

SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MYTH OF IDENTITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: <u>MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN</u> : SALEEM'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY THROUGH MEANING	11
CHAPTER 2: <u>THE SATANIC VERSES</u> : THE MIGRANT AND STRANGE FUSIONS	31
CHAPTER 3: THE FRONTIERS OF <u>SHALIMAR THE CLOWN</u>	52
CONCLUSION	69
WORKS CITED	73

ABSTRACT

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Salman Rushdie writes extensively about identity in both his nonfiction and fiction writings. Identity presented in these writings is a construct, a hybrid of a myriad of influences including history, culture and family. Three of his novels, Midnight's Children, The Satanic Verses and Shalimar the Clown, help illustrate Rushdie's use of identity. In Midnight's Children, Saleem uses history and family to present his identity, a construct prone to errors and exaggerations. In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie explores the migrant identity, a heterogeneous identity, which indelibly changes as it crosses frontiers. In Shalimar the Clown, Rushdie explores identity politics in the Kashmir region and examines the frontier as a place of ambiguity and hybridity. Identity in these three novels will be shown to be non-static, not pure, and not innate.

INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie has written extensively about identity in essays collected in both Imaginary Homelands and Step Across This Line, and his novels, particularly Midnight's Children, The Satanic Verses, and Shalimar the Clown, and explores how identity is developed and maintained in the individual and perceived by the community. In Step Across This Line Rushdie conveys the hero quest as a personal journey of self exploration: "But the voyager must refuse the [guardian]'s definition of the boundary, must transgress against the limits of what fear prescribes. He steps across the line. The defeat of the ogre is an opening in the self, an increase in what it is possible for the voyager to be" (409). This illuminates Rushdie's concern with what he calls the "apostles of purity, those who claimed to possess a total explanation" (Imaginary Homelands 394), the guardians who define the limits of what a person can be. Rushdie creates characters that push those boundaries and expand what is possible for the individual; identity becomes a creative process.

In Midnight's Children, Saleem says:

And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. (4)

Part of Saleem's motivation is to paint an accurate picture of himself for his audience, to

create his identity. This is not a singular identity, but a multifaceted one that cannot be pinned down. A logical inference from “multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me” (4) is that there are multitudes within those multitudes; to know Saleem is impossible. The use of “multitudes” suggests a frustration in choosing identity. Saleem has trouble beginning the novel and stumbles through expressing his belief that he is tied to the birth of an independent India. After he tells the reader of the multitudes inside him he says, “I must commence the business of remaking my life” (4), and it is this that speaks the most about a narrative fraught with self-proclaimed errors and distortions, reeling from the burden of including everything and everyone.

Rushdie writes in Imaginary Homelands (1991), “[...] our response to the world is essentially *imaginative*: that is, picture making. We live in our pictures, our ideas. I mean this literally. We first construct pictures of the world and then step into the frames” (377-378). How aware is one in the creation of his/her world? This question is important in reference to post-colonial works. Edward Said writes that colonial power was institutionalized by an active creation of the idea of the Orient: “Yet, what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West” (Orientalism 40). Through the institutionalization of the Orient, the idea of the Orient and the West's power over it are “taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth” (46). The West, Europe in particular, then develops “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures” (7). The story of an Egyptian courtesan who was represented by Flaubert illustrates identity for the colonized: “she never spoke of herself, she never

represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her” (Said, Orientalism 6). The colonizers built their identity in juxtaposition to their idea of the other. Said and Rushdie assure us this is a constructed identity, but the colonizers take it as scientific truth. Saleem is now taking the place of the colonizer in creating his identity. Unlike the Egyptian Courtesan, Saleem will represent himself. Saleem believes he is telling the true story, but Rushdie's comments on our imaginative response to the world and Saleem's errors let the reader know that Saleem's story is as constructed as the Orient.

This conflict in establishing identity is an overarching theme in many of Rushdie's novels where the multitudes continue to interfere and distort anything that can be identified as “I.” Saleem seems to be resisting this confusion of identity by attempting an all-encompassing story, one in which everything has meaning for his life. He constructs the theory that he “had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country” (3). Rushdie writes about this attempt at metanarrative:

Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another, as a character of mine once said, *like flavours when you cook*.

(Imaginary Homelands 394)

Identity is fluid and mutable, and any attempt at defining one's identity too narrowly becomes confusing and potentially dangerous. Rushdie is trying to form a concept of

identity that avoids the type of politics that have formed the basis of human relationships throughout history. In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie explores this, referring to a migrant identity:

The effect of mass migrations has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves—because they are so defined by others—by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. (124-125)

This state of the migrant identity could also be called hybridity, or identity formed by the mutual influence of cultures on one another. Lois Tyson describes hybridity in this way:

Therefore, many postcolonial theorists argue that postcolonial identity is necessarily a dynamic, constantly evolving *hybrid* of native and colonial cultures. [...] This view encourages ex-colonials to embrace the multiple and often conflicting aspects of the blended culture that is theirs and that is an indelible fact of history. (369)

Homi Bhabha, in commenting on the writings of Renée Green who uses an analogy of an attic, a boiler room, and a stairwell, elaborates on this idea. Green uses the stairwell as a type of liminal space:

The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and

passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (5)

The stairwell in Green's passage can easily be inferred as the traveling of the migrant, the traveling that happens in between the “fixed identifications” of national identities. It fits well with Rushdie's assertion that we are “leaking into one another.”

Homi Bhabha's work in The Location of Culture further illuminates Rushdie's use of migrant identity. Bhabha states:

The very concepts of homogeneous national cultures [...] are in a profound process of redefinition. [...] [T]he very idea of a pure, “ethnically cleansed” national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. This side of the psychosis of patriotic fervour, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities. [...] [T]he truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision. (7)

Rushdie, born in India, migrant to Great Britain and currently living in the United States of America, is in the unique place of being able to articulate this double vision. Bhabha talks of “the complex interweavings of history” (7), that is, the various cultural identities formed by various histories are not autonomous or pure. They are constantly influencing each other, but it is in the migrant where “strange fusions occur” (Rushdie,

Imaginary Homelands 124) that this fragmentation comes together, not into a monolithic identity, but a fluid hybrid identity. Jaina Sanga says, “For the migrant, the notion of fragmentation becomes important, because it is precisely through the process of piecing together different worlds that he is able to establish an identity” (26). This is an echo of the multitudes of which Saleem speaks, and the world in which Rushdie lives.

