"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

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree

of Master of Arts
in English at
Massey University

Blair Mahoney
1996

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.

Acknowledgements

The quotation from Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Theological" used in the title of this thesis is taken from Contemporary Indian Poetry in English, by Lakshmi Raghunandan.

For the meticulous supervision, for the many useful discussions, for the not-so-useful-but-very-interesting conversations, and especially for pointing out the many passive-voice constructions, Dr Victoria Carchidi is to be thanked.

Thank you, Simon, Angela, Angela, Andrea and Jane for all the grad-room banter and camaraderie. You all contributed to a great atmosphere, made writing a thesis seem almost pleasant, and sowed the seeds of lasting friendship. I consider myself lucky to have studied with such brilliant scholars who also had the patience to put up with my lame sense of humour.

Thanks also to all my other friends: Lennie, Steve, Justin, Austen, Penrhyn, Marcus, Hannah, Alistair, Helen, Fraser, and a special mention to Mike, all the way over there in Edinburgh. You are all great chums and the spiffing times we've shared also helped me through this thesis.

To the one who cast a critical eye over this work at many times, especially the flashing cursor and the piles of paper on the floor, I give my thanks. You may give the appearance of being a cat of simple pleasures, Finnegan, but your hidden erudition inspired me also. Sorry the thesis wasn't on Joyce.

Last, and most certainly not least, in an attempt to break the record for the highest number of Angelas listed in an acknowledgement, thank you, Angela of the lucky eyes and the high heart. Your love and support makes everything worthwhile.

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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.[1] 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 'carnivalesque' 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 Reneé 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 Zufilkar. 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).[2]

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.

Chapter One

Rushdie and his World: The carnivalesque, masquerade, and grotesque realism in The Satanic Verses

> the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World

The novels of Salman Rushdie display a number of recurring elements: shifting and hybrid identities, the dislocation of the migrant, the dangers of essentialism and fixity, and the subversive carnivalesque elements of migrant subcultures. The Satanic Verses, in particular, displays all of these elements, but they can also be seen in his earlier novels and in The Moor's Last Sigh, his most recent novel. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the transgressive nature of carnival and masquerade and Homi Bhabha's theories dealing with hybridity, mimicry and colonialism provide the tools to best explain the picture of postcolonial hybrid subjectivity that Rushdie depicts in his novels.

My contention is that in his novels Rushdie constructs versions of postcolonial subjectivity and the nation that break free of essentialist and monolithic thinking and which are based instead on ideas of hybridity and multiplicity. He does this by depicting characters whose identities are shifting and multiple, who don a variety of masks without necessarily using them to conceal essential identities. The migrant is a perfect figure to illustrate this conception of multiple, shifting identity, for the migrant belongs in one sense everywhere and in another sense nowhere. Rushdie also shows that a nation such as Great Britain is not as homogeneous as some of its inhabitants might like to think. The British Empire has come home, has imploded, bringing with it diverse, heterogeneous elements. Some of these elements can be assimilated into the mainstream, but there always remains something unassimilable, an unreconcilable part that resists all efforts to suppress difference and

contributes to the multiplicity of self and nation. In contrast to the prevailing view that the postmodern fragmented subject is inimical to the prospect of political agency, Rushdie's novels demonstrate that a fixed and unitary identity is not necessary for the postcolonial subject to achieve agency and bring about political change. Indeed, Rushdie's hybrid and multiple characters are in many ways able to bring about more political change than are unchanging and static characters. It is through their very hybridity that newness, change, enters the political world.

Postcolonial Carnival

> Carnival is presented by Bakhtin as a world of topsy-turvy, of heteroglot exuberance, of ceaseless overrunning and excess where all is mixed, hybrid, ritually degraded and defiled.
>
> Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression

In the opening pages of Rabelais and his World, Bakhtin draws a distinction between two different types of worlds that existed in medieval Europe: one public and official, the other based on unofficial forms and outside the sphere of influence of Church and State. This latter world engaged in rituals of inversion that parodied and ridiculed those of the official world:

> All these forms of protocol and ritual based on laughter and consecrated by tradition existed in all the countries of medieval Europe; they were sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom. (5-6)

When Saladin Chamcha returns to England after surviving the explosion of the plane he was on, it is a very different England to the one he left. He discovers

a split between official and nonofficial worlds similar to that Bakhtin describes above.

The split between official and nonofficial is shown clearly in the scenes of the riots that originate in the vicinity of Club Hot Wax. These riots are a popular uprising of those immigrant underclasses that feel they are being victimised by the police and the official authorities. Saladin himself is the recipient of police brutality. The vicious beating he receives at the hand of the policemen could not have occurred in the official England that he once believed in; the official England is more like "that Sussex of rewards and fairies which every schoolboy knew" (SV 158). The police are very much a part of the official world, however, being the representatives of those who wield power.

This official role of the police is evident in the riot scenes which Rushdie describes using the terminology of television. The camera is often perceived as a neutral medium that merely presents the facts, but Rushdie shows that it is able to be manipulated and is a component of the official world, the world of order:

> --Cut.-- A man lit by a sun-gun speaks rapidly into a microphone. Behind him there is a disorderment of shadows. But between the reporter and the disordered shadow-lands there stands a wall: men in riot helmets, carrying shields . . . . A camera is a thing easily broken or purloined; its fragility makes it fastidious. A camera requires law, order, the thin blue line. Seeking to preserve itself, it remains behind the shielding wall, observing the shadow-lands from afar, and of course from above: that is, it chooses sides. (SV 454-5)

The camera looks down from above, that is, from the official world, onto the nonofficial world of the rioters. It is shielded from the nonofficial world by the line of policemen, and is representative of order, presenting the nonofficial world as a place of shadows and disorder. The positioning of the camera and reporter in the light of the sun guns associates Europeans with light and reason

and Africans and Asians with disorder and lawlessness. The Satanic Verses has introduced a racial element into the official and nonofficial worlds described by Bakhtin.

In The Satanic Verses the existing hierarchy discriminates mercilessly against the nonofficial immigrant culture which exists in London. Those immigrants, with their different religions and beliefs, are not compatible with "the existing religious, political, and moral values" of the official world (Bakhtin 9). They must turn instead to the nonofficial world of the carnivalesque, which Bakhtin describes as celebrating

> temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (10)

The carnivalesque, then, is concerned with what Rushdie calls bringing newness into the world, with bringing about change in the existing order. Bakhtin also points out, however, that this liberation is only a temporary one.

One of the major criticisms of carnival is that its transgressive power is licensed by the authorities, an outlet for radical urges to be harmlessly expelled. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, for example, state that "[m]ost politically thoughtful commentators wonder, like Eagleton, whether the 'licensed release' of carnival is not simply a form of social control of the low by the high and therefore serves the interests of that very official culture which it apparently opposes" (13).[3] Stallybrass and White go on, however, to claim that carnival is not completely ineffective in bringing about political and social change. When combined with a strong political agenda and a high level of friction in the community, it can bring about real change. They write, "for long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects but that, given the presence of sharpened political

antagonism, it may often act as catalyst and site of actual and symbolic struggle" (14; original emphasis), and they observe that "it is in fact striking how frequently violent social clashes apparently 'coincided' with carnival" (14). This coincidence between carnival and violent social clash occurs in The Satanic Verses when the riots, which bear many features of carnival, erupt as a reaction against the racism of the English police. The regular rituals of inversion which take place in Club Hot Wax are relatively harmless expressions of displeasure towards the establishment, and as such are allowed to continue, but when these same sentiments meet with the catalyst of police brutality and the death in custody of a prominent figure in the community, they result in riots that have real potential to cause damage to the establishment. Action is taken, therefore, by those in power to try to prevent this more serious outpouring of carnivalesque practices.[4]

There are a number of carnivalesque scenes in The Satanic Verses. At Club Hot Wax the crowd (predominantly immigrants) call out the name of the authority figure whose wax effigy they wish to see melted in a gigantic microwave oven:

> Attendants move toward the tableau of hate-figures, pounce upon the night's sacrificial offering, the one most often selected, if truth be told; at least three times a week. Her permawaved coiffure, her pearls, her suit of blue. Maggie-maggie-maggie, bays the crowd. Burn-burn-burn. The doll,--the guy,--is strapped into the Hot Seat. Pinkwalla throws the switch. And O how prettily she melts, from the inside out, crumpling into formlessness. Then she is a puddle, and the crowd sighs its ecstasy: done. "The fire this time," Pinkwalla tells them. Music regains the night. (SV 293; original emphasis)

Here we see Bakhtin's ritual of transgression taking place in the unofficial underground world of the immigrants, who have suffered more than most due to the policies of the Conservative British government.[5] They select the figure

of the Prime Minister to perform a comic uncrowning and humiliation of the supreme authority figure in the country. The events at Club Hot Wax are an inversion of the official ritual that takes place on November 5, when an effigy of Guy Fawkes, one of the rebels who tried to blow up the English parliament, is burnt. Rushdie alludes to this in the above passage when he refers to the effigy of Thatcher as a guy. In the official celebration a person who attempted to transgress the authority of the State is humiliated, but in the Hot Wax ritual it is the authority figure that is subjected to the melting that corresponds to Bakhtin's comic uncrowning.

The melting of the effigy is a carnivalesque celebration, and as such provides a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order," and a "suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Bakhtin 10). In Club Hot Wax, the patrons are temporarily out of the reach of racist taunts, police harassment and oppressive government policies. There all rank is suspended and they can invert the power relations between the Prime Minister and themselves, exercising their power over her image and exacting their symbolic revenge. The Club Hot Wax ritual corresponds closely to Bakhtin's description of medieval carnival and its rituals and symbols:

> We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (à l'envers), of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings. A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a 'world inside out.' (11)

The wax effigies are parodic representations of authority figures who are made to undergo a ritual humiliation. The comic uncrowning takes place in a microwave oven which melts them from the 'inside out,' exemplifying the logic of the inside out, whereby hierarchies are inverted and power relations altered

for a temporary period. Such an inversion requires, of course, an acceptance of the existing categories, and a recognition that hierarchies of power exist between them. The carnival aims for social change of some sort, however, for, as Bakhtin says, it "was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal" (10).

A similar ritual of inversion occurs in the "Return to Jahilia" section of the novel when the prostitutes of The Curtain, in a move to increase business, take on the identities of the twelve wives of Mahound. The strategy succeeds, but the women feel the need to carry the masquerade further by marrying the poet Baal and have him play the role of Mahound. In this underworld the lowly have taken on the identities of the powerful, despite occupying positions diametrically opposed to the purity required by the religion that Mahound has founded. The marriage ceremony, then, is a classic Bakhtinian ritual of inversion, one in which the reluctant Baal plays his required part:

> having no option, he agreed to the twelvefold proposal. The Madam then married them all off herself, and in that den of degeneracy, that anti-mosque, that labyrinth of profanity, Baal became the husband of the wives of the former businessman, Mahound. (SV 383)

By calling the brothel a "labyrinth of profanity" Rushdie encourages a view of it as opposed in every way to the religion of Islam. This point is driven home by labelling the brothel an "anti-mosque", which emphasises the opposition to the Islamic holy place of worship. The participants in the ceremony all masquerade as the central people in that religion, but they invert its principles; they are not only outside the sacred, they are its antithesis. Mahound cannot tolerate such a ritual of inversion, with its mixture of categories which he maintains must be kept separate, and he therefore sentences the poet and the prostitutes to death for their transgression.

The use of the term "anti-mosque" to describe the brothel also puns on the term "anti-masque," which adds further resonances to the carnivalesque

situation in both The Curtain and Club Hot Wax. The masque, in its seventeenth-century form, was a courtly entertainment that developed out of the carnival.[6] Instead of the connotations of transgression carried by the carnival, however, a masque usually dramatised the victory of the forces of order over disorder. The antimasque is the part of the masque in which the forces of disorder and transgression make their appearance. Peter Mendes describes the antimasque as

> an interlude of morris-dancing . . . whose crude bouncing rhythms would release anarchic vitality, temporarily shattering the calm and ceremonial dancing of the masquers. The antimasquers usually appeared dressed as rustics, thus prompting the symbolic equation disorderly rout = rustic, ordered harmony = court. (89)

This description of the antimasque is strikingly similar to Bakhtin's portrayal of the carnival and appropriately describes the rituals of inversion that take place at both Club Hot Wax and The Curtain, in which disorder is equated with the underclass. While the ritual at The Curtain is not so explicitly aimed at the overthrow of the oppressive order that is in power, it is characterised as the binary opposite of such order. The "crude bouncing rhythms" of the dancing in an antimasque release an "anarchic vitality," further evoking the dancing at Club Hot Wax, which contains "lights, fluids, powders, bodies shaking themselves, singly, in pairs, in threes, moving towards possibilities" (SV 291). Those possibilities include a release from the oppression which the dancers suffer, and the creation of a new society based on hybridity and diversity instead of monolithic oppositions between order and chaos, rich and poor, white and black.

Such possibilities are not arrived at simply through the rituals of inversion that they participate in, as these rituals merely reaffirm the categories. There are a number of problems with such simplistic inversions of existing hierarchies, as Rushdie demonstrates through the example of Gibreel.

The inversions of carnival, despite their political usefulness, have their limitations and Rushdie aims for something beyond the reversal of binary oppositions. He searches instead for a third term that arises out of negotiation between the terms of the binary. That third term he labels 'newness', and is the source of real and effective political change in his novels.

Rushdie, in The Satanic Verses, tries to answer the question "How does newness come into the world?" (SV 8), and the opening pages of the novel are replete with images of rebirth and change. The change that the novel is working towards is not simply an inversion of existing hierarchies such as we see occurring in Club Hot Wax and The Curtain; it involves moving through these binary oppositions to a new and hybrid conception of identity and culture. Rushdie provides an example of simplistic and destructive carnivalesque inversion in the novel when Gibreel imagines himself to be (and perhaps really is) the Archangel Gibreel, come to wreak vengeance on the godless English. In a scene that reverses the traditional relationship between colonizer and colonized, he imagines himself to be the one in the position of power, and even quotes Frantz Fanon on the desire of the colonized subject to invert the hierarchy in which he or she is trapped:

> He would show them--yes!--his power. --These powerless English! --Did they not think their history would return to haunt them? --"The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor" (Fanon). English women no longer bound him; the conspiracy stood exposed! --Then away with all fogs. He would make this land anew. He was the Archangel, Gibreel. - And I'm back! (SV 353; original emphasis)

Gibreel here espouses a kind of philosophical absolutism in which he stands for absolute good and the English for absolute evil. He has reversed the hierarchy of colonialism and claims to see the true nature of the world: a world which doesn't allow for shades of meaning.

The theme of the destructive nature of such absolutism recurs throughout The Satanic Verses and closely ties in with the inversion of hierarchies. Such inversions reinscribe terms such as colonizer and colonized, confirming them as fixed categories. The only change that results is the perception of which term is superior. Such purity of ideals, and the taking up of the position of absolute adversary to some other absolute is shown to be ultimately ruinous in the cases of Tavleen the hijacker and Hind of Jahilia, as well as in Gibreel's case. Homi Bhabha's reading of Fanon emphasises the need to move beyond the absolutism that is required in the process of inverting the hierarchy and celebrating that which was formerly derided:

> Fanon recognizes the crucial importance, for subordinated peoples, of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories. But he is far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend that 'roots' be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the present. ("Introduction" 9)

The passage sheds light on the fragment of Fanon that is quoted by Gibreel, for it shows that although fixed origins and identity are to some extent understandable desires for the colonized subject they can also be dangerous, as can the uncritical reversal of the power relations between oppressor and oppressed. As Bhabha and Rushdie indicate, it is more productive to accept fragmentation and diversity and to move past the binary oppositions altogether, toward an ideal that is predicated upon compromise and alliances that bridge difference.

The Satanic Verses and the Grotesque

> In shattering the mirror of representation, and its range of western bourgeois social and psychic 'identifications', the spectacle of colonial fantasy sets itself up as an uncanny 'double'. Its terrifying figures--savages, grotesques, mimic men--reveal things so profoundly familiar to the West that it cannot bear to remember them.
>
> Homi Bhabha, "Representation and the Colonial Text"

One of the principle features of the carnival is what Bakhtin labels 'grotesque realism.' He describes the grotesque body as an image for the larger community, a community that continuously expands and is bound up in cycles of birth and rebirth, change and renewal:

> The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable. (19)

As Bakhtin explains it, the image of the grotesque body is an unsettled one, continually in process and, due to the metamorphoses it experiences, connected with the multiple and hybrid identities written about by Rushdie and Bhabha. It thus has an uncertain relation to time, refusing to remain static and consistent for any significant period. Bakhtin also points out the ambivalence of the image, a feature which it shares with the practice of mimicry described by Bhabha. "The grotesque image," he writes,

> reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (24)

The ambivalence Bakhtin describes here is an important feature of grotesque realism and carnivalesque images in general. This ambivalence indicates that

the images are not in themselves transgressive; they may be transgressive images but they carry no political force unless there is some motivation behind them, unless, as Stallybrass and White point out, the carnival is combined with concrete grievances and antagonism. The ambivalence of grotesque realism and masquerade is due to them invoking certain practices and institutions in order to undercut them; in order to arrive at the new they must first invoke the old. These invocations of the old mean operating within the existing system and being implicated in the very things that are being subverted.

