Filmi Fictions

Cinematic Strategies in Salman Rushdie's Novels

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Abstract

This thesis examines Rushdie's use of visual storytelling that is derived from Hindi cinema to elaborate his aesthetic, political and philosophical arguments in his fiction.

Chapter 1 considers Rushdie's engagement with urban spaces, in particular his affiliation with Bombay, the postcolonial aesthetic of Rushdie's novels, and the aesthetic and philosophical relationship between Rushdie's fiction and Hindi cinema. These theoretical delineations are then further investigated in subsequent chapters in a detailed analysis of Rushdie's major novels to reveal the intricate link between Rushdie's deployment of Hindi cinema in his highly visual narratives, which make recourse to a film vocabulary that is borrowed from the cinematic conventions of Bollywood. Rushdie uses Hindi cinema intertextually and this is analysed in relation to *Shree 420* (1955) and *The Satanic Verses*, *Mother India* (1957) and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) and *Shalimar the Clown*. Furthermore, this thesis considers Rushdie's engagement with the postcolonial nation state, the former centre of Empire and a globalising world and argues that Rushdie's theory of cultural hybridity, which is reflected in his own fusion of cinematic visual storytelling and novelistic conventions, is directly connected to his deployment of the conventions of Hindi cinema. This thesis considers Rushdie's method of writing with its emphasis on the epic, the mythic, the tragic and the comic, brought together in a storyline narrated in cinematic parameters and delineates the narrative arc from *Midnight's Children* to *Shalimar the Clown*, which is read as a progressive engagement with and argument about the role, place and space of the individual in relation to a fast-changing social, economic and political space.

This thesis thus argues that Hindi cinema's syncretism becomes an aesthetic marker in Rushdie's fiction that allows for the elaboration of an argument about the multiplicity of Indian identity both on the subcontinent and abroad, and details how Rushdie instrumentalises Bollywood in his narratives to express an aesthetics of hybridity and a particular conceptualisation of culture with which 'India' has become identified in a global context.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Creating 'Imaginary Homelands'

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the painter Vasco Miranda sees himself and Aurora Zogoiby as 'exponents of an "Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art" in which the unifying principle was "Technicolor-Story-Line"' (Rushdie 1996b, 148-149). Vasco's claim reads like an apt description of Salman Rushdie's own method of writing with its emphasis on the epic, the mythic, the tragic and the comic brought together in a high-octane storyline narrated in cinematic parameters. This thesis will examine this process. As the title of the thesis suggests, my analysis will focus on the *filmi* style of Rushdie's fiction that is borrowed directly from the commercial Hindi film and its visual culture.[1] As Rachel Dwyer notes, this *filmi* style is reliant on film sets, location and costumes and the way in which they are depicted by a particular style of cinematography (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 8). Hindi cinema's reach is all pervasive and films permeate India's public culture through advertising, film music and promotional material. Together they form part of what Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel term the visual culture of the Hindi film. It will be my argument that Rushdie draws directly on this visual culture for his narratives of and arguments about postcolonial independent India and its position in a globalising world. Thus Vasco Miranda's claim is a succinct description of the visual culture and aesthetic that my analysis is concerned with.

Rushdie uses Hindi cinema intertextually as reference points to further accentuate and highlight his own philosophical and political arguments. In this respect, the *filmi* style of Bombay cinema is adapted by Rushdie to serve as a visual narrative strategy in his narration of independence movements and nationalism on the Indian subcontinent, the role of women in relation to emergent nationalism and discourses on nationhood, trans-global migrancy, hybridity, globalisation and terrorism.

This chapter will discuss more broadly the aesthetic conventions and concepts that this thesis is concerned with by considering Rushdie's fiction in relation to postcolonial discourse analysis and Hindi cinema. I will also briefly delineate the importance of the city, in particular Bombay, for the imaginary world of Rushdie's fiction and Hindi cinema. By analysing the visual aesthetics from which Rushdie's fiction and the Bombay film draw, this chapter will highlight the sites of engagement of Rushdie's hard-hitting critique of the postcolonial nation state and a globalising world

and how it is achieved. Rushdie's fiction and the Bombay film circulate globally and impact in complex ways on how people imagine national identity and communal belonging (Shohat/Stam 2003, 1). Through global circulation the process of imagining community has become deterritorialised and my argument in this thesis will trace how such borders have been subsumed. In this respect, this thesis crosses disciplinary boundaries between literary, postcolonial and film studies by linking debates about colonialism, postcolonialism and globalisation in a discussion of Rushdie's engagement with Hindi cinema in relation to his fictional productions.

Hindi Cinema and Rushdie's fiction: an aesthetic of the city?

Rushdie's fiction grows out of a specific location – Bombay. The 1950s and 1960s, when Rushdie grew up there, were a particularly exciting time for the city. It is considered by many as Bombay's 'Golden Age', spurred by the optimism of the first decade of Indian Independence.[2] In *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in particular Rushdie celebrates this period. For Rushdie, Bombay during this period is an emblem of the 'All-India' idea, a cosmopolitan city that serves as a cultural interstice. The urge to write about his childhood in Bombay was for Rushdie the major driving force behind *Midnight's Children* to enable him, now living in Britain, to retrieve home through writing. In his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' he states: 'the past is home albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time' (Rushdie 1992a, 9). Rushdie's project is related to memory and remembering, engaged with retrieving and reclaiming that which is lost. This process of recuperation takes place solely in his imagination, triggered by photographs confined to family photo albums. Through his imagination and through writing Rushdie wants to go beyond the faded greys of the old photographs: 'I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself, not in faded greys of old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor' (Rushdie 1992a, 9-10). The gesture towards cinema in his imagining of the urban environment is immediately evident here and I will argue in subsequent chapters that cinema becomes the crucial marker with which Rushdie articulates the cityscape.

For Rushdie, the Bombay film is an obvious choice of source material, considering that, like his novels, they are also part of the urban culture of modern India:

> while it's undeniable that Indian urban culture, Bombay above all, is full of fakery and gaudiness and superficiality and failed imaginations, it is also a culture of high vitality, linguistic verve, and a kind of metropolitan excitement

> that European cities have for the most part forgotten. And this is true of that over-painted courtesan Bombay, as it is of Ray's Calcutta.
>
> (Rushdie 1992a, 110)

Rushdie's imagining of Bombay springs from the tension between the gaudiness and superficiality you find in the city and its vitality and verve which is what generates Rushdie's urge to retrieve the city 'in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor' (Rushdie 1992a, 9-10). I thus argue that this tension allows for a textured image of the city to emerge through the orchestration of plots along the principles of the Bombay film's syncretism, a technique particularly suited to the representation of the urban environment.[3]

Rushdie's preoccupation with Bombay in his fiction marks him out as an author primarily concerned with the metropolis and the urban centres, rather than rural India, setting himself apart from a previous generation of Indian authors writing in English such as Mulk Raj Anand or Raja Rao.[4] Rushdie had to find a way of expressing an urban sensibility, how to translate the bustling, teeming, noisy metropolis, its argot and its culture not only into fiction, but also into English and I argue that in this instance Hindi cinema becomes an important tool for Rushdie's imagining of the city. Rushdie is less concerned with present-day Bombay, but a city recuperated from his memories, viewed in shards of broken mirrors (Rushdie 1992a, 11). Thus it is useful to think about the presentation of urban spaces in Rushdie's fiction in filmic parameters. These spaces serve as a setting and represent a heightened version of reality, a backdrop against which his narrative unfolds. In *The Satanic Verses* and *Fury*, London and New York, too, read more like carbon cut-outs on a movie set. London in particular becomes ephemeral, a city of the mind that lives in the imagination as the capital of *vilayet*[5], the Emerald city that in reality is a harsh, unyielding, challenging, hostile and confrontational space. Rushdie's Bombay confronts his readers with a snapshot of the city, a stylised version which powerfully encapsulates the spirit of the city.[6] In this respect I argue that Rushdie engages with the city in fragments, focusing exclusively on Bombay's upper middle class and its experience of the city during a narrow period in time.

For Rushdie, many metropolitan centres coexist, yet Bombay remains a focal point. While his writing remains loosely connected to Bombay, it has become increasingly off-centred. For Rushdie, the metropolis becomes a filter and a lens through which different, often conflicting realities may be viewed. Bombay becomes an epitome of modernity in the context of India, which is again illustrated by Rushdie's

deployment of the Bombay film, its styles and conventions in his fiction. Bombay cinema and Rushdie's writing embrace quintessential local forms of storytelling and transform them through the prism of the metropolis. This relates directly to Rushdie's idea that the stories of anywhere are also the stories of everywhere else. Rushdie states: 'I already knew that because Bombay, where I grew up, was a city in which the West was totally mixed up with the East' (Rushdie/Livings 2005, 110). Although this might seem like a cliché, it is a point Rushdie stresses repeatedly. Increasing mobility and social diversity through the process of migration creates in any metropolis a new sense of dynamism, which clearly influences social and cultural developments and innovations.[7] Rushdie traces this process in his writing of and engagement with metropolitan centres. Furthermore he translates this into his own method of how to write about these urban locations.

The Bombay film creates a fantasy of the city and Rushdie often transposes that fantasy onto his imagining of Bombay, London and New York which is stylised and moulded to fit in with his often surreal characters. Rushdie confronts his readers with differing versions of the city. While the city is a site of modernity and progress, which facilitates the process of identity formation and the discovery of selfhood, it also contains a dark other. Salahuddin Chamchawala's relationship with the city of London in *The Satanic Verses* is a clear example of this as he descends from official, respectable London into the shady world of the illegal immigrant hiding in bed-sits in South London. Moraes Zogoiby's experience of Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh* also echoes this. In both protagonists' journeys, the discovery of community, for Salahuddin the discovery of the Bangladeshi immigrant community in Brickhall, for Moraes the discovery of Mainduck's gang in the city's slum, provides the impetus for their transformation.

The representation of the urban environment, the city, the slum and the village is also an important feature of Hindi cinema. Bombay, where the Hindi film industry is based, also features as the embodiment of the urban environment, partly due to the fact that it is India's economic capital and is seen as an epitome of modernity.[8] Filmic representations of Bombay focus on the city's wealth – its houses, streets, hotels and nightclubs as well as its public buildings (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 65). According to Dwyer the distinction between city and village rests on the separation between a timeless village and the city as an embodiment of modernity and progress (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 63). For instance, Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) initially depicts a timeless,

romanticised version of the village and its community, before detailing the problems that beset the villagers, falling victim to usurious moneylenders, caught in a vicious cycle as victims of natural disasters. Nehruvian modernity is presented in this instance as the solution to some of the ills that beset the villagers, which is explicated in the opening and closing shots of the film with the inauguration of the village's new irrigation system (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 64). The idea of village-as-community also features in the films of Raj Kapoor. According to Dwyer, he presents it as 'a pure, unsullied India, exemplified by the village women whom he portrays in his films as innocent and pure.' (Dwyer/Patel, 2002, 64)

The city by contrast is set up as an inhumane place of corruption, although the city is also glamorised as a place of urban sophistication and a space of opportunity. In *Shree 420* (1955), for instance, Raj who has become a fraudster enters the glamorous jet-set world. He is forewarned of the city's corruption on the street sign that points into the direction of Bombay – Bombay 420, the number of the paragraph in the Indian Penal Code associated with small-scale fraud. In this respect, the village becomes a trope for a lost paradise, which finds its way into representations of the slum. For Ashis Nandy, the slum presents the village community within the urban environment. In these cultural representations, Nandy argues, the slum serves as an invocation of a remembered village (Nandy, 2001, 20). This is echoed in Saleem's journey in *Midnight's Children* across the subcontinent. Later, Rushdie transposes the journey from village to city onto transglobal migrancy from Bombay to London and New York. Thus the city is also presented as a space that is threatening and problematic, which as Dwyer notes 'can be dehumanizing and lacking in human values' (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 65).

Nandy argues that Indian literature has had an uncomfortable relationship with this movement between spaces: 'Such negotiation with the city has all the elements of the lowbrow and the maudlin and uses too narrow a range of psychological shades. But perhaps for that very reason, popular cinema has turned it into an over-used, proforma cliché' (Nandy 2001, 26). Raj Kapoor was a master of this in his films *Awaara* (1951), *Shree 420* and *Jagte Raho* (1956). I thus argue that Hindi cinema allows Rushdie to find an idiom with which to negotiate the many facets of the city by reworking the trope of the journey between spaces. Rushdie's engagement with an urban environment is intricately connected to cinema, especially in the representation of the city as a microcosm of the nation. These representations of the city contain within them parallel

contrasts between representations of the city and the village, and the city and the slum. As Nandy argues:

> [B]oth cinema and the slum in India showed the same impassioned negotiation with everyday survival, combined with the same intense effort to forget that negotiation, the same mix of the comic and the tragic, spiced with elements borrowed indiscriminately from the classical and the folk, the East and West.
>
> (Nandy 2002, 2)

I argue that this point could also be made in relation to Rushdie's novels. Nandy analyses influences that are neither contained in one locality nor one mode of representation nor one genre and it is here that it becomes most obvious how Hindi cinema in its depiction of the urban environment impacts on Rushdie's fiction.

In the Indian context, Bombay cinema like no other medium has depicted the process of urbanisation and has expressed a version of modernity. In this respect, as M. Madhava Prasad argues in 'Realism and Fantasy in Representations of Metropolitan Life in Indian Cinema', one might argue that Hindi cinema functions in a similar way to the nineteenth century novel by portraying the metropolis as a site of conflict between 'opposing forces and desires, hopes and projections' which are often expressed as class conflict and detail the complex interrelationship between different sections of society (Prasad 2004, 83). The conflict within the city is further complicated by the opposition between the rural and the urban, the village and the city, which elides the internal complexity inherent in the city (Prasad 2004, 84). In this respect, Prasad distinguishes between two perspectives that are used in Hindi cinema to read the city – the internal and the external. In the first instance, the city is 'internally split into a rational grid aspiring to a universal rationality, and the everyday life, with its teeming diversity, which defies this logic' (Prasad 2004, 84). The external perspective is also demarcated by two aspects: 'firstly the city as site of attractions [...], an object of imagination and fantasy; and second the city as a logic of urbanization, which extends beyond the territorial limits of the city' (Prasad 2004, 84). According to Prasad, the city functions as a prime space of representation as 'the seat of power from where political representation realizes itself, it is where the last word of justice is spoken, where the complex economic activity of the surrounding territory is sought to be represented [...] in the speculation of the market place' (Prasad 2004, 85-86). Thus, I read the urban environment as an important marker in the narratives of Bombay cinema and Rushdie's fiction. Bombay functions in both as a default city, which in recent years has become increasingly decentred by London and New York. According to Prasad, in Hindi cinema Bombay assumes a metaphorical function: '"Bambai" serves to signify the generic

metropolitan other, rather than the specific entity that the city of Mumbai is' (Prasad 2004, 87). Thus Prasad argues that Bombay is not only a physical location but has in Hindi cinema a visual quality and a narrative functionality (Prasad 2000, 87). For Prasad this imaging of the city is presented differently and he identifies two different cinematic Bombays – the Bombay of the 1950s and the Bombay of the 1970s and after:

> The relationship of characters to the cityscape, the way the city figures, as metaphor as well as site of unfolding of events, in effect the city as horizon of a representational project: all undergo a significant transformation as we move from one to the other, a shift that must be assumed to relate to the changing aesthetic concerns of the Bombay cinema as much as to the social transformation that have altered the image of the city in public discourse.
>
> (Prasad 2004, 87)

In this respect, I argue that both Bombay cinema and Rushdie's fiction articulate a specific discourse of the city and narrate a particular version of Bombay. Rushdie's characters all have a distinctive relationship with and experience of the city of Bombay. Saleem Sinai's experience of 1950s Bombay is distinct from his experience of post-Emergency Bombay. Similarly, Moraes Zogoiby's experience of 1950s Bombay is very different from communal Mumbai. Their changing experience of the city, which is linked to their social transformation, impacts on their aesthetic engagement with the city and their narration of it. Thus the city and how it figures either as metaphor or site of unfolding events will be a focal point throughout my discussion by considering how the urban cityscape is narrated and how it impacts on the socio-political arguments of Rushdie's narratives.

Rushdie's postcolonial aesthetic

The themes and issues Rushdie addresses in his fiction and non-fiction have been of major interest to colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis. Rushdie's concerns with Indian nationalism in relation to the emergent nation states of the subcontinent and the position of the individual in society are the most obvious markers how Rushdie's fiction is engaged with the process of decolonisation and its aftermath. The larger concerns about nation, nationhood, the individual in society and the role, space and place of culture in relation to definitions of selfhood within this discourse are my prime concerns here. Rushdie shifts his focus from discussions of the postcolonial nation state to migration and dislocation and its effects on the individual, which will be charted in the discussion of the novels. Thus I read the narrative arc from *Midnight's Children* to *Shalimar the Clown* as a progressive engagement with and argument about the role, place and space of the individual in relation to a fast-changing social, economic and

political space that ranges from the postcolonial nation state, the former centre of Empire to a globalising world. Out of Rushdie's engagement with transglobal migrancy and diaspora emerges his own theory of cultural hybridity.[9] Rushdie captures a particular moment in time in the closing years of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. This particular moment has been described by a variety of terms, most often beginning with the prefix 'post', such as postcolonial or postmodern. These designations, despite their currency, remain ambiguous and controversial in meaning. However, what these terms and the meaning of the prefix suggest is a form of transit, a form of going 'beyond'. As Homi Bhabha suggests, 'we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' (Bhabha 1994, 1). In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie describes this situation similarly to being eternally stuck in a transit zone (Rushdie 2000, 461).

Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* discusses incisively the many meanings and different experiences the term 'postcolonial' attempts to absorb. In the process the shortcomings of the designation become obvious. Loomba remarks: 'To begin with, the prefix "post" complicates matters because it implies an "aftermath" in two senses – temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting' (Loomba 2005, 12). Kwame Anthony Appiah discussed further the complexities of the prefix in 'Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?'. He argues that 'the *post-* in postcolonial, like the *post-* in postmodern, is the *post-* of the space-clearing gesture' (Appiah 1991, 348). In his essay, Appiah discusses neo-traditional African art, its reception in the West and its production, which he extends to African writing in English, to draw out the complexities and slippages of both terms. He concludes that authors writing in the condition of postcoloniality produce fiction that is postrealist, that transcends postnativist politics and looks towards a transnational rather than a national solidarity (Appiah 1991, 353). Thus, Appiah concludes, 'its *post-*, like that of postmodernism, is also a *post-* that challenges earlier legitimating narratives' (Appiah 1991, 353). In this respect, Appiah draws out many similarities in approach between the postcolonial and the postmodern, which can also be traced in Rushdie's fiction. Rushdie's novels have been read as postmodern and postcolonial texts; however, in my discussions of Rushdie I privilege a postcolonial over a postmodern reading, as Rushdie's texts do not originate from a deep questioning of Western modernity but from an investigation of modernity in the context of Bombay and India and a particular class

of bourgeois middle-class Bombayites, such as Saleem Sinai and his family, Gibreel Farishta and Salahuddin Chamchawala, The Zogoiby clan, Rai Merchant and Ormus Cama, as well as Malik Solanka.

Yet postmodern and postcolonial strategies of reading, as Appiah suggests, are not mutually exclusive, however, the emphasis is different, and I will return to this point later on in this section.[10] Inherent in postcolonial strategies of reading and more broadly postcolonial criticism is what Homi Bhabha describes in his essay 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The question of agency' as a witnessing of 'the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for social and political authority within a modern world order' (Bhabha 1994, 171). Rushdie takes up these questions and explores the effect this contest has on the individual. The focus in such an investigation must always be on, as Mishra and Hodge argue, postcolonialism as 'a radical political act of self-legitimation and self-respect locked into practices which antedate the arrival of the colonizer, and bracket it with postmodern practices generally' (Mishra/Hodge 1993, 283).

The postcolonial is subversive and challenging. It attempts to deconstruct, explode and subvert preconceived binaries of North and South, East and West and seeks to reveal more complex interconnections between different parts of the world. I argue that Rushdie's fiction is postcolonial and by extension postmodern in its rejection of binaries and hierarchies, instead advocating a complex formation of a hybrid subjectivity. In this respect, Rushdie's writing demonstrates the fluidity of the term 'postcolonial'. As Benita Parry argues:

> postcolonial criticism has come to be identified as postmodernist in its orientation [...] One consequence of this is that there has been a fluid, polysemic, and ambiguous usage of the term 'postcolonial' within and beyond specialist circles. The plenitude of signification is such that 'postcolonial' can indicate a historical transition, an achieved epoch, a cultural location, a theoretical stance.
>
> (Parry 2004a, 66)

If the postcolonial is postmodernist in orientation, as Parry argues, how do we need to understand postmodernism and postmodernity in the context of the postcolonial and Rushdie's writing?

Bhabha in his introduction to *The Location of Culture* sees the 'post-' of postmodernity, postcolonialism or post-feminism as a gesture to the beyond (Bhabha 1994, 1). It is up to the critic to invest them with meaning. According to Bhabha, the 'post-' in these terms can 'only embody its restless and revisionary energy if they

transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment' (Bhabha 1994, 4). Thus I argue that Rushdie's writing about the metropolis, Bombay, London and New York, imaginatively responds to this intensified modernity rooted historically in a postcolonial moment. The tension between conflicting realities and their challenge to absolutes, 'the grand narratives' of religion, history, nationhood, of the universal humanism of the Enlightenment, which are fractured into more complex micro-narratives, are the hallmarks of postmodernism, and Rushdie's writing and his characters engage with these. Thus, I read his eccentric characters as the agents that highlight the transformation of the present into an ex-centric site – Salahuddin Chamchawala and Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses*, Aurora Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Vina and Ormus in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are only a few examples and this issue will be explored further in my discussions of the novels.

Postcolonial discourse constructs its own elaborations on the individual in different cultural spaces and its engagement with 'in-between' spaces that produce new interstices of culture. Bhabha argues:

> It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experience of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?
>
> (Bhabha 1994, 2)

Here, Bhabha is preoccupied with similar issues that Rushdie addresses in his fiction. Bhabha refers to many of Rushdie's crucial sites of engagement – the intersubjective and collective experience of *nationness*, community interest or cultural value – especially in relation to nation-formation of newly independent colonies and in relation to the position of minority communities in the former metropolitan centres of Empire. I will argue that this is further complicated in Rushdie's fiction by the process of subject formation in relation to emerging ideas of nationality and in the context of a fast integrating world with the global flow of people where subjectivity has to be reconfigured and rethought in the context of migration.

For Rushdie's fiction, the crucial site of engagement of postcolonialism is the discourse of nation, nationalism and nationhood. Rushdie's texts portray the involvement of the bourgeois Indian elite in the struggle for independence. Rushdie describes a very clear vision of what independent India should represent. He shares the vision of a free India as Nehru outlines it in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on the eve of independence on 14 August 1947 and in much greater detail in *The Discovery of*

India. Saleem in *Midnight's Children* and Moraes and Aurora Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as well as some of Rushdie's other narrators hold India's postcolonial elite to account, accusing it of having betrayed Nehru's vision. He holds Indira Gandhi and the 1975 Emergency especially responsible for the decline and dismantling of the Nehruvian vision of the nation – democratic, secular and socialist in outlook. In *Midnight's Children*, he portrays her as an annihilating widow, the antithesis of Mother India, destroying India's postcolonial secular ethos; in *The Moor's Last Sigh* he blames her for opening the Pandora's Box of communal violence. Through her manipulative electioneering that has often played off one religious community against the other she has allowed an essentialising nationalism based on religious exclusivity to emerge and become dominant. In this respect, I read Rushdie's fiction as a critique of a particular exclusionist nationalism that threatens the founding principles of democratic secular postcolonial India.

Rushdie does not reject nationalism per se. He makes it clear that an Indian nationalism based on the principles of secularism that enshrines democracy, plurality through respect of religious diversity and equality by promoting a socialist ethos is the only solution for a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like India. Rushdie writes against a particular 'nativist' nationalism that in the example of the *Hindutva* movement in its search for a pure ancient Hindu past is ethnically, culturally and religiously absolutist and ultimately reveals fascist tendencies. This becomes clear in the narrative argument of *The Moor's Last Sigh* and is also dramatised in *The Satanic Verses* in its challenge to a unitary interpretation of religion and will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4 and 5.

Rushdie is at pains to ask hard-hitting questions about the direction in which India and Pakistan are heading as postcolonial regimes. He highlights the abuses of power in both countries, be it Indira Gandhi's 1975 Emergency or Pakistan's succession of civil and military autocratic governments. Ultimately his judgment of Pakistan is much bleaker than of India, but even about India he seems to be despairing. The question of nationhood and self-governance is further complicated by Rushdie's engagement with how postcolonial countries are positioned in a global economic network. As Tamara Sivanandan suggests:

> It has become increasingly evident that while the ideology of anticolonial nationalism may well have been a necessary condition for the forging of the unity necessary to spearhead the resistance to colonial domination, it has proved an insufficient one to lead these societies successfully into a post-independence

> state of liberation – either from continuing Western imperialism, or from their own internal contradictions.
>
> (Sivanandan 2004, 43)

Rushdie makes this apparent in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and in *Shalimar the Clown*. In the former, the photographer Rai exposes how Americana International forces less developed nations into new forms of economic dependency that recall colonial oppression; in the latter, Rushdie investigates how a formerly colonised country like India can be similarly repressive on its 'separatist' periphery where national unity is challenged.

Sivanandan argues 'that anticolonial nationalists were able to adapt the received or imposed nationalist ideology for their own needs' (Sivanandan 2004, 47). Appropriations and adaptations of such conceptualisations are transformed and can become 'naturalised'. In such a process, a wider argument about culture and the interaction of different cultures and traditions becomes evident. Edward Said argues: 'Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures' (Said 1994, 261-262). In this respect, Rushdie creates his own blend of cultural referents, borrowing both from European and Indian literary traditions. His own method of writing illustrates his main argument that any idea of India as a nation must include the sum total of all its parts. It cannot be defined as an exclusive and exclusionist Hindu India. Thus he creates an intense mix of linguistic and cultural references that can also be read as a 'decolonisation' of English as a language.[11] Rushdie demonstrates that, within processes of decolonisation, culture and nationalism are interlinked. This also becomes evident in the productions of Bombay cinema of the time. Indeed, what is evident in Rushdie's narration of an Indian national consciousness is his emphasis on its *imagined* nature. For Rushdie, then, India is a country that exists through the collective imaginary will of its citizens where the concept of Indianness can be invested with different meanings for people living in different parts of the country or in the diaspora. However, while Rushdie engages with the dream imaginary of nationhood in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, he is also aware that there are people who are excluded from this imagined national identity, which is most evident in *Shalimar the Clown* and this will be a focal point in my discussion of the novel in chapter 7.

The question of tradition and modernity in the context of postcolonial nation-building is important here, as it relates directly to cultural productions and finds its way

explicitly into Rushdie's fiction and Hindi cinema. Cultural productions like novels, newspapers, film, painting and theatre were important instruments in the forging of such an identity. Rushdie engages with these formations in his novels, for example in Nadir Khan's poetry or Hanif's movies in *Midnight's Children* or the art Aurora Zogoiby produces in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Rushdie's insistence on India's multiplicity in *The Moor's Last Sigh* in the wake of the destruction of the Babri *Masjid* in Ayodhya and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism also illustrates this powerfully. Rushdie demonstrates that it is possible to write an epic novel that incorporates and re-presents a complex panoramic picture of India from its most marginalised communities. *The Moor's Last Sigh* shows precisely the inter-subjective experience of nation-ness and how subjectivity can never be solely defined in unitary terms, but always in excess of the sum of the parts of difference. Yet, the text also allows the fissures and exclusions to surface whenever national discourse strives for a unitary vision of nationhood. The novel thus debates the complexities of representation by looking at different modes of representation, such as realism, melodrama, surrealism and collage, representations that are often mediated by the idiom of Hindi cinema. Thus I argue that Rushdie's method privileges the sweeping panorama by writing epics marked by excess, a crowd of stories that the reader needs to negotiate. This is particularly evident in *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

Thematically, Rushdie's fiction is investigating and questioning the emergence and definition of national communities in cultural terms and how they produce national and regional identities and migrant minority identities. These identities are defined through discourses of social differences. As Bhabha argues, 'they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision and a construction – that takes you "beyond" yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present' (Bhabha 1994, 3). Rushdie's fiction is not only rooted in particular places and spaces, but also in a particular historical moment to which he responds. He begins in *Midnight's Children* with the subcontinent's experience of and liberation from British colonial rule that has lead postcolonial India to adopt a particular form of direct and liberal democracy, investigating how this democracy developed over the first three decades after Independence. In *Shame*, he engages with postcolonial Pakistan and its succession of autocratic civilian and military governments through the eyes of a London-based author in exile. In *The Satanic Verses* he shifts his attention to the Indian diasporic community

in London, while *The Moor's Last Sigh* brings the political themes of *Midnight's Children* up to date. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* Rushdie returns to the theme of transglobal migration in the context of globalisation and *Shalimar the Clown* investigates separatism, terror and terrorism in Kashmir. Central to all his novels is the birth of India and Pakistan as independent nation states through the partition of British India. A study of Rushdie's writing cannot escape this particular historical moment. Furthermore, Rushdie's fiction concerns itself with a narrow section of Indian society – the urban middle classes of Bombay. This group was integral in the negotiations that led to Partition and Independence and the construction of a particular idea of nation that in India defined itself along universal discourses of humanism, liberal democracy, socialism, modernity and progress.[12] Rushdie's texts sharply investigate these anticolonial movements and discourses of nationalism and nationhood, often decentring, questioning and exploding these 'grand narratives'. In this respect I argue that in Rushdie's fiction we can find postcolonial discourse's post-structural methodology fused with an investigation of anti-colonial discourses out of which the field originally emerged.

What then is the purpose of a postcolonial reading of Rushdie? According to Parry it allows us 'to dismantle and displace the truth-claims of Eurocentric discourses' (Parry 2004a, 67).[13] She argues: 'Whether by direct influence or osmosis the work of postcolonial studies has prompted the wider community of literary critics to recognize that signs of overseas empires, conspicuous or ghostly, were written across the body of both the canonical and popular British literature' (Parry 2004a, 71). Sara Suleri's excellent study *The Rhetoric of English India* illustrates this in the case of India. She shows how Rushdie's own writing is influenced by the literary productions of authors such as Kipling and Forster as she posits their discussion into a wider dialogic relationship between imperialism and its aftermath (Suleri 2005, 21). So while Rushdie's texts overtly engage with postcolonial nation states such as India and Pakistan and metropolitan centres such as the US and Britain, they also engage with imperialist narratives. They refuse binaries and hierarchies and remain challengingly ambivalent.

Both the postcolonial and the postmodern are intrinsic challenges to dominant discourses, seeking to explode 'grand narratives' that emerged in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. According to Bhabha, the wider importance of postmodernity is its consciousness that the epistemological limitations of the ethnocentric notions it

critiques also limit the space of enunciation of other disparate and dissident histories and voices (Bhabha 1994, 4-5). Furthermore, the heterogeneity of nation states has put into question the whole concept of homogenous national cultures and identities. Thus, Bhabha argues that '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' (Bhabha 1994, 5). This process of redefinition is often perceived as crisis, as recent debates about Englishness and multiculturalism have shown. In this respect, Rushdie's fictional work arguably belongs, albeit not exclusively, to what Bhabha calls 'the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora [...] the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees' (Bhabha 1994, 5). Rushdie engages with a process of displacement and its inherent discontinuity, where the sovereignty of an overriding national culture, defined in terms of modernity and progress, is challenged (Bhabha 1994, 6).

Through these ruptures and interventions the cultural space of a national consciousness is severely questioned as the production of art on the margins and its perceived newness becomes what Bhabha calls 'an insurgent act of cultural translation' (Bhabha 1994, 7).[14] In his introduction to *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha observes that after having written on the nation state, India and Pakistan in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, Rushdie's marked shift in *The Satanic Verses* serves as a reminder that the most acute observation comes out of the migrant's double vision (Bhabha 1994, 5). My focus on Rushdie's deployment of Hindi cinema in the novel allows for both narrative strands to emerge and accentuates the 'double vision' that the author adopts. In Rushdie's fiction, national identity is central in relation to how characters define their sense of self. The relationship between the individual and this definition of selfhood in relation to nationhood as it is filtered through Hindi cinema in Rushdie's fiction is the focal point throughout my discussion. In this respect I argue that in Rushdie's fiction Hindi cinema shapes an 'insurgent act of cultural translation'. Thus, the aesthetic and ideological conventions of the Bombay film fulfil an important function in these debates and shape Rushdie's arguments.

Hindi cinema and Rushdie's visual aesthetic

In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai states that 'nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary' (Rushdie 1995a, 33). It could be argued that this is Rushdie's maxim throughout his literary works and, as this thesis will suggest, Rushdie's engagement with cinema as a visual aesthetic goes beyond 'basic'. Rushdie

references particular filmic texts, such as *Shree 420*, *Mother India* or *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), which feature as specific and direct intertexts in *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*. These films were released in the post-independence era during Nehru's term in office as prime minister. This period is also regarded as Hindi cinema's 'golden era', with the films of Raj Kapoor, Mehboob Khan and K. Asif, superstar actors such as Dilip Kumar, Madhubala, Nargis, and Dev Anand, making a huge impact on the style and aesthetics of post-independence Hindi cinema. In this section, I will delineate Rushdie's relationship with the Bombay film, how it features in his writing and to what ends it is deployed. I will focus on Bombay cinema's melodramatic mode of story-telling in relation to Rushdie's fiction, the question of realism in the context of both Rushdie's fiction and Bombay cinema, and the role of Bombay cinema as a cinema of attractions, providing spectacle for its spectator. I will conclude this delineation with a discussion of Bombay cinema as a postcolonial cinema and how this relates to Rushdie as a postcolonial author.

Rushdie's engagement with Bombay cinema needs to be read against one quintessentially American filmic text, which is central to understanding Rushdie's visual aesthetic in relation to Bombay cinema – the MGM film version of Frank Baum's children's novel *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The film has had a huge impact on Rushdie as a child and is a reference point throughout his fiction. In his monograph on the film for the British Film Institute, Rushdie writes how the film inspired him to write his first short story at the age of ten. The story was lost, but Rushdie states: 'I remember that *The Wizard of Oz* (the film, not the book, which I didn't read as a child) was my very first literary influence' (Rushdie 1992b, 9). His fiction is littered with references to the iconic film – Indira Gandhi appearing green and black and black and green, transmuting into the Wicked Witch of the movie in Saleem Sinai's dreams in *Midnight's Children*, the 420 ruby slippers of Hind, yellowbricklane in London in *The Satanic Verses*, the Tin Man in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, to name but a few. It is clear that the film has a special place in Rushdie's imagination and he claims: 'When I first saw *The Wizard of Oz* it made a writer of me' (Rushdie 1992b, 18). For Rushdie, when it came to writing *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, *The Wizard of Oz* more than any other film helped him to find the right voice and idiom for the story (see Rushdie 1992b, 18). The monograph that Rushdie wrote for the BFI Film Classics series is interesting for other reasons. It establishes well Rushdie's relationship with cinema and its importance in his work. The book was published in 1992, three years after the fatwa and it enabled Rushdie to reflect

differently on his altered relationship with 'home' as well as to clarify his thoughts about India's commercial cinema.

The plot of *The Wizard of Oz* has resonances in Rushdie's fiction, especially the relationship between parents and their children and their dramatisation in the novels. For Rushdie, the film's main narrative thrust revolves around the inadequacy of adults and their world:

> *The Wizard of Oz* is a film [about] [...] how the weakness of grown-ups forces children to take control of their own destinies, and so, ironically, grow up themselves. The journey from Kansas to Oz is a rite of passage from a world in which Dorothy's parent-substitutes, Auntie Em and Uncle Henry, are powerless to help her save her dog Toto from the marauding Miss Gulch, into a world where the people are her own size, and in which she is never, ever treated as a child, but as a heroine.
>
> (Rushdie 1992b, 10)

Dorothy's status as a heroine is accidental, when her house crushes the Wicked Witch of the East as it lands in Oz. Many of Rushdie's heroes, too, seem like accidental or reluctant heroes. The pattern of a rite of passage is often repeated or inverted in Rushdie's plots. Saleem's ejection from his house and his journey to his uncle's house that prefigures a more permanent and harsher exile after the destruction of his family by a bomb takes up this notion. Salahuddin Chamchawala's uneasy relationship with his father, his journey, transmutation and his reconciliation with his father at the end also has echoes of Dorothy's journey to Oz and features similarly in Rai's journey in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and Moraes's relationship with his family in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The reconciliation between Moraes and his father, now an underworld don, seems like an odd recognition of the father's power. For the most part of the novel he appears to be an inconsequential figure. Thus, he could be read as an inversion of the figure of the Wizard, who is revealed to be not powerful but an incompetent bumbling fool with no powers at all. Rushdie's novels are distinctive in how often the hero's journey concludes with a reconciliation with the parents, especially the father figure. This rite of passage plotline is familiar from many epics as well as the nineteenth century Bildungsroman, and is often staged melodramatically and, as this thesis will argue, is influenced in Rushdie's fiction by filmic texts from the Hollywood and Bollywood canon.

The Wizard of Oz is important to understand Rushdie's argument about home and homelessness, journeying and the discovery and reconfiguration of selfhood. After her journey and adventures in the Technicolor world of Oz and her return to black-and-white Kansas it is revealed that Oz was just a dream, despite Dorothy's protestations.

Ironically, for the viewer, as much as for Dorothy, Kansas cannot compete with Oz and the latter seems more real, rather than surreal, which Rushdie links not only to the transition from childhood to adulthood, but also to the idea of home and homelessness:

> the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our own 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.
>
> (Rushdie 1992b, 57)

Rushdie's view of the film's conclusion very clearly aligns with the journeys of his characters, in particular his transglobal migrants. These deliberations are important for practically all of Rushdie's heroes, for Saleem Sinai who after his journey finds respite in the arms of his ayah in the Braganza pickle factory, for Salahuddin who after his reconfiguration of selfhood rediscovers a different version of home through the love of Zenat Vakil, or for Rai who remakes home together with Mira and Tara in New York. The reconfiguration of home enshrined in Dorothy's exclamation 'There's no place like home' is reworked in Rushdie's use of the maudlin chaplinesque tramp as he was played by Raj Kapoor in films such as *Awaara*, *Shree 420* and *Jagte Raho*. Thus I argue that in the conceptualisation of homelessness and dislocation, which features so prominently in Rushdie's writing, two film songs intersect: 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' and 'Mera Joota Hai Japani', the opening song from *Shree 420*, which is the anthem of Rushdie's transglobally migrating hero, belted out in mid-air by Gibreel Farishta as he tumbles down to England.

Dorothy's message in relation to Rushdie's heroes unmasks the fragmentary nature of identity and the possibility of infinite rearrangements. It also points to the transient nature of home and how the creation of any sense of home relies on a physical and metaphoric journey to the self. This often painful journey is closely related to the birth of India as an independent nation and the partition of British India into the political entities of India and Pakistan. This rupture along which Indian nationhood has been defined is one of the reasons why one of the key features of 1950s Hindi cinema is the image of the 'fragmented Indian'. This image can be directly related to the formation of a new national identity through cinematic representation. As Sumita S. Chakravarty argues: 'These mass audiences for Hindi films also constituted the new citizens of India and as such faced the problems of developing some notions of social responsibility, of building community and solidarity that went beyond the "traditional" loyalties to family

and caste groups' (Chakravarty 1993, 133). Rushdie draws on this representation of the Indian self in *Midnight's Children* through the narrator-protagonist Saleem who is on the verge of fragmenting and his grandfather Aadam Aziz, who discovers his national identity after he sees his future wife completely for the first time, no longer in fragments through the perforated sheet. In this respect I argue that Rushdie engages with the question of national identity by using similar tropes to Hindi cinema. Rushdie then further complicates this process by relating it directly to the reality of transglobal migration of his urban middle-class Indians.

Rushdie speaks pejoratively of the Hindi film and likens its consumption to the pleasure of eating fast food: 'The classic Bombay talkie uses scripts of appalling corniness, looks by turn tawdry and vulgar and often both at once, and relies on the mass appeal of its stars and its musical numbers to provide a little zing' (Rushdie 1992b, 13). Rushdie contrasts *The Wizard of Oz* with Hindi cinema as the former takes on its best elements: 'It takes the fantasy of Bombay and adds high production values and something more; something not often found in any cinema. Call it imaginative truth' (Rushdie 1992b, 13). For the sake of argument Rushdie's generalisation is sweeping and reductive and shows his limited intellectual engagement with the genre. Yet cinema and in particular the Indian commercial cinema features throughout Rushdie's fiction, either explicitly through direct references to films that provide analogies with his own narratives or implicitly in his use of fade-ins and fade-outs, montage, dissolves, superimpositions, the wide-angle shot and the song-and-dance sequence, which are all part of the visual aesthetic and cinematic attractions directly derived from Hindi cinema. Despite his protestations, his fiction, as I will delineate, is actually much more intertwined with the world of Bombay cinema than Rushdie cares to admit. I asked Rushdie to clarify the influence of cinema and especially Bombay cinema on his writing at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2005. He responded as follows:

> Yes, I was very affected by the movies. I was young and I was forming my ideas about art and about writing at a time when the movies were unusually exciting. It was very different from now. [...]
> I have always thought that I got a lot of my education from people like Fellini, Bunuel, Bergman, Godard and Orson Welles. [...] If you grow up in Bombay you can't avoid the Bombay cinema, but we all know that it's junk. It's the equivalent of a McDonald's burger.
> [...] So, yes, I have been very influenced by the movies but not particularly by Indian movies except in one regard. That is the regard—how shall I put this?—in which the Indian commercial cinema is very like the plays of Shakespeare, because it is everything at once. If you look at Hamlet, for example, the first

> scene is a ghost story. The second scene is political intrigue at court. The third scene is a love story. The fourth scene is prat-falling clowning. The fifth scene is back to the ghost story. He is telling you at least four different kinds of story at the same time and he makes it work on account of the fact that he's Shakespeare, which helps. The Indian cinema does not have the benefit of Shakespeare but it has the same idea, which is that a film can be everything at once. It can be an adventure story, a love story, a comedy and a musical all at the same time. I pinched that portmanteau idea of what a work can be, so in that sense I was influenced by the Bombay movies.
>
> (Rushdie/Koval 2005)

It is worth considering the 'portmanteau idea' of Hindi cinema in relation to Rushdie's novels further. Film critic Nasreen Munni Kabir explains that this intermingling of genres developed gradually and became prominent in the 1970s with films such *Amar Akbar Anthony* (Kabir 2001, 14-20). Rushdie first uses the 'multi-genre' idea of the Bombay film in *Midnight's Children* and develops, reworks and manipulates it in his other novels.[15] I will analyse this process further in the discussion of the novels and will argue that in Rushdie's use of the blending of stories there is a sense of streams of stories merging and diverging, which create the impression of interconnection between his fictional worlds.

The syncretic portmanteau idea of Hindi cinema is directly linked to the melodramatic mode of the Bombay film from which Rushdie extensively draws and related to the treatment of realism and the surreal in his fiction. This is connected to debates about aesthetics which Rushdie addresses in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and in his essay 'Satyajit Ray'. Rushdie sees the discrepancy between the Indian art house cinema and the commercial Bombay film as a clash between two different urban cultures: 'the cosmopolitan, brash bitch-city of Bombay versus the old intellectual traditions of Calcutta' (Rushdie 1992a, 109). Bombay films, like Rushdie's novels, allow for a strong streak of fantasy and require the audience to suspend its disbeliefs. Thus, I argue that in Rushdie's fiction the 'magical' elements serve as intensifications of the real. The treatment of realism in Rushdie's fiction is intertwined with the question of postmodern and postcolonial aesthetics. In a 1984 interview with Kumkum Sangari, Rushdie firmly rejects the postmodernist label insofar as he believes that postmodernism refuses to accept that literature is 'referential' and that literature only exists as a text that remains unrelated to the outside world (Rushdie/Sangari 2001, 69). Rushdie also rejects realism as a school of writing as it requires a level of consensus on what reality is. According to Rushdie, this consensus has been eroded over the past century through political processes and the advent of mass migration: 'If you arrive in a society as a migrant,

your position is automatically a dislocated one, and so you have to work out a literary mode which can allow that kind of conflict of description to take place in it' (Rushdie/Sangari 2001, 70). In this respect, Rushdie's 'realism' needs to be re-routed through a different idiom and the idiom of the Hindi film is instrumental in this regard as the syncretism of the Bombay film allows space for the debate and potential resolution of this conflict of description. The escapist, fantastical elements of Rushdie's fiction underpin and intensify the impact of the socio-political argument he is making and provide a response to India's post-independence modernity and to trans-global migration.[16]

Hindi cinema's form is a syncretistic intermingling of different cultural, cinematic and aesthetic modes. I argue that these similarities in form make it a necessary reference point for Rushdie's own vision of syncretism and cultural eclecticism. As Vijay Mishra states:

> how and why Bollywood is to so many a signifier of the cultural logic of Indian modernity are questions whose answers may be discovered in the Rushdie corpus. For what Rushdie did was to read Bombay cinema as 'Bollywood' [...] even before it acquired that meaning. In his treatment, Bombay cinema was both film and a particular logic of culture. It was, finally, a form that mediated how Indians, both homeland and diaspora, read quotidian life.
>
> (Mishra 2007, 15)

For Mishra, the synchronicity of Bombay cinema's form, which is capacious enough to agglomerate different narrative modes, allows cinema in Rushdie's fiction to fulfil the role of India's quintessential aesthetic as well as to become the prime marker of Indian culture (Mishra 2007, 16). Thus Mishra sees in Rushdie's 'representational apparatus' a discourse that is intertwined with the country's dominant cultural form (Mishra 2007, 16). According to Mishra, then, 'Cinema, as text, provides Rushdie with both a context (cinema as social fact) and a language (cinema as a particular discourse, a particular representational technique) with which to write national allegory' (Mishra 2007, 17). My discussion takes up Mishra's notion that in Rushdie's fiction Bollywood cinema is deployed towards a postmodern aesthetic by referencing a cinematic form that by its very nature was postmodern before postmodernity, responding to a particular Indian postcolonial modernity.

Rushdie's concern with an Indian national identity in *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Shalimar the Clown*, necessitates an engagement with Bombay cinema. As Rosie Thomas claims, 'at a very obvious level Hindi films are clearly important in establishing a sense of national

identity' (Thomas 1995, 161). The coalescence of realism, myth and the surreal as they feature in both Rushdie's novels and Bombay cinema reveals the process of how national identity formations are constructed, questioned and subverted. Chakravarty argues this point succinctly:

> Realism and myth represent a dialectic tension: the pull of the everyday, the normal, the contemporary against that of the imaginative, the unexpected, the timeless. Each contains the other, for realism as a particular set of conventions points always to the larger traditions and belief systems within which those conventions are embedded, while a mythic structure or image often embodies the most 'real' though indirect expression of the ways of seeing and believing of a society and its culture, what film critic Parker Tyler has called 'imaginative truth.'
>
> (Chakravarty 1993, 119-120)

Chakravarty argues that myths produce 'a dynamic textual process where meanings are inherently unstable' (Chakravarty 1993, 121). Chakravarty shows how Bombay cinema of the 1950s concerned itself with the production of a mythic tradition that reflected contemporary issues and the secular ethos of the newly independent nation (Chakravarty 1993, 125). The inherent instability of such myths similarly preoccupies Rushdie in his fiction and marks the 1950s Bombay film as a particular intertext for Rushdie's novels. I thus argue that the three specific cinematic texts Rushdie uses – *Shree 420*, *Mother India* and *Mughal-e-Azam* – interlink his texts directly with the romantic-mythic tradition that Chakravarty outlines.[17]

This romantic-mythic tradition functions within melodramatic parameters that can provide the drama of heightened emotions as intensifications of the real. This interrelationship between melodrama, realism and an aesthetic of excess is filtered through Hindi cinema in Rushdie's fiction and aestheticises the visual as a mode of storytelling that Rushdie's narrators adopt. Rushdie's narrators use a visual aesthetic that is closely linked to the Bombay film. Saleem Sinai references the Bombay Talkie at various stages in his story in order to further explain his current situation. For instance, he explains his amnesia as a plot-device lifted from Bombay cinematic conventions. Moraes Zogoiby, too, uses the aesthetics and idiom of Hindi cinema in order to make sense of his relationship with his father, the underworld don, and his mother, the prolific artist Aurora Zogoiby. The dream sequences of Gibreel Farishta also borrow the cinematic visual aesthetic that is derived from the Bombay film's song-and-dance sequences. Rushdie's narrators become spectators of their own stories. Marginalised and sidelined they observe through the filmic idiom what has happened to them as though it were a spectacle on a movie screen. In this respect, the role of a visual

aesthetic requires some further definition, especially in relation to the position of the spectator and spectacle. Defining such an aesthetic is difficult. As Rachel Dwyer notes, 'there is no defined aesthetics of Hindi cinema. But Hindi cinema shares noticeable features such as the use of melodrama and heightened emotion, especially around the family, an engaging narrative, stars, a certain *mise en scène*, usually one of glamour, grandiloquent dialogues and the all-important songs' (Dwyer 2005, 1).[18] Throughout the discussion of the novels, I will be focussing on these elements that shape Hindi cinema's visual aesthetics and how they feature in Rushdie's fiction.

The melodramatic mode in Rushdie's fiction and Bombay cinema is an important aesthetic marker.[19] Peter Brooks in *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* associates melodrama with the fundamental desire to express all as the characters, cast in primary psychic roles, such as father, mother, son or daughter, reveal their deepest feelings in heightened and polarising dialogue, which leads to the subsuming of the world that is split into binaries (Brooks 1995, 4). In this respect, Brooks argues, 'the narrative creates the excitement of its drama by putting us in touch with the conflict of good and evil played out under the surface of things' (Brooks 1995, 4). According to Brooks, it is important to note that melodrama is rooted in the real where the reality of the everyday becomes an important reference point. Yet, there is a clear instrumentalisation of reality in the melodramatic mode. According to Brooks, melodrama 'is using the things and gestures of the real world, of social life, as kinds of metaphors that refer us to the realm of spiritual reality and latent moral meanings' (Brooks 1995, 9). In this respect, I argue that melodrama produces a heightened sense of reality and allows for the projection of the surreal in Rushdie's fiction.

The relationship between Rushdie's fiction and melodrama is not only inflected by the use of the melodramatic mode in Bombay cinema. It finds its literary antecedent in the novels of Charles Dickens. Rushdie has mentioned that his fascination stems from how Dickens manages to combine a hyper-realist background in which his surrealist foreground, like the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit* or the Jarndyce and Jarndyce court case in *Bleak House*, is embedded in the narrative.[20] This applies equally to Dickens's larger-than-life characters, such as Fagin in *Oliver Twist* or Jaggers in *Great Expectations*. Rushdie is influenced by Dickens in the way in which he grounds character and surreal imagery in this sharply observed background. As Rushdie claims, out of this background, 'the comic and fantastic elements of his work seemed to grow

organically, becoming intensifications of, and not escapes from, the real world' (Rushdie 2006a, xii). Rushdie's use of melodrama, then, finds in Dickens a literary antecedent and in Hindi cinema a filmic antecedent.

The connection between melodrama, its relationship with the epic and the way in which it becomes a marker for a postcolonial Indian modernity interests Rushdie because it has a particular impact on urban mass culture. Rushdie's protagonists are all drawn from a middle-class urban background. These middle-class protagonists draw from the urban mass culture as it is produced in the dream factories of Bombay and in this respect, these narrators have no time for the more high-brow, serious and realist auteur cinema. Rushdie's protagonists reject a certain realism and instead opt for what Moraes Zogoiby calls *'unnaturalism'*, which becomes inflected through the melodramatic mode of Bombay cinema (see Rushdie 1996b, 5). Ashish Rajadhyaksha argues that Hindi cinema uses a form of epic melodrama in its discussion of themes of Indian nationality (Rajadhyaksha 1993). Rajadhyaksha observes that 'realism was one of the key sites of a major cultural hegemony in cinema, as various approaches to it defined state policy on film after independence' (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 56). This debate was shaped by Satyajit Ray and the Indian People's theatre association. This battle, Rajadhyaksha claims,

> was assimilated at a secondary level by most of India's commercial cinemas, who in equating realism with certain objectified values and symbols [...] also wrought what in retrospect would be the far more significant change in Indian film: the shift from the reformist social [...] into an idiom of melodrama.
>
> (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 56)

The Bombay film subverts what Rajadhyaksha terms 'a realism of perception' that undermines the camera's objectivity. This is Rushdie's prime concern in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. The photographer-narrator works as a news photographer picturises the reality of the conflict zones of the world and delves into fashion and celebrity photography to counter the excessive realism he is exposed to in the war zones of the world. This is also countered by Bombay cinema, which uses the voyeuristic gaze as an oppositional strategy to realism. As Rajadhyaksha with reference to Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino argues, 'the cinema becomes a "spectacle aimed at a digesting object" in which man is accepted "only as a passive and consuming object"' (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 57). In this instance the visual becomes a particular aesthetic.

Vijay Mishra explores this further in his reading of Raj Kapoor as auteur and voyeur (Mishra 2002, 98-112). Mishra defines the genre of Bombay cinema as 'sentimental melodramatic romance linked to dharmic codes' (Mishra 2002, 99). This is

reflected in the cinema of Raj Kapoor and the representation of the hero in his films. Kapoor works within the melodramatic mode, but, according to Mishra, 'manipulates the politics of desire and the subject/self/spectator's insertion into that desire' (Mishra 2002, 99). Rushdie extrapolates this for his own heroes/narrators who all are spectators and voyeurs and use this paradigm for their visual aesthetic. Kapoor implicates the viewer/reader in a viewing pleasure of excessive and heightened drama that is structured around the image of 'Woman' and I argue that this deployment of what M. Madhava Prasad has discussed as the 'absolutist gaze' is intrinsic to the melodramatic staging of family and romance in Rushdie's novels.[21]

For Mishra, melodrama is a reworking of a female agenda into the filmic text that is achieved through the destabilising effect of emotional excess that can confront a patriarchally conditioned rigid worldview that allows for a degree of female spectatorial engagement (Mishra 2002, 110). In this respect, the spectatorial desire of a male voyeuristic gaze plays an important part in how women are read in Bombay cinema. Rushdie parodies this in his own fiction. Saleem's accident in a washing chest where he becomes privy to his mother masturbating or his illicit viewing of his mother's blossoming love affair with Nadir Khan are only two examples. This is further accentuated by the Peeping Tom Omar Khayyam Shakil gazing on Farah Zoroaster through his telescope pre-empting his career as a doctor, a profession that he describes as legitimised voyeurism. Gibreel Farishta too becomes a voyeur in his filmically realised dreams in which he features as the archangel Gabriel. Through the prism of Bombay cinema, then, 'Woman' in Rushdie's fiction becomes not only a sexual object upon whom a particular body politics is enacted but also the point where a social politics is debated in the coding of women as grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, sister-in-law and courtesan.

In 'Melodrama, Body, Revolution' Peter Brooks remarks that 'the melodramatic body is a body seized by meaning' (Brooks 1994, 18). In this respect, the body politics of a text become the text's central defining feature insofar as melodrama is concerned with acting out what otherwise might be repressed. Brooks thus argues that in the context of melodrama there is a 'constant recourse to acting out, to the body as the most important signifier of meanings' (Brooks 1994, 19). This is reflected in Rushdie's fiction, for instance, in the fragmenting female bodies and Saleem's own disintegrating body as he writes his life-story in *Midnight's Children*, obsessed with finding meaning in his story to counter his fear of meaninglessness and absurdity. Thus the male/female

body becomes the site upon which/through which meaning is defined and where the identity politics of Rushdie's narratives converge.

Rajadhyaksha associates the emergence of 'epic melodrama' in Hindi cinema with the context of India's nationalist movement insofar as both make recourse to the trope of family as a stand-in for the nation (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 59). Thus the family becomes a site in Hindi cinema where the formation of subjectivities is shaped by the historical moment and conflicting attitudes. In this respect, Rajadhyaksha argues that 'film puts the scale up to the entire question of indigenous modernism in India, racked as it has been by the question whether/if/how it relates/should relate to the "tradition" even as each constantly perceives the other in its image' (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 59). The films then debate a dialectic of modernity and tradition on the site of the family through 'epic melodrama' and thus become an important intervention in the imagination of India (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 59). Rajadhyaksha argues:

> Much of this melodrama had a developed idea about both realism and modernism, very much in its own terms, with both concepts emerging directly from allegories of either nation, the national struggle, or in less defined terms, of freedom and oppression. Their realism was entirely symbolic: in which certain symbols of the contemporary – of Science, for example or Knowledge, which then merged with the symbols of actual reality – were used to stand in for psychoanalytic associations of 'desire' or 'apprehension', of collective memory or the tragedy of the loss of memory, of tradition as the unifier and/or the betrayer.
>
> (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 59)

This emerges clearly in the films Rushdie chooses as direct intertexts for his fiction and is realised by the staging of the patriarchal family by his narrators. As Rajadhyaksha remarks, this heightened form of realism that becomes melodramatic and epic is a subterfuge that allowed for the reconfiguration of earlier genres, such as the mythological and the historical, as they are retold and become 'a major cultural hegemony within a broader ideological container of the nationalist allegory and its several more abstracted metaphors' (Rajadhyaksha 1993, 60). It is in this context that Rushdie's use of the idiom of Hindi cinema needs to be read. This is exemplified, for instance, by the Sabarmati case in *Midnight's Children*, the feudal landowning Shakil family in *Shame*, the Zogoiby-da Gama clan in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and the Camas in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which all present a particular engagement with Indian modernity shaped by India's and Pakistan's experience of colonialism and its postcolonial reality. In this respect, I read the interaction between Hindi cinema's aesthetic and Rushdie's literary productions as disruptions of realism.

In Hindi cinema, the relationship between realism and melodrama functions as a way of creating a postcolonial consensus in postcolonial India (Jaikumar 2006, 196). Rushdie uses filmic texts from the 1950s and 60s when Indian cinema still took on and reworked the narrative themes of the colonial era through the genres of the historical, mythological and social film, responding to the issues how India as an independent nation might be imagined and what Indian self-governance may entail, what issues the new independent nation will have to tackle. The historical allowed for a depiction of an imaginary past, the mythological retold the epics and often narrated them as allegories for Indian society, while the social films deployed a contemporary setting for their melodramatic narratives about family and community, often reformulating a realist aesthetic to a melodramatic template (see Jaikumar 2006, 205).

Within the melodramatic staging in Hindi cinema a particular moral universe is articulated and upheld, which Rushdie uses and subverts in his narratives. Rosie Thomas argues that Hindi cinema explores this moral universe within a framework that debates tradition, modernity and Indianness (Thomas 1995, 157). Hindi cinema serves as a site of contestation where notions of tradition and modernity are debated and renegotiated. According to Thomas, '[t]his operates on the level both of form and of structuring content' (Thomas 1995, 158). Thomas's suggestion is a pertinent observation:

> film should be seen as an arena within which a number of discourses about female chastity, modern nationalism, and morality intersect and feed upon each other, with significant political effects, and that this broader text offers fissured, contradictory, and partial representations and identifications.
>
> (Thomas 1995, 159)

Thomas argues that the construction of an Indian identity in commercial Hindi cinema is achieved through a series of conventions that deploy strategically nationalist and patriotic themes and feature an 'ideal moral universe' (Thomas 1995, 159). Similarly, the notion of the novel as an arena for discourses becomes so crucially evident when discussing Rushdie's fiction, and I argue that the manner in which this discussion is played out emulates the space set up by the Bombay film. Rushdie often makes recourse to this in the melodramatic staging of the family. Aurora Zogoiby, for instance, is unlike the traditional mother of Hindi cinema. She is an adulteress, foul-mouthed, a drinker and leads a bohemian lifestyle. However, she still maintains a distinctive moral code that leads to the expulsion of Moraes from the family home. Similarly, Saleem Sinai is exiled from home after doubts about his parentage emerge and his mother is accused of adultery. Rushdie distorts the boundaries between good and evil, especially where the

discourse on motherhood is concerned, and in that respect this moral code is put into question. While Rushdie blurs these boundaries, the moral universe of his novels becomes markedly bound up with a discourse of nationalism, modernity and tradition that clearly demarcates between the villain and the hero, those who seek to destroy the nation and those who want to uphold its values.

However, the role and function of the hero particularly in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* is ambivalent, considering that more often than not he is a victim, rather than proactive participant. I read them as a subversion of the function of the hero in Hindi cinema. Ravi S. Vasudevan argues that 'a melodramatic routing' is important in the way in which it complicates the hero's identity in Hindi cinema's 'social' films:

> It is the hero's very mobility between spaces, spaces of virtue (the 'mother's' domain), villainy and respectability (the 'father's' domain) which problematizes social identity. Often the street, the space of physical and social mobility, is also the space of the dissolution of social identity, or the marking out of an identity which is unstable.
>
> (Vasudevan 2000b, 110)

A film like *Shree 420* plays out this drama very intricately and perhaps this is the reason why it is such an important text for Rushdie. The journeys of Rushdie's heroes are very much encapsulated in Vasudevan's description, for instance, Saleem's journey across India and up and down the social ladder, from middle-class respectability into the slum. Similarly, Salahuddin Chamchawala, the respectable voice-over artist, becomes a refugee after the loss of his passport and ends up in the shady immigrant world in London. He is vilified as an alien and transmutes into a devilish creature. Thus the reader is confronted with what Vasudevan calls 'a drama of downward social mobility' (Vasudevan 2000b, 110). However, as Vasudevan suggests, the social slide that the hero faces is not irreversible but allows room for social renewal and the recovery of his virtues (Vasudevan 2000b, 111). Following on from Vasudevan's observation I argue that Rushdie subverts in his novels the moral universe of the Bombay film by undermining it with characters that are recognisable as a type, but act against type. In this respect, his novels push the boundaries of a moral framework that is directly related to quintessential debates and questions about a society in transition. As my discussion suggests, Rushdie's narrative more often than not needs to be viewed through the prism of the Bombay film and this becomes most obvious in the melodramatic staging of the family, but also in his narratives' use of Hindu mythology, which is also filtered through the filmic parameters of the Bombay film.[22]

The mapping of a national consciousness in Rushdie's fiction, too, can be linked to similar attempts in the Bombay 'social' film of the 1950s. Vasudevan analyses the genre of the 'social' in the context of an emerging national cinema for post-Independence India and how Hindi cinema maps a 'nation space'. In *Midnight's Children* this is reflected in the career of Saleem's uncle Hanif, who tries unsuccessfully to blend a socially conscious cinema with the commercial.[23] Vasudevan argues that the Bombay 'social' film played an important role in identity negotiations for its spectators: 'the mass audiences earlier conceived of as being attracted only by sensation and themes of moral affirmation were now being solicited by an omnibus form which also included a rationalist discourse as part of its "attractions"' (Vasudevan 2000a, 387). Vasudevan observes that the Bombay film combined a rhetoric of morality and identity in its discourse of social transformation (Vasudevan 2000a, 387-388). In this respect, Bombay cinema had to involve itself in the construction of overarching cultural norms. According to Vasudevan, these norms 'suppressed the representation of marginal currents in Indian narrative and aesthetic traditions' (Vasudevan 2000a, 394). Vasudevan argues that through cinema, culture is reformulated within a nationalist context, and that cinema is involved in undermining 'space for marginal discourses' by exercising control over the ambiguity between the relationship of gender and power (Vasudevan 2000a, 395). *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* in particular, are concerned with similar negotiations and I will return to this point in my analysis in subsequent chapters. Vasudevan's argument illustrates how the Bombay 'social' film of the 1950s became the prime vehicle with which the Bombay film industry engaged with the challenges of modernity and modern life in post-independence India, which seems to me a powerful link with similar preoccupations in Rushdie's fiction (Vasudevan 2000b 105).

As has been established, Bombay Cinema is marked by its heterogeneity, which Rushdie likens to the portmanteau, where the form itself can be loosely defined as 'epic melodrama' (Rajadhyaksha 1993), 'feudal family romance' (Prasad 1998) and 'sentimental melodramatic romance' (Mishra 2002). For Mishra, the role of dharma is central in Bombay Cinema: 'A transcendental principle of dharma (the ultimate Hindu law), a decentred notion of genre, and a mode of heterogeneous manufacture combine to create the sentimental melodramatic romance that is Bombay cinema' (Mishra 2002, 14). This is emblematic of Hindi cinema's aesthetics and Rushdie uses it for his own narratives in the staging of his urban upper middle-class families and through characters

directly linked to the film industry such as Saleem's uncle Hanif, his aunt Pia, Homi Catrack, Whisky Sissodia, Gibreel Farishta and Pimple Billimoria. Rushdie taps into key paradigms of Bombay cinema, such as the conflict between tradition and modernity within a nationalist project, which was prevalent in the films of the 1940s and 1950s. In its highly stylised way Bombay cinema addresses social and political issues which become split into oppositional forces. Mishra defines them as 'good and bad, sanctity and scandal, dharma and adharma, indeed [...] a Manichean world order' (Mishra 2002, 16). The body becomes the site upon which this drama is enacted and becomes a marker of this discourse: 'the melodramatic body is the site where the lifting of repression takes place and the socially and morally disavowed (censored) is momentarily avowed or scripted back into the alternative (but real) narrative of the text' (Mishra 2002, 38). In this respect I argue that Rushdie's fiction through the idiom of Hindi cinema presents that discourse through the melodramatic and the sentimental to articulate a particular moral universe.

Hindi cinema plays a role in the manner in which 'nation' is narrated and here most obviously one can trace the intertextual relationship to Rushdie's fiction. Nation in the cinematic as well as Rushdie's text becomes a discursive formation that is articulated as a site where a national imaginary as allegory is expressed. Thus as Mishra remarks, Bombay cinema harnesses an imperialist mode of production towards specifically nationalist goals (Mishra 2002, 10). Bombay cinema became an indigenised form of story-telling that found its antecedent in India's oral story-telling tradition, a tradition in which Rushdie's idiom also finds a precursor. This allowed first Indian film-maker Dadasaheb Phalke, who directed the first mythological film *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913, to argue that his films were *swadeshi*, home-grown indigenous entities where their content and mode of production were concerned (see Mishra 2002, 13). In many ways post-Independence Hindi cinema engaged with a concept of Indian nationhood that was based on the Nehruvian vision of the nation – secular, democratic and socialist in outlook. Films like *Mother India* and *Awaara* also engage with questions about an Indian modernity and the conflict between progress and tradition. These debates have been shaped by the colonial moment and Hindi cinema's productions of the 1930s and 1940s already develop the themes that have so distinctively shaped post-independence Hindi cinema. Thus 1950s and 1960s Hindi cinema concerned itself with the ideas of nationhood and citizenship for newly independent India and strived in its melodramatic

routing to create a sense of belonging by championing through Nehruvian ideals a particular idea of Indianness.

Priya Jaikumar argues in *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* that in the period preceding independence 'films became figurations of the internal polarizations of India's nationalist discourse when they attempted to reach for multiple and potentially contradictory nationalist appeals to create a cinematic vision' (Jaikumar 2006, 234). The Nehruvian vision of the nation defined itself against Imperialism. However it is important to note that it developed in conjunction with other forms of nationalisms that took account of region, caste and language. In this respect, as Jaikumar argues, there existed 'multiple self-determining agendas [...] [which] could not be solved within the framework of a nation-state' (Jaikumar 2006, 235). Commercial Hindi cinema resolved this issue in the use of the multi-genre of the social film by adopting a 'moralizing tone of social instruction' (Jaikumar 2006, 235). Mythologicals and historicals also adapted their narrative forms, on the one hand idolising a pre-modern past with shared values and on the other distinguishing the enlightened and reformist ruler from the evil feudal landowners. Thus, as Jaikumar observes, 'each genre provided a template for the uneven assimilation of modernity within the colony. Melodramatic socials were to become independent India's dominant cinematic form for manufacturing an imaginary civic society' (Jaikumar 2006, 235).

Rushdie's deep questioning of India's civic society makes Hindi cinema an obvious site of engagement for his fictional world as it offers alternative ways of imagining society through its representational apparatus. In this respect, Rushdie subverts the idiom of the Hindi film. Nationhood and in particular the imagining of the unified nation is thematically central to Indian popular cinema and of equal relevance to Rushdie's fiction. The intersection of discourses of nationhood in relation to identity formation of the individual in Rushdie's fiction, Bombay cinema and postcolonial discourse provides in this thesis a space for analysis that will open up an original way of reading Rushdie's novels. My analysis will further elaborate and analyse Mishra's observation that '[...] the Rushdie aesthetic uses the archive of Bollywood to negotiate India itself. What is significant is that there is a cinematic point-of-view, a cinematic organisation of the magical, of hybrid lives, that Rushdie uses for his own project' (Mishra 2007, 25-26). I will concentrate on this process and will detail how Hindi cinema becomes in Rushdie's fiction a signifier for the state of postcoloniality itself. I

thus argue that Rushdie deploys the aesthetic elements of Bombay cinema as plot devices that highlight his own political and philosophical arguments.

This thesis will offer a detailed analysis of Rushdie's distinctive style of visual story-telling from *Midnight's Children* to *Shalimar the Clown* in relation to the aesthetic conventions of Bombay cinema. However, the thesis will not consider his debut novel *Grimus* as the novel does not feature the visual narrative elements that it is concerned with. Furthermore, the novel has been rejected as a failure by its author.[24] *Grimus* will feature briefly in the discussion of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, as both novels share an intertextual relationship with Farid ud-Din Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*. I discuss Rushdie's shorter fiction, such as *East, West* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, as and when it is relevant but it will not feature in a separate chapter either.