Bhabha proposes that pure identity is only possible in the death of other cultural expression, and Rushdie states that “the apostles of purity [...] have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings” (394). There is a danger associated with monolithic-pure identities that attempt to be the only truth. The colonial history that created the idea of West and East and the oppressive past between them lends credibility to this perspective. Edward Said chronicles the West's construction of the Oriental and how this characterization contributed to the oppression and suffering of the world outside Europe. Said states that even as decolonization is occurring there is still a perception that the “the Western consumer [...] is entitled to either own or to expend [...] the majority of the world resources. [...] Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being” (Orientalism, 108). In his work Culture and Imperialism, Said refers to the building of identity through oppositions: “[W]e are dealing with the formation of cultural identities understood not as essentializations [...] but as contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions” (52). He goes on to say:

To the best of my ability to have read and understood these “structures of attitudes and reference,” there was scarcely any dissent, any departure, any demurral from them: there was virtual unanimity that subject races should

be ruled, that they *are* subject races, that one race deserves and has consistently earned the right to be considered the race whose main mission is to expand beyond its own domain. (53)

The loss of identity due to colonialism and the attempt at relocating cultural identity informs much post-colonial writing, yet, in the writings of Rushdie and Bhabha, this reclamation is fraught with the same dangers that instigated and abetted colonialism. In response to Rushdie's books Grimus and Shame, Fawzia Afzal-Khan writes, "The message here [...] seems to be: we must step out of the circle of opposition, the dialectic of power-powerlessness, oppression-rebellion, altogether, that is, destroy the old status quo, the world as we know it, entirely before the world can be made habitable for all" (149). In two of Rushdie's novels, The Satanic Verses and Shalimar the Clown, that same message can still be found. In The Satanic Verses, Saladin Chamcha must let go of his opposition to his cultural identity which he has rejected in favor of a British identity before he finds a kind of peace, and in Shalimar the Clown identity politics contributes to the flaring up of hostilities in the Kashmir region.

Rushdie may be suggesting that locating identity it is not an exclusively post-colonial project or problem. When Rushdie describes the migrant, he does not talk about Indian migrants or post-colonial migrants. He asserts that "we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another" (Imaginary Homelands 394). While the stories are primarily Indian, Rushdie writes in English, and his characters come from diverse parts of the world. Rushdie, like Saleem, is attempting to acknowledge everyone. Rushdie understands he cannot *include* everyone, but he can help the reader understand his global perspective through acknowledging the "multitudes [...] jostling and shoving inside."

Part of post-colonial discourse is giving a voice to the voiceless. Bhabha writes about an increasingly international literature, one in which the culture is constantly vigilant and self-conscious of its identity and how it perceives the other:

The study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of “otherness”.

Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was a major theme of a world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrains of world literature. (17)

Bhabha is not just concerned with the identity of formerly colonized people, but the entire spectrum of human culture which is inexplicably bound together, both historically and politically. This cultural interconnectedness is at work in Shalimar the Clown.

Nowhere is this point more poignant than in the Kashmir village home of Shalimar the clown and Boonyi. The village consists of both Muslim and Hindus who have lived in relative peace for generations and share history and stories that stretch well beyond Kashmir. The marriage of Shalimar and Boonyi represented an unprecedented joining of the two communities.

To understand how Rushdie works with identity it is important to avoid pigeonholing, or to use a word Afzal-Khan uses in relating to history, *petrification* of, the identity that Rushdie critiques. One would not want to be accused of playing identity politics with Rushdie's conception of identity. To define Rushdie's conception of identity in positive terms would restrict a concept that Rushdie consistently works to break open and resist definitive categories. This type of identity politics was seen in the reaction to

The Satanic Verses in which Rushdie is accused of distorting Islamic history and disfiguring the prophet Mohammad (Appignanesi, Maitland 47). In a letter to the Indian Prime Minister at the time, Rajiv Gandhi, in response to the banning of the book, Rushdie points out that the people criticizing the book had stated “that they had no need actually to read it” (Appignanesi, Maitland 34), which in some ways echoes Orientalists’ attempts at defining the East without having been there or assuming a perspective once arriving. It is perhaps easier, then, to understand what identity is not for Rushdie. Identity is not pure. Identity is not static. Identity is not foundational. Identity is not innate. Insistence on identity being pure, static, foundational and innate is potentially dangerous. Rushdie's novels explore these parameters of identity working in his characters. If his characters violate them, or play at pinning down their identities in concrete ways, there will be negative outcomes.

Midnight's Children, The Satanic Verses and Shalimar the Clown represent Salman Rushdie's important and influential works and establish Rushdie's concepts about identity. Midnight's Children, his second novel was the first to draw widespread attention. Here we will follow Saleem Sinai as he searches for the meaning of his self, and tries very hard to create an identity. Satanic Verses prompted controversy in the form of a fatwa from the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran, in 1989, and sent Rushdie into hiding. Due to the controversy Rushdie would become an advocate for free speech. This novel, in the characters of Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, introduces readers to Rushdie's migrants, figures who cross frontiers, both physically and metaphorically, and struggle with their identity as their physical selves are transmogrified into external representations of the conflict. Shalimar the Clown is Rushdie's latest

novel, and deals with Kashmir and the rise of terrorism. The book critiques the use of identity politics by formerly colonized people in creating autonomous communities free from Western rule and further explores the frontier as a place of hybridity.

In an interview with Bill Moyer, Rushdie says:

A purpose of our lives is to broaden what we can understand and say and

therefore be. [...] [I]t enriches us as people to push those boundaries

outwards against the frontiers of knowledge and [...] acceptable ideas.

And there are of course people who don't like that. And who want to do

the opposite really, want to push those boundaries in. [...] I'm aware of

that. But I'm not interested in their sense of reality. I'm trying to say that,

that is an extremely reprehensible way to look at the world. (par. 73-75)

Rushdie, in contrast to the apostles of purity, is attempting to expand the concept of identity and to free identity from ideology and dogma. Exploring his novels will illuminate how his characters push their own boundaries and expand the possibilities of identity.

CHAPTER 1

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN: SALEEM'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY THROUGH MEANING

In Midnight's Children, Saleem, the narrator, has an identity crisis. It does not come into sharp focus until halfway through the book, but there is a glimpse of the conflict in the opening paragraph. Here the novel stalls at several points before Saleem reaches a satisfactory beginning. The first third of the paragraph reads like a conversation between two people on how to begin, interspersed with phrases like, "No, that won't do," "The time matters too," "No, it's important to be more [...]" "Oh, spell it out, spell it out" (3). This strange way of beginning calls attention to several aspects of the text itself. The most obvious is that Saleem's story is a construct. The text at this point does not have the errors or contradictions that will come later, but the reader is left with the definite sense that this story is not an accurate report of actual events, but constructed by the narrator. The narrator has left little room for the reader to be comfortable in the illusion that he/she is reading a homogeneous story.