The extent to which Bakhtin's description of the elements of grotesque realism coincides with the discourses of racism is quite remarkable, and illuminates in particular the incident in The Satanic Verses in which Saladin is transformed into a grotesque devil figure. Bakhtin considers the elements of grotesque realism, connected as they are with processes of change and renewal, to be positive, and this is how I have been treating them thus far: as positive ways to subvert the status quo and bring about change. The specific elements of grotesque realism which Bakhtin enumerates, though, are often used in negative racist stereotypes. For example, Bakhtin writes:

> The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other. (26)

In racist discourse, people of colour are frequently referred to as being grotesque in just this manner, as being primarily sexual, unclean, and forever reproducing. Bakhtin is applying his analysis to the medieval poor in the novels of Rabelais, and such representations have also been applied to them, characterising them as a vast, squalid rabble. Bakhtin, however, sees these grotesque elements as positive forces for change instead of the degrading

features of the downtrodden. In a similar fashion, Rushdie reclaims the negative images that have been applied to people of colour and uses them to mobilize resistance to the very racist discourses from which they come. The catalyst for the reclamation of negative images in The Satanic Verses is Saladin Chamcha, an Indian resident of England who becomes transformed into a grotesque, devilish creature.

Sometimes the differences between cultures can seem enormous, and Rushdie dramatises this perception of the gulf between cultures in his portrayal of the mutation of Saladin Chamcha into the horrific figure of racist fantasies and fears. Reflecting on his transformed, goatish, and Satanic form, Saladin says to himself, "The grotesque has me, as before the quotidian had me, in its thrall" (SV 260). The grotesque works in two main ways in The Satanic Verses: as a literalization of racist images of people of colour, and as a symbol of change and becoming: a potent force that can be harnessed and used to overthrow oppression.

Firstly, the grotesque figure that Saladin has become is the perfect object for the fear and loathing with which the racist views the immigrant of colour in Britain. When Saladin is arrested for being an illegal immigrant and is thrown into a police van he notices the changes that he appears to have undergone:

> His thighs had grown uncommonly wide and powerful as well as hairy. Below the knee the hairiness came to a halt, and his legs narrowed into tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, cloven hoofs, such as one might find on any billy-goat. Saladin was also taken aback by the sight of his phallus, greatly enlarged and embarrassingly erect, an organ that he had the greatest difficulty in acknowledging as his own. (SV 157)

Chamcha is puzzled that the policemen in the van take his bizarre transformation completely within their stride, but were he more aware of the

racism of his adopted country he would not be so surprised at their acceptance of his Satanic appearance. His animal-like appearance and his visible strength and sexual potency literally reproduce their racist conceptions. He is a creature both to be feared and to be ridiculed. His difference is greatly exaggerated as he is completely transformed into the Other that bears no resemblance to 'normal' human beings such as the white, middle-class, male policemen. These racist policemen also perceive people of colour as dirty and lacking in personal hygiene, and Saladin fulfils their expectations when he defecates on the floor of the van, leading one of the policemen to remark, "You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilized standards. Eh?" (SV 159).

Rushdie makes a number of points here, and the prominent one concerns racist stereotypes. The policeman makes the comment that 'they' (immigrants) are all the same, and by so doing fixes a single identity onto a large and heterogeneous group of people. The problem is not so much that he is wrong to see all immigrants as dirty and ignorant of British standards of cleanliness, but more that he is wrong to both identify all immigrants as the same and to fix that identity onto them, precluding any possibility of diversity or of change. It is not that the policemen mistakenly see immigrants as unclean, strong, and virile, but rather that immigrants, like Britons of European heritage, are a diverse group of people who cannot be categorised in such a rigid and destructive manner. And to go even further, it would not matter even if the stereotypes were generally true, for each person deserves to be treated individually, not just as a member of a larger group defined by one attribute such as race or sex. Rushdie is not trying to say that racists are wrong in saying that all immigrants are bad because 'in fact' all immigrants are good; he is, instead, portraying characters who are good and bad at the same time.

Homi Bhabha has critiqued the sort of criticism that would attack a novel such as The Satanic Verses for containing too many negative images of

immigrants. He argues against such a prescriptive form of criticism by pointing out that it involves a similar sort of ritual of inversion to those discussed above. By suggesting that only positive images of oppressed minorities should appear in novels, such criticism engages in the same sort of fixity as the policemen from The Satanic Verses. Bhabha points out that

> The demand that one image should circulate rather than another is made on the basis that the stereotype is distorted in relation to a given norm or model. It results in a mode of prescriptive criticism which Macherey has conveniently termed the normative fallacy, because it privileges an ideal 'dream-image' in relation to which the text is judged. The only knowledge such a procedure can give is one of negative difference because the only demand it can make is that the text should be other than itself. ("Representation" 105)

The solution is to avoid such fixity altogether, and to represent the diversity of different groups, as Rushdie does in his novels. Another aspect of stereotyping is that the group which stereotypes others also has to stereotype itself; its members must define themselves in opposition to this other group, and they must come up with a definition that excludes the undesired group. Seamus Deane, for example, has pointed out that "Although the stereotyping initiative, so to speak, is taken by the community that exercises power, it has to create a stereotype of itself as much as it does of others. Indeed, this is one of the ways by which otherness is defined" (12). Such a definition must therefore revolve on a homogeneous nature common to all those they wish to include and is necessarily as much a fiction as the negative stereotype of the undesired group.

Stuart Hall has observed that "ethnicity, in the form of a culturally constructed sense of Englishness and a particularly closed, exclusive and regressive form of English national identity, is one of the characteristics of British racism today" (256). In the case of Great Britain, a certain British

'character' must therefore be identified that unites those who have such a 'character' against those that they perceive encroaching upon their territory.[7] This character is usually identified by symbols and icons as varied as the Bulldog and The Beatles. Rushdie undermines this stereotype as well as the negative stereotypes of immigrants in The Satanic Verses when he has Saladin answer back to taunts from one of the policemen when he tries to tell them that he is an English citizen:

> 'Who're you trying to kid?' inquired one of the Liverpool fans, but he, too, sounded uncertain. 'Look at yourself. You're a fucking Packy billy. Sally-who?--What kind of name is that for an Englishman?'
>
> Chamcha found a scrap of anger from somewhere. 'And what about them?' he demanded, jerking his head at the immigration officers. 'They don't sound so Anglo-Saxon to me.'
>
> For a moment it seemed that they might all fall upon him and tear him limb from limb for such temerity, but at length the skull-faced Officer Novak merely slapped his face a few times while replying, 'I'm from Weybridge, you cunt. Get it straight: Weybridge, where the fucking Beatles used to live.' (SV 163; original emphasis)

Names are one of the outward markers of identity that are commonly used to define people, and Saladin's name betrays him, in the minds of the policemen, as a foreigner, as belonging outside their constructed sense of being English. Saladin points out to the policemen, though, that there are members of their own group with heritages other than Anglo-Saxon. A European heritage is acceptable to the policemen because such a heritage is not usually outwardly visible, it does not disrupt the broad unity of appearance where everybody shares the same skin colour. The main marker of Englishness for the policemen is skin colour, and this is the one aspect of Englishness that Saladin has failed to mimic; he can't be English in their eyes because his skin colour betrays him as a 'Packy', or Asian. Rushdie argues here that the British nation,

despite what the policemen think, is heterogeneous and varied. Although at first glance all the officers look the same to Saladin, he comes to notice variations and differences between them. These variations are invisible to the policemen, but not larger variations that might include people such as Saladin with different skin colours and names. Rushdie implies that these wider variations need to be accepted also.

The racist attitudes held by the policemen and others are responsible for the transformation of Saladin into a grotesque, satanic creature. When Saladin is taken to a prison hospital full of creatures similar to himself, and asks another inmate why they are like this, he gets the answer, "They describe us.... That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (SV 168). By describing him and other immigrants in this degrading manner, the policemen have turned them into precisely what it is that they fear and despise. Following the logic of the novel, in which ideas become reality, Saladin encounters a woman at the hospital who literalizes the common racist idea that immigrants breed at a rapid rate and their aim is to take over the country:

> he heard a woman grunting and shrieking, at what sounded like the end of a painful labour; followed by the yowling of a new-born baby. However, the woman's cries did not subside when the baby's began; if anything, they redoubled in their intensity, and perhaps fifteen minutes later Chamcha distinctly heard a second infant's voice joining the first. Still the woman's birth-agony refused to end, and at intervals ranging from fifteen to thirty minutes for what seemed like an endless time she continued to add new babies to the already improbable numbers marching, like conquering armies, from her womb. (SV 166)

Such literalizations as this undermine the racist ideas on which they are based by showing just how ludicrous they are. Rushdie has pushed the racist fear or fantasy to grotesque extremes here, and, while debilitating for the woman who

must endure such constant agony, the fantasy also threatens the racists who conceived it, with the image of the conquering armies marching out of her womb. Those racists use grotesque realism as an oppressive construct in the form of racist stereotypes, but oppressed groups can reclaim the grotesque images as a site of resistance, turning the images against their creators.

Bakhtin has identified what he calls the "essential principle" of grotesque realism as degradation, "that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (19-20). Saladin's transformation into a goat-like creature involves precisely this physicalizing of the abstract. He represents Satan, brought down to earth in physical form, and he embodies abstract racist conceptions of immigrants. Bakhtin does not, however, conceptualize degradation as the entirely negative process of racist oppression, but instead sees it as containing the potential for positive change and renewal. Like the images of rebirth which proliferate in the opening chapter of The Satanic Verses, he speaks of new beginnings and birth arising out of death:

> To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better.... Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and womb. It is always conceiving. (Bakhtin 21)

Bakhtin answers Rushdie's question "[h]ow does newness come into the world?" (SV 8) by suggesting that it emerges out of the processes of death and degradation. He sees the grotesque body as a symbol of change with its

continual transformations and focus on the processes of life, such as birth, death, eating, drinking, and defecation. He takes those images which form a large part of racist constructions and looks for their positive and transformative elements. This reclamation of predominantly negative images plays an important part in The Satanic Verses.

The first instance of such a reclamation in the novel occurs when the prophet in the Jahilia section of the novel takes the name Mahound:

> Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; has adopted, instead, the demon-tag the farangis hung around his neck. To turn insults into strengths, whigs, tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym: Mahound. (SV 93)

Similarly, Jumpy Joshi reclaims, in a poem he has written, Enoch Powell's notorious racist "River of Blood" metaphor, hoping to turn it into something that can be used to oppose racism instead of support it (SV 186). And later in the novel Uhuru Simba reclaims the role of the "uppity nigger" who is out to cause trouble and promote change (SV 414). The most powerful image of reclamation in the novel, however, is of that very grotesque and racist image that Saladin has come to literally embody. The oppressed underclass start to mobilise around this image, seeing in the grotesque body, as did Bakhtin, a potent force for change and rebirth. Children begin wearing rubber devil-horns and Saladin's satanic form starts to appear on banners at political demonstrations. Once more, the language of reclamation is used as Mishal explains to Saladin the reasons for his popularity:

> you're a hero. I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own. (SV 286-7)

There is an ambivalence here that harks back to my earlier mention of the way that the racist images of the grotesque are products of both fantasy and fear. As with the image of the woman continually giving birth to the "conquering armies", the grotesque creature that Saladin has become is both degrading and frightening. He is, as his fellow inmate in the prison hospital tells him, a product of racist conceptions and descriptions, yet those very descriptions have transformed him into a being that has the power to strike back against them. Mishal observes that the other immigrants can really identify with him, and they can unite under him in order to fight against the common experience of oppression of which he is a symbol. By refusing to observe the diversity and individual skills and attributes of the various ethnic minorities and instead lumping them all together, the racists have unwittingly also provided them with the unity that they require in order to strike back against oppression. The various groups have united on this one issue that they share, forging a common identity that has in some ways also been thrust upon them, and have worked together despite their many differences to try and achieve change in this one area.[8]

The Satanic Verses and Masquerade

> the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.
>
> William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Bakhtin has written of masquerade, another of the important elements of the carnival, that the mask is

> the most complex theme of folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The

> mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. (39-40, my emphasis)

As with grotesque realism, and indeed all elements of carnival, Bakhtin perceives masquerade to be intricately bound up with notions of change and rebirth. This is because, to an extent, when one puts on a mask one is reborn as a new person; one identity has been changed for another, or, to look at it another way, one identity has been hidden beneath another.[9] The above quotation, however, proposes a radical notion of difference. Bakhtin suggests that the masquerade emphasizes difference not between self and other, but difference within the self; masquerade exposes the self as multiple rather than as a unified whole, because masquerading as a different self reveals the presence of more than one self in the same body. Like grotesque realism, masquerade embodies the act of transformation, indeed, Bakhtin says that "It reveals the essence of the grotesque" (40). More specifically, the use of masks results in "such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures" (40). Just as the grotesque body is continually metamorphosing into different selves, so the masquerader changes masks and dons new selves. Bakhtin sees the use of masks as symbolic of reincarnation; they alter people's identities, allowing them to be 'reborn' as new people. The masquerade contributes to the play of difference and the feeling of uncertainty that is a central feature of carnival in its unsettling of official certainties and fixity.

The principal participants in The Satanic Verses are, by their very professions, party to the practice of putting on masks, as both Gibreel and Saladin are actors. Gibreel is a superstar of Indian cinema, and specialises in portraying deities in movies that are known as "theologicals". James Harrison

has pointed out that a particularly profound metamorphosis must take place when an actor portrays a deity, and at the start of his long career Gibreel often had to don masks in order to play Hanuman the monkey king or Ganesh the elephant-headed god (91). Saladin, too, is no stranger to masks in his career as an actor in England. Mostly forced to do voice-overs due to his unfortunate handicap of having the wrong skin colour to appear on television (as his manager Hal Valance informs him, ads "research better" without people "of the tinted persuasion" in them), Saladin becomes the "man of a thousand voices," able to use his voice as a mask, changing voices to take on different identities while he remains unseen. Later he lands a leading role on a television programme called "The Aliens Show", but he has to remain unseen, once more, hidden beneath a latex suit .[10]

Both main characters, then, involve themselves in a constant masquerade; one that even spills over into their personal lives. Gibreel's lovers ask him if he can wear his elephant mask to bed with them, and, on a deeper level, Saladin's marriage appears to be a case of mistaken identities due to the masquerade that he and his wife engage in. Pamela is the possessor of a voice that immediately suggests a world of privilege and aristocracy: a world which she is desperately trying to escape and which Saladin desperately wants to embrace as he flees from his Indian identity. She decides to end their marriage when she realises that Saladin is in love not with her, but with that "voice composed of tweeds, headscarves, summer pudding, hockey-sticks, thatched houses, saddle-soap, house-parties, nuns, family pews, large dogs and philistinism" (SV 180). Pamela masks the deep sorrow that she carries with her from the suicide of her parents by wearing a constant smile on her face, a "brilliant counterfeit of joy", and Saladin constructs fantasies of their happily married life together, concealing the cracks in their marriage through an elaborate masquerade of happiness that he can almost bring himself to believe in. When he travels back to India, however, things

start to fall apart as his fantasy world collides with another vision of his life, and the two prove to be incompatible:

> He had worked so hard and come so close to convincing himself of the truth of these paltry fictions that when he went to bed with Zeeny Vakil within forty-eight hours of arriving in Bombay, the first thing he did, even before they made love, was to faint, to pass out cold, because the messages reaching his brain were in such serious disagreement with one another, as if his right eye saw the world moving to the left while his left eye saw it sliding to the right. (SV 51)

Just as the presence of multiple beings within the same body disrupts conventional unitary notions of identity, the masquerade of feelings and emotions subverts Saladin's unified view of the world. He has brought together incompatible notions in his head and he is unable to cope.

The effect that masquerade has when bringing together apparently incompatible notions or selves can also be used to good effect by the migrant who wishes to subvert existing structures. The narrator of The Satanic Verses, for example, muses on the effectiveness of masquerade as a strategy of resistance for the migrant:

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him sociopolitically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. (SV 49)

The narrator presents a number of views on masquerade here, all coming from different angles. The first comes from a religious perspective that is steeped in purity and the sovereignty of the whole and individual self. Such a perspective

cannot allow either the blasphemy of usurping the role of the Creator or the heresy of the hybrid or multiple self. The second perspective considers masquerade to be a risky business, an heroic struggle against oppression. The last, and I think most interesting viewpoint, sees masquerade as a process of resistance against the racism that many migrants encounter. In order to counter the false and damaging descriptions of those such as the police officers who beat up Saladin, the migrant is forced to come up with alternative identities, identities which need not be any closer to an objective 'truth' than those perpetrated by racists, but which protect the migrant from further abuse. Indeed, the suggestion is made that it may even be desirable to construct 'false' identities in order to protect a self or selves that the migrant wishes to remain secret. In this way the young Saladin at boarding school learns to masquerade as a way of becoming accepted:

> he began to act, to find masks that these fellows would recognize, paleface masks, clown-masks, until he fooled them into thinking he was okay, he was people-like-us. He fooled them the way a sensitive human being can persuade gorillas to accept him into their family, to fondle and caress and stuff bananas in his mouth. (SV 43; original emphasis)

His masquerade is a survival technique, and principally involves suppressing differences and imitating features of the group to which he wants to belong. Rushdie's description of Saladin's masquerade involves an ironic twist in that he likens the imitator to a human gaining acceptance from a group of gorillas, despite being the one who is doing the 'aping'.