Chapter 2 on *Midnight's Children* will discuss how cinema is instrumental in debunking myths of the nation. The discussion will place a particular emphasis on the representation of women and nation. *Midnight's Children* first introduces Rushdie's idea of multiplicity, pluralism and hybridity with which he associates India and to which communalism is diametrically opposed, which he develops further in subsequent novels. *Midnight's Children* is informed by Bombay cinema and reflects and parodies it in its use of stock narrative devices, such as children switched at birth, or characters like the good ayah and in the transformation of Indira Gandhi into the Widow, the wicked witch of the East. The novel also introduces characters associated with the film industry such as Saleem's uncle Hanif and his starlet wife and the film producer Homi Catrack through whom Rushdie develops an aesthetic argument about realism and fantasy in relation to the idiom of Bombay cinema. The chapter also includes a close reading of Rushdie's Screenplay of *Midnight's Children* to further highlight the filmic elements of the novel. The chapter will argue that the use of Bombay cinema in *Midnight's Children* reveals the feminine as a trope in how nationhood is imagined and will further argue that representations of Bombay through cinematic visuals, which Rushdie extends to the whole of India, allow him to deconstruct India's myth of nation in the wake of the Emergency.

Chapter 3 will discuss *Shame* in relation to *Midnight's Children* and will examine the role of women and nation in both novels. It will focus on how Karachi and Pakistan become in *Shame* the antithesis to Bombay and India and will show how the notion of non-stop inventiveness and the potential of non-stop regeneration that Rushdie associates with India are portrayed as non-existent in Pakistan. Rushdie stresses

Pakistan's singularity rather than its multiplicity and argues that the threat of religious extremism brings with it a closure of possibilities. This chapter will analyse the central role of 'Woman' in Rushdie's exploration of the theme of shame, *sharam* and honour. Women attain mythic stature through their suffering and this chapter will explore how these 'larger-than-life' characters are constructed in filmic parameters and shape the narrative. This chapter will also explore the narrative of partition and its cinematic representation in the novel and different modes of representation and narrative forms of story-telling.

Chapter 4 on *The Satanic Verses* discusses how Rushdie deploys cinematic aesthetics on all levels of the narrative and how he uses them in his argument for hybridity in his negotiation of migrancy. The chapter will discuss the theme of migration by comparing the filmic intertext *Shree 420* and its engagement with migrancy, dislocation and identity in relation to Bombay with similar concerns in *The Satanic Verses* and trans-global migration to London. It will argue that Rushdie here extends the preoccupations of *Midnight's Children* to the global arena and will examine how Hindi cinema functions in different ways in the novel: as memory trigger, a way of imagining home and of portraying the effects of alienation for the characters in an epic story of good versus evil. By dislocating his narrative away from the subcontinent to the metropolitan centre of the former Empire, Rushdie can further interrogate the notion of the Imaginary Homeland and contrast it with ideas developed in *Midnight's Children* and through the narrator/author in *Shame*. The chapter analyses further how the novel uses elements of Hindi cinema, such as the song sequences to structure Hindi film superstar Gibreel Farishta's dream sequences. This strategy has been first introduced in *Midnight's Children* in the form of the fragmented body of Reverend Mother seen only through the perforated sheet, but Rushdie has refined this technique in *Shame* and uses it to even greater effect in *The Satanic Verses* by directly referencing song picturisation in Hindi cinema. Thus the chapter will argue that *The Satanic Verses* illustrates how cinema plays a role in the way the novel is structured and that this structure loosely resembles that of the Hindi film.

Chapter 5 will examine *The Moor's Last Sigh* as a companion volume to *Midnight's Children* and will pay particular attention to the way in which Rushdie revisits Bombay and perceives the recent changes that have transformed the city after the 1992/93 riots and bomb blasts. Two filmic intertexts *Mother India* and *Mr India* (1987) will be discussed to show how Rushdie constructs his alternative version of

Mother India and a different way of imagining India as a postcolonial nation. The chapter focuses on Rushdie's use of the conventions of Hindi cinema, specifically in the construction of the 'larger-than-life' artist Aurora Zogoiby and the important role of gossip and hearsay in this process. The chapter will interrogate how Rushdie develops the notion of 'Woman' from *Midnight's Children* as a trope with which nationhood is imagined after the dream of an eclectic, secular India goes up in flames after several bomb explosions in Bombay. The construction of the character of Aurora amalgamates Rushdie's experimentation in writing women and therefore merits particular attention. This chapter will also explore how Bombay is portrayed as a metaphor for modern India, which connects the novel thematically to Rushdie's previous novels. After being sidelined in *The Satanic Verses*, Bombay takes centre stage again. Thus the chapter will explore the novel as an intertext to *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* and will show how Rushdie constructs an arc between the novels that he concludes in the first third of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

Chapter 6 will focus on how Rushdie is moving away from cinemascope storytelling to a more polyphonic style. It will discuss how Rushdie constructs a postmodern reworking of myth in an age of globalisation and trans-global migrancy and how Rushdie uses the trope of discontinuous personalities that he has explored in *The Satanic Verses* in his retelling of the Orpheus myth. The chapter will examine how *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* reworks material from *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* through the minority of the Parsees and how the novel negotiates the shifting ground beneath its protagonists' feet in three metropolitan centres – Bombay, London and New York. While *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* focuses on music, it is also obsessed with picture-making – the narrator Rai is a free-lance photographer. The notion of picture-making as a form of art and its implications for memory and remembering shall therefore be a main focal point in a discussion of the novel. Furthermore the chapter discusses *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in conjunction with *Fury*. Both novels are concerned with diaspora, rather than the homeland and this chapter will make comparisons to a number of recent Bollywood movies that have also taken up this issue. The chapter also discusses the issue of superstardom and celebrity and how the star becomes a screen upon which the public projects its own aspirations, comparing the VTO phenomenon in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* to the star system in Bollywood cinema and the superstar intellectual in *Fury*.

Chapter 7 will explore *Shalimar the Clown* in the context of 1960s Hindi film *Mughal-e-Azam* and highlight how the film works in the novel as an important intertext. Rushdie uses the genre of the historical to make a wider argument about Kashmiri tolerance through allusions to Mughal rule in India. The chapter will also focus on the cinematic nature of writing and its intertextual relationship to the genre of the Hollywood thriller through filmic intertexts *Vertigo* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. The novel engages with conceptualisations of terror and terrorism in a globalised world and this chapter will demonstrate how Rushdie examines this in different localities, time periods and through the eyes of different individuals with vastly different experiences that lead to the reframing of discourses of citizenship, loyalty and nationhood. In *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie once again demonstrates how cinematic strategies allow him to create a panoramic screen within his novels that shows itself to be capacious enough to explore and to deeply question the politics of globalisation, nationhood and terrorism.

The Conclusion delineates Rushdie's fiction's and Hindi cinema's relationship with the city and will focus on the trajectory Bombay-London-New York that this thesis has charted and will briefly outline the role of different genres of Hindi films – 'social', 'mythological' and 'historical' – in Rushdie's narratives and how they influence and direct his political and philosophical arguments in his novels.

Notes:

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[1] My discussion refers to what is commonly know as 'Bollywood' as either Indian popular cinema, Bombay cinema or Hindi cinema, partly to escape the controversial debates about the term. 'Bollywood', a composite taking the 'Bo-' in Bombay and grafting it onto the '-llywood' of Hollywood, has become the standard designation for the Indian film industry as a whole, and is often used as a blanket over-generalisation, that throws together the various regional cinemas of India and often now even includes India's art house or new cinema. The term itself is contentious. It is not quite clear where it originated from, although it has been suggested that it has been coined by a journalist writing for the film magazine *Cineblitz*. In her excellent introduction to Indian popular cinema Nasreen Munni Kabir explains: 'The Bollywood name has divided critics, filmmakers and stars, many of whom refuse to use it. They believe it sets up Hindi cinema against Hollywood movies in an overly simplified and patronizing way, and blithely implies that conventions that work for Tom Cruise will work equally well for Aamir Khan, or that Kajol can change places with Julia Roberts. But despite such valid protests, the term has become common currency in both India and elsewhere. Most people find it a useful way of identifying Bombay productions' (Kabir 2001, 21).

[2] While Rushdie remains a controversial novelist in India, there is admiration for the way in which his novels manage to encapsulate the spirit of Bombay's Golden Age. Jerry Pinto and Naresh Fernandes in their collection *Bombay, Meri Jaan: writings on Mumbai* call Rushdie '*the* storyteller of Bombay' (Pinto/Fernandes 2003, 112).

[3] For an interesting discussion see the essays in Kaarsholm, Preben, ed. 2004. *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience*. Calcutta and New Delhi: Seagull Books.

[4] Rushdie, like these other great Indian writers writing in English, faces a similar artistic problem. Rao in particular was concerned to find a way of expressing the Indian reality of village life in a language that was not 'native' to India, but a colonial export. In his Foreword to *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao describes the challenges and predicaments for Indian writers writing in English: 'One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. [...] We are all instinctively bilingual. [...] Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialectic which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American' (Rao 1989, i). Furthermore, Rao addresses the problem of style and the difficulty of expressing the Indian tempo of life that needs to be infused into English expressions and needs to reflect the style of Indian storytelling. Rushdie, although not a fan of Rao, is faced with the same predicament. He was inspired by Desani's undertakings in *All About H. Hatterr*, which, in his article 'The Empire writes Back with a vengeance', he describes as 'the first great stroke of the decolonising pen', and looked to India's oral story-telling tradition, the Indian religious epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, as well as the *Arabian Nights*.

[5] Vilayet, literally meaning 'foreign land' in Hindi, is used as a name for England. The term is used in *The Satanic Verses* and sets England up as the promised land that falls short of expectations. Thus the story of the migrants in their fight against racist attacks becomes not the *Mahabharata* but *Mahavilayet*, the epic of the great foreign country (Rushdie 1998, 283).

[6] By contrast, Vikram Chandra's novel *Sacred Games* as well as his short story collection *Love and Longing in Bombay* give a much more rounded picture of the fabric of Bombay by engaging with people from different social spheres as well as incorporating more detailed descriptions of the different locations of the city.

[7] This period of transformation in Bombay culminated in the advent of independence and paved the way for Bombay's boom in the following decade. Rushdie's treatment of Bombay in his novels needs to be read as an engagement with, even a response to, this changing cultural landscape of the city. In this context it is worth considering Raymond Williams's argument in his 1989 book *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*. Williams analyses the specific location of the artist in relation to the changing cultural milieu of the metropolis. Although Williams writes about the western metropolis, there are some correlations with Bombay, a city that, although situated in India has always been looking to the West. Williams argues: 'It [the metropolis] was the place where new social and economic and cultural relations, beyond both city and nation in their older senses, were beginning to be formed: a distinct historical phase which was in fact to be extended, in the second half of the twentieth century, at least potentially, to the whole world' (Williams 2007, 44). The advent of Art Deco, its adaptation in Bombay, is perhaps an example how this process impacted on a colonial city like Bombay.

[8] The 1930s and early 1940s in particular saw an unprecedented building boom, economic growth and accelerated activity in the move towards independence, which paved the way for the city's prosperity. The emblem of this move to modernity was the adoption and adaptation of the Art Deco style to build the city's apartment blocks, cinemas and department stores. According to Dwivedi and Mehrotra in *Bombay: the Cities Within*, from 1933 to 1942 the building boom climaxed as the population of Bombay increased to 1.49 million with the need for space and land escalating (2001, 242). This building boom coincided with Art Deco becoming the prevalent style. Dwivedi and Mehrotra note: 'In many ways this unique style became symbolic of the last burst of westernisation that engulfed the city before India gained independence in the following decade' (2001, 246). Part of the successful adoption of Art Deco and its representation in interiors and architecture was due to Bombay's social and cultural scene frequented by Bombay's business and upper-class community. Art Deco was highly influential in the transformation of the old Fort Area of the city as well as the Back Bay reclamation scheme between Marine Drive and Churchgate. Its application was consistent with the original style, although less elaborate than in New York. As Dwivedi and Mehrotra observe, the style was readily adapted to local needs and to the available technology in Bombay (Dwivedi/Mehrotra 2001, 247). The development of Art Deco into a Bombay style impacted greatly on the design and look of the city. According to Dwivedi and Mehrotra, 'the development of Art Deco rapidly replaced Bombay's image from a Victorian to a cosmopolitan and modern city' (Dwivedi/Mehrotra 2001, 247).

[9] Homi Bhabha concerns himself with Rushdie's conceptualisation of hybridity in relation to *The Satanic Verses*, which he discusses in 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation' (Bhabha 1994, 139-170) and 'How newness enters the world: postmodern space, postcolonial times and

trials of cultural translation' (Bhabha 1994, 212-235). Rushdie writes back to this by making fun of the title in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The tile of Zeenat Vakil's thesis is '*Imperso-Nation and Dis/Semi/Nation: Dialogics of Eclecticism and Interrogations of Authenticity in A.Z.*' (Rushdie 1996b, 329).

[10] Vijay Mishra and Douglas Hodge have demonstrated this in their reading of *Midnight's Children*: 'For postmodernism, Rushdie's questioning of historical certainties is exemplary of its own project; for the post-colonial what is important is the way in which another, lost master-narrative recalled through the creative power of *maya*, of illusion, is used to free the colonized. [...] Whereas a postmodern reading of *Midnight's Children* would emphasize play and deferral, a fully post-colonial reading will locate the meaning of untranslated words and the special, culture-specific resonances of the text. It might even offer a radical reshaping or rethinking of what Habermas has called our "communicative rationality"' (Mishra/Hodge 1993, 282). For an interesting reading of *The Satanic Verses* as a text that is at the same time postmodern and postcolonial see Aravamudan 1989, 3-20.

[11] Rushdie elaborates on this in 'The Empire writes back with a vengeance' (Rushdie 1982, 8).

[12] According to Rachel Dwyer in *All You Want is Money, All You Need is Love: Sex and Romance in Modern India*, the rise of the middle classes is closely intertwined with the growth and development of Bombay. According to Dwyer, 'the bourgeoisie was not a single community, but included a wide spectrum of castes and also of social class from the small shopkeeper to the rich merchant, who might aspire to the highest social status and could certainly dominate the commercial, and to some extent the political, life of the city' (Dwyer 2000, 65). The city saw the emergence of a mercantile middle class, and an intellectual and professional middle class, which became prominent with the introduction of a new education system in the mid-nineteenth century (Dwyer 2000, 69). The most significant change to the structure of the Bombay middle classes came with Independence. The partition of British India in 1947 significantly altered the social fabric of the city, as many of the Muslim elite left Bombay while some 200,000 migrants arrived in the city (Dwyer 2000, 73). Dwyer describes the first decade of independence as 'by and large a middle-class rule and is looked back to as a golden age for the professional and intellectual middle classes, a time of high morality, ending with the defeat by China in 1962' (Dwyer 2000, 74).

[13] For an interesting discussion see Young, Robert. 1990. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. London: Routledge.

[14] Bhabha argues: 'Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent "in-between" space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present' (Bhabha 1994, 7).

[15] The formulaic nature of the Bombay film is often cited as one of its defining features. However, it should not be accepted as a given. It seems an incredibly reductive way of looking at Bombay cinema. If there were only a set formula to follow, every film would be a hit. There are certain elements that the film audience will require, but it is how these elements are modulated, expanded and reworked that will determine the success or failure of a film. This process is likened to the blending of spices, the masala mix.

[16] This will be discussed in further detail in relation to the magical gifts of the Midnight's Children as a symbol of hope and possibility that is destroyed, Sufiya Zinobia's transformation into a violent beastly figure as the avatar of shame and shamelessness, indicting a corrupt political elite, and Salahuddin Chamchawala's transformation into the devil that mirrors the demonisation of the immigrant community in Britain in the early 1980s.

[17] For a synopsis of these films and film-stills see the Appendix, 298-304.

[18] According to Vasudevan, nineteenth century Victorian melodrama had a considerable influence on the development of the melodramatic mode in Bombay cinema. Rosie Thomas further elaborates on this: 'Thus, traditional entertainment forms, notably village dramatizations of the mythological epics and also, more directly, the urban nineteenth- and twentieth-century Parsee theater with its adaptations of Shakespeare and Victorian melodrama, inflected this development, interacting, of course, with many other developments' (Thomas 1995, 161). Many writers, directors and performers made the transition from stage to screen and worked in the film industry. Rachel Dwyer notes the influence of Parsi theatre

companies that were largely responsible for the promotion of a new urban theatre that was superseded by cinema in the twentieth century (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 14). This theatre is marked by its eclecticism, drawing on Shakespeare, Victorian melodrama, modern versions of Sanskrit drama as well as original work (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 14). According to Dwyer, 'the plays included songs and dance set between long dialogues and displayed many features that we later find in Hindi films, notably the presentation of a series of attractions [...] such as miracles, which interrupted the narrative, and the use of song and dance' (Dwyer/Patel 2002, 14).

[19] Vijay Mishra in his analysis of Bombay Cinema's melodramatic staging argues that 'in Bombay Cinema (which began as a colonial form) one of the great borrowed literary forms has been melodrama' where its 'expressive possibilities [...] are taken up in a highly localized manner' (Mishra 2002, 35). Although there are some similarities, there is no simple transposition of the melodramatic mode of Western literary tradition or the Hollywood film. As Mishra argues, melodrama is used selectively. Furthermore in its construction of archetypal figures Bombay cinema is directly related to the great Indian epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. These epic pretexts have been mediated through the crucible of Parsi theatre. As Mishra claims, the Parsi theatrical traditions in its cultural hybridity became a repository of stories, themes and dialogues for cinema in India (Mishra 2002, 9).

[20] See Rushdie/Ball 2000,106-107 and Rushdie/Pattanayak 1983, 20

[21] M Madhava Prasad discusses the Indian star system in the context of the Hindu practice of *darsana*. According to Prasad, 'darsana refers to the relation of perception within public traditions of Hindu worship, especially in the temples, but also in public appearances of monarchs and other elevated figures. Typically this structure is constituted by the combination of three elements : the divine image, the worshipper and the mediating priest. [...]the act of going to the temple is perceived as involving the "taking of darsana (*drasana lena*) by the devotee and the "giving" of darasana (*darsana dena*) by the divinity in question. [...] The practice signifies a mediated bringing to (god's) presence of the subject, who, by being seen by the divine image, comes to be included in the order instituted and supported by that divinity' (Prasad 1998, 74-75). In this respect, Jaikumar argues that because of these different notions of visuality that is based on a sense of interaction across distance and 'of an explicitly hierarchical structuring of the image that intrudes into the film's mimetic capabilities', it is different from the voyeurism that defines the relationship between viewer and filmic text in Hollywood film theory (Jaikumar 2006, 197)

[22] For a detailed analysis of the mythological film see Dwyer, Rachel. 2006. *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian cinema*. London: Routledge.

[23] This seems to articulate the debate between the commercial sector of film-making and the Calcutta film society in the 1950s, a debate that was shaped largely by Satyajit Ray, who was deeply critical of the commercial cinema. See for instance his 1948 essay 'What is Wrong with Indian films' and his 1967 essay 'Those Songs' in Ray, Satyajit. 1976. *Our Films, Their Films*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

[24] In an Interview with Ginny Dougary Rushdie admits: 'Although other people have liked it [...] I think Martin [Amis] likes it but, as I say, it embarrasses me' (Rushdie/Dougary 2005). In a 1984 interview with Kumkum Sangari Rushdie elaborates on this: 'I've said before that I don't hear my voice in *Grimus*. [...] The most important lesson I taught myself, by looking into why *Grimus* was a bad book, was that the fantasy was not connected to any observable reality, that these elements of fantasy must grow out of something I know and people can recognise' (Rushdie/Sangari 2001, 72). In *Grimus*, Rushdie claims, he had not yet found his voice as an author. In this respect, he sees it as an apprentice piece: 'So perhaps I had to write *Grimus* in order to understand how to write the others. At the time it was very painful because it involved rejecting, more or less completely, one's entire intellectual framework' (Rushdie/Sangari 2001, 72).

Chapter 2

Midnight's Children: Unravelling the Riddle of Midnight

Midnight's Children is Rushdie's first novel set in India and his first where he uses cinematic storytelling. The novel won Rushdie the Booker prize and established his reputation as a novelist. Furthermore, the novel paved the way for a younger generation of novelists from the subcontinent who often emulated Rushdie's style of storytelling. Rushdie has remained a distinctive literary voice for more than three decades and *Midnight's Children* remains his most widely acclaimed work. The idea for the novel lay initially with Rushdie's preoccupation of restoring his childhood Bombay to himself. According to Liz Calder, his former editor at Jonathan Cape, after his debut novel *Grimus*, Rushdie worked on an unpublished novel titled *Madam Rama*, which was about the movie industry. Liz Calder states, however: 'I read it and I said I didn't think it worked as it stood, though it had absolutely marvelous material in it. He agreed, as did other publishers. So he put it to one side' (Weatherby 1990, 38). *Midnight's Children*'s central character, Saleem Sinai, comes from another still-born novel, *The Antagonist* (Rushdie 2006a, ix/x). In *Midnight's Children* Rushdie develops his hall-mark style of multi-layered storytelling, teeming, turbulent and ever-digressing, first signs of which can be seen in his debut novel *Grimus*.

Midnight's Children has been influenced by many writers, literary styles and other novels. Western literary scholars have traced many of the influences to Western literature, such as Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* as well as Charles Dickens, while Rushdie has volunteered other influences on his writing such as Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville and Machado de Assis.[1] Rushdie's fiction has also been linked to the South American Magical Realist tradition, most notably Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.[2] While my discussion acknowledges these influences, I will privilege Rushdie's subcontinental heritage and will emphasise the influence of India's storytelling tradition on the novel, a tradition that bridges different media – oral storytelling, film, music, visual art, folklore.

Midnight's Children draws on the conventions of Bombay cinema, reflected in the way the novel uses stock narrative devices and often parodies them. This chapter will read *Midnight's Children* through the idiom of the Bombay film. It will look at how cinema is instrumental in debunking myths of the nation with a particular emphasis on the representation of women. I will argue that the use of Bombay cinema in *Midnight's Children* reveals the feminine as a trope in how nationhood is imagined and will further

argue that representations of Bombay through cinematic visuals, which Rushdie extends to the whole of India, allow him to deconstruct India's myth of nation in the wake of the Emergency. The novel first introduces Rushdie's idea of multiplicity, pluralism and hybridity with which he associates India and to which communalism is diametrically opposed. Rushdie uses a distinctly visual and cinematic style to convey the main thrust of his argument how the dream of a nation expressed by Nehru on the Eve of Independence could turn into a nightmare through the despotic streak of his daughter and her declaration of a state of internal emergency in 1975. Against the historical backdrop of thirty years of Indian independence, Rushdie, through his narrator Saleem, narrates an ever-digressive tale. At its centre lies the epic saga of the Sinai family.

Salman and the Sea of Stories

Midnight's Children is a novel that agglomerates several streams of stories that are interconnected through an array of leitmotifs, such as the silver spittoon, the pointed finger, the Midnight's Children, pickling, or the perforated sheet. The perforated sheet is perhaps the sturdiest of these recurring motifs as it is linked with Rushdie's narrative method. The concrete object of the perforated sheet illustrates the method of storytelling in the novel. Rushdie explains:

> Well, having found the image of the sheet with the hole, it began immediately to feel like a metaphor for the way in which the whole book was written, and it became helpful to me as a way of understanding how to write the book. To fall in love with something seen only in little bits and to make the composite figure in your imagination, and then fall in love with it, seemed not unlike what I was trying to do. So all those deliberate uses of phrases [the 'partitioned' woman, the 'sectioned' woman, the 'collage'], such as the ones you mentioned, were there to steer the reader in that direction.
>
> (Reynolds/Noakes 2003, 12)

Rushdie's observations regarding this metaphor are striking insofar as they are not only relevant to how women are imagined in the novel, but also to the functioning of memory. Rushdie puzzles together the fragments of his memory of Bombay in an aim to restore his Bombay childhood to himself. This leitmotif is stretched, perhaps overplayed to excess, recurring over and over again in different guises. For example, the sheet's link to the partitioned woman is extended to the discovery and imagining of a national consciousness. Through the perforated sheet, Saleem's grandfather pieces together the fragments that add up to an image of his future wife Naseem. The Heidelberg-educated young doctor is called to the landowner Ghani's House to examine his daughter who is suffering from an upset stomach. However, because she is in purdah, her father cannot

allow Aziz to see his daughter and comes up with the plan to seat his daughter behind a sheet with a big hole in the middle. The doctor then has to specify which part of the patient he needs to see to give his diagnosis.[3] Through this process, Aziz accumulates an image of Naseem through the fragmented parts that become whole when she develops the long sought-for headache.

The perforated sheet as an object mirrors Saleem's shifting perspective as narrator. His perspective switches back and forth from the panoramic and sweeping, to the up-close and personal. As a narrative strategy, he deploys this throughout the novel. However the shift in perspective is most crucial and noticeable in the third section of the novel. Saleem's focus becomes narrower and narrower the more he realises that he is not central to the history of the country, but that this role of centrality belongs to Indira Gandhi, fictionalised in *Midnight's Children* as the Widow, re-imagined in Saleem's nightmares as the Wicked Witch of the East in a nod to *The Wizard of Oz* (see Rushdie 1995a, 207-208).[4] By the end of the novel, Saleem has become marginal in his own story, which is also his initial position of enunciation. The reader is made aware from the beginning from which position he writes and tells his tale, which raises several questions about his role as the narrator of the story. Does he try to reclaim his central role in the story of his life, or is his act of writing his autobiography, a form of confessional, his way of admitting defeat? Bearing these concerns in mind, what strategies does Saleem use to keep his audience captivated, interested and on his side? How believable is he, especially since he hints constantly at his own unreliability? He creates this impression through his ever more elaborate attempts to maintain his centrality in his story. Some answers to the above questions can be found in the way cinema becomes an idiom through which Saleem tells his ever-digressing narrative.

The motif of the Midnight's Children is intrinsically linked to Saleem's realisation of marginality and closely connected to the examination of the politics of the novel in its firm and uncompromising critique of Indira Gandhi and her declaration of a state of internal emergency. The novel charts, albeit loosely and in fragments, India's history, or, to be more precise, writes a version of Indian history, from the last years of the Raj, beginning in 1915, to the lifting of the Emergency in 1977, ending with the country's thirtieth anniversary of Independence. Initially, the novel examines the struggle for Independence, in which Saleem's grandfather takes an active part, and explores possible alternatives to the partition of the subcontinent. All these debates, which dominate the first part of the novel, come to nothing, which is reflected in the

name of the Rani of Cooch Naheen, Hindi for the Rani of 'nothing at all', under whose patronage these discussions take place.

With an agreement on Partition, the countdown begins towards the Midnight Hour of 14 August 1947, at which India makes its tryst with destiny and 1001 Midnight's Children are born. They become a metaphor for the country's hopes and possibilities that Independence brings with it. Linked to the Midnight's Children is also the motif of the Midnight Hour and its association with magic. Yet the novel later also plays on the Midnight Hour being the hour of nightmares. Thus the wicked witch of the East, Indira Gandhi, and her declaration of the Emergency are linked to the witching hour. Saleem parallels and diametrically opposes two Midnight Hours, India's arrival at Independence and the inception of the state of internal emergency in 1975 at which point Indira Gandhi assumes autocratic rule over the country. The death of democracy and the polarisation of society that it brings with it is presented in the novel as the death of an idea of India as it is outlined by Nehru in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on the Eve of Independence, which is intercut with Saleem's birth.[5] Similarly, the birth of the Emergency is intercut with the birth of Saleem's wife's child. The dismantling of the rule of law and the assumption of autocratic rule brings with it heavy press censorship, which is reflected in baby Aadam's two-year refusal to utter a single word, slum clearances as part of city beautification programs, and an extreme form of birth control.[6] The forced sterilisation, the performance of a variety of '-ectomies', draining out all hope, transforms the metaphor of the Midnight's Children into one of hope betrayed and possibility denied.

Rushdie introduces into the novel a film vocabulary that he uses as a given. He uses montages, close ups, fade outs, intercuts, dissolves, sometimes he portrays the action in the style of a documentary, sometimes a Bombay film melodrama or action movie. The novel teems with cinematic visuals and they produce a very striking effect.[7] For example, a distinct documentary style allows for a more immediate portrayal of the horrors of the Amritsar massacre, while Bombay-film-style melodrama works well in portraying the larger-than-life characters in his own family and their often bizarre family life. The action sequences in his confrontation with Shiva, too, bear traces of the 1970s action drama and seem like an indirect comment on the films that were produced in Bombay at the time, reflecting the heightened tensions and aggressions during the Emergency (see Rushdie 1995a, 347). Indeed the rebellious Shiva is an implicit reminder of the hero of 1970s Bombay cinema, 'the Angry Young Man'. In *Midnight's*

Children, Rushdie strategically deploys Bombay cinema's stock narrative devices, such as the good ayah, children switched at birth or the epic family saga, to melodramatic and comedic effect. He deploys them always in view of underlining the vision of Nehru and his ideal of postcolonial independent India.[8]

The eclecticism of Saleem's legacy is achieved through the very popular Bombay film device of switching children at birth. He becomes a motley agglomeration of dubious and multiple parentage and ancestry, which mirrors that of the whole country. Saleem is and is not his parents' son. He is the bastard child of the departing British colonialist William Methwold who has acquired a taste for lower-class Indian women, namely the wife of the street-singer Wee Willie Winkie. Because of Mary Pereira's act of switching him and Amina Sinai's child, spurred on by her crazed love for the Marxist petty criminal Joe d'Acosta, Saleem leads the privileged life of the little rich kid, while his rival Shiva, whose place Saleem has involuntarily usurped, has to lead the tough life of a street beggar. Saleem's identity is patched together and all these elements are part of his fragmentary self. Rushdie notes that for Saleem, the hit song 'Mera Joota Hai Japani' from *Shree 420* could also be his theme tune (Rushdie 1992a, 11).[9] The motley agglomeration of selfhood acquires further thematic significance in *The Satanic Verses*.

Saleem's quest for identity is parallel to that of the country. Rushdie suggests that India is made up of a patchwork of cultural signifiers – religious, popular cultural, national – mirrored in the linguistic plurality of the country. Thus Saleem, Midnight's Child, switched at birth by the woman who was later to become his Christian ayah, is raised a Muslim, not a Hindu. He is committed to secularism through his parents' upbringing, yet his narrative swarms with references to the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The role given to the Sabarmati case in *Midnight's Children* highlights this well. The Sabarmati case as it is narrated could not be staged more melodramatically. Here, the novel questions modernity and tradition, and the episode is a good example of the interplay between the relationship of Bombay cinema's moral code and Saleem's view of morality within his own narrative. Rosie Thomas underlines the relationship between the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the moral universe of the Bombay film from which Saleem also draws:

> It would appear that it was not simply the fact that the tales of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were familiar throughout India that ensured their suitability but the fact that [...] they offered the framework for melodrama, within which the perennial battle between good and evil could become the arena in which the 'modern' can be constantly negotiated.

(Thomas 1995, 180)

Rushdie's reworking of the Nanavati case that held India spellbound in 1959/60 illustrates Thomas's observation well.[10] The Nanavati case, which Rushdie adapts in the novel as the Sabarmati case, was associated in the popular imagination with the abduction of Sita by the evil demon king Ravana and her restitution to Rama.[11] Bombay cinema often uses elements of these myths, and Saleem also infuses his story with these references and transposes them on his characters. On the one hand, he stresses India's and his family's secularism. On the other hand, he demonstrates how the mythology of independent, secular, democratic India is reliant on the ancient religious mythology for its new secular mythology.[12]

This connects the novel further with Bombay cinema, which also draws from the old myths, reinventing them for a modern audience. For example, a film such as *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977),[13] one of the first proper masala films, accumulating a string of episodic highlights edited to form a seemingly organic spectacle, tells the story of three brothers separated from their mother and each other through a combination of fate and villainy, after their father takes the blame for somebody else's crime. The sons are raised as Amar by a Hindu policeman, Akbar by a Muslim tailor and Anthony by a Catholic priest. The brothers are separated and meet again under a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, seemingly giving the film more gravitas in its portrayal of a secular society that post-independence India is meant to be, arguing for religious tolerance. As Meenakshi Mukherjee notes, the film could be seen as intertextual in the way in which it echoes Rushdie's imagining of India's secular modernity in *Midnight's Children*:

> There may be an element of comic and parodic exaggeration in the rendition of an easy co-existence of diversity in the land of his birth, encapsulated for example in *Amar-Akbar-Anthony* fashion, in the varieties of mothers Saleem has: biological, adoptive and nutrient – Vanita, Amina and Mary Pereira, and the many fathers he acquires through life – British, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh – but this playfulness does not go against the central project of the novel.
>
> (Mukherjee, 2000, 177)

These parallels are also revealing with regard to the way in which Rushdie uses cinematic storytelling as a narrative strategy in the novel. Cinema is intricately woven into the plotline of *Midnight's Children*, and the visual scope of the novel is further highlighted when comparing and contrasting Rushdie's screenplay with the novel.

The screenplay of *Midnight's Children*

After the novel won the Booker of Bookers in 1993, Salman Rushdie was approached by the BBC and Channel Four to produce a TV miniseries of the novel.[14] The project

was never completed due to a number of difficulties Rushdie recorded in his introduction to the screenplay which was subsequently published by Vintage in 1999. According to Rushdie, it was a mammoth project that involved 'two writers, three directors, at least four producers and a whole passionately dedicated production team [...], and which foundered for political reasons when everything was in place and the beginning of principal photography was only a few weeks away' (Rushdie 1999, 1). Rushdie favoured the BBC because of its ability to fund and produce the serial itself as well as the presence of Alan Yentob, a friend of Rushdie's, as head of drama at the BBC. The agreed format was a feature-length first episode followed by four fifty-minute episodes, a running length of about five hours in total. After some drafting difficulties Rushdie took over as scriptwriter, largely rewriting the original script. The only thing Rushdie retained was the dialogue taken from the novel. Rushdie has been ruthless in adapting the novel as a screenplay. Some characters have been cut, such as Mian Abdullah or peripheral characters such as snake expert Dr Schaapsteker, Evie Burns or the Narliker women, as well as long sequences such as the war in the Rann of Kutch. This has simplified many of the storylines that digress in the novel, while still retaining the essence of the novel and its arguments. Most striking is the way in which Rushdie kills off his characters and readjusts the storyline and his characters' life stories to fit into the narrative structure of a fifty minute episode, which is much more successful than a later attempt at adapting the novel into a three hour version for the stage.[15]

Rushdie as the adaptor of his own novel makes ruthless changes in order to construct a dramatic arc within each episode as well as over the whole series, yet he is careful enough with the original to maintain the essence of the novel, such as its preoccupations with memory and childhood adolescence in Bombay, the pressures of family life, unrequited love, as well as the politics of post-independence India. These are not easy to juggle and condense, yet he is aware of what is effective on screen and more effective on the page within the confines of a book.[16] In his own words: 'Books and movies are different languages, and attempts at translation often fail' (Rushdie 1999, 2). In an interview he sounds more optimistic: 'I would think that there always is a solution with film' (Rushdie/Tripathi, Vakil 2000, 81).

Rushdie has made some tough choices. For example, the Amritsar massacre in 1919, the first instance in the novel where Saleem overtly uses cinematic visuals in his descriptions, happens off-stage in the screenplay. It seems to be a reminder and makes

concrete Saleem's observation that '[m]ost of what matters in our lives takes place in our absence' (Rushdie 1995a, 19). Perhaps it is also a statement against visualisations of the massacre in films such as Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982). Rushdie's choice has a great impact, much like the powerful suggestion of atrocities in Shakespearean tragedy, where through suggestion rather than full visualisation the horror of the atrocity is reinforced as it takes place in the viewer's mind. Especially in times of over-visualisation of horrific historical events this seems like an effective depiction.

In the novel, Saleem adopts a documentary style to narrate this incident and for the first time uses technical terms of film production. Saleem describes his grandfather watching a street scene in Amritsar on 7 April 1919, suffering from an olfactory attack on his senses by the pungent smell of excrement, while his wife suffers from a headache. One week before the actual massacre, Aziz has a sense of the tensions in the air. The itch in his nose forewarns Aziz that 'something was not right here' (Rushdie 1995a, 32). Saleem then cuts to a close-up of his grandfather's right hand. Between thumb and forefinger he was holding a pamphlet. Saleem now cuts to a long-shot, asserting 'nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary' (Rushdie 1995a, 33).[17] He goes on to describe the events of 13 April in the Jallianwala Bagh. After Saleem cuts to his long-shot, he intercuts events in the hotel room with events elsewhere. In the hotel room Aziz appeals to Naseem:

> 'Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman.'
> ... While in the Cantonment area, at British Army H.Q., one Brigadier R. E. Dyer is waxing his moustache.'
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 34)

Saleem shifting from one scene to another is denoted in the text by an ellipsis, but the reader has been made aware by the narrator of the filmic connection, which has the effect that the reader visualises the events as a film. Furthermore, through Saleem adopting a camera gaze in Amritsar, his intrusive narratorial voice becomes detached and allows for a seemingly neutral depiction of events, as the true horror unfolds. This form of narration foreshadows that of later incidents, such as the events in the Sundarbans and the forced sterilisations in the Widow's Hostel in Benares. These nuances do not translate easily, are lost in a visualisation on the screen and therefore Rushdie's bold choice seems to be the right one.

The screenplay needed to condense the action, while staying true to the original and needed to translate the material imaginatively. This is largely achieved through structure as well as adapting storylines to enhance some of the impact of events on

screen. The longer first episode covers events from Aadam Aziz's return from Heidelberg to Saleem's birth. The second episode is concerned with Saleem's childhood in Bombay and ends with the discovery that Saleem's blood group does not match with either of his parents. Episode three narrates Saleem's exile in Pakistan and his return to Bombay, his stay with his Uncle Hanif, as well as his revenge on his mother by sending the anonymous letter to Commander Sabarmati. The episode ends with the death of Hanif and Aadam Aziz and the family deciding to move from Bombay to Pakistan as Methwold Estate is demolished to make way for high-rise developments. In the fourth episode, Saleem discovers his sense of smell, falls in love with his 'sister' who embarks on her singing career, and the wiping out of his family in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. The narrative then skips forward to the war of secession of Pakistan's East Wing, where Saleem, suffering from memory loss and becoming a man-dog, joins the Pakistani Army's canine unit. The episode ends with the independence celebrations of Bangladesh, the defeat of the Pakistani Army by India and Saleem's rediscovery of his name through the chance meeting with Parvati the witch who takes him with her to Delhi. The final episode deals mainly with the Emergency. Saleem arrives back in India, marries Parvati the Witch and becomes aware of a plot to eliminate the Midnight's Children. Captured by Shiva during a slum clearance, he is abducted to Benares, imprisoned in the Widow's Hostel and tortured into betraying the whereabouts of all the Midnight's Children who are subsequently rounded up and forcefully sterilised and drained of their magical gifts. The episode ends with Saleem's return to Bombay as a broken man with baby Aadam and after the competition in the Midnight's Confidential Club he seeks out the Braganza Pickle factory where he is reunited with his ayah.

Every single episode is structured around a climax: Episode one around India's arrival at independence, episode two around the first ten years of independence and events such as Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and the partition of the state of Bombay, episode three around the coup in Pakistan, episode four around the Indo-Pakistan War and the secession of Bangladesh. The final episode climaxes with the Emergency and the perpetrated atrocities in the Widow's Hostel in Benares. Rushdie then arranges his narrative around these crucial events, thus 'handcuffing' Saleem to history. Lifafa Das and his Peepshow machine play a more prominent role in the screenplay effectively introducing each episode, giving a short preview of what the viewer can expect in the episode as he is shown a series of black and white postcards.

The first episode commences, unlike the novel, with Ramram Seth's prophecy and then cuts to Amina giving birth. As a voice-over Saleem explains his and the Midnight's Children's unique position: 'All over India, in that midnight hour, children were born who were also children of the time: fathered, you understand, by history. It can happen. Especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream' (Rushdie 1999, 17). In a montage, the faces of baby Saleem and Shiva and then of other babies are mixed together in a composite, undulating like a flag behind which flies the saffron, white and green flag of independent India. Then the scene shifts to the 30-year-old Saleem in the Braganza Pickle Factory, writing his memoir and narrating his story to the intrusive Padma. From the beginning, Rushdie highlights the centrality of Midnight's Child and the birth of independent India that is later paralleled with the birth of baby Aadam at the inception of the Emergency. These flashbacks as well as skipping forward in time become more obvious in the screenplay than in the novel, which is perhaps due to an increased narrative drive and call for linearity within the structure of the screenplay. These jumps, however, do seem organic and work in terms of keeping suspense and interest.

Through visualisation, Rushdie's critique of post-Independence India's politics becomes more pronounced. If anything, because of the death of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the death of her son Sanjay in 1981, Rushdie can now be even more hard-hitting in his criticism of the Emergency. Indira Gandhi sued Rushdie and his publisher successfully over a passage in *Midnight's Children* that Rushdie had to delete from subsequent editions of the novel.[18] In the screenplay, however, Rushdie increases his criticism of Sanjay. Indira Gandhi hovers over the Emergency like an invisible presence, while the perpetrators of the slum clearances and mass sterilisations all have a resemblance to Sanjay Gandhi. Rushdie remains ambiguous about who is in control of the proceedings, although it becomes clear that all the orders go back to the highest government offices and ultimately Indira Gandhi is held responsible. Thus the visualisation of the Emergency, of Indira Gandhi's ultimate betrayal, can be handled with even greater directness.

Rushdie has also made bold choices in partly rewriting characters' lives and plotlines to fit in better with the dramatic arcs of each episode. Rushdie has a knack for ruthlessly dispensing with his characters when they have lost their apparent usefulness in his narrative and the screenplay is no exception, where even characters who survive in the novel, though their whereabouts remain unknown, are killed off to provide

unambiguous closure to the narrative threads that are often left open in the novel. For instance, his sister Jamila does not find refuge in a convent but is wiped out in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 together with her aunt Pia and Reverend Mother inside their petrol station. General Zulfikar, his aunt Emerald's husband, has an extended lease of life in the screenplay, commanding Pakistan's troops in Bangladesh, only to be assassinated when he surrenders to the Indian army. Most strikingly, Shiva dies in the screenplay in a motorcycle accident, the only midnight's child not subjected to the '-ectomies' performed in the Widow's Hostel, but one of the most loyal henchmen of the government. The events in the Widow's Hostel are played out like the final showdown between Shiva and Saleem as Shiva wreaks his final revenge on the little rich boy who took his place, which meant that he lived a life in poverty. In the end, Shiva is crushed by a truck, while on the run, after Indira Gandhi has been unceremoniously kicked out of office in the general election held after the Emergency. Perhaps a screen adaptation needs a certain level of closure, but in the novel it is significant that the whereabouts and fate of Shiva remain unknown to reinforce the unresolved dualism between the two. Saleem imagines him to be dead, but he is not certain. Indeed in the novel he admits that he made his demise up in order to lull himself into a false sense of security, which is further proof of his unreliability in his role as narrator.

The screenplay's ending also diverges. The novel ends with Saleem disappearing into the crowd on his own. In the screenplay, he walks into the crowd hand in hand with Padma to celebrate India's anniversary of independence. Yet they are separated by the crowd and are swept in opposite directions as both disappear in a mass of humanity.[19] The screenplay, too, does not necessarily pronounce on the future, but hints only at the possibility of marriage between Saleem and Padma. The tone of both endings remains the same.

Rushdie has effectively condensed his novel into a screenplay and has adhered to what Walter Murch expressed in a conversation with Michael Ondaatje: 'As a rule, when you're adapting a novel to film, you have to ask, What's the short story of this novel? And then make certain fateful decisions. The obvious truth about film is that it's highly redundant visually' (Ondaatje 2003, 126). Thus in adapting the novel Rushdie had to cut through the visual redundancy of film on top of the story abundance of the novel, while staying true to the spirit of the novel. The screenplay is much more infused with elements of Hindi cinema. There are song-and-dance sequences, over-powering

larger-than-life villains, the melodrama of family life is further accentuated, the high romance of star-crossed lovers is much more foregrounded, and the screenplay deploys them to great effect. In the novel they form part of a whole series of streams of stories that come together in Rushdie's examination of India's politics from the birth of the nation at Independence to the Emergency.

Mythic nations, national myths

Midnight's Children is not only concerned with the birth of a nation but also an ideal of India that Nehru described in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on the Eve of Independence: a country that is free, secular, democratic and socialist in outlook.[20] These principles are further developed in *The Discovery of India*, which Nehru wrote during his five month imprisonment in 1944. Nehru seeks here to answer two specific questions: 'What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir?' (Nehru 2004, 25) By looking at India's past, he seeks to make sense of his position in relation to India so it will allow him a better understanding of what it means to be 'Indian' and by extension how India can build a better future for herself. Nehru likens this to a journey of discovery. He finds a common mythic bond that all Indians share:

> Whether there was such a thing as an Indian dream through the ages, vivid and full of life or sometimes reduced to the murmurings of troubled sleep, I do not know. Every people and every nation has some such belief or myth of national destiny and perhaps it is partly true in each case. Being an Indian I am myself influenced by this reality or myth about India, and I feel that anything that had the power to mould hundreds of generations, without a break, must have drawn its enduring vitality from some deep well of strength, and have had the capacity to renew that vitality from age to age.
>
> (Nehru 2004, 47).

For Nehru, this myth about India is enshrined in her diversity and her elusiveness:

> India with all her infinite charm and variety began to grow upon me more and more, and yet the more I saw of her, the more I realized how very difficult it was for me or anyone else to grasp the ideas she had embodied. It was not her wide spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom
>
> (Nehru 2004, 51)

Nehru describes a country held together by a strong age-old cultural background out of which a common outlook emerges, which he calls 'the spirit of India' (Nehru 2004, 52). Nehru thus argues that India is a country that is, on the one hand, defined by its diversity, but on the other, through a common cultural bond, a unity which shares a national heritage as well as moral values derived from popular philosophy, tradition,

history, myth and legend, especially the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Hence, Nehru argues:

> Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India ever since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardization of externals or even beliefs. It was something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practiced and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged.
>
> (Nehru 2004, 55)

Nehru thus maintains that despite variety and diversity amongst the people, there is a quintessential Indian quality that bonds them together and gives rise to a dream of unity, of cultural synthesis.[21]

Midnight's Children takes up Nehru's rhetoric and themes, and creates a similar argument about the idea of India as a collective dream that the Indian nation has decided to dream, which becomes a reality at the arrival of independence in 1947. In *Midnight's Children*, the birth of the nation is associated with the mythic events of the past to highlight the magical hour of that birth, anticipated the night before in the dreams of the residents of Methwold estate and the Sinai family. That night 'myths, nightmares, fantasies were in the air' (Rushdie 1995a, 111). Thus the potential of nightmares manifests itself at the birth of the nation long before the Emergency. This new myth is the collective dream of independent India:

> there was an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history, although it had invented the game of chess and traded with Middle Kingdom Egypt, was nevertheless quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which could never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will – except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood. India, the new myth – a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and God.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 112)

Saleem then turns away from these sweeping statements about the new nation back towards the microcosm of his family and his birth, sidelining the blood sacrifice in the Punjab and Bengal.

While Amina is in labour, Saleem surveys different locations, not only in Bombay (the nursing home, Colaba Causeway), but also his grandparents in Agra and returns to the violence in the Punjab: 'And in all the cities all the towns all the villages the little dia-lamps burn on window-sills porches verandahs, while trains burn in the Punjab, with the green flames of blistering paint and the glaring saffron of fired fuel,

like the biggest dias in the world' (Rushdie 1995a, 115). Saleem contrasts sharply the new optimism associated with the new myth of India with the many-headed monster of the crowd, in one location celebrating, in another butchering each other. Thus, right at its inception, the idea of India is likened to a dream as well as a nightmare. The use of dreams in association with the Midnight Hour suggests from the very beginning the fragility of the magical possibilities of that hour, and how easily dreams can lapse into nightmares.

The novel elaborates a myth of nation and then examines how it is dismantled and destroyed in the 1970s through the autocratic rule of Indira Gandhi during the Emergency. What becomes clear from the outset is how frail the construction of this new vision of India is and that not all its citizens can participate in it. In this respect, it is interesting to note which historical events Rushdie chooses to include and to exclude from his narrative. For instance, Rushdie marginalises the narrative of Partition, despite it being one of the most traumatic and pivotal events in the subcontinent's history. Yet while these events may seem peripheral in the novel, Partition is woven intricately into the fabric of the novel. Saleem tells the story of his grandfather's survival of the Amritsar massacre. At this moment, Saleem begins to shake as he discovers a thin crack appearing on his wrist. Thus, fragmented bodies become the mirror of the fragmentation of a country through multiple partitions.

The crack that Saleem sees developing on his wrist merits further scrutiny. The recognition of the crack that triggers the story of the death of the boatman Tai can be read as an example of how Saleem equates himself with India. Cracking and splitting, then, are another leitmotif carefully woven into the novel. On one level, the notion is deployed in connection with the construction of an idea of nation. As Meenakshi Mukherjee explains, the novel is concerned with an idea of India 'that is inclusive and tolerant – and the novel is beset with an anxiety about the fragility of this concept of India' (Mukherjee 2000, 177). Saleem shows this concept of India, like himself, as always on the verge of fragmentation. On another level, Rushdie uses splitting and cracking as a narrative strategy in the novel. *Midnight's Children* is an accumulation of fragmented and digressing stories held together by a vast array of leitmotifs. Cracking manifests itself overtly in Saleem, cracks developing on his body, as well as his volatile mental state, always in danger of cracking up. In the course of the novel he becomes more and more delusional, which links cracking to notions of memory discussed later in this chapter.

Splitting manifests itself in the fragmentation of a landmass, from British India, which was itself fragmented, into India and Pakistan with its East and West Wing and the later secession of the East Wing to form independent Bangladesh. Furthermore, this fragmentation is, through the perforated sheet, mapped onto the imagining of women. Saleem introduces Naseem in fragments as her body is puzzled together to form a whole. Once fully assembled, after her marriage, she reinvents herself as the powerful matriarch Reverend Mother. Ironically, she does not turn out to be the woman Aadam expected her to be. Women's bodies are fragmented, mutilated and puzzled together throughout the novel. They are used as objects on which nationhood is mapped and are objectified as fantasies of desire in patriarchal-sexual terms.[22] This is later concretised in the novel as the Burqa-clad Jamila Singer becomes the voice of the nation of Pakistan. Her singing voice allows a nation to take flight, to project its hopes and aspirations onto her disguised body, a self that has become a voice. Through the erasure of her body and her self, that voice becomes the mythic embodiment of the nation.

As much as being concerned with the geographical entity of India, the novel also argues about the political entity of India and the changes and partitions it has undergone. Thus the arguments about India are territorial, philosophical and ultimately political, which is exemplified in Mr Zagallo's human geography lesson (Rushdie 1995a, 231-232). The insistence on India as an idea as much as a geographical entity is rooted in the perception of the artificiality of political community on the subcontinent. Thus notions of a myth of nation become a driving preoccupation of the novel.[23] According to Sunil Khilnani in *The Idea of India*, modern India is undoubtedly a product of the modern world, shaped by European colonial expansion, ideas of the state, nationalism, democracy and economic development. Furthermore, the idea of India had no clear definition during the independence struggle (see Khilnani 1999, 5). Rushdie exploits this in *Midnight's Children*, allowing divergent ideas of nationhood and religious pluralism to coexist side by side. Thus, Rushdie does not chronicle the nationalist movement in the novel. Instead, he offers an alternative vision of India as a free independent nation, undivided as one entity.[24]

From the Amritsar massacre Saleem's narrative jumps forward to 1942, the year of the 'Quit India' resolution, and Aadam Aziz's affliction with the optimism disease caused by Mian Abdullah, known as the Hummingbird, founder, chairman and moving spirit of the Free Islam Convocation.[25] Aadam Aziz is convinced by Mian Abdullah's politics, explaining his leanings to the Rani of Cooch Naheen: 'I started off as a

Kashmiri and not much of a Muslim. Then I got a bruise on the chest that turned me into an Indian. I'm still not much of a Muslim, but I'm all for Abdullah. He's fighting my fight' (Rushdie 1995a, 40). By contrast, his wife has reinvented herself as Reverend Mother, now a strong-willed woman with a set moral and religious code against which Aadam has to fight for a secular education for his children. Within their family, Aadam needs to defend his view of secularism.

The Rani of Cooch Naheen is presented in sharp contrast to Reverend Mother, whose internationalist spirit and cross-cultural concerns express themselves in a skin disease that makes her go white in blotches. This confession of hers is whispered to Saleem in a fading photograph (Rushdie 1995a, 44-45). This alternative vision, then, can either be read as a figment of Saleem's imagination or as an explicit reminder of how imagined a community India really is. The meetings at the Rani of Cooch Naheen's are an attempt to defy any form of categorisation. This is expressed in the game of hit-the-spittoon as much as Nadir Khan's poetry. Nadir Khan, Mian Abdullah, the Rani and Aadam are united in their loathing for the Muslim League. Thus the Rani pronounces in the year of the 'Quit India' resolution: '"And what's more," the Rani said with finality, "they are mad. Otherwise why would they want to partition India?"' (Rushdie 1995a, 46) Yet all these musings end in failure and the Rani, after the assassination of Abdullah, wastes away and fades literally into 'nothing at all'.

John J. Su reads this as another critique. He argues that beneath Saleem's story lies a more general political critique of communities founded on the charisma and vision of a single figure (Su 2001, 551). Hence the Free Islam Convocation, as much as the Midnight's Children Conference and Picture Singh's magician's ghetto, all promising to bring a utopian ideal to fruition – an un-partitioned India, a community of leaders whose magical powers symbolised 1001 possibilities, the true hope of freedom – are founded, defined and sustained by a single figure, but fail because of their dependence on this single leader (Su 2001, 552). Thus, Su argues that these failures of leadership, especially Saleem's, could ultimately be read as a dismissal of Indira Gandhi, who intrinsically tried to make herself the embodiment of the nation. According to Su, 'alternative communities and their visions for a more egalitarian India founder not on their inability to envision a break with a history of sectarian violence but on their inability to imagine an alternative political mechanism of leadership' (Su 2001, 552).

From these concerns emerges a question Rushdie sought to answer in his television documentary 'The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987', commissioned

by Channel 4 to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of India's Independence.[26] Rushdie flew back to the subcontinent to interview a cross-section of people from different walks of life, who were, like Rushdie himself, all born in 1947, looking as it were for the 'real-life counterparts of the imaginary beings' he once invented (Rushdie 1992a, 26). The riddle Rushdie seeks to answer is 'does India exist?', which is linked to the question 'What is India?'. These two questions combined have an important bearing on the novel, which is also reflected in *Midnight's Children's* use of elements of 1950s Hindi cinema, especially when considering cinema's role in building and authoring an idea of nation in the early years of Independence. The question Rushdie poses makes sense when thinking of India as a political entity, as these questions combined lead to another question: 'What kind of India do its citizens want?' There are no obvious answers to these questions and Rushdie is far from imposing one view on his readers, but what is emerging in his fiction and his non-fiction, especially in the teeming multitudinous *Midnight's Children*, is a view of India as pluralistic, multiple and hybrid, where many realities exist side by side. During the 1980s when communalism, or the politics of religious hatred, grew ever stronger, this view was diametrically opposed to these notions. In Rushdie's words: 'To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and a crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once. But the India of the communalists is none of these things' (Rushdie 1992a, 32). Saleem at the end of the novel disappears into this crowd, the future uncertain.[27] However, the novel hints at the multiplicity of India, a multiplicity that Rushdie seeks to reflect in the act of writing and is a sharp contrast to the pessimistic ending of the novel.

Filmi clichés and *Midnight's Children*

This multiplicity is also reflected in the mixture of genres that Rushdie fuses in the novel, bringing together different narrative forms and media. Thus, as Martin Zerlang notes in 'A Close-Up on Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', 'Entertainment is key to the understanding of *Midnight's Children*' (Zerlang 2004, 110). This is realised in the filmic picturisation of the novel's sweeping family melodrama, its panoramic landscape of Kashmir, the Gangetic plains, the cityscapes of Amritsar, Delhi, Dhaka and Bombay, the verbal entertainment of Saleem's sheer word power and storytelling inventiveness. Indeed, the increased role of Lifafa Das in the screenplay of the novel where his introductions to each episode serve as a trailer of what is to come, a function that Saleem as master of ceremonies fulfils in the novel with his constant summaries and prospective outlooks, are all part of his organisation of the multitudes of tales that he

agglomerates in his story. Thus the novel is concerned not only with telling the story but with visualising the tale through the mass-medium of film, hinting at the importance of cinema for the subcontinent, as well as creating a distinctive atmosphere and mood.

Saleem's moral code is connected to Bombay cinema and is intricately tied to his relationship with his mother and its oedipal undertones, and his Bombay film starlet aunt, who provides for Saleem his moment of sexual awakening. Aunty Pia is married to his uncle Hanif, who works as a film director and who tries to combine a commercial aesthetics with social-realist subjects, a project in which he fails. He is the only character free of Reverend Mother's influence and follows his dream to make his name in movies. Hanif, as a young director, devises the indirect kiss for his film *The Lovers of Kashmir*, introducing the erotic into his films through suggestion to avoid censorship (Rushdie 1995a, 142). Saleem replicates this device himself when he narrates the meeting between his mother and Nadir Khan, her former husband, in the Pioneer Café. The incident when Saleem discovers the 'infidelity' of his mother is one of the most filmic moments in the novel.

Saleem follows his mother by hiding himself in the boot of her car and spies on her, voyeuristically gazing through the windows of the Café as their love scene plays out similarly to the one in his uncle's film:

> through the dirty, square, glassy cinema-screen of the Pioneer Café's window, I watched Amina Sinai and the no-longer-Nadir play out their love scene; they performed with the ineptitude of genuine amateurs.
>
> On the reccine-topped table, a packet of cigarettes: State Express 555. [...] Unable to look into my mother's face, I concentrate on the cigarette-packet, cutting from two-shot of lovers to this extreme close-up of nicotine.
>
> But now hands enter the frame - first the hands of Nadir-Quasim, [...] next a woman's hands [...] fingertips avoiding fingertips, because what I'm watching here on my dirty glass cinema-screen is, after all, an Indian movie, in which physical contact is forbidden lest it corrupt the watching flower of Indian youth; and there are feet beneath the table and faces above it, feet advancing towards feet, faces tumbling softly towards faces, but jerking away all of a sudden in a cruel censor's cut.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 216/217)

Before Saleem slips back to the car, to stow away in the boot again, he witnesses this 'movie's' climax as his mother passes a glass of lassi over to Nadir, imitating the indirect kiss and the subliminal eroticism of Hanif's film, and thus, as Saleem observes, 'life imitated bad art' (Rushdie 199a, 217).

The theatricality of the novel, its larger-than-life characters, are all rooted in the popular cultural idiom of the Hindi film, which Rushdie translates into the plotline as

much as into the structure of the novel. It enters the novel again with the discovery that Saleem's blood group does not match with either of his parents:

> And now I, Saleem Sinai, intend briefly to endow myself-then with the benefits of hindsight; destroying the unities and conventions of fine writing, I make him cognizant of what was to come, purely so that he can be permitted to think the following thoughts: 'O eternal opposition of inside and outside! Because 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. [...] 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. And these, mark you, are only effects on private life. The consequence on the sphere of public action, as will be shown, are – were – will be no less profound.'
>
> Finally, withdrawing my gift of foreknowledge, I leave you with the image of a ten-year-old boy with a bandaged finger, sitting in a hospital bed, musing about blood and noises-like-claps and the expression on his father's face; zooming out slowly into long-shot, I allow the sound-track music to drown my words, because Tony Brent is reaching the end of his medley, and his finale, too, is the same as Winkie's: 'Good Night, Ladies' is the name of the song. Merrily it rolls along, rolls along, rolls along...
> (Fade-out)
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 236-237)

Saleem strategically deploys a filmic vocabulary (longshot and fade-out) here and gives his audience a mixture of teaser trailer and summary of events, which he underscores with a soundtrack, further accentuating the filmic nature of this passage. The choice of song is perhaps unusual as this section is at first underscored by Tony Brent's rendition of 'How Much is that Doggie in the Window', before Saleem drowns himself out with 'Good Night, Ladies'. Rushdie mixes here filmic visualisation with the story-telling drive of the novel. What follows from this episode is Saleem being exiled from the family home, staying with his film director uncle and movie star aunt. Important for Saleem's own story is his musing on mutilation and fragmentation. The cracks that are appearing are after all a visual realisation. As he reminds us, they are not metaphorical cracks that have also afflicted his grandfather, foreshadowing his mutilated, severed finger and the loss of his hair and the '-ectomies' in the Widow's Hostel. Saleem's mutilations need to be understood in conjunction with the visualisation of his story through the perforated sheet shifting between the full panorama and the intensely private. Saleem relates the private and the public and stresses their bearing on past, present and future. Thus in this passage, the narrative is suspended in time and becomes rooted in the moment – a moment charged with the Bombay-film-style melodrama of a

father rejecting his son, presuming his wife's unfaithfulness, when she has been virtuous all along. Time stands still in Saleem's deliberations. The significance of timelessness in a novel rooted in history is crucial as it breaks up the linearity of the narrative, fragmenting history. The suspension of real-time allows Saleem to mythologise his own family. This link allows Saleem to introduce elements of soap-opera as well as lurid gossip in his tale (see particularly Rushdie 1995a, 241-260).

His stay with his aunt and uncle further heightens the *filmi* nature of the novel, since deprived of starring roles, Pia Aziz has turned her real life into a feature film, where Saleem is cast in bit parts opposite her, his favourite being that of son to her mother (Rushdie 1995a 240-243). What is so important here is that Saleem details his relationship with the women in his family, his mother, his aunt, and later his sister, with whom he falls hopelessly in love, through the idiom of the Bombay film. However, this is performed with irony considering, for example, that in *Midnight's Children*, Saleem is obsessed with wreaking revenge on his mother, rather than defending her honour. Hanif and his aesthetics, too, serve to subvert the Bombay film idiom on which the novel relies so much. He decides to dispense with fantasy and instead rework the idiom of the Bombay film for realism:

> Hanif was fond of railing against princes and demons, gods and heroes, against, in fact, the entire iconography of the Bombay film; in the temple of illusions, he had become the high priest of reality; while I, conscious of my miraculous nature, which involved me beyond all mitigation in the (Hanif-despised) myth-life of India, bit my lip and didn't know where to look.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 244)

This describes Saleem's ambiguous relationship with Bombay cinema and the tension between realism and fantasy, myth and reality, in which he sees his life and India caught up.

The heightened emotions of these filmicly-narrated scenes are here deployed to play out like a Bombay film. They serve the purpose of driving the narrative forward and underpinning the novel's tensions between the mythic and the real. In this respect Bombay cinema develops into an important narrative strategy in the novel. For Saleem, cinema is a metaphor for the negotiation of his perception of reality, truth and history:

> Reality is a question of perspective; [...] Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves – or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality...
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 165-166)

The above point sums up Saleem's narrative strategy in the novel especially his deployment of cinema as an idiom through which he narrates his story. This movement is further accentuated as Saleem's story progresses and reaches its climax in the Widow's Hostel in Benares.

Saleem Sinai suffering from memory loss after his family is wiped out can be read as the partial erasure of his self, thus becoming dissociated from history, just living in the present moment. The only remaining link he maintains with his past is the silver spittoon. The erasure of self is marked by the shift from a first-person narrative to the third person. Thus the narrative becomes detached from Saleem as he becomes detached from his self. Saleem connects his amnesia also with the Bombay talkie:

> With some embarrassment, I am forced to admit that amnesia is the kind of gimmick regularly used by our lurid film-makers. Bowing my head slightly, I accept that my life has taken on, yet again, the tone of a Bombay talkie; but after all, leaving to one side the vexed issue of reincarnation, there is only a finite number of methods of achieving rebirth. So, apologizing for the melodrama, I must doggedly insist that I, he, had begun again; that after years of yearning for importance, he (or I) had been cleansed of the whole business; that after my vengeful abandonment by Jamila Singer, who wormed me into the Army to get me out of her sight, I (or he) accepted the fate which was my repayment for love, and sat uncomplaining under a chinar tree; that, emptied of history, the buddha learned the arts of submission, and did only what was required of him. To sum up: I became a citizen of Pakistan.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 350)

In his amnesiac state, Saleem detaches his self from himself for his journey through purgatory and hell – the war of secession of Bangladesh. The horrific events and descriptions are reminiscent of the Vietnam War movies of directors like Oliver Stone or Francis Ford Coppola. Saleem points out that amnesia might be a melodramatic cliché, but it serves the purpose of his tale and so has no problem using it. What is more interesting though is the statement that Saleem gives up his Indian citizenship to take up Pakistani citizenship. Perhaps Rushdie plays on the irony of the meaning of the name Pakistan, the 'Land of the Pure'. Saleem has entered a state of impurity through his sexual longings for his sister Jamila as well as through his search for sexual experience elsewhere. His amnesia, his descent into hell, and his adoption of Pakistani citizenship could be read as part of a cleansing process that Saleem needs to go through so that he may reclaim his selfhood. Therefore, the Bombay talkie cliché of amnesia is used with a specific, ironised purpose and shows how in the absence of family his sense of self is erased. Ultimately, Saleem needs to re-establish himself in a community and remake his family beyond blood-ties to recuperate a sense of self.

Family matters

In the novel family is a microcosm of the nation and plays a central role in the imagining of nationhood. As much as being tied up with Indian history, Saleem also ties his story to that of his family. He establishes the importance of the Aziz/Sinai clan early on in the novel. The boatman Tai pronounces: '"That's a nose to start a family on, my princeling. There'd be no mistaking whose brood they were. Mughal Emperors would have given their right hands for noses like that one. There are dynasties waiting inside it" [...] "like snot"' (Rushdie 1995a, 14). Family is also an important part of any Hindi film, reflecting the significance of family in the social fabric of the Indian nation. The role of mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, brothers and sisters and daughters and sons have a bearing on the moral conceptualisations on which Saleem pronounces, but their stories also introduce the melodramatic elements into the novel. Furthermore, the family unit becomes a microcosm on which nationhood is mapped. Saleem's inclusion of Tai's statement, however, has to be taken with a pinch of salt. He leads his audience to believe that he is the natural son of Ahmed and Amina, because he, too, has a very large nose. However, it later transpires that he is actually the son of Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita the street-singer. This is then further complicated because Vanita had an affair with the departing British colonialist William Methwold. Thus Saleem's parentage is put even more into question, although he sets himself up as the rightful heir of the Aziz and Sinai clan.

These twists and turns, a trickle of revelation that leads to further disclosures is reminiscent of the best Hindi movies, and they serve a distinctive function in the novel. While family is paramount for Saleem, collecting a string of father and mother figures, he destabilises the conceptualisation of family as sacrosanct. *Midnight's Children* is not only an historical epic, but also a family saga, and both are intricately interwoven. Saleem's conceptualisation of family is loose as he seeks to find new families in his negotiation of belonging and home. Thus the novel sets up an idea of family as dynasty, a theme Rushdie returns to in subsequent novels, especially in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.[28] Family and dynasty figure prominently in Indian public life with Indira Gandhi stepping into her father's shoes and becoming prime minister, and her grooming of her son Sanjay to succeed her. As Rushdie sees it, the close relationship between mother and son is at the root of the autocratic policies of the Emergency and the free rein given to Sanjay and the Congress Youth movement he was heading. In his introduction to Tariq Ali's *The Nehrus and the Gandhis: An Indian Dynasty*, reprinted in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie states that by the time of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the

Nehru-Gandhi family had been completely mythologised, the trials and tribulations of the family becoming an ever-engrossing saga and obsession: 'we dreamed them, so intensely that they came to life' (Rushdie 1992a, 48). Rushdie states:

> In this version – the dynasty as collective dream – Jawaharlal Nehru represents the dream's noblest part, its most idealistic phase. Indira Gandhi, always the pragmatist, often unscrupulously so, becomes a figure of decline, and brutal Sanjay is a further debasement of the currency.
>
> (Rushdie 1992a, 48)

Rushdie suggests that the crucial relationships in the Nehru-Gandhi family have always been between parents and their children – father and daughter, mother and son respectively, and it is on this rock upon which the attraction of dynasty-as-myth relies (Rushdie 1992a, 49).

