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The Satanic Verses: Towards a Viable and Productive Ethics of Representing Otherness

Masters Dissertation for the Department of English Literature

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Formal Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own unaided work. The assistance I have received in creating this work has come from Prof. Gerald Gaylard in his capacity as my supervisor.

This is being submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand towards the award of a Masters degree in English Literature. It has not in substance or part been submitted in the past nor has it been used for an award at any other university.

The information obtained for this dissertation was done while under the aegis of the University of the Witwatersrand only.

Signed: Robyn Bloch

_____

Abstract

The Satanic Verses focuses on issues of migrancy, faith and belonging towards negotiating a new historical voice and levelling a challenge against master narratives of legitimacy and authority, including Islamic fundamentalism, Indian nationalism and British neocolonialism. The text grapples with emergent forms of otherness in an attempt to embrace newness and therefore engages an ethics of representation that can fully countenance the other's heterogeneity. Levinasian ethics positions otherness as wholly absent, thus avoiding the play of power in representation. However, this also excludes the other from being a part of a shared humanity. Thus I propose that a viable and productive ethics of representing otherness locates the other as *both* absence and as a subject of humanity. This "hybrid ethics" is exemplified in *The Satanic Verses.* It is achieved by creating linguistic and structural frames around sites of absence, thus highlighting the aspects of otherness that elude representation. Concurrently, the other is represented as a subject and thus has political, social, historical and cultural bearing within a shared humanity. Importantly, this allows the other to emerge without eliding difference. The broader significance of this research is the potential emergence of a radically transformative and productive voicing of otherness within dominant discourses.

Dedicated to:

Ricky

For his unremitting support

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Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Otherness: Defining the Indefinable 10

Language

Introduction 44

Master Narrative Transposition 45

Intermediary Nature of Language 52

Against the Word, Towards the Split 57

Performative Absence 63

A Politics of Language 73

Conclusion 78

Structure

Introduction 80

Mise-en-Abyme: Paradox and the Structural Abyss 82

History: A Structural Haunting 91

Metafiction: the Text in/as History 104

Conclusion 109

Otherness and Subjectivity

Introduction 111

Saladin's Journeys: Fatherland, Mother-tongue 122

Feminised Politics: Revision within the Ambit of Sexual Difference

Introduction 135

Coloniser Colonised 136

Postcolonial Women 143

Women in Islam 152

Hind and Ayesha 157

Conclusion 162

Conclusion: A Productive Ethics 163

Introduction

Much of the attention given to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) has been focused on the so-called "Rushdie Affair". The fatwa of death issued by the Ayatollah Khomeini in February 1989 resulted in an outcry from both supporters of the novel and those against it, seething between the "liberals" who were against censorship and those who were insulted by the novel's alleged blasphemy against Islam. The two sides of this argument were, and indeed are still today, given monolithic identities — the civil liberties of the West, the keepers of the freedom of speech, set against the conservative primitiveness of the pan-Islamic world. The crystallisation of these two social identities, each of which is equally fallacious, not only ignores the actual novel in question but essentially misses one of its vital messages — the espousal of an ethic of questioning that dismantles social binaries. Sara Suleri, a postcolonial theorist and commentator, puts it well: "[S]uch a binary approach muddies the issues at hand by allowing one form of cultural hysteria [the fatwa] to be narcissistically mirrored by another [the West as the putative seat of civil liberty]" (Suleri 200). This only reifies the binaries of West/East, Christian/Muslim, and, far from opening up a channel for debate, the whole affair became enmeshed in political power play, with Iran breaking off diplomatic relations with Britain when Margaret Thatcher refused to ban the book.

In the midst of all of this was Salman Rushdie, who became either an angelic hero for the cause of liberty and freedom of speech, or the devilish, deracinated blasphemer of Islam, the Qur'an and the Prophet — recalling his two characters from *The Satanic Verses*; Saladin, who is metamorphosed into a devil, and Gibreel, who becomes an angel. Some writers saw fit to make comment about Rushdie's personality and intentions — "Rushdie is … a practitioner of black magic" (Ashraf in *Impact International* 28 Oct – 10 Nov 1988 cited in Appignanesi & Maitland 26), "Rushdie's artistic and moral degradation is … immense" (Farangi in *Independent* 21 Feb 1989 cited in Appignanesi & Maitland 24). Thus, Rushdie's character became a site of curiosity and vilification. On the other side, writers across the globe rallied to Rushdie's defence, protecting his right to freedom of expression. Two days after the fatwa of death was pronounced against Rushdie, Harold Pinter wrote in a letter addressed to Thatcher: "A very distinguished writer has used his imagination to write a book and has criticized a religion into which he was born and he has been sentenced to death … It is an

intolerable and barbaric state of affairs" (Pinter in *Guardian* 16 Feb 1989 cited in Appignanesi & Maitland 106). Thousands of writers also signed a statement of solidarity against the fatwa and for the "right to the freedom of opinion and expression" (Appignanesi & Maitland 137)[1].

In spite, or perhaps because, of this political, social and religious furore, comparatively little attention has been given to *The Satanic Verses'* subtle treatment of otherness. The novel's focus is on the migrant experience and the manner in which ideas of history, home and faith are grappled with in the torrid space of 1980s London. Its complex structure follows several storylines, generally ordered around the two main characters mentioned earlier, Saladin and Gibreel. The novel opens with the two Indian men falling from an exploded hijacked plane and landing, miraculously unharmed, on the shores of the English Channel. The fall elicits their metamorphoses. Saladin, an Anglophile with British citizenship and an embarrassed distaste for India and people from India (despite himself), becomes a devil. Gibreel, who has recently experienced a devastating loss of faith in Islam, becomes an angel who is tormented by serial dreams that roughly follow the story of the rise of Islam and the Prophet. These metamorphoses inaugurate the metaphor of transformation under pressure. The immigrant grapples with the choice between assimilation and isolation in his or her new location and fights to find a niche within the dominant political, cultural and social structures of their host nation. He or she must also engage with the binaries within these dominant structures that potentially position them as "other" and, as in *The Satanic Verses,* dismantle these binaries towards a position of newness — a hybrid subjectivity that can inaugurate a new historical voice. However, this needs to occur while remaining heterogeneous, thus retaining difference if they are not to be wholly assimilated. Saladin's transformation forces him to experience another side of Britain, its institutionalised racism and the treatment of anyone seen as "other" — thus, the immigrants, refugees, and exiles living in London. For Gibreel, his transformation forces him to experience another side of religion, which, under the pressure of his loss of faith, is full of doubt. Gibreel is unable to reconcile himself with his loss of faith and commits suicide in the end. Saladin, however, is able to humanise himself and come to

[1] For a list of the signatories see: Appignanesi, Lisa and Maitland, Sarah, eds. *The Rushdie File.* Fourth Estate Ltd., London: 1989 p. 138.

terms with his hybrid subjectivity. He is an other in England because of his Indianness and an other in India because of his Britishness. However, in the end, without eclipsing or suppressing either site of difference in himself, he is able to enter a new subjectivity that dismantles the binaries that make him one thing or the other. Thus, using the migrant experience and the metaphor of transformation, the text creates a space and time in which otherness is able to emerge while retaining its difference.

I am therefore interested in the various ways otherness is represented and grappled with in *The Satanic Verses.* Of course, the term "other" is notoriously slippery — it is used in a host of ways and is equally a part of several different theoretical paradigms. I will discuss my use of this term and its various "definitions" (in as far as it can be defined) shortly. However, first I want to outline briefly the complexities involved in representing the other as well as the importance of the attempt to do so. Representing otherness presents a paradox. As soon as otherness is represented its otherness is dissolved and eclipsed. This occurs for several reasons. The play of power in representation means a conscious or unconscious espousal of certain ideologies and discourses that, when placing the other within them, makes this otherness relative. Thus, it is only other to or within a particular set of ideas. Any "real" otherness is subsumed into a hierarchical binary of same/other. The poststructuralist perspective on otherness deems it, by definition and by its very nature, absent and unrepresentable. Otherness within this theoretical paradigm is rather the capacity for *difference* in any narrative structure. This difference thus cannot be a part of the narrative structure because it would only make it the same as everything that is already within the structure. Thus, otherness as the capacity for difference is connected to absence as it necessarily cannot be a part of the representation. The other is also a political and historical phenomenon. During the imperial expansionism of the 19th and 20th centuries, the coloniser, placing himself or herself in the seat of civilisation and knowledge (the same or the self) subjected the colonised to this knowledge, which then became "the other". Today the same type of othering occurs within nationalism, ethnicity, culture and religion. Several important questions need to be raised in terms of otherness — why is it important? And, more specifically, why is it important *in representation*?

Otherness is connected to ethics. Levinasian ethics is based on a relation between the self and the other and the concomitant call to responsibility necessitated by this relation. Kantian ethics, to speak rather broadly, is premised on the treatment of mutual respect towards the other within the paradigm of universal human dignity. Thus, the attempt to represent otherness is an ethical endeavour because it is through a form of relationship with the other that we understand the world ethically. Yet, these two ethical paradigms essentially clash in terms of the way otherness is perceived. For Levinas, respect and responsibility towards the other is premised on the other being wholly outside of representation. This is based on the fact that for Levinas, representing the other places it within a particular ideological paradigm or discourse, which then subsumes the other's difference. There is, however, a danger involved in relegating the other to an absolute absence. In one sense, I believe this absolutism does not fully countenance the complex heterogeneity of the other and is not an adequate way to engage with the various ways in which the other is potentially manifest. It also assumes the other is outside of any and all forms of common knowledge and thus, perhaps, outside of humanity and human dignity, which creates a scenario that lends itself to binarism. Therefore, there is a renewed call for allowing the other to emerge in representation so as to be a part of our shared humanity, avoiding its total relegation to absence. However, the choice between one type of ethical paradigm and another is a choice between two evils: one, which favours absence in order to preserve otherness from being eclipsed within representation, runs the risk of placing the other outside of common humanity; the other, which favours a representation of the other in order to place him or her within a paradigm of human dignity, runs the risk of eclipsing any actual otherness under the edifice of a dominant ideology. Thus, I propose that an ethically viable and productive representation is achieved through a *combination* of framing sites of absence in which the other is allowed to remain unrepresented but is highlighted as significant, *and* allowing the other to emerge as a subject. Further, I propose that this type of ethical representation of otherness is exemplified in the text, *The Satanic Verses.*

Therefore, the focus of this paper will move away from the "Rushdie Affair" or any speculative accounts of the author's character. I will focus on the *technical aspects* of the text to investigate its attempt to represent otherness. Of course, it is impossible to ignore the historical impact of the novel, and I have looked at this aspect briefly in one of my chapters. I

should, however, not be disingenuous or oblivious to the fact that arguing that a text that upset millions of people has ethical aspects is not in itself making a particular statement. To clarify my particular ideological position with regards to the "Rushdie Affair": being an avid and critical reader I am certainly against any edict that would ban the reading of a book and see fit to kill its author. The burning of books appals me, and the burning of *this* book even more so because it is a rich and complex meditation on human nature, the experience of migrancy and the position of otherness in society. To a certain degree, my choice to read this text from the perspective of the ethics of otherness is influenced by what I feel is a too quick and often unfair critique of it. I am not unsympathetic to those who took genuine offence to the book, after having read it. Yet too often it was used as a tool for other agendas: in South Africa the book was banned by the apartheid government in a strategic move to cause a rift between Muslims, who called for its banning and black Africans, who were against it because of their struggle against the erosion of free speech under the apartheid government. Rushdie was also barred from coming to South Africa to give a speech entitled "Wherever they burn books, they also burn people", which was intended as an act of solidarity against apartheid and its censorship statutes. In Iran, Khomeini's fatwa of death was seen as a political move. Reza Pahlavi, the son of the former shah of Iran, stated that "Khomeini's regime can only survive as long as it produces permanent critics. A politics of opening towards the West would be tantamount to a loss of power for the current regime" (from *Salzburg Kronen Zeitung,* 11 March 1989 in Appignanesi & Maitland 102). Amir Taheri saw *The Satanic Verses* as "an issue likely to stir the imagination of the poor and illiterate masses" in Iran (from *The Times,* 13 February 1989 in Appignanesi & Maitland 95). It was also suggested by Harvey Morris that the edict was used as a way to rally the people of Iran to renewed revolutionary fervour, intended to replace the Iraq-Iran war as a focus of national unity (105).

Thus, simultaneously, *The Satanic Verses* and the resultant "Rushdie Affair" is extremely complex and far too simplistic. On the one hand, the text is caught in a web of politics and various agendas, has genuinely raised the ire of many Muslims and has became a touchstone of, or extension of, the historical grievances between the West and the East — extending back to the Crusades. On the other, this complex text has been simplified to the extent of almost being ignored. Therefore, fully acknowledging the importance and complexity that resulted from the publication of this novel, I wish to focus more fully on its technical aspects;

its linguistic play, its structural narrativisation and characters, in order to explore its ethics. As to whether the text itself is ethical or not, in the face of its charges of blasphemy versus freedom of speech, I believe that question would warrant a discussion longer than the length of this paper will allow. My focus is thus purely centred on the ethics of the representation of otherness *within* this text.

Several questions arise out of the focus area of my investigation, which will make up the body of my paper: how is it possible for otherness to remain absent within representation but to still be framed and highlighted as significant? How does the other emerge as a subject without eclipsing its difference? And how do the two occur simultaneously in order to present an ethical representation? Before looking more closely at both why I have specifically chosen *The Satanic Verses* as my primary text as well as the theoretical fields pertinent to my investigation, I will attempt to delineate my use of the term "otherness" or "the other".

Otherness: Defining the Indefinable

Otherness by its nature defies definition or conceptual encapsulation. The act of defining a concept places it within a discourse and therefore within the concomitant play of power/knowledge inside the regime of representation (see: Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* London: Tavistock Publications, 1970). Foucault claims that "discourse" creates an exclusive and exclusionary body of theory — a "unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order [illegitimate knowledge]" (Foucault, *The Order of Things* 83) — which disallows and even suppresses the possibility of difference. This "illegitimate knowledge" is deemed as such by the dominant discourses of power and is therefore the site of subjugated knowledge — the voices of those outside the dynamics of power within the dominant discourse, such as the economically disenfranchised, ethnic minorities or the culturally, socially or politically suppressed. Submitting something or someone to the regime of power/knowledge is thus an act of epistemic violence because discourse programmatically suppresses the possibility of difference — hence, the difficulty involved in "defining" otherness, which is itself made up of the possibility of difference. Yet the attempt to negotiate a form of framing or highlighting of otherness is still critical. It is

towards wresting otherness from defunct binaries, which still operate within dominant discourse, and opening up a representative time and space for the voicing of a new historical subject.

Gayatri Spivak identifies this bind in her seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), in which she accuses Foucault and Deleuze, both of whom vociferously critique the play of power in discourse, of perpetrating the same epistemic violence against the subaltern[2] by attempting to speak *for* them. Spivak asserts that the attempt to speak for the disenfranchised is another mechanism of power that constructs the subaltern as an other through a binary logic that automatically suppresses difference — placing the intellectual in a hierarchical binary of the known and the same, and the subaltern as the other. Spivak suggests that to "confront them [the subaltern] is not to represent … them but to learn to represent … ourselves" (84). This involves a foregrounding of the intellectual's subject-position within a particular discourse of power, which avoids automatically assuming the normative value of said discourse. Following Spivak's advice, I will delineate my position within the theoretical paradigms I will use to explore otherness.

Before doing so, however, a last word on the attempt to define otherness. To define a concept is emphatically a logocentric impulse. The *logos* "relates to 'meaning', produces it, receives it, speaks it, 'composes' it" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 11). Therefore, a logocentric impulse implies an attempt at full and unitary meaning and, more importantly, that this type of meaning is possible. The entire body of poststructuralist thought, which I will discuss shortly, works to demonstrate the failure of logocentrism in the face of the irreducible multiplicity of experience. "[W]hat needs to be foregrounded [in poststructuralist thought] is the way in which it explores and develops the consequences of the logical impossibility of rigorously delimiting conceptual identities" (Glendinning 77). Thus, my "definition" of otherness potentially falls within logocentrism, and is done within the framework of all the myriad

[2] Spivak locates the subaltern within the lowest strata of economic and political power within Indian society. They are in the margins of society — "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (78). Her categorisation, however, is in no way homogenous and is used only to illustrate the spectrum "for whom the episteme operates its silent programming function" (ibid).

dangers described above, but is nonetheless necessary for the clarity of my research. Moreover, the other is also fleeting. "It is *there*, but out there, *beyond* … eluding us" (Derrida, *Ellipsis* 378). Kristeva calls for a lightness of touch when dealing with otherness: "Let us merely touch it, brush it, without giving it a permanent structure. Simply sketching out its perpetual motion" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 3). My attempt, therefore, is as far as possible to avoid perpetuating epistemic violence or to fall into logocentrism while "sketching" out the concept of otherness.

I will approach the concept of otherness (though the term "concept" is anathema to its meaning) from two different, though related, directions — poststructuralist and postcolonial theories. My reading of otherness in relation to both these theoretical standpoints will be through difference and thus through *absence,* that is, through the unrepresentable nature of otherness. To fully understand "absence", I will briefly discuss the poststructuralist critique of logocentrism and "presence", most comprehensively explored in Jacques Derrida's text *Of Grammatology* (1976). Derrida asserts that Western metaphysics privileges "presence", which is at the heart of logocentrism. As mentioned above, the *logos* relates to unified meaning. "Presence" is the unencumbered immediacy of this meaning, which is perceived as outside the language that conveys it. Writing is deemed secondary to the primacy of speech, which is characterised as retaining an essential link to thought and therefore, to pure meaning. In logocentrism, writing is always "preceded by a truth, or meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 14) and is thus essentially secondary to this meaning.

Derrida famously argues that "there is nothing outside the text" (Derrida, *The Play of Substitution* 89). This assertion has several implications. Language "produce[s] the sense of the very thing it defers" (Derrida, *The Play of Substitution* 87) meaning that the world is mediated by language, that although language allows an "understanding" or a sense of something, it is always between the thing and our experience of it in its immediacy. However, if language precedes the referent in the world, and always defers it, immediacy and originary presence is impossible. The transcendental signified — a concept that is immediately and absolutely connected to meaning — is absent. The absence of the transcendental signified, of

immediacy and originary presence, opens up the text to the *play* of the signifier. This play is also called the "movement of supplementarity" (Derrida, *Structure, Sign, Play* 289). The absence of the transcendental signified means that a sign is added to supplement the lack. This supplement is meant in both senses of the word — to add something missing and to add something additional. This play of the signifier is always "the disruption of presence" (292) because it both signifies and substitutes absence.

The notion of "play" and its connection to absence is the first way in which I would like to read otherness. This play is transgressive because it disallows closure and opens up the text to the *possibility of difference*. It exposes the "*limits* of decidability, of calculability or of formalized completeness" (Derrida, *Limited Inc.* 114), and opens the boundaries of text to the possibility of "something else", of difference. The play of absence is thus also the play of difference, which I will read as one of the "forms" of otherness.

Derrida makes use of several different terms — the trace, supplementarity, differance, alterity — each of which refer to different aspects of broadly the same thing, outlined above. In the same way I wish to employ the terms "otherness", "the other" and "difference" to mean different aspects of the same thing. Having outlined my first "form" or aspect of meaning of otherness, I will move on to how the term is used in postcolonial theory.

Homi K Bhabha, a prominent postcolonial theorist, works towards defining the postcolonial perspective in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*:

> The postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of cultural community. It insists that cultural and political identity are constructed through a process of alterity (175).

The "process of alterity" is employed to avoid the play of power involved in representing a particular group or social echelon as "other". The "other" within the "process of alterity" is thus located outside representation. As the term "postcolonialism" suggests, it is interested in the continued consequences of the colonial and imperial conquest of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the hegemony of neocolonial economic enterprise. The consequence of

continued forms of contemporary colonialism is the perpetuation of dominant discourses that instigate a normative system of value, entrenching the harmful binaries of self/other, us/them, which originally herald from colonisation. This hierarchical binary of power subsumes any actual otherness into this dialectical relationship, which is played out through the regime of representation — Foucault's power/knowledge dialectic. The other can therefore only be "defined" outside of this dialectic, which is necessarily outside of representation. The other is ephemeral; it can be conceived of but as soon as one attempts to find a representation adequate to it, one falls into the dialectic. It is thus like "otherness", beyond representation. Postcolonial thought, however, differs in its focus.

Where poststructuralist theory focuses on the failure of logocentrism, postcolonial thought is "[d]riven by the subaltern history of the margins of modernity" (ibid). Thus, it is strongly located in the social, cultural and political identities of people on the margins of society, and in negotiating a space and time for the "process of alterity", which does not eclipse their difference within the dialectic of representation power or perpetuate epistemic violence. This "process of alterity" necessarily "unsettles the liberal ethic of tolerance and the pluralist framework of multiculturalism" (177).

The "process of alterity", in which the cultural difference of the other is sustained, is figured both spatially and temporally. It is in the "in-between spaces" (216) of historical realities, as well as in the "disintegrative moment" (217) that emerges as the domain of social causality and cultural difference, which are "unrepresentable" (ibid). Border existences — the minority, the other of a social or national discourse — call for a renewed envisioning of time and space. Space is no longer only governed by political, social or cultural borders, which is the locus of power, but is decentred by the people that inhabit the in-between spaces — the "interstitial passage[s]" (217) — that defy and destablise unified, formalised and homogenised cultural, social or political communities. Concurrently, the time of the other is no longer Historical time, which is linear and singular; rather, it is non-synchronous and disjunctive. The other disrupts historical temporality because of its historical invisibility. The other is not included in the historical reckoning of the dominant social, cultural or political community but is nonetheless there. This other time and space (or the time and space of the

other) is termed the "third space" (Jameson in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 218) of cultural difference.

The hybrid identity, someone in-between one nation and another or one culture and another, most powerfully embodied by the migrant experience, is identified as inhabiting Jameson's "third space". These "differential identities" are constantly "opening out, remaking the boundaries, exposing the limit of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference — be it class, gender or race" (219). Thus, the postcolonial other, like poststructuralist otherness, exposes the limits of a particular boundary or border and opens it up to difference — to "*something else besides, in-between*" (ibid). This difference, however, is not singular or autonomous, which would potentially fall prey to the dialectical circle of power or the play of binaries, us/them, self/other, that efface difference. This "something else besides" gestures towards what Spivak terms the "irretrievably heterogeneous" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 79) nature of the other, which thus is constantly exceeding representation.

Having "defined" these two aspects of otherness, I would like to briefly delineate their significance in terms of ethics. The aspects of otherness that defy representation and remain outside of it fit into Levinas' definition of ethics, which forms one part of my reading of ethics in *The Satanic Verses.* Emmanuel Levinas, in his text *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961), defines "ethics" as "[a] calling into question of the same … by the other" (43). His "definition" of the other is an "irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and possessions" (ibid). The "I" here can be related to "the same" in postcolonial theory or to "presence" in poststructuralist — it is everything that the "I" or ego can relate to, can represent and can encompass, and therefore possess and neutralise, with reason. The "absolute other", as Levinas terms it, is wholly exterior to this and is outside of representation.

However, Levinasian ethics, and its concomitant "definition" of otherness, is critiqued and revised by several theorists[3] — most forcefully by Julia Kristeva, but also by Christopher Norris and Edward Said — for its absolute break with humanism. Humanism, with its emphasis on universal ethics, the dignity of all men and women and the focus on rationality, is also connected to ideological control, specifically in terms of creating normative, *European* standards. "[T]hose universal essential features which define the human … assimilate[s] the human itself with European values" (Young, *White Mythologies* 122). It is thus also connected with colonialism and hegemony — "Humanism is the counterpart of racism: it is a practice of exclusion" (Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* 752). However, the argument for a critical return to humanism is based on a renewed appeal to the principle of humanity. Placing the other at such a remove — where one is not even able to *think* the absolute other — allows a disassociation and even break to occur, which excludes the other from being a part of a shared basic humanity. Thus, there is a theoretical turn toward "the *principle* of … universal dignity — without scattering it among new nations, religious, or private regionalisms" (Kristeva *Strangers to Ourselves* 152). This then necessitates a new aspect of otherness, which is not wholly unrepresentable.

This final "form" of otherness is the other-as-subject. To be a part of a shared humanity, the other must emerge from absence into individuated subjectivity. This, however, in no way means that the other aspects of otherness are eclipsed. Indeed, one of the main points I wish to make with this paper is that all the aspects of otherness mentioned can be sustained in a representation and, in fact, cannot be productively ethical without one another. The other-as-subject is an attempt to anchor the other in the real-world concerns of racism, poverty, and migrancy, to name a few, without effacing their heterogeneity and difference. The subject, or more fully, the *conscious* or *thinking subject* is defined as "the mind, as the 'subject' in which ideas inhere; that to which all mental representations or operations are attributed; the thinking

[3] See: Norris, Christopher *Truth and the Ethics of Criticism.* Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1994 and *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War.* Massachusetts, Massachusetts University Press: 1992. Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1991 and *Nations without Nationalism.* Columbia, Columbia University Press: 1993. Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* London, Chatto & Windus Ltd.:1993. Levinas, Emmanual. *Humanism of the Other.* 1972 (trans. Richard A. Cohen) Illinois, Illinois University Press: 2003. Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the work of Emmanuel Levinas" in *Writing and Difference.* Great Britian, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.: 1978

or cognizing agent; the self or ego" (OED). Representing the other as an individual with agency of thought immediately allows a common ground that assumes "shared ontological, cognitive and evaluative commitments" (Norris 29), upon which an ethic of dignity and humanity can find actual purchase. Derrida writes: "[I]t is impossible to respect [the other] in experience and in language, if this other, in all its alterity, does not *appear* for the ego" (*Violence and Metaphysics* 123). The emergence of the other into subjectivity thus opens a space for this appearance and therefore, for empathy, compassion and respect. The other is also represented as a subject in another sense of the word — as a subject *of* a nation, culture, religious creed or ethnicity and thus subject *to* subjugation or upliftment within these social, political or historical paradigms. However, the other-as-subject is always provisional and never represented as unified or sovereign because of the play of difference. Thus, "one can *both* make adequate allowance for [a] range of culture-specific interests, values and priorities *and* maintain the principled appeal to higher level maxims" (Norris 96) such as human dignity.

In defining the various uses of the term "otherness", "difference" and "the other", I have made reference to most of the theoretical paradigms pertinent to my discussion. However, the history, methods and specificities of each theoretical field need to be looked at in more detail to clarify my position within them. The term "poststructuralism", which has come into use in referring to the failure of logocentrism, and whose "method" (if one could use such a systematic term) is deconstruction, is, in fact, rejected by Derrida. Derrida asserts that his work is a "structuralist gesture … a gesture that assumed a certain need for the structuralist problematic. But it [is] also an antistructuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part on this ambiguity" (Derrida, *Letter* 2), and thus that the term "poststructuralism" denied or moved away from the theory's deep-rootedness in structuralism, which asserts that the world can be wholly understood in terms of rational structures of varying degrees of complexity. While acknowledging Derrida's reticence in the use of the term "poststructuralism", I will employ it in a similar manner to the term "postcolonialism". Both terms contain and are rooted in the ideas or social problematics that they wish to engage with and *extend.*

The way in which poststructuralism works in a text is named "deconstruction". For Derrida the notion of play is connected to his "motif of deconstruction" (Derrida, *Letter* 2), which "[does] not destroy structures from the outside … [but] inhabit[s] those structures … operating necessarily from the inside" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 24). Thus, deconstruction enters a particular narrative structure and exposes its structure to its own elements of undecidability — opening it to the play of absence and, thus, to the play of difference. *The Satanic Verses* employs what I have termed an "ethic of deconstruction", wherein the text engages particular narrative structures — most notably the religious master narratives of Islam, as well as narratives of British and Indian nationalism — and deconstructs them, exposing their sites of absence and thus their potential for the play of difference. I use the term "ethic" pointedly, as it is through the motif of deconstruction in the text that it is able to grapple with otherness while allowing it to remain unrepresented. This makes up one arm of the ethical paradigm I am proposing. Thus, rather than deconstructing the narrative by exposing the way that the structure privileges presence, I aim to investigate the way in which deconstruction already works as a motif in the text. *The Satanic Verses* engages with particular master narrative structures, thus my investigation will look at the ways in which the text attempts to expose the elements of play, difference and undecidability *within* these structures. However, this operation works from within the old structures and because of this "the enterprise of deconstruction always falls prey to its own work" (ibid). The narrative structures of *The Satanic Verses* thus do fall prey to logo-, phono- or phallocentrism. In fact, the last of these three, the phallocentric impulse, which plays into the binary of placing men above women within a particular power dynamic that is not questioned or critiqued, is most directly discernable in the text and is pointed out in my chapter on gender and sexual difference. Thus, I do not aim to assert that *The Satanic Verses* is beyond the deconstructive critique. Rather, my main focus will engage with how the ethic of deconstruction already in the text works to frame otherness through the play of absence.

Another theoretical position that is best read linguistically is Lacanian theory. Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), a French psychoanalyst, contributed to psychoanalysis, philosophy and literary theory most famously by critically revising Freudian theory through the lens of linguistic play and language. Lacan's rereading of Freud postulates the importance of language in subject constitution and theorised a "lack" in the heart of language. To explain briefly: during the

Mirror stage (just before the Symbolic stage), the child is with the mother and s/he recognises the mother as Other. The movement into the Symbolic stage, and therefore into language, is always accompanied by an Other. "[T]he Other becomes the real witness and guarantor of the subject's existence" (Benvenuto, Kennedy 73). However, the child feels a lack that the other cannot fulfil. Thus, as the child moves into the Symbolic stage this lack becomes embedded in language and is "something that cannot be put into words" (176). This lack "shines forth with its very absence" (Benvenuto, Kennedy 180)[4].

Lacan's assertion that language and the constitution of the subject is marked by a "lack" is useful in terms of connecting character to language more directly — grounding my reading of language in what I have termed "performative absence". This "absence" shows a slight shift in reading from Derridian absence in as far as performing absence — making it manifest through the copia of exceptionally long sentences, as well as through lists, and through the way in which characters are named — would make this absence "present": it "shines forth". Derrida insists in his "concept" of absence that it cannot be manifest in a text, which would only make it another form of presence. Derrida engages with Lacanian theory in both *Le Facteur de la Verité* (meaning both *The Truth Factor* and *The Mailman Bringing Truth*) and *La Carte Postale* (translated as *The Post Card*) critiquing Lacan's reliance on a closed system of meaning, much like the structuralist theory of language as well as his inadequate critique of Freud's inherent phallocentrism in his theories. Lacan's "lack" in language is anathema to Derridian poststructuralism because the term "lack" immediately assumes that this type of absence is in a binary that privileges presence. However, Lacan's reading of language in relation to subject constitution is nonetheless still a useful and productive theory as it allows another type of reading of absence in language — absence that is potentially performative and manifest in its "lack".

Postmodernism is another body of theory that is critiqued by Derrida, but it is nonetheless useful in my reading of *The Satanic Verses.* This body of theory is famously difficult to define because of its inherently provisional and diffuse nature. However, I will broadly

[4] For a fuller explanation see: Lacan, Jacques. trans. Sheridan, A. *Ecrits: A Selection.* London: Tavistock Publications, 1977.

outline the points that are salient to my use of the theory. Linda Hutcheon, in the preface to her text *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, outlines the meaning of the term "postmodernism" as "intensely self-reflexive and parodic, yet [postmodernism] also attempts to root itself in the historical world" (x). The focus on history is based on the reassessment of the influence of dominant discourses and master narratives on our perception of history, in an attempt to assert the provisionality of these narratives, forcing a reimagining of history. Umberto Eco affirms this: "Postmodernism recognises that the past, since it cannot be destroyed because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited but with irony, not innocently" (32). One of the first points I will make in my reading of this text is that its revisionary power comes out of its rereading of the History of Islam, the Christian bible, British imperialism and even the representation of contemporary life in Britain and India, which is deemed "historical" in as far as it is the authorised representation of Britain and India, written and promulgated by those in power.

Postmodern thought aligns itself with poststructuralism in terms of its "refusal to resolve contradictions" (Hutcheon *Poetics* x) within the comprehensive rejection of binaries of power. This allows a move towards "anti-totalisation" (42) in an effort to understand the world as provisional and contradictory. Certainly, *The Satanic Verses'* rereading of various historical edifices is done in an attempt to open them up to the illegitimate and unauthorised versions and voices and thus is, at heart, an anti-totalising gesture. These unauthorised voices form the other or outside, of the normative, dominant narratives of History and are lost to History. Spivak asserts that it is vital to re-engage the voices that are lost, eclipsed or silenced within authorised History by finding ways to gesture to these sites of silence — "what the work *cannot* say is important" (Macherey as cited in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 81). Lyotard insists that "Postmodern art consists in exploring things unsayable and things invisible" (*The Philosophy of Painting* 190). Though Lyotard is referring to painterly art here, his theory can be extended to literature[5]. Therefore, my understanding of "postmodernism" is premised on its focus on provisionality, anti-totalisation and the attempt to find ways to gesture towards the unsayable and unsaid in any work.

[5] See: Lyotard, Jean Francios. Trans. G. Bennington. and B. Massumi. *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

However, where postmodern theory falls foul of poststructuralism is in what Christopher Norris calls its "delusive[ness]" (*Deconstruction, Postmodernism and Philosophy* 168). He, agreeing with Habermas, asserts that the "post in post-modernism is a delusive prefix, disguising that fact that [it is] still caught up in the problems that have plagued the discourse of philosophy" (ibid). Norris divides postmodernism's theoretical relationship with poststructuralism into roughly two camps: the first, which includes Norris and from which I will read both postmodernism and Derridian poststructuralism, "read[s] Derrida's work as a radical continuation of certain Kantian themes" (170). The second sees it as a complete break from "deluded 'enlightenment' notions" (ibid). Indeed, Derrida does radically critique enlightenment thought — most definitively, its basis in universalist Truth, which resulted in the dominance of particular rational, *European* modes of thinking. However, if postmodern thought asserts a break from philosophy as we know it, then all truth claims become relative and there is potentially a reversion "back to a pre-enlightenment ethos when faith (not reason) was the arbiter of right thinking" (Norris, *Truth and Ethics* 12). Thus, my use of postmodern theory within this paper is done only while acknowledging the paradoxical inescapability of philosophy and reasoned enquiry.

Postmodernism is also connected to postcolonialism in as far as Hutcheon describes postmodernism as persistently "questioning Western modes of thinking" (*Poetics* 8). Postcolonial theory is involved in pointing out and critiquing the modes of "legitimate", Western modes of thought, which perpetuate the colonial binary of self/other and eclipse or subsume any illegitimate or unauthorised forms of knowledge within this dominant discourse. Though it would be safe to say that postcolonialism at large agrees with and is rooted in this critique, it is in no way a monological body of theory. It is comprised of several different areas of focus, which can be generally divided into two main groups: the first is very critical of postmodernism and poststructuralism and particularly of postcolonialism's connection with them, accusing these theoretical standpoints of being almost completely textual and thus ignoring real-world political circumstances. It is focused on economic, social and national oppression and subjugation of various peoples, particularly pertaining to the ongoing effects of the imperialist enterprise of the West over Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as the

scourge of neocolonial exploitation. It is also critical of what is seen as the pitfalls of postcolonial theory, which includes its "inability to periodize or historicize the colonial experience and to account for the roles of the colonized subjects as active agents in the making of culture and history" (Gikandi 97). Postcolonial theory also suffers from an "anxiety of influence" (99) as most of its most prominent theorists — Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said — are all highly influenced by French poststructuralism, Foucaultian discursive systems of power and Lacan's rereading of Freud. Also, many theorists of postcolonialism do not actually work from countries that are decolonised but are immigrants in Western countries. Thus, the anxiety that the "language of theory [is] is merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 20-21).

While acknowledging these anxieties, however, the second, broad group of postcolonial theory, and the one that I will focus on in this paper, see postmodern and poststructural theory as providing a powerful weapon that "embodies an active concept of intervention with [the] oppressive circumstances" (Young *An Historical Introduction* 57) of the "modern world system at its moment of crisis" (Gikandi 98) wherein decolonised nations and marginalised people struggle for social and political authority and legitimacy in an increasingly globalised world. In fact, Robert Young, in his text *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West,* sees postmodernism as "European culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world" (19). An important focus area for the proponents of this type of postcolonial discourse is that of difference, the "process of alterity" and the power of the hybrid subject for negating the homogenising impulses of nationalism and so-called cultural authenticity. The idea of difference and the power of the subject as a transformative force within dominant discourses, such as nationalism, is one of consistent interest for Rushdie. In *Midnight's Children,* Saleem's personal life interacts with and influences the history of the newly independent India, rupturing and exposing the constructed nature of the post-independence nationalist discourse. Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses* the immigrants create an alternate perspective to authorised forms of history. This is especially true in terms of the contemporary setting in London during the 1980s. Nationalist discourse promulgated by Thatcher was at times explicitly racist. Her oppression of the immigrant population in

Britain was framed and preceded by such rhetoric as Enoch Powell's infamous "River of Blood" speech made in 1968, which sought to spread fear and hatred for immigrants. As Timothy Brennan aptly puts it: "Margaret Thatcher's use of 'we' [in her speeches] ... naturally excluded England's two million formerly colonised peoples" (149). Perhaps the most telling incident in relation to the treatment of the immigrant population in London was the Brixton riots that occurred on 11 April 1981. The riots broke out because of metropolitan police action dubbed "operation swamp 81", which entitled plain clothed police officers to search anyone deemed 'suspicious'. Over 900 people were searched in Brixton alone in the first week of April 1981. This caused rising tensions that eventually resulted in the riot. Although a report issued after the fact by Lord Scarman found the 'stop and search' police privileges to be discriminatory, Thatcher dismissed the notion that unemployment, discrimination and racism lay beneath the Brixton disturbances. These riots are referenced towards the end of *The Satanic Verses* (see pages 449 - 469) explicating the manifest racism of the time but also the power of the people to rise up against said racism and oppression. The immigrant in London during the 1980s is thus not only socially and politically oppressed but also is a potential site of rupture for the nationalist discourse, towards a new, transformative one.

My ethical paradigms will include Levinas' ethics of the absolute other, defined earlier, and Kant's humanist ethics of respect, defined as the following: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*). As I mentioned when defining "otherness", Kantian and Levinasian ethics clash in terms of their positioning of the other. My proposal for a viable and productive ethics in the representation of otherness — an ethics that has practical, political, social and philosophical relevance, and is able to be productively put into practice in representation — is that a combination of these two positions of otherness in representation is possible in a single text. This will include a necessary modification of both Levinasian and Kantian ethics. One proposal, by Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), is a persistently vigilant and critical perspective on humanism, thus allowing the use of Kantian ethics without the negative aspects of the "prison-house of European humanism" (Gikandi 98), which is seen as an "instrumental device for the domination of man" (Young, *White Mythologies* 7). This modification includes "a large allowance for the facts of cultural

difference, 'strangeness', and alterity" (Norris, *Truth and Ethics* 99). Its manifestation within representation is the play of difference and absence, in which Levinas's "absolute other" is gestured towards without being represented — creating a space for the relation between the same and the absolute other. The modification of Levinasian ethics is allowing the concurrent emergence of the other-as-subject, thus rooting the other in a common humanity.

Finally, I would now like to turn to my primary text, *The Satanic Verses.* This text is engaged with the potential for a transformative newness in the way in which we understand and negotiate with dominant narratives — including religious narratives, nationalism and narratives of cultural authenticity — asking constantly: "How does newness enter the world?" The provisional answer provided by the text is the persistent reimagining and dismantling of binaries, opting for the multiplicity of hybrid subjectivity. In the same vein, *The Satanic Verses'* attitude towards the representation of otherness allows the multifariousness of both allowing the space for the play of difference in absence as well as allowing the other to emerge as a subject with individual agency. The absolutism of either one type of representation *or* the other is incongruent with the irreducible complexity of otherness and the myriad pitfalls involved in the attempt to represent this complexity.