Rushdie explores the existence of a secret, possibly essential and unchanging, self beneath the masks worn by the migrant in a number of ways in The Satanic Verses. Changez Chamchawala sees his son desperately trying to become an Englishman and does not approve of this rejection of an Indian self that he perceives as essential and unchanging. In a letter to

Saladin he associates such a masquerade with Satan, who Saladin ironically comes to resemble in a transformation that is not of his willing:

> "A man untrue to himself becomes a two-legged lie, and such beasts are Shaitan's best work," he wrote, and also, in a more sentimental vein: "I have your soul kept safe, my son, here in this walnut-tree. The devil has only your body. When you are free of him, return and claim your immortal spirit. It flourishes in the garden." (SV 48)

This view, with its separation of body and soul, of depths and surfaces, echoes that of Zeeny Vakil, who urges Saladin to drop his masquerade and become Indian once more, something that he is not prepared to do, even though his body also seems to be trying to persuade him as his accent starts to slip, and he starts to speak once more in a "Bombay lilt." At other times, however, she sees not an essential Indian self beneath his masks, but a void, the "terrible vacuum" that Bakhtin associated with the Romantic mask:

> when you aren't doing funny voices or acting grand, and when you forget people are watching, you look just like a blank. You know? An empty slate, nobody home. (SV 61)

Pamela, too sees this absence at Saladin's core: "I could see the centre of you, that question so frightful that you had to protect it with all that posturing certainty. That empty space" (SV 183). Saladin himself reinforces this view of identity as a series of masks beneath which there is not an essential being but rather an absence of being when he reflects on the meaning of an oft-used cliché:

> I'm not myself, he thought as a faint fluttering feeling began in the vicinity of his heart. But what does that mean, anyway, he added bitterly. After all, "les acteurs ne sont pas des gens", as the great ham Frederick had explained in Les Enfants du Paradis. Masks beneath masks until suddenly the bare bloodless skull. (SV 34; original emphasis)

By saying "I'm not myself," Saladin implicitly compares a certain outward self-image to an internal model from which it differs. When he says that, though, he suddenly realises the literal truth of this statement, as he has no essential self he can locate to which he can compare his outward mask. In his idea of himself he consists entirely of masks, which, when he removes them, expose the absence that Zeeny and Pamela have caught glimpses of. Rushdie suggests here that by denying his Indian side, Saladin empties himself, becoming the absence perceived by Zeeny and Pamela. He becomes complete at the end of the novel only when he accepts his Indian selves as part of his multiple and hybrid construction.

In her discussion of masquerade and its use in eighteenth-century fiction, Terry Castle writes of the radical notions of the self that masquerade can engender. The masquerade can break down rigid boundaries between self and other, destroying hierarchies and encouraging notions of the multiple and/or fragmented self. In Castle's view identity is a matter of surfaces rather than depths. The outward transformations of the masquerade are all that are important in terms of identity. To some degree, if the masquerade as another person is successful, then one is for all intents and purposes that other person. Castle writes,

> From basically simple violations of the sartorial code--the conventional symbolic connections between identity and the trappings of identity--masqueraders developed scenes of vertiginous existential recombination. New bodies were superimposed over old; anarchic, theatrical selves displaced supposedly essential ones; masks, or personae, obscured persons.... One became the other in an act of ecstatic impersonation. The true self remained elusive and inaccessible--illegible--within its fantastical encasements. The result was a material devaluation of unitary notions of self. (4)

Castle stops short of suggesting a truly hybrid conception of identity arising from the masquerade, saying that there is a true self, but that it is unimportant, as it remains hidden behind the masks. The important identities are the visible ones, and the ability to change these, says Castle, leads to a pragmatic acceptance of multiple selves rather than a fixed unitary self. This focus on appearances is an important consideration for victims of racism, for it is largely because of their appearance that they are oppressed. If they did not look or sound like they belonged to the oppressed group then they could escape much oppression. In The Satanic Verses, for example, the racist policeman do not stop to consider the personality of the satanic-looking Indian they are about to beat up, they merely make the visual association and attach it to the stereotype they hold.

A slightly different version of identity is shown in Saladin's dream of a bizarre stranger,

> a man with glass skin, who rapped his knuckles mournfully against the thin, brittle membrane covering his entire body and begged Saladin to help him, to release him from the prison of his skin. Chamcha picked up a stone and began to batter at the glass. At once a latticework of blood oozed up through the cracked surface of the stranger's body, and when Chamcha tried to pick off the broken shards the other began to scream, because chunks of his flesh were coming away with the glass. (SV 33-4)

The man in the dream is not really a stranger to Saladin, however, for in his quest to escape the prison of his skin he is Saladin himself striving to become the perfect simulacrum of an Englishman. The dream suggests, though, that it is impossible to escape the "prison" of one's skin, that it is false to feel trapped by it, and that some identities cannot be discarded. The dream furthers the critique of metaphors of depth by suggesting that the surface is everything: the man in the dream wishes to escape from his surface appearance, but he

cannot because it is an integral part of his identity. The dream critiques the idea that one can be freed of local context and circumstance. Saladin, according to this conception of identity, can never leave behind that part of his identity that he wears on his sleeve, as it were, in the form of his skin colour. Whether or not this constitutes an essential Indian identity, however, is another matter, for skin colour is, to some extent, merely another superficial signifier, and Rushdie makes the point that such a signifier can have multiple signifieds.[11]

As a contrast to Saladin's identifications and their relationship to his skin colour, Rushdie offers Pinkwalla,

> a seven-foot albino, his hair the palest rose, the whites of his eyes likewise, his features unmistakably Indian, the haughty nose, long thin lips, a face from Hamza-nama cloth. An Indian who has never seen India, East-India-man from the West Indies, white black man. (SV 292)

Pinkwalla has the white skin that Saladin implicitly desires in his quest to become the perfect Englishman, but he does not wish to imitate the English in any other respect as he accepts and values his life circumstances. In that respect he is truly a "white black man", for despite his skin colour, he identifies as a black man. It is interesting to note that even though his skin is white, however, his features are still "unmistakably Indian." He too carries with him certain traits which indicate his origins but, as with Saladin, those traits are not necessarily reliable indicators. In Saladin's case they are unreliable because he has renounced his past in his attempt to become a new person, and in the case of Pinkwalla, his Indian features and skin colour show the flexibility of signifier and signified, bearing no essential relation to any one part of his varied personality.

The question of the nature of the self is addressed explicitly by Muhammad Sufyan, the proprietor of the Shaandaar Café, as he ponders the nature of Saladin's metamorphosis. He comments that the "Question of

mutability of the essence of the self . . . has long been subject of profound debate" (SV 276), and characterises the debate as being divided between the views of Lucretius and those of Ovid. According to Lucretius, "Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers . . . that thing . . . by doing so brings immediate death to its old self" (SV 276). This means that we have no essential being and that when one identity is replaced by another, the old one is irrevocably lost. Saladin, before his transformation, inclines to this view when he considers that he has put his old self behind him and replaced it with his new, English identity. Working against this, however, his voice starts to slip on his return to India, and his old self seems to be struggling out from behind his mask. Muhammad Sufyan himself subscribes to the Ovidian conception of identity which allows for an immortal essence: "As yielding wax . . . is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our souls . . . Are still the same forever, but adopt In their migrations ever-varying forms" (SV 276-7).

While Saladin appears to fail in his quest to discard his Indian identity in favour of an English one, he decides to throw himself into his new Satanic identity, and become that totally, even as he sees he has no choice in the matter:

> He chose Lucretius over Ovid. The inconstant soul, the mutability of everything, das Ich, every last speck . . . . He would enter into his new self; he would become what he had become: loud, stenchy, hideous, outsize, grotesque, inhuman, powerful. (SV 288-9; my emphasis)

Saladin therefore internalizes his external condition, becoming the identity that has been thrust upon him. He embraces his grotesque new identity, and, although he detests his appearance, he still recognizes the powerful possibilities it contains.

Overall, the novel, like Muhammad Sufyan, tends towards the Ovidian rather than the Lucretian conception of identity. In the bizarre opening scene

of the novel, Gibreel, as he falls towards England out of an exploded plane, sings a song which aptly summarizes Ovid's view of an eternal essence as the basis of identity:

> "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." (SV 5)

Underneath the multicultural exterior lies an essence, a heart, a soul, that retains his Indian identity. The clothes, and outward appearance and behaviour in general, may define a person in some way, but they cannot alter every part of the individual, something remains unaltered, just as wax melted and shaped into a different form is still wax. This is the message that we get from Saladin's trip back to India where he detects his old identity trying to creep back: "Watch out, Chamcha, look out for your shadow. That black fellow creeping up behind" (SV 53). His voice betrays him, slipping back to a "Bombay lilt" he thought he had left behind, and after the plane crash he finds his face has also lost the rigidity that he has cultivated and returned to its old cherubic state. As much as he tries to rid himself of this self, the novel seems to suggest, it keeps on coming back. This reaches a climax when he visits his father on his deathbed and reaches a reconciliation with him. As he sat next to his father,

> Saladin felt hourly closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins--or rather Salahuddins--which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices, but which had apparently continued to exist, perhaps in the parallel universes of quantum theory. (SV 523)

Once more his old self, or, as is stated here, selves, are coming back to haunt him. Instead of continuing to reject these selves, however, he starts feeling closer to them, coming to terms with himself (himselves) at the same time he comes to terms with his father. These old selves he identifies with his old

name, Salahuddin, a name he had rejected in his quest to become what he perceived as English, and a name which he now comes to embrace once more. Names are another outward indicator of possible identifications, and Saladin changed his to become more accepted in England. Now, however, he changes back to Salahuddin to identify once more as an Indian. The passage quoted suggests a continuing essence of some sort that has persisted despite the changes that Saladin has made in his life. That essence, however, grows and multiplies with him and does not remain fixed and unchanging. It is a hybrid rather than a pure essence, and consists of all the identities that he has previously adopted. Rushdie suggests in the conclusion of the novel that one can never leave behind one's past, and, at the same time, that one's past is not a solid and fixed object but a varied and multiple essence.

The conclusion of The Satanic Verses ties up the carnivalesque elements in the novel. Saladin has transcended the crude inversions of carnival exemplified by Gibreel and his adversarial attitude. He no longer rejects his Indian side and has reached a space of negotiation between his English and Indian elements where newness can emerge. That newness is a hybrid combination of all the selves, English and Indian, that he has constructed. He no longer has the physically grotesque features that were a result of racist conceptions, but he retains the spirit of grotesque realism described by Bakhtin. He remains a body in process, continually changing and evolving into something new, dying and being reborn as he transforms from a cynical mimic into a loving son and reclaims his heritage. He also keeps the spirit of masquerade, changing masks and creating hybrid identities as he does so. The resolution he reaches means that he no longer rejects his Indian selves, meaning that he now embodies the essence of the palimpsest. Whereas before he hid a void beneath his multiple masks because he abjured those Indian parts of his identity, he now has identity written over identity, the

new selves overlaying the old and creating rich, new hybrid identities. This is the ideal of hybrid identity proposed by Rushdie.

Chapter Two

Of Mimicry and the Migrant: The Construction of Identity and Nation

> I was an invader from Mars, one of many such dangerous beings who had sneaked into Britain when certain essential forms of vigilance had been relaxed. Martians had great gifts of mimicry, so they could fool yuman beans into believing they were beans of the same stripe, and of course they bred like fruit-flies on a pile of rotten bananas.
>
> Salman Rushdie, "The Harmony of the Spheres"

Like masquerade, which exposes the multiplicity of the self, mimicry radically undermines the notion of the unitary subject and therefore contributes to Rushdie's argument for hybridity and against purity. The mimic must combine at least two selves within the same body and is necessarily a hybrid being. Mimicry plays a particularly large part in The Satanic Verses, and is also touched upon in Midnight's Children and The Moor's Last Sigh.

Like the Martian that the narrator's friend imagines him to be in the epigraph to this chapter, Saladin Chamcha has great gifts of mimicry upon which he bases his professional life as an actor and voice-over person. His mimicry also crosses over into his personal life, in his continual striving to become the perfect English gentleman and be accepted into English society. Saladin, too, is an alien, in the sense that he is a foreign resident of England. He is effectively from another world--he is not just an easily assimilable immigrant from another country in the so-called 'First world,' or even from the 'Western World'; he is from the East, from a so-called 'Third-world' country. Saladin even plays an alien on a TV show, and upon his arrest protests, "Don't any of you watch TV? Don't you see? I'm Maxim. Maxim Alien" (SV 140). Saladin, like many other characters in The Satanic Verses, is an alien in the sense that he is out of harmony with his adopted country. As such, he challenges the conceptions of identity held by other inhabitants of England. Saladin, of course, does not wish to remain out of harmony with England, and

the strategy he uses in order to try to achieve harmony is to mimic his idea of the perfect English gentleman.

The key texts for this thesis on the discourse of mimicry are Homi Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man" and "DissemiNation." In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie revisits the discourse of colonialism that Bhabha discusses in those articles in a postcolonial situation. In Rushdie's novel, however, there are a number of reversals of the colonial situation. For example, Gibreel and Saladin are former colonized subjects who encroach on the territory of the former colonizers. Gibreel recognizes this reversal as, in his deluded state, he sets out to transform England into the image of India. He thinks of "Native and settler, that old dispute, continuing now upon these soggy streets, with reversed categories" (SV 353).

Mimicry suggests a non-unitary conception of identity and this contributes to the development of hybrid identities that Rushdie shows in his novels. In turn, these ideas about the non-unitary and hybrid nature of identity are connected to a concept of the nation as fragmented and hybrid. The conception of territory is inextricably connected with conceptions of self, and Rushdie shows in The Satanic Verses that the hybrid nation and the hybrid person are the way forward in an increasingly fragmenting world.

Sala(hud)din Chamcha(wala) as Mimic

> the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English.
>
> Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"

In the opening scenes of The Satanic Verses, as Saladin and Gibreel are falling towards England among the debris of the exploded jet they were travelling in, Saladin becomes consumed by "the will to live": "and the first thing it did was to inform him that it wanted nothing to do with his pathetic personality, that half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices" (SV 9). At the

outset of the novel, then, the narrator characterises mimicry as a negative character trait. Saladin resembles those colonized subjects in times past who, in order to advance under the colonial system, mimicked the attributes of the colonizer. Although the situation has been reversed and Saladin, an Indian, has migrated to England, the discourse of colonialism is still very much in place. Therefore, in order to get by in England, Saladin uses the same strategies of mimicry adopted by the colonized subjects during the period of Britain's active imperial expansion.

From an early age Saladin possesses a "determination to become the thing his father was-not-could-never-be, that is, a goodandproper Englishman" (SV 43). Dissatisfied with his life in India, Saladin has internalized the hierarchy implicit in the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized, and in his mind he belongs to the inferior term in the opposition. Saladin perceives this binary opposition to be the natural state of being and therefore, instead of attempting to undermine the opposition, he attempts to change himself and rise to the top of the hierarchy. When he attends school in England, he begins this process of mimicry in order to achieve his goal. His first act of mimicry upon his arrival at his English school involves eating a kipper, with its multitude of bones, for breakfast. Despite the lack of any advice or assistance from his schoolmates he achieves his goal and sees it as a prophecy of things to come:

> The eaten kipper was his first victory, the first step in his conquest of England.
>
> William the Conqueror, it is said, began by eating a mouthful of English sand. (SV 44)

Saladin here connects himself with an earlier migrant arrival on the shores of England; and like that earlier arrival he hopes to conquer England.