Rumour and gossip have contributed to India's first family transcending into myth, aided by a number of real-life rumours and scandals.[29] Sometimes the trials and tribulations of the family read more like the ingredients of a soap opera fuelled by a never-ending stream of gossip: 'because myths, like soap-operas, which contain the mythic in its most debased form, require a high level of spice' (Rushdie 1992a, 49). Rushdie further suggests 'that the story of the Nehrus and the Gandhis has provided more engrossing material than anything in the cinemas or on television: a real dynasty better than *Dynasty*, a Delhi to rival *Dallas*' (Rushdie 1992a, 50). The process has also been one of self-mythologisation, reflected in Indira Gandhi's election slogan *India is Indira and Indira is India*, in which she sets herself up as the embodiment of the state and the land, Mother Indira as Mother India. Through the election slogan Indira Gandhi mythologises herself as a protean, nurturing Mother India, exploiting the image of the Hindu Mother goddess and her symbols and the idea of *shakti*. Thus *Midnight's Children* can be read as a counter-myth to the self-mythologisation of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Rushdie's hard-hitting critique of Indira Gandhi as 'Mother Indira' (Rushdie 1995a, 421) is further highlighted when considering Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's observations in *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, culture and postcolonialism*. Her argument focuses on two aspects – the conceptualisation of subjectivity and the issue of power. She argues that in an identification such as 'India is Indira' 'the female subject is no longer perceived in metonymic relationship to the nation, as its leader, but as an actual metaphor for it, its equal and its visible embodiment' (Rajan 1993, 109). In this representation as mother the woman leader, according to Rajan, can 'reconcile aspects of nurturing and service in opposition to the authority of the father, as well as to

subsume both parental figures into a single complex authority figure' (Rajan 1993, 109). Rajan identifies the acceptable face of leadership as service, denying power, but stressing sacrifice, while positioning the hierarchy of public duty and private affections by giving primacy to the first (Rajan 1993, 110). Rajan further points out that '[t]here was no need for Indira Gandhi to draw conscious attention to the parallels – the mythic resources of such symbolic transformation already existed' (Rajan 1993, 110). They were already rooted in the people's consciousness. The dynastic familial element is of considerable importance here. Indira Gandhi herself used every opportunity to flaunt her actual Nehru identity as daughter, as well as her symbolic maternal concern for the people of the nation, and the two were not unrelated. Similarly, Rajiv Gandhi stressed during the 1985 election campaign 'I am her son, she was my mother'. Thus, Rajan further argues that 'gendered family identities – especially motherhood – are culturally capable of sustaining metaphoric expansion to embrace dimensions of leadership' (Rajan 1993, 110). Arguably, the 'Mother India' trope, which will be explored further in chapter 5, became instrumental for Indira Gandhi in this regard. In this respect, *Midnight's Children* must be read as a hard-hitting critique of this image.

Rushdie portrays the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as Saleem's nemesis the 'Widow' who seeks to be Devi, the mother-goddess. Rajan connects this presentation to the image of widowhood in India:

> The powerful negative connotations of Hindu widowhood, viewed in the popular imagination not merely as the misfortune of women, but as their destruction of the male, are associated with a (widowed) Prime Minister whose defining act is the massive sterilization programme of the Emergency.
>
> (Rajan 1993, 112)

Saleem states:

> 'Women have made me; and also unmade. From Reverend Mother to the Widow, and even beyond, I have been at the mercy of the so-called (erroneously, in my opinion!) gentler sex. It is, perhaps, a matter of connection: is not Mother India, Bharat Mata, commonly thought of as female? And, as you know, there's no escape from her.'
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 404)

Saleem goes on to summarise the encounter with all the women in his story that prepares for the overbearing role of the Widow. He concludes:

> How are we to understand my too-many women? As the multiple faces of Bharat-Mata? Or as even more... as the dynamic aspect of maya, as cosmic energy, which is represented as the female organ?
>
> Maya, in its dynamic aspect, is called Shakti; perhaps it is no accident that, in the Hindu pantheon, the active power of a deity is contained within his queen! Maya-Shakti mothers, but also 'muffles consciousness in its dream-web'.

> Too-many-women: are they all aspects of Devi, the goddess – who is Shakti, who slew the buffalo-demon, who defeated the ogre Mahisha, who is Kali Durga Chandi Chamunda Uma Sati and Parvati... and who, when active, is coloured red?
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 406)

Saleem couples the destructive element of his too many women that is most strikingly linked to Indira Gandhi with incidents of motherly betrayal, most overtly to that of Leela Sabarmati and her affair with Homi Catrack, as well as that of his mother Amina Sinai and his aunt Pia. These instances prepare for the ultimate betrayal of the idea and model of India as an independent nation. Thus Saleem asks the question if Indira Gandhi's quest for meaning and his own equation of himself with the nation had transmuted in her own mind into the slogan *India is Indira and Indira is India.*[30] His musings move to the influence of hairstyles on history, suggesting that if Indira Gandhi's hairstyle had been a coiffure of uniform pigment, the Emergency might have lacked its darker side. By the time of the Emergency, Saleem melodramatically stresses: 'the Prime Minister of India was, in 1975, fifteen years a widow. Or (because the capital letter may be of use): a Widow' (Rushdie 1995a, 421).

Rajan points towards the connection made between individual and historic figures – Saleem Sinai as citizen and Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, linking the image of the male victim with the female principle of energy, 'a midnight's child and a woman leader sharing a common national destiny' (Rajan 1993, 113). According to Rajan, Mother in its conflation with the role of Prime Minster wielding power becomes ultimately 'an abstract, metaphysical energy or evil, the feminine principle. Actual power is explained or replaced by symbolic power, the woman by Woman, the widow by the Widow, the individual by the type, the leader by the goddess, history by myth' (Rajan 1993, 113). *Midnight's Children* is born out of the Emergency trauma. Thus, Rajan contends that the 'paradigm of motherhood-nationalism that represents leadership as service also accommodates the representation of leadership as despotism by a simple reversal of the female leader's priorities' (Rajan 1993, 113). Thus, the dream image of independent India, imagined as Mother, turns into a nightmare, represented by the Widow. Saleem loses the battle for centrality as he, the only possible competitor, is rendered impotent:

> 'The people of India,' the Widow's Hand explained, 'worship our Lady like a god. Indians are only capable of worshipping one God.' But I was brought up in Bombay, where Shiva Vishnu Ganesh Ahuramazda Allah and countless others had their flocks... 'What about the pantheon,' I argued, [...] And now the

> answer: 'Oh yes! My God, *millions* of gods, you are right! But all manifestations of the same OM. [...] For the masses, our Lady is a manifestation of the OM.'
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 438)

This is followed by Saleem's most hard-hitting criticism of Indira Gandhi:

> But what I learned from the Widow's Hand is that those who would be gods fear no one so much as other potential deities; and that, that and that only, is why we, the magical children of midnight, were hated feared destroyed by the Widow, who was not only Prime Minister of India but also aspired to be Devi, the Mother-goddess in her most terrible aspect, possessor of the shakti of the gods, a multi-limbed divinity with a centre-parting and schizophrenic hair...
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 438)

The self-deception of memory, the consolation of memory

Saleem's story is a narrative from memory, a memory that is affected by Saleem's own physical disintegration. Rushdie concretises the fragmentary nature of memory and its inherent unreliability, raising further questions about Saleem's method of writing and why he feels the urgent need to write down his story. Is Saleem deceiving himself by writing his story? Is he, through the act of writing his story, ultimately fighting only his fear of meaning nothing? Or alternatively, does the act of writing provide consolation? He can after all reconnect with his family, Parvati the Witch, the Midnight's Children and reclaim his lost home city Bombay.[31] Reclaiming Bombay through narrative is an equally important preoccupation for Saleem and Salman – for Rushdie, because of his dislocation, for Saleem, because of his traumatic experiences. Especially in the sections where he relives his childhood, Saleem wants to escape back to a state of innocence from the horrific experience during the Emergency at the hands of the Widow, the Bangladesh War and the Indo-Pakistan War. Arguably then, the process of writing and the consolation it can provide are linked to memory and remembering as well as forgetting. Bringing these processes together initially might seem paradoxical. However, the act of writing can perhaps provide consolation, despite the pitfall of unreliable memory and self-deception. Saleem defends his story before Padma as follows:

> 'I told you the truth,' I say yet again, 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own.'
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 211)

Saleem only offers a version of facts, his account of his family's and his own life that is bound together with the history of India through the accident of his birth. This strategy is perhaps a safeguard for Rushdie so that the book is not read as a guidebook or history book that pronounces on post-Independence Indian history.

Saleem makes mistakes, some of them are intentional, some of them are not only those of Saleem but those of Rushdie as well, as he admits in '"Errata": or Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*'. One of those can be found in the description of the Amritsar Massacre, where General Dyer enters the Jallianwala Bagh followed by 'fifty white troops' – they weren't white, but Indian (see Rushdie 1992a, 23). Yet Rushdie admits that while he was initially upset at this error, with the passage of time Saleem's wrongness started to feel right. Rushdie further explains that at the outset his intentions in writing the novel were Proustian, a reclamation of home through the process of remembering, piecing it together on the printed page like a jigsaw puzzle. Yet Rushdie concedes:

> Time and migration had placed a double filter between me and my subject, and I hoped that if I could only imagine vividly enough it might be possible to see beyond those filters, to write as if the years had not passed, as if I had never left India for the West. But as I worked I found that what interested me was the process of filtration itself. So my subject changed, was no longer a search for lost time, had become the way in which we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool.
>
> (Rushdie 1992a, 23-24)

What is Saleem's purpose then? What drives him to write his story? Ultimately it is his quest for meaning and his fear of absurdity, of making sense of what has happened to him during his eventful life. Thus the act of writing needs to deliver for Saleem, as Rushdie explains, 'the significance that the events of his adulthood have drained from him' (Rushdie 1992a, 24). Truth needs to be subservient to this desire, and truth becomes memory truth, his version of events. These errors serve to make the reader suspicious of Saleem as he is alerted to Saleem's distortions to a greater or lesser degree. Saleem plays with facts to fit his story. Saleem makes similar observations on the discovery of the error in chronology regarding Mahatma Gandhi's death:

> The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time.
>
> Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I am prepared to distort everything – to re-write the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role? Today, in my confusion, I can't judge. I'll have to leave it to others.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 166)

His exaggerations grow ever more elaborate the more he realises that he is peripheral and not central to the events of his country. Thus writing history becomes an interesting process in the novel.

The novel's argument is that history is always ambiguous where facts are not readily established and can be interpreted in many different ways. Rushdie states: 'Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge' (Rushdie 1992a, 25). Rushdie proposes that Saleem's unreliable narration might be a useful analogy, a reflection, of our own attempts to 'read' the world. Whether Rushdie's argument is convincing and persuasive is up for debate. Harish Trivedi has accused Rushdie of not having done his homework properly and many of his Indian readers have pointed out to Rushdie many of the mistakes he made.[32] However, the serious questioning of the pitfalls of memory and the process of remembering in conjunction with arguments about historiography politicise his argument and significantly complicate it. Thus, Saleem's unreliability undermines the official version of history through a process of constant contestation. So while history might be the scaffolding around which the narrative of *Midnight's Children* is built, Saleem plays with established facts to offer his personalised version of history, each chapter dealing with a significant episode in Indian history.

Saleem likens the process of writing to pickling, giving further meaning to the framing narrative, where we encounter Saleem writing his life story in the Braganza pickle factory under the auspices of Padma. Padma and Saleem both disrupt the linearity of the narrative and through their interruptions further upset the flow of the story. This is ironic insofar as Padma continually insists on Saleem telling a straightforward story, rather than constantly digressing, over-cramming his story with, in her view, unnecessary details. How then must we understand the process of writing? Beyond Rushdie's own admission of factual errors lies a deeper engagement with not only historiography and memory but also a process of reclamation, similar to the one that Dr Narliker and Ahmed Sinai engage in. The land Rushdie tries to reclaim through the process of writing is not only a version of Indian history, but also his childhood years in Bombay, an imaginary homeland, his version of India that through his own dislocated position can only be part of 'Indias of the mind' (Rushdie 1992a, 10).

Midnight's Children is Rushdie's first novel anchored in the urban environment of Bombay. While the city is a meticulously observed backdrop to large sections of the narrative, Bombay is also reflected in the story-telling energy of the novel.[33] Saleem's

tale is marked by its excess, a multitude of stories jostled together side by side. Rushdie explains:

> when I wrote *Midnight's Children*, one of the ideas I had about it was that... the first thing to think about India is its multitude, its crowd and I thought: 'how do you tell a crowd of stories?' 'What is the literary equivalent of that multitude?' One strategy that was adopted in that book was deliberately to tell, as it were, too many stories, so that there was a jostle of stories in the novel. Your main narration, your main storyline, had to kind of force its way through the crowd as if you were outside Churchgate Station trying to catch a train; and you had to really do some work.
>
> (Rushdie/Niven 2004, 129-130)

The reader has to carve out a space for himself within this multitude of stories and the process of reclamation of memories. The reclamation often happens through the idiom of Hindi cinema, for example, photographs coming to life and talking to Saleem or big swooping wide-angle shots of the city. This shift from the close-up to the panoramic wide-angle shot becomes apparent in Saleem's lavish distribution of the factual and the remembered, further highlighting that Saleem has a tendency to privilege memory over facts.

Thus, because of the partiality of memory, Rushdie's story must also be fragmented, linking the storytelling techniques with the physical fragmentations and partitions of a geographical entity and of various characters in the novel. Saleem describes the process of pickling and the connection to his longwinded autobiography as every chapter resembling a pickle-jar. Every jar 'contains, therefore, the most exalted of possibilities: the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time!' (Rushdie 1995a, 459) The jars contain Saleem's special blend of the truths as well as half-truths, recollected from memory, a process, where distortions are inevitable. Saleem states:

> I reconcile myself to the inevitable distortions of the pickling process. To pickle is to give immortality, after all [...] The art is to change the flavour in degree, but not in kind; and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and form – that is to say, meaning. (I have mentioned my fear of absurdity.)
>
> One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth... that they are, despite everything, acts of love.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 461)

Before writing down the events in the Widow's Hostel, Saleem states that 'Scraps of memory: this is not how a climax should be written' (Rushdie 1995a, 426). But these scraps make this section of the novel so evocative as out of the scraps a whole

emerges that unravels the full horror of what happens to Saleem and the Midnight's Children at the hands of the Widow – the physical destruction of what they symbolically stand for – hope and possibility. As the realisation of being peripheral registers with Saleem, the sweeping panoramic view of events narrows down to these scraps. It is also striking that the events in Varanasi in the Widow's Hostel are devoid of irony and tongue-in-cheek humour. Saleem has to force himself to narrate the horrific tortures he endures under which he breaks, leading to the forced sterilisation of the Midnight's Children as all hope is drained and they are robbed of their magical capabilities.[34] Subsequently Saleem has to face the question of guilt. He concedes:

> I refuse absolutely to take the larger view; we are too close to what-is-happening, perspective is impossible, later perhaps analysts will say why and wherefore, will adduce underlying economic trends and political developments, but right now we're too close to the cinema-screen, the picture is breaking up into dots, only subjective judgements are possible. Subjectively, then, I hang my head in shame.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 435)

Thus Saleem has moved to the most personal and most close-up and immediate, confronted with his own shame, addressing the Midnight's Children directly, asking for forgiveness that he knows cannot be granted. The only option he has is to continue with his narrative. Cinema serves here as an analogy of what effect Saleem as narrator is trying to produce. Saleem provides us with the most immediate indictment of Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule, which is clearly embedded in the direct and indirect treatment of history in the novel as a whole and its critique of India's political elite. By the end of the novel, when in its climax Saleem is confronted with the figure of Indira Gandhi, the Midnight's Children are invested with meaning through their destruction at the hand of the Widow. Saleem loses the fight for centrality and brings about the destruction of the Midnight's Children and their magic gifts, but at the same time allows them to become an evocative symbol of hope betrayed and possibility denied, thus preventing them from becoming an absurd, meaningless group. For Saleem, the Emergency essentially destroyed what modern India according to its founding fathers should have been. It is the antithesis to the hopes expressed by Nehru on the birth of the Nation. Ironically, it is Nehru's own daughter, now, through marriage, also holding the name of the man associated with bringing India its independence, who is the destroyer of that dream of diversity.

Shiva's force of destruction, dominating the latter half of the book, raises the question in how far Rushdie presents a pessimistic view of history. Rushdie rejects this

criticism. In his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' he does not regard the book as despairingly nihilistic. While the story does lead Saleem to despair, the story is also meant to echo the Indian talent for non-stop regeneration: 'The form – multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country – is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem's personal tragedy' (Rushdie 1992a, 16). This ability for regeneration and multiple possibilities is inherently present in the novel, such as Ahmed Sinai recovering his love for his wife, Reverend Mother's transformation from devout Muslim to businesswoman, and Pia's transformation from Bollywood starlet to proud owner of a petrol pump.

In 'The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987' Rushdie points out that, if anything, the book's last pages, with their suggestion of a more pragmatic generation rising up to take the place of the Midnight's Children, 'now (1987) seems absurdly romantically optimistic' (Rushdie 1992a, 33). Still, Rushdie's indictment of the Emergency and Indira Gandhi remains stark: 'It has seemed to me [...] that the imposition of the Emergency was an act of folly [...]; and that many of the evils besetting India today – notably the resurgence of religious extremism – can be traced back to those days of dictatorship and State violence' (Rushdie 1992a, 52). In this respect Rushdie holds Indira Gandhi responsible for damaging the structure of Indian democracy. Rushdie has remarked that her call for a general election in 1977 and her removal from power has given his novel a happy ending, which during the time of writing was not evident. Rushdie maintains that the decision to declare a state of internal emergency seriously threatened the balance of power of the working of the Indian state and the ideal of nation envisioned by her father. Saleem's tale is a challenge to that episode in history, turning historiography inside out by simply narrating his story.

Notes

[1] In an interview Rushdie has commented: 'Writing nowadays is very international. For instance, Latin American writers all talk about, as influences, people like William Faulkner. My own writing contains very visible influences from all over the world. And that kind of international fraternity is responsible for all the better writing being done now.

I think I have benefited from gaining a knowledge of western culture, western artistic developments, but obviously if it hadn't been for the Indian half, none of that would have been much use. ...' (Rushdie/Dube 2001, 17).

[2] Rushdie states that while *Midnight's Children* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are in the same area of fiction, they are different in vision. Rushdie's point of departure is the urban vision of Bombay as an idea, as well as a place. Thus Bombay is the spirit of the book. Marquez's vision in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by contrast is essentially not urban by taking what seems normal and natural in a village and

very strange and wonderful outside the village. Rushdie's point of departure is exactly opposite to that (see Rushdie/Kumar 2001, 34).

Magical Realism is a term invented by German photographer, art historian and art critic Franz Roh in 1925 in his book *Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus* (*After Expressionism: Magic Realism*). Magical Realism describes modern realist paintings with fantasy or dream-like subjects. In Central Europe, Magical Realism was part of the reaction against avant-garde art, known as the return to order, that took place generally after the First World War. In 1955 the critic Angel Flores used Magical Realism to describe the writing of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, and it has since become a significant if disputed literary term. For a good overview see Zamora and Faris 1995.

[3] This rather peculiar way of examining a patient is based on a true story that Rushdie's grandfather told him: 'My grandfather once told me – when I was still quite young – much later when he actually was in India, no longer in Kashmir, he had been called as a doctor to the house of a woman who was in purdah and her normal lady doctor was not available for some reason and he had been asked to examine her through a hole in a sheet, which he told me as a comedy story – he said this is a completely bizarre thing to be asked to do if you're a doctor, to put a stethoscope through a hole in a sheet and feel somebody's heart' (Reynold/Noakes 2003, 14).

[4] '...the nightmare of Indira Gandhi is fused with the equally nightmarish figure of Margaret Hamilton [the actress who played the witch]: a coming-together of the Wicked Witches of the East and West' (Rushdie 1992b, 33).

[5] 'At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. [...] We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell' (Nehru 1997, 1-2).

[6] In the short story 'A Free Radio' in *East, West* Rushdie also comments on the forced sterilisation programs and the promise of a free radio that never arrives.

[7] In a 1982 interview Rushdie states: 'I am very interested in movies, and I think they probably have influenced the writing quite a lot. Bombay, as the book makes clear, is very much a movie city, apart from anything else, so you grow up there with the feeling of being in a film capital. And I did have relatives who were involved in the movies, although not quite in the way the characters in the book are, so I've had movies in my blood from an early age.

And I think there's one thing particularly which the development of film since the New Wave has done for audiences and even for readers: It has made people much more sophisticated about accepting what might once have been thought to be very strange techniques. For instance, if you want to intercut two scenes in prose now, people know what you're doing and don't think of it as being confusing. The whole experience of montage technique, split screens, dissolves, and so on, has become a film language which translates quite easily into fiction and gives you an extra vocabulary that traditionally has not been part of the vocabulary of literature' (Rushdie/Ross 2000, 6-7).

[8] Rushdie notes: 'And originally I thought there'd be only one child – the idea of having the exchange of children came later. That was partly because I thought of a sort of dualism between the children – they represent wealth and poverty, reason and unreason, peace and war and so forth. But also I wanted them to be not children of their parents; I wanted them to be the children of the times. And the exchange, by divorcing them from their actual bloodlines, was a way of achieving that. And also it's a nice Bombay talkie idea; I liked it because of its melodrama and its cheapness' (Rushdie/Pattanayak 1983, 21).

[9] The song's importance for Rushdie's fictional characters will be discussed in further detail in the chapter 4 in the context of *The Satanic Verses*.

[10] In the Nanavati case, Parsee Indian naval commander Kawas Manekshaw Nanavati was tried for the murder of his wife Sylvia's lover Prem Ahuja, who he shot three times after confronting him about his affair with his wife. After the shooting Nanavati immediately gave himself up to the police. In the subsequent jury trial the jury had to deliberate whether the gun went off by accident for which under the Indian Penal Code he would face a sentence of 10 years for accidental homicide or whether the murder was premeditated for which he could be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment for murder. His defence argued for the former, the prosecution for the latter. In the event, the jury acquitted Nanavati 8:1,

upon which the judge, calling the verdict perverse, referred the case to the Bombay High Court for a retrial. The massive media attention and public support had influenced the jury. This led to the abolition of trial-by-jury in the Indian penal system. At the retrial, Nanavati was sentenced to life imprisonment, but after continuous lobbying by the media and the public, Nanavati was pardoned by the Governor of Maharashtra and was released after serving only three years of his prison term. He, his wife and three children subsequently migrated to Canada, where Nanavati died in 2003.

[11] In an interview, T. Vijay Kumar asked Rushdie: 'What was the special objective in bringing in mythological characters like Rama, Ravana, or Ganesh into the modern setting of *Midnight's Children*?' He answers: 'You see, Rama [shows] up in the book in connection with the Nanavati case. I think in India, more than anywhere else that I know, the past is still with us. Those legends have not lost their power, they haven't just become fairy stories. They still are actual. So there are going to be parallels between living legends and untrue facts. The Nanavati case seemed to my mind to be the 20th century reenactment of the Ramayana. I think it is because the case had such a close connection with the living legend that it had such a hold on people's mind. Although, in the end, he went to jail as the President refused to pardon him, there was no doubt in the people's minds. As I said in the book, India found itself having to choose between the rule of heroism and rule of law, between its mythical past and present' (Rushdie/Kumar 2001, 34). It is also a question of shame and honour, which is the preoccupation of his next novel *Shame*.

[12] Some characters are named after gods, Shiva fathers a child with Parvati, and although he is not named Ganesh he has Elephantine ears, thus hinting at that God's Elephant head. Thus the narrative plays with mythological elements in its own aim to become mythic and epic.

[13] The film was a major star vehicle for Amitabh Bachchan, whose accident on the set of the film *Coolie* Rushdie fictionalises in *The Satanic Verses*. Amitabh Bachchan is also the major real-life parallel to Gibreel Farishta. Rachel Dwyer notes: 'Manmohan Desai made several films about families separated and reunited (almost constituting a separate genre called 'lost and found'), and one of the earliest films was about a Partition separation. His films showed characters from different religions, his most famous being *Amar, Akbar, Anthony*, which is now a byword in religious plurality' (Dwyer 2006, 143-144).

[14] When the book was first published, a few directors were interested in turning *Midnight's Children* into a film, among them renowned Indian filmmaker Shyam Benegal (see Rushdie/Dube 2001, 10). Satyajit Ray, by contrast, thought the book was un-filmable, because the amount of simplification needed would mean the book would no longer be itself. Rushdie has commented: 'My feeling is that it's very hard to get it into a feature film and that, if it is at all possible, it would have to be something longer, like a television series' (Rushdie/Tripathi,Vakil 2000, 81).

[15] However, despite the stage adaptation's unevenness, it proved that it was possible to condense and adapt the novel, to visualise and bring to life in full 3D the characters, narrative and arguments of the novel, capturing its spirit and translating it for the stage. The problematics in the three hour version were that the story had to move too fast and there was not enough time to engage with the characters, in order to actually care what happened to them. Thus, a significant poignancy to Saleem's story was lost on stage. It proves that the novel is perhaps better suited to be adapted as a TV miniseries than a feature film. However, the play adaptation showed that it was not impossible to adapt the novel and might provide the necessary impetus for a producer to finally film Rushdie's screenplay.

[16] Rushdie's old career as an advertising copywriter was useful in teaching him how to condense material, while experience in drama and documentary filmmaking were helpful in creating the episodic dramatic structure of the screenplay.

[17] Saleem, like Salman, is a big movie fan, breathing and living film. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why he has such a passion for gossip. Cricket and films, it seems, are the nine year-old Saleem main preoccupations: ' With the eclectic spirit of my nine years spurring me on, I leaped into the heads of film stars and cricketers – I learned the truth behind the *Filmfare* gossip about the dancer Vijayantimala, and I was at the crease with Polly Umrigar at the Brabourne Stadium; I was Lata Mangeshkar the playback singer and Bubu the clown at the circus behind Civil Lines ... and inevitably, through the random processes of my mind-hopping, I discovered politics' (Rushdie 1995a, 174).

[18] Rushdie had to delete the following sentence from subsequent editions of *Midnight's Children*, over which Indira Gandhi sued him: 'It has often been said that Mrs Gandhi's younger son Sanjay accused his mother of being responsible, through her neglect, for his father's death; and that this gave him an unbreakable hold over her, so that she became incapable of denying him anything' (Rushdie 1981, 406). See also Rushdie 2006a, xv-xvi.

[19] This seems almost reminiscent of the ending of *A Passage to India*.

[20] See Nehru, Jawaharlal. 'Tryst with Destiny'. In Rushdie/West 1997, 1-2. Nehru elaborates on his vision of a free India in chapter 10 'Ahmadnagar Fort Again' in *The Discovery of India*. See Nehru 2004, 532-632.

[21] The notion of cultural synthesis and India as a palimpsest is significant to the narrative argument of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

[22] This is echoed in the song and dance sequences of Hindi films, especially of the 1950s and 60s. In many song picturisations women's bodies are mapped by the camera gaze, puzzled together to form a whole on which the main protagonist projects his desire.

[23] Brennan points out that the myth of the nation essentially has multiple meanings. It can mean either '[m]yth as distortion or lie; myth as mythology, legend or oral tradition; myth as literature *per se*; myth as shibboleth – all of these meanings are present at different times in the writing of modern political culture' (Brennan 1989, 1-2). This new concern with the nation is especially apparent in postcolonial writing after the Second World War. Brennan goes on to state that the nation 'is precisely what Foucault has called a "discursive formation" – not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure, which the Third-World artist is very often either consciously building or suffering the lack of' (Brennan 1989, 4).

[24] Perhaps Rushdie is explicitly highlighting that Partition was not seen as a viable and natural option. Indeed, the call for a separate Muslim homeland on the subcontinent really did not take hold until 1946, one year before independence. According to Vijay Mishra, the two nation theory of the Muslim League used an absolutist ethnic definition of the Muslim, seeking to define the Muslims of the subcontinent in terms of an exclusive category with a shared world-view, a common outlook, and a structure of consciousness in accord with the fundamental tenets of Islam (Mishra 2002, 210). Yet there were many other groups like the Jam'iyyat-i 'Ulama-i-Hind collective of Indian Muslims opposed to both Partition and the two-nation theory (Mishra 2002, 210).

[25] In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a novel very much preoccupied with the idea of India, Rushdie spends more time looking at the conceptualisation of India as a nation during the Independence struggle. He then moves on to chronicle the decline of the idea of independent India as multi-religious and multi-ethnic with a specific focus on Bombay and the 1992/93 riots and bomb blasts.

[26] The transcript was subsequently published as an essay titled 'The Riddle of Midnight, August 1987' (Rushdie 1992a, 26-33).

[27] Rushdie ties up many of the loose ends in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, where Adam Braganza is adopted by Abraham Zogoiby and introduced to the family business. He turns out to be a spectacular failure.

[28] In *Shame*, the reader encounters the family feud between two Pakistani political dynasties, the Hyders and the Harappas. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the reader is introduced to the life and death stories of the business dynasty of the Zogoibys, the wife an artist-celebrity, the father an underworld don.

[29] For instance, during the Emergency, there were suggestions that the relationship between Indira and Sanjay was incestuous, the Oedipal ambiguities being wildly exaggerated, a theme Rushdie takes up in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. There have been public confrontations between Jawaharlal Nehru and his son-in-law Feroze Gandhi, Indira Gandhi has been ousted and disgraced post-Emergency and Sanjay, in what some have called a moment of divine retribution, was killed in a plane crash. Furthermore there have been the confrontations between Indira Gandhi and her daughter-in-law Maneka, Sanjay's wife.

[30] Arguably, Saleem marginalises the women in his narrative as he is convinced of his centrality. This conviction is destabilised by Indira Gandhi as he muses: 'Was my lifelong belief in the equation between the State and myself transmuted, in "the Madam's" mind, into that in-those-days-famous phrase: *India is Indira and Indira is India*? Were we competitors for centrality – was she gripped by a lust for meaning as profound as my own – and was that, was that why…?' (Rushdie 1995b, 420)

[31] Rushdie has commented on the role of Bombay in the novel in various interviews: 'I think the kind of sensibility in the book is basically urban. Although half of the novel takes place in Bombay, the other half doesn't. But to my mind it all takes place in Bombay, because Bombay is the spirit of the book. Bombay is an idea as well as a place' (Rushdie/Kumar 2001, 34). In another interview Rushdie has commented how writing about Bombay was the original motivation for writing *Midnight's Children*. 'Bombay in the fifties and sixties was a remarkable city, and I remembered a lot of it. In a way my memory was frozen at the time that I left, so it was as though the city which no longer existed continued to exist inside my head. I thought I'd better write it down before I forgot' (Rushdie/Ross 2000, 6). When Saleem's family finally arrives in Bombay, he spends some time tracing the city's history and its mythic past. Reclaiming an ur-Bombay, when there were still seven islands, before the East India Company and the British Raj through land reclamation turned Bombay into one big peninsula connected to the subcontinent. Saleem then proceeds to describe the microcosmic world of Methwold Estate (see Rushdie 1995b, 92-99).

[32] In 'Salman the Funtoosh: Magic Bilingualism in *Midnight's Children*' Harish Trivedi argues that in appearance as in speech Rushdie's sense of cultural hybridity is more dramatic and performative and not fully meditated and realized. Taking the word funtoosh, its origin and meaning, Trivedi goes to great lengths to deconstruct Rushdie's position as the 'native informant' for his western readership and in the process attempts to prove that Rushdie's knowledge of Hindi and Urdu words is so faulty that he cannot be called bilingual (see Trivedi 2003, 69-94).

[33] In a 1983 interview with *Literary Criterion* Rushdie states: 'The writers I was much more conscious while writing are Sterne and Dickens and Swift. For instance, there is a technique that Dickens used that I thought was very remarkable. He uses a kind of background or setting for his works which is completely naturalistic, down to the tiniest details. And on top of this completely naturalistic background he imposes totally surrealistic images – like the Circumlocution office, which is a civil service department designed to do nothing, or like many of the characters, who are much larger than life. […] What I tried to do – though not quite in the Dickensian way - was to make sure that the background, the bedrock of the book, was right – that Bombay was like Bombay, the cities were like the cities, the different dates were recognisably correct so that the fantasy could be rooted in that kind of reality' (Rushdie/Pattanayak 1983, 20).

[34] These events are already described very vividly in the novel, but are visualised even more strikingly, horrifically and poignantly in the screenplay.

Chapter 3

Shame - Filmic representations of migrancy, women, shame and the Islamic postcolonial nation state

In *Shame*, Rushdie shifts his attention to Pakistan and he presents the country at an angle to reality, describing a fictionalised version of the country as a bleak dystopia of the postcolonial state. Like *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* engages with ideas of nationhood, history and historiography, society and the individual and the role of women in a patriarchal system. Central to the novel is the rivalry between a prime minister and a military leader, closely paralleling the rise and fall of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq. Rushdie directly attacks both leaders' style of government and, more broadly, Pakistani politics of the 1970s. Rushdie engages directly with the theme of migration here and debates more incisively notions of home and homelessness, which he later develops into the central themes of *The Satanic Verses*.

This chapter will discuss *Shame* in relation to *Midnight's Children* and will examine the role of women and nation in both novels. It will focus on how Karachi and Pakistan in *Shame* become the antithesis to Bombay and India, and will show how non-stop inventiveness and the potential of non-stop regeneration Rushdie associates with India are portrayed as absent in Pakistan. Rushdie stresses Pakistan's singularity rather than its multiplicity and argues that the threat of religious extremism brings with it a closure of possibilities. Women play a central role in Rushdie's exploration of the theme of shame - *sharam* - and honour. The female characters attain mythic stature through their suffering and this chapter will explore how these 'larger-than-life' characters are constructed often in filmic parameters parallel to the imagining of women in Bombay cinema. This chapter will show how Rushdie's female characters are instrumental in shaping the narrative and will also question different modes of representation and different narrative forms of storytelling. *Shame*, like *Midnight's Children*, is a highly visual narrative, borrowing not only from cinematic representations of the Bombay film, but also from the oral story-telling tradition of the subcontinent. *Shame* is a polemical novel, a sharp indictment of the postcolonial state in decline and of the subcontinental patriarchal system where conceptualisations of shame and honour are manifested and acted out on the female body.

Although *Shame*'s main narrative thrust centres on the postcolonial politics of Pakistan, the novel tentatively marks the shift in subject matter in Rushdie's fictional work away from a central preoccupation with the postcolonial nation state – India in *Midnight's Children*, a version of Pakistan in *Shame* – towards the former centre of Empire, Great Britain in *The Satanic Verses*. After *Shame*, Rushdie directs his attention to transglobal migration and the position of the immigrant as outsider in London and New York. In *Shame*, Rushdie begins to dramatise the difficult relationship between the migrant and the home he has left behind through the narrator's position in exile. In this respect, Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère reads both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* 'as the story of an impossible farewell' where 'each novel represents a new beginning, conceived of as a tentative departure from the past and the mother country' (1999, 23). The shift occurs in *Shame* with a narratorial voice in voluntary exile, a voice that needs to come to terms with the place it has left behind. Not until *Fury* does Rushdie break that pattern.[1] Thus Rushdie dramatises migrancy through the narrator whose voice is in marked contrast to Saleem's, whose self-delusional voice seems to have wrestled the story-telling process from his author.[2] *Shame* can be read as Rushdie's attempt at finding an alternative strategy to the story-telling techniques of *Midnight's Children*. In *Shame*, the narrator holds the reins firmly in his hands and his hero is peripheral, marginalised and sidelined. More importantly, the hero is denied his own opinions and interventions in the novel. Thus Omar Khayyam Shakil is censored by the narrator as much as the novel's female characters are sidelined.[3]

Inscribing Nationhood: Imaging Pakistan

The narrator of *Shame* judges Pakistan's myth of nation as a failure: 'perhaps the place was just *insufficiently imagined*, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriffbaring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong' (Rushdie 1995b, 87). The narrator holds the country's political elite responsible for this failure and links it directly to the country's birth as an independent nation state from the partition of British India into India and Pakistan. The question of a myth of nation is closely linked to the writing of history within nationalist movements. In the late nineteenth century, the Bengali intellectual Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay noted 'we must have a history' (Chattopadhyay cited in Khilnani 1999, 159). By the 1920s, projects of writing a history for the Indian subcontinent became one of the main preoccupations of nationalist intellectuals (Khilnani 1999, 159). A variety of competing histories were produced, all

wrestling for authority. From this process, a version of Indian history emerged, divided into Hindu, Muslim and British periods where the classic era of Vedic culture and the Gupta Empire which lasted from the fourth to the seventh century was portrayed as the defining historical moment of ancient Hindu India (Khilnani 1999, 159). The Muslim period from the eleventh century in these histories was portrayed as a period of decline that made the subcontinent vulnerable to British conquest (Khilnani 1999, 160). This extremely sanitised version of Indian history focused on a skilfully customised idea of Hinduism.[4] According to Khilnani, it emphasised 'territorial origin and broad cultural commonalities rather than ritual practices, caste exclusivities or particular gods' (1999, 160). This search for a seamless Hindu past, which to this day is conducted by Hindu nationalist organisations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has had an important impact on the later stages of British India's move to independence, as these histories proposed and defined an exclusive and excluding definition of Indianness (Khilnani 1999, 161). Khilnani thus argues: 'Hindu nationalism was a real mover in the agitation for Partition' (1999, 161). Khilnani proposes a different reading of the processes that led to Partition. He sees Jinnah's political project as a response to the more hard-line attitudes and actions of the Hindu majority and some elements within the Indian National Congress in the 1930s. He argues that Jinnah's political project also needs to be analysed in terms of its intention to safeguard the interests of Muslims in provinces where they were in a minority (Khilnani 1999, 162).[5] Jinnah saw the Muslims of India forming a single community that co-existed alongside the Hindu community within a united, confederal India. It was not until the late 1930s that calls for a separate Muslim state gathered momentum. According to Khilnani, this coincided with an 'erosion of trust that fanned a desire to redescribe a "minority" within British India as a separate "nation", and to take it outside the boundaries of India' (Khilnani 1999, 163). A definition of Indianness with an exclusive sense of culture and historical past can therefore be seen as one of the decisive factors on the road to Partition and led to a re-inscription of a minority into a 'nation' that ultimately defined itself along ethnic-religious lines (Khilnani 1999, 163).

The novel's engagement with Partition links it most explicitly to *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie's invented fictional film *Gai-Wallah* is a cross-over from *Midnight's Children*. Rashid the rickshaw wallah, who saved Nadir Khan from the assassins who had butchered Mian Abdullah, was on his way home from the cinema where he saw the movie.[6] In *Shame*, the riots the film sparked in Delhi illustrate the divisiveness among

the Hindu-Muslim communities. As the Empire cinema is burnt down, tolerance, too, is burnt and scorched, and Bilquìs emerges as the victim, her eyebrows burnt off and her clothes torn off by the hot wind that fans the flames engulfing her father's cinema after the bomb had been planted in the Empire. Bilquìs, homeless, survives without even the clothes on her back and becomes, along with a large part of India's Muslim community, a refugee. The connection between *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* is further accentuated if one thinks about some of the narrative strands as taking place at roughly the same time. For instance, when The Empire cinema burns, Amina Sinai transforms herself into a version of Mother India, announcing her pregnancy to her Muslim neighbourhood to protect the Hindu Lifafa Das. At the same time, her husband and business partners are held to ransom by the Ravana gang. In this respect, the section set in Delhi in pre-Partition India in *Shame* needs to be read as closely interconnected with the previous novel. The fictional cinematic text *Gai-Wallah* is a cross-over that signals their relationship. Thus, the violence that led up to Independence and Partition which is sidelined in *Midnight's Children* becomes prominent, and for Bilquìs a defining moment in her life, and reflects back on the previous novel. This connection gestures towards wider interconnections between Rushdie's fictional worlds. This 'spill-over' from *Midnight's Children* counterbalances the lack of narration of the Partition violence in the earlier novel.

Bilquìs becomes a victim of the Partition riots in Delhi and a refugee in her own country. Her experience of violence ruptures her connection with India and forces her into an identity crisis:

> All migrants leave their pasts behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes – but on the journey something seeps out of the treasured mementoes and old photographs, until even their owners fail to recognize them, because it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging – at any rate, my point is that Bilquìs's past left her even before she left that city; she stood in a gully, denuded by the suicide of her father and watched it go.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 63/64)

The experience of uprooting proves formative for Bilquìs. Bilquìs becomes violently disengaged from her past and is forced to refashion her life elsewhere. She becomes a discontinuous being in the process. The narrator empathises with her and is at pains to establish some form of connection between Bilquìs's migrant experience and his own. He sees discontinuity as the quintessential hallmark of the immigrant experience. Thus the narrator layers Bilquìs's experience with more meaning. His experience of migrancy

is transferred to her as she makes her way naked to the Red Fort in Delhi with only her dupatta stuck to her body. Against this backdrop, Bilquìs meets her future husband Raza Hyder (Rushdie 1995b, 65).

Bilquìs's character is shaped by the experience of Partition:

> I am wondering how best to describe Bilquìs. As a woman who was unclothed by change, but who wrapped herself in certainties; or as a girl who became a queen, but lost the ability possessed by every beggar-woman, that is, the power of bearing sons; or as the lady whose father was a Woman and whose son turned out to be a girl as well; and whose man of men, her Razzoo or Raz-Matazz, was himself obliged, in the end, to put on the humiliating black shroud of womanhood; or perhaps as a being in the secret grip of fate – for did not the umbilical noose that stifled her son find its echo, or twin, in another and more terrible rope?
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 67-68)

Here, the narrator exposes the many ways of interpreting Bilquìs's story in an attempt to establish continuity and reinsert her into historical discourse. He invests her with multiple meanings by revealing the possible connections between the stories he chooses to tell later on, inviting the reader to connect different narrative strands, forcing the reader to cross-reference constantly. The narrator collapses time, combining elements of past, present and future.[7] The narrator, like a movie trailer, lays out hints of stories yet to be told and in the process relays the interpretative possibilities of her story, foreclosing others. Bilquìs's story and *Shame's* engagement with Partition powerfully dramatises that the split in territory has generated in people a split in their selves in relation to belonging and home. Bilquìs's foibles, fears and behaviours need to be read in the context of her experience of Partition where she lost her father, her home, her honour, was alienated from her homeland and migrated to another, where it becomes increasingly clear she does not belong. These external forces play a major part in her retreat from the world. In the wake of the selfish decisions of a political elite to which her husband Raza Hyder and her best friend's husband Iskander Harappa[8] belong, events become too horrific to bear. In this respect, women in the novel seem to be at the mercy of the shameless behaviour of men.

This needs to be further contextualised in relation to the nationalist discourse on the role and position of women. Partha Chatterjee has explored this in his essay 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' by looking at the Bengali Renaissance in the nineteenth century and debates around social reform and the women's question. These debates were crucial in determining the place of women within nationalist ideology and in opposition to colonial governance in India. According to Chatterjee,

'the resolution of the women's question was built around a separation of the domain of culture into two separate spheres – the material and the spiritual' (2001, 155). These deliberations are important for an understanding of *Shame* because nationalism on the subcontinent was not only about gaining independence from the British colonial power. As Chatterjee indicates, 'it related the question of political independence of the nation to virtually every aspect of the material and spiritual life of the people' (2001, 155). In this respect, these preoccupations have shaped the position of women in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in its separation of responsibility for social space, split into home for women and world for men – *ghar* and *bahir*:

> The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation. And so we get an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into ghar and bahir.
>
> (Chatterjee 2001, 156)

Chatterjee further argues that during the nationalist struggle the protection, preservation and strengthening of the national culture became the overriding issue (2001, 156). The split should not be understood as a rejection of modernity, but as a strategy that could make the nationalist project compatible with modernity (Chatterjee 2001, 156). In these deliberations, home was deemed to be the main site where the spiritual quality of the culture could be expressed. The main responsibility to protect and to nurture fell to women (Chatterjee 2001, 159). In this respect, Chatterjee maintains, the 'new' postcolonial woman was subjected to a new form of patriarchy, a patriarchy distinct from the patriarchy of indigenous tradition (2001, 159-160). According to nationalist discourse, the prime marker of a woman's newly acquired freedom was to attain by her own efforts a superior national culture (Chatterjee 2001, 160). Therefore, it could be argued that the nationalist project envisioned for the postcolonial Indian women a pseudo-emancipation where a woman's femininity is fixed in terms of precise culturally visible spiritual qualities (Chatterjee 2001, 162). This spilt of home (the female domain) and the world (the male domain) is all-pervasive in *Shame* and, as this discussion will show, is one of the crucial determining structural devices of the novel. This concern will also be significant in the narrative argument in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

The political struggle for power between Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder also needs to be related back to the moment of origin of Pakistan as a nation. The Indian

historian Mushirul Hasan sees the reality of Partition as well as the fact that to this day more than 120 million Muslims live in India, rather than Pakistan or Bangladesh, as the failure of both Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism (Hasan 2003, 144). Hasan argues that the search for identity of both nations has been constrained by the conflicting interests of an abundance of diverse and antagonistic groups (Hasan 2003, 144-145). For Hasan, the secession of Bangladesh does not necessarily provide the counter-argument to the two-nation theory, 'but rather how Pakistan's journey, beginning 14 August 1947, has been hampered by so many conflicts and contradictions' (Hasan 2003, 145). Amartya Sen in *Identity and Violence* also argues that the secession of Bangladesh was based on issues concerning language, literature and politics, but not religious identity (Sen 2006a, 15).

The duel of Iskander and Hyder needs to be read in the context of the identity crisis the secession of Bangladesh sparked in the political landscape of Pakistan. In this respect, *Shame* narrates the aftermath of Pakistan's defeat after the war of secession, an event that features prominently in *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie brings the concerns about religious, cultural and national identity together in both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. In the former novel he imagines an alternative to Partition in the Free Islam Convocation. In the latter he presents the unitary vision of Pakistan as a Muslim state that in his imagination can only lead to an annihilating explosion. In both novels he conceives of an end for Pakistan that approaches an apocalypse. While *Midnight's Children*, too, seems to make a judgment about postcolonial India, about what it has become in the wake of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, the method of *Midnight's Children*, the way in which it is written, is the implicit counter argument to the bleak picture at the end, hinting at India's potential for non-stop inventiveness and regeneration. For Pakistan, Rushdie does not see this opportunity, but he sees the country and its citizens trapped in a cycle of shame and shamelessness, which breeds violence that culminates in both novels in Pakistan exploding.

Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* portray Pakistan as a barren landscape. The territory that *Shame* maps out is a closed system in which the protagonists are trapped. Thus, Aijaz Ahmad convincingly claims that the reader is confronted with a distinctive version of Pakistan: 'a space occupied so entirely by Power that there is no space left for either resistance or its representation; whoever claims to resist is already enmeshed in relations of Power and in the logic of all-embracing violences' (1994, 127). This has a significant bearing on any writing of history as it is systematised into

discourse which leaves no room for individual resistance, and which is only ever self-serving or futile. Thus, Ahmad sees the individual confronted with a 'history without systematic origins, human subjects or collective sites', only 'a history of all-encompassing Power, which is wielded by none and *cannot* be resisted because there is nothing outside the fabrication of Power' (1994, 130-131). In this respect, the machine of history in the novel is totalising and all-encapsulating and does not allow for any form of meaningful resistance, which becomes clearer in my later discussion of Bilquìs and Sufiya Zinobia. A 'history of all-encompassing Power' does not leave any room for the individual and becomes a violator in its own right as it excludes those who are powerless.

Ahmad seems to describe a process within a postcolonial context in *Shame* that could be seen as an analogue to Spivak's conceptualisation of 'epistemic violence' that leads to an objectified construction of the other in the imperialist project and denies the subaltern colonial other a place, space, role and voice outside distinctively defined parameters, which leads Spivak to the following conclusion: 'Between patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution, it is the dubious place of the free will of the sexed subject as female that is successfully effaced' (Spivak 1985, 144). This bears heavily on the representation of women in *Shame*. Are Sufiya Zinobia, Rani Harappa, and the Virgin Ironpants examples of a possibility of resistance or, as Bilquìs and Omar Khayyam exemplify, is resistance futile in the face of an all-encompassing power of the state that is rooted in an exclusionist patriarchal religious ethnic nationalist discourse that justifies autocratic rule? The violating force of history can only be countered by further violence yet even this violence leads to nothing but annihilation. History in *Shame*, then, can be read as static and not open to change, only a cycle of shifting power relations, which is interlinked with shameful and shameless behaviour of a political elite. Thus in *Shame*, *Midnight's Children's* potential for non-stop regeneration and multiplicity is a possibility that is foreclosed.

This becomes obvious in the claustrophobic 'Nishapur' mansion of old Mister Shakil, crammed with a stifling agglomeration of artefacts and books. The name Nishapur alludes to the birthplace of the poet Omar Khayyám, the Persian eleventh century poet after whom the central peripheral hero of *Shame* is named.[9] The internal world of Nishapur and its cultural artefacts could perhaps have provided alternative models for independent Pakistan, especially after the crisis of the secession of its east wing to form Bangladesh. Omar Khayyam delves into his grandfather's collection of

books and artefacts that provide a detailed overview of this cultural heritage, from the Indus civilisation to the Mughal Empire, Urdu and Persian literature, which could be found in the geographical locality of Pakistan. 'Nishapur' allows for an exploration beyond 'history' back to an antiquity that needs to be archeologically excavated (see Rushdie 1995b, 31-35). The treasures in Nishapur would have perhaps allowed for different imaginative possibilities, but as the decay of the mansion indicates, they are not 'valuable' in modern-day Pakistan and are left to rot.

The agglomeration of artefacts and their discovery by Omar Khayyam points towards the possibility that, within the land-mass of Pakistan, national community could be imagined outside religious and patriarchal models not solely based on Islam. In this respect, the responsibility for the failure of a new dawn for Pakistan is firmly laid at the feet of the country's ruling elite and their inability to provide an alternative inclusive system to govern its territory. As religion was the main dividing factor on the road to the partition of the subcontinent and the integral part of the founding myth of nation of Pakistan, the novel incisively criticises the role of religion in relation to the country's political regime. The narrator claims:

> My point is that Islam might well have proved an effective unifying force in post-Bangladesh Pakistan, if people hadn't tried to make it into such an almighty big deal. [...]
>
> So-called Islamic 'fundamentalism' does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. [...]
>
> But the ramming-down-the-throat-point stands. In the end you get sick of it, you lose faith in the faith, if not *qua* faith then certainly as the basis for a state. And then the dictator falls, and it is discovered that he has brought God down with him, that the justifying myth of the nation has been unmade. This leaves only two options: disintegration, or a new dictatorship... no, there is a third, and I shall not be so pessimistic as to deny its possibility. The third option is the substitution of a new myth for the old one. Here are three such myths, all available from stock at short notice: liberty; equality; fraternity.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 251)

This is the narrator's sharpest indictment of religion and politics and its uses and abuses by the state. Rushdie presents democracy, secularism and the ideals of the French Revolution as the only viable and workable myth of nation for Pakistan. Otherwise, for insufficiently-imagined Pakistan, Rushdie only sees the house of history crashing down unless the old myth is replaced, empowering the people, which he sees as unrealistic for the immediate future. The symbolic ending of the novel, which will be discussed later in

further detail, could then be read as the failure of an alternative myth of nation emerging.

Aijaz Ahmad makes the case that the problem with the novel is that very clearly Rushdie only engages with Pakistan as a polity, exposing its grotesque ruling class (1994, 140). Thus, Ahmad argues that, in the rhetorical stance of the novel, Rushdie presents the experience of the country's ruling elite 'as the experience of a "country"' (1994, 140). While this allows Rushdie to present the action of the novel as a juicy-gory family saga, the narrator also sweepingly generalises Pakistani society. Ahmad sees the novel's family saga and the portrayal of Pakistani society as mirror images of each other through the presentation of 'a society which is declared to be coterminous with this state structure, equally deformed and irretrievably marked by its purported civilization (Islam) and its genetic origin (the Partition)' (1994, 141). In this respect, the novel reads like a loveless book.[10] While I agree with Ahmad on this point, it is important to note that Rushdie's concern in all his novels is with a narrow stratum of society – the bourgeois middle class who both in India and Pakistan were so important in the nationalist movements and the nation-building process. What emerges perhaps too easily and most problematically in Rushdie's often patronisingly polemical argument about his Pakistan at an angle to reality is the assertion, to quote Ahmad again, that 'the country was *made* wrong; what else do you expect?' (1994, 141)

Omar Khayyam: journeys from Nishapur

The novel begins and ends in the 'Nishapur' mansion in the remote border town of Q. The 'Nishapur' mansion is positioned outside of real time, sequestered from the outside world and the flow of history:

> Omar Khayyam passed twelve long years, the most crucial years of his development, trapped inside that reclusive mansion, that third world that was neither material nor spiritual, but a sort of concentrated decrepitude made up of the decomposing remnants of those two more familiar types of cosmos, a world in which he would constantly run into – as well as the mothballed, spider-webbed, dust-shrouded profusion of crumbling objects – the lingering, fading miasmas of discarded ideas and forgotten dreams. The finely-calculated gesture with which his three mothers had sealed themselves off from the world had created a sweltering, entropical zone in which, despite all the rotting-down of the past, nothing new seemed capable of growth, and from which it became Omar Khayyam's most cherished youthful ambition quickly to escape.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 30)

The description of the 'Nishapur' mansion is revealed by the end of the novel to be a microcosm of Pakistan, a parallel mirror image, replicating the stifling of possibilities

for the individual, in which the mythic world of history cannot provide any guidance for the individual. The lack of freedom Omar Khayyam experiences in the mansion mirrors that of his life, where freedom is merely an illusion as he remains trapped, peripheral and devoid of any agency. His birth in 'Nishapur', isolated from the flow of history of the outside world, but sequestered in his own myth-world, leads Omar Khayyam to describe himself as being 'not even the hero of his own life; a man born and raised in the condition of being out of things' (Rushdie 1995b, 24). The reader is confronted with the most unlikely of heroes: 'Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat' (Rushdie 1995b, 25). When his mothers finally relent and let him escape to that other demented house of the outside world, they say good-bye to him, advising him that he should not feel any shame. Pushed to the sidelines, a passive being, there is no other option for Omar Khayyam but to become a spectator of the life of others and of his own. This is made concrete in the voyeuristic pleasure he takes in using his telescope to spy on Farah Zoroaster (Rushdie 1995b, 45), which leads him to become a doctor: 'What's a doctor after all? – A legitimized voyeur, [...] who gazes on what we take most trouble to hide; [...] a minor character, yet also, paradoxically, central, especially at the crisis...' (Rushdie 1995b, 49).

The narrator relates the peripheral existence of Omar Khayyam to his own as an author in exile. As a person no longer living in Pakistan, the narrator is very conscious of his position and of the criticism that could be levelled at him:

> *Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!...* I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. *Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies?* I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories?
> Can only the dead speak?
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 28)

These concerns unconsciously preoccupy the narrator and indicate why he writes about a fictionalised version of Pakistan. Furthermore, he clearly marks out why he so desperately seeks to align his experience with that of his characters. He is conscious of the fact, and constantly reminds us as readers, that, like his hero Omar Khayyam and his female characters, he also occupies a position on the periphery. This awareness generates the above questions for which he needs to find narrative strategies for his story to gain 'authority'. Implicitly the reader can also detect a slight feeling of guilt,

perhaps even shame, about the appropriation of these stories. This is perhaps one explanation why the narrator feels the need to offer a fictionalised version of Pakistan:

> The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 29)

Alternatively, it could be argued that the narrator is deliberately universalising his story. This tension between the universal and the particular pinpoints some of the weaknesses in the narrator's imagined Pakistan.

The cutting between past, present and future is perhaps also a reflection of the narrator's attachment to his past and his homeland, if only by elastic bands (Rushdie 1995b, 28). The narrator describes the process of migration as 'translation': 'It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion [...] that something can also be gained' (Rushdie 1995b, 29).[11] What precisely it is that can be gained through migration is not made explicitly clear in *Shame*, but will become clearer in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* as both novels take on migration and hybridity in their reconfiguration of selfhood. The possibility of translation in *Shame* remains ambiguous when it comes to the narrator's engagement with the concept of shame:

> This word: shame. No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write, and so forever alter what is written...
>
> *Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry 'shame' is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shìn rè mìm* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 38-39)

Does the narrator so simply disown his previous remarks on translation or is it a marker that he can claim to be authentic and thus has a right to write this story? Why is the title of the novel *Shame* and not *Sharam*? Hima Raza sees it as a way for the narrator and Rushdie to establish himself as an Urdu-speaking writer in the South-Asian Diaspora (Raza 2005, 6). Rushdie shows the inadequacy and shortcomings of English to communicate the culturally specific concept of shame. At the same time he appropriates English to construct his polemical argument about Pakistan. He illustrates powerfully

what is lost in translation and highlights the in-between space he finds himself in. Raza argues: 'Rushdie's imaging of the *mohajir*[12] reiterates the political scope of this narrative in which he appropriates *Angrezi* (English) to convey his multiply displaced position, as well as to express a literary sensibility that is greatly shaped by his native language, Urdu' (2005, 6). It becomes ultimately an argument about narrative strategies, about how to narrate the experience of migration and how to write about 'over there' and 'over here' (Rushdie 1995b, 68-69).

The narrator muses on how different his narrative might be if he were writing a realistic novel about Pakistan:

> The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart.
>
> Fortunately, however, I'm only telling a sort of modern fairy-tale, so that's alright; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 70)

The question is, however, whether or not the narrator is in a position to write a realistic novel about Pakistan anyway. Conscious of his role as the outsider, he confesses that his view of Pakistan, too, has through his emigration been fragmented and distorted (Rushdie 1995b, 69). These implications are important for an understanding of the novel's engagement with history, in particular the partition of British India, and Pakistani politics, even though the narrator suppresses and censors these debates through an intense process of fictionalisation. Sara Suleri, for instance, argues that *Shame*

> accrues a freedom from facticity, an ability to allegorize and fantasize a sequence of events for the benefit of an uninformed audience. This ostensible flexibility, however, functions as a derangement in a narrative that frequently founders in the excessive fictionality that it has won from the hands of historical discourse.
>
> (2005, 175)

The narrator thus creates a detachment from the historical-political reality of his fictionalised Pakistan and yet he can never fully detach his text from that reality. This detachment is part of the narrator's method in fictionalising the socio-political reality of Pakistan. However, in the process, the narrator is also forced to acknowledge that his narrative cannot win complete freedom from historical and political discourse. Suleri points out the connection of Rushdie's text with colonial historical texts, such as James Mill's *The History of British India*, which claimed to offer an authoritative account of the subcontinent. Despite Mill never having visited India he assumes the authority to

make value judgements (Suleri 2005, 176). Rushdie's own narrator needs to prevent himself from falling into a similar trap.

Nevertheless, who determines who has a right to tell which story? Simply living elsewhere cannot be the basis for dismissing Rushdie's narrator's narrative. The narrator, through the process of intense fictionalisation and allegorisation, is involved in a process of disengaging his text from the reality of postcolonial Pakistan. Yet the excessive fictionalisation founders precisely because the overuse of allegory requires the reader to make a translation. He is forced into interpreting this self-consciously fictionalised world as an analogue of the real. Suleri thus contends that the narrative of *Shame* in its invocation of censorship 'obliquely acknowledges a complicity in the structure of a cultural judgment that takes the form of a muffled or a silenced voice' (2005, 177). The narrator-author in exile is aware of his precarious position and ultimately does not want to appear as the outsider who authoritatively judges Pakistan. He can, however, judge his fictional world more freely and with authority. Yet through a process of interpretation and translation, the reader ultimately transfers these judgements to the socio-political reality of Pakistan. In this respect, the narrator concedes that he is unable to write realistically about Pakistan, not because of his fear of censorship – this seems more like a smokescreen – but because of his exiled position in the west and his limited experience of Pakistan. Thus he exercises a form of self-censorship. This creates tensions between official stories, unofficial stories and histories that he chooses to narrate. He clearly controls which stories are told and which are omitted. The narrator muses: 'every story one chooses to tell is a kind of censorship, it prevents the telling of other tales...' (Rushdie 1995b, 71). This is a pertinent reminder that stories contain other stories, which is dramatised for instance in the two accounts from very different perspectives of the execution of Iskander Harappa (Rushdie 1995b, 187 and 238).

The tension between public and private stories that are jostling and competing with each other in the narrative also impacts on the public and private spaces that the characters navigate and relates directly to the role and place of women in the novel. Women occupy the private space of the home – Rani Harappa is cloistered in the Harappa family home of Mohenjo[13], Bilquìs is sequestered in the presidential palace in Islamabad and Sufiya Zinobia becomes a mad woman locked up in the attic. The tension between public and private stories, then, is also a competition between male and female stories:

> I had thought, before I began, that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale, a saga of sexual rivalry, ambition, power, patronage, betrayal, death, revenge. But the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prism of its reverse 'female' side. It occurs to me [...] that their stories explain, and even subsume, the men's.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 173)

The refracting of his plot shifts the narrative's emphasis away from official history to unofficial stories that directly challenge received facts. The narrator reveals what the state would censor and ties it into a dialectic of shame and shamelessness which becomes increasingly interlinked as the female plot subsumes the male plot.

In this respect, shamefulness in *Shame*, as Suleri argues, is closely tied to the representations of censorship: 'As a scarcely veiled allegory of the symbolic violence of historical process, *Shame* is from its inception a text that knows it will be banished from the culture that it represents' (Suleri 2005, 175). Representation and authenticity in order to legitimate his narrative therefore become the most crucial issues for the narrator in relation to his own position between East and West. The narrator thus allies himself with Bilquìs who is excluded from Bariamma's zenana and insulted as a *mohajir*:

> I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will). And I have a theory that the resentments we *mohajirs* engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. [...]
>
> I am comparing gravity with belonging. [...] We know the force of gravity, but not its origin; and to explain why we become attached to our birthplaces we pretend that we are trees and speak of roots. [...]
>
> When individuals come unstuck from their native land, they are called migrants. When nations do the same thing (Bangladesh), the act is called secession. What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations? I think it is their hopefulness. [...] We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time.
>
> I may be such a person, Pakistan may be such a country.
>
> [...] A palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done. [...]
>
> As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 85-87)

The narrator hints again at the un-reality of Pakistan as opposed to that of India, which has come into existence by the forces of a collective will. Pakistan on the other hand did not. Thus the historiographical effort to justify Pakistan as an independent separate

nation state is presented as an imposition. The country then needs to be thought of as imaginary. The narrator argues that through migration people become discontinuous beings; through secession countries, too, become discontinuous. In order to validate its existence, Pakistan needs to justify itself in a palimpsestual continuous history that overwrites what lies beneath. This act of overwriting, obscuring and discarding the old history is mirrored in the decay of the 'Nishapur' mansion. The ancient artefacts are useless in providing a regenerative narrative of history as the country's political elite is not equipped with the imaginative capability to use them as the basis of imagining nation. The narrator brings together the migrant's and the newly independent nation state's experience, which is similar through their discontinuity and the need to find imaginative ways to reconfigure a sense of selfhood. The narrator aligns himself here with the *mohajirs* who fled from India to Pakistan and indulges in the creation of his own versions of the country he has left behind. He outlines many of the preoccupations Rushdie takes up in his later fiction and non-fiction. The last sentence of the passage seems like a very condensed version of his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' and the idea of migration as coming unstuck from territory and defying gravity is summed up in the metaphor of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Omar Khayyam's, Bilquìs's and Sufiya's journeys thus read like metaphors of un-belonging and dramatisations of the narrator's feelings of rootlessness and displacement.

Amitava Kumar has remarked that in Rushdie's fetishisation of migrancy in *Shame*, as well as in *The Satanic Verses*, '[t]here is a danger here in migrancy becoming everything and nothing' (2000, 13). In the figure of the narrator there is the constant fear of rejection of his narrative at home as well as the fear of being misunderstood in exile. This highlights the precarious situation the narrator finds himself in and thus it could be argued that the narrative of the novel is a dramatisation of the inner turmoil that the narrator experiences. Torn between East and West, his feelings of fear, shame, powerlessness and helplessness provoke rage within him. *Shame*'s narrator's position on the periphery, like that of his hero and his female characters, produces a tension that is expressed in a language that requires translation, sometimes verbal, sometimes imaginative. Language thus fulfils a bridging function between East, West, describing, and through the act of description, expressing and giving meaning to different realities. Thus the act of translation, of bearing across, becomes enabling and empowering.

Filmic narrativisation in *Shame*

The urge of the narrator to make visible what, especially to his western implied readership, is invisible is perhaps one of the imperatives for the narrator to write his story using strikingly memorable images. *Shame* is a less self-consciously cinematic novel than *Midnight's Children*. The narrator, unlike Saleem, makes no recourse to a film vocabulary. However, the narrator is using an intensely visual language in his descriptions, inter-cutting scenes, using elements of thriller, melodrama, and comedy, leading up to a final showdown in 'Nishapur', worthy of any Bombay film. More importantly, however, the novel makes very interesting use of flashback, which seems a staple of Rushdie's writing. *Midnight's Children* is entirely told in flashback, so is *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The constant time-shifts in the narrative decentre any form of linear story-telling. The narrator often anticipates, similarly to a movie trailer, events that have happened, but should not yet be narrated. He narrates the same event from different perspectives, creating simultaneity as well as suggesting how in the telling 'truth' can alter. This is especially apparent in the doubly narrated execution of Iskander Harappa, but also in Bilquìs's story during the Partition riots in Delhi. These elements work as conscious disruptions that force the reader to question truth and history as absolute.

The connection to the world of cinema is most overtly dramatised through Bilquìs, daughter of a Delhi cinema owner, who displays all the qualities and tantrums of a film starlet. There seem to be echoes of Pia Aziz in Bilquìs. She is trapped in her roles as daughter, wife, mother and grandmother. The way in which she acts out these roles resonate with their representation in Bombay cinema. She becomes a tragic heroine in the melodramatic sense as her husband sacrifices his love for her for his career, yet she remains the dutiful wife. The story of the courtship of Bilquìs and Raza is narrated with the coyness of a Bombay film melodrama against the backdrop of the violent upheaval of Partition. Here, most overtly, the novel alludes to the Bombay film. Mahmoud Kemal, nicknamed Mahmoud the Woman, is the owner of Empire Talkies, a 'rut putty' cinema in Delhi, and Bilquìs is the maharani of this Empire. Watching films on the big screen provides a few hours of escapist entertainment for the audience (Rushdie 1995b, 60). However, for Bilquìs, watching films has a character-forming influence: 'And in the darkness of his Empire, night after night, she studied the giant, shimmering illusions of princesses who danced before the rackety audience beneath the gold-painted equestrian figure of an armoured medieval knight' (Rushdie 1995b, 61). Bilquìs and her life are thrown off course by her experience of communal violence as

well as her indulgence in a staple diet of movies. She seems to disintegrate further and further as the novel progresses and her husband attains more power. She fades away like the Rani of Cooch Naheen.

Another connection becomes evident here when considering her name. Bilquìs in Islamic tradition is the name of the Queen of Sheba, although the Koran does not name her as such. The Queen of Sheba's acceptance of the one 'true' faith and submission to God before Solomon is in *Shame* paralleled by Bilquìs's fate as her own submission to Raza Hyder leads to the effacement of her own selfhood. Bilquìs, the Maharani of the Empire cinema who worshipped the silver screen, through her marriage to Raza, becomes the dutiful wife. Yet in her submission to him she becomes a ghostly figure that haunts the presidential palace in Islamabad. She is a queen without power who discovers the hollowness of life: 'Things had been chipping away at Bilquìs for years, [...] but the worst thing of all was to be there, in that palace, that queenly residence of which she had always dreamed, and to discover that that wasn't any good either, that nothing worked out, everything turned to ashes' (Rushdie1995b, 208). This crushing realisation that nothing around her is allowed to flourish and her deeply seated disillusionment leads her to efface her self by wearing a black burqa in her own home. Her retreat from life is mirrored in her speech, clouding what she means in metaphors. When Hyder assumes dictatorial powers over the country in a coup, Bilquìs disappears from view completely.

Rani Harappa, on the other hand, bears the infidelities of her husband by engaging herself stoically in her needlework (Rushdie 1995b, 152). Rani has earned herself respect through her dignified and honourable conduct in the face of her husband's shameful behaviour, leading the narrator to contrast them as follows: 'both women had husbands who retreated from them into the enigmatic palaces of their destinies, but while Bilquìs sank into eccentricity, not to say craziness, Rani had subsided into a sanity which made her a powerful, and later on a dangerous, human being' (Rushdie 1995b, 152). The retreat from life of both women is parallel. Hyder replaces Iskander as leader, Rani and Arjumand are kept under house arrest, and Bilquìs is shut away by her husband for fear of her embarrassing, shaming him. Rani immortalises the memory of her husband in her embroidery of eighteen shawls, which become her legacy to her daughter in an attempt to account fully for her husband's life:

> Eighteen shawls locked in a trunk: Rani, too, was perpetuating memories. Harappa the martyr, the demigod, lived on in his daughter's thoughts; but no two

> sets of memories ever match, even when their subject is the same [...] An epitaph of wool. The eighteen shawls of memory. [...] Rani would put a piece of paper inside the trunk before she sent it off to her newly powerful daughter. [...] her chosen title: 'The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great.' And she would add a surprising signature: *Rani Humayun*. Her own name, retrieved from the mothballs of the past.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 191)

The shawls are tableaux of the career of Iskander Harappa. In the act of sewing, Rani is performing some kind of exorcism, banishing the oppressive burden put upon her by becoming the wife of Iskander and reclaiming her selfhood. Her art provides Rani with the possibility of setting herself free. Rani channels her own fury into her art and in this respect her act can be read as a parallel to Sufiya's outbursts of violence.