Also at play is the narrator's identity; the reader may question why Saleem has such a hard time relating the circumstances of his own birth. Yet, for Saleem *his* birth is not simply *a* birth, so he draws attention to the fact that he was born at the exact moment of India's independence. Saleem says that he is "handcuffed to history" (3) assigning special significance to his birth and life. However, the stuttered beginning of the novel

calls into question this assertion. This doubt in the narrator's sincerity is further reinforced in the second paragraph in which Saleem admits he fears “absurdity” (4) and that he wants his life to mean something. This search for meaning is what his story is about, but it brings into question Saleem's motive in telling an accurate story. The third paragraph outlines the problem with establishing meaning: “I have been a swallower of lives; to know me, just one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well” (4). The reader is told there are multitudes jostling and shoving inside of Saleem. While one can infer that these multitudes are persons from Saleem's life, or even the Midnight Children's Conference, they might also be potential Saleems.¹ Saleem attempts to find meaning and significance in these multiple possibilities and searches for a purpose in his life, but in the process he exposes the mutability and artificial construct of his identity.

There is a question of how truth is established. There seem to be multiple possibilities of truth, at least in regard to Saleem's life story, and Saleem will present his version. The reader may not doubt Saleem at this time, though he has given some reasons to be suspect. He has been honest thus far, even telling his reader that he is “remaking his life” (4). In commenting on Saleem's narration Rushdie says:

History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be, I believed, a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to “read” the world. (Imaginary Homelands 25)

¹ The idea of multiple possibilities of the individual is echoed later in The Satanic Verses.

Saleem's authority as a narrator has been both brought into doubt and reinforced by questioning the authenticity of his story: brought into doubt because the reader is made aware that this is just one version, yet reinforced because there is no "true" version. The version that Saleem is giving is true for Saleem, and as narrator of *his* version, he is the ultimate authority. Sanga posits Rushdie's formation of identity in this way:

"Identity, as Rushdie's writing illustrates, is not grounded merely in attempts to recover the past; rather, identity refers to the way in which we are positioned and constructed by the workings of the past. Identity is thus constructed through the complex interplay of memory and narrative" (21). While Saleem acknowledges the multitudes, he insists that his story is authentic, he is "remaking my life from the point at which it began," (4) and creating his identity from "the complex interplay of memory and narrative." Sanga says:

The dismantling or calling into question the idea of certainties is actually fundamental to Rushdie's vision of the world. [...] Thus "observable reality" [...] is always suspect, and Rushdie would rather attest to and draw from the world of the imagination—dreams even, rather than privilege the idea of a single fixed way of looking at the world. (20)

The fragmented beginning reveals Saleem's construction, and calls into question his version of his story and history. Rufus Cook explains:

the writer tends to become a victim of what Kenneth Burke refers to as the "impulse to perfection" the temptation, inherent in all language, to reduce a complex, multifarious reality to the dimensions of a single metaphor or model. [...] It is because he is so sensitive to this danger, of course, that Saleem Sinai agonizes throughout Midnight's Children over the demands

imposed on him as a storyteller. (4)

Despite Saleem's assertion that he is merely presenting his story, there is a motivation behind this telling: his search for meaning. Hassumani argues that Saleem reorganizes history to impose meaning on ambiguity (36). While his version may be colored by his memories and prejudices, it is something entirely different to knowingly create meaning and significance in a story that deserves none. Saleem attempts to establish meaning in his life through the creation of the Midnight's Children Conference: "[W]e must be here for a purpose, don't you think?" (252). While a reader may forgive the coincidence of Saleem's birth and the birth of India, he/she may not forgive his later assertions of involvement in history. His belief that he *is* something new, unique and has a purpose in the world destroys lives later on, as he uses his "power" to dispense his sense of justice. Saleem may not be one of Rushdie's hated "apostles of purity," indeed Saleem may despise them as much as Rushdie, but in his quest for meaning, his identity slips towards a monolithic idea and becomes his obsession.

Saleem chooses to construct his identity in several ways. The first is through family. He begins his story with his grandfather and grandmother meeting, and establishes connections despite the fact, revealed much later, that he is not biologically related to the family. Throughout his life he adopts multiple fathers that compensate for the ambiguity of his birth and further reassert his connection to history and assertion that he is something special. Saleem connects his identity to coincidences in history, developing theories to explain his intrinsic role in the history of India: "I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what our [...] scientists might term 'modes of connection' composed of 'dualistically-combined

configurations' of the two pairs of opposed adverbs given above" (272). Part of his connection to history is expressed in his belief that he is something special. The significance he gives to the Midnight's Children and his later revolutionary desires motivate him to take action, and also draws criticism from family and captors later in the novel.

The story of Saleem's life opens in 1915 with his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, 32 years and 130 pages before his own birth. Padma, his faithful audience for this re-telling of his life, makes several comments about Saleem's slowness to arrive at the moment of his birth due to his myriad distractions and side stories: "You better get a move on or you'll die before you get yourself born" (37). She does not realize that for Saleem everything is important in constructing his story, and each part conspires to give him birth. It is notable that Aziz is not his biological grandfather. This fact is not revealed until much later, and no regression in the story is made to account for the lives of his biological parents. Saleem merely states that he has given clues and claims that his parents never doubted that he was their son, even after learning the truth (131). This identity of grandson by association rather than biology is important to consider because of Saleem's claims that the past has affected his present, creating in part who he is: "to know me [...] you'll have to swallow the lot as well. [...] I must commence the business of remaking my life from the point at which it really began, some thirty-two years before anything as obvious, as *present*, as my clock-ridden, crime-stained birth" (4). The assumption of the reader and Padma is that the connection between past and present generations is biological. Padma exclaims, "What thing are you that you don't even care to tell the truth about who your parents were? You don't care that your mother died

giving you life?" (131). Saleem's story questions identity of biology, an identity that many perceive as foundational. Yet, the past that Saleem claims appears to have an effect on him regardless of biology, and is therefore *his* past.