I chose *The Satanic Verses* specifically because it is an intricate text that deals with complex and contentious issues in such as a way as to be equal to their challenges. Rushdie's oeuvre, especially his earlier works, is made up of texts that each tackles a particular social or political situation in a particular country; India's independence in *Midnight's Children,* the political turmoil during Pakistan's creation in *Shame*. Rushdie is an immigrant from India, living and working in London (at least at the time of the writing of these books) and thus his is a dual perspective. This perspective is at once "plural and partial" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 15) and is the "ambiguous and shifting ground" (ibid) that potentially allows something fresh, new and vital to emerge. As Bhabha says, "the truest eye now may belong to the migrant's double vision" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 5). *The Satanic Verses* encapsulates this duality in a way that the other texts do not. Its vision works through this fractured, dual lens by being set both in India and England, the past and the present. Its story is told through eyes of the migrant, tackling the experiences of racism, loss of faith,

deracination and the wrestle for newness — for an identity equal to the schizoid experience of migrancy. It is in this struggle that cultural difference emerges as a site of profound complexity and significance, and it is here that otherness and the other potentially emerge. Rushdie recognises that "the real risks of any artist are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 15). *The Satanic Verses* is a text engaged in a critical inquiry as to the validity of various normativising narratives, especially religious narratives, which opens the possibility of *something else,* something other and radically transformative.

The Satanic Verses is a complex and convoluted text that is located in several different times and spaces, jumping between the past and the present; between the fabulist Jahilia (a place aligned with Mecca during the rise of Islam) and contemporary London and Bombay[6]. The narrative also includes a host of different characters, some of whom share the same names, making it necessary, for the sake of clarity, to give a detailed synopsis of the narrative. There are two main storylines (though this is something of a simplification), each of which involve one or the other or both of the main characters; Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. Both Gibreel and Saladin were born in Bombay. Saladin, fascinated by Britain because of what he sees as its superior culture — "he longed for that dream-Vilayet[7] of poise and moderation" (Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*[8] 37) — goes to England when he is thirteen to receive an education and never moves back to Bombay. After finishing high school and college, he works as an actor. He is primarily a voice-actor but also works in theatre and for a television show called *The Aliens Show* with his Jewish co-star, Mimi. He receives his British citizenship and marries an English woman, Pamela Lovelace. It is through Saladin's narrative

[6] The city of Bombay in India is now named "Mumbai". This change occurred in 1995 but proposals for the change came about as early as 1982. The name change was based on supposedly anti-colonial grounds, a highly politicised move. The name change is connected to Hindu nationalism and is phonetically grounded in Hindi. However, it is also divisive as it names the city for Hindus and potentially discriminated against the city's other inhabitants; the Muslims and non-Marathas. Rushdie's use of the old name, Bombay, is thus not without political resonance and fits into his description of Bombay as cosmopolitan and therefore belonging to no one religious or cultural group more than any other.

[7] Literally "foreign country," used as a name for England (Hindi). (Brians, *Notes*)

[8] From here *The Satanic Verses* will be referenced as *SV*.

that the theme of deracination and the frustrated tension between isolation and assimilation felt by immigrants is made most clear.

Gibreel grew up in Bombay as part of a poor family of *dabbawallas* or lunch-porters. When he is twenty-one he enters the movie industry where he stars in "theologicals", films that depict various Hindu Gods, notwithstanding his being a follower of Islam. At the height of his success Gibreel contracts a mystery illness that almost kills him. It is during this illness that he loses faith in God. After he recovers, in order to prove "to himself the non-existence of God" (Rushdie, *SV* 30), he goes to a hotel and eats pork, a meat forbidden in Islam. While eating the pork he meets and falls in love with Alleluia Cone. Alleluia, or Allie, is a British mountain-climber who immediately makes a deep erotic and romantic connection with Gibreel. After three days together she leaves for London and, some time later, Gibreel gets on a plane to join her. He leaves because he is attracted to Allie's newness, to "the challenge of her" (32), but also because after eating the pork he suffers "a nocturnal retribution, a punishment of dreams" (ibid).

Gibreel begins to suffer from serial dreams in which he is positioned as the archangel Gibreel. These dreams are divided into four chapters in *The Satanic Verses*: "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia" tell the story of the rise of the religion "Submission", a religion aligned with Islam. In the dream, Gibreel, as the archangel, recites the revelations to Mahound, a character aligned with the Prophet Muhammad. The chapters "Ayesha" and "The Parting of the Arabian Sea" mainly focus on the story of Ayesha the butterfly girl. Ayesha is visited by the archangel Gibreel and, divinely inspired, leads the people of her village, Titlipur, on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Each of these dream narratives causes a temporal break in the "real-time" of the narrative, an important feature of the text which I will return to shortly.

The Satanic Verses opens with the explosion of a plane carrying both Gibreel and Saladin to London from Bombay. Both men survive the 30 000 foot fall, landing in the English Channel and washing up on the beach. The fall, however, causes the men to be metamorphosed; Gibreel into an angel complete with a shining halo and Saladin into a devil, with rapidly

forming horns and cloven hooves. They are rescued from the beach by the cantankerous Rosa Diamond, an Englishwoman obsessed with her past. Saladin is caught by the police and taken to a detention centre on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant. Gibreel, whose angelic features quite convince the police of his legality, remains with Rosa. Thus, Gibreel and Saladin's stories diverge.

Their back-stories, briefly described above, are inlaid into this "present" of the novel, which begins with the exploding plane. The temporal structuring of *The Satanic Verses* is made up of complex layers of simultaneous narratives. For example, the dream narratives occur while Gibreel's sleeping body remains a part of the present of the narrative. Little time passes in the present of the text, yet, in his dreams, years go by. Also, Gibreel and Saladin's narratives diverge but happen simultaneously, in parallel, as will be described shortly. The complexity of the temporal structure is related to Rushdie's rendering of otherness. It is connected to the vital idea of simultaneity and the non-linear nature of narrative time. This is set against the linearity of historical or authorised narratives.

When Saladin, metamorphosed into the image of the devil, is taken to the detention centre he experiences the power of institutionalised racism in Britain. In the centre immigrants from India, Senegal or Nigeria have been metamorphosed into water-buffalo, snakes, monkeys; into mythological creatures such as a manticore; have skin made of glass or are blind. This is because, as the manticore tells a distressed Saladin, they have each "succumb[ed] to the pictures they [racist Britons] construct" (168). "'They describe us,' the [manticore] whispered solemnly … 'They have the power of description'" (ibid). This image of the power of racism, its physical manifestation, and the psychic trauma it causes, which forces the people in the detention centre to experience themselves as other, is central to the key concerns of racism and ethnic oppression especially prevalent in Britain in the 1980s.

After breaking out of the detention centre Saladin is given sanctuary in the Shaandaar café in Brickhall, a suburb in London mostly peopled by immigrants. The café, which has a boarding house of sorts above it, is run by Hind and her husband Sufyan, also immigrants from India.

Here the devilish Saladin is greeted philosophically by Sufyan, an erudite scholar-cum-waiter in the café, with horror by Hind and with curiosity and glee by Hind and Sufyan's two daughters, Anahita and Mishal. The two daughters grew up in England and embody a new cultural hybridity. They acknowledge their contingent, often oppressed position in British society because of their ethnicity but do not accept or locate themselves as victims. Rather, they become agents of change by calling attention to institutionalised racism and by being actively involved in community forums that call for equality.

While living above the Shaandaar café Saladin is exposed to the ethnic and cultural inequality that he hitherto worked to ignore and separate himself from. These inequalities include dangerous housing conditions, racist attacks and little or no access to police assistance. Saladin has also begun to physically grow, becoming larger and more grotesque, eventually hardly fitting into his room. He grows in another sense too, as his form begins to enter the community's dreams — symbolically growing out of the confines of his room. At first people do not say anything but slowly the image starts becoming a powerful, cohering force for the community of Brickhall: "[H]e was a defiance and a warning … The image of the Goatman, his fist raised in might, began to crop up on banners at political demonstrations" (286).

The image of Saladin as the devil is a complex one, which talks to the multifariousness of otherness. His bedevilment works literally as a way in which to expose the power of racism, the power to make a person experience themselves as other — as with the people in the detention centre. For Saladin, a man who has always suppressed his otherness, his bedevilment becomes a catalyst for him to face his own otherness and then to expose him to the larger inequalities at work in Britain. Yet, in line with Anahita and Mistal's attitudes, this does not relegate him or the ethnic, cultural or social other to the position of victim. Their oppressed position is acknowledged but the image of the devil is wrested away from one only of oppression and becomes one that causes the community to cohere. It becomes an image of power.

Equally the image of the other as the devil can be read as retaining its connotations of evil, danger and violence. Saladin regains his human form through the force of hate. After outgrowing the Shaandaar café he is taken to a local dance club to spend the night. Here he is finally able to remember his "hated Other" (Rushdie, *SV* 429), Gibreel, who just watched as he was taken away by the police at Rosa's house. The overwhelming hatred and rage he feels towards Gibreel humanises him. Thus, like the grotesqueness of his physical form while bedevilled and the fierce negativity of his hatred, the other must be allowed to be dangerous, vulgar and violent — in his rage, Saladin totally destroys the club. It is also important to note that Saladin's rage and hatred is elicited by an other. Therefore, otherness is various; it cannot only be defined in the sense of the other as victim, or as an agent of transformative power, as erotic or exotic or, most conveniently, as wholly and only absent. This is especially true of the Levinasian other, which is implicitly connected to something holy or godly through his use of liturgical language, and thus to something automatically and only positive. This too is a form of ethnocentricism, though an apologist one.

The manner in which I would like to read otherness in *The Satanic Verses* moves beyond its reading in much of the postmodern and postcolonial theory that focuses on it. For Bhabha the other is a vehicle for a potentially transformative space and time within dominant discourses. For Spivak the other is both a mark of political, social and historical disempowerment within discourse and a site of aporetic absence. For Hutcheon the other remains ex-centric and marginal. Thus, much of the theory of otherness avoids locating the other within anything considered negative — as violent, dangerous or ugly. This is a theoretical reaction to the colonial history of marking the other as *only* something to be feared, as unknown and inferior. The trend in the theoretical location of otherness is a reaction to this, in an attempt to wrest otherness from racism, xenophobia, culturalism and tribalism. Yet allowing the other a full spectrum of heterogeneity is indeed a part of the message in *The Satanic Verses.* Saladin's devilishness is balanced by Gibreel's angelic form, but in the end neither is wholly good nor evil.

I would like to now turn to Gibreel's dreams, which temporally break up the text. Gibreel's dreams begin after he eats the pork in the hotel. The two major dream narratives, the first

involving the Prophet and the second the pilgrimage to Mecca, are each broken up into two chapters but form coherent narratives. Yet he dreams and wakes several times in the "present" of the narrative before the entire dream is dreamt. Thus, before the hijacked plane explodes Gibreel struggles to stay awake but constantly fails, falls asleep and murmurs about "Jahilia" and "Al-lat", which are a part of his dreamscape. This creates the temporal breaks in the narrative, constructing a palimpsestic temporal scheme, as dreams underlie the "present" of the narrative.

In the first dream Gibreel encounters the city of Jahilia, which is aligned with Mecca. The term "jahilia" means "ignorance" or "barbarism" and is used to refer to the time before the Prophet Muhammad received the revelations (Brians *Notes*). It is commonly used as a term of contempt today meaning "unislamic" (Easterman 34). This was one of the things found blasphemous in the text, as Muslim readers felt that the use of this name for a city aligned with Mecca was an insult. Rushdie defends this by stating that the use of the term "Jahilia" was connected to the dreamer's state of mind: "Gibreel has been plunged by his broken faith into the condition the word describes" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 399). In this dream, Gibreel is the archangel Gibreel, who, in Islamic history, gave the revelations to the Prophet Muhammad (Gibreel's full name is "Gibreel Farishta", meaning "Gibreel Angel" in Urdu). The dream follows the story of the Prophet Mahound as he receives the revelations and begins to gather followers, most notably Khalid, Bilal and Hamza. The Prophet also has an older wife who helps him become a successful businessman. All of this is a part of the actual history of the Prophet Muhammad according to Maxime Rodinson, a renowned scholar of Islamic history.[9] The story follows the struggle between the prevailing polytheism of the time and the introduction of the monotheism of Islam. Abu Simbel[10], the ruler of Jahilia and his powerful wife, Hind, work to suppress the new religion, most notoriously by offering Mahound a deal of sorts. If he was to admit three goddesses, Uzza, Manat and Al-lat, as

[9] See: Rodinson, Maxime. *Mohammed.* Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd.: 1985.

[10]Abu Simbel is the name of the temple in Egypt that was moved in the 1960s to make way for the Aswan High Dam. Abu Simbel is a set of two temples built by Pharaoh Ramses II. One of the temples is dedicated to Ra-Harakhty, Ptah and Amun, Egypt's three state deities at the time. The character Abu Simbel, as a polytheist, worships a pantheon of gods and goddess, the most notable of which are three goddesses; Manat, Uzza and Al-lat. Thus, his name is aligned with a temple that equally is dedicated to three goddesses.

intercessors for Allah then Abu Simbel would endorse the new religion. This precipitates the incident of the satanic verses. Tempted by the compromise that promises to facilitate the success of the religion, Mahound "asks" Gibreel if the goddesses' intercession is desired by Allah. Gibreel, flummoxed, has no answer: "Mahound comes to me for revelations, asking me to choose between monotheist and henotheist alternatives, and I'm just some idiot actor having a … nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help." (Rushdie, *SV* 109 italics in the original)

Gibreel's storyline contains the theme of doubt and the trauma involved in a loss of faith, thus his overwhelming sense of doubt is translated into the dream. He wishes desperately to find a way to regain his faith, but the doubt that haunts him affects his dreams, which are thus themselves full of moments of doubt. Despite Gibreel's confusion when being asked about the goddesses, Mahound seems to will an answer from him. Gibreel is at a loss as to who gave Mahound the answer — "God knows whose postman I've been" (Rushdie, *SV* 112) — here referring to whether the verses given were God-ordained or satanically-inspired. Mahound announces to Jahilia that the three goddesses' intercession is greatly desired. However, Mahound begins to doubt the veracity of these verses, realising that the power of Islam issues from the uncompromising strength of monotheism. He once more calls on Gibreel, who, equally flummoxed, is again willed to speak. Based on this, Mahound rescinds the verses and he and his followers are forced into exile in Medina. This ends the first part of Gibreel's dream.

The second part of this dream, in the chapter "Return to Jahilia", focuses on Jahilia years after Mahound goes into exile. There are rumours of his rising power and his expectant return to Jahilia. His return especially worries two characters: Baal, a satirist who vociferously mocked Mahound, and Salman the Persian, Mahound's ex-scribe. Salman began to notice that while transcribing the revelations for Mahound, who is illiterate, he would not notice if Salman changed the wording. This caused him to lose his faith and leave Mahound's service. This incident, like the incident of the satanic verses, is a quasi-historical one that serves the theme of doubt in these sections and will be dealt with in detail in the chapter on language.

Baal was a court poet for Abu Simbel who was charged with making derisive epitaphs against Mahound and his new religion in a bid to undermine him.

On Mahound's return to the city, there is a general call for everyone to "submit" to the new religion called, aptly in this context, "Submission". Those who submit will be spared, thus answering the second of two important questions asked throughout the text: the first is "What kind of idea are you?" and the second is "What will you do when you win?" The first question is answered when Mahound rescinds the satanic verses, thus the answer to the question is: absolute, singular, unwilling to admit any compromise. The second is answered by sparing the lives of the people who, at first, did not take him seriously and sent him into exile. The question is thus answered as: generous, benevolent.

Salman is caught and spared but Baal, fearing for his life, goes into hiding with the twelve prostitutes of the city who live in a place called *Hijab* or "the Curtain", which is a reference to the modest dress worn by Muslim women. Baal, noticing that the sequestered wives of the Prophet Mahound caused the brothel customers to be aroused, suggests that each prostitute takes on the names of the wives. The prostitutes get very involved in their roles, taking on the rumoured characteristics of the Prophet's wives. They also all marry Baal, needing a symbolic husband: "In that age it was customary for a whore … to take the kind of husband that wouldn't give her any trouble — a mountain, maybe, or a fountain … so that she could adopt, for form's sake, the title of a married woman" (Rushdie, *SV* 382). Thus, Baal and the twelve prostitutes becomes the profane mirror of Mahound and his twelve wives. The juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane is a motif throughout the text. This is connected to the way in which the text grapples with binaries, attempting to dismantle their fixity. Here, the profane mirror works to critique and challenge the absolutism of the discourse of Islam, especially as regards the manner in which Muhammad is represented. For Rushdie, the Prophet Muhammad is important because of his "doubts, uncertainties, errors, fondness for women" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 409), which he feels makes the Prophet more "vivid, more human and therefore ... more worthy of admiration" (ibid). Thus, the profane mirror challenges Islamic discourses that portray the Prophet as more than human, something

he strongly opposed[11]. Eventually, the brothel is torn down and Baal and the prostitutes are put to death. Mahound pronounces the death sentence, saying: "'Writers and whores. I see no difference here'" (Rushdie, *SV* 398). Shortly after this Mahound dies and this ends the dream of Jahilia.

The rewriting of the sacred through the lens of fiction is a central practice in *The Satanic Verses.* Rushdie suggests that "the row over *The Satanic Verses* [was] an argument about who should have power over the grand narrative, the Story of Islam" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 432). The rewriting of the "grand narrative" of Islam admits moments of doubt and confronts ideas of absolutism and purity with their profane opposite, challenging it as a dominant narrative that is automatically imbued with power. Other types of grand or master narratives are challenged in the text, including the Christian and Islamic notion of the absolute separation between good and evil, God and the devil, which is a lynchpin of both religions:

> This notion of the separation of functions, light versus dark, evil versus good, may be straightforward enough in Islam — *O, children of Adam, let not the devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them their clothing that he might show them their shame* — but go back a bit and see that it's a pretty recent fabrication. Amos, eighth century BC, asks: "Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?"

By challenging master narratives, Rushdie questions their automatic link to power and how that power is potentially destructive by, for instance, espousing notions of the monological nature of good and evil. This allows binaries to emerge and admits no difference.

The second dream narrative involves two separate stories, both of which involve a character named Ayesha[12]. The dream begins in contemporary London where Gibreel finds himself in

[11] See: Sura xxxiii: 45- 46

[12] To differentiate between the two characters named Ayesha I have added a characterising addendum next to each name: Ayesha the empress is the character in the story of the exiled Imam; Ayesha the butterfly girl is the character who leads the people on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

the apartment of an exiled Imam. This character is aligned with Khomeini during the Iranian revolution that saw him having to spend time in exile in London. Though it was Khomeini who pronounced the fatwa of death on Rushdie there is no indication that it was connected to the less than flattering character of the Imam. The Imam is obsessed with staying indoors in order to remain uncontaminated by what he claims is the corrupting influence of Western culture. He is also obsessed with Ayesha the empress. Ayesha, in Islamic history, is the name of the Prophet Muhammad's favourite and youngest wife. This section is referencing the history of Islam after the death of Muhammad, specifically the events that caused the split between Sunni and Shia (sometimes called Shiite, or Shi'ite) Muslims. After Muhammad's death, Ayesha's father, Abu Bakr, became caliph, or leader of the Muslims. However, a group of Muslims believed that another man, Ali, had been appointed by Muhammad. Ali declined to take over the caliphate but agreed to rule those who would follow him. Ayesha then raised an army against Ali and his followers in the "Battle of the Camel". Ayesha was defeated. Thus began the divide between the Sunnis, who believe Abu Bakr was the correctly appointed caliph, and the Shias, who followed Ali and do not recognise the legitimacy of Abu Bakr and the following three caliphs. The main ideological difference between the two sects is that the Shias believe that the Imams have the right to political and spiritual rule over the community, whereas Sunnis believe only in following the teachings of the Qur'an and the hadiths and do not acknowledge the Imams as having more or less spiritual power than the community.

Ayesha the empress is the Imam's "enemy, his other" (Rushdie, *SV* 206). The Imam is from the Shia sect and thus his hatred for Ayesha is connected to the historical split in Islam. In this short dream, Gibreel is called upon by the Imam and taken to Desh where he witnesses the mass extermination of the people at the hands of Ayesha. The Imam explains that the people love him and thus are "do[ing] the needful" (Rushdie, *SV* 213) by dying for him. Gibreel retorts that Ayesha has "driven [the people of Desh] into [the Imam's] arms" (214) and that it is not love but hate that has done this. In the end, Gibreel is commanded to kill Ayesha, which he does.

This is referencing the revolution in Iran, in which the people of Iran, headed by Khomeini, revolted against the monarchy and replaced it with a theocratic Islamic state. Rushdie is very critical of this and thus, through Gibreel's dream, renders the history as full of overwrought religious fervour and unnecessary death. Through the demonising of Ayesha, this section also powerfully points out the manner in which discourse is constructed by those in power. The use of cultural, and in this sense, religious currency in the demonisation of Ayesha shows the way in which discourse is manipulative. In a broadcast sent from London to Desh, this conflagration of various discourses is made clear: "Death to the tyranny of the Empress Ayesha, of calendars, of America, of time! We seek the eternity, the timelessness of God" (Rushdie, *SV* 211). Time and progress is associated with the West, specifically America. This is then associated with the tyranny of the empress. This discourse ignites the enmity felt towards the West by Muslim states — an enmity stretching back to the Crusades — and America's neocolonial enterprising in Islamic countries (specifically oil rich countries) with the ruler of Desh, Ayesha. Though they are barely related, connecting the two lends currency to the discourse and awakes in people old hatreds from old discourses. Rushdie calls attention to this construction, once more challenging dominant discourses that are imbued with power, however fallacious this power.

After Gibreel kills Ayesha the empress the dream changes. Gibreel is now in the village of Titlipur where he encounters the rich, Westernised landowner Mirza Saeed and his wife Mistal. Mirza witnesses Ayesha the butterfly girl, a poor, orphaned doll-maker, eating butterflies in his garden. Ayesha is visited by Gibreel and given revelations in the form of popular Hindi film songs. Her divine visitation elicits butterflies to constantly swarm around her, clothing her with their wings and allowing themselves to be eaten. Convinced she has been given a holy duty, Ayesha gathers the village on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Mistal, who has recently found out that she has breast cancer, is told that she will be healed if she completes the pilgrimage. Mirza is completely against it, begging his wife to see a Western doctor. Mistal, Ayesha and the rest of the village begin the pilgrimage on foot with Mirza following in his Mercedes. The clash between the Western focus on science and rationality and that of religion and faith is a central theme in this section. In the end there is no definitive answer given; neither rationality nor faith wholly wins the day. Once more, the text challenges binaries not by calling one or other side superior but by dismantling them altogether.

Slowly, as more pilgrims begin dying, Mirza collects unbelievers in his Mercedes. Towards the end of the pilgrimage, they come to a hostile village, who will not allow them to pass. A deluge of rain comes down and kills thousands of the hostile villagers who work in the mines. At this Ayesha states that they "dug their own graves" (Rushdie, *SV* 493). In a later incident, while resting at a mosque, a foundling baby, clearly illegitimate, is stoned to death when Ayesha proclaims: "'Everything will be asked of us'" (497). Thus, like Mahound, Ayesha is answering the first question mentioned earlier: "What kind of idea are you?" Her ferocious commitment to her calling answers this question: "[an idea that is] uncompromising; absolute; pure" (500). Eventually the pilgrims reach the Red Sea on the other side of which is Mecca. Ayesha, in a reference to Moses, asks the seas to part so that they can walk to Mecca. Those who believe see the sea part and begin walking. Mirza and his unbelievers see nothing except their friends and family disappearing into the water.

Afterwards, Mirza goes back to the village, which is very dilapidated. When a fire starts and begins to consume his house, Mirza decides to stay and die, having lost his wife. In a strange moment, part vision, part dream, Mirza is back at the Red Sea. Ayesha is there and begs him to "open wide!" (507). At first he resists but then lets go, opens himself up to faith and walks with the rest of them to Mecca. This strange and powerful ending gives the dream narratives another perspective on faith. Whereas the narrative involving Mahound was beset with critical scepticism, this narrative admits a space for the powerful aspect of faith. The story of a village's pilgrimage to Mecca is based on a real incident in which a woman, believing herself to be divinely inspired, lead a pilgrimage to Mecca that resulted in the deaths of all the pilgrims by drowning in the Arabian sea. Rushdie wished to explore this incident in order to understand "people for whom devotion was as great as this" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 410).

Gibreel's narrative in the "present" of the text starts at Rosa Diamond's house after they have fallen from the plane and Saladin has been taken by the police. Gibreel becomes embroiled in Rosa's retelling of her past in Argentina. Rosa's power of recall pulls in Gibreel so fiercely

that he begins to see images from her past appear and even starts to embody or become embodied by the men from her past. He is only able to extricate himself once Rosa dies. Gibreel then gets on a train to London to find Allie but is chased from station to station by a ghost from his past. When Gibreel was still acting in theologicals in Bombay he had a long term affair with his married neighbour, Rekha. After meeting and falling in love with Allie, however, Gibreel calls off the affair. Rekha takes her two children, throws them off the top of her apartment building and then jumps herself. Gibreel is tormented by Rekha's ghost throughout the text, just as he is tormented by the dreams. All of his torments began when he lost his faith, which grounded him in reality.

After eventually escaping Rekha, Gibreel ends up on Allie's doorstep. He sleeps and dreams for seven days. This is one of the places that the dream narratives would slot into the "present" of the main storylines. When he wakes he and Allie begin their romance, which from the start is difficult. Gibreel, having been a famous movie star, is spoilt and jealous. One day, after a huge fight, Gibreel is visited by God and goes out into London convinced he is the archangel Gibreel. His dream self and his real self are beginning to merge. After several days without food and failing to convert anyone, Gibreel walks into the road and is hit by the car of a movie mogal, Mr S. S. Sisodia. He is taken back to Allie and convinced by Sisodia to relaunch his movie career.

In the meantime, Saladin, now human again, goes back to his home. His wife, thinking him dead, started a love affair with one of Saladin's friends, Jumpi Josh, and is now pregnant. After getting over the shock of his reappearance, she asks for a divorce. Saladin, having nowhere else to go, settles in the attic. At a party one night Saladin spots Gibreel and Allie. Gibreel, who knows nothing of Saladin's rage and hatred for him, once more befriends him. Saladin learns of Gibreel's jealous nature and uses his voice artistry to torment Gibreel with suggestions of Allie's infidelity. This eventually drives Gibreel away from her.

Driven mad by the blurring of reality and his tormenting dreams, as well as by the putative infidelity of his lover, Gibreel decides he is now the incarnation of the angel Azraeel — the

angel of destruction. The city becomes a terrifying place for him: "The city becomes vague, amorphous. It becomes impossible to describe the world. Pilgrimage, prophet, adversary merge, fade into mist, emerge" (Rushdie, *SV* 459). He begins to see the city as irrevocably corrupt. He acquires a trumpet, which he believes will blow out flames that will consume the city.

Around the same time that Gibreel is becoming the angel Azraeel, riots are beginning to break out in Brickhall. This is because the activist Dr Uhuru Simba[13] has been falsely accused of a spate of murders and killed in custody. Gibreel ends up in Brickhall and, he believes, starts an all-consuming fire. It is never made clear whether Gibreel does in fact start the fires or whether they were as a result of the riots. The Shaandaar café goes up in flames with the café's residents and Hind and Sufyan still in it. Saladin, who is in Brickhall at the time, rushes in to save them but is trapped by a falling roof beam. Gibreel sees Saladin and saves him from the fire. This is an important moment in terms of the question of good and evil. Gibreel, potentially the cause of so much destruction, saves Saladin, his enemy, from dying. Meanwhile, Saladin, who has caused Gibreel so much pain by tormenting him with jealously, is redeemed by this act of love. Thus, neither Saladin nor Gibreel is wholly good or evil, full of only hatred or love, but each grapples with the other and with their own otherness; each is a complex, heterogeneous subject.

After this, Saladin, Gibreel and Allie each end up in Bombay for different reasons. Saladin receives a letter saying his father is gravely ill, Allie stops in Bombay on her way to Everest to attempt a solo ascent and Gibreel is in Bombay trying to get his movie career back on track. Saladin manages to reconcile with his father after their lifelong estrangement. He also finds his childhood friend Zeeny. He and Zeeny had an affair when he was in Bombay with his theatre troupe before he was survived the exploded plane. Zeeny offers Saladin a new start in Bombay.

[13] "Uhuru" means "freedom" in Swahili and is connected to campaigns for national independence in Africa, particularly in Kenya. "Simba" means "lion" in Swahili. In this context, Rushdie is satirising race campaigners in Western countries who take on African names to lend themselves more legitimacy. Uhuru's original name is Sylvester Roberts.

Gibreel fails miserably at resuscitating his movie career, making theologicals that depict his dreams; first the one featuring Mahound, and then the pilgrimage. Both films flop and equally cause offence. In the end, Gibreel accuses Sisodia, who is also in Bombay, of having an affair with Allie and shoots him. Then, on the roof of his apartment building — the same building from which Rekha committed suicide — he confronts Allie. Gibreel is convinced that Rekha's ghost pushed Allie off the roof, but once more the blurred line between reality and his delusions makes the distinction unclear. Gibreel goes to Saladin's father's house where he confesses all this to Saladin. Finally, unable to bear his torments, Gibreel shoots himself "and [is] free" (Rushdie, *SV* 546). Saladin leaves his father's house and pursues a new life with Zeeny.

In the end, Gibreel kills himself because he is unable to reconcile himself with his loss of faith. Saladin survives by being able to reconcile the various parts of himself; his Britishness and Indianness; the aspects of himself that are negative, full of destructive hatred and rage; and his capacity for love and redemption. The manner in which he is represented in the text allows all the aspects of his subjectivity to emerge without eclipsing his difference. Thus, Saladin's otherness is allowed the space to be dynamic, shifting and complex. This speaks to the possibility of a productive and viable ethics of representing otherness that is multifarious and heterogeneous. This type of representation admits the aspects of otherness that resist representation — the complex play of love and hate for the other and as an other or Saladin's Indianness in London and Britishness in India. Equally, it allows the other to emerge as a subject that is a part of a common humanity. Thus, *The Satanic Verses,* as a complex meditation on the nature of otherness, produces a way in which otherness can be dynamically, *ethically* represented while retaining difference.

The exploration of the nature of otherness is an important prevailing theme throughout Rushdie's oeuvre. As a member of the Indian diaspora, the immigrant outlook and perspective on history, culture, society and religion is obviously one of personal interest and importance for Rushdie. He, like Saladin, was born in Bombay but was educated in England,

where he ended up living for several years. In the meantime, his family in India moved to Pakistan — just as Saleem's family does in *Midnight's Children.* This is not to say that all of Rushdie's works are semi-autobiographical but rather that migrancy is an idea that resonates on several different levels in his works.

The Satanic Verses came after *Shame,* but it was the huge success of *Midnight's Children,* which won the Booker Prize in 1981 and went on to win the Booker of Bookers that put Rushdie on the literary map. *Midnight's Children* is a sprawling, teeming book; if *The Satanic Verses* is, as Jussawalla says, "Rushdie's love-letter to Islam" (50), then *Midnight's Children* is his love-letter to India, specifically to Bombay. The story follows Saleem Sinai, who is born at exactly the stroke of midnight on August 15 1947, the moment India gained its independence and the year Rushdie was born. Thus, Saleem's life becomes inextricably connected to India's tumultuous history. Rushdie's critique of the nationalist fervour that characterised India after it gained independence is rendered through his fictive writing of its history. Through Saleem, and the story of Saleem's family, he creates a smaller subjective history that counters and challenges History as it is constructed through nationalist discourse. Rethinking the relationship between the individual and larger historical structures is characteristic of all of Rushdie's earlier works. In *Shame* the history of the creation of Pakistan is told through the story of Omar Khayyam Shakil. The same can be said of *The Satanic Verses,* which looks at the narrative of Islam through the eyes of an individual, Gibreel, in order to reimagine it from a contemporary, subjective perspective. Postimperial British nationalism and the neocolonial impulse (read: the defence of the Falklands), is seen through the eyes of the immigrant, thus telling an other, illegitimate history. In *Midnight's Children* this is called the "chutnification of history" (Rushdie, *MC* 459), which sees history as various, impure, constructed and personal. Rushdie completed an MA in history at Cambridge, thus his continuous interest in history and its construction from as far back as the history of Islam, to that of India and the more contemporary history of Iran.

Rushdie's texts have been influential for being both postmodern and postcolonial. In *Midnight's Children,* the nature of objective, historical truth is critiqued through the unreliable narrator, Saleem, who has lapses in memory when writing about the city of

Bombay. This calls attention to writing and truth always being subjective. It is also, like *The Satanic Verses,* riddled with intertextual references, which once more talks to the nature of truth and originality. The role of the author is also central to his work. In *Shame* the author engages with a trenchant audience:

> *Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to the subject!* ... I know. Nobody ever arrested me, nor are they 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 territory? (28)

Here, the "subject" that Rushdie has no right to is the violence that precipitated Pakistan's independence during the partition. Rushdie's border, hybrid existence as an immigrant opens the question as to his authority or right to write a story that is not his. His "forked tongue", which speaks, and writes in a Pakistani story, in English seems to dilute his legitimacy further. Yet he asks an important question of history; who has rights to the narrative? Indeed, this is a question asked of Islam through his rewriting of the narrative. Incidentally, the line "your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag" appears in *The Satanic Verses* as "your Angrez [English] accent wrapped around you like a flag" (53). Here Zeeny is chiding Saladin when he is in India the first time. Across his texts, Rushdie seems to grapple with language's connection to nation — thus the simile of the flag. But it is something that he engages with, either directly, as with the intervention of the authorial voice in *Shame,* or by calling attention to its political nature as with *The Satanic Verses* (see the chapter on language, page 74). In the above passage he also asks who stakes the claim to the historical narrative, which implicitly also questions the constructed nature of national or historical narratives, and likens them to his creative act in redescribing them through literature.

Border conditions and experiences also interest Rushdie, not least because of his own border condition, between India and England and, later, Pakistan. These are played out in the investigation between the domestic and the public, the social and political. In a more abstract sense other border conditions also emerge in his texts, such as gender or sexual difference. In *Shame,* the interstitial, border condition defines both gender and nation. Pakistan, battling to gain a sense of its political and social place is imbricated with the liminal position of Sufiya

Zinobia. Sufiya, nicknamed "shame" because she cannot stop blushing, is born of Raza, the soon to be president of Pakistan. The violence that animalises her issues from her sense of shame, and is a metaphor for the explosive violence in Pakistan after the partition. Yet, Rushdie also came under fire for his depiction of Sufiya, and indeed, more generally for his problematic depiction of women across his texts. In most of his texts women are never given central roles, and if they are, they are augmented by the main male character. In *The Satanic Verses,* this is true of Allie who is a prop for Gibreel towards the exploration of the connection between love and god. Rushdie's personal life does not lend him much legitimacy when it comes to women — he has been married and divorced four times and is pro-pornography.

The exploration of the role of religion in one's life is also prevalent in his novels, particularly in *The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children.* Early on in the latter text, Saleem's grandfather bumps his nose while bending down to pray. His eyes water and his nose begins to bleed. He decides, because of this, that he will never again bow before God or man. However, this vow leaves a life-long hole in him, what Rushdie calls "a God-shaped hole", creating a vacancy in his spirit. In a similar way, Gibreel's loss of faith torments him to such a degree that only suicide can free him. Thus, the power of religion and faith is a prevailing theme in his work.

Finally, however, it is his focus on the nature of otherness, the way in which it is possible to explore it, represent it and grapple with it in order to engage with history, society and politics that is the most challenging and interesting aspect of his texts. In *The Satanic Verses,* Rushdie allows otherness to emerge both as sites of absence that are significant and as emergent subjects. The manner in which the two types of representation emerge in the text will be dealt with by first, for the sake of clarity, looking at how they work separately, and then finally how they occur simultaneously. I will look at language as a site for framing and highlighting the unrepresentable, "absent" aspects of otherness. I will then explore the complex narrative structure of the text in order to argue that its structure gestures towards otherness. Changing tack, I will explicate the arguments around the necessity of allowing the other to emerge as a subject and then investigate how this works in the text by looking at one of the main

characters, Saladin. Using gender and sexual difference as a dynamic trope for the exploration of otherness, I will look at how it is possible for both otherness as absence *and* the other as a subject to emerge simultaneously. Finally, I will explore the ethical implications of this dual representation of otherness.

Language

> Language is courage: the ability to conceive a thought, to speak it, and by doing so, make it true (Rushdie, *SV* 281).

Introduction

Language is an important and rich site for gesturing towards otherness through the play of difference. The play of absence and presence, of lack and desire in the language, as well as the embedded discourses of power and politics, are all sites of play in *The Satanic Verses.* For Derrida, language is the primary site through which the play of absence "emerges" or can be identified. This is because, at a very basic level, language is the way in which it is possible to convey meaning, intended and unintended, present and absent. It is the vehicle for conceptualising thought and further, through the play of deconstruction, it allows for the play of difference. Lacan saw that it was possible and productive to reread Freud's psychoanalytical paradigms with a linguistic focus. He realised that language is an important part of subject constitution and was able to designate "otherness" within language, while Levinas situates his "absolute other" within the formal structure of language. Thus, linguistic play has been identified by many prominent theorists as significant, especially in reimagining and designating otherness and the play of difference. For Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, in their seminal text *The Empire Writes Back,* language is located as a site of political power paradigms that, through the practices of linguistic appropriation and abrogation, can be dismantled. This is especially powerful when the political unity of a dominant language such as English, and its connection to the spread of empire in India, is destabilised and reimagined. Finally, Bhabha designates that "difference in language … is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures that meaning is never simply mimetic or transparent" (*Cultural Diversity* 207). In this way language is situated as never innocent of political complexity, cultural exigencies and societal structures of community and belonging. Meaning in language, when read through the play of difference, is irreducibly complex, thus allowing a space for the play of absence and otherness.

Towards a reading of the linguistic play in *The Satanic Verses* I will consider the significance of the transposition of various important master narratives, not least that of Islam and the

story of the Prophet Muhammad, and how the sacredness associated with these narratives is affected by this transposition. I will then focus on the ethic of deconstruction and how it is at play in relation to the language of sacred texts such as the Qur'an and the Bible. Finally, I will consider the political complexities of language use in this text, focusing on the manner in which language is specifically shown to be enmeshed in the political landscapes of both India and England.

Master Narrative Transposition

Before it is possible to tackle the language in this text directly, it is necessary to discuss a particular practice that acts as a fulcrum point for much of the linguistic play in the text. Rushdie rewrites, translates or transposes "sacred" texts into the "profane space" of the fictional novel (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 225). A sacred text could be a religious, historical or cultural text whose narrative has gained an unquestioned authority and truth quality — it has become a master narrative. These narratives encapsulate the dominant discourses of a particular social edifice; these discourses, in turn, cohere around natural authority and an innate truth quality. However, "no narrative can be a 'natural' master narrative: there are no natural hierarchies, only those we construct" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 13). The fictional novel is figured as profane[14] because it opens a space of play that is otherwise unavailable, or disallowed, in the sacred texts[15]. *The Satanic Verses'* most powerful and effective transposition of a master narrative is its rewriting of the Qur'an, the Islamic sacred text and, to a lesser extent, the Christian Bible. The transposition of religious sacred texts into the fictional space of this text is a radical rewriting as these sacred texts gain natural authority through the presence of God, which acts as a "guarantee" for authoritative truth. Deemed as God-ordained, the words are connected to a powerful and absolute truth and meaning, which inheres in the text, in its language[16]. Rushdie transcribes the story of Mahound, a character

[14] The word "profane" is defined as "irreverent, blasphemous" but also as "secular" (*OED*).