Arguably then, in *Shame* art becomes an expression of a regenerative possibility, even in the face of hopeless desolation and desperation. Rani's embroidery most crassly shows the opposition of imagination and reality, of art and politics (see also Rushdie 1992a, 122). The fact that Arjumand rejects her mother's gift of the trunk with the shawls is therefore insignificant, as it has allowed Rani to recuperate her name and a sense of self that Iskander denied her by consigning her into prescriptive gendered roles in the private space of the family home at Mohenjo. Her embroidery is her way of unravelling the fabric of her life in which Iskander, whom the narrator describes as the assassin of possibility, is immortalised on a cloth in all his debauched shamelessness (Rushdie 1995b, 194). Her own artistic vision empowers her. This is in marked contrast to Bilquìs:

> Bilquìs Hyder became, in those years, almost invisible, a shadow hunting the corridors for something it had lost, the body, perhaps, from which it had come unstuck. Raza Hyder made sure she stayed indoors [...] the mistress of the C-in-C's residence became less than a character, a mirage almost, a mumble in the corners of the palace, a rumour in a veil.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 209)

Like Sufiya, Bilquìs becomes a version of the mad woman in the attic. Bilquìs sewing shrouds is perhaps a similar attempt to Rani's to regain a sense of self, but it is doomed to failure. Bilquìs is only sewing veils, which allow her and her husband to escape, but firmly enshrines her retreat from public life and marks the erasure of her self.

The political rivalry between Hyder and Harappa adds another tragic dimension to the narrative, the former initially being the protégé of the latter and then, in a reversal of fortune, the protégé becoming the executioner. Obvious parallels can be drawn here between Bhutto and Zia, but for the novel itself the grotesque tragedy of their relationship is more significant. Their story is one of betrayal, resolved in the final

resolution of their struggle in Iskander's execution which later is paralleled in the three sisters' execution of Raza Hyder, cut to bits in the dumb waiter in 'Nishapur'. Suleri sees the novel as a soap opera, a television miniseries where the story of Bhutto/Harappa and Zia/Hyder is devoid of all resonance. In this respect, she argues, '*Shame* is perhaps best described as a televised narrative, fully equipped with commercial interruption and a will to remote control' (Suleri 2005, 182). Thus, Rushdie presents a tale where the career of both politicians is narrated as a power struggle in elite and family circles (Suleri 2005, 182). According to Suleri, the true failure of the novel is its incapability to address the obvious question: 'why did such powerfully secular figures exert considerable influence over their Muslim constituencies?' (Suleri 2005, 183). In this respect, she argues: '*Shame* censors the curiosity of its own story, relying instead on the more lurid language of feud and vendetta' (Suleri 2005, 183). Suleri's point is interesting. She draws attention to the fact that *Shame* does not answer the crucial question for Pakistan. While this is an important omission, Rushdie reveals that his interest lies more in the power struggle of the two protagonists. He is aware of the effects this power struggle has on the country, but ultimately it is the rivalry of both men for power that interests Rushdie. He offers his own reading of the Zia-Bhutto relationship in a 1985 interview with *Scripsi*:

> Zia was entirely Bhutto's creation. He made him out of nothing on the grounds of his stupidity. Then you get this bizarre relationship where the protégé becomes the executioner. *That* is what I wanted to write about because it's at the same time a tragic and comic relationship – the situation is tragic but the figures are comic. Zia is a kind of menacing comic grotesque and it seemed to me that here was a Shakespearean tragedy in which all the roles were cast with second-rate music hall comics [...] I would write a book whose story was more or less unrelieved tragedy but I would write it as a farce.
>
> (Rushdie 1985, 108-109)

His description of *Shame* as 'unrelieved tragedy' written as a farce creates the impression of a second-rate Bombay film. Bilquìs transforms from the vampish heroine into a slightly deranged tragedienne of a mother who loses not only the love of her husband, but also has to bear the shame of a still-born son and a daughter as a first born child. Rani Harappa, too, is part of the long suffering mother figures who has a daughter who wants to be a boy and as Iskander's wife has to bear her husband's shameful and shameless behaviour – his affairs, debauchery, corruption and humiliations. Both are women who are devoid of agency, but accept the role they are prescribed. Within these parameters they attain some kind of dignity, Rani in her stoic embroidery, Bilquìs in her sewing of shrouds.

Laj, *izzat* and *sharam* – Sufiya Zinobia

The scope of the novel's politics, argument and engagement with the question of the role of women within conceptualisations of nationhood and the nation are summed up in the narrator's introduction of Sufiya Zinobia:

> This is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia, elder daughter of General Raza Hyder and his wife Bilquìs, about what happened between her father and Chairman Iskander Harappa, formerly Prime Minister, now defunct, and about her surprising marriage to a certain Omar Khayyam Shakil, physician, fat man, and for a time the intimate crony of that same Isky Harappa, whose neck had the miraculous power of remaining unbruised, even by a hangman's rope. Or perhaps it would be more accurate, if also more opaque, to say that Sufiya Zinobia is about this novel.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 59)

Sufiya Zinobia is the only female character who attains some kind of agency. Yet this agency, too, is problematic, considering Sufiya is mentally impaired and unaware of her actions. Sufiya is Shame personified. She is the direct link to the title of the novel and in this respect she is about the novel as much as the novel is about her. However, as Aijaz Ahmed argues, the conceit of her mental illness – at the age of nineteen she has the mental capacity of a six year old due to her contracting a brain fever as a child – is problematic. Ahmad observes: 'Now, the problem with this metaphor of mental illness is that the pressures and processes of gendering [...] are given to us in the form of a *physiological* insufficiency on *her* part' (1994, 145 original italics). Thus, according to Ahmad, 'this shift from the social to the physiological forecloses the possibility that the person in question can regain control of her body' and '[t]he novel therefore becomes incapable of communicating to us, in whatever grotesque forms, the *process* whereby a woman's intellectual and emotional abilities may be sapped, or regained' (1994, 145).

I agree with Ahmad that this is a major shortcoming in the argument of the novel as it rejects any possibility of redemption, despite the fact that the violence that is produced by the coming together of shame and shamelessness through the union of Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyam Shakil is meant to be exactly that. Rushdie's own criticism of Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil* (1985) can then be redirected at his imagined dystopia in *Shame*:

> it is too easy [...] to create a Dystopia in which resistance is useless; that by offering only token individual resistance to the might of the State one falls into a sort of romantic trap; that there has never in the history of the world been a dictatorship so overpowering that it became impossible to fight against.
>
> (Rushdie 1992a, 121)

The problem is that, as *Shame* progresses, the concept of shame is more and more separated from the woman Sufiya. Ahmad states: 'she becomes, almost literally, the conscience of a shameless world – a principle of honour' (1994, 146). Because Sufiya Zinobia is mentally retarded, which makes her agency problematic, it is almost inevitable to read Rushdie's portrayal of women in *Shame* as misogynistic. This too is not entirely convincing. Rather, the misogyny is inherent and all-pervasive in the system Rushdie is describing where women are denied political agency in the public sphere and become merely tokens in manly displays of honour and shame. This does not detract from the fact that the way in which Sufiya enacts her avenging violence maintains, according to Ahmad, an old misogynistic myth, namely that of the woman as seductress, temptress and killer: 'not an object of male manipulation but a devourer of hapless men' (Ahmad 1994, 148). Her attacks complete Sufiya's transformation from human to beast. Ahmad thus argues that in Rushdie's 'conception of Sufiya as a principle of honour and redemption, he seems to have fashioned a macabre caricature of what female resistance to cruelties might be; the woman herself becomes, in this version, a rapist' (Ahmad 1994, 149). In this conceptualisation the erotic, the demonic and the demented overlap. Sufiya through her manic state becomes a killing machine and thus the violence she perpetrates is nothing but all-consuming and destructive.

Ahmad sees Rushdie's failure to include integral regenerative possibilities within the grotesque world of *Shame* as the novel's fundamental conceptual flaw (Ahmad 1994, 151). However, this needs to be further contextualised by considering the role, space and place of women in nationalist discourse and their problematic relationship, which I discussed earlier. Chatterjee concludes in his essay:

> The new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honour of a new social responsibility, and by associating the task of "female emancipation" with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate, subordination.
>
> (Chatterjee 2001, 162)

Rushdie often subverts this model in his representation of his female characters, for example his portrayal of Aurora Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as well as the Widow in *Midnight's Children*. In all these novels, including *Shame*, the portrayal of his female characters is a subversion of the nationalist discourse of women, a counter-narrative to a particular patriarchy. According to Chatterjee, 'this patriarchy combined coercive authority with the subtle force of persuasion' (2001, 163). Her role was codified through the adulation of woman as goddess and mother enabling her through the erasure of her

sexuality to participate in life of the public sphere, the world outside the home (see Chatterjee 2001, 163).

Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* engage with the conceptualisation of a code of female honour as it is formulated in patriarchal-sexual terms. The trope of Mother plays an important role in developing this, as the transformation of Indira Gandhi from benevolent Mother to Widow as well as the transformation of Naseem into Reverend Mother in *Midnight's Children* indicates. In *Shame*, the mother figures are marginalised and sidelined, but there seems to be an appropriation of the narrative on their part. *Shame*, like *Midnight's Children*, needs to be read with the trope of Mother and Nation in mind. Both texts very clearly indicate how closely interconnected the centrality of conceptualisations of gender are to the social imaginary that constitutes nationhood. Nalini Natarajan discusses this in her essay 'Woman, Nation, and Narration in *Midnight's Children*'. She highlights in her discussion 'the spectacle or visual effect of woman as it shapes the national imaginary, the way woman functions as sign in the imagining of community, [and] the relation of these aspects of woman as sign and spectacle' (Natarajan 2003, 165/166). In the representation of women in *Midnight's Children* it is already very evident what role women play in the formation of nationalist subjectivities. Jamila Singer's transformation from brass monkey to daughter of the nation of Pakistan illustrates this most potently. As Natarajan argues, within these conceptualisations, the female body 'becomes a focus for the symbolisms of cultural and religious reaction' (Natarajan 2003, 171).[14]

Shame shows the other side of the argument inherent in the story of Jamila Singer. *Midnight's Children* chronicles a myth of nation in decline. In *Shame*, nation is not mythic, but insufficiently imagined. The women, however, are mythic as they wreak their revenge on the men. The dream image of woman as a unifying principle of the nation where all its dharmic virtues come together is shown as absurd and transforms into the spectre of a nightmare as Partition and war show up a much more realistic image of women, no longer idealised but as victims of the brutal realities of their lives (see Natarajan 2003, 177). Jamila Singer is sacrificed to the idea of nation, her voice veiled behind a Burqa. Her only escape lies in the sisterhood of a convent, retreating far away from the realities of the state. Sufiya Zinobia on the other hand bursts out of her seclusion as an avenging angel, challenging the position women are forced into, no longer posing as the dutiful daughter and wife. Yet what makes Sufiya's outburst problematic is its uncontrolled nature. Her violence is demonic, perverse and

unconscious, not rationalised. They are acts of irrational outrage and most gruesome violence.

Sufiya could then be read as the embodiment not only of shame, but of fury, acting for the marginalised women – humiliated Bilquìs Hyder, sexually crushed Naveed, betrayed Rani Harappa. She works in unison with the other three Furies in the novel, the three Shakil sisters, who avenge the loss of their second son by executing Hyder. It is therefore also possible to read Sufiya's destructive impulse as a form of Shakti and her transformed self as the embodiment of Kali. Thus the violence embodied by Sufiya is empowering through what it denies. As the men in the novel deny female power, they thus enrage the wrath of Kali and she unleashes her destruction. The analogy might also be apt, because Shiva was the only one who could tame Kali and she is often depicted dancing on his dead body, which seems to echo the ending of the novel. In the final union with Omar Khayyam, Sufiya annihilates history as real-time and mythic time collapse into the abyss. The narrator hints at the religious connotations of Sufiya's transformation: 'What is a saint? A saint is a person who suffers in our stead' (Rushdie 1995b, 141). Sufiya becomes an emblem for the shame of women, blushing for being 'the wrong miracle', which the narrator contrasts with Arjumand Harappa, the 'Virgin Ironpants', who is ashamed of being a woman, trapped and constrained by her female sexuality: '"This woman's body," she told her father on the day she became a grown woman, "it brings a person nothing but babies, pinches and shame"' (Rushdie 1995b, 107).

Sufiya becomes the emblem of female fury. As the narrator explains, he based the character of Sufiya Zinobia and the violence that shame engenders in her on two incidents, firstly an honour killing in the East End of London, where a Pakistani father kills his daughter, because she had a white boyfriend, and secondly a racist attack on a young woman on the underground, which she is too ashamed to report to the police.[15] Both stories outline the connection between pride, honour and shame and illustrates why Sufiya Zinobia is more aptly about this novel: 'We who have grown up on a diet of honour and shame can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy: that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride' (Rushdie 1995b, 115). This links the novel also to the pogroms during Partition where men from one religious community would slit their own daughters' and wives' throats or set fire to them rather than risking them being raped by the other religious community in a desperate attempt to protect their

honour and pride. The narrator maintains: 'Between shame and shamelessness lies the axis upon which we turn; meteorological conditions at both these poles are of the most extreme, ferocious type. Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence' (Rushdie 1995b, 115-116). The narrator underlines the connection between the three concepts with one of the novel's most powerful images:

> Wanting to write about shame, I was at first haunted by the imagined spectre of that dead body, its throat slit like a halal chicken, lying in a London night across a zebra crossing, slumped across black and white, black and white, while above her a Belisha beacon blinked, orange, not-orange, orange. I thought of the crime as having been committed right there, publicly, ritually, while at the windows eyes. And no mouth opened in protest. [...] It seems even the insomniacs at their windows closed their eyelids and saw nothing. And the father left with blood-cleansed name and grief.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 116)

Is Sufiya Zinobia the narrator's way of recuperating the lost voice of that murdered girl? 'Humiliate people for long enough and a wildness bursts out of them. [...] it's a seductive, silky thing, this violence, yes it is' (Rushdie 1995b, 117). All the women in the novel have to bear the humiliations of their husbands, fathers and lovers. Sufiya thus transforms into that silky seductive beast, the spectre of a white panther that rips off its male victim's head and pulls up his entrails through his throat.

At first, Sufiya turns on Pinkie Aurangzeb's turkeys as she was made to feel as a miracle-gone-wrong, her family's shame made flesh. She 'had discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links *sharam* to violence', awakening the slumbering beast inside the beauty (Rushdie 1995b, 139). The power of the beast grows ever stronger in Sufiya, next bursting out of her on her sister's wedding day as she attacks Talvar Ulhaq, who shamefully substitutes a different bridegroom at the last minute. The whole incident reads like a scene from a Hammer horror movie (Rushdie 1995b, 162-171). Sufiya is Shame's avatar, mutating into the exterminating, avenging angel as she becomes instrumental to the narrative in the imaginary depositioning of the despotic Raza Hyder. Her existence has become nothing more than a rumour. The stories of the murders she has committed have been narrated orally, as hearsay, yet have attained such mythic potency that she has become the most serious threat to the general's powers. Nobody saw her or could describe her and significantly nobody caught her on the rampage:

> She was not caught, nor killed, nor seen again in that part of the country. It was as if her hunger had been satisfied; or as though she had never been more than a rumour, a chimaera, the collective fantasy of a stifled people, a dream born of their rage; or even as if, sensing a change in the order of the world, she had

> retreated, and was prepared to wait a little longer, in that fifteenth century, for her time.
>
> (Rushdie 1995b, 263)

Thus at the end of the novel, she is saddled with even further metaphorical meaning as she becomes the avenging force of the common people who have been betrayed and shamed by their political leaders.

Rushdie imagines a violent resolution, a disillusioned dissolution of his fictional Pakistan. Raza Hyder, Bilquìs and Omar Khayyam are violently butchered in 'Nishapur'. His wife Sufiya Zinobia prowls towards her husband, readying herself for the apocalyptic union of shame and shamelessness, Kali dancing on her Shiva's body: 'the power of the Beast of shame cannot be held for long within any one frame of flesh and blood, because it grows, it feeds and swells, until the vessel bursts' (Rushdie 1995b, 286). As 'Nishapur' explodes, the reader is presented with a mythic outburst of violence that springs from a long history of humiliations. The violence that these humiliations brings about is seen by the narrator as redemptive, redeeming and cleansing. However, while Omar Khayyam by giving himself to his wife, even though he knows it means his death, might be redeemed, the explosion of 'Nishapur' suggests that redemption might be an impossibility for the world at large (see also Ahmad 1994, 145). The ending could then be read as an admission of imaginative failure, of the narrator's incapability of finding an idiom with which to express any concept of shame. Suleri argues that in the cinematic detail of the final scene the perspective is completely given over to the male voyeuristic gaze: 'the reader too is forced to read the text's vision of apocalypse from the point of view of a male terror as it watches the bestiality of the approaching female' (Suleri 2005, 187).

Rushdie returns to the redemptive power of violence in *The Satanic Verses*. Salahuddin Chamchawala, the perfect mimic man, transforms into a devilish beast, the stigmatised and demonised immigrant in Thatcher's Britain, and transforms back into a human being in the Hot Wax Club after the beast is exorcised. However, in *The Satanic Verses*, there is also a marked shift away from the redemptive power of violence to the redemptive power of love. Salahuddin reclaims his sense of self in the arms of Zenat Vakil. The question of love and violence and their redemptive qualities continues to preoccupy Rushdie throughout his novels and gains prominence again in *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown*. *Shame* engages with the role of women within discourses of nationalism, which explicitly links the novel to similar explorations of the role of women and nationalist discourse in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In

Shame Rushdie imagines a tragedy acted out by characters devoid of any tragic stature where the symbolic landscape of Pakistan becomes a barren wasteland.[16]

Notes

[1] In *Fury*, violence is also all-pervasive and associated with the bestial murders of young female socialites after some depraved sado-masochistic ritual.

[2] Rushdie explains in an interview with the *Paris Review*: 'It just arrived, this voice of Saleem's: quite savvy, full of all kinds of arcana, funny but sort of ridiculous. [...] I held onto Saleem's coattails and let him run. As the book developed, as Saleem grew up, there were moments where I felt frustrated by him. [...] to me Saleem always felt very unlike me, because I had a kind of wrestling match with him, which I lost' (Rushdie/Livings 2005, 125-126).

[3] Throughout the novel, Rushdie makes an implicit argument about censorship, on which he has further elaborated in his essay 'Censorship' in *Imaginary Homelands*: 'The point I'm making is not that censorship is a source of amusement, which it usually isn't, but that – in Pakistan, at any rate – it is everywhere, inescapable, permitting no appeal' (Rushdie 1992a, 38). Censorship, like gossip, thus becomes an integral part of the fabric of the novel as part of the story-telling strategy of the narrator. It could even be argued they go hand in hand as in the wake of misinformation or no information the rumour-mill tends to run wild: 'What are the effects of total censorship? Obviously, the absence of information and the presence of lies.' Rushdie argues further that 'the worst, most insidious effect of censorship is that, in the end, it can deaden the imagination of the people. Where there is no debate, it is hard to go on remembering, every day, that there is a suppressed side to every argument' (Rushdie 1992a, 39).

[4] This periodisation of Indian history dates back to James Mills' *History of India*, which was published in 1818.

[5] Ayesha Jalal originally gave this account of Jinnah's demand in *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan.*

[6] Rashid the rickshaw boy was seventeen and on his way home from the cinema. That morning he'd seen two men pushing a low trolley on which were mounted two enormous hand-painted posters, back-to-back, advertising the new film *Gai-Wallah*, starring Rashid's favourite actor Dev. [...] The film was an eastern Western. Its hero, Dev, who was not slim, rode the range alone. It looked very like the Indo-Gangetic plain. Gai-Wallah means cow-fellow and Dev played a sort of one-man vigilante force for the protection of cows. SINGLE-HANDED! and DOUBLE-BARRELED!, he stalked the many herds of cattle which were being driven across the range to the slaughterhouse, vanquished the cattlemen and liberated the sacred beasts. (The film was made for Hindu audiences; in Delhi it had caused riots. Muslim Leaguers had driven cows past cinemas to the slaughter, and had been mobbed.) The songs and dances were good and there was a beautiful nautch girl who would have looked more graceful if they hadn't made her dance in a ten-gallon cowboy hat (Rushdie 1995a, 49-50). The aside in brackets is fully dramatised in *Shame* (Rushdie 1995b, 61). The movie also features in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, where a remake of the movie is screened during the Bombay riots.

[7] Rushdie has written on this process in his essay 'The Location of Brazil' (Rushdie 1992a, 118-125).

[8] Harappa is also the name of the ancient city of the Indus Valley Civilisation in north-east Pakistan dating back to 3300 BC. The Indus Valley Civilisation is also called the Harappan civilisation after Harappa, the first excavated city.

[9] Farid Ud-Din Attar, too, was born in Nishapur. Rushdie often alludes to Attar's narrative poem *The Conference of the Birds* (see for example *Grimus*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *The Satanic Verses*). In one of the studies of the 'Nishapur' mansion there is also 'an exquisitely carved walnut screen on which was portrayed the mythical circular mountain of Qaf, complete with the thirty birds playing God thereupon' (Rushdie 1995b, 33), which depicts a scene from the poem. Significantly, after its removal, Omar Khayyam finds the books that teach him hypnosis, which becomes important for his career as a doctor and will bind him to Sufiya Zinobia.

[10] It seems that the criticism Rushdie levelled at Naipaul in his review of *The Enigma of Arrival*, is a charge one could level quite easily at Rushdie's *Shame*: 'a life without love, or one in which love has been buried so deep that it can't come out, is very much what this book is about; and what makes it so very, very sad' (Rushdie 1992a, 151).

[11] Rushdie further elaborates on this in a conversation with Günter Grass: 'I was very struck by a curious fact I discovered which showed me something about the reason why my writing, or perhaps one reason why my writing had fallen towards this metaphorical, imaginative kind of writing, which is that if you look etymologically at the meaning of the word "metaphor" and "translation" it turns out they mean the same thing. Translation, from the Latin, means "to carry across." Metaphor, from the Greek, means "to carry across." So again this comes back to my preoccupation with the idea of migration. People are also carried across, you see; they're carried physically from one place to another and I formed the idea that the act of migration was to turn people somehow into things, into people who had been translated [...]
If you consider where your sense of self has always been located – in the idea of roots, the idea of coming from a place, the idea of inhabiting a kind of language which you have in common and the kind of social convention within which you live – what happens to the migrant is that they lose all three. They lose the place. They lose the language and they lose the social conventions and they find themselves in a new place with a new language – and so they have to reinvent the sense of the self. This is, after all, the century of the migrant as well as the century of the Bomb; there have never been so many people who ended up elsewhere than where they began, whether by choice or by necessity. And so perhaps that's the source from which this kind of reconstruction can begin. People who are no longer caught in the old definition of the self, but capable of making new ones' (Grass/Rushdie 1985, 15).

[12] Hima Raza in her essay 'Unravelling *Sharam* as a metaphor for *Mohajir* Identity in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*' has explained lucidly the multiple connotations of the term '*mohajir*' within the context of the subcontinent and its importance for an understanding of the novel: 'In Urdu, the noun *mohajir* is derived from the Arabic word meaning "emigrant, evacuee, or refugee" (Ferozsons Urdu-English Dictionary 1998, 50). A *mohajir* refers to one who has performed the act of *hijrat*; this word also comes from Arabic and connotes "separation, migration, flight, specifically the flight of the Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina" (Ferozsons Urdu-English Dictionary 1998, 813). Thus *hijrat* is an exalted form of migration, one that is inspired by the pursuit of great religious and moral ideals. It implies personal sacrifice on the *mohajir's* part – leaving behind country and kin for the sake of his faith – and not only serves as the ultimate testament of an individual's faith but also becomes the defining characteristic of *mohajir* identity. While the term *tark-e-watan*, used to describe the act of permanently leaving one's native country for foreign lands, has connotations of abandonment and desertion, *hijrat* is distinguished by the purity of its motive, the promise of building a new homeland. However, this unique exilic-migration comes at a heavy cost and the *mohajir* never quite recovers from the physical uprooting and cultural estrangement which accompanies *hijrat*' (Raza 2005, 3). Raza further argues that 'Rushdie's understanding of the historical background and political implications of *mohajir* identity in the specific context of a partitioned subcontinent shapes his representation of an essentially ruptured, diasporic identity in *Shame*. Moreover, his own experience of *hijrat* (Rushdie's family came as *mohajirs* to Pakistan) explains his personal affinity with the figure of the *mohajir* and he uses this emotionally charged perspective to develop the theme of migration in *Shame*, in a manner that transforms the writing of fiction into a subversive, political act' (Raza 2005, 3).

[13] Mohenjo-Daro is the name of another city of the Indus Valley Civilisation, twenty kilometres from Larkana in Sindh. Mohenjo-Daro in Sindhi means 'Mound of the Dead'. It seems an apt choice of name for the Harappa family estate. The estate of the Bhutto family is also situated near Mohenjo-Daro.

[14] In *Midnight's Children*, women are presented as spectacles of Motherhood, which ties the novel most obviously to *The Moor's Last Sigh* (see also Natarajan 2003, 173).

[15] The description of this incident is based on a similar attack on Rushdie's sister Sameen to whom the novel is dedicated.

[16] See Rushdie, Salman. 1985. An Interview with Salman Rushdie. *Scripsi* 3 (2-3): 107-126.

Chapter 4

"To be born again, first you have to die." Identity negotiations through Bombay cinema in *The Satanic Verses*

The Satanic Verses is Rushdie's most hotly contested and debated novel. In the early years of the *fatwa*, many critics took great pains in discussing the novel as though the controversy never happened. This seemed a necessary step if the novel was to be discussed as a work of art in its own right, rather than the cause of the Rushdie affair or, more accurately, *The Satanic Verses* affair. However, more than seventeen years after the *fatwa*, this distinction has to be re-examined. In 1998, the Iranian government distanced itself from the *fatwa*. This has not only restored the author's freedom but also freed the novel, so that it might finally be discussed as a text, not only as a controversy, but as part of postcolonial literary productions, so that a fuller account of the novel may emerge.[1] A lot has been written about Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa*, sentencing the author, his publishers and translators to death, about the controversy and the offending passages of the novel, and this chapter will only marginally touch on these.[2] Rushdie's writing has always been polarising and the political nature of his writing and his artistic project and aesthetics go hand in hand. Thus, an examination of how Rushdie writes needs to say something about the effect it produces.

This chapter will show how cinematic sensibilities permeate the novel and aid Rushdie in making an argument for hybridity in his negotiation of migrancy. *The Satanic Verses* is a novel where worlds collide, where heaven and hell meet, and where a cast of characters are sent on journeys of epic proportions with life-changing consequences for all involved. This is Rushdie's first novel after *Grimus* not to be entirely set on the Indian subcontinent. Most of the action takes place in the metropolitan centre of the former Empire, Ellowen Deeowen – London. It is set in 'The City Visible but Unseen', namely that of the immigrant community, conflating Southall, Brixton and Brick Lane, the centres of the immigrant and South-Asian communities in London, into Brickhall. *The Satanic Verses* is first and foremost a novel about the immigrant experience in London and how the individual has to come to terms with dislocation. Coupled to that is the dream imaginary of ailing Hindi movie star Gibreel Farishta who imagines himself to be the archangel Gabriel and dreams the revelation to the Prophet in the town of Jahilia.[3] The narrative develops strands, which are loosely

linked through dream sequences, a proliferation and doubling of names, and cinematic strategies.

Rushdie has noted that '[f]ilms, in *The Satanic Verses*, are invented to serve the purposes of the story. So they're an amalgam of all kinds of notions. But I think they do come out of a memory of the Indian cinema which was rather more innocent' (Rushdie/MacCabe 2001, 215). For instance, the novel uses element of Hindi cinema, such as the song sequences, to structure the dream sequences. Yet cinema also plays a role in the way the novel as a whole is structured, and I will argue that the novel's structure loosely resembles a Hindi movie.

The Satanic Verses and Bombay Cinema

Sumita S. Chakravarty opens her study *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987* with a short summary of the filmic elements in *The Satanic Verses* and how they highlight the role the syncretic Hindi film plays not only for the author's imagination but for Indians on the subcontinent as well as in the diaspora. In the whole controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses*, she argues, no attention has been paid to the fact that Gibreel, the dreamer of the offending passages that were to outrage Muslims all over the world, was in fact a former Bombay film star. Chakravarty notes that, considering Bombay cinema's reputation, using it as 'the vehicle for one of the most evocative explorations and allegorical representations of the postcolonial consciousness' might at first sight seem outrageous (Chakravarty 1993, 1). Yet the hybrid nature of film as the exponent of a national culture lends itself perfectly to kick-start this discussion. According to Chakravarty, Rushdie's use of Bombay cinema lends legitimacy to a previously derided national form and highlights how politically invested fantasy can be (Chakravarty 1993, 2). It is ironic in this respect that Rushdie calls *The Satanic Verses* his least political novel in various interviews.[4] Rushdie's genius lies in the way he presents the preoccupations of high art – issues such as double alienation, fiction, dreams, identity and hybridity – through popular culture, in this case the mythological film and the worldview of the fictional Bombay film superstar Gibreel Farishta.

The Satanic Verses is Rushdie's most cinematic novel. Its main protagonists are Gibreel Farishta, an Indian movie actor who has made his name in Bombay cinema's theologicals[5], and Salahuddin Chamchawala, a radio and television actor of Indian origin, the man of one thousand voices and one. Further characters loosely connected with the movie industry also feature. However, cinema permeates the novel on many

other levels as Rushdie paints the canvas of an almost Dickensian cityscape against which his story may unfold.[6] He writes sections of the novel in the language of cinema, using close-ups, fade-outs, montage, crane shots, and transforms these visual technicalities into language, creating a multifarious panorama. He also emulates the melodramatic staging and dialogue of Hindi cinema, which are played out particularly in the scenes between Rekha Merchant and Gibreel (see Rushdie 1998, 26-32). Furthermore, the novel teems with references to European art house cinema, such as Goddard, Fellini and Luis Buñuel, popular Hollywood cinema, and Bombay cinema, all of which Rushdie watched avidly.[7]

Rushdie specifically uses the role Bombay cinema plays in the migrant imaginary in the novel. According to Chakravarty, cinema represents an order of psychic investment for migrants of Indian origin from all over the world (1993, 3). Hence, it is no coincidence that Rushdie's migrant novel that renegotiates issues of home, belonging, migration and hybridity should also be his most cinematic and engage with texts from Hindi cinema on all levels. Rushdie expresses through this the importance of cinema for South-Asian migrants in renegotiating their relationship with the homeland. For example, on his train journey down to London Gibreel meets John Maslama, a South Asian from Guyana who emigrated to Britain and who now owned a couple of record stores and the infamous Hot Wax Club. He is a long-standing fan of Gibreel's movies and admires him for portraying 'deities of every conceivable water [...] a rainbow coalition of the celestial; a walking United Nations of the gods' (Rushdie 1998, 192). John Maslama has created in his mind an image of Gibreel as star and taken from that whatever he saw fit to fashion his new life. Gibreel is the avatar and anchor for his life. However, Gibreel realises that this was nothing more than fiction, a lie. Gibreel reflects: '[f]ictions were walking around wherever he went [...] fictions walking around as real human beings' (Rushdie 1998, 192).

The issue of memory, the connection with home and the role Bombay cinema plays in this realm resonates even more explicitly in the Shaandaar Café, owned by Muhammad Sufiyan and his wife Hind. Before emigrating to England, Muhammad used to be a successful schoolteacher in Bangladesh. Yet his involvement with the communist party forced him to flee his homeland. In admiration of her husband's pluralistic mind Hind has resorted to match this in her travails in her kitchen. As she mapped the subcontinent through her culinary eclecticism, and as she devoured her cooking, 'her body began to alter, because all the food had to find a home somewhere,

and she began to resemble the wide rolling land mass itself, the subcontinent without frontiers, because food passes across any boundary you care to mention' (Rushdie 1998, 246). Her culinary expertise is the greatest asset on their migration to England where her cooking initiates the role reversal between husband and wife.

Hind as cook and breadwinner is the chief architect of the Shaandaar Café's success, where people from far and wide come to sample her cooking to remind them of home, long lost and only a distant memory. Yet her family's migration to the Vilayet has also upset everything she valued, which 'had in this process of translation, been lost' (Rushdie 1998, 249). She now finds herself in a hostile environment with its regular racist attacks, where windows are smashed in the night and people have to put up with unspeakable verbal abuse. She also has to confront her own community, where daughters are killed for dowry and her own children, rejecting their culture, refuse to speak their mother tongue. As a means of countering her life's disappointments, she indulges in a regular diet of Hindi and Bengali cinema and its gossip magazines:

> to deny the ghosts outside the café, she stayed indoors, sending others out for kitchen provisions and household necessities, and also for the endless supply of Bengali and Hindi movies on VCR through which (along with her ever-increasing hoard of Indian movie magazines) she could stay in touch with events in the 'real world', such as the bizarre disappearance of the incomparable Gibreel Farishta and the subsequent tragic announcement of his death in an airline accident; and to give her feelings of defeated, exhausted despair some outlet, she shouted at her daughters.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 250-251)

For Hind, Bengali and Hindi cinema serve as a Proustian memory trigger and as a direct link to home, which in these films is a projected dream world. For Hind it is escapist entertainment where she can access nostalgically a familiar world for a few hours. It provides for her a way of remembering and refreshing an image of home and forgetting the harsh realities of everyday life.

Hybridity, Cultural Identity and the Diaspora

In 'In Good Faith' Rushdie defends *The Satanic Verses* as 'a migrant's-eye view of the world' written from the very experience of up-rooting, disjunction and metamorphosis with which he equates the migrant's condition. He argues:

> *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, 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 greatest 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.
>
> (Rushdie 1992a, 394)

However, judging by the harsh reaction the novel provoked, many did not share Rushdie's view that this form of intermingling, dabbling in two cultures, is possible. Nevertheless, even though the community Rushdie is addressing seems to be alienated from and hostile to his claims, the novel's characters act out and explore the effects and consequences that this possibility of connection opens up to the migrant. The two protagonists are set up as each other's nemesis, both representing extremes – one transforming into the archangel Gabriel, the other into Satan. Their battle for centrality is acted out against the backdrop of 1980s London. This confrontation is tied to a journey of discovery in a negotiation of identity and belonging.

After their landing on British soil, cast into two adversaries – Gibreel and Shaitan – the novel negotiates their trials in contemporary London, exposing Thatcherite Britain's attitudes to immigration, exile and race. It should not be neglected, however, that Gibreel and Salahuddin, although opposites, need each other to complete their journey. Rushdie sums the novel up as 'the story of two painfully divided selves' (Rushdie 1992a, 397). Despite Gibreel playing a multiplicity of Gods in his movie star career, his attempt at negotiating this multiplicity in his own life fails. He stresses continuity; Gibreel 'has wished to remain, to a large degree, *continuous* – that is, joined to and arising from his past' (Rushdie 1998, 427). This proves too much for him. Gibreel's dreams leak into his waking self, making it easy to lead him to his downfall in a story of betrayal, where the boundaries between the real and the dream world are blurred. The concept of time and place, real and imaginary, collapse, and distinctions between them become impossible. Gibreel in that respect could be read as a parallel figure to Saleem, as he, too, tries to be continuous and embody these continuities in one self, which leads to his own disintegration at the end of the novel. Whether this is due to the process of telling his all-encapsulating, all-consuming story is debatable, but the accumulation of too many selves, of too much too-muchness will ultimately lead to an explosion.

Pitted against that is Saladin-Salahuddin, 'a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* re-invention; his *preferred* revolt against history being what makes him' (Rushdie 1998, 427, original italics). Yet the acceptance of these discontinuities is not a given, but part of a process of learning that he goes through in the course of the novel, which starts with the fall from the plane. Perhaps the acceptance of discontinuity could

be read as the acceptance of death, the prerequisite to be born again, to become something new and this is another form of 'how newness enters the world'. The acceptance of these discontinuities allows for Salahuddin's redemption. The process of self-realisation and the acceptance of his own discontinuity leads him to accept India as home. Michael Gorra concludes that this asks us to read identity as 'a consciously created pastiche "of whatever clothes seem to fit," and in doing so it calls into question V.S. Naipaul's concept of the colonial as an essentially unthinking and impotent mimic man, condemned by history to ape the West' (1997, 155). These comments on Rushdie's writing style can equally be attributed to the novel's subject matter: Salahuddin as the mimic man is an implicit critique of Naipaul's visualisation of postcolonial identity and Salahuddin's transformative journey elaborates a possible alternative conceptualisation of this.

In Salahuddin the division is secular and societal, torn between his Indian past and his new life in Britain, the clash between Bombay and London, while Gibreel's division is spiritual. As Rushdie explains, he is 'strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so. The novel is about their quest for wholeness' (Rushdie 1992a, 397). Salahuddin succeeds and survives, as he returns to his roots through the process of 'facing up to [...] the great verities of love and death' to regain a new sense of self (Rushdie 1992a, 398). This is not possible for Gibreel. Their journey, then, could be read as a way of finding a possibility with which to express one's own divided self.

Stuart Hall has elaborated on this in 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in his enquiry into Blacks and Asians as the emergent new subjects of cinema, questioning their position of enunciation (1993, 392). This question has a great bearing on the negotiation of identity and Hall suggests that identity should be regarded as 'a "production" which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (Hall 1993, 392). This would be one way of reading Salahuddin Chamchawala's journey. By extension, this may also apply to Rushdie. Hall reminds us that all of us 'speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always "in context", *positioned*' (1993, 392). Rushdie does speak from his own experience as an immigrant in Britain and his observations of a divided society and the specific upheaval of the early years of what has come to be known as High Thatcherism. Salahuddin's search for his identity is a way of understanding the process of identity formation, which, according to Hall, 'does

not proceed in a straight unbroken line, from some fixed origin', but is influenced by similarity and continuity, difference and rupture (1993, 395). This is perhaps where Gibreel's quest fails as he cannot cope with the discontinuities in his life. The inevitable renegotiation of identity in the face of migration, the diaspora experience, is thus defined through recognising a necessary heterogeneity and diversity. This notion of identity, according to Hall, 'lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*' (1993, 402). Following on from that, Hall suggests the need for what Rushdie terms in *Midnight's Children* the potential for non-stop regeneration and Hall sees as the need of constantly producing and reproducing oneself anew through transformation and difference. It might be said that Zeeny Vakil's approach to art is an aesthetic concretisation of such regeneration. She questions the defining myth of authenticity, 'which she sought to replace by an ethic of historic eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit' (Rushdie 1998, 52).

Rushdie's mongrelisation becomes in Hall the aesthetics of the 'cross-overs', of 'cut-and-mix' (Hall 1993, 402). This is perhaps best exemplified by the sense of belonging and alienation experienced by second generation migrants. Mishal Sufiyan and her sister, for instance, feel completely alienated from Bangladesh, the place their parents still see as home and desperately try to keep alive in the Shaandaar Café. Both daughters see themselves as English/British. However, this form of Englishness is unrecognisable to the transforming Salahuddin Chamchawala, the true 'Mimic Man'. For their mother Hind, observing the change in her daughters is a painful process: 'the poison of this devil-island had infected her baby girls' (Rushdie 1998, 250). The two ideas of Britishness, the one idolised by Salahuddin and the other as lived by Anahita and Mishal, come into direct conflict in the Shaandaar Café:

> 'What about us?' Anahita wanted to know. 'What do you think we are?' – And Mishal confided: 'Bangladesh in't nothing to me. Just some place Dad and Mum keep banging on about.' – And Anahita, conclusively: 'Bungleditch.' – With a satisfied nod. – 'What I call it, anyhow.'
>
> But they weren't British, he wanted to tell them: not *really*, not in any way he could recognize. And yet his old certainties were slipping away by the moment, along with his old life…
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 259)

The process of identity formation as it clashes between the second generation and the first in an alien space is also linked to what Chakravarty refers to as 'the problematic scenario of originary desire' (1993, 3). She explains this as the desire for origins that is accompanied with discomfort, pain and guilt that is central to the attempt of new

identity formations on the part of displaced peoples. This certainly holds true for Hind and could be extended to Gibreel, while Salahuddin has renegotiated his identity by marrying the English Pamela Lovelace.

Migration and the Metropolis

In *Imaginary Homelands* Rushdie states that '[t]o be a Bombayite (and afterwards a Londoner) was also to fall in love with the metropolis. The city as reality and as a metaphor is at the heart of all my work' (Rushdie 1992a, 404). In *The Satanic Verses* the metropolis takes centre stage in many incarnations: Bombay-London-Jahilia. This point is taken up by Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Rimli Bhattacharya in 'Salman Rushdie: The Migrant in the Metropolis'. They present the city as the greatest tangible symbol of human inventiveness, which makes it therefore the 'natural' setting for this process of identity formation (1990, 18). This notion is problematic since it leaves out the migratory processes that do not end in the metropolitan centre but on its periphery, although Rushdie does touch on that.[8] Rushdie argues that a renegotiation of identity can only take place in the metropolis. It seems that for Rushdie the interest lies more in presenting migration within the confines of the city, despite the short Rosa Diamond episode. The artificiality of the cityscape is presented as the perfect environment where identity politics are concerned, because it allows enough flexibility for non-stop inventiveness. Thus, the longest section of the novel is 'A City Visible But Unseen', and the other London sections take up an equally substantial part of the novel, making the theme of migrancy and the metropolis central to the novel. The migratory process implies movement from the periphery to the centre. In *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie sets up Bombay as the metropolitan centre at the national level, which has always drawn rural populations from all over India, transforming Bombay into a syncretic multi-ethnic, multi-religious city with a large migrant community. Bombay features as the 'most cosmopolitan, most hybrid, most hotchpotch of Indian cities' in Rushdie's fiction (Rushdie 1992a, 404). In *The Satanic Verses*, Bombay and London are set up against each other. Bombay is no longer central, but is the metropolis on the periphery with London taking centre stage. Implicitly, then, it could be argued that Rushdie shows how the notion of centrality of the metropolis is shifting.

In 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation' Homi Bhabha argues that in *The Satanic Verses* the colonial space is played out in the imaginative geography of the metropolitan space with 'the repetition or return of the

postcolonial migrant to alienate the holism of history' (1994, 168). He observes that, as a consequence, the postcolonial space is no longer supplementary to the metropolitan centre but 'stands in a subaltern, adjunct relation that doesn't aggrandize the *presence* of the West but redraws its frontiers in the menacing, agonistic boundary of cultural difference that never quite adds up, always less than one nation and double' (Bhabha 1994, 168). Indeed, *The Satanic Verses* shifts fluidly between the various metropolitan centres – Bombay, London and Jahilia. In this realm, Rushdie has to negotiate the migrant condition and the process of deracination in opposition to rootedness creatively. The reader is presented with an image of London, the dream image of London that Salahuddin has. He flies out of his window at night 'to discover that there, below him, was – not Bombay – but Proper London itself, Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen. [...] [D]own towards the city, Saintpauls, Puddinglane, Threadneedlestreet, zeroing in on London like a bomb' (Rushdie 1998, 38/39). The city has already been named in the opening pages by Gibreel: 'Proper London, capital of Vilayet' (Rushdie 1998, 4). Salahuddin maps the capital of the 'Foreign Land' as he zooms over it in his dreams.

The opening sets up a positive image of London that throughout the novel becomes increasingly unstable, which is in line with the destabilising of the protagonists' identity. This is perhaps best exemplified by the crazy magic carpet chase through London in the 'Ellowen Deeowen' section, reminiscent of the best action movies, a mapping of the city, a linguistic A-Z of London, giving not only a sense of the city, but also of Gibreel's growing insanity as he flees the ghost of his spurned lover Rekha Merchant, who haunts him by following him everywhere on her magic carpet. This chase scene is further punctuated as in the 'Ayesha' section Gibreel has the dream of flying back the Imam, a barely disguised fictional version of the Ayatollah Khomeini. London, here more specifically Kensington, a place that in the popular imagination is associated with upper-class Englishness, is presented as a place of exile, with the Imam longing for his homeland Desh. He has to live in this hated city, 'this sink of iniquities which humiliates him by giving him sanctuary, so that he must be beholden in spite of the lustfulness, greed and vanity of its ways' (Rushdie 1998, 206). As the dream progresses, Gibreel takes on the point of view of the camera as both he and the Imam 'zoom through the night', flying back to Desh, and an immense landscape emerges, a cinematic and photographic imaginary that unfolds through sheer word power (see Rushdie 1998, 208-215).

Nicholas D. Rombes argues in '*The Satanic Verses* as a Cinematic Narrative' that this landscape is an image 'presented on a plane in which the foreground and background tend to gravitate towards each other, reducing three-dimensional images to two-dimensional ones' (1993, 49). This is instrumental in creating a sense of space that imbues flatness through its aerial perspective, while it also creates distance and foreshadows the two-dimensional studio version of an idealised Dickensian London. Rombes argues that Rushdie uses aerial shots preferentially at the expense of 'intimate proximity' (1993, 49). This explains the use of metaphors of flatness and depthlessness as a way of highlighting the limited capability of understanding of the camera. Rombes states that Rushdie highlights this dichotomy as an exploration of 'the potential dangers of "one way of seeing" suggested by the camera perspective as well as to raise questions about how all of the ways in which to manipulate the camera render it a possible tool for exploitation' (1993, 52/53). This picturisation is countered by that of London, which is initially set up as the ideal Vilayet that the migrant dreams of and is then decentred and exposed as being a hostile environment. In the end, London is a mirror image of the depthless wasteland. In the central section of the novel 'A City Visible but Unseen' Proper London and the Vilayet is not the promised land, exemplified in Hind's and her husband's suffering: 'they had come into a demon city in which anything could happen, your windows shattered in the middle of the night [...] and every day you heard about this boy, that girl, beaten up by ghosts' (Rushdie 1998, 250).

References to phantom imps, ghosts and demons further highlight the *unheimlich*, in the sense of being un-homely, of the new host country. As Salahuddin transmutes into the devil, complete with goat beard, hooves and horns, London, too, exposes its hidden side: 'Yes: this was Hell, all right. The city of London, transformed into Jahannum, Gehenna, Muspellheim' (Rushdie 1998, 254). The city's uncanniness is further highlighted by evocative descriptions: 'The sun rose, unwrapping the misty city like a gift' (Rushdie 1998, 254) or the city thickening 'around them like a forest; the buildings twined together and grew as matted as her hair' (Rushdie 1998, 255). These descriptions are instrumental in setting the sinister mood of the section and as cinematic and visually invested as they may be, they are very reminiscent of the cityscape painted in the novels of Charles Dickens. This sinister cityscape provides the narrative's backdrop and is the locale where racial tensions are exposed. The locked-up anger finds its outlet in the Hot Wax Club by providing a counter narrative to received notions about the immigrant community (Rushdie 1998, 291-293). Here, too, the city features as

an overpowering backdrop with different notions coexisting side by side. Otto Cone elaborates this further:

> '"The modern city," Otto Cone on his hobbyhorse had lectured his bored family at the table, "is the locus classicus of incompatible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side upon the omnibus. [...] But if they meet! It's uranium and plutonium, each makes the other decompose, boom."'
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 314)

This is underlined by the description of London as, like Gibreel, having lost a sense of its self:

> London had grown unstable once again, revealing its true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city [...] 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.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 320)

This pronouncement on the city's struggle with its own Imperial past, its postcolonial present and subordinate future foreshadows the stuttering movie producer Whiskey Sisodia's remarks that 'the trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means' (Rushdie 1998, 343).

Gibreel sets out on his mission in an attempt to reclaim the city and redeem it as he goes to explore London from A to Z. What follows is a detailed mapping of the city where the breakdown of dream and reality becomes ever more worrying as Gibreel's mind deteriorates and London transforms into a wasteland (Rushdie 1998, 327). This leaking of dream and reality is explained through Gibreel suffering from schizophrenia, with the splitting occurring not in him but in the universe. His comeback carefully choreographed by Whiskey Sisodia ends in disaster as Gibreel levitates out of the auditorium 'hovering high over London!' (Rushdie 1998, 352) The section concludes when Gibreel in a moment of celestial delusion and in an attempt to turn London into Bombay decides to tropicalise the city:

> No more of these England-induced ambiguities, these Biblical-Satanic confusions! – Clarity, clarity, at all costs clarity! [...] 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 practical, down-to-earth, comprehensible! – Iblis/Shaitan standing for the darkness, Gibreel for the light. [...] ...O most slippery, most devilish of cities! [...] Well, then, the trouble with the English was [...] *their weather*.
>
> Gibreel Farishta floating on his cloud formed the opinion that the moral fuzziness of the English was meteorologically induced.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 353/354)

This dichotomy between reality and illusion that is more and more exposed, this widening gap that threatens to swallow Gibreel, Salahuddin and London whole, is linked to Sisodia's pronouncement on history and connects with Bhabha's observation that Gibreel as the avenging migrant concretises the ambivalence of cultural difference.

Through the idiom of the English weather this ambivalence evokes what Bhabha calls 'the most changeable and immanent signs of national difference' (Bhabha 1994, 169). Not only does this section conjure up stereotypical images of England – wind-battered shorelines and rainy, grey days – but according to Bhabha it pitches it against a 'daemonic double': 'the heat and dust of India; the dark emptiness of Africa; the tropical chaos that was deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilizing mission' (Bhabha 1994, 169). Bhabha sees these imaginative geographies in flux as they assemble in the city, since the migrants, the minorities and the diasporic come to the city and transform the history of the nation. In the West, and increasingly elsewhere, for example Bombay, the city, according to Bhabha, 'provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out' (Bhabha 1994, 170). This throws some light onto the shifting perceptions of London and Bombay, especially the social commentary on Indian politics in the final section of the novel, but also onto the romanticised image of London as it exists in the Shepperton Studios and its juxtaposition with the mutant version outside.

The movie studio representation of London that features in the following London section 'The Angel Azraeel' is a two dimensional recreation of a Dickensian London, reminiscent of any BBC costume drama. This further decentres the imaginary cityscape as it has featured in the novel thus far, exposing it as nothing more than a dreamscape, a backdrop against which both Salahuddin's and Gibreel's journey of death and rebirth is unfolding. This is juxtaposed by the tropicalised 'real' version where the rising temperature mirrors the rising tempers and tensions in the immigrant community that alludes to the race riots in London in the autumn of 1985. Gibreel descends further and further into paranoid schizophrenia and as the dream and real worlds collide, boundaries become increasingly blurred and as a consequence, London, too, becomes more and more distorted. Gibreel realises: 'This is no Proper London: not this improper city. Airstrip One, Mahagonny, Alphaville. He wanders through a confusion of languages. Babel: a contraction of the Assyrian "babilu". [...] Babylondon' (Rushdie 1998, 459).

As Salahuddin has transformed from human into devil and back into human, Gibreel has transformed from the Angel of the Revelation into the exterminating Angel Azraeel. The city descends into chaos and the Shaandaar Café goes up in flames, killing Mishal Sufiyan's parents, while Salahuddin escapes the flames, saved by Gibreel. Gibreel saving Salahuddin allows the latter to renegotiate his life, to be born again in the wake of tragedy. This shows that the cityscape is closely interlinked with the journey of both protagonists. Furthermore, it illustrates how both characters in the wake of crisis have to renegotiate and reinvent their lives. This then describes the process of migration and how it is equated with the notion of rebirth, which is summed up in the opening of the novel: 'To be born again,' [...] 'first you have to die' (Rushdie 1998, 3).

The immigrant characters in the novel are all desperate to hold on to an idea of home, lamenting their displacement, keeping the flame of home alive through the consumption of Bombay cinema and the memory trigger of food. Nevertheless, *The Satanic Verses* is perhaps the novel where Rushdie deals most explicitly with the celebratory possibility of rebirth. However, this possibility is presented as a painful process not open to everyone. Throughout the novel prevails the profound sense of a loss of home that cannot be recuperated. The loss is absolute, as the migrant finds himself in a hostile environment, impossible to be regarded as home. Therefore, in the novel Hindi cinema as escapist entertainment fulfils a paradoxical double function. It serves as a way of forgetting the present reality and through the consumption of images serves as a trigger to remember what has been lost and is irretrievable – the past sense of home and belonging. In this respect, all the characters in the novel have to negotiate ways of dealing with their loss, refashioning and reinventing their lives in the largely hostile environment of Thatcherite London in the 1980s, where the legacy of Enoch Powell's racist rhetoric is repeated, albeit in coded form, by Margaret Thatcher and Lord Tebbit.[9]

Migration and national identity – *Shree 420* and *The Satanic Verses*

The issues of home, hybridity, land and belonging are introduced right at the beginning of the novel. Salahuddin's and Gibreel's fall to earth is a moment of closure, a clear break with the past, throwing up the potential for renewal as the immigrant has to invest 'the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home*' (Rushdie 1998, 4, original italics) with new meaning. This is conflated with the Hindi movie song 'Mera Joota Hai Japani' from *Shree 420* sung by Gibreel Farishta as he and Salahuddin

tumble down to earth after their hijacked Air India plane is blown apart by a suicide bomber above the English Channel. Rushdie translates the song as follows:

> '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.'
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 5)

Sumita S. Chakravarty sees the song as 'the incorporation of several (transnational) identities by a single hero, expressed both visually and rhetorically (through song)' (1993, 203). This connects with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that the novel's central theme is the postcolonial divided between two identities – migrant and national (Spivak, 1990, 43). It gestures towards Rushdie's notion that a hybrid identity is made up of 'whatever clothes seem to fit'. Chakravarty explains that during the Nehru era national belonging could not be entirely separated from declaring oneself international: 'The use of body is a particular nexus of culture and choice, a field of possibilities susceptible to infinite rearrangements' (1993, 203). In this respect, the experience of Saladin/Salahuddin becomes intertextual with the experience embodied by the hero in the film.

It is interesting that Gibreel sings the song, as it is Salahuddin who in the end has the ability to renegotiate his identity and build a bridge between his migrant and national identity. In order to achieve this, however, he needs the help of Gibreel, Zeeny, Pamela, Jumpy Joshi and finally his father. In these confrontations Salahuddin shows a receptiveness to experience as he successfully negotiates the field of possibilities that allows the mongrelisation of his self. Chakravarty points to the irony of the song in the film being sung by a vagabond, laughing at himself, where the assortment of clothes that he wears exposes his impoverished state. Yet, the nationalist message of the film puts his Indian heart at the centre of his random 'global accumulation of accessories' (Chakravarty 1993, 203/204). Salahuddin's hostility to Gibreel belting out this song in mid-air that he can only counter with 'Rule Britannia' is associated with him denying and rejecting his Indianness. This is further emphasised later on in the novel when during Gibreel's descent into madness Gibreel proposes list-making (favourite books, movies, female film stars, etc.). Chamcha offers the gems of world cinema: *Potemkin, Kane, Otto e Mezzo, The Seven Samurai, Alphaville, El Angel Exterminador*. While Gibreel, accusing Chamcha of being brainwashed, lists his top ten movies as '*Mother India, Mr India, Shree Charsawbees*: no Ray, no Mrinal Sen, no Aravindan or Ghatak' (Rushdie 1998, 439/440) and states '"Your head's so full of junk," he advised Saladin,

"you forget everything worth knowing"' (Rushdie 1998, 440). Both lists are exclusive and the notion of hotchpotch on a cinematic level is revealed as Rushdie's novel assimilates influences from all these films. But they reveal also that Salahuddin can put into one list the gems of various national cinemas, bridging different worlds through film. Yet what is noticeably absent is any attempt to connect with India. Gibreel's list, however, is exclusively drawn from Bombay cinema. If these lists are taken as belonging to or representing two different worlds, it is almost ironic that, in the end, Salahuddin can reconcile both worlds, the art-house cinema world which he so admires with the world of the Bombay film, which is further emphasised in the melodramatic family reconciliation at the end.

The notion of the quest links the novel to *Shree 420*. The main character of *Shree 420*, Raj, sells his honesty and forsakes his integrity when he cannot find work in Bombay. He enters a seedy jet-set world, decadent and corrupt, where the fraudulent businessman and the corrupt politician, conning people out of their savings, are ultimately identified as the enemy of the nation. Pitched against this is the optimistic Nehruvian vision of the nation. In this respect, as Virdi argues, the film is a good example of a populist commentary as it is embraced by Hindi cinema in the Nehru era (2003, 93). Virdi observes that 'Hindi cinema positions itself as a national cinema not only by privileging the traditional over the modern, but by naturalizing and idealizing the nation's imagined community as one that commands fierce love and loyalty' (2003, 94). It echoes in the novel through Salahuddin's own journeying, yet pushes the boundaries further, as it not only asks what it is to be Indian, and a good Indian at that, but also what it means to be English/British. Therefore, it could be argued that the novel actually unmasks the identity crisis of postcolonial Britain, where one's own identity can only be affirmed by othering and attacking the immigrant community that seems to threaten received ideas of Britishness/Englishness. Hence, the novel does not only address issues of identity for the migrant, but also for the host nation.

Salahuddin's journey is one of re-discovering and embracing his Indian roots, which he symbolically chopped off with the tree his father planted for him at birth. It is ultimately an acknowledgement that you can never completely deracinate yourself. Thus, Salahuddin needs to come to terms with, re-learn, and ultimately accept that his 'heart is Indian for all that'. Therefore, the painful journey that he embarks on in the novel that leads to a complete reinvention, a rebirth of himself, has to include the rejection and death of his former self. Chakravarty shows in her reading of *Shree 420*

how through the suggestion of 'transcendence, the body of the hero becomes a map on which nations can appear to coexist in harmonious yet distinctly separate spheres' (1993, 204). This complex reading is echoed in *The Satanic Verses* and reveals the complicated body politics of the novel towards which the opening song already gestures. The idea of a motley agglomeration of identity seems to reflect what Judith Butler described as follows:

> The body is not a static phenomenon, but a mode of intentionality, a directional force and mode of desire. As a condition of access to the world, the body is a being comported beyond itself, sustaining a necessary reference to the world and, thus, never a self-identical natural entity. The body is lived and experienced as the context and medium for all human strivings.
>
> (Butler 1986, 38)

The song reflects this and therefore seems a fitting anthem for Gibreel to sing and, as mentioned in chapter 2, is as appropriate for Saleem. Rushdie only translates the refrain, but here is a translation of the entire song taken from the DVD subtitles:

> My shoes are Japanese,
> My trousers are English,
> The cap on my head is Russian,
> But my heart is Indian.
> My shoes are Japanese…
>
> I venture into the big, wide world
> I walk with my head held high
> Where does my destination lie,
> Where will I ever settle?
> The Creator up above only knows.
>
> Like true soldiers, we forge ahead
> The cap on my head is Russian
> But my heart is Indian
> My shoes are Japanese…
>
> Up and down, round and round
> Flow the eternal waves of life
> Foolish are those who sit on the sidelines
> With little care for their country's fate.
>
> To forge ahead is like life,
> To sit still is like death.
> The cap on my head is Russian,
> But my heart is Indian.
> My shoes are Japanese…
>
> There may be many a prince, many a ruler
> I am like a prince, just as spoilt

I sit on the mighty throne
Whenever I feel in the mood.

Cry the crowds in amazement:
He looks very familiar
The cap on my head is Russian,
But my heart is Indian.
My shoes are Japanese...[10]

The song is not only an ode to migrancy and upward mobility but at its centre lies the acknowledgement of the hero's Indianness, despite his international attire. This needs to be scrutinised further. In the film, Raj Kumar Saxena (Raj Kapoor) migrates to the metropolis Bombay where he has to accept that he has to forsake his honesty and integrity along with his aspirations and dreams in order to be successful in this city of opportunities. The song accompanies his vagabond journey from rural India into the city and depicts his migration from the periphery to the metropolitan centre. The song also encapsulates the journey the hero in the film embarks on, becoming a fraudulent businessman, forsaking his honesty and decency, which he dramatically reclaims at the end, escaping out of the net of profiteers, blackmarketers and fraudsters, who are identified as the enemies of the young independent nation and its people.

The song is not the only intertext to *Shree 420*. Srinivas Aravamudan in his essay 'Being God's Postman is no Fun, Yaar' shows how the intertextuality runs further as he unravels the layers of meaning associated with connotations of the number 420 and its hold on the novel. According to Aravamudan, the hold of 420 on the Indian imagination does not stem from the movie itself, but originates in the judicial apparatus installed by the British in an attempt to facilitate the governance of India, which led to the introduction of the Indian Penal Code in 1860 (1994, 191). In judicial terms the number 420 is understood as a shortened reference to the section of the Code, which stipulates:

> Whoever cheats and thereby dishonestly induces the person deceived to deliver any property to any person, or to make, alter or destroy the whole or any part of a valuable security, or anything which is signed or scaled [*sic*], and which is capable of being converted into a valuable security, shall be punished with imprisonment.[11]

Aravamudan highlights the importance of the number 420 in understanding the novel's South-Asian sensibilities. He deems it more important than several other untranslated and often untranslatable colloquialisms, allusions and Rushdie's choice of Hindi and Urdu words (1994, 191). Therefore, Gibreel singing the song does not only allude to the

film and its sensibilities, but to the layered meaning of fraud associated with the number 420 as it is enshrined in the Indian Penal Code.

Looking closely at the song's chorus, 'O my shoes are Japanese [...] These trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that' (Rushdie 1998, 5), Aravamudan observes that an ideologically sensitive reader would be struck by the late capitalist dichotomy the song conveys, where the nationalism of India is pitched against an emerging global market (1994, 190). While an analysis in these terms could lead to some interesting results, this is an in-joke Rushdie has with his sub-continental readers and readers familiar with Bombay cinema, for whom the connection to the movie is immediately obvious. On the surface, Rushdie uses the song and the film as a way of pitching the actors' two identities against each other. While Farishta chooses to sing a Hindi movie song while he tumbles from the sky, Chamcha sings 'Rule Britannia' in an attempt to preserve his Englishness, which has been so much destabilised during his visit to India. Their spontaneous mid-air sing-song is underpinned by the hold of the number 420. Aravamudan further explains that this abbreviation, often cited in Indian newspapers, denotes small-scale fraud and confidence tricks, while in the popular imaginary the scope of 420 extends also to politicians and businessmen (1994, 191). In *The Satanic Verses* the figure of the fraudulent businessman is embodied in the Pakistani Playboy Billy Battuta with his sex-kitten Mimi Mamulian. Aravamudan also applies the allusion to the Emergency where this section was often invoked to combat 'anti-national' elements and he proposes that flight AI 420, blown up by Sikh hijackers, could be a metaphor of the aeroplane as ship of state, which alludes to the enormous currency that this notion has in India, where Rajiv Gandhi was an airline pilot for the domestic carrier Indian Airlines before he succeeded his mother as Prime Minister (1994, 192). The death of his brother Sanjay in a plane crash, who had been groomed to succeed his mother, also echoes here. Furthermore, their AI plane is named *Bostan*, one of the gardens of paradise, giving their fall even further connotations. This is a good example of how Rushdie layers his narrative with multiple meanings. Rushdie connects the cultural baggage of the Number 420 and its importance in the popular imaginary with that of the 1950s Hindi movie *Shree 420*, which roughly translates as 'The Gentleman Cheat'. Aravamudan argues that *The Satanic Verses* is profoundly Indian in the sensibilities it exports, echoed in Chamcha's statement: 'the earth is full of Indians, you know that, we get everywhere, we become tinkers in Australia and our heads end up in Idi Amin's fridge. Columbus

was right, maybe; the world's made up of Indies, East, West, North' (Rushdie 1998, 54).

ImpersoNation – The Star Cult of Indian movie heroes

The novel is about journeying, migration, flight and the effects on identity. The story also revolves around the issues of impersonation, a form of pretence that could be seen as a kind of fraud – pretending to be someone that one is not. Salahuddin Chamchawala is a voice-over artist, while Gibreel Farishta is a Bombay film star who shot to fame by playing Gods in 'theologicals'. Aravamudan sees the bombastic re-enactment of religious mythology as 'an obvious "420-ing" of a credulous and illiterate public who worship the film star as divine incarnation' (1994, 192). The constructed star image, in its scope very unique to the Indian subcontinent, leads Gibreel to complete self-delusion and ultimately to his own downfall. This star cult, then, can be read as an open critique of the subcontinental star system. For some, this often translates into a political career, for example Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao also known as NTR in Andhra Pradesh or M.G. Ramachandran in Tamil Nadu.[12] Amitabh Bachchan also served as an MP from 1984-1987. Farishta is a composite of 'NTR', Raj Kapoor, and Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan, who shot to fame in the 1970s in the 'Angry Young Man' films such as *Deewar* (1975) and *Sholay* (1975). Rushdie reveals:

> [T]he character of Gibreel himself is a mixture of two or three different types of Indian movie star. There was in the forties a Muslim actor, a very big star at the time, who did somehow get away with playing major Hindu divinities and because he was so popular it was not a problem. And it was interesting to me that mega-stardom allowed you to cross those otherwise quite fraught religious frontiers. [...]And then there was an element of the big South Indian movie stars, a bit of Rama Rao. And, finally, there was a large bit of the biggest movie star in India for the last fifteen or twenty years, Amitabh Bachchan. [...] By mixing up all these people, I was able to use the idea of the Indian movie star as being halfway between the human and the divine.
>
> (Rushdie/MacCabe 2001, 214)

This is made clear through various incidents that allude to Bachchan. For instance, Gibreel's accident on set that brings the whole of India to a standstill mirrors what happened when Bachchan injured himself on the set of *Coolie* (1983):

> The whole of India was at Gibreel's bedside. His condition was the lead item on every radio bulletin, it was the subject of hourly news-flashes on the national television network, and the crowd that gathered in Warden Road was so large that the police had to disperse it with lathi-charges and tear-gas, which they used even though every one of the half-million mourners was already tearful and wailing. The Prime Minister cancelled her appointments and flew to visit him. Her son the airline pilot sat in Farishta's bedroom, holding the actor's hand. A

> mood of apprehension settled over the nation, because if God had unleashed such an act of retribution against his most celebrated incarnation, what did he have in store for the rest of the country?
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 28/29)

This can be read as another dramatisation of the novel's opening. Chakravarty contrasts this with the account of Bachchan's accident carried in the weekly *India Today* (August 1982: 32):

> Bachchan, the near indestructible superstar who had battled seemingly insurmountable odds in thousands of celluloid frames, was fighting the most epic and riveting battle of all – for his life. ... Childhood friend Rajiv Gandhi broke off his trip to the United States... among Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's first appointments after her return was a flying visit to see the stricken star.
>
> (quoted in Chakravarty 1993, 3)

Furthermore, Gibreel's fated affair with Rekha Merchant, who is his lover in Bombay, also has a real life parallel. Her name is a composite of Ismail Merchant, the movie producer and one half of the production team Merchant Ivory, responsible for a string of film adaptations of novels such as *Heat and Dust* (1983), *Howard's End* (1992) and *In Custody* (1993), and Hindi film superstar Rekha with whom Bachchan is rumoured to have had an affair. Bachchan was also a strong supporter of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress and stood as a candidate.

Rushdie can link his narrative strands with Gibreel as a composite figure that amalgamates these public personae by mixing up these figures of public life and by drawing from the idea of the movie star being half-way between the human and the divine. Rushdie plays on the constructions of these actors' public image, which, in Chakravarty's terms, is the portrayal of a composite national personality as mass culture (Chakravarty 1993, 134). Actors thus play on the symbolic construction of their star persona and the characters they portray on celluloid, a point I will discuss further in the next chapter.

Vijay Mishra further complicates this in relation to the subcontinental star cult. He argues that Bombay cinema puts forward a certain ideology where particular emphasis is placed on the received idea of dharma. According to Mishra, this is important in Hindi cinema's melodramatic staging where high metaphysics, the domain of the absolute, are staged as a revisionist ideological system, which reinforces the essentialisms of the Hindu world order through its own authorised identities, such as the filmic hero. Hence, this has allowed the star to become a political hero as well, as it 'has even elided the differences between cinema and politics' (Mishra 2002, 49). Ultimately, Mishra argues, '[t]heir success reinforces the collapse of the sign and the referent: the

star personality traduces and takes over real history' (Mishra 2002, 49). Rushdie translates this in his novel through Gibreel Farishta playing a central role in the commodification of ancient religion and myth as interpreted and commercialised by television and cinema.

Chakravarty sums this up further. The Bombay movie actor through a density of allusions becomes a cultural transmitter. In this respect, Gibreel emanates and captures countless bits and fragments of a collective national life ranging from political intrigue, lurid journalism, to gossip. She sees Gibreel 'as mercurial a narrative surface as the cinematic consciousness he embodies' (Chakravarty 1993, 3). He is the sum-total of absolutely everything: romantic hero and mythological figure, Muslim and Hindu, multiple identities that ultimately lead to his destruction. Rushdie successfully links these together and in this respect Bombay cinema has a very specific function in the construction of the multifaceted character of Gibreel Farishta. Chakravarty reads Gibreel and his 'allusive/elusive nature and structured compositeness' as 'a figure for cinematic discourse, a symbolic force in postindependence India' (1993, 4). While a reading of the novel through the character of Gibreel maps a space for the discussion of the novel within the framework of cinema, it is incomplete. Gibreel cannot survive, while Salahuddin can. The possibility of return, the reconciliation with the father, the acceptance of origin as a way of mapping out one's own space is the preoccupation of the final chapter. In this respect, Salahuddin, who seems like a figure akin to the hero in Bombay cinema's 'social films', finds a way to resolve his conflict.

Rushdie shows his awareness of Bombay cinema's role during the nation-building process of the 1950s when India moved away from its colonial past to invent its own postcolonial identity, its myth of nation as outlined in the Nehruvian vision of the nation: socialist and secular, where people of all faiths can live together peacefully and prosper. This dream, as it is promoted by Bombay cinema of the 1950s and early 1960s, often takes centre stage in Rushdie's writing as the previous discussion of *Midnight's Children* shows. However, he deploys Bombay cinema as a way of critiquing this dream, a dream that ultimately does not live up to reality and hence questions not only the reality of the All-India idea, but also national identity as a specifically Hindu identity. In *The Satanic Verses* there is a progression away from this form of debunking 'myths of nation' – that of India in *Midnight's Children*, that of Pakistan in *Shame* – as his narratorial emphasis shifts away from the homeland to the diaspora in an exploration of complex identity crises. This shift subtly creeps into

Shame through the narrator's interruptions of the narrative and takes up the major part of *The Satanic Verses*. These concerns are then translated into the protagonists' search for identity and belonging, where the question of national identity and its negotiation away from the homeland in a hostile environment becomes paramount.