Bhabha writes of mimicry not as a strategy of survival or resistance on the part of the colonized subject, but instead as a discourse constructed by the

colonizers in order to retain their superior position in the hierarchy and fix and control the colonized. However, for Bhabha, mimicry is a self-undermining discourse: while the colonizers fear difference and seek to eradicate it, at the same time they must preserve an element of difference to distinguish between original and copy. Therefore, "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" ("Mimicry" 86). The process of mimicry can apply to land as well as to people, and in The Moor's Last Sigh Rushdie gives us an example of the British subjugating the Indian terrain to their will, forcing it to resemble the land they left behind:

> Here at Fort Cochin the English had striven mightily to construct a mirage of Englishness, where English bungalows clustered around an English green, where there were Rotarians and golfers and tea-dances and cricket and a Masonic Lodge. (MLS 95)

The ambivalence of the discourse of mimicry, however, means that despite efforts at imitation the land produces its slippage, its difference: "the bloodsucker lizards beneath the English hedges, the parrots flying over the rather un-Home-Counties jacaranda trees" (MLS 95). This mimicry of the land is also in evidence in Midnight's Children in the form of Methwold's Estate, where the owner has transported Europe to the subcontinent, constructing four houses which he names after the palaces of Europe: "Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci" (MC 95). Methwold goes further than mimicry of the land, however, and stipulates as a condition of sale that the new Indian owners of the houses retain the entire contents of the houses. He has moved into the personal mimicry that Bhabha writes of, and he disguises the importance of his strategy of control by referring to it as merely a whim: "you'll permit a departing colonial his little game? We don't have much left to do, we British, except to play our games" (MC 95). The consequences for the colonized new inhabitants are more serious, however, and they fail to see that this is a strategy for the British to retain some sort of

power over them even though they are officially relinquishing governance of India:

> the Estate, Methwold's Estate, is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath. Listen carefully: what's he saying? Yes, that's it. "Sabkuch ticktock hai," mumbles William Methwold. All is well. (MC 99)

Mimicry changes the Indians because they come to see the trappings of the English as desirable and they internalize that desire, coming to think of England as superior to India. Methwold's Estate exemplifies the manipulative purpose of the discourse of mimicry. Rushdie doesn't, however, in Midnight's Children, write about that slippage which occurs in mimicry and the subsequent menace perceived by the colonizer. He develops the menace of mimicry much more fully in The Satanic Verses. In that novel, although Saladin sees his mimicry as a strategy of survival he has consciously chosen, he actually displays no more agency than the inhabitants of Methwold's Estate. Like them, he has internalized the values which denigrate India with respect to England. He therefore thinks he has agency, but at the same time he displays the ambivalences of mimicry, for he wants to conquer the country that he sees as superior.

Mimicry demands a certain malleability of self, for one must change oneself in order to resemble another. All his life Saladin has been able to discard one self in favour of another, newer self. When he sets out to transform himself into a "goodandproper Englishman" he achieves this goal with relative ease, although it does take him some time to perfect. He bases his new identity on his image of what an English gentleman should look like,

and we are able to see the ideas of hierarchy that he has internalized. The face that he constructs for himself, for example, shows signs of superiority and contempt for others that are in keeping with a colonizer who looks upon his subjects with disdain:

> This face was handsome in a somewhat sour, patrician fashion, with long, thick, downturned lips like those of a disgusted turbot, and thin eyebrows arching sharply over eyes that watched the world with a kind of alert contempt. Mr Saladin Chamcha had constructed this face with care--it had taken him several years to get it just right--and for many more years now he had thought of it simply as his own--indeed, he had forgotten what he looked like before it. Furthermore, he had shaped himself a voice to go with the face, a voice whose languid, almost lazy vowels contrasted disconcertingly with the sawn-off abruptness of the consonants. (SV 33)

It is important to note here that Saladin mimics a subject that he has invented; he himself has constructed the very model which he mimics, just as we all do. Saladin has an idea of what England should be like in his head and that idea is not necessarily congruent with other conceptions of England. Thus, Pamela says of his ideas:

> Him and his Royal Family, you wouldn't believe. Cricket, the Houses of Parliament, the Queen. The place never stopped being a picture postcard to him. You couldn't get him to look at what was really real. (SV 175)

Of course, Pamela's conception of England is no more real than Saladin's; they are merely competing versions of reality, despite Pamela's conviction that she knows what is "really real". The essential difference between the two is that Saladin refuses to see the negative features of England--features to which he becomes forcefully exposed. England for Saladin, before his "fall from innocence," is a "dream-Vilayet of poise and moderation" (37). His idealised

vision of England makes it impossible for him to believe any negative things about it, making it even more shocking to him when he encounters the prejudice and racism of the policemen who accost him after his fall from the plane. Indeed, the racism comes as a shock to him because he has internalized such racism himself. When the policemen attack him, for example, his immediate thoughts are, "Such degradations might be all very well for riff-raff from villages in Sylhet or the bicycle-repair shops of Gurjanwala, but he was cut from different cloth!" (SV 159). His idealised view of England, to which he perceives himself as belonging, is part of his own racism.

Saladin's mimicry, like the mimicry described by Bhabha, is an ambivalent construction. Bhabha writes that mimicry results in an ironic compromise between, on one hand, the colonizer's demand for stasis and identity and, on the other hand, the change and difference that comes from history. This occurs because the colonized subject aims for identity (with the colonizer) but continually falls short, exposing the differences between them ("Mimicry" 86). Saladin's mimicry also vacillates between stasis and change, identity and difference. He tries to fix his identity, his facial features and his voice, but in order to do this he must first have the ability to change his identity into the desired form. He attempts to achieve identity with the English by imitating expressions and mannerisms, but in striving to do so he highlights the external marker that he cannot change: his skin colour. Because he manages to imitate perfectly almost every other feature and mannerism of the English he makes the one feature that he cannot imitate stand out more than it might have had it remained one of a number of differences.[12] While one of the aspects of mimicry, the highlighting of his skin colour does not necessarily affect the racism Saladin is subjected to. The policemen behave in a racist manner before they know of his skills of mimicry because they seize upon his skin colour as the primary marker of his identity.

The oscillation between stasis and change also manifests itself in some of the incidental events of The Satanic Verses. For example, during Saladin's fall out of the plane, his bowler hat remains firmly attached to his head, seemingly confirming his fixed identity as English. Earlier, though, on his flight to India and upon his arrival there, he had found his carefully constructed voice and face slipping (like a false moustache, suggests Zeeny Vakil), which shows that, despite his efforts to fix his identity, he remains very much in flux. Saladin sums up this tension between stasis and change when he tells Zeeny how in his youth he would try on a variety of selves, each of which had a very temporary feel to it:

> Its imperfections didn't matter, because he could easily replace one moment by the next, one Saladin by another. Now, however, change had begun to feel painful; the arteries of the possible had begun to harden. (SV 63)

As his agent, Hal Valance, tells him later, his universe is beginning to shrink, he has fewer options available to him and consequently he cannot change selves with the same facility as before. Saladin's mimicry, which suggests primarily his ability to change selves, has somehow become fixed, making it difficult for him to achieve that sort of change any more. He has come to believe that he is what he mimics and consequently believes that he cannot revert back to an anterior self behind the mimicry. Saladin's transformation into the goatlike creature with grotesque attributes again demonstrates this ambivalence between stasis and change: he is a body continually in process, constantly transforming, but at the same time this is an identity fixed upon him due to the racist views of people such as the policemen who apprehend him, an identity which he cannot escape until, for reasons unexplained in the novel, his rage frees him.

Saladin comes to think of his unwilling transformation as a punishment that has been visited upon him for his previous mimicry:

> Had he not pursued his own idea of the good, sought to become that which he had most admired, dedicated himself with a will bordering on obsession to the conquest of Englishness?. . . . Could it be, in this inverted age, that he was being victimized by--the fates, he agreed with himself to call the persecuting agency--precisely because of his pursuit of 'the good'?--That nowadays such a pursuit was considered wrong-headed, even evil? (SV 256-7; original emphasis)

The answer to his question is that many of his colleagues do indeed consider mimicry wrong-headed. Both his father and Zeeny Vakil inform him of this on his return to India, and residents of England such as his wife Pamela and Jumpy Joshi are similarly disgusted at his continued attempts to act English. Mimicry may well be an ambivalent phenomena that undermines colonial authority as well as reinforcing it, and it is certainly a valid strategy of survival or resistance, but the majority of characters in the novel do not see it as a solution to the inequalities with which they are faced.

The other people who consider Saladin's mimicry wrong-headed or evil are those very subjects that he is mimicking. As Bhabha writes, "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" ("Mimicry" 88; original emphasis). Thus, while colonizers authorize the mimicry of colonized subjects in order to fix their identity into an "authorized version of otherness" (88), they are at the same time threatened by that menacing aspect of mimicry which is part of the doubling aspect whereby colonizer and colonized are combined in the same hybrid being. Mimics are therefore both authorized by the colonizers and, at the same time, "inappropriate colonial subjects" (88). Saladin's mimicry is accepted for a long period of time, allowing him to be successful in England. Upon his re-entry into the country, however, he comes up against this fear of the menace of his mimicry. The fear of the policemen is based on the threat that Saladin poses to their own conceptions of national identity. If he is an

Englishman, then they have to widen their conception of national identity to include people of colour and allow that that identity is hybrid and continually shifting rather than fixed and pure. Rushdie literalizes the menace of the mimic by depicting Saladin's transformation into the goatlike creature. This transformation is suggested to be a product of the racist views of people such as the policemen who have, therefore, themselves created the very being of which they are afraid. This process epitomizes the ambivalence of the discourse of mimicry. The colonizers conceive of mimicry as a strategy of containment, as a way of keeping the colonized under control by making them familiar. At the same time, however, their fears heighten the differences that they perceive between themselves and the colonized, transforming the colonized into a creature of menace. Complicating matters further, mimicry also undermines conceptions of the self as fixed and unitary, blurring the boundaries between colonizer and colonized.

Bhabha conceives of mimicry as very much a product of the colonizer who wishes to control the colonized subject and maintain power. Only the inherent ambivalence of the discourse of mimicry, not any active resistance on the part of the colonized, leads to the undermining of colonial power. As Robert Young observes:

> Mimicry at once enables power and produces the loss of agency. If control slips away from the colonizer, the requirement of mimicry means that the colonized, while complicit in the process, remains the unwitting and unconscious agent of menace--with a resulting paranoia on the part of the colonizer as he tries to guess the native's sinister intentions. (147-8)

In a sense, however, the discourse of mimicry does allow the colonized a more active role. The subversive potential of mimicry results from the power of the gaze and the associated agency that this involves. In the standard colonial hierarchy, the colonizer's gaze is dominant, and he has the agency that the

colonized subject lacks. The colonizer uses the discourse of mimicry to fix colonized subjects into their lower position in this hierarchy, but the ambivalence of the discourse again emerges because in mimicry the colonizer is the passive object of the gaze while the colonized subject is the active imitator. The colonized subject as mimic, writes Bhabha, takes part in a colonial desire

> that reverses "in part" the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty. ("Mimicry" 89)

By reversing the process of colonial appropriation and by reversing the direction of the gaze by imitating the colonizer, the colonized subject gains a sense of agency that undercuts the opposition between colonizer and colonized and also subverts the supposed unity and fixity of the position he or she occupies. In Bhabha's conception of mimicry, however, the self-undermining nature of the discourse, rather than any initiative on the part of the colonized, produces this reversal of the gaze. Although Saladin thinks he is the agent of his own mimicry (it is out of his own desire and contrary to the wishes of his friends and family that he embarks upon his course of mimicry) the apparent agency he has is shown to be ultimately an illusion. He speaks of conquering England through his mimicry, but he is unable to achieve this goal because of the ambivalences of the discourse.

Bhabha writes that because mimicry is not complete--by definition, mimicry must always fall short of perfect imitation or it could not be recognizable as mimicry--it paradoxically foregrounds those very racial, cultural and historical differences which it seems to efface. Therefore the mimic is only a "partial presence", with the differences emerging in the gap between mimic and model ("Mimicry" 88). An incident in The Moor's Last Sigh highlights the

slippage that occurs between mimic and model. At one stage, Moor's grandfather Camoens becomes an ardent communist, and is thrilled to hear that

> an élite group of Soviet actors had been given exclusive rights to the rôle of V. I. Lenin: not only in specially prepared touring productions which told the Soviet people about their glorious revolution, but also at the thousands upon thousands of public functions at which the leader was unable to be present owing to the pressures on his time. The Lenin-thesps memorised, and then delivered, the speeches of the great man, and when they appeared in full make-up and costume people shouted, cheered, bowed and quaked as if they were in the presence of the real thing. (MLS 29)

Camoens therefore sets out to recruit a troupe of Indian Lenin-mimics to perform the same functions as their Soviet counterparts. The search proves difficult, however, and when a member of the official Special Lenin Troupe arrives to inspect them he is less than impressed with the standard of mimicry achieved by the Indians:

> "Vladimir Ilyich asks what is the meaning of this outrage," the interpreter told Camoens as the crowd around them enlarged. "These persons have blackness of skin and their features are not his. Too tall, too short, too fat, too skinny, too lame, too bald, and that one has no teeth." (MLS 30)

The first feature mentioned as being inadequate, as in the case of Saladin, is the skin colour of the prospective mimics. As Bhabha comments, the mimic is "almost the same but not white" ("Mimicry" 89). The sign of racial difference, being the key feature, maintains a separation between colonizer and colonized. The Lenin-mimics, however, unlike Saladin's near-perfect imitation, fall woefully short in their attempts at imitation. They have descended from mimicry into mockery, and whereas mimicry is "almost the same but not quite",

mockery consists of an extremely inadequate representation. Mimicry is a practice that is authorised by the official powers whereas mockery is not authorised, as much as Camoens would like his actors to be. Therefore, when Camoens suggests that his Indian Lenins have merely been adapted to suit local needs, the official Lenin mimic is of a different opinion:

> More barrages of Russian. "Vladimir Ilyich opines that this is not adaption but satirical caricature," the interpreter said. "It is insult and offence." (MLS 30)

The official powers perceive mimicry as reaffirming their superior position in the hierarchy, and see mockery as a deliberate attempt to undermine that status through ridicule. Mockery therefore appears similar to masquerade with its comic representations--albeit unintentional in this case--which carry a satirical bite. The satirical aspect of mockery results from the obvious gap between mimic and model which makes it clear that the model is being lampooned. In contrast, mimicry, such as that used by Saladin, displays no obvious satirical intention due to the faithful nature of the representation. Despite this lack of satirical intention, however, the discourse of mimicry is more threatening to the official powers than is the more obvious mockery.

The satirical nature of mockery is also shown in the final Jahilia section of The Satanic Verses. When the poet Baal, writer of satirical verse, is captured by the prophet Mahound upon his triumphant return to Jahilia, he is sentenced to death by the prophet for his transgressive mockery. Baal had been hiding in a brothel where the prostitutes had taken on the names of Mahound's wives and even acted like them. Baal, in turn, had taken on the role of the prophet. Again, instead of the "almost the same but not quite" of mimicry, we here see the more pronounced differences of mockery. The sacred is acted out by the profane, and Mahound cannot tolerate the potential hybridity that results from this mixing of categories. When Baal and the prostitutes play the roles of Mahound and his wives they mockingly imply that

the categories of the sacred and the profane are not as separate as Mahound would like to think, by bringing them together in the one place. In order to maintain the separation of the categories Mahound therefore orders the prostitutes and Baal to be put to death (SV 391-2).

Mockery, like mimicry, is used by Rushdie to show hybrid forms of identity that combine two sides of an opposition, whether colonized and colonizer or sacred and profane. These hybrid forms of identity are perceived as a threat by the official powers (the policemen and Mahound) because they undermine unitary and fixed notions of identity which allow them to retain their superior position in the hierarchy. Not only does the discourse of mimicry undermine notions of personal identity, however; as the "Rosa Diamond" section of The Satanic Verses demonstrates, mimicry also undermines conceptions of national identity.

Gibreel Farishta, Rosa Diamond, and the History that Happened Overseas: Fragmented Personalities and Nations

> The conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories is of particular interest in Rushdie's work, and in an earlier generation of resistance writing.
>
> Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism

The "Rosa Diamond" section of The Satanic Verses provides a transition point between hybrid notions of personal identity and a hybrid national identity, both of which are advanced through the discourse of mimicry. Rushdie had earlier made a connection between fragmented personalities and nations in Midnight's Children, and he goes on to make similar connections in The Moor's Last Sigh. The nation is one of the key elements in the formation of personal identity: people often define themselves in relation to both their places of origin and their places of residence. When these towns, cities, or nations are fragmented or hybrid, then that fragmentation or hybridity reflects in the personal identities

of their inhabitants. This correspondence also applies to the history of the nation, as Rosa Diamond's sense of history demonstrates.

Saladin is washed up on the beach in front of the house of Rosa Diamond with Gibreel, the other main character in the novel, who also becomes a mimic. When Rosa takes in the two characters, Saladin gets taken away by the police; Gibreel avoids a similar fate because he has dressed in the clothes of Rosa's dead husband, an aristocratic former landowner in Argentina.

Not only does Gibreel's mimicry save him from the sort of treatment that Saladin suffers at the hands of the police, but, Homi Bhabha argues in "DissemiNation", it has a larger significance in terms of conceptions of national history, undermining the unitary nature of that history and, as with personal identity, promoting a sense of hybridity through the presence of fragmented and competing histories (167-8).