His grandfather also possesses a fragmented identity. This fragmentation is represented by a hole that forms within Aziz after he is struck on the nose and renounces his belief in God: "And knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a hole" (6). This alteration is facilitated by a Western education in a German school of medicine. Saleem says his grandfather saw things "through traveled eyes," and felt "as though the old place resented his educated, stethoscoped return" (5). This resentment is expressed in the folding up of the earth to strike Aziz on the nose, releasing a few drops of blood. Aziz is no longer purely Indian, and upon his return the land tells him this. Rushdie's migrant identity plays a part in Aziz's fragmentation. Sanga writes, "The notion of fragmentation is relevant as the migrant's identity can be seen as a compilation of 'shreds and scraps' of meanings, arranged and rearranged by the experience of migration" (26). The strange fusions that have occurred within Aziz have left a hole, rather than a new, whole self. Tai the boatman chastises Aziz for his new medicine, "big bag full of foreign machines, and he's still as silly as an owl. [...] We haven't enough bags at home that you bring back that thing made of a pig's skin that makes one unclean just by looking at it?" (15). Tai espouses the old traditions and has an acute distaste for the new ways that Dr. Aziz is bringing to India, including the unclean leather bag:

Doctor Aziz begins to diagnose. To the ferryman, the bag represents
Abroad; it is the alien thing, the invader, progress. And yes, it has indeed

taken possession of the young Doctor's mind; and yes, it contains knives, and cures for cholera and malaria and smallpox; and yes, it sits between doctor and boatman, and has made them antagonists. (16)

Tai gives clues to the power of the nose, and creates a foundation upon which Saleem can build his identity despite biological discrepancies. The ground hit Aziz upon the nose. Later, Tai tells Aziz, after seeing the stethoscope, "You will use such a machine now, instead of your own big nose" (17). Earlier Saleem claims, "I wish to place on record my gratitude to this mighty organ—if not for it, who would have believed me to be truly my mother's son, my grandfather's grandson" (8). Aziz's nose itches to give warning about pending troubles. In this way, Saleem firmly attaches his identity to his family. Saleem's nose later in the book becomes both the source of his telepathic powers, and eventually an incredible sniffer of smells, mirroring the power of warning his grandfather's nose possesses.

Another example of the fragmentation of Aziz is how he met Saleem's grandmother, Naseem Ghani. Aziz is called in to examine Naseem, but is only allowed to examine her through a perforated sheet. Aziz is called back many times, and can only see a small part of Naseem's body through the hole in the sheet; he comes to know Naseem bit by bit. Afzal-Khan explains that "what is being implied here is that Dr. Aziz, himself a 'fragmented' man, becomes obsessed with the woman whom he sees only in fragmented form, and in his desire to unify these pieces, to possess the whole woman, he decides to marry her" (152). This mirrors the reader's perception of Saleem who releases bits and parts of his story so that the reader comes to know Saleem in bits and parts: "The act of gluing together the numerous inconsistencies becomes part of the process of

reclaiming, restoring, and restructuring a past reality that history has dislocated” (Sanga 26). He excuses this upon the revelation that he is not his mother's son by saying, “Nor have I been guilty of trickery. I provided clues” (131), similar to the clues offered by the perforated sheet.

Saleem's identity with his family is always in question, despite his assertion that they accept him. Upon learning that his son was not his son, Ahmed Sinai slaps his wife and sends his son into exile (270, 275). This questionable family identity explains Saleem's assertion that he has had many fathers. By claiming these fathers he is able to attach himself to their identity and history. He claims two fathers as a result of his birth, William Methwold, his biological father, and Ahmed Sinai, father by accident. William Methwold claims that he is a descendant of another William Methwold, “Did you know my ancestor was the chap who had the idea of building this whole city? Sort of Raffles of Bombay. As his descendant, at this important juncture, I feel the, I don't know, need to play my part” (107). In this way, though he does not admit it, Saleem is tacitly connected to the birth of Bombay. Saleem's father, in response to Methwold's claims of a famous ancestor, creates a story of a Mughal ancestor and a family curse. It seems that Saleem inherits the propensity for story telling from his fathers.

While in Pakistan, and away from his adopted father Ahmed, Saleem adopts another father, and becomes entangled in a military coup. His attempt at creating meaning by identity through a new father is more explicit in this case:

Of course, I nodded. Proving my manhood, my fitness for sonship, I assisted my uncle as he made the revolution. And in so doing, in earning his gratitude, in stilling the sniggers of the assembled gongs-and-pips, I

created a new father for myself; General Zulfikar became the latest in the line of men who have been willing to call me “sonny,” or “sonny Jim,” or even simply “my son.” (332)

In the next line Saleem says, “How *we* made the revolution” (emphasis added). Saleem is identifying completely with his uncle and the revolution they are planning; he sees his eleven-year-old self moving objects around on a table as representative of troop movements and contributing to the plan. After accompanying his uncle to kidnap the president, Saleem remarks, “not only did I overthrow a government—I also consigned a president to exile” (333). This is overstated for a young boy, despite his claims of being present when it happened. Yet, his identification of General Zulfikar as a father allows Saleem to connect himself to history and contribute to building the identity and meaning of his life.

His relationship with his sister, Jamila, the Brass Monkey, is thrown into confusion as he accepts that he is not biologically tied to the family. The relationship, one of a few stable relationships Saleem has during childhood, had formed part of his identity. He was the Brass Monkey's older brother; they were siblings and playmates who stuck up for one another: “From the beginning, I decided to treat her as an ally” (173). The questioning of his status as part of the family does little to diminish the feelings that Saleem holds for the Brass Monkey, but he doubts whether his feelings are merely fraternal or if they have become incestuous. He dismisses the history that has made the Brass Monkey and himself siblings, and falls in love with his sister. Up to this point, family and national history create Saleem, but in this one instant he tries to recreate himself as a lover of the Brass Monkey based on biological circumstance. Upon

declaring his love, he immediately realizes his mistake, “but even as he spoke he could hear his words sounding hollow, and realized that although what he was saying was the literal truth, there were other truths which had become more important because they had been sanctified by time” (372). This story is told parallel to the story of the Nawab fixing the elections in Pakistan. Saleem comments, “maybe this was the difference between my Indian childhood and Pakistani realities—that in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disorientated, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies” (373). He then accuses Jamila of believing “what-had-been-sanctified-as-truth” (373) as if his own history is mirroring the corruption of Pakistani politics. What Saleem is missing is that Jamila's identity as his sister has been constructed from “the complex interplay of memory and narrative” (Sanga) of them as siblings and she is not guilty of the same dishonesty of the corrupt politicians that fixed the elections of Pakistan. A reader might reverse Saleem's appointed roles: Saleem is the one trying to corrupt Jamila by insisting on *his* version of the truth, and thus Saleem mirrors the corruption of Nawab. Jamila resists, and after the death of their family, disowns Saleem for his indiscretion.

Saleem's bias towards himself in matters of historical significance is also illustrated in the birth of the Brass Monkey; an episode in which Saleem establishes a pattern of interpretation of events that pushes him to the center of attention. Saleem dismisses the Brass Monkey's birth: “the birth was so uneventful, so effortless that it passed virtually unnoticed on Methwold's Estate,” because, as Saleem puts it, “I [...] hauled myself upright in my cot.” While Saleem interprets this event as himself being the center of attention, it is quite possible that this is an instance of an infant Saleem

trying to thrust himself into the middle of events that threaten to leave him behind and render him insignificant.