[15] As discussed in my introduction, *The Satanic Verses* has aspects of a postmodern text. Postmodernism is generally ascribed to and associated with the West. Polemic believers in Islam often demonise the West as being actively in opposition to Islam. Therefore, the *form* of the text is quite literally profane.

[16] This does not necessarily mean that the words have a fixed meaning, that they are not open to interpretation. What it does mean is that the words are recognised as having an innate truth-value and as automatically having

aligned with Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, in the chapters "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia". This transcription immediately challenged the veracity of the text. "Muslims view the Qur'an as God's direct words revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad"[17] (Mohammed 59), therefore the *direct* transcriptions of this holy text, several of which are found in this chapter of *The Satanic Verses*, are of powerful consequence.

"The lote-tree of the uppermost end" (Rushdie, *SV* 91) is found in the Qur'an, Sura[18] 53, entitled "The Star" (53: 14). In the Qur'an a lote-tree stands at the boundary of the garden of paradise. "This tree, said to stand in the seventh heaven on the right hand of the Throne of God, is called *al-muntaha*, 'of the limit', because it is the boundary beyond which even the angels do not pass[19]" (Thackston in al-Kisa'I 347). Not only directly transposing lines from the Qur'an, Rushdie references a sacred image of limit and boundary. This reference appears in *The Satanic Verses* at the beginning of Gibreel's dream, in which the story of Mahound (and, implicitly, a rewriting of the story of the Prophet Muhammad) is told. Referencing an image of the boundary between the untouchable sacred space of God and everything else — the quotidian, the secular and the profane — demonstrates not only a levelling of these two otherwise hierarchically ranked planes but also that the boundary referenced in the image of the lote-tree will be traversed in the fictional space of this text.

Sura 53 is of profound importance in *The Satanic Verses,* as it is in this chapter of the Qur'an that the "satanic verses" is alleged to appear. The "satanic verses" describes an incident in which the Prophet Muhammad is said to have accepted the three pagan goddesses Manat, Uzza and Allat as intercessors for Allah. In *The Satanic Verses* the verses that accept the

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meaning that is, depending on the type of religious practice, either literally available in the words of the text, or within the interpreted meaning.

[17] This is based on several verses of the Qur'an, among them, 15:9, 26:195, 97:1 (Mohammed 59).

[18] A Sura is a chapter in the Qur'an

[19] See: Haykal, Muhammad Husayn. *The Life of Muhammad,* 8th ed., trans. Isma'il Ragi A. al Faruqi (N.p.: North American Trust Publications, 1976). Orig. Hayat Muhammad (1935). And al-Kisa'i. *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i,* translated from the Arabic with notes by W. M. Thackston, Jr. G. K. Hall: Twayne Publishers, 1978.

three goddesses reads as follows: “Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other? … They are exulted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed” (Rushdie, *SV* 114). In the Qur’an, this incident has purportedly been expunged from the Qur’an and replaced in the Sura as: “Are yours the males and His females? / That indeed were an unfair division!” (53: 21-22). In *The Satanic Verses*, the verses are also rescinded. This is transcribed as: “Shall He have daughters and you sons? ... That would be a fine division!” (Rushdie, *SV* 124) The inclusion of the incident of the satanic verses, along with the verses that later replace it, is an act of radical transgression. If there are some verses inspired by the devil, while others are God-ordained, it casts doubt over the veracity of all the verses in the Qur’an. More importantly though, and what I believe the inclusion of the incident communicates, is how the incident recalls the humanness and humanity involved in the rise of Islam. Mahound makes a mistake, in his and his companion’s opinions, by including the three goddesses because the power of Islam in a time of polytheism is its unrelenting monotheism. The inclusion of incident in *The Satanic Verses* is therefore less about undermining the Qur’an than the attempt to locate Muhammad’s humanity. “Muhammad’s doubts, uncertainties, errors, fondness for women abound in and around Muslim tradition. To me [Rushdie], they make him more vivid, more human” (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 409). The Prophet Muhammad’s humanity has always been made clear in the Qur’an: “And he commanded you [the people of Islam] not that ye should take angels and prophets for lords” (*The Holy Qur’an* 3: 80). Thus the inclusion of the incident is not only transgressive but can be read as an affirmation of Muhammad’s humanity. The verses have a further significance in that “one of the reasons for rejecting these goddesses was that they were female” (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 399 italics in the original). Therefore, the incident also suggests a subtle critique of the religion’s attitude toward women. *The Satanic Verses’* exploration of women in Islam is looked at in detail in the chapter “Feminised Politics”.

Excerpts from the Bible are also found in this chapter: “Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone” (John 8: 7) is referenced in *The Satanic Verses* as “[Mahound] leaves the House [of the Black Stone] before it occurs to anybody to pick up, and throw, the first stone” (Rushdie, *SV* 124). The transcription of the religious sacred texts into the space of this novel is a radical gesture on many levels. The first and arguably most important is the fact that the novel is fiction and therefore the placement of these texts into

the fictional space fundamentally shakes their veracity, which in turn challenges their claim to innate truth. Further, there is a textual play with the verses, which is otherwise unavailable in their original sacred contexts. The above biblical reference to casting the first stone is a vivid example of this. Contextually, this verse refers to an incident wherein the Pharisees brought an adulterous woman before Jesus. The Pharisees quote the Law of Moses that states that the punishment for adultery is death by stoning. Jesus replied with the above quoted verse. Under Sharia Law[20], a person caught committing adultery is stoned to death as punishment. Rushdie transcribes the biblical quote and contextually relates it to Mahound, the character aligned with the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the re-contextualisation of the verse places Mahound in the position of the adulterer, at the mercy of persecution. This then works ironically with the Sharia Law of stoning adulterers, which is based, in part, on the writings of Muhammad. The textual play of fiction frees the sacred texts from their imbrications in solidified master narratives. Also, by placing the two sacred texts, the Qur'an and the Bible, in propinquity, *The Satanic Verses* dissolves the divide between them — a divide solidified during the Crusades and one that survives in contemporary history. Equally, a divide that is fallacious; the Qur'an mentions Moses and Jesus and reveres them as prophets.

The interplay and exchange between the two texts not only places them on the level ground of criticism — neither better or worse than the other, both opened up to critique — but also implies their similarity and the potential for a dynamic exchange between the two instead of the dead-space of an absolute divide. This is particularly pertinent now, in terms of the post-9/11 social dynamics between the West, America particularly, and the pan-Islamic world wherein the interplay between the Qur'an and the Bible is potentially a metonym for these social dynamics. Islam is now located as the other to America, through the systematic use of "clichés, ... [and] demeaning stereotypes ... [as] justifications for power and violence" (Said, *Preface*) and thus Islamophobia is rife in the West. Conversely, militant Islamic groups cite America and the West as dangerous corrupting influences. The fundamentalism of both

[20] Sharia Law is the body of Islamic religious law. The term "Sharia" means "path to the water source"; it is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Islamic principles of jurisprudence. It is based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the *hadith* (sayings and doings of Muhammad and his companions), *Ijma* (consensus), *Qiyas* (reasoning by analogy) and centuries of debate, interpretation and precedent.

parties is fuelled by binaristic and monolithic thinking. "The terrible conflicts that herd people under falsely unifying rubrics like 'America', 'The West' or 'Islam' and invent collective identities for large numbers of individuals who are actually quite diverse ... must be opposed" (Said, *Preface*). Thus, there is the need for a space wherein damaging binaries can be dismantled and a dynamic exchange can occur and this need is potentially filled in the polysemic space of literature.

Freeing sacred texts from their complex connection to master narratives has a larger significance. Lyotard states that one of the defining characteristics of postmodernism is "incredulity towards metanarratives[21]" (Lyotard 26). Master narratives are challenged on the basis that "no narrative can be a 'natural' master narrative. There are no natural hierarchies, only those we construct" (Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 13). Rushdie's ironic rewriting of the Qur'an and the Bible within the fictional context then works to call attention to the constructed nature of the master narrative. This has far-reaching consequences. Within postmodernism, the challenge to master narratives both comes out of and causes a "crisis of legitimisation" (Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism* 8). The challenge is levelled on a broad scale, beyond questioning and challenging specific and particular master narratives, the very modes of thought that legitimised the master narratives in the first place is called into question, which by implication, "put[s] into question the basis of our *(sic)* Western [or Eastern] modes of thinking" (Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism* 8). This links directly with postcolonialism, which seeks to challenge the master narrative of history as "narrative proper" (Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* 65), particularly those of the West. In *The Satanic Verses* the postcolonial challenge to the master narrative occurs within the inversion of secular cultural and historical master narratives.

Along with the literally sacred texts, Rushdie transposes secular sacred texts — historical and cultural master narratives. These include a repositioning of the migrant in London as a viable and valuable historical voice. The title "A City Visible but Unseen", a chapter predominantly

[21] "Metanarrative" and "master narrative", in this context, are exchangeable terms. I will use "master narrative" as my preferred term.

set in Brickhall[22] (a suburb in Rushdie's rendition of London that is mostly peopled by Asian immigrants), is explained by the author: "[I]t seemed to me at that point, that [the London Indian community] really was unseen. It was there and nobody knew it was there. And I was very struck by how often, when one would talk to white English people about what was going on, you could actually take them to these streets and point to these phenomena, and they would somehow still reject this information" (Rushdie cited by Chaudhuri). Here Rushdie points to the manner in which the master narrative, perpetuated by England's dominant majority group, "white English people", excludes London's immigrant population's historical or social legitimacy. By showing the immigrants' perspective of London within this chapter — aptly named to point to the immigrants' otherwise elided position — Rushdie inverts the master narrative of legitimacy, handing the historical and social telling to the immigrant population. In fact, the entire text is told from the perspectives of two immigrants, Saladin and Gibreel. Saladin becomes immersed in the immigrant population in London, coming to understand fully their oppression and their will to fight back, eventually fighting back himself, while Gibreel grapples with his loss of faith in the torrid space of postcolonial London. The new historicist approach to considering, challenging and potentially reimagining history through the vehicle of literature is a powerful way of understanding the manner in which historical discourse is constantly constructed in the present. By allowing the immigrant perspective to emerge as the lens through which the story is told a new historical voice is potentially emerging, allowing a fresh perspective of this historical context[23].

Rushdie's prolific and complex use of literary intertextuality is an example of the transposition of cultural sacred texts. Literary master narratives, such as Shakespeare's texts, are narratives that stand for the highest mark of literary legitimacy — they stake out tradition and define canons. Rushdie rewrites the plot of Shakespeare's play *Othello,* wherein the antagonist, Iago, uses suggestion to drive Othello mad with jealousy resulting in him killing his wife, Desdemona. In Rushdie's rendition, Shakespeare's high art is "profaned" with the low art of children's rhymes and advertising jingles: "Violets are blue, roses are red, / I've

[22] Brickhall is probably a combination of Brick Lane and Southhall, both Asian suburbs in London. (Brians *Notes*)

[23] See: Greenblatt, Stephen. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1990 and *Practicing New Historicism* written with Catherine Gallagher, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000.

got her right here in my bed" (Rushdie, *SV* 446). This transposition forces a re-imagining of the classifications of high and low art, perpetuated by master narratives of literary tradition, authority and legitimacy.

To conclude this section, I want to look briefly at how the text challenges the "word" and its connection to God and therefore to the fullness of meaning. In several different contexts, *The Satanic Verses* refers to the lines: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (*The Holy Bible* John 1:1). I will look at two such contexts. The first context in which the word of God is referred to makes a direct reference to the biblical phrase. Allie and Gibreel are reunited after Gibreel's airplane crash and they remember the way they first met. Gibreel had just lost his faith in Islam and to prove it he went to a buffet table in a hotel and stuffed his mouth full of pork — the eating of which is forbidden in Islam. Allie saw him do this and said: "You're alive … You got your life back. *That's* the point" (Rushdie, *SV* 29), though Gibreel had not asked her anything. Later, when remembering this event Allie says, "I did read [your thoughts], right? … I read your thoughts and just the right words came out of my mouth … Just flowed out. Bingo: love. *In the beginning was the word*" (Rushdie, *SV* 296 my italics). This has several potential meanings. On the surface, it connects the beginning of their love with the words Allie spoke. The use of the biblical phrase, however, also connects love with something godly — the second part of the biblical verse is: "and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God". The word "love" in the above quote is isolated and the followed by the biblical phrase. This automatically connects the word "love" to the "Word", and implicitly, to God. However, this happened at the moment Gibreel lost his faith in God. Thus, the "word" in this context is disconnected with God, or rather with authorised versions of God. Gibreel lost his faith in Islam but found love. The use of the biblical phrase connects love with godliness, even though his legitimate or defined religion was lost, which allows other forms of religiosity and godliness to emerge that are secular, erotic, illegitimate, polysemic, complex and dynamic. This is a challenge to the master narratives of both major religions, both Christian and Muslim, which function on doctrinaire singularity and finality.

The second incident occurs in the chapter "Return to Jahilia", which describes Mahound's triumphant return from Medina to Jahilia after being forced to leave several years previously. Salman, the Persian scribe for Mahound, realises that Mahound did not notice if he changed the wording of the revelations[24]. Filled with doubt, Salman renounces Islam, leaves his position as scribe and runs away to Jahilia. However, with Mahound's return Salman fears he will be killed. When asked why, he replies: "It's his [Mahound's] Word against mine" (Rushdie, *SV* 368). This is a common phrase, however, the context and the capitalised W in "Word" shifts, refigures and multiplies its possible meanings. The phrase "It's his word against mine" denotes equal legitimacy in either of the parties. However, the capitalised 'W' means that the words referred to have a larger, religious significance, referencing the biblical phrase that connects "the Word" with God. Mahound's "Word" is legitimate because of its, and his, connection to God. This is against the illegitimate "word" of the lowly scribe. However, the scribe's word literally *is* the "Word", because he transcribes the revelations, the word of God. This means that the "Word" (legitimate, authorised) and the "word" (illegitimate, prosaic) are the same. Thus, the phrase "it's his Word against mine" gestures towards the multiplicity of meaning in language and is a challenge to the idea that language could ever contain a pure, original and singular meaning. This idea will be looked at in further detail in the following section.

Significantly, challenging the veracity of master narratives is a form of critique and questioning that points out the absence of an authoritative and legitimate absolute Truth. Instead, the fictional space allows for the shift and play of meaning, which is open to a multiplicity of truths.

Intermediary Nature of Language

One linguistic effect of transposing master narratives into the profane fictional space is that this begins to point out the constructed, intermediary nature of language. Master narratives are able to function as such because they are premised on logocentrism — as is Western metaphysics. This is according to Derrida, the father of poststructuralist theory, who figures

[24] This incident will be looked at in detail in the following section.

logocentrism as the "determination of the being of the entity as presence"[25] (Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context* 12). What logocentric thought apparently allows is immediate and present access to concepts and meanings perceived to be outside the language structures that convey them. However, Derrida insists that "immediacy is derived … all begins through the intermediary" (Derrida, *The Play of Substitution* 87). Derrida connects language with what he terms "writing". In terms of Derridian theory, defining this term (or any other) would wholly undermine his poststructuralist endeavour, therefore there is no comprehensive definition of "writing", per se, in Derrida's works. However, in order to delineate my use of this term, I will use a theorist writing on Derrida. Norris defines the term "writing" (as far as it can be defined) as the "precondition of language [that] must be conceived as prior to speech … it is the element of undecidability within every system of communication" (28)[26]. Language, or writing, acts as a mediator and therefore produces only the *sense* of the referent, or thing, in the real world. This defers immediate access to the referent and, because of the mediation, is different from it. This is the basis for Derrida's theory of *differance.* The term *differance* has two particular resonances: "to differ (in space) and to defer (… to postpone presence)" (Bass in Derrida, *Writing and Difference* xviii). The referent becomes a "mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception" (Derrida, *The Play of Substitution* 87). Transposing, and often directly quoting, master narratives in the space of fictional textual play begins to call attention to the *linguistic* nature of the sacred texts. With its veracity challenged and its meanings often shifted because of the contextual change, the master narrative is stripped of its authority, becoming words and phrases that are recognised but do not necessarily have any more authority than the other "fictional" words and phrases in the text. This break forces a recognition of the linguistically mediated, and therefore constructed, nature of the master narrative.

The Satanic Verses plays with this idea in several complex ways, the most effective of which is found in the plot involving the character Salman Farsi, the Persian scribe for Mahound. The use of this particular name has several resonances. "Salman" obviously recalls the author's name — Rushdie himself states that his use of this name was "an ironic reference to

[25] "Presence" here is figured as being fundamentally connected to immediacy and origin.

[26] See: Derrida, Jacques. Trans. G. Spivak. *Of Grammatology.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976

the novel's author" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 339). Rushdie is self-reflexively calling attention to himself as author, which in turn calls attention to the constructed, *authored* nature of the text. As the author, he acts as the "meta-scribe", transcribing, and by virtue of that act, interpreting words and events. This is significant because through this, he shifts and complicates the role of the scribe in the text from pure recorder, effaced from the text, to that of the writer, the interpreter. The name and surname also evokes a character in Islamic history, Salman al-Farisi[27]. He is one of the esteemed companions to the Prophet. Finally, Salman Farsi's claim to have placed his own words in the Qur'an aligns him with one of the Prophet Muhammad's scribes[28], 'Abdullah Ibn Sarh al-`Amiri — a man who allegedly doubted and left Islam. The conflation of these three names, collapsed into the single name, is in itself significant. If each name's significance were to be taken singly, the use of and placement of the name in the text would have a particular effect and meaning (two of which I will explore shortly). However, when collapsed into a single name, the effect on the text becomes complex and conflicting. Referencing the Prophet's companion, Salman al-Farisi locates the text historically and within a particular master narrative of this history. Conflating this name with that of the doubting scribe affects the solid grounding of this name and its associated historical meaning — the name is hollowed out, its fixity undermined. A further way in which it is undermined is by conflating recognised history, that of the Prophet's companion, with history that is somewhat more dubious. The incident of the doubting scribe is only recognised by a few (mostly European) scholars.

The actions of this character align him with the scribe. There are recordings of an event that took place between the Prophet Muhammad and his scribe[29], wherein "one of the secretaries [Muhammad] employed boasted that he induced the prophet to alter the wording of the revelations." (Guillaume 56) The scribe is quoted as saying, "I used to orient Muhammad

[27] Despite the fact that Rushdie renounces the name's alignment with this figure "Salman the Persian [is] named not to 'insult and abuse' Muhammad's companion Salman al-Farisi" (Rushdie, 1992: 399), the spelling and combination of the name and surname are too easily aligned with the historical character to be ignored.

[28] As the Prophet was illiterate (Sura 7: 157-158, Sura 62:2), he would recite the messages revealed to him by the archangel Gibreel to a scribe. The Arabic word "qur'an" means "the recitation".

[29] See: Abd al-Fad, Abdullâh. *Is the Qur'ân Infallible?*, Guillaume, Alfred. *Islam* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth: 1971.

wherever I willed, he dictated to me 'All-Powerful All-Wise' and I suggest 'All-Knowing All-Wise' so he would say: 'Yes, it is all the same'" (Ibn al-Athîr 154). As previously mentioned, this is a story without the historical legitimacy set within the edifice of the greater, accepted master narrative. The few accounts I managed to find are themselves dubious. Rushdie's play with the master narrative is such that the historical legitimacy and veracity of a story is not the important element. He uses stories that have entered the culture and history by rumour or mistake as well as those that cast a new light on the otherwise unchallenged master narrative. According to certain accounts, this incident caused the scribe to doubt the Prophet and leave the Muslim faith. In *The Satanic Verses,* Salman Farsi the Persian scribe, while transcribing Mahound's revelations, begins "surreptitiously [to] change things" (Rushdie, *SV* 367):

> Little things at first. If Mahound recited a verse in which God was described as *all-hearing, all-knowing,* I would write, *all-knowing, all-wise*. Here's the point: Mahound did not notice the alterations. So there I was, actually writing the Book, or rewriting, anyway, polluting the word of God with my own profane language. (Rushdie, *SV* 367)

The inclusion of this event, which challenges the direct link between the words of the Qur'an and Allah, is a further indication of the layered way in which Rushdie challenges the Qur'an as master narrative. Rushdie not only transposes the sacred texts into the profane fictional space thereby implicitly undermining the texts' connection to truth and meaning, but includes certain accounts that in themselves profoundly challenge the veracity of the Qur'an (the most radical account being that of the incident of the satanic verses which was rescinded from the Qur'an). Though some of these accounts are not necessarily recognised by Muslim scholars, they none the less have entered the Muslim and non-Muslim cultural milieu. Rushdie's choice to include these incidences further challenges the Qur'an as master narrative, in so far as a master narrative functions by exclusion. Implicitly, when one particular story is told, other stories *must* have existed that, for one reason or another, were excluded. The Qur'an, as a complete piece of work that functions as a master narrative, excluded many of the events that Rushdie includes in his text. Rushdie's inclusion of these events effectively points to the silenced narratives and, because he places these accounts and incidences alongside ones that are recognised as legitimate, also gives them an equal legitimacy — otherwise disallowed.

The scribe in *The Satanic Verses* begins to function as a literal intermediary. He *transcribes* the orally received recitations and because of this, as with most transcriptions or translations, there is the potential for the meanings to shift in this process. As a literal intermediary between Mahound's recitations and their divinely inspired meaning, the scribe embodies the constructed nature of language and how it comes between (Derrida would say before) meaning and our reception of it. Mahound's not noticing the changes made to the revelations on one level casts doubt on his revelations, more importantly, though, it shows that Mahound is unable to contemplate the manner in which language shifts and defers meaning — this is because he is fundamentally logocentric. Logocentric thought figures writing, in the Derridian sense, as "exterior to meaning" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 13). It debases writing as a "mediation of a mediation"[30] which is "preceded by a truth … meaning is already constituted" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 13-14). The logos, associated with origin, meaning and presence, guarantees Mahound truth and meaning. Logocentrism suppresses language as a form, as a system of signs that could change meaning, relegating it to pure vehicle. However, when the scribe changes the wording and is not caught, this guarantee is undermined; the words become signs that are stripped of their God-ordained meaning. Importantly, the legitimacy of the scribe's words and God's words are the same; neither holds more weight, neither is issued from the logos. In light of this, the phrase "writing the Book, or rewriting" (Rushdie, *SV* 367) is significant. When "that that governs writing is no longer issued from the logos … deconstruction is inaugurated" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 10).

Deconstruction is a radical rewriting of all texts that privilege presence[31]. The scribe recognises the intermediary nature of language, and its break from the logos, and so deconstructs by rewriting the Book *without* the guaranteeing connection to meaning and presence. This makes his writing "profane" as it calls attention to its own constructed, intermediary nature. A further intermediary layer exists in the way the revelations are received. Mahound receives the revelations from Gibreel, who, in his own words, is "just

[30] The first mediation is the spoken word, the phoné. Speech is directly connected to thought, which in turn is directly connected to meaning, to the *logos.* Writing is the second mediation. It serves only to mediate the phoné into the graphic/pictograph.

[31] Spivak terms it "anasemia" which is the name for the "need to reread every product of [logocentric] language" (Spivak, *Revolutions* 79).

some idiot actor having a bhaenchud[32] nightmare" (Rushdie, *SV* 109). Gibreel, as the archangel, is portrayed as extremely confused, not knowing what revelations he can give: "[W]hat the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help" (Rushdie, *SV* 109). Again, the collapse of both the archangel and the foul-mouthed character into the same name has the effect of shifting and hollowing out meaning, making it multiple and indeterminate. Gibreel feels that the revelations he "gives" to Mahound "flow in both directions" and, because of this, it is "impossible to say which one of [them] is dreaming the other" (Rushdie, *SV* 110). The reception of the revelations is portrayed as complex, ambiguous, cyclic. Most importantly, the *origin* of the revelations becomes ambiguous. Origin is important because without it, full and absolute meaning is impossible, as there will always be something *beyond.* On one level the ambiguity of the revelations' origins functions to question whether the thrust behind them was humanly or divinely inspired — of course, Gibreel, a man dreaming himself divine answers the question quite decisively. On another level, the aporia of the origin opens the revelations to the "play of signification" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 7), which opens the otherwise logocentric, closed meanings to heterogeneous polysemia. It is this potential for difference within the indeterminacy of multiple, polysemic meaning that allows the other-as-subject — the ethnic, social or political other — to function as provisional and in constant production. By calling attention to the openness of meaning in language, the text inaugurates the space in which difference is not eclipsed or closed down.

Against the Word, Towards the Split

Once a text is open to the play of signification, words become open to shifts in value and meaning — open to the play of meaning. The play of meaning in language, under the edifice of poststructuralism, is a challenge to the logocentrism of structuralist thought. Saussure, a structuralist linguist, asserts in *Course in General Linguistics* that the sign is made up of two interrelated parts — the signifier (sound-image/form) and the signified (concept/meaning) (67). These signs work within language, which is a "system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (114). Signs gain meaning only by their difference to other signs in the system. By this logic, if the

[32] 'Bhaenchud' means "one who sleeps with his sister;" in Hindi, but is commonly used as a very insulting expletive (Brians, *Notes*).

sign were to be repeated, its value would stay constant. Derrida challenges Saussure's theory, stating: "The difference between signifier and signified belongs in a profound and implicit way to the totality of the great epoch covered by the history of metaphysics [logocentrism]" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 13). This is because the signified is connected to "pure intelligibility [and therefore] refers to an absolute logos to which it is immediately united" (ibid) while the signifier is described as "only a secondary thing, substance to be put to use" (Saussure, 118). However, against this Derrida asserts that "nothing escapes the movement of the signifier and that … the difference between signified and signifier *is nothing*" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 23). The signified does not, cannot, fix and finalise meaning. The signifier is open to the play of signification.

In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie points out the play of signification through the repetition of words and phrases. A particular word begins to take on different meanings when repeated and because of this "every repetition is an alteration" (Spivak, *Revolutions* 86)[33]. When a word or phrase is taken out of its specific context and repeated or doubled, its meaning is repeated with a *difference*. The movement of the signifier is the track of difference — that that is beyond fixed meaning. The phrase "the satanic verses" is used in several different contexts throughout the text — each time it is repeated its meaning shifts. The phrase as the *form,* the signifier, never becomes the *concept,* the finalised, transcendental signified. The possibility of the forms' infinite repeatability, which makes fluid its meaning, fundamentally negates the possibility of closed meaning.

The title of the text is the first and most obvious use of this phrase. However, the "satanic verses" also refers to an incident wherein Mahound was given false verses by Shaitan (Satan). The repetition of the phrase creates an ambiguity in the meaning — between whether the "satanic verses" are simply the false verses given to the Prophet, or the *actual* text *The Satanic Verses*[34]. Each of the two uses of the phrase affects the others' meaning, altering it.

[33] Spivak's article "Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's 'Limited Inc.'" in *The Spivak Reader.* Routledge: London, 1996 is based on Derrida's article "Limited Inc: a b c …" in *Glyph 2,* John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1977.

[34] This tension also works structurally and will be analysed further in the chapter on structure.

The phrase is used again in the text, though in a completely different context. Saladin, the "Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice" (Rushdie, *SV* 60) taunts Gibreel with menacing rhymes, intimating a love affair with Gibreel's girlfriend, Allie Cone. These rhymes are referred to as "the little, satanic verses" (Rushdie, *SV* 445). The comma after the adjective "little" makes the word "satanic" another adjective to describe the type of verses. "Satanic", used as a descriptive word, is connotative of the malicious mischief and corruption of the figure Satan. However, the repetitive use of this phrase alters the implied contextual meaning of this adjective, adding the literal to the figurative meaning.

The use of the phrase is not confined to negative connotations. In the chapter "A City Visible but Unseen", many of the members of the community of Brickhall begin serially dreaming of Saladin, now physically transformed into the image of the devil. In these dreams, he is singing verses that cannot be identified because of his "diabolically ghastly" (Rushdie, *SV* 285) voice. The use of the word "verses" in connection with the now bedevilled Saladin immediately implies the phrase "satanic verses". The community begins to understand the "power of the dream" wherein the devil stood as a "defiance and a warning" (Rushdie, *SV* 286). These dreamed (satanic) verses begin to cohere and inspire the oppressed community. The phrase is contextually altered, becoming a description of positive power.

The repetition of the signifier as alteration is termed the "graphic of iterability" by Spivak (*Revolutions* 86). This is a challenge to logocentric idealism that "claims that the idea [concept or meaning of a word/phrase] is infinitely repeatable as the same" (ibid) because it is *preceded* by a truth and meaning that is accessible. The significance of the iterability in this text is that it begins to point out the track of difference in language. Meaning becomes fluid because "the movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always *more* … this addition … supplement[s] a lack on the part of the signified" (Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play* 289 italics mine). This surplus, related to iterability, the trace or difference[35], is the absent *other* of language.

[35] Derrida uses several terms which "cannot be reduced to any single, self-identical meaning" (Norris, *Deconstruction* 32). His use of several terms is described as paleonymy, which can be delineated as the particular charge that a word carries. In connection with the idea of paleonymy, Derrida states: "Each concept

Iterability has a further significance. Though not directly linguistic in nature, within the text there are several instances of doubling characters and situations, which creates mirror images — either of the *same* but with a different contextual thrust or of opposites within the same Manichean category. Identity is based on repetition as far as meaning coheres and becomes stable when an idea is repeated. However, if the nature of repetition is to alter meaning, then "identification is iteration" meaning that "identity is always impure" (Spivak, *Revolutions* 87). In this way, the possibility of alterity enters identity. Baal, a poet in Jahilia, becomes the "secret, profane mirror of Mahound" (Rushdie, *SV* 384). This is achieved by making him "husband" to twelve prostitutes who take on the names of Mahound's wives to please and arouse the brothel's customers. The twelve women sequestered in the brothel, called The Curtain (also referred to as *Hijab,* an ironic reference to the modest dress code in Islam), mirror the twelve wives of the Prophet Mahound sequestered in their harem. The names of Mahound's wives are signifiers that are meant to identify them and connect them to a particular situation — the harem, their husband, purity and so on. When the "twelve [prostitutes] enter into the spirit of their roles" (Rushdie, *SV* 382), becoming increasingly like their counterparts, the images of the two sets of women become aligned and doubled. The signifiers are the same but the implications and meanings of these signifiers are different — not least because the identities of the prostitutes are not the identities of the wives. The act of doubling the twelve wives points to the impurity of identity, both on the level of the signifier (which never becomes signified, final and identifiable) and that of the characters. The prostitutes and the wives are the same (same names, both sequestered, both devoted to their husbands) but different (the former profane, the latter sacred). Using the play of the signifier and its fluidity of meaning, Rushdie opens the possibility of another identity, an *other,* different, identity within the *same.*

… belongs to a systematic chain, and itself constitutes a system of predicates. There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work — metaphysical or not — on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated" (Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context* 330).

Baal, the profane mirror of the Prophet, does not share his name. However, they form parallel images, are embroiled in parallel situations. "Harem and brothel are antithetical worlds, and the presence in the harem of the Prophet, the receiver of a sacred text, is likewise contrasted with the presence in the brothel of the clapped-out poet, Baal, the creator of profane texts" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 401). Baal's texts are profane for several reasons, the most important of which is that they are creative and fallible, fabricated, human. This is against Mahound's sacred text, which is divine and therefore infallible. The alignment of the two texts is made vivid in an incident when Baal is with the surrogate "Ayesha", the youngest prostitute in the brothel. "It is as if I see myself standing beside myself. And I can make him, the standing one, speak; then I get up and write down his verses" (Rushdie, *SV* 385). This image is the double of Mahound receiving the revelations from Gibreel but instead of Gibreel, it is Baal's *other* self speaking. Of course, the use of the word "verses" implies the profane, both in terms of its connection to the phrase "satanic verses" and because the word is connotative of artistic or creative verse — poetic verse. Figuring the profane double of the sacred text as creative or poetic is significant as creative texts are interpretive. This works to show the possibility of continuously interpreting sacred texts as opposed to having a final and closed understanding of them. The creative text becomes the *other* to the sacred text. By repeating the idea, doubling it, but profoundly altering its meaning, the mirror images function as a radical graphic of iterability. When the play of the signifier negates a fixity of meaning, language is able to point to that that is beyond language — the deferred and differing meaning.

The narrator in the text actively embodies the play of the signifier as it is related to Derrida's theory of differance. The term "difference" means "to differ (in space) and to defer (… to postpone presence)" (Bass in Derrida, *Writing and Difference* xviii). The narrator acts as an agent for differance, constantly working to disrupt and dispel complete meaning. He[36] is also suggestively aligned with the devil, as far as the devil is a figure associated with disruption and mischief: "I know; devil talk … / Me?" (Rushdie, *SV* 93). The narrator often enters the text at the end of a section within a chapter. Generally, his entrance is preceded by a

[36] The narrator's gender is never directly stipulated. I have chosen to refer to the narrator as masculine because of the several insinuated connections made between the narrator and the devil or Shaitan, traditionally figured as masculine.

statement. In the chapter "A City Visible but Unseen", Saladin, after much deliberation, makes the decision not to think of himself as evil: "No more thinking myself evil. Appearances deceive; the cover is not the best guide to the book. Devil, Goat, Shaitan? Not I" (Rushdie, *SV* 257). Instead of the statement's meaning closing down with the rejection of Saladin's being implicitly evil, Rushdie, through the narrator, adds a question: "Not I: another. / Who?" [37] (Rushdie, *SV* 257). The narrator begins to open up meaning by asking questions that are never fully answered. This is in line with the ethic of questioning final meaning in the text. (See: Rushdie, *SV* 408, 424) The devilish narrator enters as the disruptive signifier, shifting and challenging meaning.

Through highlighting both the intermediary nature of language as well as the play of signification the text opens up to polysemia, gesturing to the manner in which meaning exceeds language. This has worked to point out the absent other of language. This absence is apparent through the mechanisms I have just outlined — iterability, the play of signification that frustrated a completion of meaning and a focus on the intermediary nature of language. This absence is *not* defined against presence. Presence denotes the perception that meaning is immediately available in a pure form (the logos) and not "corrupted" by an intermediary. Derrida's insistence that there is "nothing outside the text" (*Of Grammatology* 158) suggests that our perception of meaning is always already mediated and therefore pure "presence" is impossible. Absence is not the opposite of presence, but, rather, what is always already absent, lost to experience, missing — outside of representation. Significantly, *The Satanic Verses* highlights this absence, which is outside representation. In this way language becomes a way in which to acknowledge the excessive nature of otherness, which exceeds the bounds of representation. This is important because the representation of otherness needs to allow room for the play of difference, which necessarily functions in absence.

[37] This is reference to Samuel Beckett's play "Not I", in which the fragmented nature of identity is explored. The full line: "... and she found herself in the — ...what?..who?..no!..she!" (Beckett, 2) shows her struggle never to use the first person pronoun.

Performative Absence

I would now like to shift my focus to the manner in which the text performs sites of absence in language. This shift will include a move away from the structural aspects of language, which up until now have explored the way in which the text, and specifically its play with language, is deconstructive. This is based on the idea that "[t]he "rationality" … which governs writing … no longer issues from the logos. Further, it [poststructuralism] inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all significations that have their source in the logos" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 10). *The Satanic Verses* engages this ethic of deconstruction by calling attention to the absence inherent in language as well as its intermediary nature, indicating that the text's signification does not progress from the logos, but is open to the play of absence and otherness. Derrida further asserts that "[h]istory and knowledge … have always been determined … as detours for the purpose of the reappropriation of presence [or the logos]" (ibid); thus, history and knowledge are used as vehicles towards some kind of original, essential meaning. A text that is deconstructive, however, undercuts this tendency, changing the way in which history and knowledge function.

Having established *The Satanic Verses* as a deconstructive text, open to the play of absence and otherness, I would now like to shift my focus to the way in which the language functions in terms of the social, historical and political context in the narrative — with the assumption that these discourses do not automatically privilege presence. The language in the text performs its sites of absence. The socially, politically or historically elided, silenced or disenfranchised within the context of postcolonial London in the 1980s are written in such as way that the language itself *performs* or displays their absence or disregard within the dominant discourses of power and representation. In this way the language in the text is able to "show" otherness through absence, therefore not representing the other within the dominant discourse, and thus not falling prey to power in representation.

In exploring this type of performative absence in language, Lacan's theory of the inherent lack in language is brought to mind. Lacan's linguistically focused reading of Freudian theory

establishes an inherent lack in language[38]. This "lack" however, clashes with poststructuralist theory in as far as establishing a lack automatically implies a positivistic privileging of presence (the logos) within a binary. This lack in language is thus entirely different to the absence inherent in language referred to earlier as absence does not perpetuate a privileged binary. The second major way in which poststructuralist theory disagrees with Lacanian thought is the focus on, and predominance of, the signifier, the word, over the signified, the meaning. Spivak in the translator's preface to *Of Grammatology* stresses that "we should not satisfy our longing for transcendence [the logos, Truth] by giving primacy to the signifier" (lxiv), which merely perpetuates the binaries at play. The tendency to focus on the signifier will be explored in the concluding chapter of this paper. For now, I will make use of Lacan's theory of the lack in language as it still has some productive value. However, this, like the focus on historical, social, and political discourses of power, will be done with the text's deconstructionist ethic in mind and at play.

In *The Satanic Verses,* the language performs its sites of absence. This performative absence is most productively seen through the way in which the immigrants are named in the text. In the chapter "Ayesha", Rushdie lists the names that are used to describe people that have moved from their birthplace: "émigré, expatriate, refugee, immigrant, silence, cunning" (Rushdie, *SV* 205). The use of the list is itself a form of performed absence (see page 68 - 69). The last three names in this list reference Stephen Dedalus' proclamation at the end of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can ... using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use — silence, exile, and cunning" (281). Stephen makes this statement because he can no longer serve that in which he no longer believes, his "home ... fatherland ... or church" (ibid). Thus, Stephen goes into voluntary exile. Yet the term "exile" is not included in Rushdie's list, rather "immigrant" is substituted. This is an important substitution as the exile dreams of return whereas for the migrant "there is no return: paradise is lost ... but they take this as a starting point for exploring new worlds" (Ruthjen, 553).

[38] For a full explanation refer to the introductory chapter of this paper, page 17 – 18.

In the above quote the most interesting naming in this list is the immigrant[39] as "silence". The literal use of the word would begin to point to the silencing of the immigrant experience because of their politically or socially oppressed positions. The immigrant becomes "silence" by being stripped of any politically, socially or historically viable voice — they are marked by "epistemic violence … [which] operates its silent programming function" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 78) and because of this epistemic violence, those on the margin "have no history and cannot speak" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 83)[40]. By placing the name "silence" among commonly used or more recognisable names for immigrants, Rushdie references the epistemological bind of the attempt to represent the other, linguistically or otherwise. He also positions immigrants in a silenced enunciative position. However, this is only one way in which they are socially situated. Just as in the Joyce quote, Stephen describes his silence as a weapon of defence, the description of the immigrant as "silence" in no way means that they are *only* silenced. In fact, the position of migrant can be empowering in as far as it allows the exploration of newness. In other instances in *The Satanic Verses* migrants are positioned as ideologically engaged with their social or political situation. Jumpy, a friend of Saladin's and the man who brought him to the Shaandaar café for sanctuary, says: "'Ideologically … I refuse to accept the position of victim … our passiveness colludes with, permits … crimes'" (Rushdie, *SV* 253). Here Jumpy is referring to crimes related to the police brutality experienced by Saladin when arrested and the more general racism and social oppression experienced by immigrants. Thus, though I am looking specifically at the way in which the immigrant's effacement is dealt with linguistically, it in no way suggests that theirs is an unproblematic, singular social position.

[39] For the sake of clarity, I have chosen the word "immigrant" to describe people who have moved from their birthplaces.