Rosa Diamond occupies a void between the past and the present, and Gibreel, too, becomes trapped within her limbo, forced--by unexplained means--to take part in her historical visions. She is, just as the mimics Gibreel and Saladin are, caught up in repetition. Bhabha suggests that a mode of representation that somehow comes between mimesis and mimicry mocks the power of history to be a model: "Mimicry repeats rather than re-presents" ("Mimicry 88; original emphasis)--so Rosa Diamond repeats, or relives English history. She, however, repeats history from a position that affirms a holistic, unitary view of the English nation, unlike the postcolonial mimics who threaten such a view, bringing home to England the history that happened overseas in the far reaches of empire. Homi Bhabha advances this view of The Satanic Verses in "DissemiNation" as part of his argument with

> that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion--the many as one--shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community, and by theorists who treat gender, class or race as social totalities that

> are expressive of unitary collective experiences. (142; original emphasis)

Rushdie, too, questions the metaphor of the many as one, and points out that the one is indeed composed of many: that is, people and nations are not pure and unitary but hybrid and multiple. For Rosa as well as Gibreel and Saladin, repetition is an ambivalent business, and she is caught between a view of herself as whole and unchanging and a view of herself as hybrid and split: "Repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity; the well-worn phrases, unfinished business, grandstand view, made her feel solid, sempiternal, instead of the creature of cracks and absences she knew herself to be" (SV 130). Rosa's visions of the Norman army and William the Conqueror are part of the approved version of English history, a version which "secures the cohesive limits of the Western nation" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 149). When Gibreel attempts to talk with Rosa about the bizarre happenings commencing with his and Saladin's arrival on the beach outside her house, she doesn't allow him to express his views, making sure that she preserves the homogeneity of English history by denying the representative of imperial history in India from having his say: "in an ancient land like England there was no room for new stories, every blade of turf had been walked over a hundred thousand times" (SV 144).

Gibreel's mimicry of Rosa's dead husband has the effect of exaggerating and highlighting the split within Rosa between a continuist national history and the "cracks and absences" of which he is representative. Gibreel is part of the history that happened overseas, and his mimicry of an English gentleman brings that history home once more; it opens up the nation to other histories and subjects that are incommensurable with the view of the nation as a homogeneous unity. Gibreel's mimicry of the "collaborative colonial ideologies of patriotism and patriarchy" ("DissemiNation" 168) of which Henry Diamond is representative deprives those narratives of their imperial

authority. The mimicry disrupts those cohesive limits of the nation that Rosa reinforces through her visions and suggests instead "a contentious internal liminality providing a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent" ("DissemiNation" 149; original emphasis). Gibreel does not disrupt the holistic and exclusionary view of the English nation from the outside, but rather, as Bhabha suggests, opens up a space within the nation from which to challenge this view. From this space the absences in the approved version of history can speak. Lacan's epigraph to "Of Mimicry and Man" proposes that the mimic does not harmonize with the background, but rather replicates it, becoming mottled if the background is mottled.[13] In similar fashion, Bhabha says of Gibreel in "DissemiNation" that "his postcolonial, migrant presence does not evoke a harmonious patchwork of cultures, but articulates the narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look at itself narcissistically in the eye" (168). Thus, in this section of the novel Gibreel counteracts Rosa Diamond's narcissistic visions of English history by positioning his postcolonial, migrant self within the boundaries of the English nation and including the history that happened overseas.

In Midnight's Children, Rushdie deals extensively with the theme of the fragmentation of the self, particularly the supposedly literal bodily fragmentation of the narrator, Saleem. It is through the character of Saleem that Rushdie establishes the connection between personal identity and national identity; as Saleem says on the opening page of the novel: "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (MC 9). Just as Indira Gandhi uses the phrase "Indira is India and India is Indira", so Saleem equates himself with India. Like the history of England that Gibreel intrudes upon, the history of India is full of disparate and varied people and events. Unlike Rosa Diamond's attempts to

homogenize and purify English history, however, Saleem narrates a history that is as unstable and fragmented as he perceives himself to be.

The first connection between individual and nation in the novel occurs when Saleem's grandfather, a doctor, treats the daughter of a local landowner. Aadam Aziz, for the sake of modesty, is obliged to examine the body of his patient and future bride through a small hole cut in a sheet:

> So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination she accompanied him on his rounds. (MC 25)

Aadam's vision foreshadows the future partitioning of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The most extreme case of a fragmented identity in Midnight's Children is, of course, Saleem, who perceives himself to be literally disintegrating: "Please believe that I am falling apart . . . . I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust' (MC 37). Of course it does seem to be only Saleem who can see these physical cracks that are spreading over his body, for when Padma calls a doctor, "Blindly, he impugned my state of mind, cast doubts on my reliability as a witness, and Godknowswhatelse: 'I see no cracks'" (MC 65). Saleem is, without doubt, an unreliable witness, but he is remarkably persistent in this claim that he is cracking up:

> now, as the pouring-out of what-was-inside-me nears an end; as cracks widen within--I can hear and feel the rip tear crunch--I begin to grow thinner, translucent almost; there isn't much of me left, and soon there will be nothing at all. Six hundred million specks of dust, and all transparent, invisible as glass. (MC 383)

When Saleem speaks of disintegrating into six hundred million specks of dust he is referring not only to himself but also to the continued fragmentation of India into its constituent parts (six hundred million possibly referring to the population of India). There is also, however, a literal sense in which Saleem is breaking up: for example, at school he loses part of his finger and a clump of hair. Saleem rightly perceives the radical nature of this fragmentariness, contrasting it with the sort of internal divisions that are predominantly referred to with regard to the fragmentary self:

> a human being inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of everywhichthing are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another the next. The body, on the other hand, is homogeneous as anything. Indivisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple if you will. It is important to preserve this wholeness. But the loss of my finger (which was conceivably foretold by the pointing digit of Raleigh's fisherman), not to mention the removal of certain hairs from my head, has undone all that. Thus we enter into a state of affairs which is nothing short of revolutionary; and its effect on history is bound to be pretty damn startling. Uncork the body, and God knows what you permit to come tumbling out. Suddenly you are forever other than you were; and the world becomes such that parents can cease to be parents, and love can turn to hate. (MC 236-7)

Saleem's body is analogous to the landmass of India which contains a vast number of different people within it. When Saleem says that the effect of his bodily fragmentation will have a startling effect on history he is not wrong, for his hair was pulled out by Mr Zagallo who was in the process of establishing a correlation between Saleem's face and the map of India. Thus Saleem's fragmentary body is an allegory of the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent, which was divided firstly into India and Pakistan, and then split further when Bangladesh becomes independent from Pakistan. Throughout the novel,

Saleem struggles to contain the multitude that is India within a hybrid whole. His fear of fragmentation is the fear that India will self-destruct due to increasing divisions amongst its very different inhabitants. Just as Aadam Aziz tries to glue together Naseem in his imagination, so Saleem attempts to glue together India in his imagination:

> And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me. (MC 9)

Saleem attempts to contain all the stories of India within the one story that he is telling; he is a "swallower of lives" and tries to maintain those lives within a hybrid whole through establishing connections between them and intertwining them. Try as he might, though, Saleem cannot maintain control over the fragmenting hordes. This is demonstrated by the example of the Midnight's Children Conference, a group consisting of all those children born in the hour after midnight on the night of India's independence. Born on the stroke of midnight, Saleem is the leader of this group and he communicates telepathically with the other members, born at the same time as their country and somehow inextricably connected with its fate. Saleem is filled with noble ideas of a group working together for the good of India, but he is finally unable to hold the other children together:

> Quarrels began, and the adult world infiltrated the children's; there was selfishness and snobbishness and hate . . . . suspicions growing, dissension breeding, departures in twenties and tens. And, at the end, just one voice left; but optimism lingered--what-we-had-in-common retained the possibility of overpowering what-forced-us-apart. (MC 304)

The same optimism that Saleem is able to retain in the face of the ultimate fragmentation of the Midnight's Children Conference is also in evidence at the conclusion of the novel where, despite the remarkable vision of his disintegration and death, Saleem retains hope for the future in the form of his son.

The hope for a better, hybrid but whole, future for India is undercut, however, in The Moor's Last Sigh, which revisits many of the characters from Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses. This most recent novel of Rushdie's displays a cynicism much more marked than in any of his previous works. What starts out as a utopian vision of a hybrid society by Moor's grandfather Camoens is immediately transformed by his wife Belle into a vision of despair:

> he would whisper to her about the dawning of a new world, Belle, a free country, Belle, above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened, above hatred because loving, above vengeance because forgiving, above tribe because unifying, above language because many-tongued, above colour because multi-coloured, above poverty because victorious over it, above ignorance because literate, above stupidity because brilliant, freedom, Belle, the freedom express, soon soon we will stand upon that platform and cheer the coming of the train, and while he told her his dreams she would fall asleep and be visited by spectres of desolation and war. (MLS 51; original emphasis)

The desolation and war of which Belle dreams foreshadow the events at the end of the novel in which bombs tear apart the city of Bombay. Her dream of the failure of her husband's utopian vision is very much the prevailing view of a novel which reintroduces characters from Rushdie's previous novels to a Bombay that has decayed from the city depicted fondly in Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses. Adam Sinai, the son of Saleem Sinai and the hope

for the future at the end of Midnight's Children, has grown up and become, in The Moor's Last Sigh, a shallow and power-hungry adult who will use any means to rise to the top. Zeeny Vakil, one of the few sympathetic characters in The Satanic Verses, also returns. As a continuing advocate of the sort of utopian hybrid world dreamed of by Camoens, however, she is destroyed along with other symbols of harmony between different groups in the explosive conclusion to the "Bombay Central" section of the novel. The Moor's Last Sigh reaffirms the ideal of hybridity on which The Satanic Verses ended positively, but shows that such ideals do not always succeed in the harsh reality of contemporary politics.

Like Saleem in Midnight's Children, Moraes (or Moor), the narrator and main character of The Moor's Last Sigh, perceives connections between himself and his surroundings. Where Saleem sees parallels between his disintegrating body and the fragmenting subcontinent, Moraes connects his accelerated growth with that of Bombay. Both body and city grow too quickly and become unmanageable:

> Like the city itself, Bombay of my joys and sorrows, I mushroomed into a huge urbane sprawl of a fellow, I expanded without time for proper planning, without any pauses to learn from my experiences or my mistakes or my contemporaries, without time for reflection. How then could I have turned out to be anything but a mess? (MLS 161-2)

Bombay, in The Moor's Last Sigh, becomes the metaphor for the potential of hybridity and the dangers of communalist politics bent on exacerbating divisions:

> Bombay was central, had been so from the moment of its creation: the bastard child of a Portuguese-English wedding, and yet the most Indian of Indian cities. In Bombay all Indias met and merged. In Bombay, too, all-India met what-was-not-India, what came across the black water to

> flow into our veins . . . . It was an ocean of stories; we were all its narrators, and everybody talked at once. (MLS 350)

Bombay is here spoken of fondly as the in-between place of hybridity where boundaries are crossed and differences meet and merge. Because it encapsulates all the varied elements of India as well as elements from outside India it is paradoxically the most typical of Indian cities, displaying everything that India has to offer. It is a place of negotiation rather than negation, a place that belongs "to nobody, and to all" and that is characterised by "everyday live-and-let-live miracles thronging its overcrowded streets" (MLS 350-1). By the end of the chapter, however, explosions have torn apart the city and the ideal of hybridity has disintegrated. Moraes' connection to the city continues: "The city I knew was dying. The body I inhabited, ditto" (MLS 374). The politics of absolutism and separatism have destroyed the city as well as Moraes and he is compelled to leave India behind:

> There was nothing holding me to Bombay any more. It was no longer my Bombay, no longer special, no longer the city of mixed-up, mongrel joy. Something had ended (the world?) and what remained, I didn't know. (MLS 376)

Hybridity fails to win the battle against the advocates of separatism and purity in The Moor's Last Sigh, unlike Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, both of which are more positive about the potential unifying power of hybridity.[14] Rushdie has, in The Moor's Last Sigh, made an observation similar to Edward Said's comment in Culture and Imperialism that,

> A new and in my opinion appalling tribalism is fracturing societies, separating peoples, promoting greed, bloody conflict, and uninteresting assertions of minor ethnic or group particularity. Little time is spent not so much in "learning about other cultures"--the phrase has an inane vagueness to it--but in studying the map of interactions, the actual and

> often productive traffic occurring on a day-by-day and even minute-by-minute basis among states, societies, groups, identities. (21)

All of Rushdie's novels show particular attention to that "map of interactions" between societies and individuals, to the "in-between" places (following Bhabha) of society where hybrid interactions take place and newness emerges into the world. The Moor's Last Sigh suggests that such hybrid interactions are not always successful, and that the "appalling tribalism" displayed by many groups is on the rise in the world today. Despite the failure of hybridity in this novel, however, the subversive potential of hybrid forms such as mimicry, masquerade and the grotesque remains. Rushdie has depicted hybridity's collapse into chaos and fragmentation in the case of India, not the failure of hybrid forms to undermine binary oppositions and hierarchies in general.

While colonizers conceived of mimicry as a strategy of containment for their colonized subjects, the inherent menace of mimicry undermined the strategy at the same time. Mimicry also undermines fixed and unitary constructions of the self, reversing the source of the gaze from colonizer to colonized, and undercutting the differences between the two. Mimicry leads not only to hybrid forms of personal identity, but to hybrid national identities that, in the case of Britain, include the colonial elements of its heritage that are often excluded. There exists potential for those hybrid national identities to descend into fragmentary tribalism, but the hybrid ideal remains Rushdie's focus.

Chapter Three

'Without Contraries is no Progression': The Undermining of Binary Oppositions

> Now the sneaking serpent walks
> In mild humility.
> And the just man rages in the wilds
> Where lions roam.
>
> Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;
> Hungry clouds swag on the deep
>
> William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

Rushdie's novels undermine unitary conceptions of identity and nation as part of a larger argument that favours hybridity and fragmentation over unity and homogeneity. As well as developing a unique picture of postcolonial identity that draws on the liberatory potential of the concepts of carnival, the grotesque, masquerade and mimicry, the argument advanced by Rushdie undermines binary oppositions in a more general sense. The opposition of Angel and Devil in The Satanic Verses is representative of all binary oppositions in Rushdie's writing, and the way he treats the opposition in that novel illustrates his process of setting up oppositions in order to subvert them. Keith Booker has observed that Rushdie's

> fiction consistently embraces contradiction, privileging the plural over the singular, the polyphonic over the monologic. One of the clearest ways in which it does so is through the careful construction of dual oppositions . . . only to deconstruct those oppositions by demonstrating that the apparent polar opposites are in fact interchangeable and mutually interdependent. (978)

By setting up oppositions that seem to be absolute and then undercutting the certainty that keeps the two sides of the opposition separate, Rushdie advances his argument for hybridity over purity. Merging the terms of a binary opposition undermines hierarchies and upsets the balance of power because one term is no longer able to isolate itself as superior. The undermining of

hierarchies has obvious implications for conflicts such as that of colonizer against colonized, in which one term oppresses the other.

The opposition between angel and devil in The Satanic Verses is not strictly allegorical of that between colonizer and colonized, but the two oppositions share an imbalance of power resulting from a historical privileging of one term over the other. The angel/devil dichotomy also informs the colonial and postcolonial situation, as Rushdie explores angel and devil as competing models for the postcolonial subject.

In opposing angel and devil, Rushdie draws largely on two earlier pieces of literature. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell by William Blake and The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov are two of the major intertexts in The Satanic Verses.[15] Each of those works challenges traditional representations of the opposition between angel and devil, and both authors appear to be largely of the devil's party in that they reject the characterisation of the devil as a wholly evil creature. Blake's work concludes with the merging of angel and devil, and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell as a whole undercuts the hierarchy in which angels are superior to devils. Blake's constant message is that "Without Contraries is no progression" (Plate 3), indicating that each term fulfils a necessary role in the movement towards some greater good. The merging of Angel and Devil at the conclusion suggests that that greater good may be the undermining of the contraries themselves.

Bulgakov's novel demonstrates a significant stylistic influence on The Satanic Verses with the chapters fictionalizing the last days of Christ clearly inspiring the chapters of Rushdie's novel which deal with Muhammad (or Mahound, as Rushdie controversially calls him) and the rise of Islam. The Russian writer also influences Rushdie's treatment of the Devil, Bulgakov's sympathetic portrayal providing a basis for the depiction of the Devil as a role model for disaffected immigrants in Thatcher's London.[16]

Rushdie often uses the device of paired characters in his novels: characters who appear to be opposites but who are revealed to be more intertwined than they first appear.[17] Midnight's Children has Saleem and Shiva; The Moor's Last Sigh has Uma and Aurora, Camoens and Aires, Belle and Carmen; and Shame has Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder. The latter two are good examples of characters who are more alike than they at first appear. Rushdie sets up an opposition between a hedonistic playboy and a devout Muslim which he subsequently undercuts as both become brutal dictators. Their intertwined natures and destinies are referred to in one of the long digressions by the narrator of the novel who, upon seeing a production of Büchner's Danton's Death, likens the two characters to the great rivals Danton and Robbespierre. The opposition depicted in the play between the two characters replicates that between Harappa and Hyder and that between Saladin and Gibreel in The Satanic Verses:

> This opposition--the epicure against the puritan--is, the play tells us, the true dialectic of history. Forget left-right, capitalism-socialism, black-white. Virtue versus vice, ascetic versus bawd, God against the Devil: that's the game. (Shame 240)

Rushdie goes on, however, to undercut the simplicity of this opposition, observing that Iskander Harappa is not simply a hedonistic Danton and Raza Hyder more than a puritanical Robbespierre. The characters are more complicated than that, each possessing a measure of the other within. Rather than being a hard-and-fast opposition, the conflict between the epicure and the puritan is an internal one. All of us are hybrid beings who experience the conflict between oppositions within ourselves rather than pure beings that display one side of an opposition:

> The people are not only like Robbespierre. They, we, are Danton, too. We are Robeston and Danpierre. The inconsistency doesn't matter; I myself manage to hold large numbers of wholly irreconcilable views

> simultaneously, without the least difficulty. I do not think others are less versatile. (Shame 241-2)

Rushdie echoes this conflation of opposed names into Robeston and Danpierre in the opening pages of The Satanic Verses; there he combines the names of the two main characters into Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha, which serves as an early indicator that the opposition between Gibreel and Saladin is a tenuous one. By constructing such an opposition between one character who is an angel and the other who is a devil, Rushdie satirizes colonial constructions of the 'good native' and the 'bad native', as well as binary oppositions in general. The opposition between Gibreel and Saladin is immediately undercut. Saladin is a traditionally 'good' colonial subject; his surname Chamcha means 'spoon', or sycophant, as Rushdie informs us in the novel. Yet it is he who becomes transformed into a devil, while the irreconcilable Caliban-like figure, Gibreel, is transformed into an angel. The opposition is also undercut in other ways. Good and evil, although seemingly apparent in the outward appearance of the two characters, do not necessarily conform to their moral substance. Saladin's only evil act--inciting Gibreel's jealousy by masquerading as a number of Allie's lovers--occurs once he has returned to his normal appearance and has discarded the outward appearance of evil. Gibreel's angelic appearance also fails to influence his moral substance and he remains prone to violent outbursts. Thus, while Saladin gains the appearance of pure evil and Gibreel that of pure good, each character remains a complex mixture.