While Saleem's construction of his identity through his family allows him to ground his identity in concrete relationships, which prove problematic, his attempts at “handcuffing” himself to the history of India provide the mode by which he gives his identity purpose. It is also what leads to the cracks, as the questions arise as to the authenticity of his story and contradictions become apparent. His identity can not hold together as it is being told, and must be obliterated into the six hundred million that populate India.

Saleem's most outlandish claims about his identity are his assertions that his life has touched all aspects of history. This has profound implications in the construction of the *Midnight's Children* and in Saleem's joining the communists and magicians, attempts to take a more active role in affecting events.

Saleem's evidence for being tied to history is rooted in his family history concerning his grandfather and grandmother. Adaam Aziz is eager to see Naseem's face, and is waiting for a headache that will take the perforated sheet up to her face: “On the day the World War ended, Naseem developed the longed for headache. Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family's existence” (23). In this episode there is no direct connection, merely coincidence, what Saleem might call “passive-metaphorical,” or “all socio-political trends and events which, merely by existing, affected me metaphorically” (273). The end of the World War mirrors Adaam Aziz's and Naseem's end of anonymity and the beginning of their real courtship. What this proves for Saleem is that there is a connection between his family and history.

One other episode illustrates Saleem's obsession with connecting his identity with history. In this episode, Saleem is not affecting events, but Saleem claims events are centered around himself and his family. The bombs dropped on Rawalpindi and Karachi wipe out his entire family, and Saleem interprets the attack as deliberate on the part of the Indian government to get rid of his family:

Let me state this quite unequivocally: it is my firm conviction that the hidden purpose of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 was nothing more nor less than the elimination of my benighted family from the face of the earth. [...] [I]t is only necessary to examine the bombing-pattern of that war with an analytical, unprejudiced eye. (386)

This allegedly analytical and unprejudiced eye has already admitted mistakes to the reader, such as the date of Ghandi's death (190) and national elections (254). By centering himself in history in this way, and lifting his family, and thus himself, to the center of historical events, his hypothesis that his life should have a purpose is supported by the attempts of the Indian and Pakistani governments to kill him.

Saleem's creation of his identity is supplemented heavily by the Midnight's Children Conference, a meeting convening telepathically in Saleem's mind of all the children born in the midnight hour of India's independence, but before this is addressed, it is important to look at how his audience, Padma, reacts to the news of voices in his head. This is the first instance in which Padma expresses extreme doubt in Saleem's story and believes that he is going crazy: "O baba! You are sick; what have you said?" (229). Saleem rejects Padma's doubt by questioning everything: "What is truth? What is sanity? [...] Do Hindus not accept [...] that the world is a kind of dream; that Brahma

[...] is dreaming the universe; that we only see dimly through that dream web. [...] If I say certain things took place which you [...] find hard to believe then which of us is right?" (242). The narrator, Saleem, and author, Rushdie, seem to be blending at this moment, as Saleem calls into question all forms of authoritative narrative, but mainly theology. He mentions that other visionary men, such as Muhammad, thought themselves insane. While Saleem doesn't doubt that there will be questions about his narrative, he asserts that for himself, that is how it happened: "Don't make the mistake of dismissing what I've unveiled as mere delirium; or even the insanely exaggerated fantasies of a lonely, ugly child. [...] [W]hat I have just written [...] is nothing less than the literal, by-the-hairs-of-my-mother's-head truth" (230). Everything is in question now, and the reader, like Padma, can do little more than accept the story: "But [...] you also [...] want to know what happens? About the hands that danced without touching, and the knees? [...] And the Children—what became of them?' And Padma nodded" (242). Saleem ends the episode of Padma's doubt by saying, "Still—I've had a valuable warning. It's dangerous business to try and impose one's view of things on others" (243). Saleem is intolerant of anyone doubting his story, yet, by questioning the objectivity of truth he gives both the reader and Padma the tools to deconstruct his story. Saleem is asking his audience to believe his retelling of his story despite its inaccuracies and contradictions.

The story calls into question any pure version of reality, yet it is still important to review the context in which this Saleem's identity develops. Saleem's gradual creation of the *Midnight's Children* corresponds with specific troubles he has as a small child. While he is writing this part of the story he has a bad fever. He tells the reader not to dismiss the validity of his story due to his fever and troubles as a child, but this very disclaimer is

suspect: “It is the exercise of these powers, as well as communication with his other 'midnight siblings,' that help relieve some of the burdens Saleem has to bear in 'real' life” (Afzal-Khan 156). Saleem has already admitted errors that provided the convenience of historical coincidence:

[I]n my India, Ghandi will continue to die at the wrong time.

Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I'm prepared to distort everything—to rewrite the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role? Today, in my confusion, I can't judge. I'll have to leave it to others. (190)

The voices come when he has been hiding in the bath closet and sees his mother naked. In order to remain silent he sucks his mucus up into his head, breaking some interior barrier and releasing the voices. He believes the voices are angels, and that he has discovered that special talent that will return his family's investment in him. He tells his family about the voices, and they reject him, punctuated by a slap to the head from his father. Saleem then “decides” they are not angels, “That night understanding that the voices in my head far outnumbered the ranks of angels, I decided [...] that I had not after all been chosen to preside over the end of the world. [...] Telepathy, then” (192). During this period, the voices are real people and he begins to listen to his parents, friends, and people all over India. At this point Saleem has no awareness of the *Midnight's Children*. The *Midnight's Children* are revealed after other traumatic moments: the rejection by Evie Burns, an American girl living on the Methwold Estate, and colliding with Sonny, one of Saleem's best friends (214). Similarly, his power is muted when his family leaves

his father and India for Pakistan, and permanently “drained” from Saleem when his parents take him to have his nasal passages cleared (at which point he acquires the power of smell). His ability is tied to traumatic moments in his life, and bolsters his self-esteem, giving meaning to his awkwardness and big nose. The mutability of the power, connected to circumstance, casts doubt on the accuracy of Saleem's claims, despite his assurance to the contrary.