[40] Spivak names those in the margins the "subalterns". She defines them as "the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban proletariat" (Spivak 78) Though the immigrant does not necessarily fit into this, they are a people on the margin in their host nation and generally are not actively represented socially, culturally or politically. They are therefore open to the epistemic violence described. For a fuller explanation see: Spivak, Gayatri C. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Ed. C. Nelson. and L. Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Linguistically, the choice to name the immigrant "silence" has several interesting implications. The signifier "silence" performatively[41] dispels the signified "silence". As soon as the word is used, the form of the word undercuts its intended meaning, the concept. This idea, when connected to the fact that the word is used to name an immigrant, points to a site of absence. Naming an immigrant "silence" linguistically performs the fact that once the immigrant is named as "other", its otherness is dispelled — named as the other, the immigrant is constructed as homogeneous "referring only to our [those who purport to represent the other] own place in the seat of the Same or the Self"[42] (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 84). Yet the need to name them, to represent them is important. The ultimate effacement occurs when, because of theoretical binds, people on the social or political margins are not represented, relegated *only* to silence and absence. However, this naming or representation needs to occur while allowing their provisionality and difference to function. Such representation occurs by open gaps in which absence allows for the play of difference. The use of the word "silence" points to the aspects of the immigrant that remain unrepresentable, his or her irreducible heterogeneity. This is because naming the immigrant as silence is stuck in the infinite circle of form undercutting meaning, but the circle itself is less important than what is *outside* this circle. The immigrant-as-other *cannot* be "silence" because of the circle that undermines the meaning of otherness; therefore, the immigrant-as-other is *not* that which is within the circle of representation. This works to point to what is outside this circle — the site of absence. Otherness, within this site of absence, is allowed to remain heterogeneous and unrepresented. Rushdie names the immigrant-as-other by pointing out what it is not — "what the work *cannot* say is important" (Macherey as cited by Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 81).

Performed absence is dramatised within the names of the characters. One of the main characters' names is Saladin Chamcha, a name truncated for the English tongue. His full name is Salahuddin Chamchawala. The name "Salahuddin" recalls Salahuddin Ayyubi, a great Muslim warrior in the Crusades. This character's full name is therefore seated in his

[41] The term "performatively" suggests the act of pronouncing the word "silence", just as the immigrant is named, or pronounced, "silence".

[42] In the context of this quote, "those who purport to represent the other" refers to the intellectual elite.

history, his culture and religion. His shortening of this name comes about because of his dream of London: "[he] longed for that dream-Vilayet of poise and moderation" (Rushdie, *SV* 37) and his rejection of his Indian heritage: "he grew increasingly impatient of that Bombay of dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts…" (Rushdie, *SV* 37). The shortened name becomes a symbol of his attempted translation into an Englishman, his attempt to "turn white" (Rushdie, *SV* 54). This shortening is ironic in the context of what his original name indicates. He is named after a hero of the Crusades, a religious war Muslims fought against invading Christian Europe. Therefore, the act of truncating his name is not only a repression of his Indianness but is also implicitly traitorous.

Each time the shortened name is used in the text, it performs the absence of the lost syllables and their implicit connection to his Indian heritage — Sala[…]din Chamcha[…]. This performed absence not only gestures towards his repressed Indianness but also the whole of the Crusades, the violence perpetuated by Christian Europe against the Muslims and his acceding to that violence, which is manifest in his butchered name. The shortened name is also a play on the word "spoon":

> A 'chamcha' is a very humble, everyday object. It is, in fact, a spoon. The word is Urdu; and it also has a second meaning. Colloquially a *chamcha* is a person who sucks up to a powerful people, a yes-man, a sycophant. The British Empire would not have lasted a week without such collaborators among its colonized peoples. You could say that the Raj grew fat by being spoon-fed. (Rushdie, *The Empire Writes Back* 8)

Thus, his name also recalls the colonisation of India. This performed absence becomes the site of the linguistic fetish.

Festishism is a Freudian theory around the anxiety of castration and sexual difference. A fetish object masks the sexual difference and so assuages the anxiety of castration. However, by virtue of the need to mask the absence, the fetish object also *marks* the absence. Hence, there is an oscillation between the pleasure of wholeness the fetish object gives to the subject

of sexual difference and the anxiety that it simultaneously marks out[43]. Bhabha, who used Freud's theory of the fetish towards a reading of the stereotype, asserts: "[T]he fetish represents the simultaneous play between metaphor as substitution (masking absence and difference) and metonymy (which contiguously registers the perceived lack)" (*The Location of Culture* 75). Saladin's truncated name works metonymically — it is a part-name that stands for his whole name. It is also a part-name that stands for his attempt at an anglicised identity. His truncated name is therefore a metonymy for *both* the Indian identity he wishes to mask and the English identity he wishes to be a part of. His name also works metaphorically. He, in an attempt to become anglicised, truncates his name, which works to mask his difference, his Indianness. This functions ironically, using the absent parts of his name to mask difference, itself an absence. Simultaneously, his truncated name signifies his desire to *be* English, when in fact all he can be is *like* the English — "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 87). He is "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 89 quote originally in italics). This "partial representation/recognition" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 88) of the immigrant by the English is termed "mimicry", which itself is a form of difference. "Mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 86). This is because it is fundamentally ambivalent. Much like the theory of fetishism, it is constructed around anxiety and power. Mimicry is an attempt to normalise and fix otherness and difference, however, this produces a "partial vision of the colonizer's presence, a gaze of otherness" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 88). Saladin's truncated name metonymically registers the perceived lack, the absence of the lost syllables mark his otherness and difference. At the same time, his truncated name becomes a symbol for his partial entry into Englishness and is a form of mimicry, which itself is simultaneously a site of otherness. Saladin is a split being — his very name articulates his difference, his otherness in India because of his Britishness and in Britain because of his Indianness. Thus, as an immigrant, he is further named a "British-Indian". The hyphen in his title as a translated being "emphasise[s] the incommensurable elements" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 219) in his identity. The hyphen works as a linguistic sign of absence, of the unrepresentable elements of difference and otherness.

[43] See: Freud, Sigmund. *On Sexuality.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977 and Metz, Christian. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier.* Bloomington: Indiana, 1982.

An example of these incommensurable elements in his identity is found in his relationship to the English language, to the "proper" English accent and to his homeland and home language, India and Urdu respectively. Saladin goes to Bombay after fifteen years in England to perform in a touring theatre production. On the plane he falls asleep and when he wakes he finds "his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade. … he heard, once again, his traitor voice: 'So, okay, bibi, give one whiskysoda only'" (Rushdie, *SV* 34). He associates this change with all the aspects of Indian culture he finds uncouth: "putting coconut-oil in his hair … squeezing his nostrils between thumb and forefinger, blowing noisily and drawing forth a glutinous silver arc of muck" (ibid). Yet, even after he forces himself to revert back to his "haught[y] English pitch" (Rushdie, *SV* 35), his Indian accent and, implicitly, the past he worked so hard to repress, keeps breaking through; his English accent and persona slipping "like a false moustache" (Rushdie, *SV* 53). Years before this, after having spent five years in England receiving his English education, he returns home for a visit. While walking in the garden at his home, Saladin realises he can now name all the trees in English and feels that "the garden had been a better place before he knew its names, that something had been lost which he would never be able to regain" (Rushdie, *SV* 45). This is an important moment for Saladin and his relationship with both India and England. I have used it to illuminate aspects of his identity in the chapter "Otherness and Subjectivity". While on the plane, Saladin's carefully moulded English accent and persona shows cracks in which his past, his Indianness, emerges. Yet, his English education affects something profoundly connected to his roots in India, something he cannot regain. Between his English identity, which begins to crumble, and his Indian identity, in which something has been irrevocably lost, there is an incommensurable element. Each side of his identity affects the other; neither is complete nor wholly roots the immigrant subjectivity.

Performative absence is also shown ironically in the text. This is done by showing absence through its opposite, through excess. Rushdie does this in three ways in *The Satanic Verses*: through excessively long, complex sentences, repetition of particular words and by using lists. With regards to language, Lacan theorised that at the heart of it is a lack or absence. The absence inherent in language makes the coherent or full expression of meaning exceedingly

difficult, even impossible. Rushdie implicitly points to this impossibility with his excessively long sentences:

> Let's observe, first, how isolated this Saladin is; his only willing companion an inebriated and cartographically bosomed stranger, he struggles alone through that partying throng in which all persons appear to be (and are not) one another's friends; — while there on London Bridge stands Farishta, beset by admirers, at the very centre of the crowd;
>
> and, next, let us appreciate the effect on Chamcha, who loved England in the form of his lost English wife, — of the golden, pale and glacial presence by Farishta's side of Alleluia Cone; he snatches a glass from a passing waiter's tray, drinks the wine fast, takes another; and seems to see, in distant Allie, the entirety of his loss;
>
> and in other ways, as well, Gibreel is fast becoming the sum of Saladin's defeats; — there with him now, at this very moment, is another traitor; mutton dressed as lamb, fifty plus and batting her eyelashes like an eighteen-year-old, is Chamcha's agent, the redoubtable Charlie Sellers; — you wouldn't liken him to a Transylvanian bloodsucker, would you, Charlie, the irate watcher inwardly cries; — and grabs another glass; — and sees, at its bottom, his own anonymity, the other's equal celebrity, and the great injustice of the division;
>
> most especially — he bitterly reflects — because Gibreel, London's conqueror, can see no value in the world now falling at his feet! — why, the bastard always sneered at the place, Proper London, Vilayet, the English, Spoono, what cold fish they are, I swear; — Chamcha, moving inexorably towards him through the crowd, seems to see, *right now*, that same sneer upon Farishta's face, that scorn of an inverted Podsnap, for whom all things English are worthy of derision instead of praise; — O God, the cruelty of it, that he, Saladin, whose goal and crusade it was to make this town his own, should have to see it kneeling before his contemptuous rival! — so there is also this: that Chamcha longs to stand in Farishta's shoes, while his own footwear is of no interest whatsoever to Gibreel.
>
> What is unforgivable? (Rushdie, *SV* 425-6).

A sentence functions as a statement that has meaning. The full stop signifies the completion of meaning. When a sentence is excessively long and complex, it implicitly points to the difficultly involved in attaining coherent meaning — which itself is connected to the attempt at obtaining or pointing out a deeper truth. The opening phrase of this sentence is: “Let’s observe”. Here the reader is called by the narrator to observe Saladin’s “isolation”, which, in

fact, creates a distance — we observe his turmoil from the outside — that stylistically reifies his isolation. The term "observe" recalls an empirical attempt at understanding, as though he were a specimen that we can watch and fully comprehend. However, the movement between the narrator observing and Saladin's inner thoughts becomes increasingly complex: "[Y]ou wouldn't liken him to a Transylvanian bloodsucker, would you, Charlie, the irate watcher inwardly cries", until the sentence becomes fully immersed in Saladin's inner frustration and confusion. The complexity of the movement between the narrator's observations and Saladin's thought process compounds the feeling of confusion and becomes increasingly incoherent. The end of this mammoth sentence is followed by: "What is unforgivable?" This sudden, jarring change in tone increases the feeling of uncertainty for the reader. There seems to be something missing, a lack in logic that brought Saladin to the question, but that the reader has no access to. The character slips beyond the reader's comprehension because language cannot encapsulate the fullness of his being and cannot contain the movement of his thought. This brings to the fore the lack in language. By making a 32-line long sentence, riddled with semi-colons, dashes and commas, Rushdie evades final meaning — the sentence is constantly moving on. The copious nature of the sentence disallows any search for an absolute or formal truth in the sentence, which in turn points to the texts' surface. Creating sentences that are excessively long and convoluted is a technique Rushdie uses across his oeuvre, most famously in *Midnight's Children,* in which he uses the technique as way to illustrate both the teeming nature of India and its convoluted history.

Rushdie engages this technique in two other ways. Firstly, through lists — "mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves …" (Rushdie, *SV* 4). In this quote Rushdie is describing immigrants falling from an exploded plane. This list is preceded by another: "Above, behind, below them in the void there hung reclining seats, stereophonic headsets, drinks trolleys, video games …" (ibid). The list describing the abstract, internal debris is preceded, without any formal indication of which is the more important, by a list of the most quotidian nature. Language cannot capture the extreme copiousness of experience, and the attempt to do so is futile and disingenuous. One cannot enter the consciousness, the internal debris, of another person in any kind of meaningful way and Rushdie points to this

by tempering his attempt with the quotidian. The list of superficial objects falling is not hierarchically distinguished from the list of men and women falling; they are almost interchangeable. Lists are also always multiple; the immigrants are never one thing, they are several, sometimes conflicting, things. Rushdie uses lists throughout the text pointing to the surface of the text and the absence of any authoritative, singular truth, and contiguously, to the multifarious, polysemic nature of reality and experience.

Rushdie further engages the technique of designating authoritative truth as absent through the repetition of words. This technique is related to the "iterability" discussed earlier in this chapter, though it has a different emphasis. Abu Simbel, a polytheist in Jahilia, asks, "Why do I fear Mahound? For that: one one one, his terrifying singularity" (Rushdie, *SV* 102). The triple repetition of the word "one" undermines the singularity that Abu Simbel so fears, ironically making "one" multiple. Singularity, or "oneness", and its connection to logocentrism — that Truth, singular and indivisible, exists — is constantly undermined in *The Satanic Verses.* More generally, the repetition of the word begins to strip it of meaning — the word becomes hollow. In a similar way, Rushdie uses wordplay to make words exchangeable: "O God, he cries out, O allgood allahgod" (Rushdie, *SV* 92). Gibreel's plaintive cry for help from God is written in such a way that "allgood" and "allahgod" resemble each other on the page. This resemblance makes the two unspaced words seem interchangeable, subtly undermining them. It also points to the openness of play with meaning in language — this is a visual play, directly calling attention to the surface nature of the text, but implicitly pointing out the multiplicity of meaning available in language. This further suggests that access to unified or complete meaning within representation is impossible. Thus, calling attention to the multiplicity in language, as well as to the impossibility of unified meaning, relates to the manner in which the text is able to attempt the representation of the other-as-subject. This is only possible in as far as the other is constantly made provisional within the rendering of language.

Through excess, lists and repetition the language in the text ironically points to absence — an absence that is connected to the signifier as a unit that is a "symbol only of an absence" (Lacan 24). The signifier is a symbol of absence because it signifies desire. Desire, or the

object of desire, by its very nature *must* be absent to function — a fulfilled desire is no longer a desire. The signifier as desire, for Lacan, is figured as the phallus "that can come to take the place of all signifiers signifying all desires for all absences" (Spivak in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* lxv)[44]. Here the phallus is a symbol rather than a physical thing. The phallus signifies the fear of castration in the male and the envy of the penis in the female. Both are connected to desire. Figuring the phallus as the ultimate (or original) signifier of desire means that the signifier becomes a symbol of absence. Language contains a lack, an absence that is "a desire for the other of the subject" (ibid). The "other of the subject" is a desire for some thing "that the subject has not" (ibid). For Lacan, the phallus as an image of lack or absence is a master signifier of this desire, yet this regimented return to image of the phallus as the seat of desire, absence and lack, is not necessarily an enabling image for a reading of otherness in *The Satanic Verses.* Rather, the lack in language and the otherness it gestures towards in the subject could be more effectively read as a radical resistance to totalise or finalise meaning and truth — a way in which the text performs its inability to complete meaning, and implicitly, the manner in which it gestures to a surplus of meaning. This is then not *only* a lack, as in an absence, but something that resists representation by exceeding it.

A Politics of Language

"The real language problem: how to bend it shape it, how to let it be our freedom, how to repossess its poisoned wells, how to master the river of words of time of blood" (Rushdie, *SV* 281 italics in original). With these lines Rushdie encapsulates *The Satanic Verses'* engagement with the politics of language. The image of the "river of blood" is one used by the character Jumpy Josh who wished to "reclaim the metaphor" (Rushdie, *SV* 186) from Enoch Powell, a British politician who used it in a speech with distinctly racist overtones. "Why abandon so potent and evocative an image to the racists?" (Rushdie, *Imaginary*

[44] Spivak, in her preface to *Of Grammatology,* looks at Lacan through the deconstructive lens. Her repetition of the word "all" works to point out Lacan's logocentric impulse in so far as he begins to totalise his positioning of the signifier, creating a "transcendental signifier" (Spivak in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* lxv). Lacan begins to privilege the signifier over the signified, word over meaning, which is done to "satisfy our longing for transcendence" (Spivak in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* lxiv). Derrida enacts a deconstructive rereading of Lacan in Derrida, Jacques. "Le Facteur de la Vérité" in Trans. Bass, Alan *Margins* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Although Lacan falls into logocentrism and is therefore open to deconstruction, his linguistic theory still has some productive value in terms of sites of absence in language.

Homelands 402). The reclamation of language from the centers of power — "reclaiming language from one's opponents" (ibid) — is a vital ethic in this text. This is because language has the potential to become "a medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which concepts of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality' become established" (Ashcroft et al 7). The reclamation of language is an attempt to shift established sites of power and works towards the emergence of a new, syncretic voice. The use of the name "Mahound", "the Devil's synonym" (Rushdie, *SV* 93), for the character aligned with Muhammad, is an attempt to "turn insults into strengths" (Rushdie, *SV* 93). The same goes for the title of the text, which is an assertion of pride in identity, written from the perspective of those who have been demonised for their otherness (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 403). Language becomes a site for the exploration of the parameters of political power and the spaces of alterity within this. Therefore, an investigation into the play of language in *The Satanic Verses* calls for an extension beyond the poststructuralist and psychoanalytical theoretical frameworks. The text explores the way in which language is caught up in the dynamics of social and historical power — "all … description is itself a political act" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 13) — and therefore calls for a postcolonial theoretical focus. Postcolonialism is "not a unitary theory … it is characterised by its refusal of totalising forms" (Young 63) and is thus difficult to define. Very broadly, in narratives it occurs through a "counter-discourse expressive of [a] position consciously undertaken against the controlling norms of dominant discourses, whether of European or non-European origin" (Erickson 4). Thus, it is critically engaged in pointing out and disrupting or dismantling narratives that entrench social, cultural, or political normalcy while disallowing the play of cultural difference. *The Satanic Verses* engages with social, political, and historical discourse through a focus on the mechanisms of power inherent and apparent in language.

Rushdie's choice to use English as the primary language in his text is itself a political act:

> The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that postcolonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the center and re-placing it … There are two distinct processes by which it does this. The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the center … marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege. (Ashcroft et al 38)

In *The Satanic Verses,* the rendering of English is both a form of abrogation and appropriation. Rushdie constantly creates neologisms, uses unexplained references and untranslated Urdu, and plays with formal English grammar. The English language becomes a playground for the visual and auditory rendering of the hybrid character, at once Indian and English, and this, importantly, begins to stake out a linguistic space for the "gap between 'worlds'" (Ashcroft et al 39) that immigrants inhabit and that Rushdie, as a postcolonial writer, attempts to write into.

Gibreel, just entering London, states: "The city — Proper London, yaar, no bloody *less*! — was dressed in white, like a mourner at a funeral. — Whose bloody funeral mister" (Rushdie, *SV* 200). Traditionally, people in Western societies wear black to a funeral. Gibreel, being from an Islamic background, connects the colour white with funerals. Immediately his difference to the society he is about to enter is referenced — and this difference is contiguously weaved into the way this character uses English. "Proper London, yaar, no bloody less!", in this sentence Gibreel's name for the city is Proper London — the capital 'P' connects the word "proper" with the pronoun "London" — but instantly this idea of "properness" is undermined with the word "yaar", a Hindi word often used in expression, meaning "friend". The propinquity of these two words is emblematic of Rushdie's play with language — where formal English, figured with the words "Proper London", is abrogated and brought "under the influence of a vernacular tongue" (Ashcroft et al 39). Gibreel also uses distinctly English words: the curse word "bloody" and "mister", but the way in which the grammar is rendered, along with the influence of the vernacular, means these words are prized loose from their "Englishness". The use of dashes instead of the grammatically correct comma dramatically breaks the sentence up. This creates a staccato rhythm, which gives us insight into the character's particular state of mind, but also, importantly, begins to point out the speech habits and rhythms that characterise his mother tongue, which, in turn, influence his rendering of English.

The word play in the text also includes the Gandhian idea of *samas,* which is roughly translated as the "faculty for assimilation", specifically the "faculty of linguistic hybridity, the grammatical technique of forming a new word by introducing two or more preexisting

words" (Young, *An Historical Introduction* 348). Rushdie includes examples of linguistic hybridity throughout his text: "No sir, a sin, a suchmuch thing" (Rushdie, *SV* 7), "No offence, man. Joke-shoke" (Rushdie, *SV* 54). This linguistic practice involves connecting two words that can be juxtaposed because they sound alike — "suchmuch" — even if the second part of the word is meaningless — "Joke-shoke" (Young, *An Historical Introduction* 348). Gandhi suggests that a "country must have a faculty for assimilation [*samas*]. India has ever been such a country." (Gandhi in Young, *An Historical Introduction* 348) This is an extremely important idea for Rushdie, whose idea of India has "always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity … by its very nature [it is] superabundant, heterogeneous" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 32). The practice of *samas* as a linguistic faculty points to the fact that "India has a cultural facility analogous to the formation of compound or portmanteau words" (Young 348). Rushdie inscribes his idea of India and Indian practices into the English language, which works to inscribe *difference* into it. "The articulation of two … possibilities of speaking and therefore of political and cultural identification outlines a cultural space between them which is left unfilled, and which … locates a major signifying difference in the … text" (Ashcroft et al 54). Rushdie's use of and play with English inscribes difference and therefore begins to establish a site of absence "beyond which the cultural Otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the colonial language" (Ashcroft et al 55).

Rushdie's engagement with vernacular English, formal grammar and linguistic hybrids is a part of an attempt to deconstruct the power structures of English, which are seen as "metonymic of hegemonic control" (Ashcroft et al 48). Standardised English becomes a metonym for the control and privileging of the center of power, in this case England. Rushdie plays with the idea of language as a form of control by using the lexicon of the film industry:

> — Cut. — A man lit by a sun-gun rapidly speaks into a microphone … confining himself, of course, to the facts. But the camera sees what he does not say. A camera is a thing easily broken or purloined; its fragility makes it fastidious. A camera requires law, order, the thin blue line. Seeking to preserve itself, it remains behind the shielding wall [of riot police], observing the shadow-lands from afar, and of course from above: that is, it chooses sides.
>
> — Cut. — … (Rushdie, *SV* 454 - 455)

The use of film lexicon relates to several ideas, including the gaze of the camera as a weapon of power and appropriation[45], it is also used as an inlet for contemporary culture — the setting of the text, London in the 1980s, is immersed in popular culture that is mostly manifest through television and film. The camera becomes a subtle eye of power in as far as it "chooses sides" by representing in a particular way. The camera as it is figured in this quote becomes a metaphor for the manner in which language represents and how this representation runs the risk of becoming a metonymy of hegemonic control. This is not to say that the camera as a visual representation, which includes auditory stimuli and is both immediately visceral and abstractly symbolic, is equitable to language, which lacks these elements; rather, that use of the lexicon of the camera recalls the eye of power, which then has significance for its rendering linguistically. That this representation described through the language of film "requires law, order, the thin blue line"[46] immediately aligns the site of representation, embodied by the camera, with the state controls. Most telling in this quote is the use of the word "— Cut. —". This calls attention to the constructed nature of representation, but, most importantly, it creates a gap in what the camera is telling the reader. It is in this gap that Rushdie creates a site of what is not adequately represented by standardised English — the cultural difference of the hybrid, postcolonial voice — and figures it as a site of control and oppression.

In *The Satanic Verses* there are many untranslated Hindi and Urdu words. Untranslated words become a radical site for the articulation of difference — a metonym of the wider, unrepresented culture from which they come (this works in the same way that standardised English is a metonym of hegemonic control). Words that are not translated into English work to "register a sense of cultural distinctiveness [and] force[s] the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of culture in which these terms have meaning … placed in an English text [untranslated words] signify difference" (Ashcroft et al 65). Untranslated words such as "yaar" and "bhai" form a linguistic gap and through this articulate the absence in which cultural difference or otherness resides. This "articulated absence" forces Rushdie's

[45] See: Mulvey, Laura. *Visual Cinema and Narrative Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975; Sontag, Susan. *On Photography.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.

[46] Rushdie is ironically referencing popular television programmes, 'Law and Order' and 'The Thin Blue Line'.

rendering of english and Hindi and Urdu into propinquity. Thus, in the same way as Saladin's hyphenated subjectivity exposes the incommensurable elements between his Indian and British identities, the untranslated words talk to the incommensurable elements of telling an Indian story in english. Further, these untranslated words signify difference, thus allowing the other to be represented as a subject whose difference is not eclipsed.

Conclusion

> Absolute difference, inconceivable in terms of formal logic, is established … *by language.* … Language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 195 my italics).

According to Levinas, language is the site through which one is most able to "access" absolute difference. It is in the play of difference, designated in its various forms throughout this chapter, which allows a space for absolute otherness without eclipsing difference. The idea that language has the power to "break the continuity" of being is associated with Levinas' definition of "being" as ego and sameness. The ego, the "I", cannot fully call itself into question, cannot critique the "exercise of ontology [the comprehension of being]" (*Totality and Infinity* 43). This is because in order to call something into question there needs to be an other, something else wholly outside of this sameness. The play of difference in language, wholly and necessarily outside of representation, creates a site of total exteriority. This opens up the possibilities within representation, never allowing it to be formally closed off with its meaning completed. Thus, "[t]he formal structure of language thereby announces the ethical inviolability of the Other" (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 195). Though Levinas' inherent religiosity in terms of the language he uses when addressing "the Other" has overtones that need critical discussion and revision (see the concluding chapter), it is nonetheless clear that the connection between the sites of otherness and the formal structure of language is significant in as far as it works to maintain difference so that the other can concurrently emerge as a subject. Having established the effects of narrative transposition as an act of critical questioning and dismantling of master narratives, I was able to identify the ethic of deconstruction in the linguistic play of *The Satanic Verses,* and thus how the manner in which the formal structure of language is engaged in the text allows the space for sites of unrepresentable otherness to emerge without eliding difference. This unrepresentable

otherness includes the incommensurable elements between Indianness and Englishness, the inability to fully countenance experience because of its excessive nature and the polysemic nature of truth. Language, however, is not the only way in which otherness is framed and highlighted in this text. The complex nature of the narrative structure is a clue to another way in which otherness is allowed to emerge.

Structure

Introduction

The Satanic Verses boasts an exceptionally complex structural system, which calls for several different, although related, readings of structural technique. The text contains elements of the mise-en-abyme system, with its promise of infinite repetition and doubling, its parallel narratives and the tension that the structure creates between the dream and reality as well as between the reader, the author and the narrator. The text is also thematically concerned with history and plays with ideas of Historical time and the historiographic narrative. Finally, the text and its author have entered social, political and religious history, which has created a unique tension between fiction and history. Ultimately, the structure of *The Satanic Verses* works strategically to point out and highlight sites of otherness through rupture, haunting and gesturing towards irreconcilable tensions.

In this chapter, I will focus on the opening chapter of *The Satanic Verses,* "The Angel Gibreel", the first dream narrative, "Mahound", as well as the stories involving two of the exiles in the text. The story of the first exile, who is simply named "the Imam", occurs at the beginning of Gibreel's second dream-narrative, which, after briefly involving the Imam, follows the story of Ayesha the butterfly girl. In the beginning of this dream, Gibreel encounters an exiled Imam living in a flat in contemporary London. The Imam is obsessed with remaining unsullied by his foreign surroundings as well as by his enemy, Ayesha the empress. Gibreel is called upon to fight and kill Ayesha for the Imam, who is then able to return triumphantly to his homeland, Desh. The second exile is Otto Cone, Alleluia Cone's father. Otto is a Jewish concentration camp survivor from Warsaw and so is both an exile and an immigrant in London. Otto spends a lot of time and effort trying to forget his past. He changes his name from "Cohen" to "Cone", rejecting even his Jewishness, and will abide no mention of Warsaw or the Second World War. Eventually, when in his seventies, Otto commits suicide by jumping down an elevator shaft, leaving Allie furious and his wife, Alicja, deeply confused: "[W]hy does a survivor of the camps live forty years and then complete the job the monsters didn't get done?" (Rushdie, *SV* 298) The question is never answered and both Alicja and Allie have to live with the idea that perhaps "a man's death [can] be incompatible with his life" (ibid).

Exiles are important characters in *The Satanic Verses* because they embody the need for a new historical voicing. There are those who are on the social, political, cultural or historical margins of a particular social system, for instance, the Imam, who is a political other in his homeland hence the need to go into exile. He is also a social and cultural other in London, because of his ethnicity, uncompromising politics and religious fervour. People on the margins of any particular social structure have been stripped of any authoritative platform for voicing their individuated subjectivity, autonomy and personal experiences. This is because of the way in which social structures work to create dominant normative narratives, which exclude those who in some way or another do not fit in; are teleological and focused on closure and finality. Those who are excluded from these narratives are the silenced historical voices. In the context of *The Satanic Verses,* these include the immigrants in London who are subject to institutionalised racism and thus are not fully represented socially, and the exiles who inhabit the strange space between a homeland they cannot return to and a host country in which they do not fully belong. Thus, there is a call for the creation of a fresh, new narrative time and space in which to allow a new historical voice for those on the margins. This is achieved in *The Satanic Verses,* as I will argue in this chapter, through its narrative structuring. These not only open up new spaces and temporalities for those on the margins but also call attention to the text's own narrative limits. Thus, acknowledging that though the narrative attempts to include other voices, it is in no way a closed or totalised narrative. Rather, it points to the fact that outside the text's narrative boundaries there are potentially *other* unrepresented voices who remain silent but are highlighted as significant.

The opening chapter, "The Angel Gibreel", which I will focus on in the following section, is narratively complex and so I will very briefly outline its basic plot. The chapter opens with Gibreel and Saladin falling from the exploded plane. The story then turns to Gibreel's history, following his childhood in Bombay and his rise to stardom. It then turns to the mystery illness that results in his loss of faith in Islam and his meeting with Allie. This eventually results in Gibreel taking a plane to London. The story then returns to the plane before it has exploded and begins to follow Saladin's history, explaining his longing for an English education, his increasing estrangement with his father and his decision to remain in England.

It then turns to his trip to Bombay with the Prospero Players, a London-based theatre troupe. Once in Bombay he has an affair with a childhood friend, Zeeny. He also visits his father in an attempt to make amends but ends up leaving his father's house in a rage. He then boards a plane back to London. The "Bostan", the same plane Gibreel is on, is hijacked by extremists who wanted "[n]othing new … An independent homeland, religious freedom, release of political detainees, justice, ransom money, safe-conduct to a country of their choice" (Rushdie, *SV* 79). The name "Bostan" is one of the names for heaven or paradise in Islam, the other being "Gulistan". After one hundred and eleven days in captivity[47], their captors cause the plane to explode over the English Channel, thus completing the circular narrative that began with the two men falling from the exploded plane. This chapter is significant when taking into account the manner in which the narrative structure deals with the characters' pasts, uses narrative techniques, such as the use of the fairytale beginning, "once upon a time", and the ways in which the text uses structure to refer to absence and the unrepresentable.

"Mahound", the first dream narrative, which involves Gibreel as the archangel and tells the story of Mahound's rise to prophethood, will be looked at first in order to explore the way in which the text engages with the mise-en-abyme structure.

Mise en Abyme: Paradox and the Structural Abyss

"Mise-en-abyme" is a technical term related to heraldry: the "abyss ... [is] the heart of the shield. A figure is said to be "en abyme" when it is combined with other figures in the centre of the shield" (Dallenbach 8). When applied to literature, Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* defines the "narrative artifice" of the mise-en-abyme as a "form of narrative self-consciousness … called overt diegetic narcissism" (50). This

[47] This incident seems to be a conflation of elements based on two different events. On June 14, 1985 a TWA flight was hijacked by a band of Shiite terrorists, from Athens to a series of airports, ending in Beiruit, where the plane sat on the runway until July 1, with people being released at various intervals. On June 23, 1985, Air India (AI) Flight 182, en route from Canada via London to India, crashed into the ocean 120 miles southwest of Ireland, killing all on board. Sikh separatists were suspected of having planted a bomb. After the publication of the novel, on December 21, 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 was blown up by a terrorist bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all on board in a manner strikingly reminiscent of the Flight A I-420 explosion. (Brians, *Notes*)

"narrative narcissism" involves a critical self-awareness of process, which translates into the text: "[T]he content's dramatic presentation of the diegetic act [becomes] a major controlling factor in the structural, as well as in the thematic, unity of the work" (51). The mise-en-abyme as a type of formal structural and thematic self-reflexivity points to a literature or aesthetic concerned with its own textuality. This type of textual focus comes up against severe criticism, primarily from postcolonial theorists, because it "privileges the act of reading over politics" (Gikandi 97) and is construed as potentially ahistorical, removing itself from the socio-political realm and denying the impact and influence of anything outside the work's own textuality.[48]

The Satanic Verses is a text concerned both with its own textuality and questions of representation *and* with social politics and historical representation. The text is exceedingly self-reflexive and, as I will argue, highlights the diegetic act through its temporal structuring and its narrator, employing a complex play of the mise-en-abyme. This is done without becoming ahistorical. To the contrary, I believe that the mise-en-abyme within the narrative structure is a highly effective and progressive tool for highlighting the socially, politically and historically elided.

The mise-en-abyme, as a means by which "the work looks back on itself" (Dallenbach 8), can potentially close the work off and create a hermeneutically sealed text. However, if the text were aware of or self-conscious about this danger (employing a kind of double reflexivity: reflexive about its own reflexivity), then the limits of the work would be highlighted. This delineates what the work is able to say and, by implication, points to what it cannot say or directly represent[49]. *The Satanic Verses* uses the mise-en-abyme as a tool to point to the limits

[48] See: Larsen, 2002; Ahmad, 1992. Both Larsen and Ahmad critically debate whether postcolonial theory can be a politically, socially or historically effective theoretical standpoint because of its roots in French (and therefore, Western) poststructuralism, which has a textual focus.

[49] David Carroll, in his text *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida,* does a reading of "The Order of Things" in which he investigates Foucault's interest in self-reflexive texts. Though I have changed the focus of the argument, I am indebted to Carroll's work.

of its own representation and further, to highlight the unsaid and unsayable *beyond* of this representation.

Lucien Dallenbach, in *The Mirror in the Text* (1989), divides the mise-en-abyme system into three distinct, essential figures:

> *simple duplication* (a sequence which is connected by similarity to the work that encloses it);
>
> *infinite duplication* (a sequence which is connected by similarity to the work that encloses it and which itself includes a sequence that … etc.);
>
> *aporetic duplication* (a sequence that is supposed to enclose the work that encloses it). (35)

The Satanic Verses engages with all three of these types or figures of the mise-en-abyme. It does so with several interesting and effective differences. Dallenbach's definition of the types and formal properties of the mise-en-abyme system, though comprehensive and necessary (there are few texts that follow this system in any depth), is formal to a fault. The mise-en-abyme is a play of doubles, parallels and the infinite possibilities within these — where Dallenbach finds "sameness", *The Satanic Verses* offers "difference". Thus, *The Satanic Verses'* engagement with this structure highlights otherness or difference *within* the parameters of what the text is able to represent, pointing to difference within itself, as well as *outside* of what it able to represent, pointing to the beyond of representation.

Dallenbach's definition of the mise-en-abyme and three different, increasingly complex ways that it manifests in a narrative, though restrictive, is a good launching point for an investigation into how the mise-en-abyme functions in *The Satanic Verses.* However, it is important to recognise that proving the play of the mise-en-abyme within the narrative is not an end in itself. Rather, its significance as a device for opening up sites of difference within the text as a technique for highlighting the limits of the narrative is key. The *abyme* is the abyss. When a particular sequence mirrors and contains itself enough — consider the image of the shield within the shield — it eventually collapses, exposing the very edge of representation itself. The abyss, the void formed by this type of narrativising, evokes several

essential questions: What is outside representation? Why is it important to recognise and highlight the limits of representation? What are the implications of this? I will establish how the mise-en-abyme functions in the text by using a small section that demonstrates all three types while considering these questions more fully.

"Simple" duplication occurs vividly near the opening of the second chapter, "Mahound". Simple duplication is the first "level" of the mise-en-abyme — the actual shield that contains a depiction of a shield in its centre. Textually this would mean that one narrative sequence, theme or image is contained within a larger narrative sequence that resembles it. In the third chapter Gibreel begins to dream: "[Gibreel] slides heavy-lidded towards visions of his angeling" (Rushdie, *SV* 92). This dream is the larger narrative sequence. Gibreel's dream is fundamentally about a loss of faith, about doubt. "But when Gibreel regained his strength, it became clear that he had changed, and to a startling degree, because he had lost his faith" (Rushdie, *SV* 29). After Gibreel loses his faith he eats pig's meat to prove "the non-existence of God" (Rushdie, *SV* 30). "After he ate the pigs the retribution began, a nocturnal retribution, a punishment of dreams" (Rushdie, *SV* 32). The dreams become the manifestation of Gibreel's doubt, his loss of faith in God. In this dream Gibreel is positioned as the archangel Gibreel, who sees "the businessman" Mahound, on his forty-fourth birthday climbing Cone mountain towards the cave in which he will eventually receive his first revelation. However, the narrative description of Mahound's ascent (and, implicitly, the dream Gibreel is having) breaks off suddenly:

> 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: … daring to ask forbidden things: antiquestions. Is it right that. Could it not be argued. Freedom, the old antiquest. He [God] calmed them down … Angels are easily pacified; turn them into instruments and they will play your harpy tune. Human beings are tougher nuts, can doubt anything, even the evidence of their own eyes. … angels, they don't have much in the way of a will. To will is to disagree; not to submit, to dissent.
>
> I know; devil talk. Shaitan interrupting Gibreel.

Me? (Rushdie, *SV* 92-93)

This break is the smaller narrative sequence that resembles the larger through the theme of doubt. The discussion on doubt and the will, or lack thereof, of angels, is enclosed within a dream which is itself a manifestation of the doubt and lack of will of Gibreel, who dreams of himself as an angel. This is the simplest form of the mise-en-abyme, but this sequence illustrates a further layer of complexity.

The narrator discusses doubt — "What is the opposite of faith? … Doubt" (ibid) — and then causes the reader to doubt the narrator — "I know; devil talk. … Me?" This in itself is a simple duplication or reflection; the doubt discussed reflects the doubt caused by the narrator. The doubt the reader feels about the intentions or character of the narrator and his "devil talk" (ibid) throws the entire break in the narrative into doubt. Therefore, the loss of faith and doubt in God discussed by the narrator is contained within a sequence that the reader now entirely mistrusts. The increasing complexity of layers that reflect and contain one another begins to create a ripple effect wherein more and more layers of the abyme can be found. The teasing question at the end of this section, "Me?", is an example *and reflection* of the "antiquestions" referred to in the description of the doubting angels that dared to ask God forbidden (anti)questions. "Me?" is an antiquestion on the level of representation. The "author-god" calls attention to his narration, causing the reader to doubt his otherwise assumed veracity, his good-intentioned silence. The narrator calling attention to himself calls attention to his subjectivity — especially because he constantly, implicitly (and once or twice, explicitly) aligns himself with the devil. The reader *must* doubt the narrator; question his voice as well as whose and what type of story is being told. In the same way that the angels dared to ask God forbidden antiquestions, so the narrator subtly goads the reader to ask the same of the textual representation. This is aligned with *The Satanic Verses'* ongoing and thorough challenge to the master- or metanarratives of power.

Hence, this system of simple duplication (between the reader's doubt and the discussed doubt) is contained within a larger system of duplication — doubt discussed within Gibreel's dreams that are brought about by doubt. The system now begins to move from simple duplication to infinite. Infinite duplication is a "sequence which is connected by similarity to

the work that encloses it and which itself includes a sequence that … etc" (Dallenbach 35). Therefore, the shield that contains an image of itself in its centre has, within this image in the centre, a further shield and so on.