Film songs, Dreams and the role of Women

Song and dance sequences are an integral party of Bombay cinema. Film music displays a certain eclecticism and synthesis not only in the picturisation of the song, but also in the composition itself. According to Peter Manuel in his book *Cassette Culture*:

> Film music, like Indian cinema in general, can be seen to reflect in its own way the dialectic interaction of tradition and modernity, city and countryside and national identity and the West. Most film songs combine Western and indigenous elements. Imported instruments like congas, synthesisers, horns and especially violins are used alongside tabla and dholak drums and melodic instruments like sitar and sarod.
>
> (Manuel quoted in Kabir 2001, 184)

Songs are used to define the meaning of love, describe many shades of emotion, to eulogise the beauty of the beloved, to convey the pain of separation. They provide a way of conversing and coercing through poetry as well as glorifying the splendour of nature (Kabir 2001, 179). Along with song, dance, too, has become an integral part of Bombay cinema, which is also a hybrid fusion (Kabir 2001, 188). Songs in films happen at particular stock situations and established situations such as the dream sequence and have long been part of Bombay cinema. Directors such as Mani Ratnam and choreographer director Farah Khan have been highly inventive in their song picturisations displaying how songs can be used very effectively to reveal the inner emotions of characters and advance the narrative through poetry (Kabir 2001, 199).

For instance, the Rekha-Gibreel affair that mirrors the rumoured Rekha-Amitabh affair is in the novel is narrated through the medium of Hindi cinema, and film songs play an important role here. Rekha and Gibreel refer to Hindi cinema to understand and explain their own situation. The ghostly Rekha, who pursues Gibreel on her magic carpet, invokes the film *Mugahl-e-Azam*, likening herself to Anarkali, whose love for Prince Salim, too, is forbidden:[13]

> All that night he walked the streets, which remained stable, banal, as if restored to the hegemony of natural laws; while Rekha – floating before him on her carpet like an artiste on a stage, just above head-height – serenaded him with the sweetest love songs [...], singing everything from the gazals of Faiz Ahmed Faiz to the best old film music, such as the defiant air sung by the dancer Anarkali in the presence of the Grand Mughal Akbar in the fifties classic *Mughal-e-Azam*, – in which she declares and exults in her impossible, forbidden love for the Prince,

> Salim, – 'Pyaar kiya to darna kya?' – That is to say, more or less, *why be afraid of love?* and Gibreel, whom she had accosted in the garden of his doubt, felt the music attaching strings to his heart and leading him towards her, because what she asked was, just as she said, such a little thing, after all.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 334)

The film song here dramatises the question of love and rejection between the two and is comforting for Gibreel in his moments of doubt. However, Rekha's singing is interrupted as a different voice from his dream world intrudes, the poet Baal, who reiterates once again the pressing question '*WHAT KIND OF AN IDEA ARE YOU?*' (Rushdie 1998, 335, original italics) Here then Gibreel listening to Rekha singing draws up the vision from his dream world, which are structured similarly to the song sequences in Hindi cinema.

In *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel's inner emotions are expressed in his dreams. Sometimes, when he sleeps, Gibreel becomes aware, 'without the dream, of himself sleeping, of himself dreaming his own awareness of his dream, and then a panic begins, O God, he cries out, O allgood allahgod, I've had my bloody chips, me' (Rushdie 1998, 92). The awareness of his dreaming self and the arrival of Mohamed trigger Gibreel to ask:

> 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 à 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.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 92)

Gibreel Farishta suffers from a profound loss of faith in the wake of a movie star career where he has played too many Gods. He probes into questions of absolute faith as he dreams the early history of a religion of submission that closely resembles Islam. This serious probing reveals Gibreel's inner emotions and the crisis he faces. Movie star that he is, he dreams in the filmic idiom:

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

> Simbel as they walk, or hand-held with the help of a steadicam he'll probe the secrets of the Grandee's bedchamber. But mostly he sits on Mount Cone like a paying customer in the dress circle, and Jahilia is his silver screen. He watches and weighs up the action like any movie fan, enjoys the fights infidelities moral crises, but there aren't enough girls for a real hit, man, and where are the goddamn songs? They should have built up that fairground scene, maybe a cameo role for Pimple Billimoria in a show-tent, wiggling her famous bazooms.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 108)

Mahound, however, approaches Gibreel and so in his dream Gibreel is not only spectator, but the central player, the star. His dreams emulate real life as again he takes on too many roles.

The manifestation of his doubt in his dream exposes Gibreel's fears: 'the fear of the self his dream creates, makes him struggle against Mahound's arrival' (Rushdie 1998, 109). Gibreel feels ill prepared for that meeting and panics: '*Mahound comes to me for revelation, asking me to choose between monotheist and henotheist alternatives, and I'm just some idiot actor having a bhaenchud nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help*' (Rushdie 1998, 109, original italics). The confrontation with Mahound reveals to Gibreel his serious identity crisis having to ask himself the question '*Who am I?*' and in relation to his relationship with God '*What kind of idea is he? What kind am I?*' Gibreel needs to pronounce on the role of the female goddesses Al-Lat, Manat, Uzza, but feels paralysed in the presence of Mahound, but then the words flow, much to Gibreel's surprise:

> *Not my voice* I'd never know such words I'm no classy speaker never was never will be but this isn't my voice it's a Voice. [...] My lips moving being moved by. What, whom? Don't know, can't say. Nevertheless, here they are, coming out of my mouth, up my throat, past my teeth: the Words.
>
> Being God's postman is no fun, yaar.
> Butbutbut: God isn't in the picture.
> God knows whose postman I have been.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 112)

Gibreel's doubts remain and the role of archangel that he plays in his dreams has a destabilising effect on his identity as well as his grip on reality, which is linked to the forced revelation to the prophet on the role of the female pagan idols, the episode of the satanic verses. Thus the crisis in his dreams is triggered by the questioning of the role of women. Gibreel in his relationship with Alleluia Cone needs her to regain a certain grounded-ness and rooted-ness in reality that has been upset by his loss of faith. Salahuddin needs Pamela Lovelace to affirm his Englishness – she is his Britannia, yet when he returns to Bombay, Zeeny Vakil helps him reclaim and regain his Indianness – she is his Mother India.[14] Hind in the Shaandaar Café through her cooking encapsulates

the entire subcontinent for her husband, family, and the immigrant community in Brickhall who congregate regularly in the café to refresh their memory of home through food. Thus the importance of 'woman' as guardian of morality in whom the values of the nation are enshrined takes on a wider meaning.

In the 'Jahilia' section, Al-Lat and Hind become the ultimate temptresses standing as an opposite, independent organisation of morality and therefore a threat to the new religion that needs to be crushed. The struggle between Allah and Al-Lat that is fought out in Mahound's head sparks the satanic verses episode. Sara Suleri in *The Rhetoric of English India* suggests that this can be contextualised within 'the cinematic crossings between delusion and desire that the theologicals represent to the Indian subcontinent' (2005, 201). Rushdie writing a novel that draws from the mythological is audacious insofar as depictions of Allah and his Prophets are prohibited in Islam. Furthermore, the novel is a further exploration of religion, mythology in relation to nationalism and identity, which Rushdie already thematises in *Midnight's Children* through the loss of faith of Aadam Aziz or the Sabarmati case. Rushdie's recourse to the genre is fitting, considering the subject matter of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie deals here with different aspects of Indian popular cinema. As Rachel Dwyer notes: 'The idea of the nation has not always been central in Indian cinema, as has often been suggested by the examination of certain key films, but has been found in specific films at given times, notably the 1950s' (Dwyer 2006, 2). Indeed Rushdie draws most overtly from 1950s cinema in the novel through his choice of filmic intertext, *Shree 420*. Yet by drawing attention to the mythological film in the novel, Rushdie further highlights the difficult question of secularism and religion that he already debates in *Midnight's Children*. The use of cinema in such a rigorous questioning seems to be the perfect tool as it highlights how these debates are approached through a medium that, as Dwyer notes, has been regarded as 'India's great experiment to fashion an Indian modernity' (Dwyer 2006, 4).

Dwyer defines the mythological 'as one which depicts tales of gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines mostly from the large repository of Hindu myths which are largely found in the Sanskrit Puranas, and the Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*' (Dwyer 2006, 15). Rushdie draws from this conceptualisation of Gibreel Farishta as the archangel who becomes his actual manifestation in the dream sequences. Yet in Gibreel, Rushdie also includes the figure of 'The Angry Young Man' whose embodiment was the young Amitabh Bachchan. This figure describes a man wronged by society who fights to re-establish a moral code. Gibreel is an inversion of this figure,

fails and thus commits suicide. This crisis manifests itself in the dream sequences. According to Chakravarty, the 'dream sequence is an elaborate and lengthy piece of surrealism to denote the tortured state of mind of the hero' (Chakravarty 139). They include Mahound's own dilemmas, be they moral, intellectual or practical, which are brought out by his wives Khadijah and Ayesha and are implicitly mirrored by the whores in 'The Curtain' and their impersonation of the prophet's harem, and in the 'Ayesha' section by Ayesha[15] and Mirza Saeed's wife Mishal, who represent unshakeable faith, as opposed to Mirza Saeed's secular modernity.

The role of women in the 'Ayesha' section is particularly striking. Sara Suleri links the questions of faith that run through the novel with the role of women in the dream sequences and shows how the role of 'woman' is instrumental in throwing light on the novel's obsessive question '*What kind of idea is he? What kind am I?*' that is again reiterated in 'The Parting of the Arabian Sea' section (Rushdie 1998, 500). Suleri extends her argument to religion and nationalism and additionally to the feminisation of Islam by destabilising the unitary narrative of Islam through the episode of the satanic verses. In this context, Suleri sees the 'Ayesha' episode as a modern retelling of the satanic verses episode in a contemporary cultural context. The inherent blasphemy in these sections is according to Suleri 'an enabling conceit, allowing the narrative to assume the highly ambitious task of rewriting the fiction of Muslim nationhood in India, and in so doing, attempting to locate an idiom for the feminization of Islam' (2005, 198). Hence, the 'Ayesha' section could be read as an attempt of gendering religion. Arguably, through a decentring of the grand narrative of Islam, the story of Mahound must be retold and, as Suleri suggests, reshaped in the body of a woman (2005, 202).

The Ayesha episode is loosely based on the Hawkes Bay case of February 1983 and is retold with a main focus on the powers of absolute faith.[16] Like the 'Jahilia' sections, the 'Ayesha' section dramatises the struggle between faith and doubt, enshrined in the novel in the often-used opening of Arabic folktales: '*Kan ma kan/ Fi qadim azzaman*... It was so, it was not' (Rushdie 1998, 143).[17] The ambiguous conclusion of that narrative thread in 'The Parting of the Arabian Sea' section also provides a narrative bridge to the theme of forgiveness that prevails at the end of the novel. Through Ayesha, the closure and rigidity that ended the 'Jahilia' section is ruptured and opened up as much as Ayesha forces Mirza Saeed to open, his body splitting apart (Rushdie 1998, 507).

Women, then, play a significant role in the way Rushdie structures his argument and shapes his narrative. Rushdie's female characters rupture the grand narratives and deconstruct history. Yet women also play an important role in how human beings become whole again, through the love of God or through the love of their fellow men and women (Rushdie 1992a, 395). As women shape the narrative, the mapping of the female body through a male voyeuristic gaze so common in Bombay cinema serves a distinctive and specific function, explaining where Rushdie directs his voyeuristic gaze (Rushdie 1998, 216/218). The direction of his voyeuristic gaze always has a social significance, something that is mirrored by the proliferation and doubling of names. Hence, through women, in the various sections, a distinct structure is emerging. Martine Dutheil de la Rochère's observation on the treatment of the 'Ayesha' story is therefore all the more significant (Dutheil de la Rochère 1999, 148). The section is inspired by a real event, narrated as a dream that is embedded in fiction and then recycled as Gibreel's comeback movie: 'His first film, *The Parting of the Arabian Sea*, had bombed badly; the special effects looked home-made, the girl in the central Ayesha role, a certain Pimple Billimoria, had been woefully inadequate, and Gibreel's own portrayal of the archangel had struck many critics as narcissistic and megalomaniac' (Rushdie 1998, 513). This describes the reverse process of Rushdie's method in *The Satanic Verses*, as he recycles a Bollywood movie, cross-fertilises it with 'real' events and narrates it as fiction.

Film permeates the novel at the level of narrative argument, plotlines and characters as well as structure. The novel is divided into nine parts, three of which are set in London, two in Jahilia, two in Titlipur and two in Bombay. The dream sequences punctuate the sections set in Bombay and London. Those are the even numbered sections Mahound (II), Ayesha (IV), Return to Jahilia (VI) and The Parting of the Arabian Seas (VI). The narrative version of dream sequences is specifically deployed to investigate issues of morality, religious doubt and social injustice in its breaking up of taboo as the opinions of many are allowed to collide in the arena of Gibreel's dreams. In Bombay cinema, the action is punctuated by song and dance sequences and these, too, are often dream sequences. In condensed form, these songs as dreams express fears and anxieties on themes such as love, religion, motherhood, crime and punishment.[18] Take for instance a film such as *Dil Se* (1998) where the hero, an All-India Radio reporter, falls in love with a suicide bomber and the song and dance sequences translate his dream of their togetherness onto the screen. Song picturisation in Hindi cinema provides

a way of introducing the erotic that would otherwise be prone to censorship, which is already denoted in the episode in the Pioneer Café in *Midnight's Children*.

The dream sequences have a similar function in *The Satanic Verses*. This is invariably alluded to in the dream sequences themselves, for instance, when Ayesha is asked by Mirza Saeed:

> 'Tell me,' he asked sweetly, 'how exactly does the angel give you all this information? You never tell us his precise words, only your interpretation of them. Why such indirection? Why not simply quote?'
>
> 'He speaks to me,' Ayesha answered, 'in clear and memorable forms.'
>
> [...] 'Kindly be more specific,' he insisted. 'Or why should anyone believe? What are these forms?'
>
> 'The archangel sings to me,' she admitted, 'to the tunes of popular hit songs.'
>
> Mirza Saeed Akhtar clapped his hands delightedly and began to laugh the loud, echoing laughter of revenge, and Osman the bullock-boy joined in, beating on his dholki and prancing around the squatting villagers singing the latest filmi ganas and making nautch-girl eyes.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 497/498)

This is perhaps the most explicit indicator of how the dream sequences echo song picturisation in Hindi cinema.

Chidananda Das Gupta in his groundbreaking study of Indian cinema *The Painted Face: Studies in Indian Popular Cinema* in his chapter 'Why the films sing' elaborates on the unique features of the filmic song. He sees the song picturisation of Hindi cinema as one of the ways in which this cinema attempts to overcome realism and naturalism and creates a mythic space for discourse. Das Gupta thus argues that this allows the filmmaker to turn fact into fiction, 'the present tense of the camera eye into the past and the future' (1991, 59). The songs, then, can be seen as the transcendental element in the language of Hindi cinema:

> [It] expounds philosophies; proposes inductive and deductive syllogisms on the truths of individual life in relation to the social universe; explains hidden meanings; comments, like a chorus, on the worth or consequences of an action, beside providing aural enchantment to the otherwise music-less urban world of its rural grassroots.
>
> (Das Gupta 1991, 60)

Arguably then, Gibreel's dreams function like the film song in Bombay cinema. The dream sequences set up a mythic space and question absolutes – especially the claim for absolute truth that disavows any other point of view. Linked to that are issues of purity and morality, which are most explicitly discussed in the 'Return to Jahilia' section.

The dream sequences provide an 'alienation effect' through dreams, yet the concerns of writing are invested with new immediacy through the scribe Salman the

Persian, Rushdie's namesake, and the poet Baal, both offering illuminating comments on the nature of the act of writing and literature. So while on the one hand, the authorial voice is distancing itself from the written word, its preoccupations are directly imparted through the character of the poet. This has a very distinctive effect as, on the one hand, it is supposed to create distance and, on the other, to provide a space where the unthinkable might become possible, a space of licentiousness. In the event, it did not have the desired effect as these sequences sparked the controversy that developed into *The Satanic Verses* affair. The dream sequences make explicit Gibreel's loss of faith and explores it on different levels and in various contexts, reworking the early history of a religion of submission, and through the process, deconstructs fundamentalism.

Rushdie has outlined in 'In God We Trust' the significance of dreams and dreaming (Rushdie 1992a, 376-392). He sees dreams as part of our very essence. Through self-consciousness, man has the ability to dream versions of himself, allowing us to reinvent ourselves anew. Hence, mankind's response to the world – awake or asleep – is '*imaginative*: that is, picture-making. We live in our pictures, our ideas' (Rushdie 1992a, 377/378). Rushdie likens this capability to the Hindu idea of *maya*. In Hinduism and vedic philosophy, *maya* refers to the illusion of a purely mental and physical reality where the true unitary self has become veiled. *Maya* must be seen through in order to glimpse transcendental truth. Hence, Rushdie argues, this veil of illusion prevents us from seeing things as they truly are, so that we mistake the veil, *maya*, for reality, leading him to the conclusion that dreaming as much as being man's gift, may also be his tragic flaw (Rushdie 1992a, 378). Rushdie further suggests that politics and religion in theory and in practice are 'manifestations of our dreaming selves'. This notion is explored in Gibreel's journey and the dream sequences. In the novel's exploration of religion, Rushdie argues that while political dreams, usually associated with dreams of improvement, betterment and progress, places the human spirit in a position of power, the great universal religions ask mankind to accept inferiority to 'a non-corporal, omnipresent, omnipotent supreme being' (Rushdie 1992a, 378). Hence, religion places human beings beneath history. Gibreel wrestles with this, being half-way between the human and the divine and his loss of faith is the way into this struggle. The dream sequences make this struggle concrete. It manifests itself through a cinematic imaginary, in the picturisation of the dream sequences and the visualisation of women.

The use of the filmic song, as it is translated into prose is interesting for another reason. *The Satanic Verses* more overtly than any other Rushdie novel is permeated by cinema, structurally as much as where plotlines and characters are concerned. It is the first novel to translate the filmic song into the novel text and could be seen as a foreshadowing of the move away from the cinemascope way of storytelling that started in *Midnight's Children* to one that is polyphonic as the Rock and Roll epic *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is. *The Satanic Verses* sums up and brings together all the sensibilities that Rushdie has explored in his writing from *Grimus* to *Midnight's Children* to *Shame* and *The Jaguar Smile*. Furthermore, it has laid a solid foundation for the preoccupations in his future writing from *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* to *East, West*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown*. Where cinematic story-telling is concerned, despite returning to it in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*, *The Satanic Verses* is perhaps Rushdie's richest text as cinema permeates the novel on all levels and, as this chapter has delineated, serves to illustrate and develop the political arguments and preoccupations of the novel.

Notes

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[1] Damian Grant also expresses this hope in his 1998 introduction of Rushdie's novels. The difficult nature of this process has been highlighted only recently with the conferring of a knighthood on Salman Rushdie, which has provoked violent protests and heated comments in both Pakistan and Iran and reignited the controversy around Rushdie and the novel.

[2] For a collection of articles and letters and a good introduction to the debates surrounding *The Satanic Verses* see Appignanesi & Maitland 1989.

[3] According to Rushdie, 'Jahilia' refers to the time in Islamic history before the revelation. 'Jahilia' means ignorance (See Rushdie 1992a, 398).

[4] In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Rushdie states: 'I thought *The Satanic Verses* was the *least* political novel I'd ever written. It didn't rise out of that kind of historical process [he refers to *Shame* and *Midnight's Children*], but out of an attempt to try to understand the process of my own life. I'd always felt that at some point my writing would have to make the same move that I made. It would have to move from the East towards the West. That's what I thought *The Satanic Verses* was about, that kind of very personal, *inner* novel. It turns out to be *the most* political novel I ever wrote. This just goes to show how wrong writers can be' (Rushdie/Wachtel 2001, 131).

[5] The genre of the theological is Rushdie's own invention. Hindi cinema has a long tradition of mythologicals, films that narrate stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The first Indian film was a mythological film, Phalke's *Raja Harischandra* (1913). Rachel Dwyer notes: 'With his first film, *Raja Harischandra*, Phalke created the mythological, one of the categories or genres of films that are unique to Indian cinema, all of which were established during the early days of silent films. Through this and the other religious genres, filmic ways of viewing religious symbols and practices became part of the visual culture of Indian cinema and indeed of Indian culture. The mythological was one of the most popular and productive genres of Indian silent cinema, which developed over the years and continues to be made, albeit very little in A-movies, until the present' (Dwyer 2006, 7).

[6] For a detailed discussion of Rushdie's affiliation with Dickens and that of *The Satanic Verses* with texts like *David Copperfield* and *Our Mutual Friend!* see Dutheil de la Rochère 1999, 63-79.

[7] In an Interview with Jeremy Isaacs first broadcast on BBC2 in 1994 Rushdie talks about the influence of the film *The Wizard of Oz* and Bollywood cinema: 'Who knows why things open doors in your mind. *The Wizard of Oz* is a wonderful movie. It's a movie that you can enjoy as I did as a young boy in Bombay, whose other cinematic environment was "Bollywood," the Bombay talkie' (Isaacs 2001, 160).

[8] In sharp contrast to this is Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*, where the issue of migrancy is negotiated in the rural location of the Wiltshire Downs. For an interesting discussion of this see Susheila Nasta's chapter 'If the "House" Falls Down: The Enigma of Writing Survival in V.S. Naipaul' in Nasta 2002, 93-131 and Abdulrazak Gurnah's essay 'Displacement and Transformation in *The Enigma of Arrival* and *The Satanic Verses*' in Lee 1995, 5-20.

[9] How ironic must it have been for Mrs Thatcher to welcome Rushdie at No.10 Downing Street, voicing her support for an author and his novel where she is described as Maggie Torture and where her waxwork figure is melted down in the Hot Wax Club.

[10] Transcribed from *Shree 420*, yash raj films the Raj Kapoor collection, 2000.

[11] Chitaley D.V. & S. Appu Rao. *The Code of Criminal Procedure* 1973, Vol.4, quoted in Aravamudan 1994, 191.

[12] Rushdie explains this in his interview with Colin MacCabe 'Salman Rushdie talks to the London Consortium about *The Satanic Verses*', see Rushdie/MacCabe 2001, 213-229.

[13] The figure of Anarkali and the film *Mughal-e-Azam* is an important intertext in *Shalimar the Clown*, where Boonyi performs the dance number and draws comparisons between her own situation and that Anarkali.

[14] Zenat Vakil returns in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as the curator of the Aurora Zogoiby bequest, the artist who fashions herself as an urban, sexy version of Mother India, and becomes the guardian of her artistic legacy.

[15] A consistent doubling of names holds the various narrative threads of the novel together. For instance, in the 'Jahilia' sections Ayesha is the name of the prophet's favourite wife, while in the 'Ayesha' section Ayesha is a modern day prophetess leading an entire village on a pilgrimage to Bombay and then through the Arabian Sea to Mecca.

[16] In February 1983, thirty-eight Shia Muslims walked into the Arabian Sea expecting that the Seas would part and they would be able to walk to Basra and then on to Karbala. According to Suleri, they were inspired by a young woman, Naseem Fatima, who claimed to be in direct visionary contact with the twelfth Imam. By the time the police reached Hawkes Bay, most of the pilgrims had drowned and police arrested the survivors on grounds that they tried to leave Pakistan without a visa. However, rich Shias impressed by the devotion of the survivors paid for their journey to and from Karbala, where they were greeted with gifts, thus fulfilling Naseem's promise that they would visit Karbala without worldly means (see Suleri 2005, 202). See also Akbar S. Ahmad's chapter 'Death in Islam: The Hawkes Bay Case' in Ahmad 1986, 46-67.

[17] Rushdie notes: 'The original incident on which the dream of the villagers who drown in the Arabian Sea is based is also part of what I "knew". The story awed me, because of what it told me about the huge power of faith. I wrote this part of the novel to see if I could understand, by getting inside their skins, people for whom devotion was as great as this' (Rushdie 1992a, 409/410).

[18] See Rachel Dwyer's discussion of specific sets in Dwyer and Patel 2002, 78-81.

Chapter 5

The Moor's Last Sigh: Tales of the Alhambra, Tales of Bombay – creating a many-headed, many-brushed Overartist

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie strategically deploys Bombay cinema to explore issues of Mother and Nation, defeated love, and the dangers and destructive forces of religious fundamentalism and corruption. He focuses on two specific cinematic intertexts to make his assessment of post-Ayodhya Bombay and closely links this to the portrayal of Aurora Zogoiby and her conceptualisation of a secular India in her art. He uses the films *Mother India* (1957) and *Mr India* (1987) to construct an alternative version of Mother India and of Abraham Zogoiby, transformed into a *Godfather*-like villain, the archetype of a corrupt and corrupting businessman. Women again take centre stage as the dream of an eclectic, secular India goes up in flames after several bomb explosions in Bombay. The South Indian Malabar Coast and the metropolis Bombay serve as the narrative's backdrop. The novel was written in the aftermath of the communal riots in December 1992 and January 1993, and the bombings in March 1993 in Bombay. Many commentators and intellectuals, including Rushdie, saw these events as the death of cosmopolitan Bombay, and the novel paints a bleak picture of what has happened to the euphoric vision of the nation on the Eve of Independence.[1]

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie returns to the subcontinent and Bombay, writing an epic family saga that begins on the periphery in the city of Cochin in the South Indian state of Kerala. Thematically, Rushdie re-evaluates India's myth of the nation and in this respect the novel can be read as a companion volume, if not a sequel, to *Midnight's Children*. In the wake of increasing communal tensions and Hindu fundamentalism, the rise of the right-wing Hindu extremist party Shiv Sena[2] in Bombay and Maharashtra and the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Rushdie decided to write a family saga that is pluralistic and eclectic in cultural and religious terms. The novel links the Jewish/Catholic/Hindu/Muslim legacy of the Indian subcontinent, East and West, Indian and European history arguing for tolerance, plurality and communal harmony.

Rushdie explains his idea behind the novel succinctly in a 1996 interview with Alvaro Vargas Llosa:

> If there is this idea that only Hindu India is India, let me do the opposite of that and try to find the smallest minority group. The Indian Jewish community in South India is tiny, especially in Cochin. Then there are different types of Christianity, including the Church of South India, based on the legend of the

> apostle St Thomas' trip to India after the death of Christ. I took these two very small communities, and created an even smaller community by intermarriage (something that, in actuality, the South Indian Jewish community doesn't allow). I tried to show that, far from being a marginal or inauthentic experience, you could put this in the center and grow the whole of the country out of it.
>
> (Rushdie/Llosa 2001, 211)[3]

The result is a multi-layered novel that challenges the reader to unpick the various narrative threads and re-examine the historical palimpsest that makes up India as a nation. Rushdie challenges the idea that 'only Hindu India is India' by constructing a Catholic Cochin artist as the iconic figure of Mother India. The locale for this challenge is Bombay. The rise to power of the Shiv Sena in Bombay is central to the story and connects the novel thematically to *The Satanic Verses* in its argument against fundamentalism. While *The Satanic Verses* specifically addresses Muslim fundamentalism, *The Moor's Last Sigh* highlights the impact of Hindu fundamentalism and the concept of *hindutva*[4] and the damage it has done to the 'All-India' idea. Rushdie sets up Moorish Spain as the historical analogy to events in India. Furthermore, he critiques Christian fundamentalism through various Christian characters: the obsessive priest Oliver D'Aeth and his missionary zeal, Moraes's great-grandmother Epifania or his sister Minnie, who becomes a nun and dies during a violent protest against birth control.

Rushdie returns to India's most 'hotch-potch' metropolis Bombay and uses it as a metaphor for modern India. In an age where nationalism is more and more dissociated from its secular roots, the effects of a new breed of religious nationalism can be observed in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious city. In this context, Aurora and her art are set up as a counter-narrative that decentres 'only one way of seeing' that Rushdie associates with any form of fundamentalism. *The Moor's Last Sigh* narrates the epic family history of the Zogoiby-da Gama clan through the eyes of Moraes Zogoiby, now imprisoned in his mother's spurned lover's Little Alhambra in Southern Spain. The narrative of family rifts and premature deaths, thwarted loves, mad passions, the power of money combined with morally dubious seductions and mysteries of art is reminiscent of the family sagas that have become more and more popular in Bombay cinema (see Rushdie 1996b, 14). Rushdie deploys them specifically as examples of how the vision of an eclectic India is going to the dogs.[5]

Like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, Moraes is running out of time and has to tell his story in an accelerated fashion. The narrator is ageing at double the speed of time, thus emphasising the urgency to get the whole story onto the page. *The Moor's*

Last Sigh, too, is a narrative under pressure. By interlinking the story of the nation with that of a family, Rushdie once again allows personal history to collide with national history. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem felt responsible for the nation's history, only to realise that he was on the margins and the person embodying the nation was Indira Gandhi. He unmasks her as a Kali-like version of Mother India. In *The Moor's Last Sigh* by contrast, the role of Mother India is contested by the artist Aurora Zogoiby, fashioning herself into an urban version of Mother India in direct competition with Indira Gandhi and Nargis, the Bombay film superstar who became an icon through her portrayal of Mother India in the 1957 film. Their contest for that role, and the different ways in which they invest that figure with different meaning, is one of the core preoccupations of the novel. Mother India is one of the defining myths of post-independence India and is closely linked to the independence struggle and India's birth as a nation. Hence, the representation of Mother India is of vital significance in an age when ideological conceptions about nation become more and more religiously invested and entrenched. In this respect, the trope of 'Mother India' and its competing interpretations in the novel become the marker that allows Nargis, Indira Gandhi and Aurora Zogoiby to enter the public domain.

Inventing and Reinventing Mother India

The phrase 'Mother India' has particular resonances in the Indian context and is interwoven with the history of India's move towards independence. As the nationalist movement gathered pace, there was also a cultural revival as an interest in the history and culture of the different regions of India increased in the early years of the nineteenth century, which allowed nationalists of the late nineteenth century to refer to this material as a source of pride in the ancient achievements of the motherland and its people. The Bengal Renaissance is perhaps the best-known example of this. A key figure of that movement, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) was one of the first to introduce the theme of the great mother into Indian nationalist discourse through a poem contained in his novel *Anandamath* (1882), "Bande Mataram", where one of the characters appeals to the Goddess Durga as both a deity and the mother as land (Chatterji 2006, 48-50).[6] According to Gayatri Chatterjee, the idea of Mother India was an important tool for nationalism and the freedom movement, which is also reflected in greetings and battle cries of anti-imperial activists such as *Bharat-mata ki jai* (May Mother India be victorious) and *vande mataram* (Hail Mother) (Chatterjee 2002, 49). In the post-independence era, Bombay cinema engaged with the creation of a new myth of

nation that presented India on the one hand as a timeless mythic entity and on the other as a modern secular state under the rule of law (see Chakravarty 1993, 132). Thus the various images that denote the motherland – *matri bhumi*, *vande mataram*, *bharat mata* – all needed to be brought together with the new nation. Bombay cinema played a crucial part in the post-independence era when the state still sought to establish itself as a new source of authority. Indian unity was challenged by India's diversity in language, religion, caste and cultures, which necessitated the creation of new myths. The film *Mother India* is a successful attempt at giving the young nation a new sense of unity and creating a feeling of allegiance and belonging on the part of its audience.

Sumita S. Chakravarty argues that the film *Mother India* presents the powerful nation through its representation of the land as mother and the mother as land as it is enshrined in a discourse of nationhood (Chakravarty 1993, 149). Chakravarty relates the film's timelessness to the way in which it engages with the Indian experience of suffering and narrates it as myth, where the everyday suffering of the peasant is portrayed as heroic, which allows the audience to reaffirm long-held cultural assumptions: 'These pertain to the conduct of woman, to her mythic strength and endurance, to her ability to provide stability and continuity in Indian social life' (Chakravarty 1993, 150). *Mother India*, the peasant woman Radha is celebrated in her role as mother and mythologised as such. By connecting the idea of India as a mother with rootedness and place, the film aligns itself with similar evocations made by Indian nationalists during the struggle for independence. A vast majority of India's population lived in a rural environment, and they identified with these representations of the earth and peasant in the film's evocation of the motherland (Chakravarty 1993, 151-152). As Chakravarty shows, this strategy makes it possible to dissociate the peasant woman Radha from the destructive and vengeful woman as well as the threat of the prostituting woman, as her struggle and survival against the odds is presented as a story of service and devotion to the motherland (Chakravarty 1993, 151).

The symbolism of the mother as divine is borrowed from the cult-worship of mother goddesses, especially in northern India. Mythology is thus one of the main sources of the film in its creation of a new mythology, which is already denoted by the meaning of names in the film. Through references to Gods, Goddesses, representations of rituals and celebrations, a familiar iconography is worked into the film in its representation of a rural, village-based community. The mother in the film is associated with a variety of Hindu goddesses: Dharti-mata or Mother Earth, associated with

productivity and stability, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, beauty and prosperity, Radha, the consort of Krishna and the personification of love, the Sita Savitri model of the devoted wife, and Kali, a figure of annihilation (see Chatterjee 2002, 28-29, 49-50; Dwyer 2000, 133). Her husband's name Shyamu is another name for Krishna and her sons Birju and Ramu, the bad and the good son, are associated with Krishna and Ram respectively. As Gayatri Chatterjee argues, the way in which the film appropriates epic and mythical material in an accumulative process allows these mythical elements to mutate and to be subverted, leading to a dialogic and conflicting relationship between the contemporary and the mythological material (Chatterjee 2002, 30-31).

The Moor's Last Sigh is Rushdie's counter-narrative to the notion that 'only Hindu India is India.' In this respect, the novel makes a clear argument about issues of representation. Furthermore it examines the causes that lead to the worst communal riots in Bombay's history in 1992 and to the series of ten bomb blasts that rocked the city in March 1993, which followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 7 December 1992. What the Bombay riots and bomb blast demonstrate all too painfully is that the secularist nature of Indian democracy has been eroded ever since the death of Nehru in 1964. This argument is closely intertwined with the multiple possible interpretations of the trope of 'Mother India' in the novel. Rushdie also invokes his fictional invention, the film *Gai-Wallah*, which features as a wide-screen remake. Rushdie invokes the film in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* as an instance when Hindu-Muslim tolerance is under strain and erupts into communal violence. So when Bombay burns after the bombings, the film also resurfaces as another cinema is destroyed: 'Dhabas in Dhobi Talao, cinemas showing the wide-screen remake of the old classic *Gai-Wallah*, the Sorryno and Pioneer cafés: all these were no more' (Rushdie 1996b, 374).

For the magnitude of the Babri Masjid demolition, the riots and blasts to be understood, the term 'secularism' in the Indian context needs some clarification. According to Ashis Nandy, 'secularism' contains two specific meanings. The first meaning, which is also familiar in the west, is that by removing religion from political discourse, room for religious tolerance becomes possible. As Nandy argues: 'The less politics is contaminated by religion [...] the more secular and tolerant a state will be. The sense of the word "secular" here is the opposite of the word "sacred"' (Nandy 2003, 34). In its second meaning, Nandy argues, secularism is not the opposite of the sacred, but of ethnocentrism, xenophobia and fanaticism. Thus, it is possible to be secular by

being equally respectful or disrespectful to religion. In its second meaning the emphasis is on respect. It is this second meaning which the anticolonial élite stressed and provided the platform upon which a broad-based mobilisation against the coloniser could be achieved (Nandy 2003, 35). In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie chronicles the decline of secularism after Independence. The Bombay riots and bombings demonstrate that the tolerant ethos of a state may not necessarily lead to religious tolerance in society. Rushdie's narrator in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is particularly baffled by that. In the novel, it emerges very clearly that Indian nationalism has been contaminated by exclusionist ethnocentric religious politics ever since the Emergency in 1975. *The Moor's Last Sigh* takes on these debates surrounding religion, secularism and its relationship to a political and cultural public sphere. Through the trope of 'Mother India', it splits the public sphere into urban and rural, secular and non-secular representations, codings and debates.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the narrator Moraes is quick to underline that 'Motherness [...] is a big idea in India' (Rushdie 1996b, 137). Rushdie's narrator creates a list of multiple mother figures who can be connected to the mythic figure of Mother India. Moraes, born ten years after Independence, in 1957, the year the film was released, is quick to point out his connection with the film:

> The year I was born, Mehboob Productions' all-conquering movie *Mother India* – three years in the making, three hundred shooting days, in the top three all-time mega-grossing Bollywood flicks – hit the nation's screens. Nobody who saw it ever forgot that glutinous saga of peasant heroinism, that super-slushy ode to the uncrushability of village India made by the most cynical urbanites in the world. And as for its leading lady – O Nargis with your shovel over your shoulder and your strand of black hair tumbling forward over your brow! – she became, until Indira Mata supplanted her, the living mother-goddess of us all.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 137)

Moraes highlights the hold of *Mother India* over the popular imaginary and the film as one of the defining texts of Hindi cinema and of Nargis as the embodiment of the role. Furthermore, Rushdie's narrator emphasises references to the idea of 'Mother', as it is defined and exploited in nationalist rhetoric, to trigger the reader to make comparisons between the various mother figures in the novel.[7] Rushdie develops these connections most overtly in relation to the 'Mother India' trope and provides the reader with a model that may help him to unpack a novel that is dense with historical and popular cultural allusions.

The 'Mother India' motif is not only significant as a plot device that sets up and parallels the Oedipal relationship between mother and son, but connects the novel's preoccupations with art, politics and representation:

> In *Mother India*, a piece of Hindu myth-making directed by a Muslim socialist, Mehboob Khan, the Indian peasant woman is idealised as bride, mother, and producer of sons; as long-suffering, stoical, loving, redemptive, and conservatively wedded to the maintenance of the social status quo. But for Bad Birju, cast out from his mother's love, she becomes, as one critic has mentioned, 'that image of an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males'.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 138-39)

Throughout the novel, the 'Mother India' idea is countered by Moraes's rewriting of the trope, which sets up his mother as an alternative urban version to Nargis's interpretation in Mehboob Khan's film. This image of the benevolent, stoic, nurturing and caring Mother India, the land as mother and the mother as land, is given a new dimension in the film by stressing the connection to India's progress ten years after Independence. In a period of change sweeping the country, the mother symbolises continuity in times of upheaval. This stoical image is countered and exploded by Rushdie's provocative, metropolitan version of an aggressive, treacherous, foul-mouthed, ruthless, exploitative, calculative and cruel mother. Aurora as Mother India is a complex, multi-layered figure who on the one hand strives to break the patriarchally-constructed image of Mother India, and on the other hand adheres to her moral code. She is both divorced from and linked to the traditional mythical image. Rushdie pursues several strategies in the creation of Aurora. He sets her up as an iconic figure who embodies an eclectic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious tolerant secular India that he associates with the Bombay of the 1950s and 1960s. In Aurora Rushdie subverts the image of India as the mother goddess: 'I thought I'd like to invent a different sort of mother [...] not rural, but urban. Not slushy but kind of gritty and sassy with a bad mouth on her' (Rushdie/Silverblatt 2001, 199). Thus, while Aurora still embodies traditional values, she can also be read as a counter-narrative to the traditional image of Mother India as it was portrayed in the film by Nargis.

The star persona of Nargis as she features as a 'text' in the film and Rushdie's novel merits further comment. Behroze Gandhy and Rosie Thomas in 'Three Indian Film Stars' have looked closely at the phenomenon of the subcontinental star cult. They argue that 'the films and the sub-text of gossip about stars are most usefully seen as debates around morality, in particular as negotiations about the role of "tradition" in a modernising India' (Gandhy/Thomas 1991, 108). This is interestingly argued in relation

to Nargis as her film roles 'ranged from coy coquette to sweet village damsel, from westernised society girl or independent, educated career woman to resilient earth mother and champion of the oppressed peasantry' (Gandhy/Thomas 1991, 116). In her performances the emphasis always lay on purity and moral soundness. Gandhy and Thomas are concerned with the persona of Nargis as publicly-constructed rumour through gossip magazines (Gandhy/Thomas 1991, 119). Nargis's role in *Mother India* came soon after her split from the actor Raj Kapoor. They were Bombay cinema's Golden Couple, since they epitomised a 'modern' freedom and lack of inhibition, despite the fact that Kapoor was married with children. When the affair ended, Nargis was regarded on the one hand as a ruined woman who deserved what she got and on the other as a figure of sympathy. *Mother India* in that respect salvaged her honour as she was 'rescued' by Sunil Dutt through marriage. She settled down to family life, leaving the 'dirty' film world. The association with the film *Mother India* and Nargis's devotion to her son and husband and her commitment to community charities allowed her to redeem herself in the public imagination. More significantly, she forged a close connection with Indira Gandhi and in 1980 was rewarded with a seat in the Rajya Sabha (The Upper House of Indian Parliament). By that time, she was a national symbol of dignified glamour and respectability, the other First Lady of India – Indira Gandhi's *alter ego*.[8] After the film, Nargis reinvented herself as the ideal wife and mother.

Before *Mother India*, Nargis presented herself as the modern woman, a secular Muslim, a working woman, who had chosen her own lovers. After her marriage, she became a bourgeois housewife and mother, turning her back on the seedy film-world. Reinvented through the film as Mother India, she re-entered public life as a politician (see Dwyer 2000, 136). In the construction of Aurora, Nargis and Indira Gandhi as public rumour, it is important to consider how they are 'read' by the public and how these readings determine their space and influence in public.

Rushdie draws obvious parallels with Aurora. Her affair with Nehru, her clash with Nargis and the conception of the figure of Aurora in the public imagination, falling in and out of love with her, play mischievously with set conceptions of Indian womanhood and with the framework of publicly-constructed figures through the proliferation of gossip and rumour. There is a deliberate blurring of the boundaries of public and private, the nation and the family unit. Aurora takes this up in her confrontation with Nargis at one of her soirées, conflating real-life events with the narrative of the film:

'The first time I saw the picture', she confided to the famous movie star on the high terrace at *Elephanta*, 'I took one look at your Bad Son, Birju, and I thought, O boy, what a handsome guy – too much sizzle, too much chilli, bring water. He may be a thief and a bounder, but that is some A-class loverboy goods. And now look – you have gone and marry-o'ed him! What sexy lives you movie people leadofy: to marry your own son, I swear, wowie.'

The film actor under discussion, Sunil Dutt, stood stiffly beside his wife and sipped lemonade, flushing. [...] 'Auroraji, you are mixing truth and make-belief,' he said pompously, as if it were a sin. 'Birju and his mother Radha are fictions only, in two dimensions on the silver screen; but we are flesh and blood, available in full 3D – as guests in your fine home.'[...]

'Even in the picture, but,' Aurora went relentlessly on, 'I knew right off that bad Birju had the hots for his gorgeous ma.'

Nargis stood speechless, open-mouthed. Vasco Miranda, who could never resist a bit of trouble-making, saw the storm brewing and made haste to join in. 'Sublimation', he offered, 'of mutual parent-child-longings, is deep-rooted in the national psyche. The use of names in the picture makes the meaning clear. This "Birju" moniker is also used by God Krishna, isn't it, and we know that milky "Radha" is the blue chap's one true love. In the picture, Sunil, you are made up to look like the god, and you even fool with all the girls, throwing your stones to break their womby water-pots; which, admit it, is Krishna-esque behaviour. In this interpretation,' and here clowning Vasco attempted unsuccessfully to convey a certain scholarly *gravitas*, '*Mother India* is the dark side of the Radha-Krishna story with the subsidiary theme of forbidden love added on. But what the hell; Oedipus-schmoedipus! Have another chhota peg.'

(Rushdie 1996b, 137-138)

Here, Rushdie betrays his love for *filmi* gossip. There were concerns by the director and his production team that it might harm the film, if Nargis's romantic attachment to Sunil Dutt entered the public domain. Rushdie uses the Oedipal implications of the film and the film stars' romance to point out the analogies with his own cast of characters in the novel, especially the intense relationship between Aurora and Moraes. Rushdie brings together here his knowledge of Bombay cinema and plays with the place of *Mother India* as one of its defining texts. By alluding to the gossip surrounding the production of *Mother India* he destabilises the film's position and its conceptualisation of Nargis as 'Mother India' and questions here the nature of motherness.

Rushdie draws on the idea of the actor as a parallel text, which Vijay Mishra has outlined in his analysis of Bombay film superstar Amitabh Bachchan in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of desire*. Mishra argues that stardom leads within the films to distinctive dynamics of spectatorial desire and cinematic construction (Mishra 2002, 155). This triggers particular processes of identification and responses on the part of the spectator. Aurora deliberately provokes Nargis and Sunil by reading their performance as mother and son and their off-screen romance as a conflation of fact and fiction. Her

reading of the off-screen romance determines her reading of the on-screen mother-son relationship. As Sumita S. Chakravarty further elaborates, clearly, there emerge 'particular scenarios [...] that mediate between private longings (of romance and family life) and public social roles' (Chakravarty 1993, 201). These are subsequently taken up by Nargis as the dispute rages on and she makes a distinct argument about commercial and non-commercial art (see Rushdie 1996b, 138).

Constructing Aurora as Mother India

Moraes presents an image of Aurora that is cumulatively constructed out of gossip and hearsay with a sprinkling of facts that suggests she is the ghost or avatar of her deceased mother Isabella. While he presents us with this all-important notion of his mother, he also narrates his family's scandals, thus elevating and immediately pulling down these figures whenever they threaten to transcend fully into myth. These stories are not always corroborated, but presented as half-truths. Nevertheless, they are sufficiently plausible to be believable. Thus, these characters can be placed somewhere between the human and myth. The narrator is very conscious of these half-truths, since he can only relay the events that occurred on Cabral Island in Cochin from second-hand accounts from his mother and father. Hence, he is aware of the unreliability of his narration, his family history, and the multiple truths that can be found in the accounts. He asserts however: 'if I were forced to choose between logic and childhood memory, between head and heart, then sure; in spite of all the foregoing, I'd go along with the tale' (Rushdie 1996b, 85-86).[9]

The Moor's Last Sigh is a story about a dynasty, told by the only surviving 'heir to the spice-trade-'n'-business crores of the da Gama-Zogoiby dynasty of Cochin' (Rushdie 1996b, 5).[10] He tells the story of his rise and fall from grace and the story of his mother who is introduced at the beginning of the novel as the 'most illustrious of our modern artists, a great beauty who was also the most sharp-tongued woman of her generation, handing out the hot stuff to anyone who came within range' (Rushdie 1996b, 5). Rushdie based Aurora on the Hungarian-Indian painter Amrita Sher-Gil. She was, as Rushdie states, the artist, at the centre of modern Indian painting, whom he used to imagine Aurora's personality (Rushdie 2007, 12). Amrita was 'a woman much influenced by Gandhian ideas, who dedicated herself to painting the "true" life of India, the life of the villages' (Rushdie 2007, 12). Aurora is imagined as her opposite in her urbanity and sophistication, but what Rushdie discovered after finishing the novel and on researching Amrita Sher-Gil more, was that they were more alike than he had

expected. Amrita Sher-Gil's bohemian life-style, her outspokenness, strong will, make Aurora seem more like a parallel, an imaginary sister, to the artist rather than her anti-thesis.[11]

In the early section of the novel, the connection between Woman and Nation is played out between Aurora's parents Camoens and Isabella. Camoens dreams

> 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.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 51, original italics)

Camoens's dream of the newly independent secular nation is undercut by Belle's more realistic dream image – the painful Partition of the subcontinent and the ensuing violence.[12] The idealised woman retains a true sense of reality, which Aurora later maintains in Bombay. This commitment to a secular version of the nation is ingrained in Aurora. After Belle's untimely death, Aurora, as her mother's phantom, throws away her uncle Aires's collection of Ganeshas and her grandmother Epifania's elephant teeth. The legacy of the secular orientated Isabella da Gama lives on in Aurora. This oneness with her mother allows Aurora to translate her mother's ideals into her art, as she secretly transforms the walls of the room, where she is locked away, into a depiction of India real and imaginary represented in the overpowering all-encapsulating image of Mother India (see Rushdie 1996b, 59-61):

> for it was Mother India herself, Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion, Mother India who loved and betrayed and ate and destroyed and again loved her children, and with whom the children's passionate conjoining and eternal quarrel stretched long beyond the grave; who stretched into great mountains like exclamations of the soul and along vast rivers full of mercy and disease, and across harsh drought-ridden plateaux on which men hacked with pickaxes at the dry infertile soil; Mother India with her oceans and coco-palms and rice-fields and bullocks at the water-well, [...], a protean Mother India who could turn monstrous, who could be a worm rising from the sea with Epifania's face at the top of a long and scaly neck; who could turn murderous, dancing cross-eyed and Kali-tongued while thousands died; but above all, in the very centre of the ceiling, at the point where all the horn-of-plenty lines converged, Mother India with Belle's face. Queen Isabella was the only mother-goddess here, and she was dead; at the heart of this first immense outpouring of Aurora's art was the simple tragedy of her loss, the unassuaged pain of becoming a motherless child.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 60/61)

Aurora combines here a mythological conception of Mother with 'real-life' characters. Aurora attaches to her image of Mother India those of her hated grandmother as monstrous and murderous and that of her beloved dead mother Isabella, linking, like Mehboob, the mythological concept of Mother India with living examples that seem to embody and represent these conceptions. Aurora's painting depicts a Kali-like Mother India, a destroyer, rather than life-giver, which is interestingly developed in the novel, as Aurora, too, turns into a Kali-like mother. The image of the annihilating mother takes on another meaning, as Aurora later plays a major role in the unmaking of her children.

Rushdie invites a metaphorical reading of Aurora, yet the mythic stature that he invests in his female characters is undercut and deconstructed through their own actions when they operate as characters in the narrative. Amidst the patriarchal male-dominated discourse and conception of Nation, Aurora encapsulates the various images of Mother India and acts these out either in her paintings or real life, taking on the role of prophetic Cassandra and annihilating mother. This ultimately sets her up as an urban version of Mother India that can compete with the notion in the film *Mother India*, the star persona of Nargis and with the political figure Indira Gandhi.[13] It also underscores the intensive mother-son relationship that dominates the novel and the film.

Bishnupriya Ghosh points out in 'An Invitation to Indian Postmodernity: Rushdie's English Vernacular as Situated Cultural Hybridity', the witticism that 'the entire country has a mother-son problem' has more serious repercussions, suggesting that the mother-son symbiosis depicts the central political imaginary of the Indian nation, which is reaffirmed by cinema and popular culture (see Ghosh 1999, 139). Moraes uses gossip as a way of explaining his conception of his family as dynasty, pointing to several chronological verities, especially the one missing night in the house cook Ezekiel's copy book, arousing his suspicions and establishing firmly a link between the Nehru/Gandhi family and the Zogoibys. Aurora's refusal of the country's greatest honour and the subsequent newspaper outrage brings up all the old family scandals, highlighting the destructive nature of gossip, forcing Aurora to retreat from public life. That link is further accentuated when, in the early days of the Emergency, Moraes mentions the unhealthy relationship between Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay: '"The whole nation is paying for that mother-son problem,"' but his Ayah quickly rebuffs him: '"You can talk," she said. "Your family. Perverts. Your sister and mother also. In your baby time. How they played with you. Too sick"' (Rushdie 1996b, 197).

The close relationship between Moraes and Aurora has significant implications for their representation in the narrative. Not only does Aurora become representative of Bombay and by extension India, but Moraes's accelerated growth and sprawling limbs, too, are likened to the population explosion and building boom in Bombay during the 1950s and 60s. Mother and son form an eclectic secular unit. Aurora transforms her son into the prime subject of her paintings, the Moor series, functioning as a mirror through which the rise of communalism and the decline of pluralistic Bombay is viewed. Moraes in turn exposes himself as a Bombay movie fan, explicitly and implicitly connecting films such as *Mother India* or *Mr India* to his story. For him, Bombay is that 'super-epic-motion picture of a city'. The authorial reciprocal gaze of mother and son allows Moraes to paint his own portrait of his mother, albeit in words, and infused with the movie language of his city:

> This is what I saw: a tall woman in a paint-spattered, mid-calf-length homespun kurta worn over dark blue sailcloth slacks, barefoot, her white hair piled up on her head with brushes sticking out of it, giving her an eccentric Madame Butterfly look, Butterfly as Katharine Hepburn or – yes! – Nargis in some zany Indian cover version, *Titli Begum*, might have played her
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 219)

Bombay Central revisited

The construction of Aurora as the mythic urban version of Mother India in 'A House Divided' is further developed in 'Malabar Masala', where Aurora is also 'the incarnation of the smartyboots metropolis' (Rushdie 1996b, 139), 'the almost-divine figure of our very own Aurora Bombayalis' (Rushdie 1996b, 123). The section opens with Aurora dancing her Ganpati dance in defiance of the gods, a routine she performs for forty-two years. Moraes presents Aurora as the embodiment of Bombay's and India's eclecticism, which would suggest that Bombay becomes in *The Moor's Last Sigh* a metaphor for modern India:

> [She] had gone back obsessively to the mythic-romantic mode in which history, family, politics and fantasy jostled each other like the great crowds at V.T. or Churchgate Stations; and had returned, too, to that exploration of an alternative vision of India-as-mother, not Nargis's sentimental village-mother but a mother of cities, as heartless and lovable, brilliant and dark, multiple and lonely, mesmeric and repugnant, pregnant and empty, truthful and deceitful as the beautiful, cruel, irresistible metropolis itself.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 203-204)

In this respect, Bombay, like Aurora, is central, and looms large as a backdrop of mythic proportions against which the events of the narrative unfold. Bombay is

reminiscent of the portrayal of London in *The Satanic Verses*, foreshadows that of New York in *Fury* and is a deliberate link to *Midnight's Children*. Some reviewers have argued that *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* work like bookends, others see the book as a mere sequel, Hollywood-style, to *Midnight's Children*.[14] They seem to be missing the point. The novel presents the reader with a very different Bombay. Rushdie does not write another version of Bombay puzzled together out of childhood memory, but an adult, grown-up version of the city. Thus, the Bombay of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a palimpsest painted over that of *Midnight's Children*, while the argument the novel is making about the death of India's eclecticism, its survival through unity in diversity, is coded and steeped even further in Indian popular cultural references.[15]

The novel fills the thirty-first pickle jar that Saleem left empty at the end of *Midnight's Children* for the stories yet to be told and extends the time frame significantly to tell the story of the more pragmatic generation that Rushdie thought was taking over at the beginning of the 1980s. In this respect Moraes as storyteller is linked to Saleem, who like a modern-day Scheherazade tell their stories under pressure. The rise of Hindu fundamentalism, the growth of exploitative capitalism, gang warfare, drug-trafficking, organised crime and a growing underworld with links to the political elite of the country has seriously undermined the Nehruvian vision of the nation.[16] The growing radicalisation of India's religious groups, which Rushdie identifies as the biggest threat to the original secular concept of nation, is especially worrying. Therefore, as John Clement Ball suggests, the novel brings the political themes of its predecessor up to date.[17] Like *The Satanic Verses*, the novel argues against fundamentalism, the threat of seeing the world in absolutist terms. This serves as the impetus for Rushdie to revisit some of the narrative threads left open at the end of *Midnight's Children*. This is underlined by the number of intertextual characters from previous novels. In particular, the arrival of Adam Braganza, Saleem's son, and his unflattering portrayal makes Rushdie's disenchantment with this younger generation clear.

There are various complicated narrative strategies at work in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Rushdie creates a frame story to his narrative that gives the novel its title. He sets up Moorish Spain and Granada and its decline as the historic parallel to pluralistic Bombay. The novel's link to Spanish history reminds the reader of Rushdie's short story 'Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate Their Relationship (*Santa Fé*, AD 1492)', the last story in the 'West' section in his short story

collection *East, West*. In the story, the conquest of Granada and Boabdil surrendering the Alhambra, which Columbus witnesses, is juxtaposed with Columbus's growing desperation to secure funding from the Spanish Queen for his explorations (Rushdie 1994, 114). It is ironic insofar as the expulsion of one conqueror is linked to the conquest of the Americas and gains even more irony, because Columbus thought he would discover a direct sea route to India.[18] This further exemplifies the abundance of subtle allusions and connections that Rushdie weaves into the fabric of his novel. Rushdie consciously intersects two very distinct histories of colonisation and demonstrates how they are interconnected. This connection can also be applied to Bombay. Abraham Zogoiby's family is linked to Moorish Spain and Aurora's is linked to the Portuguese history of colonisation along the Malabar Coast. The references to the Portuguese colonial history along the Malabar Coast (Goa and Cochin) is an implicit reminder of Bombay's Portuguese heritage, covered under decades of British colonial rule. Bombay was after all included in the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married Charles II in 1661.[19]

The *reconquista* of the Iberian peninsula by Ferdinand and Isabella, leading to Boabdil El-*zogoiby*'s ('the unfortunate') last sigh and the ultimate death of multi-religious Moorish Spain is presented as a parallel to the rise of Gup Mainduck, a barely disguised caricature of Shiv Sena's leader Bal Thackeray[20], which ushers in the death of tolerant multi-ethnic, multi-religious Bombay, replacing it with communal Mumbai. Raman Fielding makes his entry causing the controversy around Aurora's painting *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig*, depicting an incident during the third Test Match between India and Australia, which Aurora fictionalised, turning the kiss into an 'explicit hyperbole' (Rushdie 1996b, 228-235). Aurora mixes the fascination of cricket with the depiction of a kiss of a Hindu girl and Muslim cricket player in a melodramatic Bombay film style. Moraes seems to play on the repressed eroticism of the Bombay film, where everything is left to the imagination. A public kiss after all is still deemed to be an obscenely provocative image. The provocation for Mainduck, however, is not the kiss itself, but the issue of a Muslim and a Hindu kissing on the cricket field. Around this debate, Rushdie shows how cricket becomes a site for contests over race, culture, gender and moral authority.[21] It is a comment on cricket as part of the defining experience of what it means to be Indian or Pakistani, which is all the more striking, considering that it is a sport that is, according to Grant Farred, 'stubbornly inaccessible,

impenetrable to those who did not participate in the experience of British colonialism' (Farred 2004, 93).

Cricket functions as a defining cultural practice, a national obsession, which reflects the genealogy of a national essence. Therefore cricket occupies an equally significant role as the imaginary realm of cinematic representation.[22] Like Bombay cinema, cricket is a fundamental part of the Indian national consciousness. Cricket thus becomes a defining cultural practice, reinvented by Mainduck as a fundamentally Hindu game: 'essentially Hindu but with its Hindu-ness constantly under threat from the country's other, treacherous communities' (Rushdie 1996b, 231). Rushdie explains Raman Fielding's political philosophy through cricket and places this quintessential game of Empire in its postcolonial context, commenting on its importance for postcolonial India, as well as using the sport to illustrate how regional and religious nationalism are fused in the explosive new group of the 'Mumbai's Axis' (see Rushdie 1996b, 228-231).[23] The arrival of Raman Fielding marks a turning point, accentuated by the beginning radicalisation of various religious groups. Moraes sees the Emergency as a defining moment: 'Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews' (Rushdie 1996b, 235).

Thus, the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian peninsula becomes a screen through which India's political climate is viewed. Rushdie points out that rising religious fundamentalism is the biggest threat to India's plurality and hybridity, the fears of the 'Battering Ram' which Aurora's father expresses on his return from a Gandhi rally in Narayan's fictional town of Malgudi (Rushdie 1996b, 55/56). Commenting on the Bombay bombings, Moraes remarks:

> Bombay was central; had always been. Just as the fanatical 'Catholic Kings' had besieged Granada and awaited the Alhambra's fall, so now barbarism was standing at our gates. O Bombay! *Prima in Indis! Gateway to India! Star of the East with her face to the West!* Like Granada [...] you were the glory of your time. But a darker time came upon you, and just as Boabdil, the last Nasrid Sultan, was too weak to defend his great treasure, so we, too, were proved wanting. For the barbarians were not only at our gates but within our skins. We were our own wooden horses, each one of us full of our doom. Maybe Abraham Zogoiby lit the fuse, or Scar: these fanatics or those, our crazies or yours; but the explosions burst out of our very own bodies. We were both the bombers and the bombs. [...] We have chopped away our own legs, we engineered our own fall. And now can only weep, at the last, for what we were too enfeebled, too corrupt, too little, too contemptible to defend.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 372-73, original italics)

The section reiterates Rushdie's belief expressed in 'In Good Faith': 'Secularism, for India, is not simply a point of view; it is a question of survival. If what Indians call

"communalism", sectarian religious politics, were to be allowed to take control of the polity, the results would be too horrifying to imagine' (Rushdie 1992a, 404). In this respect, the novel is a lament for the loss of an ideal as it is embodied by Aurora and by Bombay. Aurora initially captures that eclecticism and documents its decline in her paintings by fictionalising it in the analogous landscape of Mooristan, Palimpstine, a fusion of India and Moorish Spain (Rushdie 1996b, 226).

Paul A. Cantor in 'Tales of the Alhambra: Rushdie's use of Spanish History in *The Moor's Last Sigh*' shows how Rushdie juxtaposes Indian history with that of Moorish Spain, thus creating a pluralistic hybrid world that can only exist in the realms of fiction which lives on in Aurora's paintings (see Cantor 1997, 336). Rushdie uses layers of histories that interact with Moraes's narrative of Bombay. Moorish Spain is held up as an ideal of religious tolerance, 'the fabulous multiple culture of ancient al-Andalus' (Rushdie 1996b, 398). In her Moor paintings, Aurora attempts to 'create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation; she was using Arab Spain to re-imagine India' (Rushdie 1996b, 229). This provides a clue to Rushdie's own method and shows that Rushdie's particular emphasis rests with religious tolerance (see Cantor 1997, 324). Thus, *The Moor's Last Sigh* demonstrates a significant shift away from *Midnight's Children*, as the secular nationalism associated with the struggle for independence and the notions of tolerance that Nehru stood for have been hijacked and have mutated into an exclusionist religious nativist nationalism. *The Moor's Last Sigh* captures that process. Thus Rushdie writes an Indian family epic from the most marginal groups in Indian society, builds his narrative around this group, and grafts the history of the entire nation onto it. Aurora translates this into her art: 'Aurora Zogoiby was seeking to paint a golden age. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains crowded into her paint-Boabdil's fancy-dress balls' (Rushdie 1996b, 227).

Furthermore, Rushdie links Moorish Spain and Mughal India, which again is fused in Aurora's paintings (see Rushdie 1996b, 226), as she provides an image where different cultures are allowed to merge into a larger unit (see Cantor 1997, 324). Rushdie suggests that India's Muslim legacy should not be denied, but seen as part of a larger picture of India's cultural and religious legacy. While he does not provide a clear-cut answer to India's troubles with religious fanaticism, he presents Moorish Spain as a utopian parallel, and an ideal. Cantor rightly suggests that, for Rushdie, 'Moorish Spain offers an historical alternative to this sad spectacle of religious violence' (Cantor 1997, 325). Rushdie uses the palimpsest methodologically and sets up Moorish Spain in the

first half of the novel as a utopian landscape, almost a fantasy land out of the *Arabian Nights*. However, in Aurora's series of Moor paintings, Moorish Spain is transformed into a parallel to the conception of Nehru's India, where the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and its destructive potential is likened to the Spanish *reconquista* of the Iberian peninsula. Perhaps Rushdie pushes his analogy too far. Moorish Spain was far from democratic and, although it allowed for religious tolerance, this was on the assumption that the Moorish rulers were not to be challenged. Yet it was an age when Muslims, Christians and Jews made advances in science and philosophy through dialogue, tolerance and respect.

Creating a many-headed, many-brushed Overartist: issues of representation

Through Aurora, Rushdie creates a new hybrid form of representing postcolonial India, which echoes Zeeny Vakil's notion of art. He argues that in a multifaceted country like India a pure national culture cannot exist and will always remain an illusion. Zeeny's approach to art in *The Satanic Verses* foreshadows Aurora. Consider, for instance, Zeeny and Salahuddin browsing through the Chamchawala art collection:

> The Chamchawala art collection, housed here at Scandal Point, included a large group of the legendary *Hamza-nama* cloths, members of that sixteenth-century sequence depicting scenes from the life of a hero who may or may not have been the same Hamza as the famous one, Muhammad's uncle [...] The pictures also provided eloquent proof of Zeeny Vakil's thesis about the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic tradition. The Mughals had brought artists from every part of India to work on the paintings; individual identity was submerged to create a many-headed, many-brushed Overartist who, literally, *was* Indian painting. [...] On the backs of the cloths were the stories that accompanied the scenes. The pictures would be shown like a movie: held up while someone read out the hero's tale. In the *Hamza-nama* you could see the Persian miniature fusing with Kannada and Keralan painting styles, you could see Hindu and Muslim philosophy forming their characteristically late-Mughal synthesis.
>
> (Rushdie 1998, 69-70)

This passage provides various links between the two texts that are bridged by Zeeny's appearance as the curator of the Zogoiby bequest who holds in trust and replaces, together with Miss India Nadia Wadia, Aurora as the Mother India figure.[24] I would argue that Aurora is the 'many-headed, many-brushed Overartist who, literally, *was* Indian painting' who through palimpsestual painting has found a method to synthesise pluralistic India into art. But the link goes further. In *Shame*, Rani Harappa and her embroidery, too, mirror the panoramic all-encapsulating art that is associated with Aurora. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem talks about an artist who killed himself,

because he could not get the whole of Indian reality into his pictures. Palimpsestual painting is Aurora's preferred method of representing India, further extending the artistic legacy of picture-making that runs through Rushdie's novels, linking painting to storytelling.

Rushdie seems to suggest that movie-making fuses writing and picture-making and in this respect Bombay cinema becomes an important hybrid text within Rushdie's writing, as it is also an eclectic fusion and layering of various art forms. This links Rushdie's fiction with the hybrid masala formula of Bombay cinema, blending action, comedy, love-triangles, tragedy and melodrama into layered, yet connected streams of stories. Rushdie's ideal of several cultures merging into a larger unit is mirrored in his method of fusing various art forms to create a panoramic picture that no canvas could hold, but the elasticity of the novel can. It allows him to portray the various aspects of Bombay. On this canvas in novel form Bombay is covered, overlayered, meticulously observed, a naturalistic backdrop against which his cast of surreal characters act out their tragedy. Thus, the narrative debates and questions as much as fuses different modes of representation:

> It was easy for an artist to lose her identity at a time when so many thinkers believed that the poignancy and passion of the country's immense life could only be represented by a kind of selfless, dedicated – even patriotic – mimesis. Abraham was by no means the only advocate of such ideas. The great Bengali film director Sukumar Sen, Aurora's friend and, of all her contemporaries, perhaps her only artistic equal, was the best of these realists, and in a series of haunting, humane films brought to Indian cinema – Indian cinema that raddled old tart! – a fusion of heart and mind that went a long way towards justifying his aesthetic. Yet these realist movies were never popular – in a moment of bitter irony they were attacked by Nargis Dutt, Mother India herself, for their Westernised élitism – and Vasco (openly) and Aurora (secretly) preferred the series of films for children in which Sen let his fantasy rip, in which fish talked, carpets flew and young boys dreamed of previous incarnations in fortresses of gold.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 173)

Rushdie develops an argument between commercial cinema and realist cinema and their varied representations of modern India, implicitly referring to Satyajit Ray. While Ray's cinematic productions have brought Indian realist cinema world fame and admiration, these films were commercially not very successful inside India, where Hindi films produced in Bombay always had a larger following.[25]

Rushdie has expressed his admiration for Ray and has had a long-standing interest in one of India's greatest filmmakers. In 'Satyajit Ray' Rushdie asserts that Ray invariably preferred the intimate story to the grand epic and he describes him as 'the

poet *par excellence* of the human-scale, life-sized comedy and tragedy of ordinary men and women, journeying, as we all journey, down little, but unforgettable roads' (Rushdie 1992a, 114). Ray represents *auteur* cinema in the subcontinental context, influenced by the French *nouvelle vague*, but Rushdie is intrigued by the high-brow *auteur's* strong streak of fantasy. Ray has a huge following in Bengal for his children's films like *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (*The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha*), which, according to Rushdie, has a similar standing in Bengal as the *Wizard of Oz* has in the United States. However, while the variety of fantasy films for children rapidly entered into the popular imagination and became part of popular culture in Bengal, and to a lesser degree elsewhere in India, they never received the same plaudits outside India as his realist films did. Andrew Robinson in his book *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye*, from which Rushdie quotes, states that *Goopy and Bagha* 'released the vein of pent-up fantasy in Satyajit Ray, that is given free rein in his grandfather's and father's work' (Robinson quoted in Rushdie 1992a, 111).[26] By linking Sen with Aurora as her only artistic equal, Rushdie connects two very specific sensibilities of artistic production, realism and fantasy, and it seems that these are allowed to intersect not only in the novel, but also in Aurora's art.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Bombay features as 'the ocean of stories' and it seems, like in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie needs to write his tale before the source of stories is plugged forever by the destruction of the city's multiplicity and the silencing of voices through the censorship of stories (Rushdie 1996b, 350). Here, the intertextual or more aptly 'intra-textual' relationship between *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* becomes evident and opens up many of the political and aesthetic arguments the novel makes about the hybrid nature of culture, constituting the only way that newness can enter the world. This is one of the major themes of *The Satanic Verses* and is very significant in a reading of this novel too. *The Moor's Last Sigh* maintains throughout a panoramic cinemascope portrayal of events and the city. This is markedly different from *Midnight's Children*, where this form of presentation becomes narrower and narrower with Saleem's realisation that he is not central, but peripheral to the events he narrates. Thus, *Midnight's Children* starts off with a panoramic view of history but, as the narrative progresses, this panoramic view shrinks, so that by the end history is only viewed through the hole in the perforated sheet.