The Midnight's Children are the primary way Saleem hopes to give his life meaning and purpose. He believes, with the same optimism that plagues the new country and his father, that the Midnight's Children are something new that can change the old ways and make a new world: “It was as though [...] history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time” (224). Saleem admits his obsession for meaning and articulates this to the Conference: “At this point I introduced the Conference to the notions which plagued me all this time: the notion of purpose, and meaning. 'We must think,' I said, 'what we are for.'” (261). The continuing infighting and dishonesty on the part of Saleem eventually dissolve the Midnight's Children's Conference. Saleem realizes:

I won't deny I was disappointed. I shouldn't have been; there was nothing unusual about the children except for their gifts; their heads were full of all the usual things, fathers mothers money food land possessions fame power God. Nowhere, in the thoughts of the Conference, could I find anything as new as ourselves [...] but then I was on the wrong track, too; I could not see any more clearly than anyone else. (261)

The creation of the Midnight's Children's Conference is the point when Saleem reveals his tendency towards the “apostles of purity” and the construction of his monolithic identity. Shiva, Saleem's enemy and alter ego also born on the stroke of midnight, in their arguments, is the bearer of commonsense realism while Saleem reveals himself the idealist:

“The thing is, we must be here for a *purpose*, don't you think? I mean, there has to be a *reason*, you must agree?” [...] Shiva yelled, “you don't know one damn thing! What *purpose*, man? For what reason you're rich and I'm poor? Where's the reason in starving, man?” (252)

Shiva insists that he should be the leader because of Saleem's delusions, but Saleem asserts that there is no MCC without him. Later during the conference, Saleem accepts the chief position, but tells the children to think of him as a big brother. They rebel against him when he excludes Shiva from the conference, and blocks part of his mind, the part that reveals that he and Shiva were switched at birth. The Midnight's Children resist all attempts by Saleem to become what he envisions, and even call him out in the end accusing him of “prevarication, high-handedness, egotism” (341). Saleem, in trying to construct the Midnight's Children in his image, destroys the very thing that had promise to give his life purpose and reason.

Saleem tries again to impose his version of reality when he tries to tell his sister that they can be lovers. One last instance illustrates Saleem's attempts at, as he said, “impos[ing] [his] view of things on others,” and the suffering it causes. Saleem is greatly disturbed by his mother's rendezvous with her first husband: “Perhaps she did it because of the growing impoverishment of her own life; but at the age of ten I wasn't disposed to

be sympathetic; and in my own way, I began to dream dreams of revenge” (250). This revenge takes shape in the Sabarmati affair, the adultery of Lila Sabarmati and Homi Catrack: “Consumed by the two-headed demon of revenge, I used my telepathic powers [...] as a weapon; and in this way I discovered the details of the relationship between Homi Catrack and Lila Sabarmati” (296). The demon in Saleem speaks: “Loose woman. [...] Perpetrator of the worst of maternal perfidies! We shall turn you into an awful example” (296). He reveals the affair to Commander Sabarmati who takes his gun and shoots the lovers in their room. The Commander is arrested, the trial becomes a national circus, and Sabarmati is convicted. Saleem has destroyed lives but he only thinks of the lesson he has taught his mother:

“It was all my doing, Amma; I wanted to teach you a lesson. Amma, do not go to see other men. [...] I am in long trousers now, and may speak to you as a man.”

Yes, I had taught my mother a lesson; and after the Sabarmati affair she never saw her Nadir-Qasim in the flesh, never again, not as long as she lived; but, deprived of him [...] she began to shrink, and her hobble became more pronounced, and there was the emptiness of age in her eyes.

(303)

Saleem later tells the reader that as a result of Sabarmati affair, the Methwold Estate enters a period of decline in which the tenants begin to sell their property and move away. Saleem’s perception that his power has a purpose and a reason enables him to impose his sense of justice upon his family and his world.

Saleem's attempts at giving meaning to his life and becoming an active participant

in history has caused suffering instead of showing the purpose of his life. His one last attempt at tying himself to the history of the nation and creating a purpose for the MCC is the story of the Widow and the Magicians and Communists. Saleem stays at the Magicians camp, home to many of the Mao Communists, when it is raided by the government and Saleem is taken prisoner. He is taken to the Widow's Hostel in Benares where mass sterilization is taking place. Saleem interprets this sterilization as an attempt to get rid of the Midnight's Children's Conference. While in the Hostel, Saleem speaks to the Midnight's Children, apologizing for everything that has happened:

Dear Children. How can I say this? What is there to say? My guilt my shame. [...] I should never have dreamed of purpose, I am coming to the conclusion that privacy, the small individual lives of men, are preferable to all this inflated macrocosmic activity. (500)

While humbly bowing out of a historical role, Saleem is still positioning his life in the center of the universe. He tells the Midnight's Children that he made mistakes, but is telling the reader that the sterilization was done to get rid of him and the Midnight's Children.

Saleem's attempts at giving his life meaning have failed in the historical sense, that is, in the way his life has played out. His last attempt is in the telling, the “petrification” of his life story: “I have immortalized my memories” (529), that are to be passed down to his son: “My son will understand. As much as for any living being, I'm telling my story for him, so that afterwards, when I've lost my struggle against the cracks, he will know” (241). Saleem lets go of his motivation for meaning in his life by saying:

I no longer want to be anything except what who I am. [...] I am the sum

total of everything that went before me. [...] I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each "I," every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. (440)

The drainage by the Widow completes Saleem's decentering: "And Saleem? No longer connected to history, drained above-and-below, I made my way back to the capital, conscious that an age [...] had come to a sort of end" (508).

Saleem makes one last comment on his unreliability as a narrator: "yes, I should revise, improve and improve; but there is neither the time nor the energy. I am obliged to offer no more than this stubborn sentence: It happened that way because that's how it happened" (530). He says this after offering numerous examples of questions that a reader might have, including why Saleem only received his powers after the incident in the laundry closet while the rest of the children didn't require a similar event. While Saleem's story has impulses towards a monolithic identity, a pure history with himself at the center, it gives its audience the tools by which to deconstruct that story, thus subverting Saleem's claim to a central role in history and his own version of his identity. Hassamani elaborates: "By the time [Saleem] reaches the end of his narrative, he realizes that the only meaning available to him is that which he superimposes onto 'reality' and that this 'meaning' or interpretation of reality is flawed and impure because the process of remembering or pickling is open to distortions" (41). Saleem's attempts at insisting upon a particular version of reality or truth cause suffering, or have unintended consequences, as the Sabarmati affair and his failure with the Midnight's Children's Conference

illustrate. Saleem's telling of his story is congruent with Rushdie's idea of identity. Sanga describes it this way: "That Saleem does not provide a calculated answer other than, 'It happened that way because that's how it happened' points toward the impossibility of tracing all the mixed up patterns that make each person. [...] [W]e have to stop counting and keeping score, and just accept our mixed up identities" (87). The reader is left with Saleem's version, but has an understanding that others would have a different story, and even Saleem himself, if he were to retell it, might tell it differently. In The Satanic Verses Rushdie continues his interrogation into the mutability and non-purity of identity.