Before moving on to a discussion of aporetic duplication, I would like briefly to consider the implications of the mise-en-abyme so far. The play of mirroring and containment becomes increasingly complex and layered, moving further and further into a particular theme — in this case, doubt and loss of faith — and yet seems never to "resolve" it. The increasing complexity of the narrative only further problematises the theme. There is something else, something that exceeds what can be explained or resolved, which then triggers another layer of narrative complexity. This structural layering evokes a void, wherein the complexity of the structure collapses or disappears into a type of emptiness. This emptiness heralds the "something else"; the other of the narrative that harries the structure but constantly defies explanation — exceeding and overflowing the rigours of structure and narrative. The use of this kind of complex narrativisation is a refusal of the closure and certainty of linear, totalising forms of representation. The emptiness signals a failure in representation to enclose or explain experience. Something always exceeds it and this structure embraces that ambiguity, that otherness. In this way, the structure gestures towards an absence or space of play *within* the text. Aporetic duplication in the text's structure signals an absence *outside* of itself.

Aporetic duplication is "a sequence that is supposed to enclose the work that encloses it" (Dallenbach 35). This presents a paradox: the image in the centre of the shield, which is contained by the shield itself, in fact concurrently contains the shield. This becomes clear when considering the narrator's intrusion into Gibreel's dream: "Shaitan interrupting Gibreel / Me?" (Rushdie, *SV* 93) The text itself is called *The Satanic Verses,* which refers to the incident of the satanic verses in which Mahound receives false verses from Shaitan instead of from the archangel Gibreel. In this section the reader is receiving "verses" or antiquestions from the narrator who casts doubt as to his devilishness and interrupts, even takes over, Gibreel's narrative. This directly echoes the incident in which Gibreel's revelations are interrupted and overtaken by Shaitan — "the Devil came to [Mahound] in the guise of the

archangel [Gibreel], so that the verses he memorized … were not the real thing but their diabolical opposite, not godly, but satanic" (Rushdie, *SV* 123). This causes several questions to arise: Is the "satanic verses" only the actual incident described in one particular section in the text? Or is it all of the incidences wherein the "wicked" narrator breaks into the narrative? Or is the entire text an example or instance of a "satanic verse"?

This last question is the site at which the aporetic duplication found in this text is most clear. A text containing the mise-en-abyme system must have a "title [a name … that] creates an oscillation between the embedded and the embedding work" (Dallenbach 29). In this case, the embedded work is the literal incident of the "satanic verses" that occurs in the chapter "Mahound", described above. The embedding work is the text which "contains" the incident. However, Rushdie's choice of title for his text, which is the same as the incident embedded within his text, works to cast doubt over what the "satanic verses" actually are. There is an oscillation between whether *The Satanic Verses* is itself a "satanic verse" or whether it simply contains the incident of the "satanic verses" — with its necessary connection with and echoes of the underbelly of Islamic history, the Prophet Muhammad's rescinded verses expunged from the Qur'an. Or, put another way, are we in Rushdie's "satanic verses" that contain an incident also named "the satanic verses", or are we in the "satanic verses" that Mahound received from the devil? This oscillation is also a type of aporetic duplication in as far as the embedded work, the incident of the satanic verses, is a sequence that potentially or vacillatingly encloses the work, *The Satanic Verses,* that encloses it.

The title is quite literally the boundary between the inside and the outside of the book. It's words form a verbal membrane that delineates the limits of the possibilities of representation, literally and physically; the title is the beginning of the *actual* or physical text and metaphorically, the title both opens and closes the bounds of representation within (and out) the text. By choosing a title that is open to both the embedded/embedding oscillation and the aporetic duplication structure, Rushdie calls attention to it as the site of the boundary or limit of representation. The delineation of this boundary, the title as the limit of the text's consciousness or scope of representation, is used not to define or delimit what the text *is* but

what it is not. This is achieved through the vacillating structural play between the title and the work.

This representational paradox is mirrored by the description of the moment the "satanic verses" revelation occurs as a sequence within the text.

> … and now Gibreel, who has been hovering-above-looking-down, feels a confusion, *who am I,* in these moments it begins to seem that the archangel is actually *inside the Prophet,* … I emerge, Gibreel Farishta, while my other self, Mahound, lies *listening* … [it is] not possible to say which of us dreaming the other. (Rushdie, *SV*110)

As with the macro structure described above, this moment is one of simultaneity and paradox — Gibreel is *outside* the Prophet, revealing the revelation to him. But he is also *inside* the Prophet, who enacts a "listening-which-is-also-an-asking" (ibid) — Mahound formulates the revelations *and* listens to them or receives them. The description of Mahound as Gibreel's "other self" is also very revealing. They are each a mirror for the other but also *contain* each other. Gibreel is inside the Prophet, who is his other, *and* outside him. Thus, Gibreel is contained within otherness and, concurrently, contains it.

The mise-en-abyme as a structural device engages with the border between self and other — between Gibreel as revealer and as self, and Mahound as reader and as other; between the text and the text within the text. The border between these two roles or states is often porous and changeable in the text — even *inter*changeable and *interchanging.* This creates "an oscillation between within and without" (Dallenbach 29). Mahound is at once reader and revealer, self and other. Further, the border becomes the focal point or defining limit of the representational paradox that continually occurs throughout the text. The otherwise strict, hegemonic lines that define the bounds of linear, logocentric representation — the defining limit between textual representation and everything *outside* of the text — shifts dramatically under the representational paradox. Indeed, the boundary becomes a fleeting site, simultaneously in two places and nowhere, porous and changing.

The complex use of this structure in *The Satanic Verses* engenders a way in which one can understand and highlight the *outside* of a text, the limit that shapes the beyond of representation, the unrepresentable — be it the otherness of another consciousness, as with Mahound and Gibreel, or the other of representation, the text's other, its "unconscious", the unsayable and unsaid outside. The significance of this is that the outside of the text is staked out as a polymorphous, undefined site in which otherness is indicated and highlighted. This otherness allows the text the capacity for difference from itself, which makes it both heterogeneous and in constant production. Further, it is through this focus on structure as a technique to highlight the beyond of the text and therefore stake out a site for otherness, that *The Satanic Verses* avoids the trap of becoming wholly narcissistic and inward looking, giving the text a larger social and political relevance. The text is both inward *and* outward-looking simultaneously — employing a Janus-faced reflexivity.

The implication of the use of the mise-en-abyme in this narrative is the creation of a space that exceeds the bounds of the narrative and, perhaps, of representation, allowing space for the potential re-engagement of silenced historical voices and experiences — the other stories and voices that representation cannot enclose but are nonetheless important to gesture towards. In the particular examples used in this section, the other voices and stories relate to both Gibreel and Mahound, as well as the story of Islam — or, rather, the *other* story of Islam. While engaging with his doubt, Gibreel dreams the story of the rise of Islam with the enabling *capacity for difference*, thus the inclusion of the incident of the satanic verses as well as the thematic focus on doubt. The dream also influences both Mahound and Gibreel, structurally introducing spaces for otherness within each of their subjectivities. Both Gibreel and Mahound are subjects that are constructed by their otherness, remaining heterogeneous but still emerging as subjects. The use of the mise-en-abyme as a way in which to open the narrative is a gesture that opens up a site outside the text. This "haunts" the narrative, never allowing the narrative to stand as complete or resolved and totalised — it is constantly questioned and even critiqued by its unsaid outside (an outside which is in itself not singular or defined but polymorphous and vacillating — an exteriority).

Both the attempt to create a space of play for the engagement of lost or silenced historical voices as well as the "narrative haunting" are played out in other ways in the text, working simultaneously within the play of the mise-en-abyme.

History: A Structural Haunting

The structure of *The Satanic Verses,* most especially its play with beginnings, opens up spaces in the narrative for a new historical voicing. This structuring is in answer to the need for a fresh narrative temporality for the voicing of the immigrant or exile's experience, which cannot be contained in linear narratives. The immigrant's experience is a powerful site of rupture and reimagining for narratives of nation, authentic culture and social coherence. The space inhabited by the immigrant is created in a narrative by dismantling linear Historical time and opening it up to the time of the unhomely and the uncanny — a haunted, haunting temporal structure.

The term "unhomely" is a direct, literal translation of Freud's *unheimlich,* more commonly translated into the English as the "uncanny" (See: Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny* 1955, translators note, p. 219). The German word *unheimlich* is the opposite of the word *Heimlich,* or "homely", and thus familiar, safe and known making its opposite something wholly unfamiliar. Yet, the "uncanny" is related to "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is long known and familiar" (Freud 220), therefore, the words "*unheimlich"* and "uncanny" are not interchangeable. However, the use of the term "unhomely" neither corresponds directly with the "uncanny" nor with the connotations of the German *unheimlich.* Bhabha uses the literal translation of the German, "unhomely", because "it captures some sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (Bhabha, *The World and the Home* 141). His use of the term refocuses its meaning by playing on the ideas of belonging through the juxtaposition of home and social, political and historical place. The "unhallowed place" is the place of the immigrant or exile, which frustrates the clear divide between private and public, home and the world. It is a time and place in between and therefore outside defined or definitive notions of time and space; outside teleological, linear narratives, national place and delineated oppositions of self/other, here/there, now/then.

Rather, the unhomely is the site of spatial and temporal liminality through which the articulation of difference and, thus, otherness is possible.

The exiles and immigrants are important characters in *The Satanic Verses.* Two such characters living in exile in London stand as mirrors for each other but offer a doubling that contains difference. The "bearded and turbaned Imam" (Rushdie, *SV* 206), a character in one of Gibreel's dreams who is living in exile from his homeland, is characterised by his relationship with the city that offers him sanctuary — "the curtains, thick golden velvet, are kept shut all day, because otherwise the evil thing might creep into the apartment: foreignness, Abroad, the alien nation" (ibid). The Imam uses the curtains to form a barrier between himself and the foreignness of the city so that he can "remain in complete ignorance of the Sodom in which he [has] been obliged to wait; *ignorant and therefore … pure*" (Rushdie, *SV* 207 my italics). The Imam is also convinced he is being spied on; the curtains are used to keep his eyes shielded and other eyes out. In contrast to the Imam stands Otto Cone née Otto "Cohen from Warsaw" (Rushdie, *SV* 297), Alleluia Cone's father, a concentration camp survivor. Otto wholly rejects his past, any trace or echo of which distresses him. "'I am English now,' he … say[s] proudly in his thick Eastern Europe accent" (ibid). However, Otto is aware of the "fragility of the performance [of Englishness], keeping the heavy drapes almost permanently drawn in case the inconsistency of things caused him to see monsters out there" (Rushdie, *SV* 298).

It is significant that Otto and the Imam are situated as doubles in the text. The twinning of a Jewish concentration camp survivor and a fervent Muslim Imam has important cultural resonance. This twinning refers to Jewish/Muslim enmity, most recently cemented by the fraught relations between Israel and Palestine. Rushdie has a particular interest in this political and social relationship, interviewing Edward Said in an article in *Imaginary Homelands* about Said's ongoing engagement with Palestine/Israeli relations. One of the central points made in this interview is the powerful and damaging nature of media representation that has created a strong binaristic relationship between Israel/Palestine, Jewishness/Islam, and Zionism/terrorism. Rushdie's choice to situate these two characters, a Muslim and a Jew, as doubles thus creates a way in which the binaristic relationship between

Islam and Judaism perpetuated by media representation can be critiqued and challenged. This is similar to the way in which he places the Bible and the Qur'an in propinquity in order to explore and criticise the binaristic divide between Christianity and Islam. Both the twinning of Jewishness and Islam as well as Christianity and Islam talks to a renewed way in which to approach the otherwise dead-space of binary divides in order to conceptualise and engage with each perspective's complexity and heterogeneity.

Both exiles in the city, the Imam and Otto each use drawn curtains a symbolic way of negotiating their relationship with both the host nation, England, and their respective homelands. The image of the drawn curtains becomes the mirror for the two men — binding them in the narrative as doubles. However, the Imam draws the curtains to keep the host nation out, the homeland within, in order to remain unsullied by foreignness; Otto draws the curtains to keep his simulacra Englishness from facing its real counterpart. Also, for Otto, the curtains create a physical barrier between him and the "monsters out there", monsters in the form of the history he lived through in the concentration camp in Warsaw. The Imam also finds the outside, behind the curtains, monstrous for reasons *both* very different to Otto's and remarkably similar. Otto finds his personal history monstrous and rejects it completely, wiping out "even his Jewishness" (Rushdie, *SV* 298). The closed curtains become a symbol for this. The Imam rejects the newness of the host nation's culture, delineating the bounds of his culture and thereby keeping it pure and ignorant of foreignness — because he is in exile his "home is a rented flat", which is described as "a waiting room, a photograph, air" (Rushdie, *SV* 206). The curtains become a means to close his history down, to stultify and ossify it — like a photograph, it becomes frozen in motion — in an attempt to preserve its purity. Therefore, though Otto rejects his history and the Imam greedily guards his, they are both enemies of history.

Each man uses the curtains to artificially contain and delineate a type of constant temporal present. For the Imam, this present is the continuous, hermeneutically-sealed (pun intended) past of his homeland; for Otto, it is the continuous future of his assimilated host-nation. The curtains are the site of this split for the exiles, each of whom has to create a forced linear history, performing a "present of which the past and the future are but modifications"

(Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context* 210). The men are suspended in time. This is done against the threat of the discontinuity and disjuncture of the past or the future in the present. However, because of each exile's particular perspective on history and time, theirs is a dual presence, both temporally in the present and connected to the promise of either the past or the future but never both at once. This is the site of difference in the double that appears outside the curtains — as the monstrous past for Otto and the sullying future for the Imam — creating the need for the physical barrier (that both masks and exposes their performed temporality and their spatial liminality). It also appears on the inside, within their closely guarded artificial-present through the rejected form of history that haunts and splits the men. This split is the time of the other — it contains, without delineating, the men's temporal otherness that resonates in the narrative through the haunting of the men's experience. This haunting is a form of questioning, a vexation to the men's performance of time that persistently recalls their implicit otherness.

The exile's performative time is played out in a space outside national belonging. These exiles inhabit the interstices of history, and therefore are a site of otherness against which national identity is created. The space that the exile inhabits in his host-nation becomes a space outside the national community while being physically inside it. The exiles in *The Satanic Verses* live in a space outside of nationhood, in performative time and therefore in an unhomely time and space. They form part of a counter-narrative of the idea of the nation, of belonging and of history. The difference they come to reveal creates a rent in essential identities, homogeneous national communities and historical time and space. They form the other side of nationhood and national time.

Temporal haunting — an otherness rising up within the temporal structuring of the narrative — occurs in another vital way in the text. The structure of the text performs a temporal two-way haunting. The past of the text constantly rises up, spectrally disrupting the movement of present moments. This occurs through the complex layering of stories within the narrative, an aspect of the text that will be dealt with in detail later on in this chapter. However, the temporal haunting does not only move in one way. The past ruptures the present, but the present does the same to the past, as with Gibreel's storyline. This occurs in the storylines

that rewrite and, I have argued, translate Islamic history. Gibreel is a recent immigrant in London who, having lost his faith, which grounded his subjectivity, slips into an isolated madness that ends in suicide. He is a character without place, neither geographically nor in religion, reality or subjecthood. The struggle to redefine himself outside of these anchoring principles is played out through his dreams, in which he features as the archangel Gibreel living through a version of the beginning of Islamic history. Gibreel becomes an immigrant in time. The history of Islam is haunted by the present in the form of Gibreel, who can no longer see it as it was. There is a void, an irreconcilable difference between History and his experience of contemporary life. The eye of the present, of the immigrant, translates history just as he is translated by migrancy and hybridity. The immigrant experience is not only the present haunted by the rise of the repressed past, but also the past uncannily reimagined by the present, because the present is coming out of the unhomely, an unhoused place where history, religion, nationhood have dissolved as absolutes. This changes the way in which it is possible to relate to and represent history. This reimagining of the narrativisation of history opens up spaces of play for the engagement of new historical voices. One of the ways in which this is realised in the narrative is through the play with beginnings.

The opening of *The Satanic Verses* begins in medias res in both a non-space — mid-air — and a non-time — "just before dawn … New Year's Day or thereabouts" (Rushdie, *SV* 3). The space is not only liminal but also an ethereal medium through which the characters are *falling* — this 'non-space' situates only the *movement* of their bodies through space, as opposed to placing them on solid ground in a recognisable world. The temporality has two layers of liminality; the immediate temporality of the "present" is situated in the in-between moment between day and night, and the larger historical temporality is situated between one year and another. Situating the opening moments of the text in this dual spatial and temporal liminality has several implications. Importantly, it immediately indicates that this particular narrative has no essential centre out of which temporal and spatial linearity will bloom — it has no "Historical" or realist beginning, located in solid space and time. "Both the realist novel and narrative history [are] two genres which share a desire to select, construct, and render self-sufficient and closed a narrative world" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 109). Both genres are written as to seem empirically representational. Rushdie's choice to

open his novel "out of thin air" (Rushdie, *SV* 4) automatically rejects and undermines the idea that empirical representation is possible.

The decentred opening of the text is a "move away from centralisation with its associated concerns of origin, oneness and monumentality that work to link the concept of centre to those of the eternal and universal" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 58). Rather, the text opens in the margins, which indicates that its historical voicing will "problematise the conventions of teleological closure or developmental continuity" (94) and will therefore come from a position of "historical plurality" (58). This not only has implications for the way that history is narrativised in the text but will also affect the manner in which identity and subjectivity is treated. In a similar way to the treatment of history in *The Satanic Verses*, identity and subjectivity are *allowed* to be plural, multifarious and perhaps most importantly, mutable. Indeed, the space of liminality encourages it. While falling from the exploded plane, Gibreel and Saladin become metamorphosed. The narrator explains transformation and its potential connection to liminality:

> Mutation?
>
> Yessir but not random. Up there in air-space, in that … most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic, — because when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible — wayupthere, at any rate, changes took place (Rushdie, *SV* 5).

Liminality is "in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 4), it defies hierarchy and the definitive differences between up and down, good and evil, history and fiction, the oppressor and the oppressed. It opens a space and time for the "process of symbolic interactions … [and] prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. [The] interstitial passage between fixed identities opens up the possibility of a *cultural hybridity that entertains difference*" (ibid, my italics). Therefore, the way in which the text begins, opening in the interstices of time and space, immediately points to an alternative, marginal voicing of history, and this history is that of the cultural hybrid, the identity-with-difference — the other.

In his essay, *The World and the Home,* Bhabha suggests that literature, with its capacity for metaphor and allegory, may provide historical discourse with a narrative beginning (146). This assertion is prefaced by the idea that "in order to appear as material or empirical, the historical or social process must pass through an 'aesthetic' alienation … The discourse of 'the social' then finds its means of representation in a kind of unconscious that obscures the immediacy of meaning" (143). Literature can provide an aesthetic — another "temporality in which to signify the "event" of history" (144) — for a historical "re-cognition" (143) that no longer obscures meaning and can give voice to the unauthorised, elided and obscured echelons of social history.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the idea of beginnings during the opening of the text. The narrator of *The Satanic Verses* describes the opening moments of the text as "a big bang, followed by falling stars. A universal beginning, a miniature echo of the birth of time" (Rushdie, *SV* 4). This image echoes that of the plane exploding (making a big bang, it is assumed) followed, quite literally in the pun, by two falling stars of the screen and radio/stage. Of course, the pun is also meant to call attention to and connect the beginning of the text to the "universal beginning" or, the universe*'s* beginning, and therefore, to an Ur-beginning. The association made with the origin of time and space, with the beginning of beginnings, talks to the idea that literature may potentially provide an opening for a renewed historical voicing. This focus is also related to the two linchpin questions the text asks: "How does newness enter the world?" (Rushdie, *SV* 8) and "What kind of idea are you?" (Rushdie, *SV* 95 et al), both of which ask questions of how one *begins* and what that beginning will mean.

The asking and answering of these questions is a motif throughout the text and is related to the text's engagement with ideas of renewal through hybridity, the potential dynamic power in dismantling binaries, and also whether newness arrives through compromise or absolutism. The first question, "How does newness enter the world?", is asked first during the opening moments of the text when Gibreel and Saladin have fallen from the plane and have survived. The question is followed by a further one: "Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is [newness] made?" (Rushdie, *SV* 8) The two men making the transition from sky to ground,

from man to angel or devil and from India to England, are men of hybridity. They are being reborn into newness through the force of transition. This metaphor for the powerful influence and effect of immigration talks to the manner in which particular pressures cause change and thus newness to enter the world, and that these can be powerfully transformative. This is particularly true of Saladin, who, though at first resistant to change, is at the end of the text able to functionally and productively reconcile his Indianness and Englishness without subsuming either in the other, thus becoming something new.

Related to this, though quite different from it, is the second question: "What kind of idea are you?" This question is first asked of Mahound just before he first receives the revelations from the archangel Gibreel. Mahound is about to "found … one of the world's greatest religions" (Rushdie, *SV* 95), and thus the question is related to the religion and its entrance into the world, the idea of newness entering the world, but is more focused on what kind of newness it will be, specifically whether it will be an idea that compromises or one that is pure, singular and absolute. The answer, after the "satanic verses" have been rescinded and the three goddesses, Uzza, Manat and Al-lat, have been rejected as intercessors, is that the religion will be an idea that is uncompromising. It is a "ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway in the breeze … The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world" (Rushdie, *SV* 335). The choice to answer the question, "What kind of idea are you?" with the answer, "Uncompromising", is made not only by Mahound but also by Ayesha the butterfly girl, who leads the people of Titlipur on a pilgrimage to Mecca. She, aligned with Mahound as a type of feminised contemporary version of the Prophet, chooses to remain pure and absolute. Thus both questions are related to, first, how newness enters the world and, second, what this newness will be like. Both are strongly connected to beginning, and what this beginning will mean.

Beyond the opening, *The Satanic Verses* is a text obsessed with, and full of, beginnings. The larger storylines are riddled with minor stories and tales, often signalled by the classic Western and Indian fable or folktale frames: "Once upon a time — *it was and it was not so,* as the old stories used to say, *it happened and it never did* — maybe, then, or maybe not"

(Rushdie, *SV* 35), "Kan ma kan / Fi qadim azzaman" (Rushdie, *SV* 544). These tales interrupt or are inlaid into other larger narrative arches. For instance, in the opening chapter, Saladin is on the plane to London and wakes to find his accent has somehow "metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently … unmade" (Rushdie, *SV* 34). He vows not to let India drag him back from his acquired Englishness. After a paragraph break, the chapter continues: "Once upon a time … a ten-year-old boy from Scandal Point in Bombay found a wallet" (Rushdie, *SV* 35). Thus begins the anti-fairytale story of Saladin's move from India to England and Englishness. These shorter tales relate to the larger narratives and often function as a flashback mechanism towards illuminating some significant moment of personal character history. These fabled beginnings give the sense that beginnings per se are possible, that stories, most especially historical and historiographical stories, begin and end, are framed and contained, are isolatable in time.

However, these fables or tales also affect the way in which the text engages with its temporal structures. They begin to create complex networks of interconnected histories, fables and dreams, each running in a particular time frame. The above incident with the wallet jumps from the present of the narrative to approximately twenty-five years into the past. Time is palimpsestic in the text. Instead of time being linear, moving in a straight line from the past to the present towards the future, it is layered and circular — the past is inlaid in the present, retrospectively elucidating both character and situation. Therefore, *subjectivity* constructs the temporality of the narrative, as opposed to so-called objective history or historical time — time is personal; the character's pasts do not stay in the temporal past but constantly crop up in the present, influencing and affecting our understanding of it. At the same time the present crops up in the past, as with Gibreel's storyline, equally affecting the past through the person's subjective experiences (the "temporal two-way haunting" referred to earlier in this chapter).

These stories within stories — the proliferation of beginnings within the narrative, the fables and fairytales layered palimpsestically — point to the ultimately discontinuous and disjunctive nature of "historical time". Historical time, which necessarily effects an "aesthetic alienation" (Bhabha, *The World and the Home* 143) in order to appear as material reality, is

replaced with what Bhabha calls "moment[s] in transit" (144). This is a form of temporality that sees "the *process* of history engaged … in the negotiation of the framing and naming of social reality" (ibid, my italics). The layered temporal scheme, which discontinuously and disjunctively traverses narrative time, opens up a way to understand history as subjective and in flux, open to play.

Bhabha asserts that literature can provide the space and, importantly, the time in which to *begin* this process of negotiating and framing social reality: "Beginnings require an "originary non-space", something "unspoken" which then produces a chronology of events. Beginnings can … *be the narrative limits of the knowable, the margins of the meaningful*" (Bhabha *The World and the Home* 146 citing de Certeau, 1988 my italics). However, *The Satanic Verses'* textual focus on narrative beginnings works in tension with the actual structure of the narrative. The way in which the narrative is structured, most vividly illustrated in the first chapter of the text, fundamentally undermines the notion that beginnings bloom out of an "originary non-space" and move in a linear or chronological manner from there.

The structure of the opening chapter of the text, "The Angel Gibreel", takes the form of a series of smaller cyclic narratives within one large circular arch-narrative. The smaller cyclic narratives begin in the "present" of the narrative — though the present is difficult to discern because of the complex discontinuity of the narrative — dip back into the past and then circle back to the present. These are contained within the larger chapter-long arch-narrative, which begins with the men falling towards the English Channel and ends with the explosion of the plane Saladin and Gibreel were travelling on. The nature of the arch-narrative is circular. The end of it in fact temporally *precedes* the beginning of the text. Bhabha describes beginnings as being the "narrative limits of the knowable" and the site of inscription where meaning begins. The cyclic structure of the narrative generates a mechanism for pointing towards the outside of narrative. The moments that precede the opening of the narrative, the start of meaning and knowability itself, are infused with significance. Therefore, the structure spectrally returns to the site of silence and the unspoken before the narrative's beginning — effectively, the structure haunts itself.

A connection can be drawn between the two images of suspension if I briefly return to the image of the men behind the curtain. Otto rejects his history, which cannot be reconciled with his present; the Imam rejects progress because he cannot reconcile it with his history. Each is a threat that haunts the men. On a broader scale, the same sort of thing is happening in the text. The opening of the text works like the curtains; it is the "curtain-raiser". The histories and voices that are not included in the text, the experience of translation for the immigrants, the falling men, all that defies representation, returns to haunt the narrative at large. For the other-as-subject to emerge in the text, it needs to be open to the aspects of otherness that defy representation so as to do justice to the other's heterogeneity. In the same way, the text itself needs to remain open its own difference and otherness, open to the narratives it has not included, the aspects of otherness not represented in the text. This is what haunts the narrative and disallows finality and closure.

A further significance of the cyclic, palimpsestic structure of the arch-narrative in the opening chapter is that it works to "dislocate the linear order of presents[50]" (Derrida, *Archive Fever* 37) in a narrative's temporal scheme. Historical time for Derrida is a linear movement of a series of present moments. A linear temporal scheme portrays narrative as a sequence of isolatable "presents" that can be defined outside of the past and future. From this standpoint, the series of present moments can be followed back to "a point of originary purity" (Currie 82). However, the present moment is inextricably connected to the past it emerged from and the future it is about to become; "In the play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 36). Mark Currie, writing on Derrida's work, puts it aptly:

> According to Derrida, the elusive nature of the moment is like the elusive nature of the undivided presence in general. Its autonomy or purity is mythical. It is a desire rather than an actuality. ... [As a desire] it helps to bring the explanation of something to rest on

[50] Derrida uses the term "present" in the plural because the linear order of historical time allows a narrative to be broken up into a coherent beginning, middle and end that is taken out of, and isolated from, the larger movement of time. Therefore, the present, if narrativised as linear, can become a series of isolated and isolatable "presents" that each have the capacity to form coherent narratives.

> something stable, something no longer in motion, no longer referring backwards or waiting to be altered. (82)

The cyclic nature of the temporal scheme fundamentally binds the present moment to the past and the future. Where the cycle completes itself at the end of the first chapter, ending with the plane exploding while the chapter started with the men falling form the already exploded plane, we are blasted back into the past to which the narrative is constantly referring and yet inexorably propelled into the future, the progression, of the narrative.

The dream narratives in *The Satanic Verses* become a significant site for the play of tension between History and fictional narrative. The text is broken up into nine chapters, five of which are set in contemporary London and Bombay and the other four are dream narratives. Two major dream narratives occur in the text: one involves Mahound and his rise to power, the other involves Ayesha and the town's people of Titlipur who embark on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Gibreel's dreams create temporal ruptures in the contemporary storyline, where the dreaming character's sleeping body remains in the story while his dream-self emerges in the dream narratives. This emergence occurs later in the text, but temporally the dream narratives occur simultaneously to the contemporary narrative. The dream narratives are a further layer of the temporal and spatial palimpsest that characterises this text. They also work to offset the narratives that are set in what can only tentatively be called reality. The duality between the real and the dream or the imagined is a focal tension in the text, which, as the divide and difference between them becomes increasingly blurred, further destabilises the coherence and linearity of the narrative.

Taking the first chapter of *The Satanic Verses* outlined earlier in this chapter as an example, the contemporary storylines are far from linear — they are discontinuous, disjunctive and cyclic, full of temporal and spatial ruptures, jumps and paradoxes. The dream narratives, however, are linear. They move in a casual fashion from the beginning of each story until its end. The two dream narratives are each broken into two chapters, equally spaced throughout the text. The second part of the narrative picks up where the first part lets off: "Mahound", the first part of the first dream narrative, ends with Mahound slipping away from Jahilia and "reach[ing] his oasis" (Rushdie, *SV* 126). "Return to Jahilia", the second part of the dream

narrative, opens with Baal the poet realising that "the Prophet Mahound was on his way back to Jahilia after an exile of a quarter-century" (Rushdie, *SV* 359). Though the narrative shows a lapse in time, the narrative is still linear in as far as it progresses forward from the beginning (Mahound's reception of the revelations) towards the end (Mahound's death), without spatial or temporal discontinuity, disjunction or rupture.

The linear structure of the dreams is an inversion of the usual portrayal of dreams and the unconscious. The unconscious is generally rendered within narrative as non-sequential and non-linear — "the 'logic' of the unconscious [is] different from the 'logic' of the ego" (Benvenuto, Kennedy 169), "unconscious truth often appears as unacceptable, or inarticulate, appearing in fragments" (167). This inversion is significant when looking at the substance of the dreams. The dreams are a manifestation of Gibreel's struggle with religion. More specifically, they focus on the lack of compromise within religion — Mahound's decision against polytheism, Ayesha's uncompromising resolve to get to Mecca encapsulated by the oft repeated "Everything will be asked of us" (Rushdie, *SV* 497). The dreams are also a rewriting of historical narratives, the most important of which is the narrative of Muhammad's rise to prophethood. Historical narratives, as pointed out earlier, are traditionally written in a linear manner. Therefore, Rushdie's parodic rewriting of the historical narrative retains the original narrative style. The dreams are thus focused on religion's historical narrativisation. The structure of the dream narratives talks into the content — religion and history are conventionally narratives of linearity and teleology. Moreover, "History and knowledge have always been determined ... as detours [or a means to] ... the reappropriation of presence" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 10). Therefore, the dreams are structured in such a way as to perpetuate the idea that an originary presence is possible, just as the teleological nature of the narratives allow closure and finality.

The linearity of the dream narratives sits in sharp contrast to the non-linear, disjunctive and discontinuous structure of the contemporary narratives set in the text's reality. The experience of temporality and spatial dynamics in these narratives of immigrant life in postcolonial, contemporary London and Bombay create a structure set *against* the dream narratives. It is a structure that rejects monotheism, purity, singularity; it is non-teleological,

opting for cyclic time. The structure itself espouses hybridity, pluralism and the play of difference — "It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 394).

The vexed tension between these two forms of narrativisation — the linear teleological narratives of religion and nationalism and the discontinuous, cyclic narratives of the contemporary postcolonial experience — is an important aspect of this text. Not only does it expose incommensurability within the text, but this same tension is uncannily played out between the text and history.

Metafiction: the Text in/as History

The Satanic Verses has a unique relation to and place in social, political and religious history after the pronunciation of the fatwa against its author. The text and the aftermath of its publication became a site for much volatile debate, which still continues today. The way in which the text deals with its own controversial nature within its contents, as well as how it was received and perceived publicly, creates a dynamic friction that influences its relationship with history. I wish to argue that the text has a metafictional structure that extends into and enters history in an active way, and that the text's structure anticipates this. Significantly, the text's violent entrance into history articulates the widening gap that results from social, cultural and religious relocation.

On 14 February 1989 the Ayatollah Khomeini delivered a legal judgement or *fatwa* against Rushdie for writing the book, *The Satanic Verses.* Khomeini found the book to be "compiled, printed, and published in opposition to Islam, the Prophet and the Qur'an" (Khomeini as cited in Pipes 27) and pronounced that Rushdie and all those involved in the publication of the book "are sentenced to death" (ibid). Khomeini called on all zealous Muslims to "execute them quickly" (ibid) and offered a monetary award for the deed. The trouble, however, started some time before this edict was delivered. Before the book was even officially published protests against it broke out in India, where excerpts had been published in two

magazines. This caused the book to be banned in India. At the same time, pressure began to mount in Britain as various Muslim factions, including the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance, wished the book to be banned and the author to apologise. The umbrella organisation for Muslims, The Union of Muslim Organisations, wanted Rushdie to be criminally prosecuted on the charge of blasphemy (only to find that it applies only to Christianity in Britain). Frustrated by the lack of response from the British authorities, various Muslim communities began taking action by organising mass gatherings in which the book was ritually burned. Following this, 8000 protesters marched in London. In Pakistan violence erupted as protesters marched on the American Embassy, ending in six deaths.

After Khomeini's edict was pronounced Rushdie went into hiding. The following week, Rushdie offered an apology: "As author of *The Satanic Verses,* I recognise that Muslims ... are genuinely distressed by the publication of my novel. I profoundly regret the distress that the publication has occasioned" (Rushdie as cited in Pipes 30). This apology was wholly rejected by the Ayatollah. Following this rejection — couched in severe language: "Even if Salman Rushdie repents ... it is incumbent on every Muslim to employ everything he has ... to send him to hell" (Khomeini cited in Pipes 30) — the European Community elevated the brouhaha to a diplomatic incident recalling all heads of mission in Tehran and suspending all official visits. The British withdrew all personnel from Iran and asked all Iranian government representatives to leave London. However, under pressure from Tehran, which stated that it would enact a complete break with Britain if it did not declare its opposition to the book and its author, Britain put out a statement that distanced itself from Rushdie: "We are not cosponsoring the book" (Howe as cited in Pipes 32). This was backed by Thatcher. However, these gestures were not practical enough for Iran, which officially broke diplomatic relations with Britain on 7 March 1989. Britain reacted in turn, closing down embassies and expelling Iranian people from Britain. After mounting in intensity the stand-off cooled with Britain making more conciliatory statements against the book. In total twenty-two people lost their lives over the "Rushdie Affair" through either riots or as victims of the fatwa: for instance,

two "moderate" imams were shot and killed in Brussels (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989: x).[51]

This incident, or series of incidences, has occasioned active debate around censorship, the secular government and religious rights, the role of literature in societies and blasphemy[52]. Rushdie himself engages with the incident and its ongoing implications for him and for the literary community, especially in the collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands.* "*The Satanic Verses* is … a work of radical dissent and questioning and reimagining. It is not, however, the book it has been made out to be, that book containing "'nothing but filth and insults and abuse'" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 395). However, despite the plethora of writing about and around this text, and the social, religious and political controversy surrounding it, little is made of the way in which *The Satanic Verses* textually engages with its own controversial nature. Thus, I will look at how this textual engagement relates to the text's historical reception.

In the chapter "Mahound" there is a character named Salman. He is the scribe for Mahound. Salman realises that the Prophet did not notice when he changed the wording of the revelations as he transcribed them. As discussed in the previous chapter, this character is based on one of Muhammad's scribes who allegedly did the same thing. The use of this name also has connections to Muhammad's companion, Salman al-Farisi. Rushdie, however, states that the character is "an ironic reference to the novel's author" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 399). In the text Salman confesses to Baal the poet: "So there I was, actually

[51] All of the facts in this section are gleaned from both Daniel Pipes' comprehensive work, *The Rushdie Affair: the Novel, the Ayatollah and the West.* Transaction Publishers, New Jersey: 2004 as well as Lisa Appignanesi and Sarah Maitland's collection of documents on the affair, *The Rushdie File.* Fourth Estate Ltd., London: 1989.

[52] For the perspective on the blasphemous nature of the text see: Kuortti, Joel. *Places of the Sacred: The Rhetoric of "The Satanic Verses" Affair.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997. Akhtar, Shabbir. *Be Careful with Muhammad!* London: Bellew, 1989. Lawton, David. *Blasphemy.* New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993. Webster, Richard. *A Brief History of Blasphemy: Liberalism, Censorship, and "The Satanic Verses".* Suffolk: The Orwell Press, 1990. For the perspective that argue for free speech, see: Ruthven, Malise. *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam.* London: Chatto, 1991. Contributions by Homi Bhabha et al in Appignanesi, Lisa & Maitland, Sarah (eds). *The Rushdie File.* London: Fourth Estate, 1989. Abdullah, Anouar, (ed). Trans. Kevin Anderson and Kenneth Whitehead. *For Rushdie: Essays by Arab and Muslim Writers in Defence of Free Speech.* New York: George Braziller, 1994.

writing the Book [the Qur'an], or rewriting, anyway, polluting the word of God with my own profane language" (Rushdie, *SV* 367). This is a moment of authorial self-reflexivity. The chapters "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia" are a rewriting of the story of Muhammad and his rise to prophethood. The author aligns himself with a character who performs the same rewriting within the text as he does with the text.

However, this reflexivity moves from the merely clever to the uncanny a few pages later. "Mahound shakes his head, '*Your blasphemy, Salman, can't be forgiven. Did you think I wouldn't work it out? To set your words against the Words of God"* (Rushdie, *SV* 374 my italics). Of course, this is another instance of the same type of authorial self-reflexivity. However, in lieu of the events that followed the publication of the novel and the accusations made, not least that Rushdie's *rewriting* of the story of Islam was blasphemous and profane, the text seems to echo the events that it both provokes and *precedes.* A further instance of this comes about when, after pitching a film that portrays the story of the Prophet (it is, in fact, the story just told in the previous chapter), the film producer, Mr S. S. Sisodia, is asked: "But would it not seem to be blasphemous, a crime against …" (Rushdie, *SV* 272). This film, entitled "Mahound", is said to have "hit every imaginable religious reef" (Rushdie, *SV* 513).

Doubling, a form of the uncanny, becomes relevant when looking at the events that followed the publication of the text. Repetition is a form of the uncanny when it "forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable" (Freud 237). If the text uncannily predicts the historical reaction to it, the historical reaction becomes an uncanny form of repetition of the pre-empted, pre-written events. This repetition is a form of duplication; the text mirrors history and history mirrors the text. The text as an aesthetic object has been intercepted by what Spivak calls "the praxis and politics of life" (*Reading the Satanic Verses* 79 cited in Mufti 51). History, its social implications and the text become indissolubly connected, echoing each other so that actual history becomes the uncanny double of the text. The implications of this are focused on intention. It can and has been argued that Rushdie, in the words of Roald Dahl, "knew exactly what he was doing" (Dahl, 1989 in Appignanesi and Maitland 200) when writing this text and this is proved by the so-called uncanny predictions made in the text. Indeed, though I do not want to spend too much time discussing authorial

intention because it will be mostly speculative, I will say that I think Rushdie has an intuitive cultural understanding and knew the "religious reef[s]" he was playing with and rubbing up against. However, I think the text and its relationship with history tells a unique and more interesting story. *The Satanic Verses'* intersection with history mirrors one of the text's intended critical functions. I have, in this and the previous chapter, looked at the text's formal aspects, including its linguistic play and structural techniques, to prove that it uses language and structure as a way in which to create sites of absence in which otherness is gestured towards without being fully represented. Thus, I believe one of the text's critical functions, suggested by its form, is to engage with various aspects of otherness, not least those that remain unrepresentable. This function is further achieved by its explosive entrance into history, which metatextually evokes and frames the equivalent sites of otherness, difference and the unhomely in actuality as it does textually. Thus, textually, the sites of otherness have been focused on immigrant experience, the new historical voice and the aspects of untranslatability within the hybrid subject. The text's historical reception highlights similar issues.