The intertextual relationship between *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Midnight's Children* merits further attention. Rushdie includes characters from the earlier novel to

connect both texts. Readers are reintroduced to the private detective Dom Minto, now over one hundred years old. Aurora enlists him to spy on Uma, Moraes's deranged schizophrenic girlfriend. Cyrus Dubash, one of Saleem's childhood friends, before he is coerced by his mother to become Lord Kusro Kusrovani Bhagwan, makes a brief appearance when Aurora turns to him as a last resort to consult about Moraes's accelerated growth and ageing. The biggest part is given to Adam Braganza, Saleem's son. Undoubtedly, the various allusions to characters and events and the Braganza pickle brand (Rushdie 1996b, 199) from *Midnight's Children* foreshadow his arrival and his appearance brings with it some level of closure to the open narrative thread of *Midnight's Children* (see Moss 1998, 125). Rushdie persuasively argues that what has happened in India in the post-Indira-Gandhi-era is much darker and more dangerous than he had envisioned in the closing chapter of *Midnight's Children*. In the years between the publication of both novels lies the assassination of Indira Gandhi, that of her son Rajiv, growing communal tensions and riots between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, Sikh separatism in the Punjab, insurgencies in Assam and other states, the continuing tensions in Kashmir and with Pakistan, the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and the subsequent violence and bombings in Bombay. Simultaneously, India moved away from socialist and protectionist economics towards an exploitative capitalist system, where large parts of the economy are controlled by the Bombay underworld.[27] In the novel, these worlds collide, and the ensuing violence manifests itself most overtly when Bombay goes up in flames.

Transcending Defeated Love

Despite the political preoccupations of the novel, Rushdie has stressed that above all, the novel is about love. Love is perhaps the sturdiest leitmotif in the novel and is present on all levels. This preoccupation is linked to the political context and content of the novel. As the story progresses, Moraes charts the breakdown of his parents' marriage. In Rushdie's words, '[t]he central story of Aurora and Abraham in the book is a story of what happens when love dies' (Rushdie/Sheff 2000, 190). The theme of defeated love allows for comparisons with filmic texts and storytelling, since it is also the main ingredient of melodrama from which Bombay cinema and *The Moor's Last Sigh* so extensively draw. Love suffers defeat in almost every relationship that the characters in the novel engage in: between lovers, sons and mothers, grandchildren and grandparents, daughters and mothers, fathers and sons. The relationship of long-suffering Francisco and Epifania ends when he drowns in the sea. Her son Aires and Carmen's relationship,

too, is doomed from the outset. He is a closet homosexual. Yet they manage to salvage from their defeated love respect and friendship and form a love triangle with Henry the navigator, Aires's lover. The only instance where love is allowed to triumph despite infidelities, is the relationship between Camoens and Isabella. The relationship of Moraes's paternal grandparents, too, is more than dysfunctional. Flory Zogoiby's husband Solomon Castile just packs his bags and leaves. These are perhaps precursors to Aurora and Abraham's relationship, which is developed most fully. After all, he is the male counterpart to her Mother India.

The conceptualisation of mother and nation in *The Moor's Last Sigh* reintroduces the theme of family as dynasty. The many references to Indira Gandhi and her family history deliberately parallel the fortunes and misfortunes of the Zogoiby clan. Furthermore, the narrator deconstructs the quintessential image of the mother goddess embodying the entire nation by challengingly building up an image of Aurora as an alternative urban and secular version. Throughout 'Malabar Masala' and 'Bombay Central', motherhood, embodied by Aurora and translated into her art, does no longer contest received notions enshrined in *Mother India*, but is increasingly threatened itself by characters such as Uma, Moraes, her own daughters, Raman Fielding and, through his shady dealings, Abraham. The Emergency, the period 'when the plague-spores of communal fanaticism were still spreading and the disease had not yet erupted in the metropolis' marks the emergence of Moraes's sister Ina as a supermodel and role-model for young Indian women, 'beating Mrs Indira Gandhi by a factor of two to one' (Rushdie 1996b, 208). Blessed with her mother's good looks, she uses her body, posing for her mother's circle of artists, and becomes a catwalk model and magazine cover girl. She also threatens the pre-eminent position of Aurora as Mother India. Her allure manifests itself in her silence and aloofness. These acts of dissention are aimed at her mother and she finally succeeds in antagonising her mother by sleeping with Vasco Miranda in the same location in Delhi where Moraes was allegedly conceived on the missing night in Ezekiel's cookbook diary. Minnie rebels by exchanging her mother for the Mother of God and devoting her life to Jesus of Nazareth after seeing Audrey Hepburn in the film *The Nun's Story* (1959), enraging the committed secularist Aurora. Minnie subsequently has visions that make Aurora fear for her daughter's balance of mind, but these visions also illustrate the shifting emphasis from secularism to sectarianism in the novel. These are the Wraiths that are entering the Zogoiby family's lives, 'crossing the frontiers between metaphors of art and the observable facts of

everyday life' (Rushdie 1996b, 239). They further accentuate the novel's preoccupation with representation. Philomena starts to work as a human rights lawyer and political activist, fighting against the tyranny of the state. Aurora's only answer to the brutalities of the time is to counter them in her art, trapped amidst the collapsing ideals of a democratic, free, secular, socialist India and her disintegrating family.

During the Emergency, schizophrenic Uma arrives and competes with Aurora over the affection of her family and most brutally over the love of Moraes as well as over the position of national artist. Uma is best understood as the negative side of multiplicity where everything is in flux, challenged and decentred. Her lack of a central focus, a mark of Uma's plurality with her multiple selves, is a metaphor for the post-Emergency political climate. Rushdie suggests that once Indian politics lost the founding principle of secular politics, for which he holds Indira Gandhi responsible, something cracked and the split personalities of the nation started to emerge. The arrival of Uma changes the tone of the novel. The story becomes much darker and Aurora, enlisting the private detective Dom Minto, suggests the genre of the detective novel and thriller in a search for Aurora's killer as well as for the truth. In this disintegrating world, Moraes is adrift, no longer sure about the verities of his life and has to face the tough choice between truth or love.

In 1979, Aurora allows Kekoo Mody to curate a large retrospective of her work. Her exhibition goes head to head with Uma. The scathing reviews describe Aurora and her art in post-Emergency India as 'an irrelevance', which is countered by newspaper accounts of the disintegration of the anti-Indira coalition government and the possibility of her return to power. Aurora's decline is also juxtaposed with Uma's exhibition and acclaim for its centre piece *Alterations in/Reclamation of the Essence of Motherhood in the Post-Secularist Epoch*. The novel suggests that with the rise of religious politics there is no room for the secular eclectic version of Mother India that Aurora represents, but the secular ideal is recoded with its Hindu mythological baggage that Uma 'young, beautiful, and driven by her strong religious faith' exploits in her art. Moraes alludes to how Indira Gandhi exploited the same image in her election campaigns (Rushdie 1996b, 262). Uma however no longer has a clear sense of identity, suggesting that the definition of Indian identity adhering to the secular, democratic and socialist idea of Nehru's India has been destabilised by the rise of sectarianism. Against this backdrop, Indira Gandhi returns to power, her son dies in a plane crash and as a parallel, Moraes is expelled from the family home and discovers Bombay's other hidden, dark side.

After his expulsion from home, his failed suicide pact with Uma that subsequently lands him in jail, Moraes is released through the intervention of Mainduck and enlisted to work for him. Moraes exposes how successful Fielding was at spreading his ideology in an aim to destroy the palimpsest that is India. He spoke of

> a golden age "before the invasion" when good Hindu men and women could roam free. "Now our freedom, our beloved nation, is buried beneath the things the invaders have built. This true nation is what we must reclaim from beneath the layers of alien empires."
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 299)

The political conception of Hindutva and its goal of 'saffronisation', for example, through the rewriting of history and the contestation of the plurality of India as a nation is mirrored by Aurora's retreat and her 'Moor in Exile' sequence (see Rushdie 1996b, 301). In these paintings, the Moor, mirroring Moraes's situation, is transformed into a semi-allegorical figure of decay.

In 1987, the fortieth anniversary of Independence, Aurora tumbles to her death while dancing her annual dance against the gods. Although she has retreated from public life, after her death, her art was re-evaluated and acclaimed by the public who had spurned her, mirroring the enthusiastic celebrations of the anniversary of India's independence. In the ideologically entrenched times in the wake of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the fortieth anniversary celebration of independence in 1987 proved to be only a short respite. The eclectic accumulated image of Mother India takes on a different connotation, now completely subsumed into Hindutva ideology. Mother India transformed into Bharat Mata is no longer the iconic figure of Mehboob Khan's film. Thus, the character who represents that eclecticism, Aurora, squeezed between the capitalist corruptive businessman Abraham and the ultra religious-nationalist Gup Mainduck, is assassinated, tumbling into the Arabian Sea. Moraes observes:

> My mother Aurora Zogoiby was too bright a star; look at her too hard and you'd be blinded. Even now, in the memory, she dazzles, must be circled about and about. We may perceive her indirectly, in her effect on others [...] Ah, the dead, the unended, endlessly ending dead: how long, how rich is their story. We, the living, must find what space we can alongside them, the giant dead whom we cannot tie down, though we grasp at their hair, though we rope them while they sleep.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 136)

Rushdie allows Aurora to return to the Sea of Stories and she makes a brief reappearance in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Moraes's narrative in this respect is his attempt to find space alongside his mother. Yet he has to recognise that there is something about his mother that will remain forever enigmatic, beyond his grasp.

After Aurora's death, the narrative shifts towards Abraham and the struggle between two layers of power – sectarian politics and exploitative capitalism, in which Bombay and India are trapped. Abraham Zogoiby's hostile takeover bid of the House of Cashondeliveri, which he assimilates into his business empire, transforms him into the grandee of the Bombay business world. He epitomises a new breed of businessman. Despite his age, he has reinvented himself from the clerk that he was in the C-50 spice enterprise of Camoens da Gama. In the seventies, now over seventy himself, 'he was beginning to paint a new layer over his own past [...] Now he had grown formidable, distant, dangerous, cold, and impossible to disobey' (Rushdie 1996b, 241). The Emergency, then, is not only the watershed that opens the Pandora's Box of increasing communal tension and violence, but also the point when Abraham mutates into a *Godfather*-like figure.

After the death of his wife and two daughters in 1987, Abraham rethinks his position, concluding that 'Eternity is here on earth and money won't buy it. Immortality is dynasty. I need my outcast son' (Rushdie 1996b, 318). In the wake of Aurora's death, the reconciliation between father and son allows for a belated healing of the rift between mother and son. Moraes realises that his father was the biggest gangster of them all and searches for a fictional figure that encapsulates what his father has become in the movies. He struggles to find a film version that helps him to confront his relationship with his father. He muses that nobody ever made a movie called *Father India* (Rushdie 1996b, 168). However, he looks to the film villain of *Mr India*. While Moraes rejects the movie as a 'trashy extravaganza', he finds in it the image of the national Father:

> There he sits, like a dragon in his cave, like a thousand-fingered puppet-master, like the heart of the heart of darkness, commander of uzied legions, fingertip-controller of pillars of diabolic fire, orchestrator of all the secret music of the under-spheres: the arch villain, the dark capo, Moriartier than Moriarty, Blofelder than Blofeld, not just Godfather but Gone-farthest, the dada of all dadas: *Mogambo*.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 168)

Moraes shows how the character of Mogambo is constructed out of a motley of Hollywood movie villains, the name 'borrowed' from the title of an old Ava Gardner film.[28] Abraham, likened to Mogambo, is turned into an all-consuming, overarching villain. The Mogambo level of fraud is set up as an adjective that denotes the extent of Abraham's scheming:

> Corrupt global-scale banking scams, stock market fixing at the super-epic Mogambo level, multi-billion-dollar arms deals, nuclear technology, drug-trafficking, conspiracies involving stolen computers and Maldivian Mata Haris,

> exports of antiquities including the symbol of the nation itself, the four-headed Lion of Sarnath.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 251)

But Moraes makes an even more important connection to the life-and-death oppositions of many movie fathers and sons:

> Here is *Blade Runner's* tragic replicant crushing his creator's skull in a lethal filial embrace; and *Star War's* Luke Skywalker in his ultimate duel with Darth Vader, as champions of the light and dark sides of the Force. And in this junk drama with its cartoon villain and gimcrack hero, I see a lurid mirror-image of what was never, will never be a movie: the story of Abraham Zogoiby and myself.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 169)

Thus, Moraes sets up two filmic texts, on the one hand *Mother India* to explain the relationship with his mother, on the other *Mr India* as an insight into the relationship with his father. Moraes extends the connection to a variety of Hollywood films that feature dysfunctional father-son relationships. This illustrates how Rushdie draws from American and Indian popular culture and weaves it into his own narrative. Here, Rushdie compares and contrasts the archetypal biblical myth of Abraham and Isaac with other father-son relationships.

Ultimately, the breakdown of communication that leads to familial love being defeated underlines that Moraes believes his story to be a 'tragedy enacted by clowns' (Rushdie 1996b, 428). Being outcast from the family circle and then reconciled with the father after Aurora's death that reverses Moraes's descent into the underbelly of the city, sees the narrative degenerate – consciously or unconsciously – into a vulgar Bombay masala action movie. Not only does the narrative thrust lie with the showdown between Abraham and Mainduck, but between the rapprochement of son and father in the absence of Aurora.[29] Moraes draws analogies to *Mother India* and *Mr India* as he tries to explain the story of his immediate family through the filmic texts. While Aurora transforms into the 'image of an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother' who 'haunts the fantasy life of Indian males', Moraes concedes that 'I, too, know something of that image; have been cast as a Bad Son in my turn' and he goes on to extend the analogies between the film and that of his family:

> My mother was no Nargis Dutt – she was the in-your-face type, not serene. Catch her hauling a shovel on her shoulder! *I am pleased to say that I have never seen a spade*. Aurora was a city girl, perhaps *the* city girl, as much the incarnation of the smartyboots metropolis as Mother India was village earth made flesh. In spite of this I have found it instructive to compare and contrast our families. Mother India's movie-husband was rendered impotent, his arms crushed by a rock; and ruined limbs play a central rôle in our saga, too. (You

> must judge for yourselves whether Abraham was a potent fellow or im-.) And as for Birju and Moor: dark skins and crookery were not all we had in common.
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 139, original italics)

This section foreshadows Moraes's own fall from grace, his descent into the shadow world of crime and gangsterism and prompts the reader to pay more attention to Abraham, who, although sidelined in the story, is not as impotent as we are led to believe. In turn, Moraes is trapped, impotent and powerless among the colliding personalities of Abraham, Aurora, Uma, Vasco Miranda and Mainduck.

The emphasis on mother-son relationships neglects the father figure, the real source of patriarchal power. Ghosh persuasively argues that '[i]n an increasingly paternalistic India of fundamentalist resurgences and urban mafia, the hidden godfather looms to destroy the political sutures on the imaginary that held the Indian nation together' (Ghosh 1999, 139). Thus, by highlighting issues of imagination, narration and representation, the social responsibilities of the artist and the historian, Rushdie 'creates a novel about a national culture - its ramparts, possibilities, failures and evolution – rather than a nation' (Ghosh 1999, 139). Hence, the odd father-son relationship that is only repaired when the mother dies, provides a further connection between the film *Mother India* and the novel. While initially present, fathers become absent in the course of the narrative of *Mother India*, which is emulated in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Abraham takes care of the business interests and for the greater part of the novel remains on the margin, an invisible presence, despite his actions having great bearing on the entire family. The anonymity his invisibility gives him allows him to build up his exploitative business empire and the analogy with Mogambo becomes even more apparent. *Mr India* is about the retrieval of a formula that makes people invisible as part of Mogambo's plan for world domination, which is also a poignant reminder of the forces of exploitative capitalism, connected to a Mafioso underworld, that are seen as undermining independent India's free, socialist, democratic and secular ethos.

The reconciliation between father and son in the absence of the mother becomes not only a counter narrative to the Oedipal theme but shifts the narrative away from the central position of women, raising serious questions that Jyotika Virdi asks with regards to the representation of the family in Hindi cinema:[30]

> How does one reconcile the mother figure's centrality and the father's exclusion in a stringently patriarchal society? [...] What is at stake in a masculine delineation that draws battle lines within the family triangle, thus making winning the mother the ground for the boy's successful passage to manhood?
>
> (Virdi 2003, 90)

Part of the answer lies with the acknowledgement of the primacy of honour as it is defined in patriarchal-sexual terms. Yet Virdi focuses on the meta-narrative of changing family politics where India's feudal-patriarchal culture is replaced by capitalist patriarchy (Virdi, 114). The novel mirrors this in Abraham diversifying the original spice business with its farms and fields into other markets once the family moves to Bombay. Perhaps here lies the reason for Abraham adopting Adam Braganza, since Moraes is unfit to become the new figure of patriarchal authority. Ultimately, Abraham's entire project fails, as Adam, too, turns out to be wholly inadequate.

There remain some serious unresolved issues within the generational power transfer. These seem, however, less incongruous if regarded within the parameters of defeated love. Moraes's love for Bombay is defeated, he leaves for Spain in an attempt to reconcile himself with his mother by finding her murderer. Abraham sends him on that journey to encounter and confront mad Vasco Miranda, who has made it his mission to destroy the entire artistic Aurora Zogoiby legacy. The final showdown is reminiscent of any Bombay action movie. Moraes muses: 'It's a Bombay remake of a cowboy movie [...] A showdown at high noon, except that only one of us is armed' (Rushdie 1996b, 431). Vasco dies of a drug overdose on the restored portrait of Aurora, before he can kill Moraes. Moraes concludes that it was the unrequited love for his mother, 'the splinter of ice left in his veins by the encounter with the Snow Queen' that had made Vasco mad (Rushdie 1996b, 432).

Love that goes beyond defeat describes best Rushdie's feeling for the decline of Bombay and the decline of an ideal of India with its three pillars of secularism, socialism and democracy that Nehru stood for. Moraes sits on top of the hill which has given the novel its title, looking down into the valley where the proud fortress stands, the Alhambra, Europe's red fort, which in *The Moor's Last Sigh* becomes sister to Delhi's and Agra's:

> *that monument to a lost possibility, that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament to lost but sweetest love, to the love that endures beyond defeat, beyond annihilation, beyond despair; to the defeated love that is greater than what defeats it, to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self.*
>
> (Rushdie 1996b, 433, original italics)

The Moor's final lament, his last sigh should therefore not be read exclusively as his final surrender. Rushdie elevates the Alhambra to a monument of lost possibility and sets her up as a parallel to the Midnight's Children, who function in the earlier novel as

a symbol for hope betrayed and possibility denied. Through *Mother India*, Bombay cinema provided the newly independent nation with a secular inclusive way of imagining Woman in the role of Mother as Nation. The film reflects this by taking up the Nehruvian vision of the Nation. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie constructs a similar vision arguing for tolerance and preserving India's 'unity in diversity' as embodied by the urban version of Mother India, Aurora Zogoiby. The novel's intertextual relation to one of the defining texts of post-Independence secular mythology, in the form of the film version of *Mother India*, and the palimpsestual relationship to India's smallest minorities enables Rushdie to write a comic epic that encapsulates the all-inclusive Nehruvian vision of the nation. Rushdie celebrates the idea of India's multiplicity. Rushdie is aware that this idea has enemies and it seems as though he is arguing that they have won the upper hand. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie returns to Bombay once again, but here his voice alters and he will wave goodbye to the 'smartyboots metropolis' for the time being.

Notes

[1] According to Jayant Lele, 'the rise and fall of the Shiv Sena's prominence in the political events of Bombay-Maharashtra has often been described in terms of waves of popularity and decline. The distinctive features of the events of 6-11 January 1993, however, require that it not be treated as "just another communal riot"' (Lele 1996,186). According to Kalpana Sharma, the reasons for the communal riots in December 1992 and January 1993 could be attributed to a series of social, political and economic developments at least over three decades. 'The communalization of Bombay politics had been taking place throughout the 1980s, and particularly after the emergence of the Shiv Sena as a force in electoral politics' (Sharma 1996, 269). Sharma further points out that the riots cannot be separated from the bombings in March 1993 when a series of powerful explosions ripped through Bombay's financial district, targeting amongst other buildings the Bombay Stock Exchange and the Air India Building. According to Sharma, the riots and explosions 'left behind a permanently altered city and exposed its fragility. [...] In the past, a shared history, the nature of the economy of the city from which many benefited directly or indirectly, contributed to its stability. The riots revealed how overt and covert changes in the city's economy and political life that had been taking place eventually contributed to the collapse that was witnessed in those weeks' (Sharma 1996, 286). In the aftermath of the bombings, Sharma claims, 'it became increasingly evident that Bombay has become a divided city not only between Hindus and Muslims, but also between those who are gaining from the changed economic environment in the city and those who are being left out' (Sharma 1996, 286). It is against this backdrop that Rushdie's narrative unfolds. For a full account of events that led up to the Bombay riots see also Zaidi 2002.

[2] The Shiv Sena was launched in 1966 and initially only had a very limited constituency with a simple programme, mainly the reservation of jobs and new economic opportunities for Maharashtrians, specifically protesting against the influx of workers from South India, which had increased dramatically since Independence and which was deemed to be responsible for a lack of jobs. Between 1960, the creation of the state of Maharashtra, and 1966, Bombay's economy underwent fundamental structural changes and the underside of state-sponsored private capitalist development started to emerge, an 'underworld' of extortion, smuggling, drug trafficking and contraband peddling. By the end of the 1960s, although the Sena publicly attacked the underworld, it managed to establish strong ties, building up a strong following that gave the organisation its muscle and power and in return gave those in the underworld the benefit of its organisation. The Shiv Sena's founder Bal Thackeray structured the organisation around a concept borrowed from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu nationalist organisation of long standing, into *Shakas* (branches) in numerous neighbourhoods. For a detailed account of the Shiv Sena's genesis and politics, see Lele 1996, 185-212.

[3] The Chruch of South India was founded in 1947, mixing Anglican and various Protestant Churches and Rushdie mentions it in the interview to draw attention to the variety of Christian minorities in South India. The da Gamas are Roman Catholics, which makes explicit the family's connection to Vasco da Gama and the Portugese legacy of colonialism along the West Coast of India.

[4] I use the term *Hindutva* not in its original sense, but in its more recent political meaning. *Hindutva* has become a term that describes a specific ideology of cultural nationalism that seeks to reorganise Indian society. Through, amongst others, the BJP, it is no longer used in religious terms, but has taken on more of a political meaning. It no longer stands for Hinduism, but for a distinctive world-view that, according to the BJP, seeks to reorganise cultural nationalism along the concept of one people, one culture, one nation. During the BJP's term in government, this became concrete, for example, when many history books were rewritten to align school syllabuses to this conceptualisation, one of the first things the Congress government has reversed. The fascist implications of this line of thinking are also evident.

[5] Moraes's uncle Aires owns a British bulldog named Jawaharlal who is stuffed after his death and becomes a family heirloom. This suggests that Nehru's idea of India outlined in the 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on the Eve of Independence is reduced to nothing more than a stuffed dog, a shell that has been hollowed out, devoid of any meaning.

[6] Sri Aurobindo has detailed the importance of 'Bande Mataram' for the Indian freedom struggle in a Lecture in Amraoti, a summary of which appeared in the newspaper *Bande Mataram* on January 29, 1908. Aurobindo translated the song from Bengali into English in 1909 (see Aurobindo 1973, 666-667).

[7] In his 1996 interview with Michael Silverblatt, Rushdie describes the Mother India theme as 'the intellectual way into the book. The fact is that the idea of India as a mother, the idea of the mother goddess has always been the most central defining image of India' (Rushdie/Silverblatt 2001, 199).

[8] See Gandhy/Thomas 1991, 107-131.

[9] Moraes further explains 'Banished from the natural, what choice did I have but to embrace its opposite? Which is to say, *unnaturalism*, the only real ism of these back-to-front and jabber-wocky days. Placed beyond the Pale, would you not seek to make light of the Dark? Just so. Moraes Zogoiby, expelled from his story, tumbled towards history' (Rushdie 1996b, 5).

[10] The novel features a detailed family tree at the beginning of the novel. *Shame* also has the same feature. It is notable that Rushdie chooses to provide his readers with this in his companion volume to *Midnight's Children*, but not in *Midnight's Children* itself, despite the novel's concerns with lineage and parentage.

[11] For an interesting discussion of Amrita Sher-Gil and her art see Rushdie 2007, 12-13 and Sundaram and Dercon, 2007.

[12] Camones is also the name of Portugal's national poet. After attacking a royal guard at court, Camoens was released from prison on condition that he enlist as a soldier and go to India (Goa) in 1553. Camoens is famous for his epic poem *Os Lusiadas* in which Vasco da Gama and his journeys of discovery along the African and Indian coasts are central.

[13] There are deliberate parallels between the three, for instance the love letter Nehru writes to Aurora is actually taken from Nehru's letters to Indira. Aurora is linked to the Nehru family, she is alleged to be his lover and Moraes implies that he might be their illegitimate love child (Rushdie 1996b, 175). This implies not only the Nehru dynasty as a parallel, but also draws analogies between their relationships. Thus, the intense mother-son relationship of Aurora and Moraes is an explicit connection to that between Sanjay and Indira Gandhi. These legends contribute in setting up the family as dynasty and their importance in South Asia's political life.

[14] Catherine Cundy and Laura Moss both comment on how the novel seems to be a self-parody of *Midnight's Children*, while Paul A Cantor recognizes that the novel goes beyond the political preoccupations of *Midnight's Children*.

[15] For an interesting analysis of this see Ghosh 2004, 84-108.

[16] For an interesting anecdotal account see Mehta 2003.

[17] See Ball 2000, 37-47.

[18] It is even more ironic that Columbus could never have accomplished his journey without the help of a converted Jew Louis de Santanel who interceded on Columbus's behalf after Isabella had rejected Columbus's plea. Another converted Jew Louis Coronel, the Court's Minister of Finance, bankrolled the entire expedition, Columbus studied Arabic maps and navigated with astral aids and equatoria perfected by Arabic astronomers from Toledo. Without Muslim and Jewish aid Spain could not have achieved its status as the pre-eminent colonial power of sixteenth century Europe.

[19] The pickle factory, in which Saleem narrates his story, is also named after Catherine of Braganza.

[20] In the novel, the parallels between Raman Fielding and Bal Thackeray are more than evident. Both carry the surname of noted English novelists, although Fielding is also one of the characters in Forster's *A Passage To India* as notably there is a Doctor Aziz in *Midnight's Children*. Before founding the Shiv Sena, Thackeray worked as a cartoonist for *The Free Press Journal*, an English-language daily, but left in 1960 to set up his own Marathi weekly journal, *Marmik*, featuring cartoons, political comment and humour. Gup Mainduck roughly translates as 'ugly toad', reflecting Thackeray's unflattering facial features. Even before founding the Shiv Sena in 1966, Thackeray was politically active during the language riots that led to the partition of the former colonially defined Bombay province into the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Initially not pursuing a consistent political line, his journal severely criticised all practicing politicians and public figures that did not meet Thackeray's approval, which increased his popularity among the lower middle classes. During these years, his strong strain of Hindu nationalism emerged in his writing.

[21] For an interesting exploration see Sen 2001, 237-249.

[22] The 2001 Hindi movie *Lagaan* takes this up.

[23] Rushdie develops this further in the inter-communal Pentangular cricket match between Bombay's British, Hindu, Muslim and Parsi teams and the new team made up of the rest, drawn from the Christian, Anglo-Indian and Jewish communities in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Rushdie 2000, 27-30).

[24] Rushdie's fictionalised Nadia Wadia wins the Miss World competition and becomes the official face of Abraham's company, while Mainduck unsuccessfully tries to woo her. Sammy 'Tin-man' Hazaré, Mainduck's most loyal henchman, is also obsessed with her. Rushdie attributes one of Madhuri Dixit's most famous songs from *Khalnayak* (1991) to her as Hazaré sings '*What is under my choli [...] What is under my blouse?*' using a cut-out colour photograph of her as a mask (Rushdie 1996b, 357). The real-life Nadia Wadia, or Fearless Nadia as she became known, was a famous stunt actress, born Mary Evans in Perth, Australia. She worked for Zacko's Russian Circus before touring India with Madame Astrova's ballet group. She joined Wadia Movietone as a chorus girl in the 1940s and then went on to star in a string of action movies, usually set in unspecified periods or Tarzan-esque landscapes as well as fantasy versions of Hollywood gangster movies. Most movies were directed by her husband Homi Wadia who launched her as 'India's Pearl White' (See Rajadhyaksha/Willemen 2002, 155/56). Rushdie's choice of name is fitting. Nadia Wadia has to negotiate between the gangsterism of Abraham and Mainduck and in the wake of catastrophe, after the riots and explosions, she displays a fearless optimism for the future, despite the visible and invisible scars that she bears. Arguably, in tandem with Zeeny Vakil, she becomes the Mother India substitute in the wake of the deaths of Aurora, Nargis and Indira Gandhi.

[25] In an interview, Nargis, by this time a member of the Upper House of the Indian parliament, asserted the following:
NARGIS: Why do you think films like *Pather Panchali* become popular abroad?... Because people there want to see India in an abject condition. That is the image that they have of our country and a film that confirms that image seems to them authentic.
INTERVIEWER: But why should a renowned director like Ray do such a thing?
NARGIS: To win awards. His films are not commercially successful. They only win awards. ...What I want is that if Mr Ray projects Indian poverty abroad, he should also show 'Modern India'.
INTERVIEWER: What is 'Modern India'?

NARGIS: Dams...
(Quoted in Rushdie 1992b, 108-109).

[26] Rushdie pays homage to Ray by naming the two plentymore fish in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* Goopy and Bagha. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes some further illuminating connections between the film and *Haroun* with regards to the use of fantasy and fable (see Mukherjee 2000, 149-165).

[27] Rushdie makes this point succinctly in 'India's Fiftieth Anniversary' (Rushdie 2003, 174-179).

[28] *Mogambo* is the title of the 1953 John Ford movie staring Ava Gardner, Clark Gable and Grace Kelly (apparently Clark Gable and Grace Kelly started an affair on set that lasted for several months).

[29] Forgiveness between fathers and sons plays a major part in the denouement of *The Satanic Verses* with father-son relationships becoming increasingly important in Rushdie's writing. This has often been connected to Rushdie's own uneasy relationship with his father, and the recent emphasis on these relationships in his writing is striking. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* as well as the short story 'The Courter' deal with father-son relationships and *Haroun* is perhaps Rushdie's only story with a true happy ending. The father-son relationship between Abraham and Moraes, however, remains dysfunctional, very uneasy and is ultimately beyond redemption as Abraham is unmasked as Aurora's murderer. Their rapprochement is also punctured by Adam Braganza's arrival, induction into the family business, and adoption by Abraham. However, despite their doomed relationship, Abraham sending Moraes on his journey to reclaim his mother's legacy from Vasco Miranda allows them to reclaim some common ground.

[30] See Jyotika Virdi's chapter 'Heroes and Villains: narrating the nation', Virdi 2003, 87-120.

Chapter 6

The Sound, the *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*, Salman Rushdie moves his focus away from the subcontinent not only geographically, but also thematically. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* shifts away from India and Bombay to England – London and Lincolnshire, where the novel is suspended in transit – before moving to America Mexico, the US and New York. *Fury* is largely set in New York, except for a short episode in London and on an island in the South Pacific. In both novels, Rushdie stays true to cinemascope storytelling.[1] Improvisation in the novel becomes a key idea not only in the music Vina and Ormus create but also in the way Rushdie allows Rai to narrate his story. Rushdie has commented on how he thinks about the structure of his novels symphonically:

> Yes, I do think about symphonic form and not just symphonic form, but, to use the Indian metaphor, the form of the *raag*... and the point about that is that it's like jazz. There is a lot of room for improvisation inside a melodic structure. So if you look at the written-down form of a *raag* it's incredibly simple, because the performer makes it up, but makes it up within very strict rules – start here, go here, finish there. [...] That's not true in the Indian tradition. The performance *is* creation. And the creation is performance, therefore.
>
> (Reynolds/Noakes 2003, 25)

The improvisation of jazz and the riff is a useful description of Rushdie's narrative method in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Rai as the narrator of the story makes interesting choices where and when to digress, repeat, summarise, and digress again, creating a spiralling cyclical narrative. Although music and polyphony are structurally and thematically important, so is picture-making, for the narrator of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a photographer. Picture-making as a form of art, its implications for photo-journalism and memory and remembering, a way of representing, imaging and imagining the world, shall therefore be a main focal point in this discussion of the novel.

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie constructs a postmodern reworking of myth in an age of globalisation and trans-global migrancy. Rushdie uses the trope of discontinuous personalities that he explored in *The Satanic Verses* in his reworking of the Orpheus myth. The metaphor of negotiating a path through life among the shifting ground beneath our feet is presented as analogue to the identity negotiations with which Salahuddin Chamchawala and Gibreel Farishta have to come to terms. Rushdie also reworks material from *Midnight's Children*, filling in the background story of movie producer Homi Catrack and William Methwold, The British colonialist with a taste for

lower-class Indian women. Roger Y. Clark has remarked that in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* 'we find out that Methwold's "myth world" of a British India is complemented by an obsession with the parallels between Greek and Hindu myth' (Clark 2001, 198). The novel is fixated with parallel worlds, over-world and underworld, another reality always beneath one layer of reality, which Rushdie also explored through the palimpsest in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The novel is firmly linked to Rushdie's imaginary world through intertextual characters like William Methwold, Homi Catrack, Whiskey Sisodia, Pimple Billimoria and Aurora Zogoiby, and this chapter will examine how Rushdie is involved in his own process of globalisation as he weaves together the different imaginary worlds/homelands he has created in his previous novels.

In this novel, Rushdie dramatises disorientation. His protagonists experience the loss of home through the process of migration. The loss of home results in a profound questioning of identity and is linked to a feeling of alienation, of being an outlaw, on the margins, unaccepted and non-conforming. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie extends the process of migration to the United States of America. The transition is significant, as the protagonists traverse the global trajectory Bombay-London-New York, all urban metropolises, which in Otto Cone's words are 'the locus classicus of incompatible realities' (Rushdie 1998, 314).

Negotiating shifting identities: Writing Bombay

The novel's starting point, after its initial stop in Mexico is pre-independence Bombay in the declining days of the British Raj. Rai narrates the story of the Cama family, close friends of his own family, the Merchants. Out of the close association of both families grows the Rai-Vina-Ormus love triangle. The novel offers another nostalgic look at the city and its golden age of the 1950s and early 1960s. Rushdie's narrative draws again from the family melodrama reminiscent of Bombay cinema that is such an integral part of *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the city is likened to Rai's rival sibling, the daughter that the Merchants never had, until Vina arrives. Bombay is an appropriate locale where to begin Rai's story of disorientation. Bombay is presented as a tolerant, hybrid and diverse city, which is reflected in the language that Rai and Vina speak amongst themselves. Vina and Rai take that language with them when they migrate to the West, for which they find their own acronym: '*Hug-me*. Hindi Urdu Gujarati Marathi English. Bombayites like me were people who spoke five languages badly and no language well' (Rushdie 2000, 7).

In his essay 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie likens the process of remembering to the land reclamation projects of Ahmed Sinai and Dr Narliker in *Midnight's Children*. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, architecture subsumes this metaphor. Rai's act of writing could be seen as his own attempt at architecture. Rai's parents Ameer and V.V. Merchant are both architects involved in the modernisation of the city, building the famous Art Deco buildings – cinemas, department stores and apartment blocks. Rushdie captures the city's transformation from Victorian to modern, which can be read as an important precursor to the issues of globalisation that the novel tackles. Rushdie explains:

> The thing to say about Bombay of the 1950s and the 1960s is that it was a very different place than the city that now exists. I suppose it's true that, to a certain extent, there's a kind of golden glow of childhood about it in my memory. But it's also the case that the people who were of an older generation thought of that city as going through a particularly memorable phase. It does seem to have been Bombay's great moment. [...] Like any great city, it acted as a magnet, and so people came to Bombay from all over India. It had a greater diversity of Indians than any other Indian cities. And it was the commercial center, so it attracted a large population of non-Indians.
>
> (Rushdie/Kadzis 2000, 217)

Bombay during the 1940s and early 1950s displayed an incredible energy and drive in its commitment to progress, which often went hand-in-hand with a *laissez-faire* attitude to conservation. Moraes Zogoiby observes that 'Bombay, a relatively new city in an immensely ancient land, is not interested in yesterdays' (Rushdie 1996b, 181).

The city had reinvented itself as a neo-Gothic Victorian city in the mid- to late nineteenth century. In the 1930s, according to Dwivedi and Mehrotra, Art Deco 'symbolised the shift in expression to represent contemporary aspirations' (Dwivedi and Mehrotra 2001, 253). This is an important point as it reveals Bombay as a city on the frontiers, at the interstice of modernity and the bridge between East and West. Rai celebrates the Art Deco style of Bombay with pride because his parents' construction firm Merchant and Merchant pioneered it in Bombay. For Rai, Art Deco was the quintessential Bombay style, which is highlighted by Rai's misconceptions about the word 'Deco': 'I actually grew up believing Art Deco to be the "Bombay Style," a local invention, its name derived, in all probability, from the imperative of the verb "to see." *Art dekho*. Lo and behold art' (Rushdie 2000, 78). His discovery of the Art Deco buildings in Manhattan, which were on a much grander scale than Bombay's, made America more enthralling and his migration more bearable. For Rai, Art Deco

Manhattan 'only increased America's allure, made it both familiar and awe-inspiring, our little Bombay writ large' (Rushdie 2000, 78).

Bombay is the starting point for the identity constructions of the main protagonists. Bombay's own position is 'in-between', rooted in the East with its gaze directed towards the West, looking beyond the Arabian Sea. This position by necessity forces the city constantly to reinvent itself, negotiating the shifting ground beneath its own feet in the name of 'progress'. Thus Bombay dramatises the construction of identity in a fast-changing world. For all three main protagonists, the initial place where they have to confront the issue of selfhood is Bombay, which is parallel to Bombay's need to find its place in postcolonial India. Rai's parents illustrate two diverging approaches to define that position. Ameer Merchant has her gaze firmly directed to the future, dreaming of skyscrapers and the transformation of the city for future generations, while V.V. Merchant's gaze is directed to the past, unearthing the city's legends and its ancient myths. Ameer favours the creation of new myths of progress to define a new postcolonial identity.[2] V.V. Merchant's approach is archaeological, in his attempt to unearth Bombay's pre-colonial history to find the roots of identity there. Bombay is the gift Rai's father presents to his son, in stories, legends and myths. His father reveals himself as not only an architect, but also as a chronicler, excavator and local historian. V.V. Merchant is a man who seeks 'fixity in knowledge, seeking solid ground beneath the shifting sands of the age' (Rushdie 2000, 62). Opposed to this is his mother's approach. Rai states that it was perhaps his parents' love for the city that made him turn towards the sea to dream of America. He asks himself: 'Did I quit Bombay, in other words, because the whole damn city felt like my mother's womb and I had to go abroad to get myself born?' (Rushdie 2000, 76)

The expansion of the city through land reclamation projects at Nariman Point and at Cuffe Parade marks the destruction of the old city. In the novel, the parallel destruction of his family and his home becomes a metaphor for the destruction of old Bombay and its optimistic post-independence ethos, which ultimately sets Rai adrift. When Rai's narrative arrives in 1965 he proceeds to narrate the disintegration of Bombay's Golden Age and the dispersion of his close-knit group of middle-class Bombayites. After the murder of her husband, Lady Spenta Cama moves to England together with Virus and Ormus to become Lady Methwold, Rai's mother dies of a brain tumour and his father commits suicide. Rai uses photography as a way of comprehending the loss of his family and Bombay:

> After they were gone I walked the streets of the city they had both loved in their different, irreconcilable ways. Though that love had often oppressed and stifled me, I now wanted it for myself, wanted to have my parents back by loving what they loved and so becoming what they had been. And photography was my means of gaining an education in their love. [...] The city was expressionistic, it screamed at you [...] There was too much money, too much poverty, too much nakedness, too much disguise, too much anger, too much vermilion, too much purple. There were too many dashed hopes and narrowed minds.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 210-211)

Rai ultimately leaves India because of the destructive potential of a changing political climate and widespread corruption of the political elite associated with the rise to power of Indira Gandhi and represented in the novel by Piloo and Golmatol Doodhwala (see Rushdie 2000, 203).[3] The corrupting economic power of Bombay and the corrupting political power of Delhi form an alliance, which he describes as Pilooism and Sanjayism:

> Bombay-wallahs sneered at the way Delhi people licked the arse of power, then turned it round and sucked its indifferent cock. Delhi-ites derided Bombay's money-grubbing glitzy materialism. This new alliance united the dark side of both. The corruption of money and the corruption of power, united in a super-corruption that no opponent could withstand.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 247)

This alignment ultimately alienates Rai completely from India and provides him with the necessary ending to divorce himself from his homeland:

> And so farewell my country [...] My home is burned, my parents dead, and those I loved have mostly gone away. Those whom I still love I must leave behind for good. [...] India, I have swum in your warm waters and run laughing in your high mountain meadows. Oh, why must everything I say end up sounding like a *filmi gana*, a goddamn cheap Bollywood song? [...] India, my *terra infirma*, my maelstrom, my cornucopia, my crowd. India my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable, my mother, my father and my first great truth. [...] I may not comprehend what you are becoming, what perhaps you already are, but I am old enough to say that this new self of yours is an entity I no longer want, or need, to understand.
>
> India, fount of my imagination, source of my savagery, breaker of my heart.
>
> Goodbye.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 248-249)

Rai waves a final melodramatic good-bye to Rushdie's fictional India and Bombay, dissociating himself from a transformed and continuously transforming city in which he no longer belongs.

In the novel, Rushdie reassembles the familiar cast from previous novels and shows how their stories are interlinked:

> They lived in a great city, a metropolis of many narratives that converged briefly and then separated for ever, discovering their different dooms in that crowd of stories through which all of us, following our own destinies, had to push and shove to find our way through, or out. In Bombay the stories jostled you in the street, you stepped over their sleeping forms on the sidewalks or in the doorways of pharmacies, they hung off the local trains and fell to their deaths from the doors of B.E.S.T. buses or – once upon a time but no more – under an onrushing tram.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 52)

Any big metropolis is constructed, not only architecturally, but also as a community, and Rushdie attempts to construct a community of Bombayites through his cast of fictional characters, interweaving and un-weaving their stories in his novels. In this light, the Bombay novels *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are interconnected streams, responding and complementing each other, revealing as many aspects of the city imaginable. Bombay is an 'imaginary' city, built on reclaimed land from the sea. In its transformation to megalopolis, the city has overwritten itself with new histories, remade itself anew, reflected, for example, in its name change from Bombay to Mumbai, disavowing its colonial origins.[4] The previous chapter on *The Moor's Last Sigh* has highlighted this complicated process and how politically controversial and explosive it is.

Aurora Zogoiby's palimpsest is not only useful in understanding an idea of India and an idea of Bombay, but is also useful in understanding the main protagonists' identity negotiations and renegotiations in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Throughout the novel, Bombay returns in a different guise shrouded in nostalgia, as Manhattan becomes not a substitute for Bombay, but 'Bombay writ large':

> Ormus Cama sees the mighty pincushion of Manhattan puncturing the haze of the high dawn air and begins to smile the smile of a man who has just discovered that his favorite fiction turns out to be no lie. As the plane banks and drops he recalls my father Vivvy Merchant's love of Queen Catherine of Braganza, through whom Bombay and New York are forever yoked together. [...] New York, for Ormus, was from the beginning a doorman, an express elevator and a view. You could say it was Malabar Hill.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 354-355)

Despite these nostalgic connections between both cities, Rai's and Ormus's transition is stark because permanent, as they have to reinvent home away from home. Bombay is their past, but the past is buried by the present and only lives on in reminiscences. Rai cannot stop himself thinking about India (Rushdie 2000, 416). Rai is in search of another India, an India that he can claim elsewhere and it seems that he finds it in New York.[5] Rai's negotiation of New York dramatises and puts into question the nostalgia

with which Rai approaches the United States and this is reflected in the deployment of popular culture in the novel.

Caroline Rooney argues that in '*The Ground Beneath Her Feet* American popular culture does seem to be very much invested with an immense nostalgia for a past that is not that of the immigrant protagonists even as it might represent a former affect of non-belonging' (Rooney 2000, 63). Thus, according to Rooney, 'certain American images, and more broadly Western images, have the status of memories, memories always already interiorised and lacking external referents' (Rooney 2000, 63-64). These referents are internalised by Rai as he continuously overwrites them, for example, New York overwrites a version of Bombay. These observations are also important for the deployment of pop/rock music in the novel. This quintessential American export is hijacked by Ormus and becomes as such an Indian invention. Rushdie makes the audacious claim that rock music was actually invented in India through the conceit that dead Gayomart whispers the tunes of what were to become iconic songs of the sixties to his twin brother from the other world. The tunes are always recognisable, but Ormus has some difficulties making out the lyrics. Thus Ormus's sound evolves from a Western style of rock music, which VTO make their own. Rollason's criticism that Vina and Ormus do not send western listeners back to Indian music seems therefore ill-founded (see Rollason 2003, 114).

For Vina and Ormus rock music is Indian music in the first place. The point is that while their musical trajectory brings them from Bombay via England to New York, for them at least, musically they remain in the East and herein lies the audacity of the narrator's claim. This demonstrates lucidly that, according to Rooney, through the flight from Bombay 'to an American culture industry [...] what was experienced as alienation and desire in India is experienced – through its displaced return – as nostalgia in America' (Rooney 2000, 63). This is further complicated by the fact that Vina's origins are in the United States. The decentring of a fixed point of origin is at issue here, and Rooney argues that what happens in the novel is 'the construction of a mythic history in images that sign themselves "America" – that is, they testify to America as historical origin and are fetishised in that they are "original" historical or cultural images without origin, like commodities that seem to appear from nowhere' (Rooney 2000, 64). This is further emphasised by Rai's method of storytelling and his role as photographer. Since there is no point of fixity and since everything is disorientated and comes adrift, his narrative must ultimately be written at an angle to reality. Rock and roll music as a

commodity travels easily and seamlessly between continents, cultures and nations. In a 1999 interview Rushdie argues that rock and roll music could be regarded as 'the first globalized cultural phenomenon at a time when the world had not been globalized' (Rushdie/Rose 2001, 256). Rock music and the popular cultural industry that surrounds it are mythologised and pastiched in the novel and the action, like any good movie, is underscored with its own soundtrack from the best years of rock and roll music.[6]

The novel does not only deploy the metaphor of its title with regards to the migratory process, but also to decentre grand narratives of history, time, politics, culture and religion. When in America, Vina, Ormus and Rai are confronted with a very different much more cynical contemporary public: 'It's convinced there's a subtext beneath every text, a hidden agenda behind the overt one, an otherworld running parallel to the world' (Rushdie 2000, 418). Rai exposes the paranoia of the modern world on the one hand and on the other also shows how meaningless the search for meaning can be, especially when celebrities become the objects onto which this search for meaning is projected. Rushdie reveals how constructed the nature of celebrity and stardom is in the Vina-mania, Ormus-mania and VTO-mania.

Ormus and Vina are given the world as a stage, but the price they have to pay is that they cease to be 'real'. Their harshest critics in the novel Auxerre and Sangria accuse them of selling out and conclude that, as a cultural phenomenon, 'they had become little more than signs of the times, lacking true autonomy, to be decoded according to one's own inclination and need' (Rushdie 2000, 426). Vina and Rai are fetishised as popular cultural commodities. This fetishisation links the cult around Vina and Ormus directly to Rai's preoccupations as a photographer. Within these assertions lies the negotiation of some form of reality and identity as the consumer is complicit in creating celebrity:

> In our hearts we believe – we *know* – that our images are capable of being the equals of their subjects. Our creations can go the distance with Creation; more than that, our imagining – our imagemaking – is an indispensable part of the great work of *making real*.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 466)

Within this process, Rai sees the role of the photographer as having the potential of creating the meaning of an event, encapsulated in an image.[7]

Rai's narrative strategy in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is a sprawling, cyclical and digressive narrative. In this respect, the novel mirrors the excessiveness of *Midnight's Children*. The novel mixes

pop and rock music, pop cultural references, Greek mythology, Hindu mythology, political references fictionalised in a non-linear timeline. Rai confuses dates, as though time can be transcended. Yet although this seems familiar from Saleem's own issues with memory and remembering accurately, Rai changes events as though he and his characters exist in a parallel universe. Rai is as distinct a narrative voice as Saleem or Moraes, but Rai's version goes beyond the description of a childhood Bombay in *Midnight's Children* or the adult disintegrating version of *The Moor's Last Sigh* as he is constantly on the move. Uprooted, he comes loose and seems to represent a new phase in Rushdie's own search for a language with which to express stories that have shifted not only in subject matter, but also in locality and sensibility. In this respect, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* reads like a blending of the narrative strategies of *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Rushdie revisits the preoccupations of hybridity, migration, transformation within the context of globalisation and reworks them from a different position. Rai through his transition to America has accepted his discontinuity with his past, the same ticket for survival that Salahuddin accepts. Rai proclaims:

> Yet I myself am a discontinuous being, not what I was meant to be, no longer what I was. So I must believe – and in this I have truly become an American, inventing myself anew to make a new world in the company of other altered lives – that there is thrilling gain, in this metamorphic destiny, as well as aching loss.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 441)

The questions Rai constantly asks himself in relation to this observation are 'Do you know who you are?' and 'Do you know what you want?'.

The novel embarks on its own migration in linguistic terms and adapts to the new realities its protagonists encounter. As soon as Rai moves the story to the US, the novel, rather crudely, moves from British English spelling to American English spelling.[8] Rai attempts to explain his coming adrift with Darius Xerxes Cama's belief in a fourth function of *outsideness*, 'that in every generation there are a few souls [...] who are simply *born not belonging*, who come into the world semi-detached, if you like, without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race' (Rushdie 2000, 72-73). Rai presents two polar opposites, himself and beautiful Persis Kalamanja, whose love for Ormus remains unrequited and who like Rai belongs to what remains – he in New York, she in Bombay. Rai's voice is also distinctly separate from his predecessors when considering the popular cultural idiom through which he tells his story. This shift is striking when considering Rai's role as photographer and the power of the photographic

image. Rai knows how to exploit photography as much as Rushdie knows how to use visuals in his novels effectively. Rai claims 'Photography is my way of understanding the world' (Rushdie 2000, 210). Similarly it could be argued that the visual image translated into writing is Rushdie's way of understanding the world.

For Rai, photography allows for the transferral of perceived actuality into the historical. In this respect, photography plays a crucial role with regards to memory and remembering. There is however a clear-cut distinction between news photography, celebrity/fashion photography and the snap for the family album. A common feature of all these images is their 'manufactured' nature, which further extends to how we perceive an image as this may trigger different emotions and memories. Furthermore, our own memories of a place or an event might differ from the 'actual' photograph. Thus, photography may not only be thought of as a memory trigger but also in direct competition with it.[9]

Rai's account is a narrative from memory, another parallel with Saleem and Moraes. Rai tells his story retrospectively. It is also cyclical starting with Vina Apsara's disappearance, returning to that point to then move to its conclusion after her death. Rai rejects linear storytelling from the outset, jumping backwards and forwards in time and from place to place. In this respect, Rai's narrative seems very filmic. He allows one scene to play out, then fades out and zooms in or cuts to the next. Thus his narrative reads episodic and fragmented. Rai's narrative is made up of shards of memory with all their potential falsifications. This is most strikingly realised in Rai's uses and abuses of historical events. They 'happen' at the wrong time, sometimes in the wrong place. For instance, the assassination of Indira Gandhi happens in 1980, rather than in 1984. The question is if Rai is just another one of Rushdie's unreliable narrators or if he engages in a more serious questioning of reality similar to Saleem's in *Midnight's Children* and the narrator's in *Shame*. Rai aligns history in his version of the world to fit conveniently into the dramaturgy of his narrative. This shifting, bending and kneading of history to serve his purpose is all the more striking, considering Rai's role as news photographer, the recorder of images as and when they happen, at the interstice of history, capturing the present moment and recording the event for posterity. Thus his role as narrator, biographer, and photographer raises issues about truth and truthfulness, realism and reality, history and historiography, fact and fiction. The bending and kneading of facts to suit his narrative is not as self-consciously dramatised as Saleem's in *Midnight's Children*. Rai has no qualms in rearranging the timeline to fit his narrative and he feels

no need to alert his reader: thus the distortions in the fabric of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – JFK not being assassinated, because Oswald's gun jammed, Watergate as a fictional novel, the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar taking place in 1975, not in 1984, or the entirely fictitious 1989 earthquake on the West Pacific Coast of Mexico – remain unexplained. Rather than accurately representing reality these seemingly outrageous propositions create a variation of the real world, a world resembling the fictional worlds of Thomas Pynchon – parallel and paranoid.[10]

The reader, like the novel's protagonists, then, has to negotiate in his mind the shifting fictional ground beneath his feet. It reveals Rai's world as a constructed deconstruction of the real world. In Rushdie's own words, 'reality becomes a creative act' (Rushdie/Moorhouse 2001, 264). This can be directly linked to the idea of migration and the migrant as Rushdie claims:

> I've always had the sense that people like me who arrived as strangers in other parts of the world more or less literally have to invent the ground we stand on. [...] So voyaging, migration, whatever you want to call it, is a creative act. You are forced into creativity in order to understand your situation.
>
> (Rushdie/Gross 2001, 276)

This is perhaps the best way to comprehend Rai's position as narrator and his inherent unreliability, because at the heart of the matter for Rai as migrant and as narrator lies the fact that if the world was metamorphosing unpredictably, then nothing could be reliable any more. Rai thus asks: 'What could one trust? How to find moorings, foundations, fixed points in a broken altered time?' (Rushdie 2000, 184) Perhaps the answer is to narrate your story at precisely this angle to reality so that this position becomes obvious.

The reader has to accept that Rai's position as a migrant and voyager in his role as photographer is that of a man who images the world, turns it into pictures, and in this respect creates his own reality. Thus, in the act of reading Rai's tale, the reader has to engage in a similar process. Rai constantly reminds his readers about the power of stories, but also about their nature, official or unofficial, fictitious or real: 'Impossible stories, stories with No Entry signs on them, change our lives, and our minds, as often as the authorized versions, the stories we are expected to trust, upon which we are asked, or told, to build our judgements, and our lives' (Rushdie 2000, 199). From the beginning of the novel, Rai confronts his readers with a new sensibility that already denotes the shift that Rushdie's characters have made in their lives. The popular cultural idiom through which Rai tells his tale is no longer the Bombay film, but informed by American popular culture – film, television and pop/rock music which increasingly dominate globally. This becomes immediately apparent in Vina's nightmare of being

sacrificed. The sacrificial priests have a resemblance to the actor Christopher Plummer, star of films such as *The Sound of Music* and *The Return of the Pink Panther*. He also starred as the Inca god-king Atahualpa in the 1969 film adaptation of Peter Shaffer's play *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, from which the imagery of Vina's nightmare comes. Only Ormus really thinks in terms of the Bombay movie spectacle when it comes to designing and plotting VTO's stadium tours:

> Ormus began to devise great spectacles, hyperbolic feats of showmanship that showed him to be a Bombay lad at heart, turning naturally to the mythic vulgarity of the Bollywood musical. Yes, showtime; science fiction dystopias, fabulated dragon-worlds, seraglio visions featuring platoons of harem-panted, rhine-stone-naveled belly dancers, black-magic rings of fire o'ertowered by Baron Samedi inflatables, and the whole multiple-image videorama which is now the staple fare of stadium rock but in those days gave people the kind of shock Bob Dylan did when he went electric.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 425)

The shift is marked. It is important to note the position of enunciation of the narrator Rai at the beginning of the story. He writes his tale after the death of both Ormus and Vina, now settled into happy family life in New York with Mira, a former Vina impressionist, and her daughter Tara. This is in sharp contrast with *The Satanic Verses*, as in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* the position of enunciation is post-transformation, it has already taken place, and thus the narrative is from memory, reliving this experience. Thus Rai's story seems perhaps less immediate than the transformative narrative of Gibreel Farishta and Salahuddin Chamchawala in *The Satanic Verses*.

The function of Rai as photographer/narrator/chronicler/biographer is important for another reason, as his shift from one locale to another raises questions about how we picturise the troubled areas of the world and what images we create of developing countries. Do these images serve to reinforce the dichotomy between East and West or do they help to bridge the gap? What is Rai's position? The shift away from the subcontinent in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a marker of what stories Rushdie chooses to tell. Initially, Rushdie's narrative is set on the subcontinent post-independence and then combined with a narrative of migration, movement and up-rooting, which Rai perceives throughout the novel as 'Disorientation – the loss of the East'. What the 'East' is in this context remains ambiguous. Does Rai talk about his childhood India or does he talk about a western 'orientalist' view of the 'East'?[11] Out of his disorientation emerges a narratorial voice concerned with exploring the world that he came to:

> Disorientation is loss of the East. [...] Lose the east and you lose your bearings, your certainties, your knowledge of what is and what may be, perhaps even your life. [...]
>
> But let's just suppose. What if the whole deal – orientation, knowing where you are, and so on – what if it's all a scam? [...] Suppose that it's only when you dare to let go that your real life begins? [...] Suppose you've got to go through the feeling of being lost, into the chaos and beyond; you've got to accept the loneliness, the wild panic of losing your moorings, the vertiginous terror of the horizon spinning round and round like the edge of a coin tossed in the air.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 176-177)

Dislocation is in Rai's term the process of freeing oneself, the process of daring to step across the line. Rushdie first dramatised this particular aspect in *The Satanic Verses* and the above section is reminiscent of Gibreel's and Salahuddin's fall to earth. Strikingly, Rushdie feels the need to return to it ten years after the publication of the controversial novel, revisiting this theme in the wake of the lifting of the fatwa. To a large degree, *The Satanic Verses* is concerned with the act of migration, and what happens internally through the process of voluntary or involuntary deracination. Thus the locus of Rushdie's narratives does not only move westwards, but also inwards in an attempt to make sense of a world that is fast becoming more and more interconnected.[12]

Metamorphosis is therefore the author's primary concern in its effect on the protagonists.[13] Metamorphoses, translation, migration, renegotiating the shifting ground beneath our feet, is a powerful image that illustrates how to make sense of that fast changing world. The novel begins with the disappearance of Vina Apsara on 14 February 1989 in an earthquake in Mexico, which is also the date on which Khomeini decreed the fatwa.[14] The inclusion of the date appears like a conscious decision of authorial self-dramatisation and should not be lightly dismissed, considering how both novels deal with the nature of celebrity in a modern age and view it as an *Ersatz* mythology that reveals itself to be empty and meaningless. It is striking in this context how both novels deal similarly with migration, transformation, love, celebrity and superstardom.[15] Celebrity, stardom, superstardom, the creation of myth and self-mythologisation have preoccupied Rushdie in his fiction ever since *Grimus*.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet seems to be loosely connected to the earlier novel in its depiction of native American culture, the Axona tribe in *Grimus* and Vina's fascination with Amerindian mythology in the later novel. The relationship between Dante's *Divine Comedy* and both novels, too, is revealing. This connection can be established from *Grimus* to *The Satanic Verses* to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. In *Grimus*, Virgil Jones is Flapping Eagle's guide in his ascent of Calf Mountain to find

Grimus, which, according to Catherine Cundy, is analogous to Virgil guiding Dante through the Inferno, through Hell and Purgatory in order to attain a vision of Paradise (Cundy 1997, 16). Journeying and questing link the three texts, a process that forms an integral part of the myth-making of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which allows Vina and Ormus and their relationship and ideal of love to grow into myth. Like *Grimus*, the novel amalgamates different myths, often showing their correlation. The debates William Methwold and Sir Darius Xerxes Cama engage in with regard to Greek and Hindu mythology serve to underpin this, forcing the reader to make similar connections. Furthermore they are an invitation to question modern myth-making and the building of legends in our celebrity-crazed age. Rai proposes such a link between identity-negotiations and celebrity:

> One way of understanding their story is to think of it as an account of the creation of two bespoke identities, tailored for the wearers by themselves. The rest of us get our personae off the peg, our religion, language, prejudices, demeanour, the works; but Vina and Ormus insisted on what one might call auto-couture.
>
> And music, popular music, was the key that unlocked the door for them, the door to magic lands.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 95)

Rushdie sees connections between the modern culture of celebrity and the ancient Greek pantheon as well as Hindu polytheism insofar as the Gods can do what they like, good or bad (Rushdie/Gross 2001, 268). Rushdie sees them as examples of ourselves writ large, 'put up on a giant movie screen for us to watch and see ourselves mirrored in them' (Rushdie/Gross 2001, 268). In the examination of the hero of mythic proportions and connections with celebrity culture also lies the link with Bombay cinema and its heroes, where the actors and their on-screen personae fuse into one in the star cult that the public creates around its movie stars, resulting in the actors being revered like gods.[16] Rushdie satirises this in *The Satanic Verses* through Gibreel Farishta, who becomes self-delusional because he has played too many gods in mythologicals and is revered as such by his fans.

The death of Vina and the subsequent outpouring of grief can be read as parallel to the public mourning of the death of Princess Diana in 1997, though other figures such as Eva Pèron also suggest themselves. Within the imagining of Vina and Ormus as celebrities and their mythic stature lies the critique of the cult of celebrity, showing them as vacuous vessels into which people fill their aspirations, desires, but also hatred and (self-) loathing. In his essay 'Crash: The Death of Princess Diana', first published in *The New Yorker* in 1997, Rushdie engages with precisely these debates.[17] The essay

seems to me an important auxiliary that explains many of the preoccupations with superstardom, myth and celebrity that the novel dramatises. Rushdie shows how dependent acts of self-mythologisation and the building of legends are on the photographic image; Princess Diana, one of the most photographed women in the world, being a case in point. Rushdie argues that we live in an 'Age of Fame, in which the intensity of our gaze upon celebrity turns the famous into commodities, too, a transformation that has often proved powerful enough to destroy them' (Rushdie 2003, 118). As a reporter, the camera 'captures the news and delivers it to our door, and, in more adoring mode, often looks upon beautiful women and offers them up for our delight' (Rushdie 2003, 119).

Rushdie likens the death of Diana in a car crash, fleeing from the lenses of the paparazzi, to an act of sublimated sexual assaults, the camera long-lens likened to a phallic snout. Rushdie implicates the camera here in the sense that it 'seeks to possess the Beauty', to capture her image on film. That image, however, is tied to economic gain, as there is an audience hungry to consume that image (Rushdie 2003, 119). Thus the camera is used voyeuristically. This seems like an accurate description of how Rai understands photography, conscious of its predatory nature:

> A photographer shoots. Like a gunman standing by a little gate in a prime minister's garden, like an assassin in a hotel lobby, he must line up a clear shot, he must try not to miss. [...] The camera's respect has nothing to do with seriousness, sanctimony, privacy, or even taste. It has to do with attention. It has to do with clarity, of the actual, of the imagined.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 213)

Rai further asserts that a 'photograph is a moral decision taken in an eighth of a second, or one sixteenth, or one-hundred-and-twenty-eighth. [...] Halfway between voyeur and witness, high artist and low scum, that's where I've made my life, making my eye-blink choices' (Rushdie 2000, 13-14). Professionally, then, Rai also occupies an in-between space. In his profession, he develops 'a knack for invisibility', and invisibility defines his place in his narrative – always present, but not always visible. He explains:

> It allowed me to go right up to the actors in the world's drama, the sick, the dying, the crazed, the mourning, the rich, the greedy, the ecstatic, the bereft, the angry, the murderous, the secretive, the bad, the children, the good, the newsworthy; to shimmy into their charmed space, into the midst of their rage or grief or transcendent arousal, to penetrate the defining instant of their being-in-the-world and get my fucking picture.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 14)

Precisely this voyeurism and exploitation has proved fatal for Diana. These observations can be directly linked to Rai and his role as narrator and photographer. Is

the writing of Vina's and Ormus's story, in which he also plays an important role, an act of writing his own autobiography or is it collusive with his voyeuristic use of the camera in order to capture and to shoot images? In other words, is his act of openly revealing all the secrets of Vina and Ormus by writing this book also a form of betrayal, cashing in on the VTO phenomenon? Rai, the great voyeur, collusive in building the myth of Vina and Ormus, is arguably also guilty of selling out by telling his tale.

What is so interesting about Diana and Vina is their skill at constructing their public persona and their own self-image. In this respect, Vina also resembles pop superstar Madonna. Rushdie uses the image of Diana sitting alone in front of the Taj Mahal, the greatest monument to love, as an example of how the Princess engaged in self-dramatisation, fully aware of 'how the public would "read" this photograph' (Rushdie 2003, 120). Rushdie points out an important dilemma. On the one hand, he argues, Diana's own exploitation of photography as a medium of self-dramatisation could be read as 'an important mitigating factor in any discussion of the paparazzi's role in her death' (Rushdie 2003, 120). On the other, one needs to take into account 'the importance attached by a woman in her position to controlling her public image' (Rushdie 2003, 120). In this respect, Rushdie sees it as a battle for ownership and for power, a dialectic between object and subject. Hence Rushdie argues that the car chase from the paparazzi, which led to the fatal crash in a Paris tunnel, is a flight 'from Object to Subject, from commodity towards humanity' (Rushdie 2003, 120).

These issues are important in an understanding of Vina, her constant refashioning and reinvention of herself, creating a palimpsest of her self, a multi-layered, multifaceted persona who could appeal to anybody and anything, but also opening herself up for scrutiny and attack. Because she stood for everything and nothing, in her death, she could be invested with meaning by everyone: 'But by then Vina was already passing into myth, becoming a vessel into which any moron could pour his stupidities, or let us say a mirror of the culture, and we can best understand the nature of this culture if we say that it found its truest mirror in a corpse' (Rushdie 2000, 6). In the creation of Vina Apsara, Rushdie dramatises the tension and dilemma of celebrity between being perceived as an object for consumption and being a subject. In the developing celebrity cult around Ormus and Vina 'the people involved cease to be thought of as living, feeling beings' (Rushdie 2000, 309). Thus Vina makes herself 'the exaggerated avatar of their own jumbled selves' (Rushdie 2000, 339).

In the process, Vina and Ormus do not only achieve iconic celebrity status as individuals, but their love, too, becomes a story of mythic proportions with parallels to classical mythology constantly being drawn. Within these negotiations, Ormus's oaths and pacts with regards to abstinence provide the necessary creative impetus for their celebrity status to be matched by their powerful musical achievements. Rai explains:

> No, this is a story of a deep but unstable love, one of breakages and reunions; a love of endless overcoming, defined by the obstacles it must surmount, beyond which greater travails lie. A hurdler's love. The forking, fissured paths of uncertainty, the twisting mazes of suspicion and betrayal, the plunging low road of death itself: along these ways it goes. This is human love.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 322)

However, the obstacles their love has to overcome are not only circumstantial, but also self-inflicted, for example, Ormus's oath to stay celibate throughout their engagement. Others are not, like Ormus's coma after a car crash from which he is awakened by Vina, like sleeping beauty or snow white, which Rai encourages the reader to interpret as an inversion of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth and parallel to the story in Hindu mythology of Rati and Kama.[18]

Vina reclaims Ormus from the underworld and Ormus's awareness of an other world makes him realise that the fabric of the world is in the process of being unwoven from the other side. He suffers from double vision: '*It's as if two eyes are looking into slightly different worlds, or rather two variations of the same world, almost the same yet utterly separate*' (Rushdie 2000, 325, original italics). Reality thus is seen as multiple and in conflict. This is dramatised in Ormus's affliction, but also in Rai's narrative strategy, which, too, takes account of these multiple conflicting realities. Does Rushdie then present this as the condition of the postcolonial migrant who has to negotiate conflicting realties? Again, parallels to *The Satanic Verses* become apparent. Yet while *The Satanic Verses* allowed Salahuddin Chamchawala to resolve his not-belonging, this is not accorded to Ormus (though it is to Rai). Does Ormus become then a rewritten version of Gibreel Farishta? Ormus is only aware of realities fragmenting, for which the earthquakes become a powerful metaphor. Ormus feels the earth move under his feet and he hears the voice from the other world proclaiming:

> *Too late to reconcile the earth with itself. We must brace ourselves for the tectonic movements, the slippages, the tsunamis, the landslides, the rocking, rolling cities et cetera et cetera, the smashing of the real. We must prepare for shocks, for the fragmentation of the planet as it goes to war with itself, for the endgames of the self-contradictory earth.*
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 327, original italics)

The notion of conflicting realities is closely associated with 'not-belonging' which in turn is seen as 'the American way' and thus the narrative shifts from England to the US, has passed through the membrane, and goes one step further than the earlier novel (see Rushdie 2000, 331).