The process of setting up binary oppositions in order to undermine them which Rushdie uses so often in The Satanic Verses is a strategy that Linda Hutcheon has identified as a key element of "the postmodern complicitously critical stand of underlining and undermining received notions of the represented subject" (Politics 39). While Hutcheon's concern is mainly feminist, the postcolonial conceptions of the subject and the nation play a large

part in Rushdie's novels. "Underlining and undermining" binary oppositions establishes a viable notion of postcolonial subjectivity: a notion based on hybridity rather than purity, which is the received notion of subjectivity that Rushdie undermines. As Hutcheon observes, however, the installation of an idea that is then challenged implies a reliance on, and a complicity with, that idea, despite the subsequent problematization of it (Poetics 209). Thus while Rushdie sets up binary oppositions in order to subvert them, he relies to a certain degree on those very oppositions to structure both his novel and his view of the world. This is demonstrated by the fact that in The Satanic Verses he ends up establishing a binary opposition of his own between purity and hybridity.

The notions of purity and hybridity illustrate well the reliance on those ideas which are challenged, as Hutcheon points out:

> The decentering of our categories of thought always relies on the centers it contests for its very definition (and often its verbal form). The adjectives may vary: hybrid, heterogeneous, discontinuous, antitotalizing, uncertain . . . . But the power of these new expressions is always paradoxically derived from that which they challenge. (Poetics 59)

The hybridity which Rushdie proposes as a basis for subjectivity in place of the received notion of purity of identity is in fact dependent on that latter notion for its signification. The hybridity of a character such as Saladin gains its meaning in part from its opposition to Gibreel as an angel who becomes obsessed with purity. But Hutcheon sees the reliance of the subversive element on that which it subverts as a necessary feature of postmodernism. Such reliance does not significantly limit the power of the subversion, it merely indicates the process through which such subversion can occur. Instead of concepts and people gaining their identity from their similarity to some centre or model, as in mimicry, which defines the colonized by how similar they are in appearance

and manner to the model of the colonizer, in Rushdie's novels self-definition becomes a matter of varied elements merged into a hybrid whole. Linda Hutcheon reinforces Rushdie's constant observation that culture (and the nation) is not homogeneous, but a heterogeneous combination of varied elements:

> The center no longer completely holds. And, from the decentered perspective, the 'marginal' and . . . the 'ex-centric' (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new significance in light of the implied recognition that our culture is not the homogeneous monolith (that is middle-class, male, heterosexual, white, western) we might have assumed. The concept of alienated otherness (based on binary oppositions that conceal hierarchies) gives way, as I have argued, to that of differences, that is to the assertion, not of centralized sameness, but of decentralized community--another postmodern paradox. (Poetics 12)

By subverting the concealed hierarchies of the binary oppositions, or at least making them apparent, Rushdie paves the way for a conception of otherness that is not part of a binary opposition but is instead, as outlined by Hutcheon, a decentralized community that accepts myriad differences. It can be seen, then, that the strategy of installing and then subverting binary oppositions, while it may be limited in effectiveness, is at least a step on the way toward a hybrid world of change and uncertainty without the prejudices and bigotry depicted by Rushdie in The Satanic Verses.

The History of the Devil

'Say at last--who art thou?'
'That Power I serve
Which wills forever evil
Yet does forever good.'

Goethe, Faust

Rushdie's treatment of the Devil is connected to his overall argument against purity and fundamentalism. By portraying the Devil as a hybrid creature he provides a model for postcolonial subjectivity that avoids fixity and is based instead on the fluid subjectivity of the migrant.

Rushdie establishes the connection between the Devil and the hybrid and fragmented migrant in the epigraph to The Satanic Verses, from Daniel Defoe's The History of the Devil:

> Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste or air, yet this is certainly part of his punishment, that he is . . . without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon. (SV epigraph; original ellipsis)

This description of the Devil which introduces the novel is akin to Rushdie's description of the migrant in many of the essays in his collection Imaginary Homelands. In an essay on John Berger, for example, Rushdie suggests that "to migrate is certainly to lose language and home, to be defined by others, to become invisible or, even worse, a target" (210), and in the title essay he says of his migrant status that "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" (15). The description of the Devil as a migrant who lacks any place that he can call a home establishes him as a sympathetic figure and reinforces the association between the Devil and immigrants from the former British Empire who, like Saladin, migrate to England and are no longer certain where they

belong. Migrants, like Defoe's Devil, belong both everywhere--they have "a kind of empire in the liquid waste or air"--and nowhere--both migrants and the Devil are "without any certain abode".

The fall of Gibreel and Saladin from the exploded aircraft re-enacts Satan's fall from heaven (the name of the aircraft was Bostan, one of the two perfumed gardens of heaven in Muslim theology). The two migrants plunge to earth amidst a collection of paper cups, drinks trolleys and reclining seats in their fall through chaos, and with them,

> 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." (SV 4; original emphasis)

The wreckage of the plane contains both the emotional and intellectual baggage of all the migrants aboard, as well as their physical baggage. This passage not only reinforces the association of the Devil with migrants, but emphasizes the fragmented nature of the migrant, and, by association, the Devil. People who are transplanted from one place to another, or translated from one medium to another, necessarily become fragmented because they leave a part of themselves behind when they move. As Rushdie comments in "Imaginary Homelands",

> The word "translation" comes, etymologically, from the Latin for "bearing across". Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained. (17)

The migrants, like Defoe's Devil, also gain something from their translation into another medium. The Devil becomes the emperor of the liquid waste or air and the migrants also travel through this medium. They may well lose a certainty

about what they call "home" but they also gain new insights and a unique perspective on societies that is at once from within and without. The Devil may appear to be dispossessed after being cast out of heaven, but the realm of air that he comes to rule over is, according to the narrator of The Satanic Verses, a place of great importance. Although forced to wander for eternity without setting foot on solid ground, the migrant Devil can exercise great influence in his chosen medium, for the air is one of the "defining locations" of the century:

> the place of movement and war, the planet-shrinker and power vacuum, most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic,--because when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible. (SV 5)

The element of air is therefore the perfect medium for the migrant because it epitomizes the change and the possibilities, as well as the fragmentation and hybridization, that are all a part of the experience of migration.

Edward Said also makes the point that migration can be a very positive experience that leads to gains as well as losses:

> Once we accept the actual configuration of literary experiences overlapping with one another and interdependent, despite national boundaries and coercively legislated national autonomies, history and geography are transfigured in new maps, in new and far less stable entities, in new types of connections. Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered. (384)

Said raises issues here that connect with Rushdie's portrayal of the Devil as a hybrid migrant figure. He first of all speaks of the interaction of literary experiences, of how they cross over national boundaries and become hybrid

and cosmopolitan. The new types of connections that arise from this intermingling are like those connections made by Defoe's Devil: the migrant Devil is no longer bound to any one nation but ceaselessly wanders between all nations. Said goes on to claim that the figure of the exile has, in the twentieth century, become a far more representative figure than in previous centuries. Defoe's Devil, then, is emblematic not only of the situation of the migrant, but of humanity in general, if what Said claims is correct and the figure of the exile is indeed "something closer to a norm."

Despite Rushdie's focus on the alienated and dispossessed immigrants in Thatcher's England, he does seem to be advancing this claim of universality. He proposes the universality of the migrant's experience only in the sense that the fragmentation and hybridity that becomes so obvious in the process of migration is something that everybody experiences to a greater or lesser extent. Rushdie suggests that the migrant gains something in translation, and that he or she changes the world as well as being changed by it. This suggestion, along with Said's claim that the exile or migrant engages in the process of "charting new territories," allows for the possibility of agency for the postcolonial migrant subject. This possibility of agency redistributes power, indicating that the hierarchies which are part of the binary oppositions which construct society can be changed.

Strange Angels

> Think, now: where would your good be if there were no evil and what would the world look like without shadow?
>
> Mikhail Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita

The Devil may be a hybrid figure in The Satanic Verses, but the other supernatural character--the angel Gibreel--embodies the concepts of unity and

rigid order. Gibreel comes to stand for implacable opposition instead of the concessions and compromises of the hybrid migrant.

Strangely enough for a character who comes to think of himself as an angel, early on in the novel Gibreel renounces God. When all his prayers and entreaties to God fail to heal him from his illness, his belief falters and he comes to a realization that there is no God: "On that day of metamorphosis the illness changed and his recovery began" (SV 30). Paradoxically, however, this rejection of God and his subsequent attempt to prove His nonexistence by stuffing his face with pig meat provides the springboard for his subsequent schizophrenic delusions and his belief that he really is his namesake, the archangel Gibreel.

While living with his lover Allie, Gibreel comes across an annotated copy of Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell. One of the lines he reads out from it is, "I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise" (cited in SV 305). Gibreel fails to recognize the warning and goes on to succumb to his delusions and act the part of the angel. Blake's work leads toward the ultimate goal of a marriage of Angels and Devils, of Heaven and Hell. By seeing themselves as the only wise, however, the Angels foreclose the possibility of dialogue between the two sides of the opposition, and so does Gibreel. He comes to stand for purity and order and sets about to cleanse the shifting, multiform, and ungodly city of London.

Before Gibreel embarks on this task, though, he has a vision of God sitting on Allie's bed. The figure he sees, however, is not quite what he had expected God to look like.[18] Still possessing an element of doubt, Gibreel has the temerity to ask whether the figure is Ooparvala, "The Fellow Upstairs", or Neechayvala, "The Guy from Underneath". The answer given, amidst clouds of divine (or profane) wrath, clearly summarizes the options open to Gibreel and that are faced by various characters throughout the novel:

> Whether We be multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridization of such opposites as Oopar and Neechay, or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here. (SV 319)

Gibreel, of course, takes the second choice and comes to stand for the principles of purity and order in his role of the archangel, just as Saladin has come to embody the principles of hybridization and fragmentation in his transformation into the Devil. A few pages later the ghost of Rekha Merchant torments Gibreel in his new-found fervour and encourages him to doubt the certainty of the opposition which he has embraced on the side of purity: "This notion of separation of functions, light versus dark, evil versus good, may be straightforward enough in Islam," she tells him, "but go back a bit and you see that it's a pretty recent fabrication" (SV 323). Citing Amos and Deutero-Isaiah she points out that good and evil used to be considered attributes of the same being.

Rekha's words have little effect on Gibreel and he continues on his fundamentalist course of action, which he perceives to be "to commence the doing of good, to initiate the great work of rolling back the frontiers of the adversary's dominion" (SV 326). He fully embraces the opposition between angel and devil and, situating himself firmly on the side of good (which he sees as the side of the angels, of course), he embarks on a quest to redeem the city of London which has, he thinks, fallen under the sway of his adversary. The city has, in Gibreel's eyes, taken on the nature of the Devil and become shifting, uncertain and hybrid. He also associates the city with the wearing of masks, another attribute associated with the Devil in the novel:

> The city's street's coiled around him, writhing like serpents. London had grown unstable once again, revealing its true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city that had lost its sense of itself and wallowed, accordingly, in the impotence of its selfish, angry present of masks and

> parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable, unrejected burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future. (SV 320)

The city, then, has become like the grotesque, carnivalesque places described by Bakhtin as well as taking on the hybrid nature of masks and parodies described by Bhabha in his account of mimicry. While this is how it appears to the seemingly deranged eyes of Gibreel, the reader is not allowed to dismiss this vision of the hidden hybrid nature of the city.[19] Unlike the one-sided vision of Hell that the Angel has in Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell which is shown to be a product of his preconceived ideas,[20] Gibreel's vision is no more fantastic than Saladin's encounters in London.

Gibreel proceeds to fall deeper and deeper into his role as the apostle of purity and ends up denouncing all the uncertainties and ambiguities that are associated with hybridity and with the Devil:

> . . . No!--He floated over parkland and cried out, frightening the birds. --No more of these England-induced ambiguities, these Biblical-Satanic confusions! --Clarity, clarity, at all costs clarity! --This Shaitan was no fallen angel. --Forget those son-of-the-morning fictions; this was no good boy gone bad, but pure evil. Truth was, he wasn't an angel at all! --"He was of the djinn, so he transgressed." --Quran 18:50, there it was as plain as the day. --How much more straightforward this version was! How much more practical, down-to-earth, comprehensible!
>
> --Iblis/Shaitan standing for the darkness, Gibreel for the light. --Out with these sentimentalities: joining, locking together, love. Seek and destroy: that was all. (SV 353; original ellipsis and emphasis)

Gibreel has convinced himself that the simplicity and straightforwardness of purity and clarity are aligned with good and that the confusions and complexities of hybridity are evil. Dividing the world up into a binary opposition such as this has the simplicity and clarity that he so desires. On one side of the opposition stands the angel Gibreel, and this side is pure, comprehensible

and good. On the other side there is darkness, Satan (or Shaitan), fragmentation and evil.

Purity vs Hybridity

> I do think that women could make politics irrelevant by a kind of spontaneous cooperative action the like of which we have never seen, which is so far from people's ideas of state structure and viable social structure that it seems to them like total anarchy, and what it really is is very subtle forms of interrelation which do not follow a sort of hierarchical pattern which is fundamentally patriarchal. The opposite to patriarchy is not matriarchy but fraternity, and I think it's women who are going to have to break the spiral of power and find the trick of cooperation.
> Germaine Greer, "Germaine" (prologue to Universal Mother by Sinead O'Connor)

Two other characters in The Satanic Verses similarly aligned with purity and implacable opposition are the hijacker Tavleen and Hind, wife of Abu Simbel, the Grandee of Jahilia. Before detonating the grenades that surround her body, blowing up the plane and killing all the hostages except Saladin and Gibreel, the hijacker Tavleen provides the following rationale for her extreme course of action:

> "When a great idea comes into the world, a great cause, certain crucial questions are asked of it," she murmured. "History asks us: what manner of cause are we? Are we uncompromising, absolute, strong, or will we show ourselves to be timeservers, who compromise, trim and yield?" Her body had provided the answer. (SV 81)

These questions are reiterated throughout the novel and provide a strong undercurrent that contributes to the debate between the absolute, the one, the pure, and, on the other side, the compromisers, the many, the hybrid. That latter side is, as has been shown, represented most clearly in the novel by Saladin, the hybrid migrant who becomes a devil, and his silent reply to Tavleen shows the opposite view: "unbendingness can also be monomania, he wanted to say, it can be tyranny, and also it can be brittle, whereas what is flexible can also be humane, and strong enough to last" (SV 81). This debate plays a large part in the Jahilia sections of the novel as Mahound and the Grandee and his wife Hind vie for political power.

The city of Jahilia is an analogue of London in the contemporary sections of the novel, and as with London we are shown the inconstant, uncertain, provisional nature of something as seemingly solid and permanent as a city:

> The city of Jahilia is built entirely of sand, its structures formed of the desert whence it rises. It is a sight to wonder at: walled, four-gated, the whole of it a miracle worked by its citizens, who have learned the trick of transforming the fine white dune-sand of those forsaken parts, --the very stuff of inconstancy, --the quintessence of unsettlement, shifting, treachery, lack-of-form, --and have turned it, by alchemy, into the fabric of their newly invented permanence. (SV 93-4)

The impermanent city with the appearance of permanence is ruled over by the Grandee Abu Simbel who like his city is inconstant and can be moulded into any variety of shapes. He is the representative of the hybrid, the many who are opposed to the one, and the absolute and pure nature of Mahound frightens him:

> Why do I fear Mahound? For that: one one one, his terrifying singularity. Whereas I am always divided, always two or three or fifteen . . . . <u>What kind of idea am I</u>? I bend. I sway. I calculate the odds, trim my sails, manipulate, survive. (SV 102; original emphasis)

Abu Simbel has asked himself the same question asked by Tavleen and has come down on the other side, taking up the position articulated by Saladin, the position of the hybrid. His wife Hind, however, when she confronts Mahound, shows the same absolute and implacable opposition that is epitomised by Gibreel:

> "I am your equal," she repeats, "and also your opposite . . . . If you are for Allah, I am for Al-Lat. And she doesn't believe your God when he recognizes her. Her opposition to him is implacable, irrevocable, engulfing. The war between us cannot end in truce . . . . Between Allah

> and the Three there can be no peace. I don't want it. I want the fight. To the death; that is the kind of idea I am. What kind are you?" (SV 121)

Hind, then, answers the question in the same way as Tavleen, asserting the inviolable nature of the binary opposition that divides her from Mahound.