CHAPTER 2

THE SATANIC VERSES: THE MIGRANT AND STRANGE FUSIONS

Saleem in Midnight's Children is a character who is self conscious of the construction of his identity, admitting to mistakes and recognizing later that he has been wrong to impose his view of the world, and that perhaps he too is victim to the optimism disease, trying to create meaning and purpose for his life. The characters of The Satanic Verses are much less introspective, and the book itself is narrated by an omnipresent narrator who at one time presents himself to one of his characters, Gibreel, directly telling him what to do. That the description of the narrator given resembles a caricature of Salman Rushdie, and that Gibreel believes he is seeing God, and the narrator does nothing to correct this assumption, points the most directly to Rushdie's idea that identity is a construct: all are authors of their identity. The book deals directly with this concept, as Mahound, a re-spelling of Mohammad, is depicted as delivering a revelation not from God, but from within himself, who then presents his recitation as divine. The negative reaction by Muslims to the publishing of The Satanic Verses, which included a fatwa that called for Rushdie's death, while not justified, is understandable.

The issue is more complicated than that, though, as Peter Jones describes in his essay "The Satanic Verses and the Politics of Identity." Jones points out that identity "is a category of which [Rushdie] makes frequent use and which is at the centre of the issues and experiences explored in The Satanic Verses" (325). Jones explores whether or not

Rushdie has committed a wrong in the eyes of those who are not Muslim. That Rushdie committed blasphemy in the sense that he has corrupted the teachings of Mohammad would pose little concern for non-Muslims, but he might be condemned if by questioning these beliefs he has somehow defamed Muslim identity. Rushdie has stated it was not his intention to insult or to blaspheme and that all parts in question are imaginary

(Appignanesi 33-34). Jones discusses the distinction between belief and identity: “if my Islamic faith is merely a constituent of my identity, it is no longer God and Muhammad who are significant – it is *me*. My beliefs become merely a manifestation of myself”

(327). However, Muslims, along with Christian, Jews, and others in respect to their faith

[...] accept that their faith is a 'public' faith – that it deserves the attention of all. The Qur'an reveals the word of God to everyone for everyone. [...]

For Muslims, the truth is not a postmodern “truth”; it is the real truth. So it runs counter to the very nature of Islam, as a system of belief, to treat its content as the private or clandestine preserve of the Islamic Ummah.

(Jones 329)

Yet, when these beliefs are made public they are no longer private matters: “[Rushdie] has been keen to point out that Muhammad is a subject in history, which is to say that Muhammad is 'out there,' in the public domain, situated in human past, the legitimate object of anyone's attention. Likewise, if the Qur'an is offered to the world as the word of God, how can it become the private property of one section of humanity?” (Jones 329).

Rushdie says in an interview in 1988, “[T]here is a view that I take—and that is that everything is worth discussing. There are no subjects which are off limits and that includes God, includes prophets” (Appignanesi 33).

For the purpose of this reading of The Satanic Verses, it is not important whether Rushdie indeed committed a wrong by representing Islamic history in a dream of Gibreel. What is significant is Jones's argument that if one's belief is internalized as part of one's identity then "Beliefs cease to be propositional claims" (329) or objective forms of truth, yet, once they enter the public sphere, they are open to criticism and scrutiny. The importance of this is that neither one's beliefs nor identity need be taken as true or accurate portrayals of reality and may in fact be constructs, both reinforcing the other. Saleem of Midnight's Children presents us with a version of his story and history. He admits to historical error, and as a public document his story is open to scrutiny, yet he asks the reader not to doubt who he is, how his story created his identity. In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie is again looking at identity, specifically migrant identity, and how newness enters the world: "The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure" (Imaginary Homelands, 394). In Gibreel, Rushdie explores the historical circumstance of Islam in a dream with the names of persons and places changed. Rushdie himself has said, "In this dream sequence, I have tried to offer my view of the phenomenon of revelation, and the birth of a great world religion" (Appignanesi 36). These historical circumstances become internalized for Gibreel, and become his identity as he comes to believe that he is the archangel Gibreel. The recounting of the creation of Islam critiques revealed religion, and how the identity of one may become the identity of many. For Saladin, what he believes about himself and the world, as he attempts to reject uncivilized Bombay for civilized London, is not part of

his experiences as he becomes demonic and comes face to face with the London underworld. As his beliefs about the world are challenged by influence of the omnipresent narrator and his migrant status, his identity changes, strange fusions occur. The unstable construction of beliefs and how they affect the mutability and create strange fusions of identity, especially at frontiers, is the idea of The Satanic Verses.

The Satanic Verses opens with Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha falling from the sky, and the narrator quickly establishes their dichotomy: “because Chamcha was going down head first [...] he commenced to feel a low irritation at the other's refusal to fall in plain fashion. Saladin nosedived while Farishta embraced air” (4). Gibreel is described as making wild gestures during the fall while Saladin is simply falling head first with his arms held tight at his side. Gibreel and Saladin throughout the novel become the antithesis of each other, in physical form, ideas, and actions. Their commonalities—born in India, actors and migrants to Great Britain—reinforce their duality; their stories diverge on how they relate to the migrant experience. The narrator reinforces this duality by turning Gibreel into an angelic figure and Saladin into a demonic creature, mirroring their internal conflict.

The narrator does not disguise the symbolic nature of the characters' entry into Britain. The opening lines of the novel, spoken by Gibreel are, “To be born again [...] first you have to die” (3). The inference here is that the migrant, upon entering a new country, is born again, the old self dying. The narrator describes it as a mutation, and later, as the two men fall through mutable clouds, describes the change as metamorphic:

Hybrid cloud-creatures pressed in upon them, gigantic flowers with human breasts dangling from fleshy stalks, winged cats, and Chamcha in

his semi-consciousness was seized by the notion that he, too, had acquired the quality of cloudiness, becoming metamorphic, hybrid, as if he were growing into the person whose head nestled now between his legs and whose legs were wrapped around his long, patrician neck. (6-7)

This type of magical reality infused with the real echoes Rushdie's assertions in Imaginary Homelands: "Migrants must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats" (125). The narrator has put the characters in an extreme location, a free fall to earth, but this only reinforces the idea that they are entering unfamiliar territory. The text even reads, "their collision sent them tumbling end over end [...] all the way down and along the hole that went to Wonderland" (6). Their fall from the plane and their safe landing are also a type of magical moment, and this Wonderland is figuratively Great Britain, a place where both characters will encounter new and unfamiliar situations.