Globalisation and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

Globalisation is often associated with American political, cultural and economic domination and is also perceived as different worlds in collision, such as East and West or developed and developing world. English as a globalised language and the *lingua franca* across the globe mediates between these worlds. In the novel, language, like identity, names and naming, is subjected to infinite rearrangements. English is thus proven to be a world language that is flexible enough to accommodate, express and describe vastly different experiences. In Rushdie's constant rearrangement of language, his playfulness creates a blend of different varieties of English, arguably decolonising and remaking it. Ever since *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie has used a version of English that, according to Rustom Bharucha, is 'a bastardized, hybridized, and more recently Hindi-film-cinematized English that is now almost two centuries old' (Bharucha 1994, 160). Using references from east and west, Rushdie creates a world-wide web of linguistic references and a dense narrative, rich in allusion, challenging his readers and himself as a novelist.

Rushdie blurs the boundaries of cultural exchanges, through the conceit that Ormus's dead twin Gayomart whispers to him in his sleep the latest hit tunes and lyrics from the afterlife, before they are even heard in America or Europe. Thus the novel plays with and debates economic and cultural exchanges as they become fluid and cross-fertilised. Within the process of economic globalisation everything is commodified: language, music, goods, services, history, people's lives. This process of commodification has a bearing on history, historiography and the notions of myth the novel explores. They become debased as a form of *Ersatz*, a projection and an illusion. Ormus and Vina and their band VTO undergo such a process of commodification. They are empty vessels that their fans can invest with whatever meaning they want. This meaning is revealed to be shifting, never fixed, on the one hand by the image Vina seeks to project through her shameless self-promotion, on the other by the image the media is willing to construct of her, her relationship with Ormus and VTO.

Frederic Jameson claims that 'the concept of globalisation reflects the sense of an immense enlargement of communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market,

both of which seem far more tangible and immediate than in earlier stages of modernity' (Jameson/Miyoshi 1998, xi). Roland Robertson defines globalisation as 'the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular' (Robertson 1992, 177-178). Put together, these two claims immediately point towards the variety of areas upon which the process of globalisation impacts most profoundly: the political, the economic and the cultural. Jameson 'defines' globalisation 'as an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts – mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the model of "national identities" (rather than in terms of social classes, for example)' (Jameson/Miyoshi 1998, xii).[19] What follows from this, Jameson argues, is a state of tension and antagonism as the terms stand in binary opposition to each other, such as the USA or the West claiming universality and another region claiming particularity. These tensions express themselves in what Jameson calls 'a range of collective Imaginaries' (Jameson/Miyoshi 1998, xii).

Rushdie addresses these 'Imaginaries' and seeks to decentre them by posing similar questions with regards to the evaluation of globalisation: 'Is it a matter of transnational domination and uniformity or, on the other hand, the source of the liberation of local culture from hidebound state and national forms?' (Jameson and Miyoshi 1998, xii) Rushdie explores these notions on a variety of levels. Most intricately he addresses these concerns through the position of Rai, a migrant photographer who has worked as a news photographer in the conflict zones of the world, as an artist and as a fashion/celebrity photographer. In 1987 Rai returns to Indochina to document the aftermath of American intervention there:

> Over the years I saw the hand of Mighty America fall hard on the back yards of the world, click, not the helping hand-across-the-sea extended to America's friends but the fist which he-that-is-Mighty hammers on the green table of your country to tell you what he wants and when he wants it, i.e. right now, buster, assume the position, this means you.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 419)

Rai's theory is that the Vietnam War had not ended at the time of American withdrawal, but had left the Trojan Horse of free trade and the potential of prosperity for all at the gates which once the 'gift' was accepted would overrun the place (see Rushdie 2000, 441). Rai thus argues:

> Indochina became just another consumer-serf of (and supplier of cheap labor to) Americana International. Almost every young Indochinese person wanted to eat, dress, bop and profit in the good old American way. MTV, Nike, McWorld.

> Where soldiers had failed, U.S. values – that is greenbacks, set to music – had triumphed. This, I photographed.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 441)

These pictures are ironic, ambiguous, full of tension and mark discontinuity for Rai, who has to rethink his position as a citizen of America, faced with the necessity to forget his past, facing up to the fact that he himself is through the process of migration and his work, though a discontinuous being, now part of 'Americana International'. He has to reinvent himself anew, to make a new world for himself, stuck between the tensions of 'thrilling gain' and 'aching loss' in his 'metamorphic destiny'.

The position of Rai raises questions of the universal and the particular. Does he arrive at a cosmopolitan, universalising, all-embracing position through his metamorphosis, his work as a globetrotting photographer, his migration? Or rather, must he recognise that ultimately, in order to give meaning to the renegotiation of the ground beneath his feet he must develop roots in a locality and in the nucleus of a small family? It seems as though Rushdie explains this away too easily. *Fury*, too grapples with these questions, but the propositions there seem even more unsatisfactory than in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Globalisation in the novel is tied to the vision of a disintegrating world, the exposure of an amnesiac culture of super-capitalism where everything is market-orientated. Within these confines it becomes ever more difficult for the protagonists to find answers to the pressing questions '*Do you know who you are? Do you know what you want?*' (Rushdie 2000, 447, original italics) But perhaps it is not possible to define any point of arrival. Migration, once Ormus, Vina and Rai passed through the membrane in the sky, leaving Bombay for ever, is a transformative experience that keeps you for ever in some form of transit zone (see Rushdie 2000, 461). For Rai, within this metamorphosis lies revelation. However, what this revelation is, is never revealed, but is lost in the multiple realities he encounters.

Rai exposes through his probing that through processes of globalisation the world is not homogenised according to the laws of Americana International, but on the contrary is fragmenting. In this world, love and family are presented as the only certainties. This is undercut by the array of dysfunctional families and love affairs that feature in the novel. Ormus and Rai both cling to the reality of their love for Vina, which for both is a fixed point in the process of metamorphosis. Their personal grief and obsessive search to recapture Vina is in marked contrast to the global outpouring of grief after Vina's death. Thus the process of globalisation is personified in the figure of Vina after her death as she is elevated to the ranks of the divine and then debased as a

commodity to be exploited for financial gain. Her death initially becomes an event of shared mourning, uniting people across the globe in the event of her death. In response, commercial interests exploit the phenomenon to capitalise 'on the Vina Effect', 'sending her ghost out to do business for the family firm' (Rushdie 2000, 486). Vina's death, Rai's and Ormus's loss, further highlights their unstable position in the world: 'When you have no picture of the world, you don't know how to make choices – material, inconsequential or moral. You don't know which way is up, or if you're coming or going, or how many beans make five' (Rushdie 2000, 487). Perhaps the answer to these uncertainties lies with Rai as he warns against the quest for meaning, accepting absurdity, an argument against interpretation. Death is just death, uncertainty is just that. Yet Vina lies at the heart of the meaning of the novel:

> The truth is that after all I was not immune to the disease of making Vina mean something, and what she meant to me was love, certainly, but also mystery, a woman ultimately unquantifiable and impossible to grasp, my window into the inexplicable. The mystery at the heart of meaning.
>
> (Rushdie 2000, 492)

Rai sees Vina and Ormus as larger-than-life and their love, he proclaims, 'is as close as I've come to a knowledge of the mythic, the overweening, the divine. Now that they've gone, the high drama's over. What remains is ordinary human life' (Rushdie 2000, 575). For the reader and Rai, Vina's and Ormus's love remains shrouded in the melodrama worthy of any Bombay movie.

Rushdie's fictional worlds have always proved to be multifaceted and multi-dimensional, where reality is decentred through parallel worlds. Increasingly, worlds in Rushdie's fiction are in collision. Thus, the individual constantly has to remake the ground beneath his feet. Within these negotiations, the individual has become the alien. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the fictional realities of Bombay that Rushdie created in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* intermingle with the multi-dimensional world of *Grimus*, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*. The modern city as 'the locus classicus of incompatible realties' metamorphoses into multi-dimensional worlds – over-world and underworld, colonial and postcolonial, industrialised and developing world, the 'real' world and the 'other' world. The lines between these different dimensions become blurred as the protagonists have to navigate and negotiate between these worlds in transition. Thus the characters are continually suspended in transit, which leads to infinite rearrangements of their identity. The only character who finds some level of stability is Rai in his relationship with Mira and the little nuclear family that they form together with her daughter Tara. In ordinary human love, beneath his

feet, Rai finds meaning, *terra firma*. Rai thus realises, as Rooney argues, 'the fantasy of an imaginary family, a family without origins' where 'America becomes the site for a hope of *a family without origins*' (Rooney 2000, 65). Malik Solanka rejects this hope in *Fury*.

Fury

In *Fury*, celebrity is also a central theme. Many of the largely hostile reviews have connected Rushdie's personal life between 1999 and 2001, which was widely reported in the tabloid press, with that of his fictional character Malik Solanka. Thus it is difficult not to read Solanka as an acute form of authorial self-dramatisation, which is already latently present in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Rushdie's and Solanka's biography seem to be congruent in many ways. Solanka, like Rushdie, is born in Bombay in 1947 on an estate off Warden Road. Both received their university education at King's College Cambridge. Both have been married twice and in summer 2000 left their wives and young children to relocate to New York. These similarities have led reviewers such as Adam Mars-Jones in *The Observer* to describe the novel as 'just another uneasy midlife crisis in disguise' (Mars-Jones 2001), while John Sutherland reads Malik Solanka as 'a version of his author, but he is also everyman' (Sutherland 2001). Yet to read the novel as Rushdie's diary or merely as a thinly veiled autobiography is reductive as it occludes the issues the novel engages with – love, violence, divorce, New York, guys and dolls, America at the pinnacle of its economic might.

In *Fury*, Malik Solanka wants and has to escape from his past. Unlike Rai Merchant, he does not remake New York in his mind as an alternative Bombay. For him, his Bombay childhood as much as his recent life in England is taboo. Bombay becomes in *Fury* 'the Forbidden City of the Arabian Sea' (Rushdie 2002a, 146). In *Fury*, the reader encounters a new type of the Rushdian migrant. Solanka has made the transition from Bombay to London and England, where he studies at Cambridge, becomes a professor and then crosses over into the commercial world of television with his puppet creation Little Brain, over which Solanka loses creative control. After a heavy row with his wife, Solanka finds himself standing at her bedside where she and her son are sleeping with a carving knife in his hand. This shocking event is the catalyst for him to uproot himself once again to move to New York, severing all ties with his family and his life in Britain to exchange it for 'America, in the highest hour of its hybrid omnivorous power. America, to which he had come to erase himself. To be free of attachment and so also of anger, fear and pain' (Rushdie 2002a, 44). He gets

involved with young Mila Milo, daughter of an expatriate Serbian author, and Neela Mahendra, a third generation diaspora Indian from the fictional South Pacific island of Lilliput-Blefuscu, a barely disguised version of Fiji.[20] Neela Mahendra's ancestors hail from another of Rushdie's fictional inventions from *The Satanic Verses*, the village of Titlipur (see Rushdie 2002a, 156).

Solanka rejects the nuclear 'family without origins', which for Rai becomes the only way of finding meaning in the present, although we see him return to London and there is a hint at reconciliation with his family. Indeed, Solanka and his wife Eleanor initially through the love of their son 'take refuge in a fantasy of undamaged familial contentment' (Rushdie 2002a, 105). However, Solanka has to find new *terra firma*, and meaning for his life elsewhere and believes to do so in Neela. He is in search for someone to heal him from his fury and he believes Neela and the love they have for each other to be his cure. Neela Mahendra seems to be Malik's answer to allay the fury of his life, bred through life's disappointments. She is his antidote: 'For *furia* could be ecstasy, too, and Neela's love was the philosopher's stone that made possible the transmuting alchemy. Rage grew out of despair: but Neela was hope fulfilled' (Rushdie 2002a, 206).

The redemptive quality of love has always played an important role in Rushdie's fiction. Amina Sinai falling in love with her husband in *Midnight's Children* and helping to unfreeze his assets, the relationship between Gibreel Farishta and Alleluia Cone and Salahuddin Chamchawala and Zeeny Vakil in *The Satanic Verses*, between Aurora Zogoiby and Abraham in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, between Rai and Mira and between Malik Solanka and Neela Mahendra are only some examples. In all these relationships Rushdie addresses the healing power of love and its potential to redeem us. *The Moor's Last Sigh* in particular develops love into a major thesis. For Moraes, love is a value in life, a love that allows for the dissolution of boundaries and for the liberation of the self. Ultimately Moraes recognises that defeated love, love when it is revealed as a mistake, is much more powerful than what defeats it.

This is echoed in Rushdie's 1987 review of Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*, reprinted in *Imaginary Homelands*. Rushdie notices the absence of the word 'love' in the novel. Love remains buried amidst the tragedy of its protagonists and remains an enigma, a riddle. For Rushdie, Naipaul's novel is about a life without love or a life 'where love has been buried so deep that it can't come out' (Rushdie 1992a, 151). In a 1999 interview with Nirmala Lakshman, Rushdie further elaborates on the theme of

love. He states that with *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, he wanted to write a love story, a story of great passion:

> I was thinking a lot about the subject of love and the thought came to me that the idea of love is associated with such ideas as happiness, trust, fidelity, longevity. [...] And I thought to myself that actually they've nothing to do with it, you know, and if one could write about a love which didn't necessarily make the lovers happy, which was the opposite of enduring, extremely brittle, which broke all those rules. There was no fidelity, very little trust, there wasn't much happiness and yet, you can't call it anything other than love.
>
> (Rushdie/Lakshman 2001, 281)

This engagement with 'brittle' love certainly seems like a prevalent theme since *The Moor's Last Sigh* and continues to run through his next novels, including *Shalimar the Clown*. However, can love as Rushdie conceptualises it provide the necessary resolution to Malik Solanka's problems in dealing with his fury, his love, his angst, his past, his future?

All the women in Solanka's life – Mila, Eleanor and Neela – represent *Furia*. 'Mila as Fury, the world-swallower, the self as pure transformative energy. [...] This is what he looked for in women: to be overpowered, outmatched. This Gangetic, Mississippian inexorability, whose dwindling, he sadly knew, was what had gone wrong in his marriage' (Rushdie 2002a, 178). Malik Solanka sees these dynamics of fury spin out of control not only in his private life, but also as a detached newly-arrived observer in the United States. Solanka hears the threatening question 'is this all there is?' and he sees the Furies hovering over himself, New York and America (Rushdie 2002a, 184).

Displacement and filmic narration – representing the South Asian diaspora

The final showdown on Lilliput-Blefuscu, which is reminiscent of Bollywood action movies, raises a number of important questions: What is the relationship between the diasporic migrant and his homeland? Where lies home for the diasporic Indian who originates from a place that is not India? Empire has spread the Indian diaspora community across the globe after the abolition of slavery, as many Indians migrated to the Caribbean, East Africa and the South Pacific as indentured labourers. What rights do they have to 'home' and a homeland beyond the Indian subcontinent? Furthermore the episode also raises questions about revolution, freedom fighters and terrorism and seems to foreshadow some of the preoccupations Rushdie takes up in *Shalimar the Clown* and harks back to his visit to Nicaragua in 1987 that he documents in *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*. Do we need to read the counter-coup in Lilliput-Blefuscu merely as an expression of Solanka's inner turmoil as the coup merges with his invented

narrative of *The Puppet Kings*? It becomes clear that for Solanka with *The Puppet Kings* history is repeating itself in an amplified form. He lost creative control over his previous creation Little Brain and the countercoup in Lilliput-Blefuscu demonstrates that he has also lost control over his other fictional world as it is appropriated by the counter insurgency and used for its own ends.

Considering the novel's displacement from the subcontinent, it can be read as Rushdie's engagement with the South Asian diaspora community, a second and third generation of diaspora South Asians for whom the notion of home and homeland is no longer rooted in the subcontinent, but for whom home is elsewhere. The Bombay film industry has discovered and is increasingly marketing their films to this audience. Location and dislocation are caught up in a problematic nexus here. as Jigna Desai argues: 'If we are to have a nomadic diasporic politics of location and mobility that destabilizes and denationalizes national (and territorial) identity, it must be one that also is specifically anchored and attentive to complex and simultaneous multiple relations, in this case, of colonialism, slavery, indigeneity, capitalism, and heteronormativity' (Desai 2004, 100). In Malik Solanka's relocation to the US this notion becomes important. He does not concern himself with a process of recuperation, but the opposite, forgetting. He does not define himself vis-à-vis his homeland, looking back to it for guidance, but in opposition to it. It seems as though Malik Solanka lives with his gaze towards neither his 'imaginary homeland', India, nor to his adopted homeland, England. On the contrary, Solanka wants to destroy precisely this back-story: 'our little storehouse of anecdote and what-happened-next, our private once-upon-a-time' (Rushdie 2002a, 51). Solanka wants to disappear in the anonymity of the big city and grasps desperately at the possibility of starting afresh:

> He had come to America as so many before him to receive the benison of being Ellis Islanded, of starting over. [...] No longer a historian but a man without histories let me be. I'll rip my lying mother tongue out of my throat and speak your broken English instead. Scan me, digitize me, beam me up. If the past is the sick old Earth, then, America, be my flying saucer.
>
> (Rushdie 2002a, 51)

Neela has a different relationship with India. For her it remains the longed-for homeland, the country of originary desire that can provide fixity. In this respect, India remains an important focal point for the twice-dislocated migrant, which is very much reflected in the décor of her apartment:

> India was insisted upon everywhere in the Bedford Street apartment, in the overemphasized manner of the diaspora: the *filmi* music, the candles and incense, the Krishna-and-milkmaids calendar, the dhurries on the floor, the

> Company School painting, the hookah coiled atop a bookcase like a stuffed green snake. Neela's Bombay alter ego, Solanka mused, pulling on his clothes, would probably have gone for a heavily Westernized, Californian-minimalist simplicity ... but never mind about Bombay.
>
> (Rushdie 2002a, 208)

Yet the décor also reveals that it is only her version, her idea of India that is reflected in the apartment, which is emphasised by Solanka's reflections. Here a connection with Bombay cinema suggests itself. Vijay Mishra argues that the Bombay film for the diaspora fulfils the function of bringing the homeland to the diaspora. He suggests it creates 'a culture of imaginary solidarity across the heterogeneous linguistic and national groups that make up the South Asian diaspora' (Mishra 2002, 237). Mishra sees Indian popular cinema 'as a crucial determinant in globalising and deterritorializing the link between the imagination and social life' (Mishra 2002, 237). Where such a reading of Indian cinema becomes problematic is in its levelling of South Asia into a homogenised monoculture in which an orientalised version of India becomes a stand-in (see Desai 2004, 6). In this respect, Bombay cinema informs a narrow ethnicity that finds its imaginative realism through a particular kind of cinema. According to Mishra, 'the consumption of Bombay cinema actively constructs an Indian diaspora of shared cultural idioms', the Indian diasporas as imagined communities, in which Bombay's commercial cinema functions as a self-contained, culturally specific phenomenon (Mishra 2002, 238).

Within these conceptualisations, music is a powerful element of Hindi films, functioning as an interior monologue that expresses repressed desires, emotions and aspirations. Music can also function as an emotional memory trigger, which allows for escape from the harsh realities of everyday life in a society that is often hostile towards its immigrant communities and can provide solace. Thus, music provides a form of escape and respite for many South Asians who stand somewhere between 'East, West', faced with the pressures of traditional values at home and the pressures the West puts on them. In *Fury*, after the funeral of his murdered friend Jack Rhinehart, Neela provides solace for Solanka by putting on a Lata Mangeshkar song from the film soundtrack of *Samadhi* (1950):

> Neela took Malik back to Bedford Street, opened a bottle of red wine, drew the curtains, lit many scented candles, and disrespectfully selected a CD of Bollywood song classics from the fifties and early sixties – music from his forbidden past. This was an aspect of her profound emotional wisdom. In all things pertaining to feeling, Neela Mahendra knew what worked. *Kabhi méri gali aaya karó*. The teasingly romantic song lilted across the darkened room. *Come up and see me some time*. They hadn't spoken since they left the

> graveside. She drew him down on to a cushion-strewn rug and laid his head between her breasts, wordlessly reminding him of the continued existence of happiness, even in the midst of grief.
>
> (Rushdie 2002a, 204)

Perhaps the negotiation of identity for the diaspora through the medium of film can be best understood, to bring together Chakravarty and Virdi's terms from their studies of Indian popular cinema, as the tension between 'ImpersoNation' and 'Cinematic ImagiNation', which is also reflected in the song from *Shree 420* which I have discussed in chapter four. The tension between the two is dramatised in the commercial exploitation of Malik Solanka's dolls. In both these metaphors we can locate, as Chakravarty argues, 'notions of changeability and metamorphosis, tension and contradiction, recognition and alienation, surface and depth: dualities that have long plagued the Indian psyche and constitute the self-questionings of Indian nationhood' (Chakravarty 1993, 4). Indian popular cinema needs to address and debate these issues. According to Chakravarty, the discussion of 'ImpersoNation' serves more than just 'reinforcing the truism that films impersonate life; characters impersonate real men and women; the film-viewing experience impersonates dreams' (Chakravarty 1993, 4). Solanka's dolls and the cult around them reflect this.

As has been argued earlier, *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* as novels concerned with diaspora, dislocation and uprooting are thematically closely interlinked. *Fury* is part of Rushdie's engagement with a world in collision and shows that the life stories of others are interconnected and mirror each other. The close father-daughter relationship of Mila Milo and the suggestion of sexual abuse is very close to Malik Solanka's own story, for he suffered abuse at the hands of his stepfather on Methwold Estate in Bombay. The close bond they form in New York seems to be a variation on the theme. Furthermore, the older man - younger woman relationship is paralleled with the scandal of Oval Office oral sex of President Clinton with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky (see Rushdie 2002a, 137).

Rushdie's fiction has made the transition from the Bombay film of the 1950s and 1960 to the preoccupations of the films of the 1980s and 1990s which echo in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*. The novel's engagement with the diaspora community and its relationship to home is particularly striking. Indeed *Fury* seems to perpetuate many clichés of Bollywood films that thematise the diaspora. The idea that Neela Mahendra can afford Malik Solanka the solace and peace of mind he craves seems not only clichéd, but seems to emulate the role the 'authentic Indian' plays in

films such as *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003) in guiding a dislocated, fragmented family back to fulfilled family life by reminding them of Indian family values. It seems that Rushdie has moved away from the engaging Bombay film formula that Vasco Miranda in his description of Aurora Zogoiby's art defined as an 'Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art' (Rushdie 1996b, 148/149) to Rai's frustrated rhetorical question 'Oh why must everything I say end up sounding like a *filmi gana*, a goddamn cheap Bollywood song?' (Rushdie 2002a, 248/249) The novel cannot quite make up its mind what it wants to be – satire, social melodrama or thriller, comedy or tragedy.

Underlying the whole novel, like a soundtrack, is fury, which is the novel's driving force. Malik Solanka observes:

> Life is fury, he'd thought. Fury – sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal – drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of *furia* comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover. The Furies pursue us; Shiva dances his furious dance to create and also to destroy.
>
> (Rushdie 2002a, 30-31)

These reflections encapsulate the spirit of the book and while the underlying furious anger engages the reader and provides a showdown which no Hollywood or Bollywood director could have imagined better with three spurned women congregating in Malik Solanka's bedroom, the novel's final chapters read like a huge anti-climax.

The novel fills a gap and provides the concluding remarks to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and its argument about celebrity. Malik Solanka could perhaps be the imagining of a different end to the story of Rai. Formally, *Fury* is a much more straightforward narrative, less digressive, goal orientated, using elements of thriller and crime fiction, which Rushdie further develops and deploys much more effectively in *Shalimar the Clown*. While thematically weaker, *Fury* reads like a much more disciplined novel in comparison to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. *Fury's* main character belongs through his origins in Bombay and Methwold estate to Rushdie's fictional landscape and while this link might seem flimsy there are important connections thematically as well as structurally between these novels. *Fury* might occupy a marginal position in this landscape but it nevertheless is an important link between *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Shalimar the Clown*.

Fury points towards the connection of identity politics and violence. Malik Solanka's fury coincides with his mid-life crisis and leads him to uproot himself and start afresh in New York. Yet his fury is played out on a grander scale in Lilliput-Blefuscu and its counter-coup. Malik Solanka's personal fury is also reflected in the

murders of rich society girls who have a *faiblesse* for kinky sadomasochistic sex, as well as in the fury of Solanka's wife and his two lovers. Where is the origin of this fury though? It can be partly located in the loathed role Malik Solanka has to play as celebrity intellectual. Here it becomes almost impossible to escape the parallels between Malik Solanka's life and Rushdie's. Thus, like *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* it could be argued that the novel's primary concern is celebrity and stardom. Amitava Kumar argues this in his review of the novel in *The Nation*. Kumar observes that the problem of the novel is that the narrative is too closely tied up with the persona of the protagonist who 'appears utterly complicit in what he wants to lampoon' (Kumar 2001, 35). This already seems a jarring note in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, but because of the centrality of Solanka in the novel it is amplified in *Fury* and becomes problematic as it has a detrimental impact on the social satire that the novel aims for, which often seem hollow and lacks credibility. The reference to the master satirist Voltaire and *Candide* only helps to further underline this (see Rushdie 2002a, 22).

Solanka grapples with the compromises he has to make for worldly, global success and has to see how he and his inventions are commodified in the process. These deliberations show the profound unease of an intellectual with his persona as a celebrity author in a global arena. Indeed, Kumar sees Rushdie's novel as an emblem of the fiction Jack Rhinehart writes in the novel to keep his estranged wife in her comfortable life style:

> He gave up visiting war zones and began to write, instead, lucrative profiles of the super-powerful, super-famous and super-rich for their weekly and monthly magazines of choice: chronicling their loves, their deals, their wild children, their personal tragedies, their tell-all maids, their murders, their surgeries, their good works, their evil secrets, their games, their feuds, their sexual practices, their meanness, their generosity, their groomers, their walkers, their cars. Then he gave up writing poetry and turned his hand, instead, to novels set in the same world, the unreal world that ruled the real one.
>
> (Rushdie 2002a, 56)

While this might be too dismissive of the novel, it is undeniable that the novel does expose a central character, who seems obsessively caught up in his own life as celebrity on the one hand and on the other yearns for respite and escape from this life. Yet in a world of globalised popular culture he is not afforded this respite. However, a mere reading of the novel as a thinly-veiled memoir would obscure the way in which the novel engages with mass media and the commodification of popular cultural products.

Sarah Brouillette argues in 'Authorship as Crisis in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*' that these are now made available as 'highly politicized forms of appropriation or

interpretation that betray the controlling intentions of their authors' (Brouillette 2005, 140). Rushdie experienced this during the controversy about *The Satanic Verses* with the ayatollah's literal call for the death of the author. However, Rushdie has become a brand name and has created for himself an authorial persona, a role that he enjoys playing. This has become increasingly apparent since his highly publicised relationship with Padma Lakshmi. Rushdie as a star author who generates column inches in gossip magazines is not a problem, but it impacts on the power of his critique of the celebrity circus both in *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which brings this discussion back to the notion of authorship and authority.

Both texts seem to be concerned with the dissolution of the demarcation between public and private life. Why does Malik Solanka flee to New York? He needs to escape his notoriety and reclaim some form of anonymity. However, it seems like a case of 'old habits die hard'. When Solanka is confronted with the business proposition for 'The Puppet Kings', he agrees, fully aware that this new creation has the potential to become as successful, if not more, than his previous invention. What happens is that the FRM rebel group on Lilliput-Blefuscu appropriates his invention and thus Solanka has to realise that there is no way of controlling his brain child. As Brouillette argues, 'the price for involvement in the creation of culture is the potential for dangerous appropriations and the entanglement of one's work with real violence' (2005, 150). Thus no icon, no text, is free from appropriation or transmission as a political message, which harks back to Vina Apsara and her idolisation after her death or the cult status of VTO (see Brouillette 2005, 150). Malik barely escapes alive from Lilliput-Blefuscu. It seems with Solanka and Neela's meeting the novel shifts in direction as it simultaneously investigates freedom struggles in the remote South Pacific island. Brouillette argues that through *The Puppet Kings* Rushdie dramatises his own ambiguous relationship with his literary productions (2005, 150). This is underlined by the references to Titlipur and Methwold Estate. Thus Brouillette concludes rather than being in Kumar's terms the exposure of an author with a 'zeal for self-glorification', the novel seems to revel in its biographical masking insofar as Solanka interprets his own situation through the narratives he creates (Brouillette 2005, 151). Brouillette argues it would be too simplistic to read the novel as a 'straightforward attempt on the part of the author to constrain his image in the eyes of an increasingly critical public, a public put off by his willingness to make himself a popular spectacle and pursue an Americanized dream of global popularity' (2005, 151). In this respect, Brouillette sees the novel

engaged in a process of disavowal that attempts to deconstruct the figure of the author-celebrity whose distinctly crafted persona is strategically deployed to sell literary texts in a competitive marketplace (see 2005, 154).

Fury explicitly critiques the way in which texts through their commercialisation become subsequently available for political (mal-)appropriation, thus making it impossible for any author to control the political meaning of his textual productions (see Brouillette 2005, 154). Rushdie's reply to Peter Catapone's remark that the story of his life would read like 'a bad Salman Rushdie novel' is revealing in this context:

> Yeah, I do think there is that side to it, where if I'd thought of it as a plot I wouldn't use it. Because it's like an Indian movie. It's very overblown. I think if I get lucky enough to be 80 years old and can't think of a novel to write then maybe at that point I'll want to write an autobiography. I don't want to be like those pop stars who write autobiographies when they're 22 years old. I've just turned 55. I feel full of writing. And it just seems inappropriate to say this is my story.
>
> (Rushdie/Catapone, 2002)

In the light of the semi-autobiographical starting point of *Fury* this response seems ironic. In *Fury* Rushdie pushes his questioning of the role of the author, authority and author celebrity to its limits and it seems as though he has manoeuvred himself into an artistic and imaginative cul-de-sac. With his next novel *Shalimar the Clown* he successfully breaks out of it by refocusing his attention on India. Kashmir seems to reinvigorate Rushdie's imagination, moving away from an investigation of celebrity to the politics of terrorism.

Notes

[1] Despite a shift in focus towards music, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* has been described as Rushdie's most filmable novel. According to the British newspaper *The Guardian* in March 2000, Rushdie sold the film rights of the novel to small Paris-based production house Gemini, which that year released a film version of Proust's *Time Regained*. With a budget of $ 15 million, Chilean director Raoul Ruiz was set to direct. In the event, like the TV adaptation of *Midnight's Children*, the project never got off the ground. Rushdie mentioned at a reading in London in 2005 that he had bought back the film rights, but although there weren't any immediate plans, he was still hopeful one of his literary works would be filmed. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* was described 'as Rushdie's most accessible and purely filmic novel', with its 'lead female character [...] allegedly loosely based on Madonna'. See 'Raoul Ruiz to direct Rushdie adaptation' 16/03/2000 Guardian Unlimited, 23/03/2002 <http://film.guardian.co.uk/News_Story/Exclusive/0,4029,147449,00.html>

[2] The ethos of progress, a new myth for postcolonial India, is explored in Hindi films of the time, e.g. *Mother India*, *Shree 420* or *Awaara*.

[3] Rushdie has modelled Piloo and Golmatol Doodhwala loosely on Laloo Prasad Yadev and his wife Rabri Devi. While in office as Bihar's Chief Minister, Yadev was implicated in the Fodder Scam, in which large amounts of public livestock subsidies were claimed for the maintenance of cows which did not actually exist. Piloo runs a similar scam with goats in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Yadev was sent to prison but managed to secure the post of chief minister for his wife, and continued to run the state by proxy from prison (see Rushdie 2003, 203). Rai exposes Piloo's and Golmatol's scam by stealing the roll

of film from another photographer who was hanged. Thus Rai builds his reputation as a photographer on pictures that he did not take. This moral dilemma constantly haunts him (see Rushdie 2000, 231-249).

[4] The renaming of Bombay into Mumbai is shifted forward in Rai's timeline to the 1970s.

[5] Rai observes: 'A kind of India happens everywhere, that's the truth too; everywhere is terrible and wonder-filled and overwhelming if you open your senses to the actual's pulsating beat. There are beggars now on London streets. If Bombay is full of amputees, then what, here in New York, of the many mutilations of the soul to be seen on every street corner, in the subway, in the City Hall? There are war-wounded here too, but I speak now of the losers in the war of the city itself, the metropolis's casualties, with bomb craters in their eyes. So lead us not into exotica and deliver us from nostalgia. For Dara Singh read Hulk Hogan, say Tony Bennett instead of Tony Brent, and *The Wizard of Oz* makes a more powerful transition into color than anything in the Bollywood canon. Goodbye to India's hoofers, Vijayantimala, Madhuri Dickshit, so long. I'll take Kelly. I'll take Michael Jackson and Paula Abdul and Rogers and Astaire.

But if I'm honest I still smell, each night, the sweet jasmine-scented ozone of the Arabian Sea, I still recall my parents' love of their *art dekho* city and of each other' (Rushdie 2000, 417).

[6] Supergroup U2, of which Rushdie's friend Bono is the front-man, recorded an accompanying theme to the novel. The song is called 'The Ground Beneath Her Feet' and uses the lyrics of the song Rai wrote after Vina's death:

All my life, I worshipped her. Her golden voice, her beauty's beat. How she made us feel, how she made me real, and the ground beneath her feet.

And now I can't be sure of anything, black is white, and cold is heat; for what I worshipped stole my love away, it was the ground beneath her feet.

She was my ground, my favourite sound, my country road, my city street, my sky above, my only love, and the ground beneath my feet.

Go lightly down your darkened way, go lightly underground, I'll be down there in another day, I won't rest until you're found.

Let me love you true, let me rescue you, let me lead you to where two roads meet. O come back above, where there's only love, and the ground's beneath your feet.

[7] In Rai's career they are his images of Vina Apsara (Rushdie 2000, 466-468).

[8] This shift aptly occurs in the chapter 'Transformer' (Rushdie 2000, 347 onwards).

[9] Rushdie makes this explicit in the opening paragraphs of his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' (Rushdie 1992, 9).

[10] There are references to Thomas Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49* in the showdown between Mull Standish and Yul Singh. Their confrontation takes place in an auction room in the novel's fictional town San Narciso, California: 'First let me tell you why *you're* here, says Mull. Turns out you're interested in conspiracies, underground organizations, militias, the whole right-wing paranoid-America thing. Who knows why. You're here to bid for the memorabilia of some defunct immigrant cabal, used to go around writing DEATH on people's walls. Don't Ever Antagonize The Horn. They had a trumpet logo. Nice' (Rushdie 2000, 400-401). In *The Crying of Lot 49* the anagram at the centre of the mystery is WASTE (We Await Silent Tristero's Empire), the symbol of the secret underground organisation is the post horn.

[11] Rai uses the term East and West rather uncritically. The question is if Rai's view of the East is through his work as a news photographer 'Eurocentric', i.e. does he present the East as a site for Western discursive engagement, another systematic misrepresentation of it through an orientalising discourse, or does his probing and questioning allow the narrative to move beyond such a narrow conceptualisation of the East? Alternatively is the novel going beyond a concern with misrepresentation of the East? Indeed through the audacious claim that Rock and Roll is an eastern invention it could be argued that the novel questions and destabilises a form of Orientalism which Edward Said described as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (Said 1995, 2).

[12] This point is also taken up by Peter Kadzis in his 1999 interview with Salman Rushdie. To his observation that 'One critic pointed out that *The Satanic Verses* is a book about a novelist named Salman

who moves not only westward, but also increasingly inward, searching for yet another way to describe a world that is increasingly connected, but in no way yet whole', Rushdie responds: 'It's not at all a bad description of the way that I felt at the time that I wrote *The Satanic Verses*. I felt that I'd written one novel, broadly speaking, about India and one novel, broadly speaking, about a kind of version of Pakistan, and I thought it was time that my writing made the same movement that I'd made – that's to say, migrate into the West. And I felt, first of all, that I wanted to write a novel about the act of migration and, secondly, a novel about the internal effect of migration. It's so ridiculous in light of what happened, but I did think about *The Satanic Verses* that it was the least political novel I'd ever written. I thought it was a novel of introspection and a novel which tried to make sense of the kind of life experience that people like me had had. And then, boom. It turned into the most public novel I'd ever written' (Kadzis 2000, 220).

[13] Rushdie extends the process of metamorphoses further. From London the narrative moves quickly to the US, thus Britain becomes simply a membrane that the protagonists need to pass through. Rushdie has commented how Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were essential reading for him before writing *The Satanic Verses*. While there are also echoes of Ovid in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in the way in which Rushdie connects the Orpheus myth to the novel, the influence of Virgil's *Georgics* is also immediately recognisable and becomes the more important intertext. See Rushdie's essay 'Influence' (Rushdie 2003, 77-69).

[14] Rushdie notes that 'of all the things in this novel, it was the thing I was most uncertain of. I vacillated a great deal about whether to leave that date in or not. There was a bit of me that thought it was digging the reader in the ribs too hard to leave it in. In the end I did, simply because I thought, well, one of the reasons I'm writing a novel about cataclysms in people's lives, about earthquakes, about the fact that the world is provisional and the life that you think is yours can be removed from you at any moment – one of the reasons I'm having these ideas and writing this book is because of what happened in my life, and I may as well just acknowledge the fact' (Rushdie/Kadzis 2000, 224).

[15] Rushdie explains: 'The subject of the STAAAR – the person we nominate for exceptionality, and then gleefully tear down if possible. It's a blood sport. And it's a religion, or a quasi-religion, and I've got more and more interested in it. I suppose *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is the one that deals with it most centrally' (Reynolds/Noakes 2003, 31).

[16] The chapter on *The Satanic Verses* analyses this in greater detail. For an interesting analysis of the star cult of Indian movie stars and the relationship between the stars and their audience see Gandhy/Thomas 1991, 107-131.

[17] The essay is included in *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002* (Rushdie 2003: 118-121).

[18] Ormus's surname already gestures towards this myth as well as many other stories: 'Ameer Merchant would conflate Ormus Cama and Vasco da Gama – "Ormie da Cama your great explorer, discovering you like a new world full of spices" – and it was a short step from Gama to *Gana*, song, and between Cama and *Kama*, the god of love, the distance was even less' (Rushdie 2000, 125). While these remarks show the potential of endless interpretation of meaning of names and naming, the Cama/*Kama* connection seems to be intriguing not only as an inversion of Orpheus and Eurydice but also as an especially important connection between myth and myth-making in the novel. Vina makes the connection between Ormus's comatose state after the car accident, her awakening him and the Rati/Kama myth (see Rushdie 2000, 324). Kama is the God of Love in Hindu mythology and like Cupid portrayed with bow and arrow. He likes to surround himself with nymphs (apsaras). In consultation with his wife Rati he aided Parvati to gain the favour of Shiva by disturbing his meditation and shooting his arrow at Shiva. When Shiva realised what had happened, he immediately opened his third eye and reduced Kama to ashes. Eventually the marriage of Shiva and Parvati took place despite Kama's intervention. Through the intervention of Parvati in response to Rati's pleas Shiva restored Kama back to life, however only as a mental image, no longer just an image of physical lust, but true love (see Doniger O'Flaherty 1975, 154-159).

[19] Miriam Pirbhai uses Jameson's definition as her starting point for an incisive discussion of the novel (see Pirbhai 2001, 54-66).

[20] Rushdie has written on Fiji in a column for *The New York Times* which was subsequently reprinted under the title 'June 2000: Fiji' in *Step Across This Line* (Rushdie 2003, 341-343). The fictional name of the island also clearly echoes Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Chapter 7

Rushdie's 'Mission Kashmir': *Shalimar the Clown*

Shalimar the Clown engages with terror and violence and demonstrates how Rushdie has re-routed and globalised his concerns. The narrative cuts across different time periods and territories, and challenges the legacies of Empire, nationhood and emergent new Empires. It goes beyond an investigation of the postcolonial nation's 'national longing for form' and instead highlights the repressions and exclusions that the postcolonial state imposes on its periphery, almost engaging in its own acts of colonisation. In the novel, this is dramatised in the continuing struggle over Kashmir between India and Pakistan and a variety of jihadist groups. In the process, the individual is left destitute and displaced. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie intertwines a complex double love triangle familiar from many Hindi films with an investigation into resistance narratives, discourses of nationhood and nationalism and how the mind of a terrorist might work. The novel debates a variety of important issues, but the central one remains the individual's struggle towards selfhood and subject formation in the face of stark ruptures that are conditioned by historical events.

Shalimar's murder of the former American ambassador to India, Maximilian Ophuls[1], can be read as privately and politically motivated. The axis on which the novel turns is the question: When is the personal political and the political personal? As my discussion will show, it seems that there are no clearly demarcated boundaries between the two any more. Thus the novel deals with different forms of violence and investigates their impact on the individual. When confronted with the ruins of their lives and the environments they live in, the cast of characters have to face the question if there is any possibility left to reshape their sense of self. Rushdie reveals in this novel how a conflict in one of the most remote territories, Kashmir, has consequences on the lives of people who live in different worlds and have vastly different experiences. In this respect, *Shalimar the Clown* is perhaps a globalised novel on a much more intimate level than *The Ground Beneath Her Feet.*

After *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*, Rushdie has reflected further on how to achieve clarity within his multidimensional plots: 'A story doesn't have to be simple, it doesn't have to be one-dimensional but, especially if it's multidimensional, you need to find the clearest, most engaging way of telling it' (Rushdie/Livings 2005,

110). *Shalimar the Clown* is a much more narrative- and plot-driven novel which the intertwining of a personal/private and political/public plot calls for. This stylistic shift allows for a clearer treatment of the subjects in *Shalimar the Clown* to emerge. Geographically, the novel spans the globe, starting in Los Angeles, moving to Kashmir and Delhi, 1940s Strasbourg and France, London, back to Kashmir, the Philippines, to climax, full circle, in Los Angeles. As effortlessly as the novel moves over the globe, the novel collapses time and bridges different timelines, allowing for different narrative strands to merge and add a new layer of meaning to the narrative.

Structurally, *Shalimar the Clown* resembles *The Moor's Last Sigh*, which intertwines different histories, time periods and locations ranging from Cochin, Bombay to Andalusia. *Shalimar the Clown* is less digressive and especially in the latter half borrows the straight-forward model of the thriller. Rushdie assembles an ensemble cast in this novel, rather than allowing one particular character to take centre stage, despite the suggestions of the title to the contrary. Rushdie's strategy points towards several aims. Firstly it is a further exploration of the theme of 'worlds in collision' that have preoccupied him ever since *The Satanic Verses*. Secondly, it is an attempt to further develop the 'everything novel' and the difficulty in writing about everywhere and the danger of ending up writing about 'nowhere' (see Rushdie/Livings 2005, 110). A further analogy with *The Moor's Last Sigh* suggests itself. *Shalimar the Clown* also has a central intertextual relationship with a defining film of Hindi cinema, *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). The film allows Rushdie to create a panoramic screen within the novel that is capacious enough to explore different experiences and realities. The film belongs to the genre of the 'historical' and is used in the novel to draw attention to India's Muslim legacy and Mughal synthesis, the importance of the concept of *Kashmiriyat*, communal harmony and tolerance.

Unlike Rushdie's previous novels, *Shalimar the Clown* is not defined by an urban setting. The novel is largely set in a rural environment, which at first sight might seem like a very marked shift. However, when considered in the context of the previous novels the shift is less stark. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the narrator Rai Merchant relates an episode in rural Gujarat, exposing a goat scam. Some of the stories in *East, West* are set in rural, rather than urban spaces as are the Titlipur section and the Rosa Diamond episode in *The Satanic Verses*. The first chapters of *Midnight's Children* are also set in rural Kashmir.[2]

As *Shalimar the Clown* travels across the globe, Rushdie investigates important geopolitical questions: American interventionism, separatist insurgencies, Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, freedom struggles and the shifting role of a former colonised country like India, its emergence as a regional power, but also a 'colonial' power. Rushdie links the Kashmir conflict and the dispute over the territory between India and Pakistan aptly to the Franco-German conflict over Alsace-Lorraine that was finally resolved with Germany's defeat in 1945. He draws a tentative parallel between separatist movements in different countries and different periods, questioning and exploding categories such as 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter'. The Kashmir conflict is revealed as a religious, political and territorial issue. The novel investigates the impact of military, political and religious violence as the paradise of Kashmir is physically destroyed. By connecting these issues to people who live in different territories, Rushdie shows that the experiences of other people impact on other people's stories:

> It used to be possible to write a novel about, say, London or Kashmir or Strasbourg or California, without any sense of connection. But now it's all one story. That's what I want to say. Everybody's story is running into everybody else's story [...] Now I feel more and more that if you're telling a story of a murder in California, you end up having to tell the story of many other places and many other times in order to make sense of that event and that place. To try to show how those stories join.
>
> (Rushdie/Dougary 2005)

Writing Kashmir from *Midnight's Children* to *Shalimar the Clown*

Most of the plot of *Shalimar the Clown* revolves around the mountainous valley of Kashmir. Rushdie, who is of Kashmiri ancestry, has used the valley as a setting before, but a closer analysis of the previous ways in which it features is revealing in the context of his latest novel insofar as here Rushdie most explicitly deals with Kashmiri politics, the disputed status of the valley within the Indian Union and how in this dispute individuals are trampled underfoot as paradise is smashed to pieces.

The first two chapters of *Midnight's Children* narrate the return of Aadam Aziz from medical training in Heidelberg and his falling in love in fragments with Naseem Ghani. In this first chapter, in a flashback to 1915 Kashmir, Saleem narrates the courtship of his grandfather and grandmother, inadvertently introducing the filmic technique of inter-cutting scenes. The novel commences with Aadam Aziz's profound loss of faith, triggered by his stay in Europe, which had led him to alter his vision. For Aziz, it leads to a conflict between modernity, represented by the anarchist/communist principles of Oskar-Ilse-Ingrid and the traditional values of Kashmir (Rushdie 1995a,

10). Rushdie suggests that the Kashmir of *Midnight's Children* is a mythic paradisiacal space, which Aziz threatens through his foreign education and knowledge, by stepping into 'history'. The act of leaving the valley for his education creates a split in Aadam Aziz's sense of self, which, in another flashback he recalls occurring through his discussions with Ilse Lubin and Oskar. Thus by returning to Kashmir, Aziz tries to reconcile his new self with a previous one: 'so here he was, despite their presence in his head, attempting to re-unite himself with an earlier self which ignored their influence but knew everything it ought to have known' (Rushdie 1995a, 11).

In the relationship between Tai and Aziz, and their subsequent conflict, Kashmir takes on different connotations. Through the Kashmir conflict, India's entry into a postcolonial modernity is felt most acutely. This is dramatised in Aziz's uneasy return home. For the Boatman Tai, he becomes the embodiment of rationality and science, associated with a modernity that Tai sees as a threat to the ancient cultural and historical legacy of Kashmir. In this respect, Kashmir is a place of origins, a place of beginnings that also transforms into a place of hope betrayed and possibilities denied. It is sentimentalised in *Shalimar the Clown*, and first thematised in Saleem's description of the valley:

> In those days there was no army camp at the lakeside, no endless snakes of camouflaged trucks and jeeps clogged the narrow mountain roads, no soldiers hid behind the crests of the mountains past Baramulla and Gulmarg. In those days travellers were not shot as spies if they took photographs of bridges, and apart from the Englishmen's houseboats on the lake, the valley had hardly changed since the Mughal Empire, for all its springtime renewals [...] Many years later, [...] he would try and recall his childhood springs in Paradise, the way it was before travel and tussocks and army tanks messed everything up.
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 10-11)

Kashmir is here a territory still unblemished by the wrangling of Pakistani and Indian politics and is presented as a primordial paradise.

Aziz's altered vision allows for the introduction of an argument about faith and reason, which causes his self to split and seems to foreshadow Gibreel Farishta's crisis of faith. Parallel to this runs an argument about tradition and modernity. Tai's rage is described as 'incomprehensible' (Rushdie 1995a, 20). Tai is conceptualised as a primordial figure who represents unchangingness, which he underlines by his decision to stop washing as an act of defiance against the doctor who brings an alien knowledge to the valley and threatens to upset its volatile balance. Clearly, modernity, science and progress are revealed as threats that bring with it the potential for destruction. This

argument is developed further in *Shalimar the Clown* as the novel explicitly asks what the creation of India and Pakistan achieved in Kashmir.

The relationship and conflict between Tai and Aziz is representative of alternative possibilities for India. It is revealing how these possibilities are discarded. Tai is killed in the first conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Aziz dies in 1964, the year Nehru died, while Saleem, it is suggested, may not survive 1977. Aziz in his last moments of lucidity warns his family: "'These Nehrus will not be happy until they have made themselves hereditary kings!'" (Rushdie 1995a, 275) Tai later reappears in Aziz's hallucinations as he cracks up mentally and physically. It is almost as if the ghost of Tai inhabits Aziz. The man who suffered from the optimism disease, Aziz, infected by the possibility of a new dawn for a free, secular undivided India represented by the Free Islam Convocation, cracks after sixteen years. Saleem observes:

> *The boatman Tai said: 'The ice is always waiting, Aadam baba, just under the water's skin.'* I saw the cracks in his eyes – a delicate tracery of colourless lines against the blue; I saw a network of fissures spreading beneath his leathery skin [...].
>
> (Rushdie 1995a, 275, original italics)

The mental and physical disintegration of Tai, Aziz and Saleem in *Midnight's Children* connects them, as they both recognise how their hopes have been betrayed. Aziz returns to Kashmir, after his vision of Jesus, and dies inside the Sankara Acharya temple on Solomon's Seat. It seems that through his return to Kashmir Aziz reconciles himself with Tai as their dualism is resolved. Aziz has the same vision of Jesus that Tai had and Aziz allegedly stealing the relic from the Hazratbal Mosque is his last act of defiance, before his body cracks and his skeleton disintegrates in the temple.[3]

The question of self-determination and secular communal harmony, which Rushdie associates with Kashmir, are already laid out here, but are developed in greater detail in *Shalimar the Clown.* [4] In her interesting analysis of Part I of *Midnight's Children* Ananya Jahanara Kabir engages with the novel's representations of Partition, the trauma of the loss of Kashmir and its effects on the novel's protagonists. Kashmir already features in *Midnight's Children* as a lost paradise to which a return seems impossible. Kabir suggests that the narrative is shaped by two losses, on the one hand that of *Kashmiriyat*[5] (the concept of 'Kashmiri-ness'), and on the other, what Kabir calls 'the mythic geography of South Asian Muslim high culture, specifically that invested in the imperial Mughal past' (Kabir 2002, 252). The sign that denotes that loss within the Kashmiri context of the narrative is Aadam Aziz's pigskin bag that so outrages the

boatman Tai, which for him symbolises the profane, the foreign, the alien, and the invasion of progress that threatens to destabilise Kashmiri peace (Rushdie 1995a, 27).

In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie's fictionalised Kashmir, the valley of K., is presented not only as paradise, but also as a political battleground. The story makes a wholehearted argument for the human need for stories for our own survival. The question on which the story hinges is '*What's the use of stories that aren't even true*?' (Rushdie 1991, 22) The novel follows the adventures of Haroun and his father Rashid Khalifa, a storyteller, who on a story-telling tour paid for by a group of corrupt politicians in the valley of K. have to save the Ocean of the Stream of Stories from Khattam-Shud, the arch-enemy of all stories, language and speech. The storyteller is faced with the problem of having lost his story-telling gift after his wife left him for another man and he accidentally cancelled his subscription of story water supply. After apprehending the story water disconnector, Haroun forces Iff the water genii to take him to Gup City in Kahani on the shores of the ocean.

The starting place for Haroun's adventure is a fictionalised Kashmir, here only referred to as the valley of K., which Rashid describes as follows: 'There are fields of gold and mountains of silver and in the middle of the valley is a beautiful Lake whose name, by the way, is Dull' (Rushdie 1991, 25). Rushdie uses Kashmir's awe-inspiring natural beauty as a backdrop, which he describes as 'a view spread out like a magic carpet, waiting for someone to come and take a ride' (Rushdie 1991, 34). Yet Rushdie suggests that the Valley of K. in the country of Alifbay is not an entirely happy place denoted by a vandalised welcome sign that now announced 'WELCOME TO KOSH-MAR'. Rashid explains: 'Let me think, Yes, that was it. "Kache-Mer" can be translated as "the place that hides a Sea". But Kosh-Mar is a ruder name.' [...] 'In the old tongue,' Rashid admitted, 'it was the word for "nightmare"' (Rushdie 1991, 40). Rushdie sets up a dialectic tension between the natural beauty of the valley and hints at the people's unhappiness because of the political situation, which is reflected in the insincere 'movie-star smile' of the politician Mr Buttoo who invited Rashid to his election rally. Rushdie reveals that on the one hand, the Valley of K. is a place of such beauty that it inspires stories, reflected also in the name of the barge on which Rashid and Haroun spend the night, *The Arabian Nights Plus One*, while on the other, its people live a man-made nightmare caused by a corrupt political elite. After ridding Kahani of the evil Khattam-Shud, and with his story-telling gift restored, Rashid turns the people against Buttoo and his unpopular local government at the rally through the power of his story.

Buttoo flees, never to be seen again in the valley, which allowed the people in the valley of K. the freedom to choose their leaders (Rushdie 1990, 207). The moral, then, of this fable is that 'stories that aren't even true' can inspire people to be active participants to stand up for their rights. This might seem idealistic, but works in the context of a children's novel, and resonates in some of Rushdie's non-fiction as well as other fiction.

The right to freedom of expression is coupled with the right to self-determination, which become important markers in the narrative argument of *Shalimar the Clown*. This is also reflected in Rushdie's non-fictional engagement with the Kashmir conflict. In a column which Rushdie wrote for *The New York Times* on the occasion of the stand-off between India and Pakistan in the Kargil area in 1999, Rushdie laments how both nations have disregarded the wishes of the Kashmiris, turning the valley into a militarised battle zone, a territory over which the two nations, and more dangerously two nuclear regional powers, compete.[6] In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie portrays a paradise that is lost and physically smashed up by man. As Rushdie explains:

> *Shalimar* was a kind of attempt to write a Kashmiri *Paradise Lost*. Only *Paradise Lost* is about the fall of man – paradise is still there, it's just that we get kicked out of it. *Shalimar* is about the smashing of paradise. It's as if Adam went back with bombs and blew the place up.
>
> (Rushdie/Livings 2005, 112)

The Kashmir of *Shalimar the Clown* unites in its narrative aspects of the territory Rushdie has addressed previously. However, he proceeds further by detailing how Kashmir, after India and Pakistan became independent nation states, was turned into a battle zone. In the initial stages of the 'Boonyi' section, it seems as though Kashmir exists out of real time, where the impact of politics is peripheral and does not influence day-to-day life in the village. There is only the analogy between Abdullah Sher Noman who is compared to a lion, like Sheikh Abdullah, 'The Lion of Kashmir', which introduces Kashmiri politics into the narrative.[7]

At first, the novel concerns itself with the multiple meanings of names and the mythic space that is associated with Kashmir. Thus the village name of Pachigam, it is suggested, is a version of Panchigam, birdville, perhaps an implicit allusion to the Sufi interpretation of Islam that used to be prevalent in Kashmir (Rushdie 2006b, 61).[8] It also seems to echo Titlipur, the City of Butterflies in *The Satanic Verses*. At this stage, conflict on religious lines seems impossible. However, a conflict between Shirmal and Pachigam erupts when Pachigam expands its business from *bhand pather* clown-story performances into catering to offer an all-round entertainment package. The conflict, which becomes violent, is thought of as outrageous: 'nobody had imagined that so

outrageous a breach of the peace was possible, that Kashmiris would attack other Kashmiris driven by such crummy motivations as envy, malice and greed' (Rushdie 2006b, 62-63). The conflict between the two villages is economic, rather than ideological as Pachigam broke the Shirmalis' monopoly of the banquet market. The pot war is set in 1946, yet the village seer and prophetess Nazarébaddoor predicts: 'This is the first pebble that starts the avalanche' (Rushdie 2006b, 63).[9]

Both villages are brought back together when the Maharaja requested the villagers to present their skills at the grand Dassehra festival. This occasion leads Pyarelal Kaul, Bonnyi's father, to remark on the interconnectedness between Hindus and Muslims in the valley:

> 'Just consider for a moment!' cried Pyarelal. 'Today our Muslim village, in the service of our Hindu maharaja, will cook and act in a Mughal – that is to say Muslim – garden, to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which Ram marched against Ravan to rescue Sita. [...] Who tonight are the Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir, our stories sit happily side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes.'
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 71)

It becomes evident how interconnected culturally Hindus and Muslims are. The emblem of this Kashmiri tolerance, of communal harmony, which along with the natural splendour of the valley is likened to paradise, are the Shalimar Gardens, which are evoked as such on numerous occasions in the novel (see Rushdie 2006b, 75-80). In the novel, the Shalimar Gardens, built by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, represent Mughal tolerance, synthesis and harmony that is associated with Kashmir. The narrator elaborates: 'Paradise too was a garden – Gulistan, Jannat, Eden – and here before him was its mirror on earth. He had always loved the Mughal gardens of Kashmir, Nishat, Chashma Shahi, and above all Shalimar, and to perform there had been his lifelong dream' (Rushdie 2006b, 78). In the Shalimar Gardens, Abdullah Noman drifts in and out of dreamlike musings about the genesis of Kashmiri tolerance and focuses in these meditations on what in his opinion distinguishes the valley: 'To be a Kashmiri, to have received so incomparable a divine gift, was to value what was shared far more than what divided' (Rushdie 2006b, 83). This vision of Kashmir is to be shattered with independence for India and Pakistan. As Pachigam and Shirmal prepare for their performances, news of Pakistan's invasion of the valley spreads, dramatising the events of October 1947 when rebels gained control over Poonch and advanced quickly to Srinagar, which led the maharaja to flee Kashmir (see Rushdie 2006b, 85). Rushdie dramatises the political and military argument in a dialogue of different rumours that

debate the status of the valley and the indecisiveness of the maharaja, creating panic among the villagers and suggesting that Nazarébaddoor's prophecy becomes true. She describes the new age that dawns metaphorically as a time of demons beginning. 'Abdullah Noman experienced the bizarre sensation of living through a metaphor made real. The world he knew was disappearing; this blind, inky night was the incontestable sign of the times' (Rushdie 2006b, 88). The end of this section suggests the loss of paradise and the narrative then leaps fourteen years to 1962 with Kashmir now a militarised zone, brilliantly evoked in the army camp Elasticnagar which grows so large that it becomes known as broken Elasticnagar.

General Hammirdev Kachhwaha, the commander of the army in Kashmir, who would later become the Hammer of Kashmir, lays out the Indian position on the army presence in Kashmir as follows:

> Elasticnagar was unpopular, the colonel knew that, but unpopularity was illegal. The legal position was that the Indian military presence in Kashmir had the full support of the population, and to say otherwise was to break the law. To break the law was to be a criminal and criminals were not to be tolerated and it was right to come down on them heavily with the full panoply of the law and with hobnail boots and *lathi* sticks as well. [...] Elasticnagar was integral to the Indian effort and the Indian effort was to preserve the integrity of the nation. Integrity was a quality to be honoured and an attack on the integrity of the nation was an attack on its honour and was not to be tolerated. Therefore Elasticnagar was to be honoured and all other attitudes were dishonourable and consequently illegal. Kashmir was an integral part of India. An integer was a whole and India was an integer and fractions were illegal. [...] Not to accept this was to lack integrity and implicitly or explicitly to question the unquestionable integrity of those who did accept it. Not to accept this was latently or patently to favour disintegration. This was subversive. Subversion leading to disintegration was not to be tolerated and it was right to come down on it heavily whether it was of the overt or covert kind. [...] When the truth and integrity conflicted it was integrity that had to be given precedence. Not even the truth could be permitted to dishonour the nation. Therefore Elasticnagar was popular even though it was not popular.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 96)

Rushdie details the logic of Indian involvement and military intervention in Kashmir and ties it to a discourse of nationhood and nationalism. Kashmir is seen as an integral part of the Indian Union and to suggest otherwise is to challenge its authority. Rushdie shows that this logic is paradoxical and absurd in this final statement. For Kachhwaha, the idea of 'Kashmir for the Kashmiris', and self-determination of their own political future, which was promised and is denied to this day, seems nothing but a ludicrous idea. Yet through the absurdity of his logical reasoning, the illogicality of the argument is reversed. General Kachhwaha is quick to dismiss any challenge to the unity of India:

'Where did that kind of thinking get you? If Kashmir, why not also Assam for the Assamese, Nagaland for the Nagas? [...] Why not stand still and draw a circle round your feet and name that Selfistan?' (Rushdie 2006b, 101-102) Yet all the regions he cites have long-standing secessionist movements fighting for self-determination.

Parallel to the logic of the state, Rushdie then proceeds to introduce into the novel radical Islam as the second destructive force in Kashmir through the arrival of Bulbul Fakh in the village of Shirmal. He is described as a 'blood-and-thunder preacher' and is nicknamed the iron mullah as the villagers of Shirmal associate him with the detritus of military metal hardware that lay rotting in the valley and, according to legend, took on human form and a life of its own (Rushdie 2006b, 115). Rushdie visualises here how the beginning religious radicalisation of Kashmiris through the influx of Islamic terrorists and preachers goes hand in hand with the draconian military presence in Kashmir. The iron mullahs thus arrive to preach resistance and revenge. Maulana Bulbulb Fakh, whose name roughly translates as 'nightingale with a bad odour', may seem like a sinister version of the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*. He is set up in the novel as a figure to be honoured, feared and obeyed and is the cause for communal strife, further exacerbating the relations between Shirmal and Pachigam. It culminates in the rape of the Hindu girl Zoon Misri by the Muslim Gegroo brothers Aurangzeb[10], Alauddin and Abulkalam, as the mullah denounces Pachigam as 'the enemy within' because of its celebration of communal interaction and harmony (Rushdie 2006b, 119). The arrival of Bulbul Fakh in Shirmal coincides with the 1965 war between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch, which turns Elasticnagar into 'Broken Elasticnagar'. The army general speaks of his disillusionment with Kashmiris and their renewed calls for self-determination, which for him suggested that the population was somehow wanting insofar as it showed itself 'ungrateful' to be 'defended' (Rushdie 2006b, 130).

Kachhwaha's disenchantment is countered by that of Abdullah and Firdaus Noman as doubts about their belief in a union with India creeps in:

> Up to now they had tried to believe that their beloved Kashmiriness was best served by some kind of association with India, because India was where the churning happened, the commingling of this and that, Hindu and Muslim, many gods and one. But now the mood had changed.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 131)

The changed situation makes the love match of Boonyi and Shalimar seem like a false symbol, associated with another age that is disappearing fast. This lament recalls Rushdie's belief expressed in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* that India

moved away from the secular ethos after Nehru's death in 1964 and that communal politics were allowed to play a much larger part in Indian politics. It is in this instance that Rushdie draws analogies with the film *Mughal-e-Azam* by pointing to the film's debates about justice, Mughal tolerance and by drawing parallels between the story of forbidden love between Anarkali and Prince Salim. In the context of the novel, the belief in Boonyi's and Shalimar's love seems like a futile last stand, as their love, too, is betrayed, defeated and dies.

Defeated Love – *Shalimar the Clown* and *Mughal-e-Azam*

While the novel's political themes are all-pervasive as they impact on all characters, the novel is first and foremost a story of betrayed love where humiliation and shame lead to all-consuming violence. Rushdie is revisiting themes from *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, yet he explores them differently in different time frames and contexts. The love story of Boonyi and Shalimar is tied to the notion of *Kashmiriyat* and its decline. When news of their lovemaking spreads and their secret is exposed, the village headman invokes *Kashmiriyat* to rationalise the possibility of a marriage between a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy:

> *Kashmiriyat*, Kashmiriness, the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences. Most bhand villages were Muslim but Pachigam was a mixture, with families of pandit background, the Kauls and Misris, and the baritone singer's long nosed kin [...] and even one family of dancing Jews. 'So we have not only Kashmiriness to protect but Pachigamness as well. We are all brothers and sisters here,' said Abdullah. 'There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. [...]'
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 110)

Their marriage is a love match and the defence and celebration of their love is thus elevated into a defence of *Kashmiriyat* itself.

The love story of Boonyi and Shalimar is also linked with *Mughal-e-Azam*. The film narrates a story of forbidden love between Prince Salim and Anarkali. The dance number from the film re-enacted by Boonyi reminds the reader of the song picturisation in the movie. Although the movie is filmed in black and white, there are two instances where the film is in colour, one of them the elaborate dance number in question.[11] Rushdie's use of *Mughal-e-Azam* in the novel is not accidental and the inclusion of the dance number is not a conceit merely to provide cinematic spectacle. Through the film Rushdie implicitly references the importance of Kashmir for the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jehangir. Furthermore, he links the concept of Mughal Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis with the idea of *Kashmiriyat*. In addition, the film plot of the

legendary Anarkali - Prince Salim love story is used to draw a parallel between Boonyi and Max. In this respect the film becomes a marker in the novel that allows for the bridging of the novel's politics with the story of forbidden and betrayed love. Rachel Dwyer's analysis of the 'Islamicate' film is instructive here.

Dwyer terms those films 'Islamicate' that refer to Islam in its social and cultural context. These films are not concerned with religion and religious depictions as such (Dwyer 2005, 96). Through the Anarkali dance number Rushdie evokes the cultural legacy of the Muslim court through the genre of the historical film. As Dwyer notes, films set in the Mughal period were made specifically in an attempt to show the 'Muslim period' as an integral part of Indian history to promote national unity in the immediate post-independence period (Dwyer 2006, 115). These films depicted, according to Dwyer, 'a composite religious culture as an ideal to be emulated' (Dwyer 2006, 115). Dwyer further notes that the legend of Anarkali and Prince Salim, who later became the Emperor Jehangir, was incredibly popular (Dwyer 2006, 115). The story was often performed in Indian theatre and there were three film versions of the story, a silent film in 1928, a version in 1952 by Filmistan titled *Anarkali* and Asif's version *Mughal-e-Azam*, which arguably is the most popular version (see Dwyer 2006, 115). Rushdie references the song '*Pyar kiya to darna kya*?' ('What is there to fear? All I have done is to love/why be afraid of love?'), the moment in which the film bursts from black-and-white into colour.[12] As Dwyer notes, the film is not a social history, but rather narrates family history. It is not even clear if Anarkali is an historical figure. However, '*Mughal-e-Azam* tells Mughal history in the context of the new nation' (Dwyer 2006, 116). In this respect, *Mughal-e-Azam*, like many historical films at the time, emulates the idea of history as discussed in Nehru's *Discovery of India*.

Mughal-e-Azam belongs to the genre of the historical film, which were made much more rarely, presumably because of the resources needed to create the lavish sets and costumes on screen. According to Sumita S. Chakravarty, between 1947-1967 an average of about three historical films were produced every year (Chakravarty 1993, 157). While the genre was in decline from the late 1960s onwards, it has had a revival in recent years with the success of films such as *Lagaan* (2001), a remake of *Devdas* (2002) and *Mangal Pandey: the Rising* (2005).

The inclusion of *Mughal-e-Azam* in *Shalimar the Clown* subliminally raises the issues of history and historical representation and how they are transformed in the narrative. By bringing together history and narration historicals also create their own

mythology by moving away from realist representation and by looking at opulence and classicism (Chakravarty 1993, 159). It is important to note that Bombay historical films are by nature a mixture of myth, legend, and the folk tale and not engaged in a 'truthful' representation of the past (Chakravarty 1993, 160). According to Chakravarty, this aligns the representation of history in Hindi cinema to an Indian tradition of historiography, where history is intertwined with myth and legend and reveals a process of cultural syncretism reflected in terms like 'unity in diversity' and 'synthesis' that stem from a complex process of cultural adaptation and adjustment (Chakravarty 1993, 160). Similarly to the Muslim social films, or films like *Mother India*, the historical film sought to appeal to a sense of national identity that went beyond the divisions of caste, regional and religious identity.[13] In this respect, the historical film could be read as an inflection of post-independence India (see Chakravarty 1993, 163).

Thus, *Mughal-e-Azam*, released in 1960, after fifteen years in the making, very explicitly addresses the issue of Partition and the Muslim minority that still lived in India at the time. While the filmmakers worked on the film, they lived through the transition from colonial to postcolonial, the withdrawal of the British coloniser and the advent of Partition that brought with it the displacement of millions and bloodshed and violence on an unimaginable scale. The film emphasises synthesis through its selective representation of the past in its nostalgic display of Mughal grandeur. As Chakravarty argues: 'the impulse toward synthesis becomes a means of exploring ideological and psychic disturbances pertaining to the group in question that then get resolved through emotional drama' (Chakravarty 1993, 165). In this respect, the Hindu-Muslim relationship is sublimated in historical representation (see Dwyer 2006). In this context, as Chakravarty notes, 'the nationalist ideology of historical synthesis found an effective though hardly unproblematic milieu in the Mughal period' (Chakravarty 1993, 166). The film thus has to be read in the context of the debate about how the Muslim intervention in Indian history needs to be understood in the context of the Nehruvian ideal of 'unity-in-diversity'. The portrayal of Hindu-Muslim synthesis and harmony relates to the context of Bombay film production where interaction between Hindu and Muslim writers, directors, actors, musicians were living proof of a cultural synthesis and an example of unity and communal harmony (see Chakravarty 1993, 167).