Ultimately, the novel comes down on the side of hybridity rather than that of purity; it supports the hybrid many rather than the pure one. Saladin, the representative of hybridity and the Devil to Gibreel's Angel, survives at the conclusion of the novel when his opposite does not.[21] The implacable opposition that Gibreel came to espouse and that was demonstrated by Hind and Tavleen is shown to be negative and destructive. As in Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell, it is the union or cooperation of the opposites, and the consequent dissolution of the opposition, that is shown to be more productive. "Which was the better way?" Saladin asks himself; "Captain Ahab drowned, he reminded himself; it was the trimmer, Ishmael, who survived" (SV 435). It is through union of opposites and compromise between them that newness emerges into the world. Instead of endorsing the sort of either/or logic of Tavleen or Hind the novel approves of a logic of both/and; acceptance of both sides of an opposition is characteristic of The Satanic Verses.[22]

Good/Evil, Angel/Devil

> Good and Evil, set up with such pomp and circumstance, have . . . no moral substance in the persons of the protagonists. They are no more than visual markers, inscribed on the body like special effects--a halo, a pair of horns.
>
> Gayatri Spivak, "Reading The Satanic Verses"

As Gayatri Spivak observes, the opposition between good and evil, as well as the opposition between angel and devil, is elaborately set up in The Satanic Verses. Rushdie goes to great lengths to drive home these associations with

the two main characters, even so far as to have Saladin physically transform into a devilish creature and Gibreel develop the features of an angel. As Spivak also notes, however, appearances are deceptive, and not necessarily a guide to the protagonists' moral behaviour. Keith Booker points out that

> it is impossible to develop any satisfactorily stable understanding of the exact meaning and status of these problematic transformations . . . . In short, it is ultimately impossible to decide who is the "good guy" and who is the "bad guy." Such oppositions simply do not apply in Rushdie's world. (985-6)

As with the question of mimicry and identity, it is wise to be wary of visual markers, and the disjunctions between outward appearance and inward thought and behaviour serve to undermine the certainty of the categories that Rushdie is establishing.

The associations of Gibreel with angels and Saladin with devils are meticulously established in the novel, but they are just as meticulously undercut. Gibreel Farishta means Gabriel Angel, and is the stage name he adopts upon his entry into show business, as a sort of homage to his mother, who used to call him her little angel. The name that he gave up also had religious connotations, strengthening the angelic aspect of his character: "Gibreel Farishta had been born Ismail Najmuddin . . . . Ismail after the child involved in the sacrifice of Ibrahim, and Najmuddin, star of the faith; he'd given up quite a name when he took the angel's" (SV 17; original emphasis). The connotations of his name, however, are undercut by his extreme case of halitosis among other things:

> Gibreel's exhalations, those ochre clouds of sulphur and brimstone, had always given him--when taken together with his pronounced widow's peak and crowblack hair--an air more saturnine than haloed, in spite of his archangelic name. (SV 13)

For almost every explicitly angelic association that is made with Gibreel in the novel there is an equal and opposite association that undercuts it, so when his face is described as being "inextricably mixed up with holiness, perfection, grace: God stuff" it is also described as "The most profane of faces, the most sensual of faces" (SV 17).

Gibreel's angelic associations reach their culmination when he develops a halo upon his arrival in England. It is also at this time that Saladin acquires the horns that are the first sign of his transformation into a devil. Another thing that Saladin has acquired during his fall to earth from the plane is, bizarrely, Gibreel's bad breath. During their fall their natures have somehow become intertwined and their features mix as they mutate:

> for whatever reason, the two men, Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha, condemned to this endless but also ending angelicdevilish fall, did not become aware of the moment at which the processes of their transmutation began. (SV 5)

Their names, in this passage, are mixed together, as are the angelic and devilish associations which they possess. It would seem at this moment that while their respective features become confused, the angelic and devilish associations which they possess are somehow separated and come to reside in the different individuals, Saladin becoming fully satanic and Gibreel becoming fully angelic. Saladin, before the fall, had, like Gibreel, a mixture of outward features that could be considered angelic or devilish. His face, for example, was originally innocent and cherubic, but he strove to transform his facial characteristics into an appearance that was harsh and patrician. The two characters were clearly hybrid. After the fall, however, the ambiguity of their appearance is replaced by apparent certainty: Saladin becomes steadily more satanic in appearance while Gibreel develops his halo and succumbs more and more often to the delusion that he really is the archangel whose

name he shares. Theirs has been a fall towards purity of being rather than a fall from purity.[23]

In an extended passage towards the end of the novel, the narrator launches into a discussion of the different natures of the two main characters:

> Should we even say that these are two fundamentally different types of self? Might we not agree that Gibreel, for all his stage-name and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses;--has wished to remain, to a large degree, continuous--that is, joined to and arising from his past[...] so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as 'true'... whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of selected discontinuities, a willing reinvention; his preferred revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, 'false'? And might we then go on to say that it is this falsity of self that makes possible in Chamcha a worse and deeper falsity--call this 'evil'--and that this is the truth, the door, that was opened in him by his fall?--While Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered 'good' by virtue of wishing to remain, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom an untranslated man. (SV 427)

While this may seem an attractive argument, especially for those who are keen to divide people up into neat categories such as angel/devil, it is ultimately a tendentious one. From the opening of the passage the narrator couches his argument in solicitous and unsure language ("Should we even say", "Might we agree") and makes many qualifications ("for our present purposes", "to follow the logic of our established terminology"). He establishes the opposition between the two only by disregarding certain character traits, thus Gibreel is continuous "in spite of" his metamorphoses and new beginnings and Saladin is only 'false' and 'evil' in inverted commas and "in our chosen idiom." The

narrator has set up a certain point of view which he can argue against, and he goes on to undercut the opposition which he has just established:

> --But, and again but: this sounds, does it not, dangerously like an intentionalist fallacy?--Such distinctions, resting as they must on an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogeneous, non-hybrid, 'pure',--an utterly fantastic notion!--cannot, must not, suffice. No! Let's rather say an even harder thing: that evil may not be as far beneath our surfaces as we like to say it is.--That, in fact, we fall towards it naturally, that is, not against our natures. (SV 427; original emphasis)

The narrator couches this rejoinder to his own argument in far more forceful terms than the previous part; he opens with "But, and again but", reinforcing through repetition and emphasizing his points with exclamation marks. He now claims that willing mimicry such as Saladin's does not in itself constitute evil, because this presupposes a point of view in which to change oneself (one's self) is a bad thing and purity and homogeneity are good. He goes on to assert that evil is not necessarily an absolute force but rather intertwined with good and part of everybody. This view means that we are all hybrid creatures, possessing a mixture of good and evil within us. This latter view also coheres with the overall narrative strategies employed in the novel, which sets up oppositions only to undermine them. Thus, Rushdie demonstrates that the opposition between Saladin and Gibreel and the associated oppositions of good/evil and angel/devil are less pure and more intertwined than they at first appeared to be. The overall thrust of the novel also points more clearly towards hybrid and heterogeneous conceptions of identity and the nation than those based on purity and homogeneity. So while the narrator presents us with argument and counter-argument in this passage, the counter-argument clearly carries more force, both rhetorically and how it fits into the overall argument of the novel. Identities are hybrid and oppositions are unstable are the messages that Rushdie conveys in The Satanic Verses.

Another way in which the novel comes down on the side of the Devil, on the side of hybridity, uncertainty, and the provisional nature of things, is through the identity of the narrator. That identity is itself confused; the narrator seems to be either God or Satan (or both) and is unprepared to divulge for certain which one he is, although he does give some clues:

> 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? (SV 10)

If at first the narrator's identity seems to be aligned with the uncertainty and confusion that I have already associated with the Devil, the last line hints that it is in fact the Devil who is narrating the story, it traditionally being the Devil rather than God who has the best tunes. In a number of interjections the narrator goes on to be critical of the sort of certainty and purity exhibited by Gibreel; critical, in fact of angels in general:

> Question: What is the opposite of faith?
>
> Not disbelief. Too final, certain, closed. Itself a kind of belief.
>
> Doubt.
>
> The human condition, but what of the angelic? Halfway between Allahgod and homosap, did they ever doubt? They did: challenging God's will one day they hid muttering beneath the Throne, daring to ask forbidden things: antiquestions. Is it right that. Could it not be argued. freedom, the old antiquest. He calmed them down, naturally, employing management skills á la god. Flattered them: you will be the instruments of my will on earth, of the salvationdamnation of man, all the usual

> etcetera. And hey presto, end of protest, on with the haloes, back to work. Angels are easily pacified; turn them into instruments and they'll play your harpy tune. Human beings are tougher nuts, can doubt anything, even the evidence of their own eyes. Of behind-their-own eyes. Of what, as they sink heavy-lidded, transpires behind closed peepers . . . angels, they don't have much in the way of a will. To will is to disagree; not to submit; to dissent.
>
> I know; devil talk. Shaitan interrupting Gibreel.
>
> Me? (SV 92-3)

A number of points arise from this passage. First of all, the narrator again hints at his identity as the Devil, as the last few lines indicate. As the Devil, the narrator and the book he narrates are clearly on the side of hybridity and the consequent uncertainty of identity and nation rather than that of purity and certainty. The whole passage is a disquisition on doubt, and the narrator approves the superior powers of doubt possessed by human beings and criticizes the angels' lack of will. The opening lines of the interjection critique the establishment of oppositions separated in the implacable manner of Hind and Mahound. Those two are more alike than might think: alike in their absolute adherence to their deities. As the narrator observes, the opposite of faith is not disbelief but doubt, just as the opposite of certainty is uncertainty. Hind and Mahound are joined in belief and certainty and their opposites are Abu Simbel and Saladin, the apostles of doubt and uncertainty.

The opposition set up by the narrator between faith and doubt is similar to that set up by Rushdie in the novel between purity and hybridity. While Rushdie sets up binary oppositions, such as that between Angel and Devil, in order to undermine them, he is at the same time aligning the Angel with purity and order and the Devil with fragmentation and hybridization, each of which is one side of a new binary opposition. This opposition between purity and hybridity, like the other oppositions in the novel, is also undercut to some

extent. As Kathryn Hume observes, although Rushdie seems to be clearly in favour of hybridity and opposed to purity, he does show some respect for rigidity and purity, for example in his portrayal of Ayesha, the butterfly woman;[24] thus, "In weighing up these two approaches to life, Rushdie does not entirely condemn the rigid, but he does uphold the flexible as valid, and as the outlook called for by our world of immigrations" (219). The conclusion of the novel, while it shows Saladin's hybridity surviving and Gibreel's purity dying, also shows the reconciliation between Saladin and his father. Earlier in his life Saladin had rejected his father partly for the reason that he had become a devout (and rigid and pure) Muslim. The rapprochement achieved between the two can therefore be looked at in a similar way to the union of Angel and Devil in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, as being, if not a marriage of purity and hybridity, then at least the suspension of hostilities between the two sides of the opposition.

"A last sigh for a lost world, a tear for its passing": The Failure of Hybridity in The Moor's Last Sigh

> our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self.
>
> Salman Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh

If hybridity and multiplicity are praised almost without qualification in The Satanic Verses, then Rushdie reconsiders in The Moor's Last Sigh, showing that these concepts have their limits and are not always successful against the forces of fragmentation. Despite failing to overcome the forces of fragmentation, the ideal of hybridity is maintained, especially in the character of Moraes, or Moor. Indeed, the failure of hybridity in the novel allows Rushdie to depict the dire consequences that result from such fragmentation and the consequent need to cling to that hybrid ideal.

Rushdie represents hybridity most strongly in The Moor's Last Sigh through the character Aurora and her paintings. Those paintings are most often of her son, Moraes (Moor), who represents the Moorish Sultan Boabdil, and his seaside palace:

> "Call it Mooristan," Aurora told me, "This seaside, this hill, with the fort on top. Water-gardens and hanging gardens, watchtowers and towers of silence too. Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another, and washofy away. Place where an air-man can drowno in water, or else grow gills; where a water-creature can get drunk, but also chokeofy, on air. One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo'ing into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it Palimpstine. And above it all, in the palace, you." (MLS 226)

This place of hybrid interaction that Aurora depicts in her paintings is Bhabha's "in-between" place where innovative collaborations can occur between diverse groups of people. It is also a carnivalesque, grotesque place that continually transforms, metamorphosing into something else, something new and vibrant. When one universe bumps into another interaction must take place, and in Aurora's vision this interaction is usually positive. Mooristan stands for Bombay, which Rushdie describes in the novel as being the one place in India where every aspect of that hugely diverse country comes together. Aurora makes political statements with her art that closely match those made by Zeeny Vakil in her book about art in The Satanic Verses. Aurora's paintings evoke the images of hybridity that she longs to see reflected in India itself:

> In a way these were polemical pictures, in a way they were an attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation; she was using Arab Spain to re-imagine India, and this land-sea-scape in which the land could be fluid and the sea stone-dry was her metaphor --idealised? sentimental? probably--of the present, and the future, that she hoped would evolve. (MLS 227)

In The Satanic Verses, Zeeny Vakil is introduced as

> an art critic whose book on the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straitjacket which she sought to replace by an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest?--had created a predictable stink, especially because of its title. She had called it The Only Good Indian. "Meaning, is a dead," she told Chamcha when she gave him a copy. "Why should there be a good, right way of being a wog? That's Hindu fundamentalism. Actually, we're all bad Indians. Some worse than others. (SV 52)

The reference to Hindu fundamentalism reveals the main enemy to the sort of ideal hybrid world imagined by both Zeeny and Aurora. The fundamentalist Hindu politics of Raman Fielding ultimately destroy their visions of Bombay as the last bastion of a positive and progressive multiculturalism. Fundamentalist politics leave no room for interaction between different groups or for merging and hybrid forms emerging between different groups. Purity must be maintained, and hybridity must be prevented. The strongest image of hybridity in Aurora's paintings is Moor himself, as Boabdil. He is surrounded by positive images of multiculturalism, and he epitomizes hybridity, transformation, and the emergence of new and vivid forms:

> Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains crowded into her paint-Boabdil's fancy-dress balls, and the Sultan himself was represented less and less naturalistically, appearing more and more often as a masked, particoloured harlequin, a patchwork quilt of a man; or, as his old skin dropped from him chrysalis-fashion, standing revealed as glorious butterfly, whose wings were a miraculous composite of all the colours of the world. (MLS 227)

Moor has come to represent all of the varied emblems for hybridity and transformation in Rushdie's novels. He is masked, evoking the masquerade elements in the novels, as well as the mimicry of characters such as Saladin in The Satanic Verses. He is a particoloured harlequin, a carnivalesque figure whose patchwork quilt nature symbolizes the hybrid union of varied elements. He epitomizes the process of transformation and shifting identities as he metamorphoses into a butterfly whose wings bring together the miscellaneous colours of the world.

The dream of Mooristan, of Palimpstine, the hope and "the dream-like wonder of the waking world" (MLS 174), start to fade, however, as the political situation changes in India, first with the totalitarian nature of the Emergency, and later with the continued rise of Raman Fielding and Hindu fundamentalism. The hybrid union of heterogeneous elements epitomised by Moor starts to fall apart:

> I had begun to come unstuck. We all had. After the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews. (MLS 235)

The menace of particularity has broken into the hybrid world of Moor and his family. They can no longer co-exist with the others in the city, they must be identified along religious lines and be included or excluded on that basis. The union of miscellaneous elements has fragmented into its constituent parts and people have started to believe the myth of purity. The fragmentation around them is transformed by Aurora into art:

> Ina died, and after her funeral Aurora came home and painted a Moor painting in which the line between land and sea had ceased to be a permeable frontier. Now she painted it as a harshly-delineated zig-zag crack, into which the land was pouring along with the ocean. (MLS 235)

The rise of fundamentalism in India has led to sectarianism and the destruction of the fluid boundaries between groups hoped for by Aurora. The boundaries

between various groups are now characterized by a "harshly-delineated zig-zag crack" and this strengthening of boundaries leads ultimately to destruction.

As well as the destruction of the hybrid world depicted in Aurora's paintings, we also see the annihilation of the ideal of hybrid identity, as represented by Moor as the Sultan Boabdil. Moor's destruction is precipitated by Uma Sarasvati, a mysterious woman who appears able to change her identity at will. The members of Moor's family meet her at the Mahalaxmi Weekend Constitutional, a day when all the richest families in Bombay meet at the racecourse. Uma proves to be the archetype of the plural person: "All of us who walked with Uma Sarasvati around Mahalaxmi racecourse that morning came away with a different view of her" (MLS 242). She is able to alter her identity to suit whoever she is with.