There is a void between the text and its reception. On the textual level of form there is a deep incommensurability between the way in which the world is textually portrayed — as being temporally haunted, as circular, fragmentary and indeterminate — and the way in which the world is perceived and represented in Islamic history, in the Qur'an and in English empiricism. This speaks into a gap between the linear, teleological history necessary to religious and national narratives and the discontinuous, cyclic history of modernity and postcolonialism, with its inexorable movement towards globalisation, hybridity and uncertainty. The text achieves its critical function inscribed in its form through this gap. As I mentioned in the introduction, Rushdie suggests that "the row over *The Satanic Verses* [was] an argument about who should have power over the grand narrative, the Story of Islam" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 432). Though I would agree with this, I believe the argument is far more expansive. This is about the way in which it is possible to see and understand the world *now*. Rushdie's world view as an Anglicised, postcolonial immigrant, articulated through his text, and that of the men and women who burned the book on the streets and killed the moderate imams as a holy duty, are incommensurable. Here is the void where representation ends but that the text's entrance into history nonetheless evokes and

frames — this unspeakability is a painful and powerful site of real-world otherness. Though considering a very different historical context, Rushdie writes in *Imaginary Homelands*: "The black American writer Richard Wright once wrote that black and white Americans were engaged in a war over the nature of reality. Their descriptions were incompatible" (13). The same thing, I believe, has occurred with *The Satanic Verses* and those who have "power over the Story of Islam". It is a matter of incompatible descriptions of the world. This incompatibility vividly emerges with the furore surrounding the novel, which framed and highlighted this incompatibility. However, "redescribing the world is the necessary first step to changing it" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 14). Thus, though highlighting this incompatibility came at the price of several lives, it is perhaps a step towards understanding our differences — the various types of otherness in the world — and allowing these differences to productively emerge.

Conclusion

The structure of *The Satanic Verses* works as a strategy for creating spaces of play for the movement of otherness. The mise-en-abyme aspect of the structure functions to show the failure of representation in the face of the multifariousness of experience. The inability to resolve an idea or theme in the text persistently vexes the closure of the structure, always gesturing to "something else", to an excess that cannot be enclosed in the narrative. This excess harries the structure, both from within and outside of the narrative, becoming a space of unremitting questioning that disturbs closure, unity and finality. This disturbance I have termed a "haunting", something intangible, ethereal and impermanent that is unrepresented and unrepresentable but nonetheless is a site of rupture for the narrative. This haunting plays out in the space and time of the unhomely, in which difference and otherness constantly arise, especially for the exiles and immigrants in the narrative.

The need for a space of play for a new historical voice is offset by a structural comparison with the narratives from History — the teleological, linear narratives of religion and nationalism. There is a disjuncture between the attempt to narrativise contemporary postcolonial experience with its discontinuous, cyclic nature, its lacunae; the sites of excess,

rupture and silence, which is in irreconcilable tension with Historical narratives of singularity and closure. The assiduous ethic of disruption that the structure strategically engages in works to dismantle and frustrate traditional narrative forms towards undoing binaries and rupturing unity and closure. This allows otherness to be "present" in the lacunae, the sites of absence, which admit and allow the irreconcilable complexity of otherness to function. Most importantly, though, the sites of otherness are critically engaged with the narrative in an ethic of questioning and avoid being reduced to a binaristic relationship with the narrative by remaining unrepresented and polymorphous.

However, only allowing otherness to "emerge" as absence, as sites of rupture and disturbance in the text, is a type of absolutism that is inadequate to its complexity. This inadequacy is felt in as far as making the other completely unknown and unknowable (and, therefore, wholly unrepresentable), assumes that the other as a subject is not a part of a shared commitment of values (Norris 29) and that the other is wholly outside of *our* modes of understanding, social practices and history. This reinstates the binary of "us" and "them", used to such destructive force during colonial conquest, and is in itself a mild form of ethnocentrism. Therefore, there is a call for a way of grappling with otherness that allows it to emerge as a *subject* that is a part of humanity. However, this does not mean that the aspects of otherness that resist representation, such as those discussed in this and the previous chapter, are no longer valuable. Rather, representing otherness through sites of absence is not and should not be the *only* way of coming to grips with otherness in representation. The combination of the two ways of representing otherness presents a complex paradox. This will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Otherness and Subjectivity

Introduction

> As a still and perhaps ever utopic matter, the question is again before us today as we confront an economic and political integration on the scale of the planet: shall we be, intimately and subjectively, able to live with the others, to live *as others,* without ostracism but also without leveling? (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 2 - 3)

Julia Kristeva's question aptly situates the complexity and urgency involved in grappling with otherness and calls for a renewed way of representing and questioning otherness both socially and within ourselves. In this question Kristeva points out three key ideas in coming to grips with otherness. Crucially, she situates the other as a subject. She then points out two major areas of difficulty; *ostracism,* or placing the other at a remove, and *levelling,* or effacing the other's difference. These focus areas are useful for exploring the critical shift in theories of otherness. I will begin with the difficulties facing the attempt to represent otherness.

The dangers of levelling otherness, of allowing its difference to be effaced, have received much critical attention. Hélène Cixous in her text *The Newly Born Woman* writes about history as a form of oppression in terms of otherness: "[I]n History what is called the 'other' is an alterity that does settle down, that falls into a dialectical circle. It is the other in a hierarchically organized relationship in which the same is what rules, names, defines, and assigns 'its' other…. the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other'" (71). History, as a master narrative, "cannot tolerate otherness or leave it outside its economy of inclusion. [It is] the appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge within a totalizing system" (Young, *White Mythologies* 4). The totalising system mentioned here is indexing the Foucaultian dialectic of power/knowledge, which creates a binary opposition that subsumes the other within its relationship with the same. This is achieved through the regime of representation — the other is purely a function of knowledge of the dominant discourse and is shown as such; the "regime of representation is a regime of power" (Hall 392). This system is intimately tied up with the colonial and imperial project and the trauma it caused the colonised peoples, who were "positioned and subject-ed [to] the dominant regimes of representation, [which] were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and

normalization" (Hall 394). The colonisers then subjected that knowledge of otherness on to the colonised peoples, which caused an "inner expropriation of cultural identity" (Hall 395). Therefore, this binary of same/other had the effect of making the colonised peoples imagine themselves as other to the normalising colonial discourse. This caused a trauma in self-identification and cultural identity[53]. This binary also worked the other way around. The West, as the seat of empire and the colonial enterprise, defined itself[54] against the other, recognising itself through its "projections of otherness" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 12). It is because of this long and disturbing history that the resultant representation of the other within this dialectic is that of "a homogenous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self" (Spivak, *Can the Subalten Speak?* 84).

This is one of the major dilemmas facing the attempt to represent otherness, which Cixous deftly sums up as follows: "What is the 'Other'? If it's truly the 'other' there is nothing to say; it cannot be theorised. The other escapes me, it is elsewhere, outside" (Cixous 71). By this logic, the other is therefore in the realm of the unrepresentable. Bhabha looks at otherness through Jameson's text *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* and locates it in Jameson's "third space", the unrepresentable "domain of social causality and cultural difference" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 217). This "third space" of the unrepresentable is the space into which the other "escapes", and this movement "outside" allows it to remain "irretrievably heterogeneous" (Spivak, *Can the Subalten Speak?* 79). Therefore, one avoids the effacement of difference within the dialectical dilemma of the play of power and knowledge within representation — in sum, one avoids *levelling*. In the previous two chapters I have detailed the ways in which *The Satanic Verses* has opened up these spaces, allowing the play of heterogeneous otherness. However, this comes at the price of placing the other at a remove, causing potential ostracism.

[53] See: Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press, 1968 and *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967.

[54] For the sake of simplicity and clarity I am using "the West" as an umbrella term to describe the colonial exploits of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries enacted upon many African, Asian and South American countries. These were in no way homogenous, monolithic exploits and hugely vary in detail.

The attempt to overcome the impasse mapped out above by locating the space of otherness *outside* representation is a widespread trend, promulgated most influentially by the work of Levinas. In his seminal work *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), Levinas establishes a similar idea to the one discussed above, although his is on the much broader scope of a "*metaphysical desire* [that] tends towards something else entirely, towards the absolute other" (33 my italics, other italics in the original). This absolute other is outside the binary of same/other, is not reversible and does not form a part of the "unity of a system [which would] destroy the radical alterity of the other" (35-36). The absolute other is therefore unknown and unknowable — it cannot be thought or represented, because these would bring it into relation with the ego, the I, and therefore into the unity of a system. Levinas's absolute other is couched in religious terms, described as "the metaphysician's separation from the metaphysical" (38). This is analogous to man's relationship with God as the absolute, unknowable other, which is prior or exterior to the egoism of the same. Levinas maps out a relationship with the other as the "face to face" (39) — with the implication that the other is the face of God — which is the launching point for his delineation of an ethics of otherness, or an ethics of the possibility of a relationship with the absolute other. Levinas's ethics will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, however, I wish to focus on the implications of placing the other at such a remove from both thought and representation.

The first question to ask of this theoretical turn is how it meaningfully and practically relates to real-world conflicts? The other, when relegated to an abyss of unknowability, no longer has any significant or tangible relationship to the ever-problematic political, social, cultural or religious horizons of the contemporary world. Though Levinas argues an ethics of relating to the other, which, very broadly, involves a calling into question of the same, the ego, which is preceded by the other, it nonetheless creates a gap wherein we *cannot* relate to the other or represent otherness. What then happens to the people on the margins, the "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 78)? Not necessarily only Spivak's "subalterns", but also the people subjected to oppression because of their ethnicity, their religion or economic position, the immigrants who are not party to protection under the laws of their host nations, refugees? These *practical* others, for want of a better term, find no purchase in their space of the unrepresentable, while distance is maintained by theories of unknowability. Norris, using

Derrida's article *Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the work of Emmanuel Levinas,* argues that this gesture repeats "the kind of empiricist (or phenomenalist) reduction, a gesture that … ends up repeating philosophy's oldest, most spontaneous gesture of *exclusion*" (Norris, *Thruth and Ethics* 58 my italics). Therefore, although it is necessary to open up spaces within representation to indicate the aspects of otherness that resist representation, this cannot be exclusively the manner in which otherness is 'represented' — in as far as it is *not* represented, or remains within the realm of the unrepresentable — if one is to avoid the ostracism of exclusion.

Derrida, in his essay *Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the work of Emmanuel Levinas,* a critique of Levinasian ethics, analyses what he terms Levinas's "messianic eschatology" (103), which is never directly mentioned in *Totality and Infinity* but is implicit throughout in his use of religious language. Derrida explains the meaning of his term as follows:

> it is but a question of designating a space or a hollow within naked experience where this eschatology can be understood and where it must resonate. This hollow space is not an opening among others. It is opening itself, the opening of opening, that which can be enclosed by no category or totality, that is, everything that can no longer be described by traditional concepts (103).

This type of opening in itself seems productive and, indeed, I have argued that Levinas's ethics has productive value. However, it is the extent to which it is taken that is problematic, as well as his attempt to place his theoretical paradigm outside of all philosophical frameworks. This is seen by Derrida as a potential reversion back to "Alexandrian promiscuity" (ibid), by which he means a pre-enlightenment ethos. To avoid this apocalyptically-toned eschatology and its philosophically regressive tendencies, there needs to be a critical engagement with the metastructure of human universalism. However, this needs to be done without erasing difference.

Consigning the other to the realm of the unrepresentable is not the only way around the dialectical problem discussed above. Spivak states that when faced with the unrepresentable subaltern the "intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation" (Spivak, *Can the Subalten Speak?* 80). Rather, she suggests that to represent the other we must learn to

represent ourselves (84). By this, Spivak means taking very specific and foregrounded cognisance of the writer's subject-position within ideology thereby avoiding the construction of normative values that construct the binary of self or same/other. However, this focus has lead to what Norris has called the "ultra-relativist position" (*Truth and Ethics* 3). Briefly, Norris argues that, when taken too far, Spivak's otherwise useful suggestion becomes a dogmatic truth-claim. It, like religious or doctrinaire rationalism, becomes immune to counter-arguments, because truth itself is relative to the cultural specificity it relates to. "[A]ny challenge to the sanctity of the custom [of an other] would issue from the standpoint external to the culture in question, and would therefore be *de facto* unable to interpret [it]" (Norris, *Truth and Ethics* 28). This means that there is no standard from which to interpret, discuss or challenge an issue that does not directly herald from the critic's very specific set of ideological and cultural values. Though this avoids the thorny territory of ethnocentricism, it can make for rather tepid, at times overly apologetic, debate. Here one is faced with a quandary wherein all meaning and value is internally specific and therefore, once again, the other is located outside the scope of representation.

The twin predicaments of levelling and ostracism pointed out by Kristeva are highly complex and problematic when attempting to come to grips with otherness. Certainly, there is no unitary theory that can solve the impasse — Kristeva couches her discussion within the form of a question as opposed to a statement, which indicates the open-ended nature of the debate around otherness. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the attempt to represent otherness is *multifarious;* it requires several, even contradictory, types of representation. Therefore, it is necessary, in order to avoid levelling, to allow the play of otherness in absence, beyond or outside of representation. Simultaneously, it is necessary to avoid the ostracism of the other. This means avoiding making the other so far outside representation that it precludes even *thinking* of the other — the other becomes "the face of God", something beyond human imagination and therefore something outside the urgent and quotidian human needs; food, shelter, protection from oppression. Or else, one is so wrapped up in avoiding ethnocentrism that one once more removes the other from being a part of a common humanity. Thus, it is necessary to allow the other to emerge and to be represented, even in the face of the dangers of levelling and ethnocentrism, in order to avoid ostracism. Crucial to note in *The Satanic Verses* is that the text allows for *both* without one eclipsing the

other. Its formal aspects open up spaces of absence, which allows otherness to remain outside representation while still framing and highlighting its significance. The other also concurrently emerges as *a subject* in the text. This is possible because the text rigorously employs an ethic of deconstruction. The other's emergence into subjectivity necessarily runs the risk of falling prey to its own work — through levelling, false univocality and sovereignty, to name a few (this will be expanded on later in this chapter) — but this risk is offset by the absence within the formal aspects of the text. This play of otherness in absence becomes the way in which the other-as-subject is deconstructed even as it emerges, allowing the other the space of subjectivity but always within the persistently provisional and conditional.

In Kristeva's question the other is positioned as a subject — "shall we be, intimately and *subjectively*, able to live with *the* others" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 3) — in the world, within the concrete concerns of the movement of people across borders — "as we confront an economic and political integration on the scale of the planet" (ibid). This is aligned with a shift in critical thought[55] from a focus on the other as purely or only unknowable, relative and unrepresentable, to the other as also needing to emerge as a subject. It is important to define the term "subject" so as to be clear: "Subject *n. Mod. Philos.* More fully *conscious* or *thinking subject*: The mind, as the 'subject' in which ideas inhere; that to which all mental representations or operations are attributed; the thinking or cognizing agent; the self or ego" (OED). The major problem with representing the other as a subject as defined above is that it potentially denotes a unified, sovereign subject — a "subject of humanism [that] … falls back on notions of consciousness-as-agent [and] totality … [which] are discontinuous with the critique of humanism[56]" (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 202). Implying that the other is a sovereign

[55] See: Norris, Christopher *Truth and the Ethics of Criticism.* Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1994 and *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War.* Massachusetts, Massachusetts University Press: 1992. Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1991 and *Nations without Nationalism.* Columbia, Columbia University Press: 1993. Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* London, Chatto & Windus Ltd.:1993. Levinas, Emmanual. *Humanism of the Other.* 1972 (trans. Richard A. Cohen) Illinois, Illinois University Press: 2003. Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the work of Emmanuel Levinas" in *Writing and Difference.* Great Britian, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.: 1978.

[56] The following is taken from Spivak's critique of the Subaltern Studies group and their work on the changes occurring in India because of the continued influence of colonialism through the introduction of capitalism. It

subject — a fully unified, fully known and *knowable* subject — grounds the other firmly within the discourse of humanism, which sought to represent the subject as indivisible and univocal, a subject of authority, legitimacy and power. Representing the other as a subject of humanism then objectifies the other, controlling him or her through knowledge as power and leaving no room for the other to emerge as heterogeneous to these discourses. This mirrors the action of the colonialists who subjected the colonised peoples to the knowledge of their otherness in comparison to the colonisers, who positioned themselves as the authoritative seat of the known, the same and therefore superior. The other is only other in relation to a particular discourse. Allowing the other to emerge as a subject then exposes him or her to this epistemic violence. Spivak explains this as the "subject-effect" (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 204) and it is worth quoting this explanation in detail in order to more fully understand the complexity of the problem:

> A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ("text" in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen as woven of many strands.) Different knotting and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent on myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. Yet the continuous and homogenist deliberative consciousness symptomatically requires a continuous and homogeneous cause for this effect and thus posits a sovereign and determining subject. (ibid)

Spivak makes it very clear just how heterogeneous the subject is, and how, because of the need to posit a continuous subject that can operate within the scheme of knowledge and knowability, the subject's heterogeneity is suppressed and blanketed over. The sheer complexity of the heterogeneous subject, however, makes it all but impossible to represent fully — it will always exceed representation, will always overrun representation's bounds. Therefore, the other as a subject can only ever be provisional. Thus, the way in which it is represented should remain conditional and always be in production. We should "not seek to

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also focuses on the attempt to recover and/or discover a consciousness of the subaltern, which, according to Spivak, is on the lowest economic rung in modern India. The work of the Subaltern Studies group is largely Marxist in nature and is often couched in the language of class-consciousness. The specificity of Spivak's critique is not directly relevant to my work, however, the subaltern, like the more general otherness I am looking at, presents some considerable difficultly when it comes to representation. Therefore, though I am not specifically focusing on the subaltern as a group, I am using Spivak's work as a scaffold for the restitution of the subjectivity of the other.

solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 1); rather, Kristeva calls for a light touch that does not give otherness a permanent structure, that allows the other to be in motion so as not to blank out its heterogeneous nature while allowing it to emerge into subjectivity. Kristeva uses the term "foreigner" to locate otherness. This allows the other to emerge within very specific and concrete political and social concerns. It opens up a space for the study of the way in which foreigners relate to the people around them and their new social circumstances; it also couches the other within the realm of the political, exploring what particular nation-state legislation says about foreigners and how the legalities have changed through the ages. Kristeva's use of the constructive metaphor of migrancy, travel and foreignness to relate to and describe various levels and types of otherness will be useful when exploring the significance of the migrants in *The Satanic Verses.*

Kristeva's foreigner is aligned with what Derrida calls the "alter-ego". Very importantly, Derrida makes the other a subject by making it a type of ego — something disallowed by Levinas because, according to him, the egoity would immediately eclipse the other's alterity — "the other as other is what I myself am not [therefore, *not* an ego, an 'I']" (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* cited by Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics* 123). However, Derrida asserts that it is "impossible to respect [the other] in experience and in language if this other, in its alterity, does not *appear* for the ego" (Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics* 154). This appearance must be something that one can relate to. "[W]e must have knowledge of the other — understand him or her by analogy with our own experience — if 'otherness' is not to become just an inverted form of autism, an empty locus upon which to project our ideas of radical (hence wholly abstract and unknowable) difference" (Norris, *Truth and Ethics* 48). Thus, the other must appear as an ego if one is to fullfil the least prerequisite for ethics (Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics* 154), which is based on empathy and the ability to understand another's experience.

The other's emergence into subjectivity is significant because it "reveals the *limits* of the critique of humanism as produced in the West" (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 209 my italics), which, as discussed above, deems the other totally unrepresentable. What Spivak terms "subject-restoration" (ibid) then becomes a crucial strategy for exposing the "symptomatic

blank [the unrepresentability of the other] in contemporary Western anti-humanism" (ibid). By this, Spivak is referring to the way in which Western anti-humanism or postmodern thought in general has made otherness "a rhetorical place-filler … a pseudo-concept or a kind of all-purpose alibi for the consciences of those on the 'cultural' … left who have lost all sense of moral and political purpose" (Norris, *Truth and Ethics* 38). The critique of anti-humanism and the renewed movement back to humanist and enlightenment ideas (though in an ever-vigilant, critical manner) is the way in which a new ethics is emerging for the engagement with otherness — especially the other as subject.

Practically, the other's emergence into subjectivity needs to be approached from different angles if one is to respect and allow for the heterogeneity of otherness. What Bhabha calls "the return of the subject as agent" (*The Location of Culture* 185) is significant because the subject emerges with "those elements of social 'consciousness imperative for agency — deliberative, individuated action" (ibid) and is therefore no longer merely a rhetorical placeholder or empty receptacle. Crucially, the other-as-subject is also a radical critique of "the West as Subject" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 66). Here Spivak is referencing the definition of the sovereign subject as being a *Western* subject "narrativised by the law, political economy ideology of the West" (ibid). Locating the other as a subject that is multifarious and provisional necessarily critiques the subject as sovereign, and this sovereignty's connection to the West. However, there needs to be a constant "acknowledgement of the [other's] persistent emergence into hegemony [that] must always by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the historian [or writer]" (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 207). The hegemony mentioned here are the normalising narratives that deem particular peoples "other", and who are therefore oppressed, silenced and subjugated. But one must be careful to note the heterogeneity that spills over and exceeds the possibility of a full and final subjectivity for the other. Herein is the site where the other resists representation. It is essential to recognise and acknowledge this excess, which is achieved in *The Satanic Verses* through the absence in the text.

To explore subjectivity one also has to acknowledge the other *in* the subject — not only the otherness *of* the subject. This is the otherness that is within each of us — Kristeva aligns it

with the unconscious, stating that "with the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an *otherness* … [that] becomes an integral part of the *same*" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 181). Therefore, otherness is also the unknown part of each of us, is an other side of us: Derrida's alter-ego. The acknowledgement of this is important because it is through this that we can potentially "elude the politics of polarity [the binaries of same/other] and emerge as the other to ourselves" (Bhabha, *Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference* 209) and therefore, "by recognizing [the other] within ourselves, we are spared detesting him *(sic)*" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 1). This is a powerful and productive act. The ways of looking at otherness's emergence into subjectivity detailed above are by no means exhaustive. The other's heterogeneity precludes a finite taxonomy; however, I will expand on an example from the text in order to illustrate the way in which the subjectivity of the other is dealt with.

It is important to first note, however, that Rushdie's portraits of otherness, or the other-as-subject, are by no means wholly successful. The creation of a portrait of the other automatically assumes that the author is claiming the right, albeit provisionally, to speak for the other. In the following section of this chapter I will focus on the manner in which Rushdie attempts to chart Saladin's journey to selfhood through the way in which he comes to terms with his otherness in Britain. This occurs through his interaction with Gibreel. However, these two characters are both privileged. Saladin is educated in Britain, has access to commercial success through his vocal talents and owns property. Gibreel is a fantastically rich and, in the beginning at least, powerful movie star. However, Rushdie also attempts to represent the *other* others in Britain; the poor, uneducated South Asian and West Indian immigrant populations. Arguably, these are the real others as they, unlike Saladin and Gibreel, do not have access to privilege and are the most divergently separated from Rushdie himself, as a privileged Cambridge-educated immigrant. However, *The Satanic Verses'* characterisation of the poorer, less educated South Asians and West Indians often falls into farce. Far from allowing these immigrants to emerge as complex characters, Rushdie "plays the role of court-satirist" (Brennan, 164) by creating caricatures of the immigrant working-class, oddly out of place within his sophisticated portrait of 1980s Britain. A stark example of this is his portrayal of Orphia Phillips, a West Indian ticket attendant in London's

underground train system, who is involved in a rather puerile love triangle. Gibreel, convinced he is the archangel, finds Orphia in tears in her ticket booth and demands that she "Recite" (Rushdie, *SV* 328). Orphia tells the story of her love affair with Uriah, also West Indian, a man described as "picking his teeth with the silver toothpick his great-grandfather had liberated from some old-time plantation boss" (ibid). Uriah is said to have a vocational attitude to his work even though, in Orphia's words, he was "jus a (*sic*) elevator boy" (329). Their passionate embraces eventually get them into trouble and they are separated. Orphia is replaced by Rochelle Watkins and Orphia believes she is now romantically involved with Uriah. Gibreel replies by placing Orphia into some kind of trance which sees her move downstairs to confront Uriah and Rochelle. After startling them, Orphia's eyes make Uriah move dreamily towards her but something stops him. Rochelle then yells, "'You tell her, Uriah ... 'Her stupid obeah don't signify down here.'" (331) Thus ends Orphia's "tragic" love story. To say that the dialects are rendered "as though it were fit for low comedy" (Brennan, 164) is perhaps something of an understatement. Fanon, referring to colonised Martiniquais, states that "to make him [here read: the other] talk pidgin is to fasten him to an effigy of him ... [making him a victim] of an *appearance* for which he is not responsible" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 35). This potentially amounts to the erasure of the individual for an idea, an appearance of what they are imagined to be by the dominant discourses. In this case, Rushdie portrays them from the outside, *othering* them and thus essentially erasing any difference.

The entire scene smacks of farce and brings in elements that see the West Indian characters entirely caricatured; the use of the silver toothpick and its origins, the reference to "obeah" — a religious system involving witchcraft and sorcery, the overwrought histrionics of the scene and Uriah's childlike attitude to his job. Other examples of Rushdie's problematic portrayals of working-class immigrants abound, including his parody of dub poetry by the deejay Pinkwalla as well as the parodic naming of the activist Uhuru Simba. It is also important to recall that the hostile reception that the novel received, far from being isolated to India or Iran, emanated very strongly from within the working-class immigrant populations of Britain. They did not accept Rushdie speaking for them, nor his rendering of their religion. Thus, though there is great value and merit in the attempt to portray the other-as-subject in *The Satanic Verses,* it must be understood as being only provisionally successful.

Saladin's Journeys: Fatherland, Mother-tongue

Saladin's journey to selfhood is told through the enabling metaphor of immigration and the challenge of foreignness. As mentioned above, for Kristeva this is a fruitful and accessible way of understanding otherness both in terms of the other within the self and the more practical aspects of otherness — racism, the choice between assimilation or isolation, the dual hatred and desire for the foreigner. Saladin takes three important journeys in *The Satanic Verses.* As a child he leaves India and goes to England. This is both a literal and metaphorical journey, as it is also a journey into the repression of his Indianness; repressing his culture, playing down his ethnicity and even changing his accent, all of which makes him an other in England. This is in an attempt to become a "goodandproper Englishman" (Rushdie, *SV* 43), however, as the ironic portmanteau of "goodandproper" already suggests, this attempt will never come to fruition — the rendering of English being already almost but not quite correct. The second journey is also from India to England, though this happens when he is an adult. This journey, or the explosion of the plane he was journeying on, metamorphoses him into the image of a devil. It is after this that he begins to (and is often forced to) grapple with his self-imposed otherness, his other within himself and his otherness in England. Finally, it is during his journey back to India to reconcile with his ailing father that Saladin reaches a fuller form of agency. Saladin's journey into subjectivity that does not deny or repress aspects of the self comes about only through the intermeshing of the dualities in his life — it is when he is able to be *both* Indian and British, denying neither but also not wholly either, that he comes into the fullness of his hybrid subjectivity. Thus, he is no longer a deracinated Indian or a racist Englishman. Looking particularly at how these dualities function in the narrative and how they influence Saladin's movement towards subjectivity, I will explore these three journeys to show how the other as a subject is represented in this text.

When Saladin is thirteen years old he is flown to England to receive his longed-for English education. His father accompanies him on the plane, which Saladin then thinks of as a "father ship … not a flying womb but a metal phallus, and the passengers were the spermatozoa waiting to be spilt" (Rushdie, *SV* 41). This unusual image is connected to the books Saladin reads on the plane — Asimov's *Foundation* and Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles,* which

are "tales of interplanetary migration" (Rushdie, *SV* 40). Therefore, his journey to England is couched in the language of the impossibly strange and foreign, the alien. The airplane is a phallus, something that will penetrate the hereunto-unknown "brave new world beneath a yellow sun" (ibid). The phallic image of penetration and, implicitly, of domination, as well as the language of the exotic, the unknown and the strange is a direct inversion of the discourse of empire/periphery. This inversion makes England the periphery, the exotic-unknown, and her previous colony, India, becomes the centre from which Saladin and his father issue as explorers, but also, importantly, as conquerors. However, this inversion is far from positive or productive; instead, it repeats the destructive binaries wrought by colonial and imperial conquest. Saladin's imperial impulse only slots him back into the dominant discourse that hinges on binaries of self/other, us/them and sees him become a function of that power. Saladin begins to "act, to find masks that these fellows [his British classmates] would recognise, paleface masks, clown-masks until he fooled them into thinking he was *okay,* he was *people-like-us*" (Rushdie, *SV* 43). The phrase "people-like-us" is the qualifying term at the heart of mimicry — Saladin became *like* the British but never fully British; almost, but not quite[57]. Rushdie refers to Saladin's aping: "[Saladin] fooled them the way a sensitive human being can persuade gorillas to accept him into their family, to fondle and caress and stuff bananas into his mouth" (Rushdie, *SV* 43). What he imagines as conquering England and the British, is in fact him being assimilated into and effaced within the dominant discourse. An example of this is the way Saladin conquers the kipper he is forced to eat at his new boarding school, something he sees as "his first victory, the first step to the conquest of England." (Rushdie, *SV* 44) However, Saladin is in fact humiliated by this experience, in which his fellow pupils remain silent, watching him battle to eat the kipper. He is forced to finish the fish, which takes him ninety minutes, after which he is on the verge of tears. This conquest is compared to William the Conqueror's mouthful of English sand. On landing on the English shore, William the Conqueror missed his footing and fell face first into the sand, thus "eating a mouthful of English sand" (ibid). However, he went on to defeat the English in the Battle of Hastings and brought Norman influence into England. Therefore, though Saladin, like William the Conqueror, metaphorically "falls on his face" in the beginning by being totally unable to eat the kipper, he will nonetheless, to his mind, "defeat" the English.

[57] See my detailed analysis of this in the language section. Also see Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Yet, Saladin's need to "conquer" the British by becoming an Englishman is fuelled by a different type of humiliation, one wrought by his father. On their arrival in England, Saladin's father returns a wallet full of British pounds that Saladin found as a young child. This gift becomes a source of torture because, in an attempt to make "a man of [him]" (Rushdie, *SV* 43), Saladin's father forces him to pay for everything on their trip. Saladin is deeply humiliated one night while attempting to smuggle a cheap roast chicken into the hotel because of his fear of running out of money. It is at this moment that Saladin feels "the birth of that implacable rage which would burn within him … [and] would boil away his father-worship" (Rushdie, *SV* 43). His explicit rejection of his Indianness and his assimilation into Britishness is a symbolic severing from his father and, implicitly, from his fatherland.

After five years of British schooling, by which time his "transmutation into a Vilayeti [foreigner, but in this case a British person] was well advanced" (Rushdie, *SV* 44), Saladin returns home for a visit. While strolling in his garden at home in Bombay Saladin finds he is able to name all the trees *in English* and feels that because of this "something had been lost that could never be regained" (Rushdie, *SV* 45). His ability to name the trees in English illustrates his movement into knowledge as power — knowledge as a form of ownership. On the same trip Saladin's mother chokes on a fishbone and dies. This, with his naming the trees, is another type of severing — a severing from his mother, and again, implicitly, his mother-tongue. Note the connection between Saladin's triumph over the fish bones of the kipper as symbolic of his quest to conquer the English by becoming one of them and his mother's choking to death on a fishbone. Symbolically this could be read as his triumph of assimilation necessarily meaning the death of a part of him. The death of his mother "uproot[s] the maternal bond" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 37) from the home soil, the fatherland and the mother-tongue. Further, "when the mother is disseminated into remembrances and words … the very memory that guarantees our identity is shown to be an ongoing metamorphosis, a polymorphy" (ibid). The death of his mother, the severing of that bond, prefigures Saladin's dislocated identity, which will become "[m]asks beneath masks" (Rushdie, *SV* 34) with no real or essential identity beneath them just "the bare bloodless skull" (ibid). Franz Fanon, in his seminal text *Black Skin, White Masks,* states that "the fact that the newly returned Negro

adopts a language different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation" (25). Here Fanon is referring to French colonised Martinique and the need felt by native peoples of this country to speak French (as opposed to Creole) and to visit France, referred to as the "mother country" (18). Returning from France and speaking fluent French creates a linguistic gap between the "newly returned Negro" and his or her peers. In the same way, Saladin's naming of the trees in the 'mother country's' language — in English — cleaves him from a sense of belonging and leaves him dislocated.

The narrator, observing the manner in which Saladin has constructed his identity, relates this to the way migrants generally create their identities as an act of self-preservation:

> [M]ost migrants learn, and become disguises. Our own false descriptions for the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. (Rushdie, *SV* 49)

Saladin, as a migrant, becomes a man of disguises — professionally he becomes an actor and voice artist: "the Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice" (Rushdie, *SV* 60). This is a reference to the *1001 Arabian Nights*, an influential text for Rushdie, which, as a brief aside, needs attention. The *1001 Arabian Nights* is the story of Scheherazade, who, in a bid to stave off her execution, tells a story each night. These stories are so interesting that she is spared each night for 1001 nights. The symbol of storytelling as both life-giving and life-preserving is a powerful one in Rushdie's work, particularly in *Midnight's Children.* Saleem, the main character in *Midnight's Children,* is one of 1001 children born around midnight on 15 August 1947, the moment India gained its official independence. By being one of two children born exactly on the stroke of midnight, Saleem is "handcuffed to history" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 3) and is thus deeply influenced by the movement of Indian history as it struggles to reconstruct itself after British colonialism. However, Saleem also, often inadvertently, influences this history. The connection between private and public forms of history, and of private and public forms of storytelling, is a motif throughout Rushdie's works, *Midnight's Children, Shame* and *The Satanic Verses* in particular. Connecting Saladin to the *1001 Arabian Nights* references the teeming nature of this story and connects it to the teeming nature of his voice. It subtly connects him back to his boyhood home in Bombay, which contained a "set of the Richard Burton translation of the *Arabian Nights*" (Rushdie, *SV* 36), even while he has worked so hard to disconnect himself from his past. More significantly, in

the context of Rushdie's oeuvre, is the connection made between the power of personal stories and the reflection of a larger historical context.

In his personal life he finds an English woman to marry because "a man who invents himself needs someone to believe in him" (Rushdie, *SV* 49). Saladin uses Pamela, his wife, to "reassure himself of his own existence" (Rushdie, *SV* 50). The proliferation of masks as an act of self-invention is described by Kristeva as "the actor's paradox: multiplying masks and "false selves" [the foreigner] is never completely true or completely false … A headstrong will but never completely aware of himself … [the foreigner] focuses his possibilities of being constantly other, according to others' wishes and to circumstances" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 8). The act of constantly disguising oneself has the effect, as Kristeva points out, of effacing the self in order to fulfil other people's ideas of who one is. Saladin causes this effacement early on in his time in England. While in college "he was ready to be anything they wanted to buy, that read-your-palm bedspread-jacket Hare-Krishna dharma-bum … everybody's goddamn cartoon of the mysteries of the East" (Rushdie, *SV* 174). This repression of his subjectivity occurs both in terms of a repression of his Indianness in order to be accepted by the British as *like* them, and the playing up of a particular idea of his Indianness, one firmly within the binary of British self or same (and therefore known) and Indian other (and therefore exotic.) The ability to be something else for other people, especially to deracinate oneself, has the effect of blanking out the self. It is because of this that Saladin becomes "a ghost … a shade … a blank … an empty slate" (Rushdie, *SV* 61), "a pretender … an imitator of non-existing men" (71) and a "mask's mask … satisfied, or at least consoled, by the echo of what it seeks" (174). In short, the centre of Saladin, his selfhood, his subjectivity and identity, became "an empty space" (Rushdie, *SV* 183). Therefore, Saladin's first journey involves a severing of his fatherland and his mother tongue, as well as a repression of his otherness to the British in favour of a constructed otherness that panders to preconceived ideas, solidly within the ambit of knowledge as power.

Saladin's second journey from India to England challenges his choice of assimilation and effacement by confronting him with the things he sought to repress, "that black fellow creeping up behind" (Rushdie, *SV* 53), his ethnicity and cultural difference and the

concomitant racism in Britain. As opposed to his first journey, the airplane on this journey is strongly connected to female images, most especially to images of birth. The exploding plane is compared to a "seed pod giving up its spores, an egg yielding its mysteries" (Rushdie, *SV* 4). Saladin and Gibreel, both falling towards the Channel, are compared to "bundles dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork" (ibid), with Saladin falling in the "recommended position for babies entering the birth canal" (ibid). Their survival is described by Gibreel as being "born again" (10). Whereas the plane on Saladin's first journey was described in phallic terms, this plane is implicitly connected to the womb and birth, or, rather, rebirth. If Saladin's first journey was about the attempt to dominate England and conquer it by "conquering" himself or wholly assimilating, this second journey is one in which he is born into a subject with individual agency who has faced his ethnic otherness, as well as his suppressed internal otherness. But he is not *only* that other — he is able to be a hybrid man. In short, it is on this journey that Saladin will enter newness.

After miraculously surviving a 30 000-foot fall from the exploding airplane, Saladin and Gibreel wash up on the beach outside Rosa Diamond's house. Rosa, a nonagenarian, is attracted to Gibreel, who has mutated into something angelic, and takes them both in — notwithstanding Saladin's foul breath and rapidly forming devil's horns. Later she is confronted by fifty-seven constables who are combing the beach in response to an anonymous call reporting suspicious people seen on the beach, suspected illegal immigrants. The police are described as taking pleasure in this duty: "[C]onstables [come] from as far away as Hastings Eastbourne Bexhill-upon-Sea, even a deputation from Brighton because nobody wanted to miss the fun, the thrill of the chase" (Rushdie, *SV* 139). The policemen are accompanied by thirteen dogs. The description of the police search resembles hunting an animal for pleasure. The "thrill of the chase" is followed by the pleasure of capture — when they first sight Saladin the men "emit an unusual hiss of what sounded like pleasure, while a soft moan escaped the lips of the second, and the third commenced to roll his eyes in an oddly contented way" (ibid). When Saladin protests and attempts to explain his situation — that he is a legitimate British citizen — he is laughed at, and when Rosa tries to intervene on his behalf a policeman points at his horns as putative evidence of his illegality: "'Lady, if it's proof you're after, you couldn't do better than *those*'" (141).

During this entire episode there is a strange concordance between legal, official duty and deeply ingrained racism. The police officers are performing a legal duty based on the country's immigration laws; however, these duties become an avenue for legally acting out entrenched prejudice. The unquestioned illogic of connecting Saladin's horns with proof of his illegal status illustrates the implicit connection made between the ethnic other in Britain and the automatic suggestion of inferiority, animalism and even evil.

Incidentally, Gibreel is left alone. A halo that has formed around his head and his angelic appeal convinces the policemen that there was never "a more reputable looking gentleman" (Rushdie, *SV* 142). This offsets the automatic connection between ethnicity and ideas of evil and inferiority. It demonstrates the inconsistent, illogical nature of Britain's institutionalised racism as well as its extreme power. With a word, the policemen deem Gibreel a gentleman. This power of description is clearly shown in the detention hospital Saladin is taken to after being beaten by the police. In this hospital men and women who have come from Nigeria, Senegal or India — and who are therefore of another ethnicity to the British — have been transformed into water-buffalos, snakes, monkeys or tigers through the power of description. An Indian model who has been transformed into a manticore, a mythical creature with three rows of teeth, explains the power of description to Saladin: "They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (168). This incident literalises the fact that dominant regimes of representation have the "power to make [people] see and experience [*themselves*] as Other" (Hall 394). Saladin, at first flummoxed by this explanation — "I've lived here many years and it never happened before" (Rushdie, *SV* 168) — will come to understand two things; first, that he, like the others in the hospital, has succumbed to their descriptions and has been literally *demonised*, and, second, that even when he was not the image of the devil he had subtly succumbed to their descriptions by suppressing his difference and attempting to wholly assimilate.