Mughal-e-Azam uses the historical setting of Akbar's Mughal court in its retelling of the Anarkali legend.[14] Prince Salim, Akbar's son, falls in love with a dancing girl. As the title of the film (The Great Mughal) suggests, Akbar is just as

important to the film as is the love story of Prince Salim and Anarkali. Hindi cinema merges the legend of Anarkali successfully with history. As Chakravarty notes, the Mughal period (1556-1707) and especially Akbar's rule (1556-1605) have been of particular interest for Bombay film-makers as his reputation as a just and tolerant ruler, his sponsorship of the arts and his respect for Hindu culture allowed for the suggestion of a common cultural bond between Hindus and Muslims (Chakravarty 1993, 168). The opening shot of the film already denotes this with a rising map of India and a voice-over that refers to a common citizenship and ancestry of India. The film then shows the artistic and architectural legacy of the Mughal period in Akbar's palace in Fatehpur Sikri that reflects the cultural and artistic synthesis of Hindu and Muslim styles. The film initially takes on these broader political issues, before moving on to the love story of Salim and Anarkali who fall in love in defiance of Akbar. The romance is, as Chakravarty states, the source of spectacle in the film with Anarkali's performance as a dancer as well as more intimate love scenes (Chakravarty 1993, 172). The dance sequence in the mirror palace is the undisputed highlight of the film. Here, the film most explicitly finds its way into *Shalimar the Clown*. Anarkali, the enslaved dancing girl, is looked upon by men of power – Akbar and Salim. In defiance of Akbar, who forbade the relationship, her dancing and singing clearly denote that she is still in love with Salim. Undoubtedly, the film is strategically evoked in the novel to suggest nostalgia for an irretrievably lost period and a glorious past of Hindu-Muslim understanding and tolerance as it is presented in the court of Akbar, a Muslim ruler who married a Hindu princess, without forcing her to convert and allowing her to practice her religion freely.

The importance of the allusion to Akbar through *Mughal-e-Azam* will become even clearer when looking at Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian*. Sen ties Akbar's ethos of toleration to a wider tradition of argument and reasoning in India, which also links to emperor Ashoka. According to Sen, Akbar was not only an advocate of the primacy of tolerance, but institutionalised it by enshrining the religious neutrality of the state through a secular legal structure (Sen 2006b, 18). Sen argues that what is extraordinary about Akbar, is that at a time when the Inquisition was still on the rampage in Europe, Akbar had the foresight to acknowledge and recognise the integral cultural and religious diversity of India (Sen 2006b, 39) This recognition makes for a distinctive argument about the unity of India.

Sen points towards two features of the intercommunal discussions that took place at Akbar's court at the end of the sixteenth century: 'The first was the "acceptance

of plurality", embracing the regular presence of a multitude of beliefs and convictions. The second was the "dialogic commitment" in the form of Akbar's visionary insistence on the need to have conversations and interchanges among holders of different beliefs and convictions' (Sen 2006b, 39). For Sen, Akbar's commitment to religious neutrality in state affairs is the foundation stone of the non-denominational, secular state (Sen 2006b, 287). In this respect, by invoking Akbar in the novel, Rushdie does implicitly reference the Mughal Emperor's convictions, the recognised plurality of India and the need for dialogue and discussion, which are the only ways of resolving the Kashmir conflict. Thus I would argue that in *Shalimar the Clown* Akbar's rule functions as a lost ideal, similar to Moorish Spain in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.[15]

Anarkali's dance is an act of defiance, similar to Boonyi's. Boonyi becomes the lover of the American ambassador and a woman who through her actions is forced to live outside respectable society. Her fate and her position in the novel echo that of the courtesan in Hindi cinema. In films like *Umrao Jaan* (1981) or *Pakeezah* (1971) and as she features in films such as *Devdas*, the courtesan is the embodiment of Islamic culture, although she is a woman whose place is outside of respectable society, displaying, as Dwyer argues, 'a socially unacceptable sexual but non-reproductive femininity' (Dwyer 2006, 122):

> This behaviour marginalises her, positioning her outside the domain of the modern female citizen by creating a powerful image of a decadent femininity, very different from the active sexuality of the Hindu woman within the bounds of marriage and the family, explored by the Hindi film.
>
> (Dwyer 2006, 122)

Although Boonyi is Hindu, not Muslim, her position relates to that of the courtesan as Dwyer describes it. When Boonyi leaves Pachigam for New Delhi to dance for the American Ambassador, she plays the role of the courtesan as much as Max takes on the role of the heir to the Mughal throne (Rushdie 2006b, 191). It is never quite clear if Boonyi sees Max only as her escape route or if she desires him. His desire, however, turns to love, despite the fact that it compromises his position as ambassador. Boonyi's attempt at escaping from the village of her birth fails spectacularly as the attraction between her and Max wanes.

Boonyi betrays Shalimar, despite her love for him. The intense affair between Max and Boonyi reveals that love can be broken, is deceitful and can be a forgery. She becomes the accomplished concubine, because in her relationship with Max she does not involve her heart: '*I will be the perfect counterfeit of a loving woman and you will receive from me a perfect forgery of love*' (Rushdie 2006b, 194, original italics). Boonyi

comes to realise that the old life in Kashmir with Shalimar, which she sought to escape, because she felt as though it imprisoned her, was actually freedom and that she had been deceived by her own calculations. The idea of freedom becomes for her a matter of perspective. Love is thus unmasked as an illusion, as something that does not necessarily endure. In her final confrontation with Max, love is revealed to be wanton, destructive and selfish (Rushdie 2006b, 205). It becomes clear that Boonyi needs to face up to reality:

> But Boonyi was no longer Anarkali, she had lost her beauty and could no longer dance, and the ambassador was nobody's son but the man of power himself. And Anarkali didn't get pregnant. Stories were stories and real life was real life, naked, ugly, and finally impossible to cosmeticize in the greasepaint of a tale.
> (Rushdie 2006b, 204)

The Anarkali legend in this respect serves as a way of paralleling the double love triangle of Shalimar-Boonyi-Max-Peggy. While the story is alluded to, it is also frustrated insofar as the narrator is at pains to point out where the analogy ends. Thus, the Anarkali story in which Boonyi envelops herself is a screen behind which she hides from reality. In this respect, Rushdie follows here a similar strategy to the one he deploys in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and his deployment of *Mother India*. In *Shalimar the Clown*, *Mughal-e-Azam* serves as an analogy to the representation of an idealised love.

When Boonyi returns to the village she finds that she had been declared dead by her father, her mother-in-law, her father-in-law and her husband (Rushdie 2006b, 223). Only Zoon Misri thinks of speaking to her as she also inhabits, after the rape she had to endure, the world of the living dead to which Boonyi is now also confined. Boonyi is described thus as 'a stationary corpse' and 'a snow-woman with the body of the deceased Boonyi inside' (Rushdie 2006b, 221). She returns to her village as a ghost and she has to confront the cuckolded Shalimar who only bides his time to assassinate her. The betrayal of his love drives him to fulfil the oath he made on their first lovemaking: 'Don't you leave me now, or I'll never forgive you, and I'll have my revenge, I'll kill you and if you have any children by another man I'll kill the children also', a remark she carelessly dismisses as post-coital romantic effusions on the part of her lover (Rushdie 2006b, 61). On her return, Boonyi immediately understands Shalimar's feelings: 'She had never seen such a look before. Humbly she told herself that it was the look she deserved, in which hatred and contempt mingled with grief and hurt and a terrible, broken love' (Rushdie 2006b, 222). Boonyi is aware of his oath, which she initially dismissed so light-heartedly and knows that she will die at the hands of her husband. Thus like Zoon, Boonyi now exists out of real time and by that conceit she

becomes the replacement for the prophetess Nazarébaddoor in the novel. She communicates telepathically with Shalimar. Boonyi shuts herself away in Nazarébaddoor's remote hut, as she has to face up to her own actions. Once again, she evokes the analogy with Anarkali: 'Anarkali, too, had been immured for indulging a forbidden lust. And the trapdoor and the escape passage that set her free? That was just in the movies. In real life there were no such easy escapes' (Rushdie 2006b, 227).

Betrayed love, then, becomes closely intertwined with the political themes of the novel insofar as the love story of Boonyi and Shalimar, a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl, is set up as an emblem of tolerance that prevails in the village of Pachigam and distinguishes itself from the neighbouring village of Shirmal (Rushdie 2006b, 61). The end of their friendly neighbourly relationship also ushers in the decline of *Kashmiriyat*. For Shalimar and Boonyi, the words Hindu and Muslim were immaterial: 'In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred. This was how things had to be. This was Kashmir' (Rushdie 2006b, 57). When Boonyi returns to Kashmir after her affair, the Hindu-Muslim harmony has already been irreparably disturbed with the beginning radicalisation of the neighbouring village of Shirmal. In this respect, the death of Shalimar and Boonyi's love is parallel to the decline of tolerant Kashmir and unleashes Shalimar's vengefulness and violence. When Shalimar learns his rope trick with which he joins the *bhand pather* troupe, his father initiates him into a trick that allows him to transform himself: 'Metamorphosis was the secret heart of life' (Rushdie 2006b, 56). His broken love triggers another metamorphosis in him as he leaves to train as a terrorist to enable him to fulfil his seemingly innocent promise. Shalimar trains in a jihadist terrorist training camp in Pakistan, under the supervision of the iron mullah Bulbul Fakh, so that one day he would kill the American Ambassador.

The loss of Shalimar and Boonyi's love and its link to the ideal of *Kashmiriyat* leads her Pandit father Pyarelal Kaul to a deep questioning of human nature and Kashmir's anti-communalist principles:

> The love of Boonyi and Shalimar the clown had been defended by the whole of Pachigam, had been worth defending, as a symbol of victory of the human over the inhuman [...] He was even questioning the anticommunalist principles embodied in the notion of *Kashmiriyat*, and beginning to wonder if discord were not a more powerful principle than harmony. Communal violence everywhere was an intimate crime. [...]
>
> Maybe *Kashmiriyat* was an illusion. [...] Maybe the tolerant reign of good king Zain-ul-abidin should be seen – as some pandits were beginning to see it – as an aberration, not a symbol of unity. Maybe tyranny, forced

> conversions, temple-smashing, iconoclasm, persecution and genocide were the norms and peaceful coexistence was an illusion.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 238-239)

In this respect, the loss of love is entwined with the loss of an ideal, which their love encapsulates. The breaking of their love is analogue to the destruction of that ideal and allows for a merging of the political and personal elements in the novel.

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter

The question why Rushdie chose to tackle terror overtly in one of his novels may be attributed not only to the events of 11 September 2001, but also to his engagement with Kashmir in the novel and the different dimension brought into the India-Pakistan conflict with the rise of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism and their influence on main-stream politics in both countries. In this respect, as Walter Laqueur argues, in Kashmir the nature of a territorial conflict acquired a religious dimension, which needs to be taken into account when writing about Kashmir (Laqueur 2003, 178). The novel needs to be understood in the context of different conceptualisations of nationalism and the Indian conceptualisation of secularism, which, as has been explained in chapter 5, differs from that in the West. The question of nationhood and separatism is important for the narrative argument in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and, perhaps more superficially, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*. While *The Moor's Last Sigh* engages with the 1992 riots and bomb blasts in Bombay and argues against a single, unitary idea of Indianness, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* briefly discusses Sikh separatism. Although the discovery of Yul Singh's financial aid and moral support in the fight for a Sikh homeland is a plot device that ushers in his fall, it introduces into the novel an implicit argument about the fractured nature of Indian identity and conceptualisations of nationhood and belonging. *Fury* similarly takes this up albeit in the different context of Fiji. These are important precursors to Rushdie's engagement with India's treatment of the peripheral state of Kashmir since independence and the insurgency in Kashmir that began in 1989. Rushdie complicates this by paralleling it with the narrative of Max Ophuls in 1930s Strasbourg, the subsequent occupation of France by Nazi Germany in 1940 and his involvement in the French Resistance.

The link between Kashmir and Alsace-Lorraine might at first seem spurious. Yet Max, a bullish diplomat who has the political negotiating skill of a Henry Kissinger and the charm and sexual energy of a Bill Clinton, makes the analogy himself, thinking that he may be able to understand India and Kashmir because the region he comes from has

similarly been defined and redefined over the centuries by the shift in frontiers because of the rivalry between France and Germany (see Rushdie 2006b, 138). Rushdie parallels the evacuation of Strasbourg in 1939 and the sudden perceived emptiness with the events in Srinagar in 1947 when the maharaja flees and no-one turns up for the *bhand pather* performance and banquet. The analogy allows Max to draw the following conclusion, which sums up the narrative core of the novel: 'Each tragedy belongs to itself and at the same time to everyone else. What diminishes any of us diminishes us all' (Rushdie 2006b, 138). This seems to be the basis on which Max acts and it becomes comprehensible through his own experience of the loss of his home, his homeland and his parents to the terror of Nazi occupation. It forces him to question civilisation and human decency that can only lead to resistance.

The story of Max, the Résistance hero, is related to the reader through his own memoirs that set him up as a romanticised war hero. In this respect, his actions are never really questioned:

> Max Ophuls was a living flying ace and giant of the Resistance, a man of movie-star good looks and polymathic accomplishment, and in addition he had moved to the United States, choosing the burnished attractions of the New World over the damaged gentility of the Old.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 161)

There is an important stress on the construction of Max Ophuls as a figure and the Resistance is the point of discovery for Max how the self can be remade (see Rushdie 2006b, 162). This is given a grim parallel later with the reconfiguring of selves in the terrorist training camps across the border from Kashmir where Shalimar trains. Max further elaborates on his role in the Resistance: 'Entering the Resistance was, for me, a kind of flying. ... One took leave of one's name, one's past, one's future, one lifted oneself away from one's life and existed only in the continuum of the work, borne aloft by necessity and fatalism' (Rushdie 2006b, 166). In the context of Max's story this sounds like an elaboration of the heroic undertaking of the Resistance, yet when set alongside the story of Shalimar, it becomes evident that he engages in his work as an assassin and terrorist in exactly the same way.

Max further elaborates this point when he learns of the assassination of an old Resistance friend by an IRA bomb: 'There was no end to treachery. Survive one plot and the next one would get you. [...] Perhaps it was endemic to the human race, a manifestation of the life cycle. Perhaps violence showed us what we meant, or, at least, perhaps it was simply what we did' (Rushdie 2006b, 173-174). The link between identity and violence becomes clear here. Although the 'Max' section in Strasbourg has

the qualities of an old film noir from the 1940s and some of the characters are rather two-dimensional and predictable, the effects of oppression and violence that Max sees prevailing in Nazi-occupied France have a profound and lasting impact. Max subsequently becomes an active participant in the creation of a new world order after 1945. His involvement in the Bretton Woods agreement and his role as an American under-cover negotiator after his disgraced exit from office after his affair with Boonyi make this clear.

The setting of the novel in Kashmir allows Rushdie to explore the theme of nationhood from the periphery. Through the example of Kashmir, the novel raises the question of the fragmenting and fragmented nation. The increase of separatism and terrorism on the periphery of the Indian nation state draws attention to the problematic paradigm of a singular idea of nationalism, nationhood and nation and throws into question Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as an imagined community. As Sumita S. Chakravarty argues, it seems as though nationalism has entered a third stage (Chakravarty 2000, 223). She singles out the first being the nineteenth century nation formations in Europe, the second the process of decolonisation. The third stage, Chakravarty proposes, 'is highly uneven, with no clear moral or political centre, and with goals ranging from the ultra chauvinistic to the more traditional strivings for a designated nation-space' (Chakravarty 2000, 223). These nationalisms or sub-nationalisms do not neatly fit into categories. What emerges, however, is a sense of nationhood defined against these sub-nationalisms that can become secessionist as the examples of Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland and Punjab show. This has become increasingly important in cinematic representations of terrorism, the Kashmir conflict and India's Muslim minority in Hindi cinema. As Chakravarty explains:

> the institution of narrative cinema in its mainstream forms may actually be resistant to nationalist imaginings, given that 'the nation' is always mediated by its 'fragments', that is, by individuals whose particularities of dress, speech and lifestyle locate them within specific regional, social and cultural configurations.
> (Chakravarty 2000, 224)

Chakravarty argues that narrative cinema can only depict the nation in its fragments as the collective nature of national identity can only be represented through the particular: 'Thus the "nation" as an entity is always eclipsed in cinema and has to be reconstituted by viewers through its screen absence. It is the absence which marks the fullness of the nation. The fragment is therefore both the nation's source of fear and its object of desire, its threat and its promise' (Chakravarty 2000, 226).

Chakravarty outlines how Hindi cinema has developed distinctive strategies to deal with this otherness since independence in 1947:

> its self-imposed ideological task has been to incorporate various others into the body politic through [...] processes of 'imperso-nation': ethnic or religious difference as a kind of lived masquerade which when peeled off, always could be counted on to reveal an essential Indianness comprised of a core of fraternal or civilisational, and patriotic values.
>
> (Chakravarty 2000, 228)

This is why the Bombay film could present so succinctly the Nehruvian vision of the nation. As Chakravarty suggests: 'Given that the partition of India in 1947 had rendered the Indian Muslim as "the undecidable", he whose loyalty to the motherland could not be counted upon and needed to be ritually re-affirmed, the popular film's mythic function served to fulfil this task' (Chakravarty 2000, 228). The role of Muslims in the Indian body politic has remained very important for Bombay filmmakers. For instance, in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's film *Mission Kashmir* (2000) Altaaf is orphaned at the age of 11 when his village is subjected to a crackdown. He is adopted by an army officer, who, as he later discovers, is the person responsible for the death of his family. He flees and joins a militant Kashmiri group and is trained by its leader to become a terrorist. Altaaf is torn between the love for his childhood sweetheart and the hatred for his adopted father in a story of vengeance and betrayal. In its final showdown, Altaaf kills the militant leader and recognises him as the enemy within. More recently, *Fanaa* (2006) deals with similar issues.[16]

It is worth considering in this instance Mani Ratnam's three films *Roja* (1992), *Bombay* (1995) and *Dil Se* (1998), which can be taken as a trilogy investigating issues of identity and citizenship on the margins of the Indian state.[17] Chakravarty suggests that in all three films the concept of India as a nation is problematic and compromised and in need of reformulation, which is highlighted by the films' investigation through its dramatisation of violence and the connection between the nation and its fragments as terrorist violence is fuelled by state violence (Chakravarty 2000, 232). Rushdie, in contrast to Mani Ratnam, challenges the territorial integrity of the Indian nation state and in this sense he pushes the argument further. However, Ratnam's terrorism trilogy is interesting insofar as it dramatises the problematic relationship between Indian territories on the periphery and the nation. In this respect, the 'poly-vocal' and 'multi-accentual' nature of film that Chakravarty outlines is similarly present in Rushdie's argument about Kashmir (Chakravarty 2000, 233). However, where they differ is that the argument Rushdie presents is less about India as a nation state than about Kashmir,

and how India, Pakistan and the insurgents have destroyed its principles and its people. What was worth celebrating about Kashmir – its secularist, tolerant multi-faith ethos – is now irretrievably lost. In this respect, the novel's conclusion is even more damning and hopeless than the conclusion of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, which lamented the loss of the pluralist, secular ethos of Bombay and India.

Rushdie makes a wider argument than filmmakers like Ratnam, as his novel engages with representations of terrorism but investigates state-led counter-terrorism. In this respect, the novel also questions how states deal with terrorism in their own territory. According to Ashis Nandy, terrorist activity in Kashmir has dramatically increased since the start of the insurgency in 1989: 'In India itself, the incidents of terrorism in only the state of Kashmir ranged between 1,243 and 5,793 in the 1990s. Reliable recent data are not available' (Nandy 2003, 133).[18] Although Rushdie debates the wider political dimensions of terrorism, he is more concerned with the effects of terrorism and the state's counter-terrorism measures on the individual characters in his novel.

There is a need to further clarify notions of terror and terrorism, insurgency and the freedom fighter. As Ashis Nandy points out, terror as a political tool in India's struggle for independence was theoretically debated and a number of groups emerged in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab in the early years of the twentieth century (Nandy 2003, 134). Nandy suggests that the debate centred around two questions. One was concerned with the label 'terrorist' and asked whether those involved in terrorist activity against a colonial regime were not freedom fighters. 'The second concerned the extent to which some sanction for political terror existed in the traditional Indian way of life' (Nandy 2003, 134). While Rushdie does not provide an answer to these questions, he also raises the question and deterritorialises it by contrasting the French Resistance Movement to German Occupation in the 1940s with Kashmiri resistance to Islamic fundamentalism and to the repressive regime of the Indian state. In this respect, Rushdie is aware of the problematics of the label 'terrorist'. Nandy draws attention to the fact that the meaning of 'terrorism' in the Indian context is not unproblematic (Nandy 2003, 134). According to Nandy, terrorism has not become a major driving force in Indian politics until the 1980s: 'It was unimaginable in 1984 that [...] the dreamy-eyed, non-martial Kashmiris, "mired" in their *Sufiana*, would one day, make terror central to Indian politics' (Nandy 2003, 135). Rushdie argues that the rise of separatist terrorism in India accelerated after the Emergency, as religious politics started to enter

mainstream politics. Nandy associates this phenomenon with a change in perception about the designation India and Indian: 'The new salience of terrorism has come at a time when a sizeable section of the Indian populace has begun to think of India primarily as a nation-state and secondarily as a civilization with its own political language and values' (Nandy 2003, 135). In this respect, Indianness is no longer defined along the concept of diversity, different languages, cultures and religions living together in harmony, and united in their Indianness. Here Indianness becomes defined as single and unitary, defined against an other, Pakistan and the Muslim. Thus the problematic status of Kashmir – a majority Muslim state under Indian rule – becomes even more contested.

How then does terrorism become part of everyday life? According to Nandy, '[t]errorism frequently speaks the language of religion and ethnicity, but the future political order of the community – for which the terrorism is supposed to create a space – has usually nothing to do with traditional concepts of public life in the community' (Nandy 2003, 139). For Nandy, the terrorist's vision of the future of its community is a mirror image of that of the state in its argument for counter-terrorist measures. Thus '[w]hen this shared culture of the terrorist and the counter-terrorist become all-pervasive, terrorism becomes part of a country's everyday culture of politics' (Nandy 2003, 139). Only mutual exhaustion on both sides will allow for a peaceful resolution and a rupture of the vicious circle of violence and terrorist and counter-terrorist measures. This vicious cycle of violence can only be broken through a growing awareness that state violence, like terrorism, has only limited effects and cannot in itself be the solution to terrorism.

The later sections of the novel make that unambiguously clear. As the conflict between Shirmal and Pachigam flares up again, the rift becomes communal. The de facto division of Kashmir becomes institutionalised through the Simla Agreement of July 1972 in which the ceasefire line between India and Pakistan is renamed the Line of Control (LOC). It becomes evident that the Pakistani administration sponsors terrorist groups, whose activities they see as a legitimate struggle against the unlawful occupation of Kashmir by Indian forces. Thus they see these groups as freedom fighters, rather than terrorists. India on the other hand insists on Kashmir as an integral part of India and thus the growing threat leads to Kashmir being militarised further. In Pachigam and Shirmal, these events are relayed through Bombur Yambarzal's television tent. The changing political climate is responsible for new suspicions of

Hindus and Muslims (see Rushdie 2006b, 247). Stuck between the lines are the people of Kashmir. Even Shalimar finally becomes radicalised and decides to join his brothers:

> I've been looking at bad things for so long that I'd stopped seeing them, but I'm not sleeping now and I see how it is: the real bad dream starts when you wake up, the men in tanks who hide their faces so that we don't know their names and the women torturers who are worse than the men and the people made of barbed wire and the people made of electricity whose hands would fry your balls if they grabbed them and the people made of bullets and the people made of lies and they are all here to do something important, namely to fuck us until we're dead.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 248)

Shalimar thus joins the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, first as a fundraiser, coercing people into making donations, and later as an assassin. Shalimar becomes a deranged killing machine.

In the training camp where Shalimar joins fellow jihadists, the reader also encounters the iron mullah once again, now engaged in ideological training for fighters. He advocates a reinterpretation of Islam as a martial religion that demands austerity and self-denial. In the jihadist training camp, Rushdie outlines very clearly the difference between the Kashmiris fighting for self-determination and the jihadist for whom ideology and a single unitary truth are primary (Rushdie 2006b, 265-268). Shalimar the Clown plays along with the ideological brainwashing of Bulbul Fakh, but it becomes clear that his motivation is his desire for revenge. Despite the demands of the iron mullah, Shalimar is not willing to give up his sense of self. He is willing to fight and kill, not for ideological reasons, but only for his own personal gratification.

The 1989 uprising marks the complete destruction of what Kashmir represented. As jihadists move into the territory, women are forced into wearing the veil, the local population is terrorised by army crackdowns in which the last performance of the bhands of Pachigam is a final, futile, act of defiance. As Kashmir is declared a 'disturbed area', every Muslim is considered a militant. Rushdie makes obvious how three different forms of terrorist fighters are engaged in Kashmir for different reasons, one fighting for the old dream 'Kashmir for the Kashmiris', one for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan and the other 'to be part of Islamic terror international' (Rushdie 2006b, 291). As a response, colonel Kachhwaha, transmuted from tortoise colonel to 'The Hammer of Kashmir', devises his strategy of 'crackdown':

> The philosophy of crackdown was, *fuck the enemy in the crack*. The methodology of crackdown could be expressed technically as cordon-and-search. Curfews would be imposed and soldiers would go house to house. [...] Town by town, hamlet by hamlet, every part of the valley would be visited by his wrath, by men who had taken their gloves off, his warriors, his storm

> troopers, his fists. He would see how much these people loved their insurgency then, when they had the Indian army fucking them in the crack.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 292)

The allusion to the storm troopers of *Star Wars* is no accident and makes implicitly clear that the Indian army engages in Kashmir in similar repressions on its periphery as a colonial power did.[19] This clinical description of the Indian army's method in its fight against the insurgents is painfully and powerfully contrasted with the crackdown that Pachigam is subjected to, in which a large number of villagers are raped, killed and tortured, and which the narrator cannot bring himself to tell fully, despite his three abortive attempts (see Rushdie 2006b, 308-309). Indeed, through the suggestion of atrocities, by not fully revealing all the details, the section becomes one of the most moving and most powerful in the novel. This is in large parts due to the visual style of storytelling that is all-pervasive in the novel. While this filmic narrativisation is no longer self-consciously dramatised as for instance in *Midnight's Children*, it runs implicitly through the novel. In this respect, precisely because the novel is so visual, when the reader is denied this visual narration, the impact becomes all the more striking and affecting. Rushdie creates throughout his narrative great empathy for Pachigam and its inhabitants. Thus when the village is subjected to a crackdown and is destroyed, the pain and horror of the events in Pachigam is palpable:

> What happened that day in Pachigam need not be set down here in full detail, because brutality is brutality and excess is excess and that's all there is to it. There are things that must be looked at indirectly because they would blind you if you looked them in the face, like the fire of the sun. So to repeat: there was no Pachigam any more. Pachigam was destroyed. Imagine it for yourself.
>
> (Rushdie, 2006, 309)

From India to Kashmira

In order to bring together different territories and histories in a narrative that still engages the reader, Rushdie constructs a character-driven plot. This is indicated by the section headings which are all titled after the novel's main protagonists' names – India, Boonyi, Max, Shalimar the Clown, Kashmira. The narrative is framed by India/Kashmira's story and maps her difficult relationship with her father Max. She has to confront the loss of her father at the hands of an assassin who has infiltrated his household as his chauffeur and valet, only to plot his murder on her birthday. The murder of the American ambassador seems like a crime that could only be politically motivated. In this respect, the novel becomes not so much a 'who-done-it', but a 'why-done-it'. As the plot of intrigue unravels the narrative becomes, as has been argued

above, one of defeated love. The framing story of the novel is set in 1990s America and largely takes place in Los Angeles, like Bombay a city famous for its film industry. In the last section of the novel, when India is confronted with the murder of her father and the whole story of her origin becomes apparent, Rushdie references two Hollywood films in particular, John Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958).

India, a documentary filmmaker, is left to make sense of Max's, Boonyi's and Shalimar's lives and to draw the consequences for herself. She is taken care of by the potato witch Olga Simeonovna, also known as Olga Volga, who is the odd double of Nazarébaddoor. For India, the enigmas surrounding her father unravel. In death, many of Max's secrets are exposed as he is revealed to have been the United States' counterterrorism chief, who also had blood on his hands. India is left wondering:

> Was she, in mourning her butchered parent, crying out (she had not wept) for a guilty man? Was Shalimar the assassin in fact the hand of justice, the appointed executioner of some unseen high court, was his word righteous, had justice been *done to Max*, had some sort of sentence been carried out in response to his unknown unlisted unseen crimes of power, because blood will have blood, an eye demands an eye, and how many eyes had her father covertly put out, by direct action or indirect, one, or a hundred, or ten thousand, or a hundred thousand, how many trophied corpses, like stags' heads, adorned his secret walls?
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 335)

India questions the rights and wrongs of the assassination of her father and in the process, 'right' and 'wrong' begin to lose their meaning. Thus the assassination of Max triggers in her a fundamental crisis of faith and identity as her image of her father is overwritten by the secret life he led as the US government's secret envoy, jet-setting to the troubled regions of the world assuming the role of kingmaker, arms dealer and sometimes terrorist. The image that emerges is almost monstrous:

> He had been a puissant speculator in that mightiest and least controllable currencies, had been both a manipulator and a benefactor, both a philanthropist and a dictator, both creator and destroyer, buying or stealing the future from those who no longer deserved to possess it, selling the future to those who would be most useful in it, smiling the false lethal smile of power at all the planet's future-greedy hordes, its murderous doctors, its paranoid holy warriors, its embattled high priests, its billionaire financiers, its insane dictators, its generals, its venal politicians, its thugs.
>
> (Rushdie 2006b, 336)

Yet the crisis India faces through the loss of her father and the revelation of his secret activities for the United States government shifts very quickly to the private personal level through the conceit that India hears Shalimar's voice in her head and starts to

communicate with him, like her mother Boonyi, telepathically. Thus the mother that was banished from her life by the spurned Peggy Ophuls is now brought to life within her. For India, life as she knew it unravels, all certainties become vagaries and the real world she inhabits becomes nightmarish (Rushdie 2006b, 342).

Thus, the suggestion of *Vertigo* in relation to her reconfiguration of selfhood is revealing. The film challenges precisely the certainties that the central character has come to assume as factual. The story of Carlotta in the film, the ghost of which haunts Madeline, also seems to resonate with that of India in *Shalimar the Clown*. It is suggested that Carlotta, a nineteenth-century socialite, was spurned by her husband and had her child taken away from her. The film is important for India as it requires the reader, as *Mughal-e-Azam* does on a larger scale, to parallel the action in the novel with familiar reference points. The film also indicates a shift in mode as the love story becomes secondary, solving the puzzle who her mother was in relation to why Shalimar committed his crime becomes primary. In this respect, the film's climactic scene and the mode of the psychological thriller become important. This is further accentuated when the novel references *The Manchurian Candidate* in Shalimar's trial when his defence lawyer suggests that Shalimar was just a brainwashed automaton, destined to kill.

Peggy Ophuls, in India's delirious state, comes to see her and finally reveals to India the story of her true origin and of her true name, which is not India, the one Peggy gave her, but Kashmira. Kashmira/India is the character upon whom all the narrative threads converge. She bridges and connects the various narrative threads, which makes her seem perhaps overly constructed. She makes concrete Rushdie's argument that 'Everywhere was a mirror of everywhere else. Executions, police brutality, explosions, riots: Los Angeles was beginning to look like wartime Strasbourg; like Kashmir' (Rushdie 2006b, 355).

Peggy's revelations lead India to go to Kashmir to discover her mother's story in order to comprehend herself, which is likened to a death and a rebirth (Rushdie 2006b, 357). Kashmira's visit to Kashmir also serves as a way of bringing the Kashmir narrative to an unambiguous close. The year is 1993, when riots in LA broke out, when the World Trade Center in New York was attacked for the first time, and the insurgency and army crackdown ruined the eclecticism associated with Kashmir and Pachigam. Yuvraj Singh explains best the position of Kashmira:

> 'You have come into our story at the end,' he told her. '[...] But maybe the truth is that [...] our human tragedy is that we are unable to comprehend our

> experience, it slips through our fingers, we can't hold on to it, and the more time passes, the harder it gets. Maybe too much time has passed for you and you will have to accept, I'm sorry to say it, that there are things about your experience you will never understand.'
>
> (Rushdie 2006, 358)

Yuvraj takes her to Pachigam in order for Kashmira to understand some of her story. As they drive to Pachigam, the reality of a brutalised and militarised Kashmir is exposed with all its force (see Rushdie 2006b, 361). Kashmira encounters Bombur Yambarzal and his wife Hasina who narrates the story of Pachigam and the murder of Boonyi, thus revealing that the person who killed Kashmira's father also killed her mother. Boonyi recognises the impossibility of love as she is confronted with the broken love of her father and mother and the wrath of the spurned Shalimar whom she feels the need to challenge. Thus her own yearning for love and stability is put on hold.

Kashmira is set on avenging her dead father. She starts persecuting Shalimar by writing him daily letters reminding him of his misdeeds, likening herself to a black Scheherazade: 'I will write to you without missing a day without missing a night not to save my life but to take yours to wind around you the poisonous snakes of my words until their fangs stab your neck' (Rushdie 2006b, 374). Kashmira deals Shalimar the final blow when she reveals to the jury that he is responsible not only for her father's but also for her mother's death, which unravels Shalimar's defence lawyer's argument that Shalimar through personality profiling and brainwashing had his free will stolen from him through mind control, which turned him into a programmed killing machine that could be activated at will. Kashmira possesses the steely will of her mother. It seems that in Kashmira, Shalimar has found his match, similarly capable to hate and to carry out her goals. In this respect, the persecutor becomes the persecuted and vice versa. Rushdie then punctures the suspense by reintroducing Yuvraj Singh into the narrative who follows Kashmira to America and with whom she finally allows herself to fall in love.

Shalimar, however, even though he is sentenced to death, remains a man on a mission. He writes a letter to Kashmira: '*Everything I am your mother makes me*, the letter began. *Every blow I suffer your father deals.* [...] *Your father deserves to die, and your mother is a whore*' (Rushdie 2006b, 392, original italic). In this respect, who is the hunter and who is hunted is blurred in the final stages of the novel, as Shalimar performs the perfect tight rope walk, escapes from prison and tracks Kashmira down in the mansion on Mulholland drive that looks similar to the monastery in *Vertigo*. The novel ends in a moment of suspense where the notion of hunter and hunted remains

ambiguous. Shalimar enters her bedroom armed with a virginal blade to kill her and Kashmira with her night-vision goggles on and armed with bow-and-arrow lies in wait, ready to shoot, avenging her father and mother by killing Shalimar the Clown. This is perhaps Rushdie's most visually compelling ending, perfectly orchestrated like a Hollywood thriller and reminiscent of Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Kashmira, having affirmed her sense of self can successfully confront Shalimar, as she has completed the individual's struggle towards selfhood and subject formation in the face of stark ruptures that are conditioned by historical events.

In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie pushes visual storytelling within the confines of the novel to its limits. He draws on *Mughal-e-Azam* and the Anarkali story directly for the novel's central love story and through the prism of the film gestures towards Akbar and his vision of tolerance. Filmic narrativisation and visual storytelling are integral to the plotting of the novel. The destruction of Pachigam and the final sections of the novel that are reminiscent of Hitchcock are perhaps the best examples. It becomes evident in this novel that Rushdie's striving for clarity in his narration allows him to create immediacy and urgency to clearly communicate his narrative argument by further adapting his style of visual filmic storytelling.

Notes

[1] The name alludes to the film director of German origin Max Ophuls. Rushdie however maintains: 'I wanted Max to have a name that is both French and German, because I wanted the history of Strasbourg to be in the name.' [...] 'Names stick. I just kept thinking of him like that, and in the end I forgot about the film director' (Rushdie/Livings 2005, 136). Maximilian Ophüls (the umlaut was dropped when he worked in France and the US) was born in Saarbrücken, Germany in 1902. In the late 1920s he started work for the German film production studio UFA. He fled to France from the Nazis in 1933 and, after the fall of France in 1940, he moved to the US. He returned to Europe in 1950. He was well known for opulent sets, strong female characters, and interesting use of dolly shots, crane shots and tracking sweeps. His smooth camera movements is said to have been particularly influential on the young Stanley Kubrick.

[2] *Shalimar the Clown's* focus on Kashmir is important for other reasons. Rushdie's family is of Kashmiri origin and he has fond memories of going on holiday there in the 1950s and 1960s, but this is his first novel where Kashmir is the central location.

[3] Rushdie's short story 'The Prophet's Hair' also uses Kashmir as its setting in an attempt to fictionalise an actual event. Earlier versions of the story appeared in *The London Review of Books* in April 1981 and in *The Atlantic Monthly* in September 1981, the same year that *Midnight's Children* was published. The story of the prophet's hair is intertwined with the story of Aziz insofar as both investigate questions of faith and both very clearly reject religion in favour of the secular. The story dramatises differently the stealing of the relic, which also features in *Midnight's Children* where the hair's theft is attributed to Aadam Aziz as his ultimate revenge on God (Rushdie 1995a, 277-278). It is the last story in the 'East' section in his 1994 short story collection *East, West*. The story is about a wealthy Kashmiri family, which is torn apart when the family patriarch, a moneylender, discovers the stolen relic of the prophet's hair, which disappeared from its shrine in winter 1963. The presence of the relic in the house causes the secular and tolerant patriarch to demand that his family abide rigorously to the rules of the Koran, ordering his daughter to enter purdah, cursing his son for his lack of academic abilities and announcing to his wife that he has been unfaithful, their marriage a sham, and, as customary under Islamic law, she would not receive

more than an eighth portion of his estate (Rushdie 1994, 46). Out of an act of desperation, both children hire a thief to remove the relic from their house to restore peace at home. The plan backfires and ends in tragedy as Atta, the son, dies, and the father, blinded by his obsession with the relic, slaughters his daughter and kills himself out of remorse, resulting in the mother going insane. In the story, the presence of the relic in the household and its effect serve as a metaphor of how overzealous religious worship is divisive and leads to intolerance, strife, suffering and death. The hair is all-consuming and destructive when removed from its shrine.

[4] It would not have been surprising to see Tai appear as an intertextual character. However, a different, more distant figure, a cousin of Naseem Aziz and a relative of the landowner Ghani, briefly appears in the story, thus linking the earlier version of Rushdie's fictional Kashmir to the one in *Shalimar the Clown*. Shalimar and his gang are blackmailing the local gentry to fund their fight against the Indian army, and they arrive at Ghani's house. In memory of Naseem, he dutifully pays up. Thus Saleem's extended family is linked to the story of Shalimar and in this respect it can be argued that the narrative of Kashmir in this novel is also the continuation of the story of Kashmir in *Midnight's Children*.

[5] According to Mirdu Rai, the term Kashmiriyat is reflective of a peerless tradition of regional nationalism that elevates itself above petty religious rivalries. It is 'founded on the historical survival of what is perceived as a more salient legacy of cultural harmony. However, Kashmiriyat so defined was an idealized "remembering" of one of several shifting meanings of "being Kashmiri": it was not only summoned but also circulated in very specific political and historical moments' (Rai 2004, 224).

[6] See Rushdie 2003, 305-307 and 'In Kashmir déjà-vu is a way of life', *The Guardian*, 1 June 2002.

[7] Sheikh Abdullah, who was known as 'Sher-E-Kashmir', the 'Lion of Kashmir', was the leader of the Kashmir National Front and was one of the most influential politicians of the region. He became the leader of the regional administration soon after the maharaja fled. Before independence he had agitated against Dogra rule and promoted Kashmiri self-determination. He continually held India to account over its broken promise of autonomy for the region, which led to his dismissal as prime minister of Kashmir in 1953 and an 11-year jail term over charges of corruption and separatism (see Schofield 1996, 91-93).

[8] This also seems to be an allusion to Attar's Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*.

[9] According to the narrator, her name means "evil eye, begone!" (Rushdie 2006b, 63) The role of prophecy and the seer in Rushdie's fiction is interesting and seems to resonate with *Midnight's Children*. However, in *Shalimar the Clown*, Nazarébaddoor questions the role of prophecy: 'Was it always a good thing to make things better? Didn't human beings need pain and suffering to learn and grow? Would a world in which only good things happened be a good world, a paradise or would it in fact be an intolerable place whose denizens, excused from danger, failure, catastrophe and misery, turned into insufferable big-headed, overconfident bores?' (Rushdie 2006b, 67) In the light of what happened in Kashmir post-1947, this comment seems ironic.

[10] Aurangzeb was the late Mughal emperor who ruled from 1658-1707. He was known as the Mughal Emperor least tolerant towards Hindus. He was the younger son of Shah Jahan (builder of the Taj Mahal) and he killed his elder brother to secure the throne for himself. He was responsible for pogroms and temple desecrations. For one of the Gegroo brothers to be named after him seems therefore particularly striking (see Sen 2006, 60-61).

[11] In 2005 a full colour version of the film was released in Indian cinemas. Although this captured some of the attention to detail and exuberant set and costume designs of the film, it is arguable that the original black and white film suddenly bursting into colour was part of its appeal.

[12] This is also the film song Rekha Merchant sings to Gibreel in *The Satanic Verses*.

[13] A more recent example would be *Lagaan* (2001). By invoking the anti-colonial struggle against the colonial power, the film showed how all sections of the village community were brought together to beat the British at a game of cricket so that they would not have to pay the crippling land tax as their village faced starvation. The film sought to appeal to inter-communal harmony and suggested that India could only be strong when it is united in its diversity, rather than divided.

[14] Sumita S. Chakravarty does point toward two instances, which confirm Anarkali's historical identity. An Indian dictionary of Indian history describes her as the secret love of prince Salim for whom he built a marble tomb in 1615. Edward Balfour's *The Cyclopaedia of India* also mentions her tomb (Chakravarty 1993, 168).

[15] Rushdie's next novel *The Enchantress of Florence* due to be published in April 2008 is set in sixteenth century Mughal India and Renaissance Florence.

[16] The question of the relationship between the state and its Muslim minority has been tackled increasingly by Bombay cinema, for example in films such as *Fiza* (2000). The issue of Pakistan, too plays a role in this and there has been a stress in more recent films to underline what connects, rather than divides Indians and Pakistanis in films such as *Main Hoon Na* (2004) and *Veer-Zaara* (2004).

[17] For an interesting discussion of *Roja* see also Nicholas B. Dirks's essay 'The Home and the Nation: Consuming Culture and Politics in *Roja*' (Dirks 2001, 161-185). For an interesting discussion of *Bombay* see Ravi S. Vasudevan's essay '*Bombay* and its Public' (Vasudevan 2001, 186-211).

[18] More recent data from Amnesty International suggests that since the start of the armed struggle in Kashmir in 1989 between 45.000-60.000 people have lost their lives (See Amnesty International 2006).

[19] Within the context of the novel, the storm troopers could also refer to the paramilitary organisation of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP), the SA (Sturmabteilung).

Conclusion

This study has discussed Rushdie's fiction in relation to Bombay cinema and analysed how it is integral to his storytelling techniques, how he uses it intertextually and how it highlights his political and philosophical arguments. Rushdie's intertextual use of films such as *Shree 420*, *Mother India* and *Mughal-e-Azam* in particular reveals his attachment to what is considered the Golden Era of the Bombay film – the 1950s and the early 1960s. The syncretic form of Hindi cinema and the range of issues covered by the social films of the 1950s provide Rushdie with a template he adapts to fit his own arguments about postcolonial India and Pakistan and transglobal migration. Yet in *Shalimar the Clown* he uses the genre of the historical film in his investigation of India's plurality through the prism of Mughal India in his engagement with Kashmir, the concept of *Kashmiriyat* and a syncretic idea of Indianness that is always more than the sum-total of all its constituent parts, however different they may be. In this respect, the different genres and the form of Hindi cinema are, as I have argued, integral to Rushdie's own artistic, aesthetic and philosophical project. My analysis of Rushdie's major novels clearly indicates that cinematic visual storytelling contributes to the arguments and questions Rushdie raises in his narratives. As Mishra suggests:

> Bollywood, for Rushdie, is like an empty signifier into which is poured a number of things: diasporic idioms and cultural practices, the English language which, as the universal tongue of cyberculture, will gradually strip the genre of its historicity and Indian-specific foundations, and a growing cosmopolitanism. Bollywood then is integral to Rushdie's style, both as source of discourse and of genre.
>
> (Mishra 2007, 26)

The idiom of Hindi cinema and its adaptation and subversion in Rushdie's fiction allows him to interrogate themes such as love, duty, self-sacrifice, morality, citizenship and selfhood and articulate a particular aesthetic argument about India's multiplicity by emulating in his novels the syncretic form of the Bombay film. Thus the intersection of discourses of nationhood in relation to identity formation of the individual in Rushdie's fiction, Bombay cinema and postcolonial discourse has provided in this thesis a space for analysis that delineates the aesthetic influence of Bombay cinema on Rushdie's narratives and its role as an ideological marker of a particular logic of culture.

It emerges most clearly that Rushdie's fiction is concerned with the crossing of frontiers, which is exemplified by the adaptation of Hindi cinema's aesthetic conventions and its ideology in his fiction and the geographical trajectory his fictional world covers, shifting between a number of metropolises – Bombay, London, New

York and Los Angeles. Bollywood cinema's texts have traversed a similar trajectory and show how physical and aesthetic boundaries are being reformulated in the process. Rushdie's title of the Tanner Lecture on Human Values in 2002 sums up this process very well: 'Step Across this Line' (Rushdie 2003, 405-442). The use of film as narrative strategy is instrumental in this regard and Rushdie has successfully used the medium to cross frontiers in his adaptation of the conventions of the novel.

Crossing frontiers plays an ideological role in Rushdie's writing. In 'Notes on Writing and the Nation' Rushdie argues that 'Nationalism is that "revolt against history" which seeks to close what cannot any longer be closed. To fence in what should be frontierless. Good writing assumes a frontierless nation. Writers who serve frontiers have become border guards' (Rushdie 2003, 67). This assumes an absolute freedom of expression on the part of the novelist, which Rushdie has vociferously defended ever since the controversy around *The Satanic Verses*. Furthermore, Rushdie addresses this issue in his critique of a particular nationalism that is religiously and culturally exclusive in *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*. For Rushdie, the production of cultural identity must contain the sum-total of difference and here the connection between his use of novelistic conventions and the idiom of Hindi cinema becomes most obvious.

As Stuart Hall puts it so succinctly in the context of the African-Caribbean diaspora, the experience of dislocation 'is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*' (Hall 1993, 402). For Rushdie, this is not only related to the experience of migration, but is integral to a conception of Indian identity that recognises the hybridity of its own cultural identity. The recognition of India's multiplicity, then, is the reason why so many people can identify with an idea of India that is compatible with different ideas of selfhood. As Rushdie wrote on the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence:

> The selfhood of India is so capacious, so elastic, that it manages to accommodate one billion kinds of difference. It agrees with its billion selves to call all of them 'Indian'. This is a notion far more original than the old pluralist ideas of 'melting pot' or 'cultural mosaic'. It works because the individual sees his own nature writ large in the nature of the state.
>
> (Rushdie 2003, 179).

For Rushdie, then, India's multiplicity is central to the formulation of Indian identity whether in the diaspora or on the subcontinent. Rushdie's fiction aims through its method to aestheticise and encapsulate this multiplicity. In this respect, his novels seek

the opening of frontiers and the crossing of boundaries, and this is intrinsically realised in Rushdie's deployment of cinematic conventions and their fusion with novelistic conventions.

Rushdie argues in 'In Defence of the Novel, yet again' that the novel 'is part social enquiry, part fantasy, part confessional. It crosses frontiers of knowledge as well as topographical boundaries' (Rushdie 2003, 58). Yet even though Rushdie thinks about his plots pictorially, his material is executed novelistically, expressed in an evolving novel that in Rushdie's own terms is a 'post-colonial novel, a de-centred, transnational, inter-lingual, cross-cultural novel' (Rushdie 2003, 57). The notion of boundary transgressions, the gesture to the beyond, is apparent in this description, which marks the novel out as the best-suited medium to deal with the current state of chaos and disorder in the world in its attempt to cross borders artistically and philosophically to articulate this multiplicity and heterogeneity in a conceptualisation of identity, subjectivity and belonging.

In 'Step Across This Line', Rushdie argues: 'In our deepest natures, we are frontier-crossing beings. We know this by the stories we tell ourselves; for we are story-telling animals, too' (Rushdie 2003, 408). Rushdie then proceeds to offer a summary of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* as an example of how journeying, of crossing frontiers, is formative and defining as we are shaped by the frontiers we cross. Thus, according to Rushdie, 'the idea of overcoming, of breaking down the boundaries that hold us in and surpassing the limits of our own natures, is central to all the stories of the quest' (Rushdie 2003, 410). For Rushdie, crossing frontiers and transformation go hand in hand and this is felt most acutely by the migrant, the frontierless man who for Rushdie is the archetype of our age:

> At the frontier we can't avoid the truth; the comforting layers of the quotidian, which insulate us against the world's harsher realities, are stripped away, and, wide-eyed in the harsh fluorescent light of the frontier's windowless halls, we see things as they are. The frontier is the physical proof of the human race's divided self [...].
>
> (Rushdie 2003, 412)

This is perhaps no better exemplified than by Rushdie's own characters: by Saleem Sinai and his uprooting and migration from India to Pakistan and back to India, by *Shame*'s narrator-author in exile, by the identity negotiations of Gibreel and Salahuddin, by the exiled Moraes Zogoiby, by Vina, Ormus and Rai, forever stuck in their transit

zone, by Malik Solanka who wants to escape his past but cannot, and by Max Ophuls and Shalimar the Clown, both migrating for very different reasons and with very different objectives. All of his characters need to make sense of their divided selves or at least acknowledge the division within their selves. The recognition of their own multiplicity provides them with the possibility for survival in their attempt to define their role, place and space in relation to a fast-changing social, economic and political space that ranges from the postcolonial nation state, the former centre of Empire to a globalising world.

The novels discussed in this thesis traverse a particular historical and geographical trajectory that begins with an engagement with India in its first three decades after independence and Pakistani politics of the 1970s and early 1980s. Rushdie then shifts his attention to a narrative that is particularly interested in the migration of Indians from India to the metropolitan centre of the former Empire. This locates Rushdie's writing firmly in a particular historical time – the period of decolonisation and the dismantling of the British Empire and the process of global economic migration that followed it. In Rushdie's fiction, migration is closely associated with the experience and legacies of Empire. Indeed, the story of William Methwold in *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a good example of this. Methwold's experience of Empire in India could be described, in Rushdie's terms, as 'breaking out of the frontiers of the self, casting off the reticence of England and becoming an unbuttoned, operatic people, hot and large, striding across the great stage of the world instead of the cramped boards of home' (Rushdie 2003, 424). This is demonstrated in his interest in mythology, his love for lower-class Indian women and the quirky handover of Methwold Estate to its new inhabitants at the stroke of Midnight on 14 August 1947. For Methwold, Empire has shown how frontiers could be overcome, as the British Empire pushed the frontier further and further. In this respect, Rushdie describes a dual process as the permeability of frontiers that has led to British colonial expansion into India and across the globe allowed for the transglobal migration to the former centres of Empire in the wake of the process of decolonisation. In this respect, the permeability of frontiers that is one of the legacies of Empire remains an important marker in Rushdie's fiction in the age of globalisation and international terrorism.

In an age defined like no other by trans-global migration, Rushdie describes how we are defined by frontiers, which leads him to examine how frontiers can be

transcended. And it is this crossing of frontiers that is central to Rushdie's artistic project:

> The crossing of borders, of language, geography and culture; the examination of the permeable frontier between the universe of things and deeds and the universe of the imagination; the lowering of the intolerable frontiers created by the world's many different kinds of thought policemen: these matters have been at the heart of the literary project that was given to me by the circumstances of my life, rather than chosen by me for intellectual or 'artistic' reasons.
>
> (Rushdie 2003, 434)

Rushdie's border crossings are tied to a process of cultural and linguistic translation. For Rushdie, the translation of India into a literary subject needed the 'verbal transmigration' of India to allow India's varying forms of thought, imagination and play, its multiplicity, to be expressed truthfully in fiction and this thesis has demonstrated how much the aesthetic idiom of the commercial Bombay film is part of this translation process (Rushdie 2003, 434-435).

This process is also bound up with Rushdie's description of an urban environment, which becomes, as Otto Cone describes it in *The Satanic Verses*, 'the locus classicus of incompatible realities' (Rushdie 1998, 314). Rushdie's fictional world is largely shaped by the cosmopolitan environment in his glorification of the urban cityscape of Bombay, London and New York. Even a novel like *Shalimar the Clown*, which is largely set in Kashmir, is framed by a narrative set in the urban space of that other great movie city, Los Angeles. Through cinematic strategies in his own fiction Rushdie represents the complexity, diversity and heterogeneous dynamics of the city in all its facets. Los Angeles in *Shalimar the Clown* and Bombay, London and New York in particular are marked out as representative of this urban experience. As I have argued in my discussion of the novels, the manner in which this urban environment is expressed and experienced is shaped by cinema, a medium that like no other is bound up with the representation of an urban modernity. As Mark Shiel points out:

> Industrial cinema has long played an important role in the cultural economies of cities all over the world in the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures, and in the cultural geographies of certain cities particularly marked by cinema (from Los Angeles to Paris to Bombay) whose built environment and civic identity are both significantly constituted by film industry and films.
>
> (Shiel/Fitzmaurice 2001, 1-2)

Rushdie exploits the city's relationship with cinema as its prime marker in his descriptions of Bombay London and New York to complicate the conceptualisation of nationhood for newly independent postcolonial countries and the reconfiguration of nationhood in the process of globalisation as the city becomes the city of global

exchange with the free movement of goods, people and capital. Here emerges the close relationship between these different urban spaces as the trajectory is traversed by Rushdie's hero and by cinema itself. Bollywood cinema has increasingly thematised the diaspora ever since the 1990s, and New York and London in particular as the locus of the NRI community have become very important in their picturisation.

The heightened awareness of Bollywood cinema and of the South Asian diaspora across the globe suggests that Bollywood's aesthetic is invested with some kind of cultural capital that goes beyond the commercial and the local. Thus, in *Bollywood: Sociology goes to the Movies* Rajinder Dudrah argues that what we mean by escapist entertainment needs to be thought through in more complex terms. He suggests that Bollywood cinema needs to be studied as 'part and parcel of cultural and social processes and elaborated on, though not exclusively, through an engagement with actual social subjects' (Dudrah, 2006, 29). In this respect, Dudrah argues, there is a need 'to think imaginatively about cinema as a global industry, films as popular cultural texts, and the relationships that are possible between cinema and its audiences' (Dudrah, 2006, 26). As my discussion has shown, in Rushdie's novels these debates complexly impact on his narratives as he engages with questions about the role of cinema as a site of discourse for his protagonists, how Bombay films are read as cultural texts and function as analogies in his own fiction. In this respect, the analogies his own characters make between their own lives and the productions of Hindi cinema become an important marker – be it Hind's avid consumption of Gibreel Farishta's films, John Maslama's adoration of the same star, Gibreel's own attachment to *Shree 420*, Moraes's and Aurora's reading of *Mother India*, or Boonyi's equation of her life story with that of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam*. Arguably then, the Bombay film has become a means by which diasporic communities negotiate Indianness and its transformation (Kaur/Sinha, 2005, 16). What becomes evident in Rushdie's engagement with Hindi cinema is what Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha describe as the interdynamic relationships between the local and the global, the national and the international and the national and intra-national, arguing that Bollywood cinema through multiple sites of productive economies has the power to link broader networks of transnational societies and diasporic communities, demonstrating how Bollywood cinema's consumption by its diasporas across the globe inflects the imaginings of nationhood (Kaur/Sinha 2005, 23). What has become evident especially during the 1990s and after is that the construction of a 'national fantasy' has become unstable.

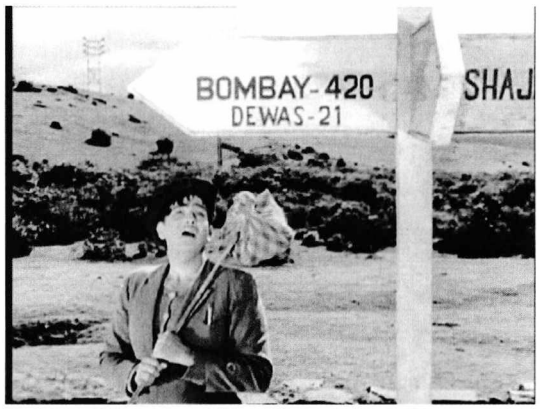
Hindi cinema plays a role in the manner in which community is imagined abroad. In this respect, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that 'in a trans-national world typified by the global circulation of images and sounds, goods and peoples, the media impact complexly on national identity and communal belonging' (Shohat/Stam 2003, 1). Thus, Hindi cinema allows for a mediated engagement with distant places in a partially deterritorialised process of imagining community (Shohat/Stam 2003, 1). Hindi cinema, then, and the global brand 'Bollywood' with which it has become recognised as a global commodity, is a postcolonial, trans-national and multi-cultural medium and it is deployed as such in Rushdie's fiction to articulate a particular logic of culture through which 'India' and its diaspora is being 'read' across the globe. Within these debates about Indianness and authenticity lies a much more politicised debate about home and the positioning of India as the authentic homeland that stands in opposition to the inauthentic 'home' in the west. In this respect, Rushdie's reading of Hindi cinema/Bombay cinema as Bollywood – a particular logic of culture as well as an aesthetic – allows him to engage with similar debates where the question of Indianness, both in India and in the diaspora, becomes central to his characters' identity negotiations and their definitions of selfhood.

Appendix

Shree 420 (1955)

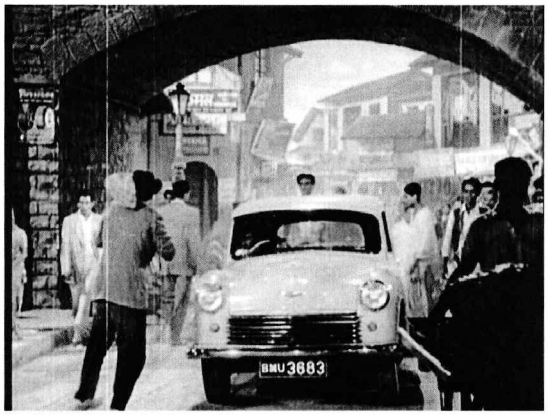
When Raj Kumar Saxena (Raj Kapoor) moves to Bombay, the chaplinesque tramp is armed with nothing but his honesty, integrity and his degree. He is a dreamer and wants to achieve his goals in this city of opportunities. Raj soon learns that his values and beliefs get him nowhere in a city, where the social system favours profiteers, black-marketers, and other species of '420s', fraudster who make fortunes. In the course of drifting from one job to another, Raj meets the beautiful Vidya (Nargis). Though poor herself, Vidya shares Raj's philosophy of honesty. Raj soon learns that their dreams are impossible to achieve by honest means and he sells out. Out of economic need and his bitter experiences in the hostile environment of the city he sees himself forced to embrace dishonesty, becoming a fraudster, Mr 420 himself. Raj enters high society as a gambler and fraudster where financial success becomes paramount. In the process he becomes further and further removed from his ideals, values and beliefs and loses Vidya, his one true love. When Raj is embroiled in a scam to defraud the group of slum dwellers who first gave him shelter, he recognises his errors, exposes the scam and brands the schemers as the true enemies of the young independent nation.

Throughout his novels, Rushdie alludes to the number '420'. The title song of the film, 'Mera Joota Hai Japani' has a particular resonance in *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie has described it as Saleem's theme song, considering he is a character whose identity is a similar motley agglomeration as the clothes Raj is wearing. Furthermore, Saleem's unreliable narration could be read as a '420-ing' of his audience. Gibreel Farishta sings the song when he tumbles down to earth after his plane is blown up over the English Channel.



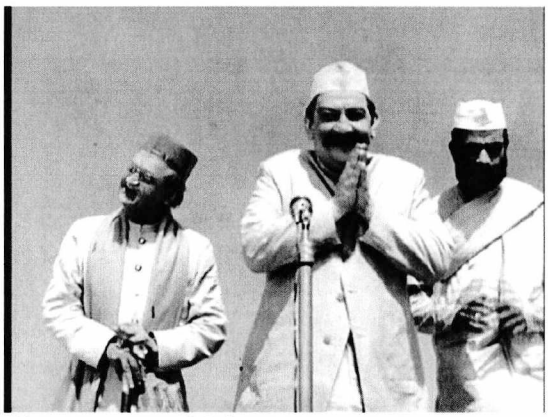
Raj walking the 420 miles to Bombay


Mera Joota Hai Japani

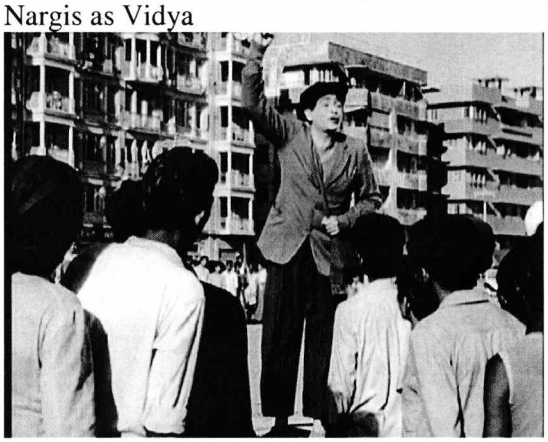


Raj arrives in Bombay

Nargis as Vidya



The corrupt politicians



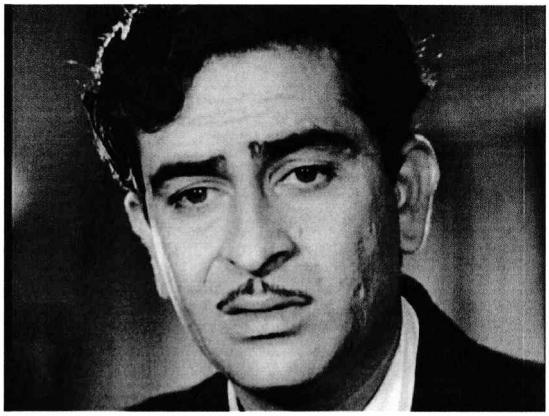
Raj putting up a box in opposition, in the background are Art Deco apartment blocks on Marine Drive

Pyar hua ikraar hua, perhaps the most famous Raj Kapoor/ Nargis love duet

Maya (Nadira), the *femme fatale*

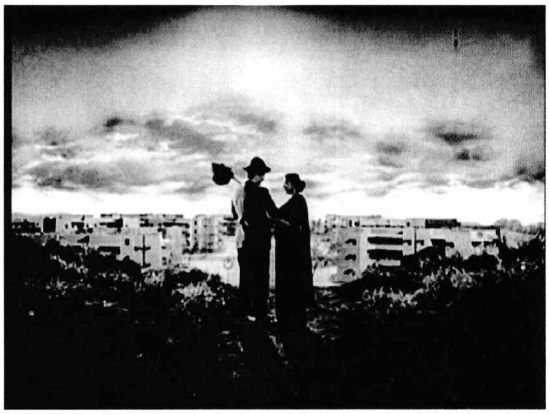
Vidya rejects Raj's offer of money

Raj confronted by his old self



The decadent jet-set world

Raj leaves the city



Vidya and Raj in front of the new housing development

Mother India (1957)

Mother India is the story of peasant woman Radha (Nargis), her family and her village. After her marriage, she finds herself in hardship, as her mother-in-law had to take out a crippling loan from the moneylender. She suggests to her husband to farm a barren piece of land full of boulders. Her husband has an accident as a boulder crushes both his arms. He leaves his family so as not to be a burden on them, leaving Radha and her three sons to fend for themselves. Despite her abandonment, Radha remains loyal to her husband, searching for him and refusing to give in to the lecherous moneylender. The land is subsequently ravaged by floods, in which the youngest son dies. As the villagers abandon their land, Radha implores them to stay, not to leave their land, but to remain loyal to Mother India. Much of the iconography Rushdie refers to in *The Moor's Last Sigh* comes from this song sequence (Oh Jaanewalo). The sequence also marks the transition of her sons Ramu (Rajendra Kumar) and Birju (Sunil Dutt) from childhood to adulthood. Ramu becomes the dutiful son, working the land and providing the family with their much-needed income, while Birju is on a mission to reclaim his mother's pawned wedding jewellery from the moneylender who provocatively allows his daughter to wear it in public. Birju becomes ever more extreme in his measures and when he threatens to abduct and rape the moneylender's daughter, Radha has to choose between her love for her son and protection of the village girl's honour. In the end, she kills her son. Her stoicism, her suffering and her commitment to sacrifice and duty make her, as the publicity material suggests, 'a supreme symbol of millions of mothers that make this ancient land Mother India.'

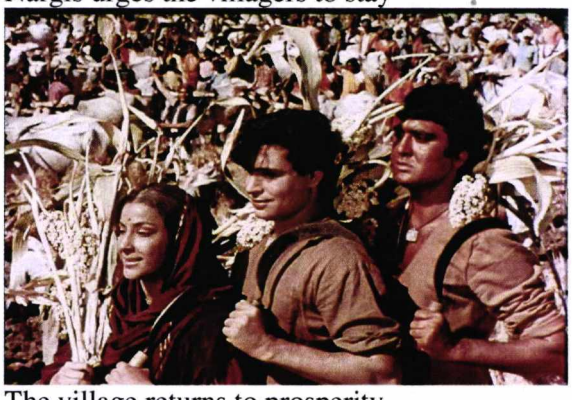
The film is told in flash-back, as her son Ramu persuades her to open the village's new irrigation project. An old Radha surveys the land now farmed by tractors and other heavy machinery in an opening shot that unambiguously associates her as the mother with the land and celebrates India's progress ten years after independence.

The opening shot of *Mother India*


Nargis as 'Mother India' and the village exodus, an implicit allusion to Partition.

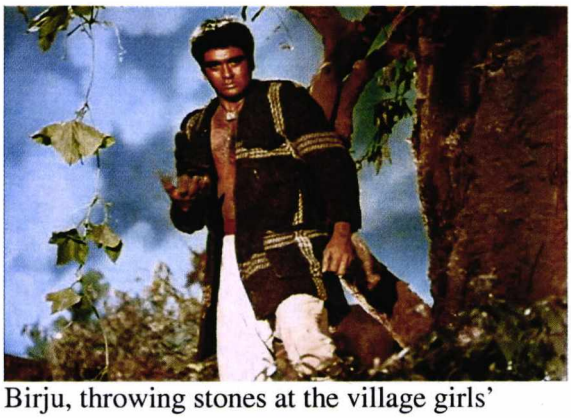
Nargis with her shovel over her shoulder

Nargis urges the villagers to stay



The village returns to prosperity

The villagers dancing in a map of pre-Partition India

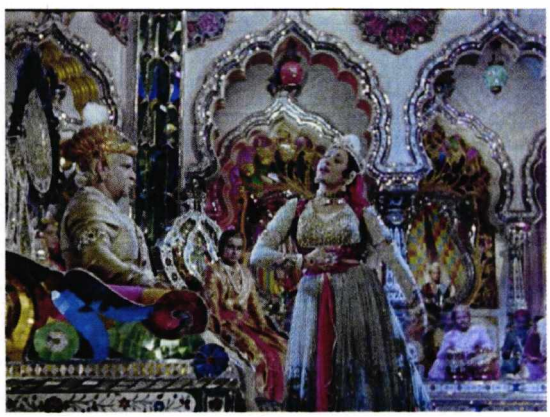


Birju, throwing stones at the village girls' water pots

Mughal-e-Azam (1960)

Mughal-e-Azam is based on the legendary love story of Prince Salim and the dancing girl Anarkali. The film is set in the late sixteenth century during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (Prithviraj Kapoor). Akbar's son and heir to the throne, Prince Salim (Dilip Kumar), falls in love with Anarkali (Madhubala) against his father's will. When Akbar learns of this he is torn between his love for his only son and the duties towards his Kingdom. Akbar strongly disapproves of a love between the future Emperor and a commoner and orders that Anarkali be imprisoned. Salim wants to defy his father and challenges his father's mighty empire by declaring war on him. However, he is defeated and is sentenced to death. Anarkali sacrifices herself for Salim by agreeing to be executed in place of Salim. She is taken away to be bricked up alive. In the film version, Akbar allows her to escape through a secret passage-way on the condition that she should never see Salim, later Emperor Jehangir, ever again.

Rushdie uses the film intertextually in *Shalimar the Clown* and it is a constant reference point for Boonyi who performs the Anarkali dance number as part of her *bhand pather* group. The dance number '*Pyar kiya to darna kya?*' in the palace of mirrors is arguably the most spectacular moment in the film with the film's transition from black-and-white into colour. The film stresses Akbar's tolerance and depicts him as a just ruler. The film also emphasises India's cultural synthesis of Hindu and Muslim styles in its opening sequence.

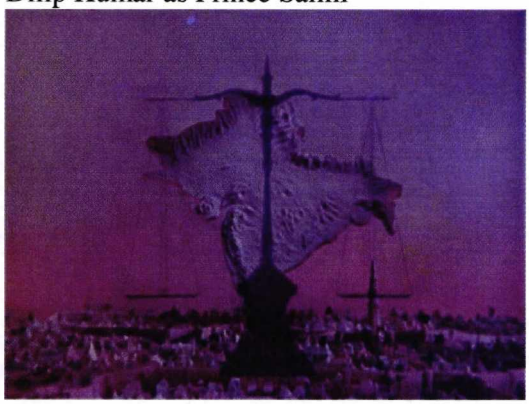


Madhubala in the 'Anarkali' Dance Number

Prithviraj Kapoor as Akbar

Dilip Kumar as Prince Salim

The rising Map of India in the movie's opening shot



The Map of India with the scales of justice in the final shot of the movie

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