Uma sets herself up in implacable opposition to Aurora in the battle for Moor's affection. Moor is the hybrid figure caught in the middle, trying to mediate between the two. Even hybridity has become split, between Aurora and Uma, opposite extremes in the spectrum of hybridity. Moor proves unable to hold them together, however, and the failure of hybridity in the face of purity is exacerbated by the split within. Aurora depicts the disintegration of the hybrid ideal in a painting which has her as Ayxa, all in black, and Uma as Chimène, all in white. Moor, of course, remains a mixture:

> He was black and white. He was the living proof of the possibility of the union of opposites. But Ayxa the Black pulled one way, and Chimène the White, the other. They began to tear him in half. Black diamonds, white diamonds fell from the gash, like teardrops. (MLS 259)

Uma turns out to be manipulative and conniving, bent on the destruction of Moor and his family. Because she epitomises plurality and shifting multiple selves, when Moor discovers her intentions he views this as a defeat for hybridity. He and Aurora had an idealised view of the nature of hybridity; for

them, it could never be used towards evil ends. Now they are proved to be wrong, however:

> It did not fail to occur to me--indeed , for a time it occupied most of my waking thoughts--that what had happened was, in a way, a defeat for the pluralist philosophy on which we had been raised. For in the matter of Uma Sarasvati it had been the pluralist Uma, with her multiple selves, her highly inventive commitment to the infinite malleability of the real, her modernistically provisional sense of truth, who had turned out to be the bad egg; and Aurora had fried her--Aurora, that lifelong advocate of the many against the one, had with Minto's help discovered some fundamental verities, and had therefore been in the right. The story of my love-life thus became a bitter parable, one whose ironies Raman Fielding would have relished, for in it the polarity between good and evil was reversed. (MLS 272)

That reversal of the polarity between good and evil, between hybridity and purity, finally undercuts the opposition established by Rushdie in The Satanic Verses. Hybridity is no longer always good and purity always evil. Moor has discovered that sometimes "fundamental verities" can triumph over multiplicity and uncertainty. Uma represents all of the negative aspects of hybridity in the same way that Moor represents the positive. Whereas Moor (and Saladin) show the potential for masks and the grotesque and the carnivalesque to bring about new hybrid conceptions of identity and nation that accept difference and revel in multiplicity, Uma shows the potential for masks to deceive, the potential for the manipulation of reality to destroy people, the potential for the provisionality of truth to be used for self-gain and fragmentation.

In The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie reaffirms the threat of the absolute: absolute hybridity, exemplified by Uma and her absolute opposition to Aurora, is just as dangerous as absolute purity. Moor, the narrator and the most sympathetic character in the novel, occupies the in-between space of hybridity

from which newness emerges. That is the same space occupied by Saladin at the conclusion of The Satanic Verses, although he had to first escape from the extremes of hybridity shown, in the later novel, by Uma. He too rejected his past selves, living only for the moment, and achieves fulfilment only once he reclaims his past selves and comes to accept and value his past and his heritage.

Both The Satanic Verses and The Moor's Last Sigh demonstrate that absolute oppositions are negative and destructive, the former through the opposition of devil and angel and the latter through Uma and Aurora. They promote the ideal of hybridity as a productive alternative to the fragmentation and conflict that arises from ideals of purity. The latter novel acknowledges that fundamentalist politicians such as Raman Fielding can take limited, local identities to extremes in the same way that colonizers took universal ideas to extremes. Far from undermining the ideal of hybridity, the victory of the forces of fragmentation in The Moor's Last Sigh reaffirms that ideal, showing the disastrous consequences of seeking purity instead.

Conclusion

Despite the discovery of the 'dark side' of hybridity in The Moor's Last Sigh, the concept remains, in Rushdie's oeuvre, the vital way in which newness will enter the world. Hybridity is epitomized by the situation of the migrant, who, as he or she crosses boundaries, is translated from one medium into another. The migrant mixes and merges, leading to Bhabha's "new and innovative sites of collaboration." Rushdie makes the point that multiplicity and hybridity already exist in most countries, and new migrant arrivals merely add to that heterogeneity. Attempts to homogenize the history of the nation can only succeed if they ignore large chunks of that history.

The hybrid model of identity proposed by Rushdie, rather than detracting from the possibility of postcolonial agency as some suggest, actually adds to it. In order to counteract the constantly shifting nature of oppression it is necessary to construct new identities on a regular basis. Hybrid identities are also crucial in the national sense. If boundaries between societal groups and nations are permeable and shifting, then the fragmentation and Balkanization that results from policies such as those held by Raman Fielding can be avoided. Such hybridity can also aid in breaking free of stereotypes which fix an unchanging essence onto a group of people. Hybrid identities allow for diversity and change and avoid the rigidity and conflict that result from stereotypes.

The "in-between" spaces of hybridity, where negotiation, rather than negation, can occur, are spaces where binary oppositions are undercut and new hybrid forms emerge. Those hybrid forms are what Rushdie strives for in his fiction, and they emerge through his use of the carnivalesque, grotesque realism, masquerade, mimicry and through his undermining of binary oppositions.

Bakhtin's carnivalesque forms, with their grotesque, continually evolving bodies, and their multiple masks embody Rushdie's transformative and hybrid ideals. The carnivalesque rituals of inversion shown in The Satanic Verses, while precipitating change and renewal, ultimately reaffirm the binary opposition between the official and nonofficial worlds. Simple inversions do not provide the negotiation necessary for new and hybrid forms to emerge.

The grotesque Saladin in The Satanic Verses, and the equally grotesque Saleem and Moraes in Midnight's Children and The Moor's Last Sigh, show the ability of hybrid forms to undermine the notions of fixity and purity. The grotesque body has an uncertain relation to time and is continually in process. The use of the grotesque as a basis for racist images demonstrates the ambivalence of the concept. Despite being associated with process and change, racists use the images to fix stereotypes onto groups they perceive as different. Those very racist stereotypes have a tendency to rebound, however, becoming threatening to the racists.

The sterile and destructive notions of fixity and purity are also undermined by the constantly changing masks and identities of the actors Gibreel and Saladin. Masquerade introduces a radical notion of difference that manifests itself not between self and other, but within the self, revealing the presence of more than one self in the same body. Masquerade can be used to construct alternative identities which counteract racist stereotypes. Saladin in particular displays the potential for a multiple and hybrid notion of identity to counter the ever shifting nature of oppression, especially once he comes to terms with the Indian selves that he had previously rejected.

Rushdie also uses the self-undermining discourse of mimicry to show the possibilities of resistance that emerge from the hybrid identity of the mimic. The discourse of mimicry also contributes to the idea of the hybrid nation, which Rushdie shows to be the way forward in an increasingly fragmented world. Although intended by colonizers to be a strategy of containment for the

colonized subject, as with the grotesque racist stereotypes the menace of mimicry emerges. The colonizer's superior position in the hierarchy becomes threatened by the hybrid union of colonizer and colonized that is the mimic. Rushdie literalizes the menace of mimicry in The Satanic Verses through the transformation of Saladin into the grotesque creature of racist fantasies and fears. Despite the lack of agency for the colonized subject in the discourse of mimicry, it still undermines its own oppressive nature, subverting once more the notion of a fixed identity that is not able to escape oppression. Gibreel's mimicry in the "Rosa Diamond" section of The Satanic Verses helps expose the "cracks and absences" in Rosa's continuist national history. His mimicry of her husband brings home the history that happened overseas, the colonial history so often rejected and glossed over in accounts such as Rosa's. By bringing home that history he contributes to the sense of the heterogeneous and hybrid nation.

The undermining of binary oppositions in Rushdie's novels looks forward to that liminal space envisaged by Bhabha where differences are not fetishized and reified but can interact and collaborate. Rushdie's practice of subverting the concealed hierarchies of binary oppositions enables a conception of otherness as part of a decentralized community that accepts difference. Although somewhat limited in effectiveness, the strategy of installing and then subverting binary oppositions is a step towards the hybrid world of multiplicity and positive interaction. Although fragmentation may triumph at the conclusion of The Moor's Last Sigh, hybridity remains the sole hope for unity, despite and because of multicultural differences.

Notes:

[1]The fatwa decreeing Rushdie's death for writing The Satanic Verses plays no part in this thesis. It has been covered extensively in books such as The Rushdie File, edited by Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland. I have attempted to contribute to the rectification of the imbalance pointed out by Edward Said:

> In the reams of print about Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses, only a tiny proportion discussed the book itself; those who opposed it and recommended its burning and its author's death refused to read it, while those who supported his freedom to write left it self-righteously at that. (397)

[2]Also cited by Bhabha ("Introduction" 6).

[3]In a similar vein, Diane Price Herndl writes, "Bakhtin's carnival, however much it exposed the arbitrariness of the social relations of power, remained an event allowed (if not sanctioned) by institutional authority, which served that institution by providing an outlet for the oppressed to prevent any real insurrection. It was an artificial subversion of hierarchies which prevented any organized question of them" (19-20).

[4]Rushdie observes the connection between the carnivalesque practice of masquerade and political revolution in The Jaguar Smile when he sees the masks covering the walls of the Nicaraguan Vice-President, the novelist Sergio Ramírez:

> During the insurrection, Sandinista guerillas often went into action wearing masks of pink mesh with simple faces painted on them. These masks, too, originated in folk-dance. One night I went to see a ballet based on the country's popular dances, and saw that one of the ballerinas was wearing a pink mask. The mask's associations with the revolution had grown so strong that it transformed her, in my eyes at least, into something wondrously strange: not a masked dancer, but a guerrilla in a tutu. (25-6)

The popular dance is another carnivalesque practice that combines with the mask to form an image of revolution in Rushdie's mind.

[5]See, for example, John Solomos, Race and Racism in Britain and Paul Gilroy, There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack on the policies of the Conservative government towards immigrants from the so-called 'new commonwealth' (India, the Caribbean, Africa) and Pakistan.

[6]Peter Mendes has given the following account of the origins of the masque: "Masque originated in the medieval pre-Lenten revels, or carnival. Carne vale = farewell to the flesh, the last spree before the abstinence of Lent; it was a ritual dance which usually mimed the battle between self-restraint (Lent) and sensual release as symbolized by the Lord of Misrule" (88). In this part of The Satanic Verses we also see this battle between self-restraint, symbolized by Mahound, and sensual release, of which the prostitutes are representative. The battle also revolves around economic issues: Mahound is described as a "former businessman" and the prostitutes perform their jobs due to an economic imperative.

[7]Such a character has been alluded to often by the original of the wax figure that is

melted in Club Hot Wax. For example, referring to projections that there would be four million people from the 'new commonwealth' or Pakistan living in Britain by the turn of the century, Margaret Thatcher was reported in The Guardian, 31 January, 1978, as saying

> That is an awful lot, and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much around the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in. (quoted in Solomos 187)

[8]Stuart Hall has made a similar point to the one that Rushdie is making here, noting that

> the term 'black' was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities. In this moment, politically speaking, 'The Black experience', as a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural difference between the different communities, became 'hegemonic' over other ethnic/racial identities--though the latter did not, of course, disappear. (252)

[9]In The Jaguar Smile, Rushdie observes that "[t]he true purpose of masks, as any actor will tell you, is not concealment, but transformation. A culture of masks is one that understands a good deal about the processes of metamorphosis" (26). The transformation he writes of is the same as Bakhtin's notion of rebirth: the new subsuming the old.

[10]Zeeny, Saladin's Indian lover, tells him the following:

> They pay you to imitate them, as long as they don't have to look at you. Your voice becomes famous but they hide your face. Got any ideas why? Warts on your nose, cross-eyes, what? Anything come to mind, baby? You goddam lettuce brain, I swear. (SV 60)

[11]In The Moor's Last Sigh, Moor has a dream very similar to Saladin's:

> When I was young I used to dream . . . of peeling off my skin plaintain-fashion, of going forth naked into the world, like an anatomy illustration from Encyclopaedia Britannica, all ganglions, ligaments, nervous pathways and veins, set free from the otherwise inescapable jails of colour, race and clan. (MLS 136)

Like Saladin he sees skin as a prison that confines him and identifies him in terms of race. Later he has another version of the dream:

> But in this version of the dream, my peeling skin took with it all elements of my personality. I was becoming nobody, nothing; or, rather, I was becoming what had been made of me. (MLS 288)

Again, the message is that although it may seem desirable to discard elements of one's make-up, they are an integral part of one's being.

[12]The "English" citizen that Saladin tries to imitate is rather narrowly defined by him as white, middle class, educated, heterosexual, and male. It is those features that Saladin attempts to mimic and largely succeeds in mimicking. Rushdie tries to widen such a definition of "English" in the novel by demonstrating that it includes a wide variety of

different people.

[13]In "The line and light" Lacan writes: "The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled--exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare" (cited in Bhabha, "Mimicry" 85).

[14]Purity, as Rushdie demonstrates, is a spurious and unattainable goal. The victory of "purity" in The Moor's Last Sigh is really the victory of fragmentation and of hatred founded on unreachable ideals of purity.

[15]Rushdie has stated that "the two books that were most influential on the shape this novel took do not include the Qur'an. One was William Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the classic meditation on the interpenetration of good and evil; the other The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov, the great Russian lyrical and comical novel in which the Devil descends upon Moscow and wreaks havoc upon the corrupt, materialist, decadent inhabitants and turns out, by the end, not to be such a bad chap after all" ("In Good Faith" 403). This claim is backed up by the large number of parallels between The Satanic Verses and Blake's and Bulgakov's works. Rushdie has, of course, been compared to a wide variety of writers. The influence of Günter Grass and Lawrence Sterne on Midnight's Children has been widely cited, but he has been included in a number of groups. Peter Briggs, for example, compares Rushdie to Kurt Vonnegut, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon, John Fowles, Jorge Luis Borges and Doris Lessing (175). Timothy Brennan links Rushdie with writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Isabel Allende, Carlos Fuentes and Bharati Mukherjee (35). The aim of this thesis is not to locate Rushdie in any map of literary influences or common purposes. The influence of Blake and Bulgakov on The Satanic Verses is cited merely to draw out the common themes that contribute to the argument of this thesis.

[16]Neil Cornwell has noted many of the parallels between The Satanic Verses and The Master and Margarita:

> Both Bulgakov and Rushdie . . . engage in the unleashing of diabolical figures on a modern city, with inflammatory results. Most obviously, though, Rushdie has followed Bulgakov's lead in the fictionalisation--perhaps realistic, perhaps parodic, but in both cases alternative, unorthodox, heretical--of the origins of one of the world's major religions. This involves too, in both The Master and Margarita and The Satanic Verses, an egrossment with 'messengers' of or from other worlds, changes in the 'word' (or the Word) and in the historical record, and the role of scribes and poets, both in these processes and with regard to the relationship of the writer to society or ruler, tyrant or patron. (193)

[17]Keith Booker makes this point in "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie" (978), Harveen Sachdeva Mann, in "'Being Borne Across': Translation and Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses," also notes "the pairs of contrastive characters" (291) in Rushdie's novels, and Kathryn Hume, in "Taking a Stand While Lacking a Center: Rushdie's Postmodern Politics", observes that the dualisms in Rushdie's major characters often turn out to be internal (210).

[18]The description in fact bears a striking resemblance to the portrait of Rushdie on the

dust jacket of the novel.

[19]The matter of ontological uncertainty in The Satanic Verses would warrant a thesis in itself. Although some commentators on the novel have considered Gibreel's visions to be purely in his mind--Ahmad Sadri, for example, refers to "Gibreel's private psychosis" (175)--Rushdie himself is less certain on the matter. When Gibreel "tropicalizes" London, for instance, although this appears to be merely a delusion, the unusually warm temperatures that ensue are experienced by a number of other characters in the novel. This uncertainty means that the reader cannot easily dismiss Gibreel's visions as part of his illness. Vijay Lakshmi has even claimed that Saladin's transformation into a goatlike creature is a product of his imagination: "His transformation into a goaty, horned, and hoofy demon in the sanitorium is not to be taken as a physical transformation but as a psychological trauma" (154). This transformation is witnessed by a large number of the characters in the novel, however, seemingly implying that it has an 'objective' reality. The fact that such confusion over reality exists in the novel is a warning to tread carefully when considering such matters.

[20]The narrator has a completely different vision of Hell once the angel has departed and upon their reunion informs the angel that "All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics: for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper" (Plate 19).

[21]Kathryn Hume makes the same observation in her analysis of the novel. Hume characterises the differences between Gibreel and Saladin as rigidity opposing flexibility, and sees the conclusion as being, therefore, Rushdie's endorsement of the latter over the former (219).

[22]Linda Hutcheon sees the logic of both/and as a characteristic of postmodern writing, and it is significant that Rushdie's Midnight's Children is one of her major examples of a postmodern novel (Poetics 49).

[23]Because purity is defined by Rushdie as a negative concept, the fall of Saladin and Gibreel resembles the fall of Adam and Eve in that they are falling from a positive state to a negative one, from hybridity to purity.

[24]Hume notes that "Rushdie may not like [Ayesha's] rigidity any more than he likes that of Mahound, but he does not treat it or them as evil" (217).

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