In the van, before Saladin is taken to the hospital, he is subjected to brutality, systematic humiliation and abuse. They mock Saladin, beat him mercilessly and when he defecates on

the floor of the van he is forced to eat it. He is called a "Packy" (Rushdie, *SV* 157), pejorative shortening of a name for someone from Pakistan, and, after defecating, "an animal" (159): "'You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilized standards" (ibid). Saladin is utterly bewildered by his treatment, having never experienced racist police brutality: "'This isn't England, he thought … How could it be after all; where in all that moderate and common-sensical land was there room for such a police van in whose interior such events as these could transpire?'" (158) Before these experiences Saladin had a very narrow idea of Britain: "The place never stopped being a postcard for him. You couldn't get him to look at what was really real." (175) Saladin, because of his demonisation, begins to experience another side of England, its institutionalised racism and subjugation, and is thus forced to confront his ethnic otherness he fought so hard to suppress.

Saladin is confronted by another form of racism when he attempts to get his old job back. As well as being a voice-over artist, Saladin also starred in a show called *The Alien Show.* In this show Saladin was completely covered in prosthetics and make-up so that you could not tell his race. The show came under fire for this, and Saladin was dubbed a "Brown Uncle Tom" (267). Eventually this pressure caused the coordinator of the show, Hal Valance, a nationalist and capitalist par excellence, to depoliticise it by firing Saladin and his Jewish counterpart Mimi and putting "white" people beneath the masks. Valance and his marketing empire are an example of pragmatic discrimination, and are symptomatic of the general bigotry among the Britons. In Saladin's interview for *The Aliens Show,* after Valance congratulates Saladin on doing so well "for a person of the tinted persuasion" (267), he blithely explains this programmatic, capitalistic prejudice to Saladin:

> Let me tell you some facts. Within the last three months, we re-shot a peanut-butter poster because it researched better without the black kid in the background. We re-recorded a building society jingle because T'Chairman thought the singer sounded black, even though he was white as a sodding sheet, and even though, the year before, we'd used a black boy who, luckily for him didn't suffer from an excess of soul. We were told by a major airline that we couldn't use blacks in their ads, even though they were actually employees of the airline. A black actor came to an audition for me and he was wearing a Racial Equality button badge, a black hand shaking a white one. I said this: don't think you're getting special treatment from me, chum. (ibid)

To all this Saladin replies: "'I've never felt like I belonged to a race'" (ibid) and therefore he got the job. However, he is fired from *The Aliens Show* for the very thing he denied, his race. "Your profile's wrong … with you [Saladin] in the show it's just too racial. *The Aliens Show* is too big an idea to be held back by the racial dimension" (265). Here Saladin experiences the choices available to the immigrant or foreigner, either he "merge[s] into that homogenous texture [of the host culture/society] … to become assimilated … Or else he withdraws into his isolation, humiliated and offended" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 39). At first, he attempts to become wholly assimilated, to "conquer" England through this. This assimilation is never fully possible though, and he simply falls back into the binary of self/other. After his attempt to suppress his ethnic difference fails and as he becomes subjected to inequality Saladin resorts to the second option, becoming isolated. He is "[a]bandoned by one alien England, marooned within another" (Rushdie, *SV* 270). His isolation connects him to the community of immigrants who are also subject to inequality.

Rapidly, Saladin becomes exposed to the vastness of inequality and racial subjugation in Britain — he becomes exposed to Britain's *others*, of which, he begins to realise, he is a part. He rooms in the Shaandaar café, which provides "temporary accommodation" to people who should qualify for public funding. This accommodation, deemed acceptable by the borough council, lodges five-person families in a single room and "turns a blind eye to health and safety regulations" (Rushdie, *SV* 264). He is told about a Sikh, one of the city's few "black" justices of the peace, who is shocked into complete silence because of a violent racial attack and never utters another word. In Brickhall, a suburb mostly inhabited by immigrants, people are conveniently framed for crimes they did not commit. Saladin inadvertently becomes embroiled in this community of immigrants through dreams. The people of the community begin dreaming of Saladin as an apocalyptic image of power and protest, a "dream-devil" (286) that stands for a "what-else-after-all-but-black-man, maybe a little twisted up by fate class race history, all that, but getting off his behind, mad and bad, to kick a little ass" (ibid). Saladin's isolation after being "humiliated and offended" connects him to a community itching to fight back against inequality and racism. Therefore, once more, the lines are firmly drawn — between the British and the immigrant population, between assimilation and isolation, between self and other. Saladin is now merely on the other side of that line,

whereas before he suppressed his otherness, he has now become an image of — and mascot for — otherness.

However, two key events take place that humanise and then save Saladin, through hatred and love respectively. Throughout Saladin's isolation in the Shaandaar café he is tormented by the attempt to visualise his "hated Other" (Rushdie, *SV* 429), who turns out to be Gibreel — the man who betrayed him by not saving him from the police at Rosa Diamond's house. He is also Saladin's natural "other" because he is transformed into the angelic, while Saladin is made into a devil. When Saladin is expelled from the Shaandaar café, he is taken to Club Hot Wax, a dance venue in Brickhall, to spend the night. This club includes life-size wax effigies of prominent British parliamentarians, famous migrants of the past as well as anti-colonial and civil-rights activists. Every night the club-goers call for an effigy to be burned on the "Hot Seat" (293). Most nights the effigy of Margaret Thatcher is chosen from the "tableau of hate-figures" (ibid). It is while alone in this club that Saladin is finally able to "fix [his] mind on his foe" (294), Gibreel. Saladin, in a rage, melts *all* the wax figures, "good and evil — Topsy and Legree" (ibid), and because of this becomes human again. He is "of entirely human aspect and proportions, *humanized* … by his fearsome concentration of hatred" (ibid).

Saladin humanises himself through rage and hatred. Though these emotions are classified as negative they also constitute will and agency, important attributes for being in control of one's subjectivity. By raging against his other, Gibreel, Saladin is implicitly raging against otherness — against his humiliation, abuse and offence, his attempt to assimilate into British society and his rejection from it. Importantly, this rage destroys both types of icons portrayed in the waxworks. Symbolically, this locates his subjectivity outside the dialectics of self/other, coloniser/colonised, Britons/immigrants. However, there is also something important about Saladin hating, and raging against, his other. Kristeva writes, somewhat enigmatically, in the opening of *Strangers to Ourselves*: "Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down my throat … The image of hatred and of the other" (1). Immediately she connects foreigners and foreignness to rage and hatred. These are felt both *by* the foreigner because of his oppressed, marginal status and *for* the foreigner by the native people of any particular country or social structure. However, connecting the foreigner (and here we can read "other")

to hatred or rage is something hardly ever touched upon or allowed in postmodern and postcolonial theories of otherness. The other is allowed to be the victim: of colonialism; of more contemporary social, political, cultural or religious structures of oppression; of racism, xenophobia or nationalism; of being misrepresented within discourses of power. Or the other can have agency within these oppressive systems. Or the other can be a part of the play of exotic or erotic desires or anxieties, to name a few. The other, however, is seldom allowed to be ugly, evil, full of destructive rage and hatred. In short, the other cannot be seen as, or represented as, negative. Saladin, however, is an other in England. He hates and is full of destructive, violent rage, and is, until he humanises himself by this very hate, a grotesquely ugly devil. If the other is to be allowed to be heterogenous, he or she cannot be represented as being wholly positive, which is as ethnocentric as assuming the other is wholly negative; an inferior savage or prone to criminality or violently sexualised. Indeed, "a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis" (ibid), but something else besides. Saladin engages with his rage and hatred and by this becomes human again, undermining the binaries that allow him to be *only* an other.

After being literally humanised by rage and hatred, Saladin is saved by love. Finally able to remember his adversary, Saladin goes about exacting his revenge. He uses his gift for voices to torment Gibreel with jealousy for his lover, Allie (for more see the section on this in the language chapter). Gibreel, having found out that his erstwhile friend Saladin was responsible for his torment, goes to find him. He discovers Saladin trapped beneath a roof beam in a burning building. Riots have broken out in Brickhall after the unlawful arrest and death in detention of the activist Uhuru Simba. In the chaos of the riots fires break out, and the Shaandaar café starts to burn. Saladin runs into the burning building in an attempt to save the occupants. Gibreel sees him run in and follows him, only to find him trapped. At this point, with one man trapped and the other capable of saving him, the reader is faced with a question: "Is it possible that evil is never total, that its victory, no matter how overwhelming, is never absolute?" (Rushdie, *SV* 467) We are asked to consider Saladin; "He sought without remorse to shatter the mind of a fellow human being [Gibreel]; and exploited, to do so, an entirely blameless woman [Allie] … Yet the same man has risked death, with scarcely any hesitation, in a foolhardy rescue attempt" (ibid). Emphatically, Saladin is a man of opposites, and yet is not wholly evil nor wholly good, just as he is neither wholly British nor Indian and

has located his subjectivity outside the narrowness of binaries. It is his rage and hatred that makes him human, yet he is willing to sacrifice himself for his fellow man. Saladin asks Gibreel for forgiveness and Gibreel picks him up, bearing him "along the path of forgiveness into the hot night air; so that on a night when the city is at war, a night heavy with enmity and rage, *there is a small redeeming victory for love"* (468). This victory for love is between one human being and another. It is as much between Gibreel and Saladin as it is between Saladin and the people he tried to save. This love erases the divide between Saladin and Gibreel, who are seen to be neither wholly angelic nor devilish but complex men. It is finally the combination of love and hate for the other that allows Saladin to break free from the binaries that erase his complexity.

It is after this that Saladin emerges into newness. He has raged against the narrowness of either assimilation or isolation, self or other, and has managed to show himself capable of great feats of love, as well as violent hatred and rage. He has become a complex, individuated subject. However, this is possible only through the combination of opposites, through the erasure of binaries *without* eclipsing difference. It is the combination of the male and female journeys — the airplane as phallus and then womb — of domination and rebirth, that allows Saladin's journeys to coalesce in an emergence of his subjectivity and open up a space for him to take his final journey back to India to reconnect with his severed fatherland and mother-tongue — not as an Indian *or* a Briton but both, or, simply, as a man. His journeys allow him to be part of a common humanity — to be *a subject of human dignity*. Saladin's story exemplifies the value of an approach to binaries that do not seek to polarise but rather to remake the ground on which they were formed. This is towards "a natural universality … which impugns supremacy without erasing distinctions" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 122). This is extremely important in terms of the significance of representing the other as a subject, and will be further explored in the conclusion.

In the first two sections of this paper I explored the ways in which the text engages with and frames sites of absence as a way in which to "represent" those aspects of otherness that resist representation. In this section I focused on the ways in which *The Satanic Verses* represents the other as a subject. However, the separation between these is wholly artificial and used

only for the purpose of the clarity of my argument. In fact, they are indissolubly connected and work with each other. A major trope in the exploration of otherness, otherwise only briefly touched upon so far, is gender. This is a dynamic site for the exploration of otherness because it manifests as the feminised narrative, with its potential for disruption and rupture, which then opens sites for the play of otherness in absence. It also simultaneously opens up a space for the exploration of sexual difference within society as a form of "practical" otherness. I will use gender and the way it works to create both types of otherness I have thus far looked at to show how otherness as absence and the other as a subject emerge in the narrative.

Feminised Politics: Revision within the Ambit of Sexual Difference

Introduction

Rushdie critically investigates the imperialist impulse, the postcolonial metropolis and patriarchal systems of hegemony within religious structures via the trope of sexual difference and feminisation. Crucially, the female becomes a site of rupture and disturbance within these otherwise fixed and generally phallocentric narratives. This occurs in two ways and is connected to my definition of both sexual difference and feminisation. As stated above, my aim in this chapter is to show how otherness emerges both as absence, by consistently opening up the narrative to the possibility of difference, and as a subject, with or without autonomous agency.

The term "sexual difference" indexes the continued marginality of women in various social and cultural structures — in this case, in both Muslim and British cultures — and is thus connected to the manner in which women are positioned as other within these social systems. The female, a figure of marginality within patriarchal systems, becomes a means to illuminate and break down the binaries of sexual difference that locates women hierarchically below men, and, by implication, the binaries of self/other, coloniser/colonised, metropolis/periphery. Of course, as Ambreen Hai points out in *"Marching in from the Peripheries": Rushdie's Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism* (1999), it is potentially highly problematic to conflate these two registers of alterity: feminist revision and postcolonial resistance (17). The danger is that by superimposing two types of disenfranchisement and otherness, either one or the other, or both, are further eclipsed. Rushdie's textual characterisation of women in general, but especially in *The Satanic Verses*, has been highly criticised, described, in varying degrees of vitriol, as "an honourable failure" (Spivak, *Reading* 223) and "embarrassing and offensive" (Brennan 164). Much of the criticism comes from the idea that Rushdie, while attempting to engage with the otherness and marginality of women in his text, simply reenacts the logic of the phallocentric narrative by creating characters that act as props for their male counterparts (the real heroes of the story). The female characters are described as "all obsessed with childbearing or suicide at the loss of their men" (Brennan 164). Or else "reinforcing Western notions of gender inequality as a mark of Islamic cultural inferiority" (Mann 297) when depicting women

during the rise of "Submission", a fictitious religion aligned with Islam, which Gibreel dreams throughout the narrative. Spivak asserts that the "gender code [in *The Satanic Verses* is] never opened up, never questioned" (*Reading* 223). I agree with these critics' assertions and will critique the aspects of the representation of sexual difference that reify gender binaries and further efface the female characters in the text. However, I would also like to argue that Rushdie does critically engage with sexual difference as a site of otherness and that, though flawed, it becomes a site with radically transformative potential and power in terms of rupturing hegemonic patriarchal systems.

It is this transformative potential in which women's alterity within patriarchal narratives becomes a site of rupture and radical revision that encapsulates my use of the term "feminisation". The representation of women in *The Satanic Verses* not only allows them to emerge in the narrative as subjects, but this emergence engenders a form of feminist revision, which works to reengage and reimagine patriarchal narratives by disturbing their fixity and opening them up to the possibility of difference.

My discussion will be framed within three sections: the first will focus on Rosa Diamond and the way in which her colonial narrative is feminised through her shifting, ethereal recollections; the second will look at ethnic women in postcolonial London and their relationship with changing ideas of nationhood and belonging, and; finally, I will discuss the depiction of women in the sections aligned with Islam, paying particular attention to the way in which the narrative "feminis[es] … Islam" (Hai 35). All of these sections will focus on the simultaneity of the two "forms" of otherness within the narrative.

Coloniser Colonised

Rosa Diamond, the character mentioned in the previous chapter, is a fascinating and complex example of the potential for patriarchal narrative revision through the representation of feminine alterity. Rosa's story occurs in the past. In 1935 she and her new husband Henry Diamond, both of whom are British, arrive in Argentina to service British economic interests in the country. In Argentina Rosa is under two systems of patriarchy, the Argentine and the British, and it is here that she attempts to come to terms with her multifarious otherness. In

both social systems she is an other because of being a woman but, importantly, with this social marginality, she begins to recognise an other within herself. She is beset with a passion and desire deemed "wicked" (Rushdie, *SV* 146) for women to feel by the social structures of that time:

> [S]he tried to stifle her wicked longings [but] at night she took to walking into the pampa and lying on her back to look at the galaxy above, and sometimes, under the influence of that bright flow of beauty, she would begin to tremble all over, to shudder with deep delight, and to hum an unknown tune, and this star-music was as close as she came to joy (ibid).

Her attempt to come to terms with her otherness is played out through the frustrated tension between her marginality and her longing to engage with her inner desires. This is coupled with, and made further complex by, the setting of her story. The colonial nature of the British economic interests in Argentina during the 1930s grounds the narrative. Rosa's story is thus played out within the larger structure of colonial binarism — us/them, self/other. However, whereas traditionally colonial narratives are from the male perspective and are inherently patriarchal, this narrative is from a female perspective and is thus problematised.

The story of Rosa's past is interconnected with the present in *The Satanic Verses.* Gibreel and Saladin are found by Rosa on the beach following their fall from the exploded plane. After watching as Saladin is taken away by the police, Gibreel decides to stay with Rosa, who exacts a strange power over him. This power is connected to her command of the past, which she relives through the stories she tells Gibreel. "Gibreel … felt her stories winding around him like a web, holding him to that lost world" (Rushdie, *SV* 146). These stories of her past become increasingly real in the present as she begins to project them, as visions and dreams, on to and around Gibreel. At first, they see an ostrich running along the beach — a creature connected to a passage I will shortly look at in detail — then an "archaic pony-trap" (Rushdie, *SV* 149) full of men and women dressed for a dance. Rosa is delighted at the sight of the pony-trap but no one else on the street notices it. Her visions become stronger and more real as she tells the story of her past in Argentina. She projects the men in her life — first her husband, Henry, and then her lover, Martín — on to Gibreel, who embodies them, or rather, perhaps, is embodied by them: "[I]t seemed that his will was no longer his own" (Rushdie, *SV* 143). Eventually, after telling her "story of stories, which she had guarded for

half a century" (Rushdie, *SV* 151), which involves a love quadrangle including herself, her husband Henry, her lover Martín and his fiancée Aurora, she dies and Gibreel is freed from Rosa's power. Her story, though convoluted, is an important site wherein her multiple forms of otherness emerge within representation and, by this, reinvigorate otherwise fixed, phallocentric narratives.

> One day it so happened that the señora [Rosa Diamond] was out riding, sitting sidesaddle and wearing a hat with a feather in it … she arrived at the stone gates … to find an ostrich running at her as hard as he could … A little way behind the ostrich was a cloud of dust full of the noises of hunting men, and when the ostrich was within six feet of her the cloud sent bolas to wrap around its legs and bring it crashing to the ground … The man who dismounted to kill the bird never took his eyes off Rosa's face. He took a … knife … and plunged it into the bird's throat, all the way to the hilt, and he did it without once looking at the dying ostrich, staring into Rosa Diamond's eyes while he knelt on the wide yellow earth. His name was Martín de la Cruz. (Rushdie, *SV* 143)

Rosa's first encounter with Martín de la Cruz, described above, becomes symbolic of her reaction to and interaction with the Argentineans. Much of her experience in Argentina is couched in highly exoticised and eroticised language. The image of a woman riding sidesaddle (with an obviously decorative or fashionable hat, as it had a feather in it), immediately brings to mind a particular primness and situates the rider within a particular class, but, most importantly, within a mediated relationship with her femininity via what the social conformity of the time allowed — in as far as straddling a horse would be deemed unseemly. This evokes a particular patriarchal system. This image is juxtaposed with that of a strange and rather dangerous bird rushing at her, being caught at the last minute. The image is highly exotic — a (helpless) woman's encounter with the perhaps unknown but certainly exotic wildlife of an unknown land coupled with a brush with danger. Rosa is saved from imminent danger by a foreign man who kills the bird while kneeling "on the wide yellow earth" — a description evocative of the stark strangeness of the land. Martín's gaze is eroticised through the very phallic image of the knife plunging into the neck of the bird. Therefore, the language of the exotic is coupled with sexual overtones, which index violence and align it with the masculine. This has a long imperial history, wherein, within colonial discourse, the male other was characterised by a sexuality that was powerful and

uncontrollable, emphatically connected to violence. He thus became a site of deep anxiety and, concurrently, of erotic attraction.

Rosa is completely passive in this passage. She is saved from danger but there is no indication given that, had she not been saved, she would have had the individual agency to save herself. Further, though Rosa gazes back at Martín, his gaze eclipses hers because of the image of the knife, and the violence he enacts. She, like the ostrich, becomes the passive receptacle of an other's violent agency. This gendered power relationship, which positions the female as passive and the male as having powerful agency, is emblematic of Argentina's patriarchal social structuring of the time, which favoured the honour system. This is clearly shown in an incident that involves Martín's fiancée, Aurora del Sol. At a dance a man nicknamed The Vulture insults Aurora's honour, saying; "[W]hy you enjoy fucking this one, I thought she was pretty dull" (Rushdie, *SV* 149 italics in the original). Even though this suggests infidelity on Aurora's part, Martín "had no option but to fight" (Rushdie, *SV* 149). After fighting and killing The Vulture, Martín throws the dead man's hat at the feet of Aurora. Though superficially it would seem otherwise, this system reinforces a patriarchal system. The woman's honour becomes a site of reflection on the man, an object of pride that must be fought, and even killed, for. The woman as an autonomous individual is overshadowed and becomes a vessel for sexual purity, which is an object of male ownership. Aurora stands by passively during the fight, picking up the dead man's hat afterwards — a physical token of her restored honour.

Beyond the implied gender relations within the Argentinean honour system, Rosa is also married to an Englishman. She arrives in Argentina a new, but not young, bride. "She arrived in that immensity … because Henry popped the question and she gave the only answer that a forty-year-old spinster could" (Rushdie, *SV* 145). Here Rosa is further situated within a patriarchal context, wherein spinsterhood (as opposed to bachelorhood) is seen as an inferior, almost shameful position that once more situates the woman without agency. Therefore, Rosa is doubly without agency, eclipsed both under the gaze of the exotic, eroticised Argentinean male other and within her position in the patriarchy of British society. However, the image of

the passive woman is made complex by the power relations at play both in this particular situation and in Argentina at the time.

Rosa arrives in Argentina at a tumultuous time in its history — the Great Depression began affecting its hereunto booming economy. This caused rising resentment towards the foreign economic interests in the country, primarily British. Henry Diamond, an Anglo-Argentine, sails to Argentina to service these interests, particularly "the railroads [that were] built by the Anglos to service the estancias, and the dams, too" (Rushdie, *SV* 147). Thus, though the British were not directly colonising the country, their economic hold created a system of neocolonialism — certainly a symbol of the later trend in British imperialism. Rushdie is also referencing Britain's defence of the Falklands against the Argentinean attack. This last vestige of empire indexes Thatcher's uncompromising politics — something Rushdie is deeply critical of. A further, though more subtle, indication of the colonial relationship is revealed by the way in which Henry relates to the Argentineans — "[T]hese people are my responsibility, he told Rosa, it is a question of honour" (Rushdie, *SV* 151 italics in the original). This paternalistic attitude towards "these people" exposes a particular relationship of power reminiscent, in all but name, of colonialism, which creates defined binaries of self/other. The reference to honour echoes Martín's fight in the name of honour and calls attention to the varying levels of facile paternalism inherent in his use of the term: the patronising relationship between the British and those under their governmental or economic hold, and, in turn, the equally patronising relationship between masculine agency and feminine passivity. However, though Rosa is effaced under two regimes of patriarchy, she, being intimately connected to Henry as the symbolic locus of economic colonial power and being British herself, is then connected to this colonial power. It is Rosa, in her description of Argentina and Martín de la Cruz, who engages the use of erotic and exotic language, which often works to both cement and elide difference (though this is problematised by Rosa because she is a woman). It is her telling the story, her representation, "her story … [Gibreel] perceived … was in fact the very heart of her, her self-portrait … and that the silver land of the past was her preferred abode" (Rushdie, *SV* 145). Also, she is not innocent of the power relations between self and other — here between British sameness and Argentinean otherness — and further calls attention to it: "[the Argentineans] like [to dance], it's in their blood" (Rushdie, *SV* 149). Therefore, Rosa engages in the same sort of ethnocentrism that Henry

does, creating binaries based on the Argentines' *difference* to the British *sameness — their blood* being different and more exotic compared to *our* blood. This then includes her in a skewed relationship of social, economic and, most importantly, representational power with the Argentineans. However, Rosa's position of power is contingent as she is doubly eclipsed or effaced, stripped of agency within both paternalistic systems — the Argentinean and the British.

The use of language in this section is significant, both in terms of the use of eroticising and exoticising imagery and the paternalistic language of colonial power. This is reminiscent of the language and its connection to relationships of power described by Edward Said in his seminal text *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (1978). This text specifically figures the West through its imaginative construction of the East through the mechanisms of representation by what he terms the "Orientalist[s]" (2) who animated the orientals according to a "battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections" (8). However, the same mechanisms, I believe, can apply to societies outside the "Orient", and the representation of the Argentineans in this section of *The Satanic Verses* lends itself to a reading via Said's text: "The relationship between Occident and Orient [here read: between the British coloniser and the economically colonised Argentineans or perhaps even between male agency and female passivity[58]] is a relationship of power, of domination [and] of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). Rosa, because of her national identity and her gendered position within it, is a part of *both* sides of the power relationship referred to here — she is positioned as a passive female and, concurrently, is a part of the neocolonial domination and the ethnographic figuring of the Argentineans.

This is an extremely significant position as the power relationship described by Said "encouraged a particularly … male conception of the world" (207). Rosa's narrative has all the trappings of a colonial one, with its highly exotic and erotic language, its stereotyping and

[58] Of course, as noted in the introduction, it is problematic to conflate two different types of disenfranchisement. I simply want to make the levels of connection clear, between the Said's effaced "orientals" who are defined and represented as other and the issues discussed until now concerning both the male/female power dynamic and the British/Argentine.

paternalism, yet it comes from the position of the female in what should be a wholly phallocentric narrative. Though Rosa is positioned as passive and effaced, she emerges in the narrative as the subject of desire. In the opening quote Martín gazes at Rosa as he plunges the knife into the neck of the ostrich. The gaze can be aligned with the scopic drive, which is "the pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object" (Mulvey 843). This gaze is important because it positions Rosa as an *object* of desire when she is simultaneously the *subject* of desire: "Rosa Diamond's secret was a capacity for love so great that … poor prosaic Henry could never fulfill.… [P]assion was an eccentricity of other races … [and so she] tried to stifle her wicked longings" (Rushdie, *SV* 146). Rosa wishes to find an avenue to express her secret self, her inner otherness, and does this first through Martín and later through Gibreel. She literally projects her desire onto Gibreel, who begins to play out the role of both Henry and Martín in Rosa's dying fantasy.

The powerful projection of her desire, in the attempt to access a secret inner otherness, begins to radically rupture the narrative and the discourse of colonialism that it stems from. This is shown through the way her history plays out. "The images [of her history] … continued to be confused … so that it was not possible to distinguish memory from wishes, or guilty reconstructions from confessional truths" (Rushdie, *SV* 153). These shifting visions come to a head at the climax of Rosa's story, in which she is caught making love to Martín, yet it is unclear who has caught her because the narrative keeps shifting. Rosa plays out each different possible version of her story — first, that Aurora kills Martín in a jealous rage. Then the vision changes after Rosa, in her dream delirium, yells out, "No! No! No, this way" (Rushdie, *SV* 154). Martín is killed by Rosa herself, guilt-ridden and again the vision changes; then Henry kills him in a terrible rage. The shifting nature of the climax of the story inverts Said's contention of the male conception of the world which is described as "static, frozen, fixed eternally" (Said, *Orientalism* 208). Rosa represents a feminised colonial history, which is open to a shifting play, rupturing fixity by creating a narrative that is fluid and transformative.

Rosa, because of her sexual difference under two systems of patriarchy, is an other. But she is an other within the same because of her national identity and its connection to power

relations. Her desire, projected on to Gibreel, co-opts him as an object — and, in this instance, because he plays Martín, an object of colonial desire — yet her oscillating position as both object and subject of desire, both powerless and powerful, does not solidify the binaries of self/other, male/female, object/subject. Rather, it works to "transform … and productively disorder the very categories of exclusion and definition…. [This works to] dismantle the very grounds of such binarisms" (Hai 17). Therefore, Rosa's feminised history becomes an important site wherein otherness breaks the bounds of imperial and sexual binaries and reforms the grounds on which they are able to work. Significantly, it is by representing Rosa as emerging from and engaging with her otherness that the narrative is opened towards a transformative newness.

Postcolonial Women

The problem of representing the otherness of sexual difference is further complicated by the space of the postcolonial metropolis, London, in which much of the action in *The Satanic Verses* takes place. Contemporary London, described by McLeod in *Locating Postcolonial London* as a "vexed space of inter-cultural exchange" (12), has become a site of oppositional tension wherein authorised versions of the city are ruptured by what de Certeau calls the "proliferating illegitimacy" (*The Practice of Everyday Life* 96) of the individual. This tension is crystallised by the immigrant in the city[59]. Decolonisation is a two-way process whereby *both* the previous colony and the metropolis are affected (Loomba 19). Thus, the immigrant in the metropolis affects the officious discursive structuring of the city as the hitherto seat of power, generating "emergent new configurations of power-knowledge" (Hall, *When was the Postcolonial?* 254). However, this interplay is not unproblematic; there remains "a troubling lack of acknowledgement of the history which happened *within* the imperial metropolis as a consequence of colonialism and its aftermath" (McLeod 5). Rushdie attempts to address this silent history most illustratively through his representation of immigrant women in the city.

[59] For more on the immigrant experience of and in pervious imperial metropolises, especially London, see: Singh, Sarva Daman & Singh, Mahavir, eds. *Indian's Abroad.* Kolkata and London: Hope Indian Publications and Greenwich Millennium Press, 2003. Sandhu, Sukhdev. *London Calling: How Black and Asian writers imagined a City.* London: Harper Perennial, 2004.

The politics of migrancy, particularly of going back to the centre from the previous colonial peripheries, is mapped out, quite literally, on the female body. Before focusing on the representation of the female body in the text, I would briefly like to address my use of the term "centre" in relation to "colonial peripheries". These are loaded terms, which inherently imply a binary of power that positions the centre, London, and by implication the West at large, as the seat of power and the peripheries, the "colonies", as inferior sites of imperial domination. *The Satanic Verses* works tirelessly to break down and interrogate such binaries, working rather within the "vexed metaphor of cultural migrancy" (Suleri 204). My use of these terms within the context of this subsection is done so in the spirit of Rushdie's phrase, "the empire writes back, with a vengeance" (Rushdie, *The Empire Writes Back* 8). In his article published in *The Times* (1982) of the same title, "The Empire Writes Back", Rushdie focuses on the power of "writing back" from the peripheries to the centre — reimagining, revising and thereby erupting colonial narratives and their implicit hierarchies. The following section focuses on Indian immigrants in London. To fully explore the experience of migrancy, Rushdie transports an important Indian cartographic symbol, Mother India, to London. The symbol's movement to the "centre" is obviously significant in terms of how this movement reshapes it and its connection to Indian identity. Thus, I use these terms within the ambit of "writing back" and the translation of the migrant experience.

Throughout the sections set in or around London, the female body is variously connected to politics, renewal (through the metaphor of their capacity to create life) and vessels for remembering. Yet this conflation of the physical with the abstract, which certainly eclipses the individual subjectivity of the women, is done self-consciously. Rushdie plays into familiar images and symbols connected to the female under various systems of patriarchy in order to explore their renewed complexity within the postcolonial context and through this represent their complex otherness. However, his reimagining of these tropes in the representation of women is not always successful, or rather too successful, at times reestablishing and entrenching the subordinating impulse as opposed to critically exploring it.

Hind Sufyan (of Shaandaar café) is an important character, both in terms of the critical exploration of the symbol of Mother India and the potential danger of this symbolism. While

still in India Hind began learning to cook all the dishes of the subcontinent in an effort to keep up with her husband, Muhammad Sufyan, and his "pluralistic openness of mind" (Rushdie, *SV* 246). As Sufyan, a learned schoolteacher, "swallowed the multiple cultures of the subcontinent … his wife cooked, and ate in increasing quantities, its food" (ibid). This happened until she "began to resemble the wide rolling land mass itself, the subcontinent without frontiers, because food crosses any boundary you care to mention" (ibid). It is not difficult to recognise the reference here — Hind is literally bodily, becoming a symbol of India. This is not, however, a simple image. Rushdie, in characteristic cheekiness, sends Mother India to London, to the colonial metropolis, and this journey from the periphery to the centre — an inversion of the colonial narrative from the centre to the periphery as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* — inverts and subverts the image and how it is meant to work symbolically.

The gendered and somatic cartography of India as *Bharat Mata,* or Mother India, has a specific symbolic and historical significance that illuminates particular socio-political dynamics. It is important to interrogate the origin of India's "bodyscape" (Ramaswamy 97) and its subsequent deployment in attempting to create a national space — both as a social and psychological exercise —to understand its postcolonial inversion in *The Satanic Verses*. British colonialists, working under the guise of scientific and rational enquiry, sought to map India in order to record its "true" geographical form. "The 'India' they sought to cartographically create was imagined as an abstract, rational, disenchanted place, a bounded mapped entity" (Ramaswamy 99). This type of mapping became a "tool for enabling the mastery of the world … [and] a metonym for colonial modernity" (Gupta 4291). It was against this colonial impulse that the symbol of Mother India emerged — "the ideology of motherhood could be specifically claimed as their own by the colonized and help in emphasizing their selfhood" (ibid). It filled the otherwise empty space of the map with feeling, creating a potent symbol of nationhood that had personal and communal significance. Of course, the communal significance is highly problematic because the symbol of the diversely religious nation-space of India is a Hindu Goddess mother. India is represented as being monolithic, ubiquitous and totalising — this totality being "overwhelmingly associated with … Hinduism [by being] invested with 'Hindu' symbolism and imagery" (Mondal 920). This imagery aggressively defines nationhood along sectarian, religious lines, effacing the

multifarious nature of the country. Many Muslims confess to feeling "psychological horror … in identifying country with the Mother Goddess" (Gupta 4293).

Indian nationalists such as Indira Gandhi, like the colonialists, used the symbol to perpetuate an image of bounded unity — of India as a "fixed geographical space" (Gupta 4292), which allowed "citizens to take conceptual possession of the territory" (Ramaswamy 99). Further, the conflation of "mother" and "nation" is the collapsing of the personal with the public. This became an effective tool for engendering powerful feelings of patriotism. But perhaps the most significant aspect of the symbolism of Mother India is its explicit gendering. Figured as a woman and a mother, India is positioned as vulnerable, in need of protection from her sons, and at the same time it is a place of plenty, of maternal love and devotion — this enables a "masculinist relationship to place" (Ramaswamy 109). Importantly, it is fecund — India as a mother becomes the guardian of cultural authenticity by ensuring the continuation of a genuine Indian tradition. Mother India "constitutes the true self [against colonial representations of Indian identity] and a repository of cultural 'tradition' and women, associated in patriarchy with the domestic space, embodie[s] it" (Mondal 914). The domestic woman, as mother and wife, is a symbol for the ground on which "Indian" authentic identity rests. Its prominence comes from the Gandhian privileging of the domestic space as a site of authenticity against modernity and its association with colonialism and violence. Finally, the gendering of the symbol opens up a "bond between the citizenry and territory … [and] emerges as a field for the play of erotic desire, as a regime for regulating pleasure" (Ramaswamy 109). Here the woman is wife, virtuous but nonetheless an erotic object who "produces sentiments of longing and belonging" (Ramaswamy 110). Ultimately, the gendering of the symbol positions men as the active agents of political and social change. The female citizen is silenced, she is "erased as an active subject to be replaced by the idealized, stylized and ultimately passive figure of Mother India propped up by a map of the nation" (ibid). She is a *sign* only; without autonomy, subjectivity or voice.

Hind, as the literal embodiment of the subcontinent, is described as having been "the most blushing of brides, the soul of gentleness, the very incarnation of tolerant good humour … she had entered into her duties with a will, the perfect helpmeet" (Rushdie *SV* 245). In sum,

Hind conforms to the definition of the role of a wife within patriarchy, in the domestic space — the seat of cultural authenticity. However, her husband, being a scholar of the "multiple cultures of the subcontinent" (Rushdie, *SV* 246), refuses to place himself above her and confirm the binary that this positioning requires. If Hind is the embodied continent and he a scholar of her multiplicity then he could never share in or contribute to Hind's need for an absolute, singular social-sexual position. Already the symbolism has shifted. The idea of a ubiquitous cultural authenticity is denied by a focus on the subcontinent's multiplicity.

Mother India as an image of erotic desire is given a more complex treatment in the text. There are two offences for which Hind cannot forgive her husband, "[his] sexual, and political, crimes" (Rushdie, *SV* 247). After the disappointing birth of their two daughters — "'Another girl,' [Hind] gasped in disgust" (ibid) — Hind decides not to have any more children and because of this stops having sex with her husband, an act she views as obscene: "she was a decent woman, not a lust-crazed libertine" (Rushdie, *SV* 248). After this her husband stays out late and she believes he is visiting prostitutes, but instead he has joined the communist party. It was his involvement in the party that forced them to emigrate to London. Interestingly, Hind sees his political involvement as a greater betrayal than had he been committing infidelity. This clearly demonstrates the collapse of both the personal into the public and the sexual into the political. Mother India evokes the play of erotic desire, which personalises and sexualises the social and political landscape — connecting and even conflating sexual desire with political fervour. Sufyan, unable to, literally, sexually couple with the metaphorical India, turns from the sexual to the political, the personal to the public. This inverts the way the image works, creating a backwards transference that ruptures the power of the image.

Having established the symbolism, Mother India then ends up in London, the previous seat of the colonial empire. This is a powerful moment of postcolonial revision, as the move further erupts and inverts the way the symbol works. Hind in London is mother to two disobedient girls who refuse to speak their mother tongue and who "fight, quarrel, disobey" and "put rainbows" (Rushdie, *SV* 250) in their hair. Neither of the daughters conforms to the idea of female obedience and subordinance within both Indian and Islamic culture, which are

traditionally patriarchal. They also do not have an innate connection or sense of idealised belonging to the homeland. Mishal, the elder daughter, says blithely: "'Bangladesh in't nothing to me. Just some place Dad and Mum keep banging on about'" (Rushdie, *SV* 259). "'Bungleditch'" (ibid), the younger daughter, Anahita, adds. Mother India's position as guardian of cultural authenticity, especially through the modest, obedient female within the domestic space, is shattered. Instead, the two daughters are examples of cultural hybridity and become powerful, active social and political agents within their community towards the end of the text.

Through her cooking Hind becomes the breadwinner, making her erudite husband a waiter in Shaandaar café. Food, which "passes across any boundary you care to mention" (Rushdie, *SV* 246), becomes the key to their material success but also literally unbounds the unitary blueprint of the subcontinent through the Mother India image, slipping beyond the domestic space, beyond its connection to cultural integrity into the social, the economic and the postcolonial.

It is also very significant that Hind is a Muslim. This irreverent transposition of the touchstone image of Mother India, considered wholly Hindu, on to a Muslim speaks to the sectarian tension still felt in India. Yet, it is also a powerful statement of commonality and shared interest. By transposing the image Rushdie creates a hybridity that defies religious dichotomy and communalism, which ultimately speaks back to the same binaristic impulse that created the image in the first place. Crucially, Mother India was an image created in opposition to colonialism. As stated above, it became a site for the negotiation of Indian identity against the colonial codification of the territory. This automatically cements the dichotomy of coloniser/colonised and its explicit connection to binaries of power. Moving the image into the migrant context fundamentally destabilises it, undoing *both* poles of the binary — the colonised and the coloniser — towards something new. The same is done by using a Muslim woman to embody a Hindu nationalist symbol. The very grounds of the symbolism's workings are dismantled and remade through the migrant, postcolonial revisionary experience. Herein is a site of otherness that Bhabha calls "the third space", which is the

"domain of social causality and cultural difference … where the *newness* of cultural practices and historical narratives is registered" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 217 my italics).

Inscribed upon Hind's ever-increasing body is the aporia of her triple otherness. She is an Indian woman in London and therefore is an ethnic and sexual other — the "track of sexual difference is doubly effaced" (Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* 82) — while concurrently under the patriarchy of Indian society. However, this inscription further eclipses her. Despite his exploration of a feminised politics — in as far as the image is recast to highlight the oppressive, often singular role of women — Rushdie maintains Hind as a symbol, one that reimagines the basis of the symbol's workings, yet nonetheless is without agency, selfhood or autonomy. The collapse of the sexual and the political and Sufyan's reversal of this collapse still plays out on her body as an object for social and political engagement. The subversion of the image falls into the same dynamics of ownership used in the original image. Hind is eclipsed in the narrative, which at times "regress[es] … into reifications of stereotypes of gender and sexuality" (Hai 18). However, in what seems like a contradictory statement, I would like to suggest that Rushdie does indeed open spaces for the representation of sexual difference and otherness, notwithstanding his regressive impulses.

> [S]o now [Hind] was no longer just one, just herself … she had sunk into anonymity, the characterless plurality, of being merely one-of-the-woman-like-her. This was history's lesson: nothing for a woman-like-her to do but suffer, remember and die. (Rushdie, *SV* 250)

Here, the phrase "woman-like-her" describes the systematic effacement of sexism and racism experienced by immigrants in London. She is routinely voided of individuality and, with it, the agency of subjectivity by her sexual and ethnic otherness. She is also attacked: "knocked over in the street by invisible hands, in the shops you heard such abuse you felt like your ears would drop off … every day you heard of this boy, that girl, beaten up" (Rushdie, *SV* 250). Her only option, in her opinion, is to "suffer, remember and die". Remembering, however, is important. Although Mulvey would say that this automatically makes her the "bearer and not the maker of meaning" (834), remembering is a potentially powerful act. The immigrant's cultural identity is necessarily augmented by the past — if not, the immigrant runs the risk of being wholly assimilated into the host culture and thus becoming effaced. Conversely,

however, if the focus on the past is too strong, the homeland can potentially become mythologised and static. Both these options re-entrench fixed binaries of past/present, there/here and implicitly, us/them — it matters not if the "us" is the immigrant or the native. If, however, the past is remembered without being mythologised, then remembering can become a powerful act of locating cultural identity.

In the same vein as Hind, Hyacinth, Saladin's black nurse, is told: "'Every morning you have to look at yourself in the mirror and see, staring back, the darkness: the stain, the proof that you're the lowest of the low … Hyacinth [was] … no longer an individual but *a woman-like-them*" (Rushdie, 1989: 255 my italics). Further on, Mimi, Saladin's fellow voice artist and a Jewish woman, says: "You get born, you get beaten up and bruised all over and finally you break and they shove you into an urn" (Rushdie, *SV* 260). Each of these women, being in one way or another other to the British sameness, experiences a terrible effacement because of their sexual and ethnic otherness.

Yet not all the women in the text are downtrodden, faceless and silenced beings. Zeeny is an example of a female character who holds the possibility of a revisionary politics and is described as the "central embodiment of Rushdie's insistently radical philosophy of hybridity" (Hai 36). This embodiment resists becoming symbolic, rather offering a complex and problematising social, sexual and political position. Significantly, Zeeny is both a medical doctor and an art critic who insists on replacing "the confining myth of authenticity … [with] an ethic of historically validated eclecticism" (Rushdie, *SV* 52). Her concurrent focus on the scientific and the artistic is itself an example of this type of eclecticism, one that essentially destabilises the dichotomies of both nationalism and colonialism. This occurs in the "constructed dichotomy revolving around *ghar* (home) and *bahir* (the world)" (Mondal 914). Mondal explains that these two sides translate into two spheres of sovereignty — the outer, which is connected to the rationalist, economic and scientific and therefore to Western colonial conquest; and the inner, which was the spiritual (and inherently superior) sphere, connected to the "East". Zeeny, being both a scientist and an art critic, dissolves and reconciles these spheres, giving power to neither the West nor the East, neither science nor art. She, as a proponent of eclecticism, cannot allow such blatantly absolute and singular

purity of the simple divide between East and West, art and science. Rather, she believes that the national culture is based "on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seem to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest" (Rushdie, *SV* 52), and hence that unproblematic spheres of knowledge or superiority are merely "*myth[s]* of authenticity" (ibid, my italics) perpetuated by nationalist interest and, earlier, by colonialists, because it served a particular political purpose. Zeeny is also an unapologetic sexual being, described as "making love like a cannibal" and the "beautiful vampire" (Rushdie, *SV* 52). These descriptions of her sexuality are in stark contrast to Hind's, who "performed the sexual act infrequently, in total darkness, pin-drop silence and almost complete immobility" (Rushdie, *SV* 247). Hind, acculturated to believe that sex was purely functional and otherwise obscene, shows a disconnection from her sexuality, her immobility suggesting an almost total passivity in the act. As a cannibal or vampire, Zeeny is shown to be actively, even aggressively sexual, and therefore defies female modesty under patriarchy, which figures female sexuality as willing but passive.

In creating the space for the representation of ethnic and sexual otherness, as well as exploring the social and political significance of this within the context of postcolonial London and India, Rushdie successfully generates a productive feminist politics. This works by writing back to traditionally patriarchal, phallocentric narratives that are often concurrently nationalist, colonial, sexist and racist. In this way, the feminist reworking of patriarchal narratives situates Rushdie's own radical revisionary postcolonial philosophies, not least that of an eclectic hybridity that resists singularity and myths of origin. This, though, is not unproblematic — Rushdie still grapples with a tendency to reify gendered stereotypes and cast female characters as images for his own symbolic use, as well as to locate female agency only within the ambit of a male character's story. There is a certain amount of anxiety associated with the way in which his postcolonial revision is played out through a feminist or feminising politics, however, his feminised narratives persistently work towards rupturing binaries in the pursuit of a politics and an ethics of *newness* — representing the othering of women within the social structures of Hinduism, Islam and Britain, which then opens the narrative to the possibility of difference. One of the most powerful and also contentious attempts to locate a politics of newness, especially within a well-established narrative, is

through his writing of women in Islam. This is done via the extended metaphor of Jahilia (Mecca), and the rise of the religion Submission, aligned with Islam.

Women in Islam

It is important to locate this section within the social, religious and historical context of the Rushdie Affair. It was the sections in the text concerning the rewriting of the story of the Prophet that caused much of the uproar. Specifically, though not exhaustively, it was the depiction of the women in the brothel and their taking the names of the Prophet's wives as well as the incident involving the "satanic verses" that caused the greatest offence. The verses in question are the ones in which he allows for the intercession of the three goddesses, Al-lat, Uzza and Manat. Later, Mahound rescinds these verses and replaces them with the following: "'Shall He [God] have daughters and you sons?' … 'That would be a fine division!' / 'These are but names … Allah vests no authority in them'"[60] (Rushdie, *SV* 124). It may be useful to look at Rushdie's rebuttals to these charges. Rushdie states that, among other reasons, — including the exploration of religious doubt and uncertainty — he included the "satanic verses" incident in order to explore Islamic attitudes to women. "I [Rushdie] thought it at least worth pointing out that one of the reasons for rejecting these goddesses was that *they were female"* (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 399-400). Along with exploring religious uncertainty, Rushdie uses this section to highlight the inequality of women in pre-Islamic societies (called "Jahilia", meaning "ignorance", in the text) as well as the continued patriarchy within Islam. One of the ways this is done is through the brothel sequence. The prostitutes take on the names and personalities of the Prophet's wives in order to arouse their customers. This allows the men of Jahilia to act out "an ancient dream of possession, the dream of possessing the queen … [which says something] about the extent to which sexual relations have to do with possession" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 402), specifically male possession over very powerful women. This denotes the connection between power, sexual possession and gender.

[60] These verses are still found in the Qur'an, translated as follows: "Have you thought upon Al-lat, Al-Uzza / And Manat, the third, the other? / Are yours the males and his the females? / That indeed were an unfair division!" (LIII: 19-22)

In fact this entire section is framed within the problematising but productive idiom of gender relations. Early on in the introduction to Jahilia, we are given the history of the founding of the city:

> In ancient times the patriarch Ibrahim came into this valley with Hagar and Ismail, their son. Here, in this waterless wilderness, he abandoned her. She asked him, can this be God's will? He replied, it is. And left, the bastard. From the beginning men used God to justify the unjustifiable. He moves in mysterious ways: men say. Small wonder, then, that women have turned to me. … Hagar wasn't a witch. She was trusting: *then surely He [God] will not let me perish* … That was when he came to her, Gibreel, and showed her the waters of Zamzam[61] (Rushdie, *SV* 95).

The narrator, who women turn to in this passage, is a character aligned with the devil — an iniquitous, destructive trickster: "I [the narrator], in my wickedness, sometimes imagine a great wave … a liquid catastrophe … that would reduce [Jahilia] to nothingness" (Rushdie, *SV* 94). That women turn to the devil instead of God is not an indictment on them. Rather, in this context, it is a criticism of the men who use God for their own ends and, more generally, of the inequality of a patriarchal religion within an equally patriarchal society — the people of Jahilia celebrate Ibrahim's brief visit to the site (to abandon Hagar and his son) and not Hagar's faith and survival. Both the irreverent, playful tone of the above passage, as well as the new female perspective, indicates and introduces Rushdie's strategy within this section of the text. The jocund tone signifies an attempt to challenge hegemony — the "sense of flippancy dethrones the most somber historical event to a rowdy, pedestrian importance" (Sanga 110). This works to provide an opening into the stories that are otherwise closed — "rather than representing a monolithic chronology that can never be altered [the religiously sanctioned story of the Prophet], it can be written from a cultural point of view" (Suleri 206). The narrative is also told from another perspective — from the perspective of the *other* to the phallo- or androcentric accounts. Hagar, in the above quote, is a character usually portrayed as secondary to Ibrahim, depicted as the main character of this story in the Bible, the Torah and the Qur'an[62]. However, here Hagar is given a voice, which shifts the balance of power in

[61] Zamzam is the name of the well in Mecca (redescribed here as Jahilia) next to the Kaaba, the most sacred site in Islam (Wensinck 317).

[62] The story of Hagar and Abraham is found in the Torah: Genesis 16:1-3, 15-16, 17, 21:1-2 and in the Good News Bible: Genesis 11:26 to 25:18. In the Bible, Sarah, Abraham's wife is barren and so gives her servant, Hagar, to Abraham to act as a surrogate. When Hagar gets pregnant, she begins to "despise" (16: 4) Sarah. Abraham gives Sarah leave to treat Hagar as she wishes. Sarah treats Hagar cruelly and she runs away. In the

the narrative. Significantly, this works to introduce the way in which this section of the narrative interrogates and locates the reconception of the story of the Prophet within questions of power — of singularity versus multiplicity, of compromise versus the absolute — which is conceived and problematised within the ambit of the tensions within gender relations.

An important reason why this is a potentially productive perspective is because often "wom[e]n become the touchstone of blasphemy" (Spivak, *Reading* in Suleri 208). This is because women have become the site through which social and religious individuation, as well as cultural authenticity, is articulated:

> The fundamentalist obsession with female 'chastity' — the segregation of the sexes, the veiling of women, the minimizing (if not elimination) of women's presence in public life is well known. … Claims about the *literal* truth of the Koran *(sic)* therefore become the means of insisting upon the possibility of an unmediated reconstruction, in modern times, of the original 'righteous' community. And the 'chastity' of the women, in the over-coded form outlined above, comes to signify the minimal condition for the desired return to a state of cultural purity and authenticity (Mufti 61). [63]

The female body is shown to be co-opted by Mahound's obsession with "rules, rules, rules" (Rushdie, *SV* 363) in *The Satanic Verses.* Though the rules described in this section do not deal only with women — they include a prohibition on the eating of prawns, how much to eat and how deeply one should sleep to name a few — some are specifically focused on "the question of women" (Rushdie, *SV* 366). Salman the scribe explains to Baal the poet that the "Prophet [doesn't] like his women to answer back, he went for mothers and daughters" (Rushdie, *SV* 366). When confronted with a tribe of women who were not submissive,

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desert God comes to Hagar and tells her to return to Sarah and Abraham. She bears a son, Ishmael. There is no mention of the well in the Biblical version. In the Qur'an Hagar is never mentioned by name but the story is traditionally understood to be referred to in a line from Sura XIV, entitled "Abraham": "I have settled some of my posterity in the uncultivated valley near unto Thy holy House" XIV:37**.** "Thy holy House" is noted as meaning "the valley of Mecca" (Pickthall in *The Holy Qur'an* 187).

[63] It is important to note that Mufti qualifies his statements within the ambit of the "public discourse of Islamic *fundamentalism*" (60 my italics) and is careful not to state anything as part of an ahistorical, monolithic version of Islam. Further, he recognises that the term "fundamentalism" is "notoriously slippery … [with a] history of abuse in the Reagan-Bush era by the media" (52). He uses the term "as a shorthand for the *public* and popular discourses of domestic and international militancy under the sign of 'Islam'" (52).

Gibreel (who relates the revelations to the Prophet) starts "pouring out rules about what women mustn't do, he starts forcing them back into the docile attitudes the Prophet prefers, docile and maternal … the faithful women did as he ordered. They submitted" (Rushdie, *SV* 367). Through this there is a clear connection made between the behaviour of women and the construction of religiosity.

The brothel sequence in the text clearly indexes the way in which rules in Islam came to be grafted on to the female as the site for cultural and religious integrity. The brothel is named *Hijab,* meaning "The Curtain", which is a reference to the modest dress worn by Muslim women. This image is used as "a means of further highlighting the inverted echo between the two worlds [harem and brothel]" (Rushdie, 1994: 401-402). The women are sequestered in both the brothel and the harem. In the harem the wives are kept out of sight to preserve their modesty, and, indeed, chastity or fidelity. By naming the brothel Hijab and having the prostitutes take on the names of the wives, Rushdie calls attention to an antithetical world, which works for the opposite — not for chastity or fidelity but promiscuity and the reception of strange men in order to fulfill *their* desires; in this case, the desire to play out a fantasy of power. This inversion then challenges the manner in which the female becomes the receptacle for cultural authenticity and the manner in which her body is co-opted. The women in the brothel are behind the curtain or veil (hijab) but are objects of male desire, as, indeed, are the women in the harem. It is important to note that the mirroring provides a way in which to challenge certain ideas around gender and modesty; particularly in as far as they have great cultural currency. In no way does this imply a conflation of the two worlds — neither the women in the harem nor the prostitutes *become* the other. Rather, the reflection serves to shape an extreme, but effective challenge. By aligning the two worlds and mirroring them Rushdie is commenting on the sequestering and objectification of women in *both* the harem and the brothel. The veil keeps men's eyes both out and in — the women are figured via the male gaze in the harem by being kept out and in the brothel by being let in. It is ironic that Rushdie is charged with blasphemy in his depiction of the brothel sequence. Rushdie, it seems, is entirely aware that women are in Islam the "touchstone of blasphemy". I would argue that is his point in this sequence. Women are the sign for cultural and religious integrity and, therefore, the co-option of women and women's bodies in the making of this sign or symbol silences and objectifies them. This point is crystallised in his creation of the two

opposite worlds that contain two sets of entirely different but equally silenced women. Of course, Rushdie himself does just this in his depiction of Hind as Mother India, and it could be argued that even in the brothel sequence he is not innocent of using the images of the brothel and the harem for his own socio-religious challenges, which co-opts woman as a symbol for something else — again, eclipsing all subjectivity and autonomy.

The same gendered power dynamics emerge in the expulsion of the three goddesses from the realm of recognised deities or intercessors. Though there is obviously something much larger at play — the question of monotheism's power of the absolute in relation to poly- or henotheism's compromise — Rushdie is calling attention to the fact that, as discussed earlier, the intercessors were women and therefore were excluded from holding any high office in Islam.

Thus, Rushdie uses women and the gender tensions in Islam as the lens through which to dynamically reimagine and retell the story of Islam. The "feminization of Islam" (Suleri 209) is not only the way in which this section of the text opens up the female perspective or challenges the construction of femininity within the ambit of patriarchal cultural authenticity, it is also the way in which the narrative works to rupture the hegemonic phallocentrism of the master narrative of Islam in an effort to "dramatise the fact that Islam can generate an anti-apocalyptic narrative" (Suleri 209). This is an important gesture, as it opens up the narrative, showing it as productive and not wholly teleological. This engagement is one of the ways that Rushdie "redescrib[es]" (*Imaginary Homelands* 14) the grand narrative of Islam, opening it up. In this instance, Levinasian ethics would be counterintuitive as his theoretical language is itself apocalyptic, messianic and eschatological. In order to open up the narrative so that it is productive as opposed to apocalyptic, a new type of ethics of representing otherness is called for. As with allowing Hagar, who is a silent and silenced voice in the Qur'anic narrative, to emerge as a subject in the rewritten story in *The Satanic Verses,* giving an other, feminine perspective allows a productive dynamism otherwise disallowed in the "fixed" or "frozen" master narrative of Islam. Thus, the disruptive potential of a feminised narrative opens up space for otherness and difference to emerge. To investigate this further I will discuss the way in which the feminisation of Islam plays out in the text by looking at two female

characters and their portrayal within Islam: Hind of Jahilia and, briefly, Ayesha the butterfly girl.

Hind and Ayesha

Harveen Sachveda Mann, in her essay *Being Borne Across* (1995), asserts that *The Satanic Verses* works to write "against the orthodox Islamic concern with female chastity" (291). This is done by creating sexualised women who are nonetheless given only peripheral roles in the narrative — "as in the prescriptive core of Islamic discourse" (ibid). I agree with this assessment, especially in as far as the female characters are always connected in some way to the main male-centred stories — the prostitutes are connected to Baal, Hind is connected to Abu Simbel and Mahound, Ayesha the empress to the Imam. To a degree this closes down the narrative by "re-enact[ing] stereotypical male typologies of women" (ibid). However, though flawed, Rushdie's attempt to create female characters who defy certain societal and religious norms need not be wholly ignored as a failure. While acknowledging its implicit re-entrenchment of unequal gender relations, it also works to open up and challenge gender codes, interrogating Islam through the powerful and empowered female. The sections concerning Hind and Mahound and the struggle for absolute power have been read as an allegory for the "consistently loving questioning [in *The Satanic Verses*] of the distinctions between Muslim and Hindu India" (Suleri 201). This refers to the potentially effective and dynamic way in which the encounter between these two religions and their inherent communalist tensions are explored in the text. Rather than cementing the divide, Islam and Hinduism are seen as having the potential to be aligned in the search for a hybrid, productive reimagining of Islam and India as a whole.

"'I am your equal' [Hind says to Mahound], 'and also your opposite'" (Rushdie, *SV* 121). Through this she positions herself as equally powerful and equally uncompromising — "'I want to fight. To the death; that is what kind of idea I am'" (ibid) — but also his female counterpart, his opposite. But Hind lives in an unequal society where "the gods are female but the females are merely goods" (118), where her husband counts her among his riches and where "people expose their baby daughters in the wilderness" (ibid). In the face of this, Hind

emerges as a strong, successful woman — "[she] controls the famous temple of Lat … [and] also draws revenues from the Manat temple … and the temple of Uzza" (100) — defying patriarchy in Jahilia, though remaining a wife to the most powerful man in the city, Abu Simbel. After Mahound enters Jahilia and destroys the temples, Hind at first refuses to submit. Importantly, she refuses to play into the gender roles meted out to her in terms of the religion — "she wouldn't be [Mahound's] mother or child" (373) — neither becoming a vessel for silent maternal concern nor infantilising herself.

Hind is seen as a witch, as bedevilled. In her defiance of patriarchy through her financial success and power, rumours emerge of her metaphorically and literally eating men, "transforming men into desert snakes after having her fill of them … and cooked them for her evening meal" (Rushdie, *SV* 360). A woman copulating with a man and then killing and eating him in the phallic form of a snake has overtones of a castration anxiety. She is a threat because she challenges and destabilises the roles women are allowed to play in this society. This threat plays out through anxious rumours that dehumanise her, making her another being, someone with occultist power, a necromancer to be feared. This works to allay the anxiety — though she is still a being to be feared she is nonetheless other, effaced in the realm of the supernatural. She is still a threat but no longer one that is tangible, no longer a socio-sexual or gendered one. This demonstrates the suppression of women through programmatic othering in order to ally anxiety.

Her bedevilment plays out in two other ways. Firstly, she does not age. "Hind [at 60] remained unwrinkled, her body as firm as a young woman's" (Rushdie, *SV* 360). Her defiance of time takes on a political edge as she takes control of the city. In missives written to the people of Jahilia, Hind writes "refusals of time, of history, of age" (361). Importantly, this connects Hind with the exiled Imam who also rejects history and "seek[s] the eternity, the timelessness, of God" (211). The Imam's enemy, his other, is Ayesha the empress, whom he associates with history and time, "the intoxicant" (210). Again religious tensions are played out within the ambit of gender. Ayesha's femaleness is connected with sexual depravity and, in a tenuous leap, with the West (specifically America) and its tyranny. Once more, the religious and the political are collapsed on to the female body as an erotic object

that is seen as a threat. However, Hind, a woman described as "sexually voracious" (361), is aligned with the Imam via her equally fervent rejection of time and history. This ruptures the binaries at work — tyranny, eroticism and the movement of time as connected to the female erotic body; and timelessness, purity and God with the suppression of that body. Her timelessness ruptures the sexual difference that allows the Imam's dichotomy to function and challenges the repression of the female erotic body.

Secondly, Hind is connected to the carnivalesque. After Mahound announces the satanic verses, later to be rescinded, there is a great carnival in Jahilia; "a night of masks … men and women in the guise of eagles, jackals, horse, gryphons, salamanders, warthogs, rocs [mythical bird of prey] … demons populate the city on this night of phantasmagoria and lust" (Rushdie, *SV* 117). The following day Mahound wakes in Hind's chambers naked with a headache. Hind explains that she was "walking the city streets late last night, masked, to see the festivities" (Rushdie, *SV* 120) and found Mahound in the gutter. The carnival is an important site for inversion and subversion of societal hierarchy and becomes a space for the "liberation of transgressive desires" (Gaylard 3). Bakhtin states that "as opposed to the official feast, one might say that the carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (Bakhtin 10). Hind's connection with the carnivalesque then links her to social transgression and the play of erotic desire. For advocates of hierarchy as a social, sexual and religious normalising standard the carnival poses a threat by dismantling the binaries of power, especially within gender, as the female body is allowed to move, unrepressed, as an erotic object. In Islam, the woman's social position is hinged on her body as the seat of cultural authenticity thus the focus on female chastity. By allowing the female body to emerge as an erotic object, an other side of female sexuality is allowed to emerge challenging the social-sexual positioning of woman within normative, fundamentalist Islamic narratives.

Most importantly, Hind is a vehement proponent of polytheism and is the last to submit to Mahound. In the allegory mentioned earlier, Hind stands for Hinduism, and Mahound, with his call for monotheism, for Islam. The way in which these two religions clash in India,

especially, is played out allegorically in the clash between Mahound and Hind, once again within the realm of sexual difference. Yet this clash is also productive in its transgression. The "erotic longing" (Suleri 201) between Hind and Mahound, played out in the moment in which he finds himself naked in her room[64], creates an opening for the productive coexistence of the two cultures and religions by bringing the two into a "defamiliarising propinquity which disturbs a habitual consciousness and allows a brief respite from … repression" (Gaylard 4). This is crystallised by the further imbrication of Al-lat and Allah, aligned in the same way to Hind and Mahound. "She [Al-Lat] is his [Allah's] equal, and I [Hind] am yours [Mahound's]" (Rushdie, *SV* 121). This plays into the idea of the singularity of monotheism and its connection to chauvinism and maleness versus the terrifying fecundity of polytheism and women; and the concomitant need to repress that fecundity. However, at the moment of Mahound's death he is visited by Al-lat and it is she who gives Mahound death, to which he replies: "I thank Thee, Al-lat, for this gift" (Rushdie, *SV* 394). It is earlier implied that it was Hind who caused the figure of Al-lat to appear to Mahound. This "hidden embrace of Allah and Al-lat, of Islam and Hinduism in the production of an "Indian" Muslim culture" (Suleri 201), couched in the dynamics of a gender code that has been opened up, intrinsically challenges a sectarian or singular Indian culture though the critique it levels against the hierarchical positioning of females within Islam. This productively allows for the transgressive and reimagined dynamism of a feminised Islam, which would be less apocalyptic and teleological a narrative and more open to the possibility of difference.

However, this feminisation goes beyond only Islam: "Rushdie suggests the feminization and opening not only of Islam but also of postcolonial narration" (Hai 37). Opening up is an important gesture in this section of the text and is embodied by Ayesha (the butterfly girl), the contemporary female version of the Prophet. The re-embodiment of the Prophet as a female is already a radical gesture of revision that works to meld the problematics of gender with that of "nation" (Suleri 209). In the attempt to define the cultural form of Islam within contemporary India, the Prophet re-embodied as a female talks into the need for an opening up of the metanarratives of Islam, including those in the Qur'an and the Hadiths, from

[64] Erotic language is used through this section: "She comes and sits close to him on the bed, extends a finger, finds a gap in his robe, strokes his chest … She places the stroking finger over his lips before he can reply" (Rushdie, *SV* 120).

another, vital perspective, not least of which is the call for a way in which to reconcile the divided nations of Islam and Hinduism in India, and, thus, a way to usher in a radical new other. Ayesha receives her revelations from Gibreel in popular Hindi film songs. This has been dismissed by Spivak as portraying the Prophetess as "lacking in existential depth" (Spivak, *Reading* in Suleri 209), but this contemporary form signals a touchstone of communalism in contemporary India. The gesture, then, is far from lacking in depth; rather, it opens up a space for the negotiation of Islam in contemporary India.

When Ayesha parts the Arabian sea, with its intertextual overtones of the Biblical story of Moses parting the Red Sea, the Westernised Mirza Saeed is denied access to this putative miracle because he is "closed [and the] sea only opens for those who are open" (Rushdie, *SV* 502). Later, in a moment that is part vision, part dream, Ayesha appears to Mirza and appeals to him to open:

> "Open" she was crying. "Open wide!" … He closed.
> … — He was drowning. — She was drowning, too … Then something within him refused that, made a different choice, and in that instant that his heart broke, he opened.
> His body split apart from his adam's-apple to his groin, so that she could reach deep within him, and now she was open, they all were, and at that moment of their opening the waters parted, and they walked to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea (Rushdie, *SV* 507).

It is important to note that when Mirza remains closed they *both* begin to drown, but as soon as he opens they are saved. It is in the "blurring of the boundaries of the self" (Rushdie, *SV* 314) that saves both of them. Ayesha reaches deep inside Mirza in the metaphorical knitting of the male and female that embodies the spirit of Rushdie's postcolonial project. "The savior here, then, is *neither* pole of an opposition, neither man nor woman, believer or sceptic, but the mutuality of the opening of a masculine body that must surrender its rigidly refusing maleness into femaleness, transforming both" (Hai 38). The appeal for openness is therefore much further reaching than only specifically gender oriented. Like the reception of the revelations in Hindi film songs, the intertextual reference to the Bible and Mirza's Westernisation — all of which merge with, and by doing so dissolve, their oppositions — the injunction is rather to find alternatives to the rigidity of binaries. Herein is the way in which Rushdie uses gender as a platform for his revisionary project. It works to "recast resistance as

a feminist move, as that which moves across boundaries *not just to exchange or invert oppositions but to collapse [them]* and to recast femaleness as that which … enables opening, as cultural novelty and survival" (Hai 38 my italics).

Conclusion

In *The Satanic Verses* the representation of women becomes a lens through which Islamic, colonial and postcolonial narratives are challenged, ruptured and opened up. The female body emerges as a site of transgression wherein it is represented as sexualised and erotic against its repression in fundamentalist Islamic narratives of authenticity. The radical knitting of male and female in Ayesha's story and of the coloniser and the colonised in Rosa's works as a way in which to dismantle the binaries associated with gender and contiguously, with all binaries that create rigidity and lead to oppression. Women-as-other talks to a larger spectrum of otherness and the need for a transformative new other, outside the over-coded narratives of nationalism in India, rigidly dividing Islam from Hinduism, or female chastity. However, this is not a call for a new multiculturalism, which seeks to dissolve *all* difference, thus itself becoming a normative master narrative, equally constructed and restrictive. Rather, it is a way in which otherness emerges to rupture narratives of nationalism, religion, and gender and open these up, productively allowing the space for the play of difference within a common humanity. Essential to this in representation is the simultaneity of the other-as-subject and the other as absent. This allows for the emergence of otherness within representation but does not erase difference.

Conclusion: A Productive Ethics

The significance of establishing the different types of representation of otherness in *The Satanic Verses* — as both framed sites of absence and as subjectivity — is the development of a viable and productive ethics of representing otherness. There are two theoretical standpoints, which I have touched upon in the previous chapters, that each argues for a type of representation of otherness that is ethical. Very broadly, the first maintains that the only way to ethically "represent" otherness is for it to remain unrepresented because of the myriad dangers of ethnocentrism, levelling and the regime of power as knowledge. The second maintains that the other must be represented as a subject to avoid ostracism or the creation of unbridgeable gaps between the comforting theoretical discourse of otherness and the realities of cultural difference. These two perspectives are incompatible and contradictory within representation (one calling for representation, the other for banning it), yet both remain convincing, vital and relevant. Choosing one of these perspectives over another would mean that important aspects of the theory's ethical structures would have to be sacrificed. However, based on my reading of *The Satanic Verses* in the previous four chapters, it is clear that even in the face of the contradiction between the two types of representation it is possible for both to function in a text. Similarly, these two types of representation are found in *Midnight's Children* as Saleem attempts to write a history that is both real and unreal. In it he is both an other struggling not to disappear within the overwhelming tides of history and nationalism and the subject of his own doubt-filled narrative. Otherness should be neither only the subject nor wholly unrepresentable but should engage in a frustrated but productive exchange between the two.

The first type of ethical structure maintains that otherness must remain unrepresented but significant. It is defined in Emmanuel Levinas's text *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961), briefly described in the previous chapter. Levinas explores ethics in terms of what he describes as "the absolute other" (39). The absolutely other is exterior or completely outside anything that can be thought or represented. If the absolute other was to "appear" (43), to be represented or even to be thought, it would be neutralised and reduced to the same. Levinas designates "the same" as egoity — everything that the "I" can relate to, can represent and can encompass, and therefore possess and neutralise, with reason. "The

possibility of possessing, that is, of suspending the very alterity of what is at first other, and other relative to me, is the *way* of the same" (38). The absolute other is "irreducible to the I, to my thoughts and possessions" (43). Thus, the very nature of Levinas's other — its alterity to the same — means that it *cannot* be represented. If it is represented it will mean a "reduction of the other to the same, by the imposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the *comprehension* of the being" (43 my italics). The absolute other is beyond comprehension, thought and representation. Yet, this does not "denote an absence" (34), rather an exteriority, something wholly outside our understanding and ourselves. It is precisely this exteriority (without being "outside", which would allow a reversibility between inside and outside, the same and the other rather it is irreducibly exterior) that allows an ethics to develop. The ego, the "I", cannot fully call itself into question, cannot critique the "exercise of ontology [the comprehension of being]" (43) without something wholly outside of the same. "A calling into question of the same — which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same — is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of the same by the Other ethics" (43). This ethics is achieved by a discourse or conversation between the same and the other, what Levinas calls "the face to face" (39), without the same being in *relation* to the other — the other always exceeds and is exterior to the same and is "thus independent of my [the same, the "I"] initiative and my power" (51). Therefore, there is (for want of a better word) a "relationship" between the same and the other in which the other calls the same into question — and hence, is ethical. Using Levinas's model, one can infer that to sustain his ethics in a text such as *The Satanic Verses* the other would have to remain unassimilated and unrepresented but not absent, and would have to be in a critical relationship with the same.

In the first two chapters of this paper I looked at how sites of absence emerge in language and in the structure of the text. These sites of absence, among other things, are a technique for dismantling master narratives by causing ruptures in the master narrative's linearity and cohesion. Master narratives function by creating a normative standard that disallows or rejects difference and otherness. The master narratives tackled in *The Satanic Verses* — the Islamic and Qur'anic narratives, those of British empiricism and Eastern or Indian mysticism and, implicitly, inferiority — are strategically and systematically ruptured by the sites of absence. The text explores immigrants attempting to come to terms with their cultural

translation, with their loss of faith, as is the case with Gibreel, and the complexity of their contingent position in British society. The master narratives that offer cohesion, teleology and sameness no longer serve or represent this shifting, complex position. The act of disrupting the master narrative is therefore also a radical questioning of normative standards of sameness. This questioning comes about through the sites of absence, which, if we translate Levinas's theory on to a literary text, would be the place of absolute otherness. This absolute otherness opens up a space of play for cultural difference and alterity. This otherness is unrepresented but not absent precisely because it functions in the narrative without becoming fully represented. Rather, it is highlighted as significant through its disruptive force but is allowed to remain unrepresented.

The sites of absence also point to a surplus of meaning, creating spaces for meaning that exceed representation. This surplus includes the irreconcilable tensions and incommensurable elements that resist and exceed representation. They are what Bhabha, quoting the Mexican/New York-based performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña, calls "the stubborn chunks" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 218), the parts of cultural difference that cannot be assigned to either one thing or another. Yet the need to call attention to these "stubborn chunks" is necessary and urgent, because it is only through this "third space" (Bhabha, 1995: 209) of unrepresentability that "a way opens up for the articulation, negotiation and translation of cultural hybridity" (ibid). This is the site of the unspoken, a revision of which "makes the act of narration an ethical act" (Bhabha, 1992: 147). The crucial relationship of critical questioning between absolute otherness and sameness in the narrative, which allows the other to remain unrepresented but is nonetheless highlighted as significant, therefore sustains Levinas's ethics.

However, casting the other out completely, allowing it *only* the space of the unrepresentable, is in itself problematic, even ethnocentric. Making the other completely unknown and unknowable is assuming that the other as a subject is not part of a shared commitment of values. It plays into the binary of us/them and thus could potentially allow for xenophobia, racism, tribalism and nationalism. Therefore, there is a need to dismantle and dissolve the

implicit binaries at work when letting otherness remain wholly unrepresented. This, however, must occur while still allowing space in the text for the play of difference.

Levinas clearly states that his theoretical paradigm of absolute otherness cannot admit any third term or concept that will place the other in a systematic relationship with the same. Human universalism is a "third term" par excellence thus the narrative needs to function in a paradox. Spivak describes what she terms "claiming catechresis" (*Postcoloniality* 227), which is a way in which to describe the need to work within a frustrated, paradoxical framework. Catechresis is done from "a space one cannot not want to habit [in this case, human universalism] yet must criticise" (228). This criticism comes in the form of the deconstructive impulse throughout *The Satanic Verses,* which allow sites of absence and the play of difference. This admits difference and otherness into the narrative, avoiding the potential dangers of doctrinaire universalism. Thus the other is a part of a shared humanity but, within the text, this humanity does not erase difference because of the play of absence. This remains a frustrated process of engagement that admits no closure and functions only in a catachrestic paradox.

The significance of the development of this conditional, paradoxical ethics is manifold and relates to several key ideas engaged with in *The Satanic Verses.* If otherness is to be truly heterogeneous then it must be allowed to be located as negative as well as positive; thus, it can also be ugly, violent, cheeky and dangerous as well as erotic, exotic and a powerful site of potential for agency and transformation. This is a text about the multidimensionality of experience and thus the only way we can fully countenance this complexity is from several different, even contradictory, angles. In a passage describing Saladin's constructed self, the narrator states:

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking the Creator's role .... he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle you see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him socio-politically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises ... A man who invents himself needs someone to believe in him. Playing God again ... Or ... think of Tinkerbell; fairies don't exist if children don't clap their hands ... Or you might simply say: it's just like being a man (49).

Thus, Saladin's position and choice to construct a self that he is happy with, that he can live with, is considered from several, very different perspectives; from one he is an abomination, from another a hero. If his circumstances are considered, by becoming a disguise he is doing the necessary to survive. In one instance he is God, in another a figment from a fairytale. His complex, contingent and multivalent position is, however, also called: "being a man". For Rushdie, being a man (and here I believe the gender is of no real significance) is being something powerful *and* ridiculous, is being influenced by society, politics and history but also having agency, reacting to it, surviving. Historically and theoretically, the other has, in one way or another, been positioned as a victim — even if this victimhood comes about purely by being positioned as *only* absent or good. But this denies agency and complexity. If the other is to emerge as having a radically transformative position with the dynamic potential to change the fixity of normative discourses, he or she must be allowed to "simply ... be a man", thus, to enter humanity as a complex, heterogeneous combination of good and evil. Saladin shows himself a devil by maliciously destroying Gibreel's relationship and by hating him for being his other. Gibreel shows himself an angel by saving Saladin from death. Yet both show themselves capable of the opposite — Saladin redeems himself by attempting to save the people in the burning building, Gibreel tries to destroy London and kills both Sisodia and Allie. In terms of nation, Saladin is a hybrid subject, simultaneously British and Indian. In terms of religion, Gibreel is caught between doubt and faith. Thus, to be human is to be many things simultaneously, and this is never truer than for the immigrant.

In the face of this, it would be counterintuitive to imagine that a single, fixed ethics could countenance this multiplicity in engaging with otherness. Representing the irreducible heterogeneity of otherness ethically calls for an ethics that can function within the paradoxical simultaneity of the other as good and evil, British and Indian, a subject and absent. This ethics, like the hybrid subject, is made up of several different, conflicting elements that can only work in a paradox — thus, perhaps it could be named a *hybrid ethics.*

The implications of a hybrid ethics are twofold. In one sense, its openness, viability and potential productiveness could be extremely positive, especially when looking at otherness in relation to dominant discourses of power. In another, however, there is once more the pitfall

of relativism, which makes for tepid, apologetic theory. If an ethics of representing and understanding otherness is to be shifting, internal and paradoxical, then ethics as a standard, whereby we understand and engage with mutual respect for another person, potentially loses its grounding, essentially negating it as a standard. This also runs the risk of becoming a homage to the individual other, closing down the possibility of an ethics related to larger structures such as community. Rushdie states: "From this premise [of the complex combination of good and evil], the novel's [*The Satanic Verses'*] exploration of morality [emerges as] internal and shifting (rather than external, divinely sanctioned, absolute)" (*Imaginary Homelands* 403). Although Rushdie is talking of morality here, I think that his estimation of the moral paradigm in his text can also be effectively understood in terms of ethics. However, his paradigm is not fully equitable to a productive ethics. If a hybrid ethics of representing otherness is not to be wholly relativised, it must be *both* internal, thus, open to the shifting, paradoxical, heterogeneous nature of the other *and* external, as a standard whereby it is possible to understand our relationship to and with otherness— once more, in a frustrated but productive tension. It is an ongoing negotiation towards embracing newness that cannot foreclose on a singular otherness.

The emergence of otherness within a viable and productive hybrid ethics allows a time and space for a potentially radically transformative voice within dominant discourses such as Islamic fundamentalism, British neocolonialism and Indian nationalism. This is the broader significance of attempting to represent otherness ethically. It is perhaps most particularly important now as a way in which to confront and challenge post-9/11 polemics. The media campaign of the so-called "war on terror" and growing Islamic militancy has insidiously and definitively drawn lines along national and religious boundaries, which potentially translate into the reification of East/West binaries. The blurring of religious and national borders is beginning to characterise both the ongoing war in Afghanistan and, in particular, the politics of Israel and Palestine. The increasing association between Israel and Zionism and Palestine and Islamic militancy simplifies an extremely complex political situation, entrenching old hatreds and raising the ghosts of destructive discourses of enmity. It is important that these situations are represented as complex and not distilled down to stereotypes. Thus, if otherness is represented as multifarious and diverse within a hybrid ethics that allows the representation viability, then an engagement with powerful and powerfully destructive discourses can be

productive in challenging them. There is, of course, a risk involved in engaging with entrenched discourses, especially those that are associated with religion. *The Satanic Verses* and the "Rushdie Affair" call this into sharp focus. However, the ongoing attempt to embrace newness against deontology and open a space for other perspectives — and the other's perspective — is the manner in which this risk is productive. This is, I believe, the role of literature and is exemplified by *The Satanic Verses*; engaging with entrenched ideas in order to reimagine and redescribe them, and, thus, to "open up the universe a little more" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 21).

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