In Step Across This Line Rushdie writes, "In The Satanic Verses I tried to answer the question, how does newness enter the world?" (73). The first pages of the novel in which mutation, metamorphoses, and rebirth are strong motifs strongly establish this theme. What Rushdie says next has weight in regards to the idea of how the migrant identity develops: "Influence, the flowing of the old into the new, is one part of the answer" (73). Gibreel and Saladin have already been seen to influence each other, "as if he were growing into the person whose head nestled now between his legs" (7), and Britain will also have profound influence on their identity.

Gibreel and Saladin approach the sense of self differently. As stated above they are both from India and actors. Gibreel, though, has spent his whole life in India, while

Saladin had long ago migrated to Great Britain, and is on the plane because he was returning from a visit to his father in India. Saladin has vehemently rejected his Indian past and embraced what he perceives as the superior culture of the British. His manifestation as a demon is a reflection of both his perception towards India and the host country's perception of the migrant. Saladin's identity is first built on a strict dichotomy of us versus them, and only after reconciliation of his identity with both the host and home country does he find peace. Gibreel perceives his identity as pure and monolithic. He is an Indian film star whose roles largely consist of playing Indian deities. After the fall from the sky, Gibreel begins to have dreams that he is the archangel Gibreel, giving recitations to Mahound. Gibreel accepts this identity, what the narrator will later describe as pure: "Gibreel [...] fears above all things the altered states in which his dreams leak into [...] so that his is still a self which [...] we may describe as 'true'" (Satanic Verses 427).

Throughout the novel, influences flowing from the old into the new, creating newness, are manifested in several ways. Gibreel and Saladin, as migrant characters, represent the primary way Rushdie illustrates this. Another example how newness enters the world is through conscious deliberate effort, which challenges the conception of *a priori* knowledge, or, in the case of The Satanic Verses, divine revelation. The characters of Mahound, the Imam, and Ayesha imagine that they are receiving revelations from archangel Gibreel. Gibreel, the observer to these revelations, makes it clear that it is not he who is giving the revelation, but Mahound, the Imam and Ayesha themselves forcing his lips to move. The implication is that these revelations are not divine, but merely ideas of a human kind.

Gibreel is an actor who plays gods in movies, has an inflated ego, and believes in reincarnation. The fall from the sky is not so much a true metamorphose as an exaggeration of traits already present. Gibreel's becoming the archangel Gibreel is almost inevitable. As a child his mother doted on him at the expense of his father: "A son is a blessing and a blessing that requires the gratitude of the best" (19). As a child, Gibreel's name was Ismail Najmuddin. He changed it, as he tells Saladin, because of his mother: "my mummyji, Spoono, my one and only Mamo, because who else was it who started the whole angel business, her personal angel, she called me, *farishta*, because apparently I was too damn sweet, believe it or not, I was good as goddamn gold" (17). *Farishta* means angel, so that literally his new name is Gibreel Angel. His mother's actions continue to reinforce his personality. When Gibreel (Ismail) returned from work with his father, she would say, "to simply lay eyes on him made all her dreams come true" (19); the narrator next informs the reader that "from the beginning [...] he could fulfill people's most secret desires without having any idea of how he did it" (19). After the fall from the plane, Gibreel dreams of giving revelation or fulfilling people's desires, as with Rosa in the house on the beach after he lands. After the death of his parents he is taken in by the General Secretary of the workers' guild that Gibreel and his father were a part of, Babasaheb Mhatre. Babasaheb informs Gibreel that his parents "were already being scheduled for re-entry somewhere. [...] So it was Mhatre who started Farishta off on the whole reincarnation business" (21). Gibreel is not aware of these influences, as Saleem was in Midnight's Children, so he is unable to question his actions later, unable to recognize his personality and identity as constructed from the past.

The narrator states:

For many of [Gibreel's] fans, the boundary separating the performer and his roles had long ago ceased to exist. The fans, yes, and? How about Gibreel? [...] [Y]ou'll agree that for such an actor [...] to have a bee in his bonnet about *avatars*, like much-metamorphosed Vishnu, was not so very surprising. Rebirth: that's God stuff, too. (17)

Gibreel's parts as deities certainly play a role in his sickness and visions later in the book. Yet, his idea of himself as the *pure* messenger of God, "*I am the right hand of God*" (448) is not entirely supported by his roles as various gods: "It was part of the magic of his persona that he succeeded in crossing religious boundaries without giving offence" (16). Gibreel represents the multiplicity of the Indian sub-continent for which he makes his movies, and he is an "avatar" of India's hybridity, telling and retelling the various myths that create the tapestry of Indian culture. It is false, as Gibreel will think later, that his angelic identity is something pure. It has been infused with not only the gods of India but also of Islam and Christianity.

Gibreel has dreams in which he delivers revelations to Mahound, a radical Imam, and Ayesha. As Gibreel continues to have his dreams, the barrier between the dream world and real world begins to fall away: "this further evidence that the world of dreams was leaking into that of the waking hours, that the seals dividing the two were breaking" (304). His first dream vision is of Mahound, a businessman in the fictional city of Jahilia, "I am him, he is me, I am the bloody archangel, Gibreel himself, large as bloody life [...] every time I go to sleep the dream starts up from where it stopped. Same dream in the same place" (83). For most of the dream Gibreel is merely an observer floating high above the city, "the dreamer, whose point of view is sometimes that of the camera

and at other moments, spectator” (108), but when Mahound is in need of a revelation, Gibreel feels an uncontrollable tug that brings him before Mahound. During the recitation Gibreel feels compelled to speak, but it is not his voice. He feels the voice coming from Mahound, "here it is *at my own jaw* working it, opening shutting; and the power, starting within Mahound, reaching up to *my vocal cords* and the voice comes" (112). A little later: "and then [Mahound] did his old trick, forcing my mouth open and making it pour all over him, like sick" (123). When Mahound goes to Jahilia to deliver the new revelations Gibreel thinks, "*it was me both times, baba, me first and second also me [...]* and we all know how my mouth got worked" (123).

The story of Mahound is a retelling of the story of Islam. Gibreel's part as messenger and observer place the episode in a dream world distancing his story from the actual historical events. It also becomes a sort of construct of Gibreel's that contributes to his mental problems later in the novel. However, much of the time Gibreel is merely an observer and the story of Mahound and the town of Jahilia can be seen as a separate narrative within The Satanic Verses. The title of the novel echoes the verses that Mahound recites to compromise with the Grandee, Abu Simbel, which he later denounces as Satanic. It also is reflective of the verses that Saladin, his voice disguised, whispers to Gibreel over the phone to send him into a mental breakdown. Both Mahound's and Saladin's verses are seen as evil and false. Mahound, in his struggle to give the Qu'ran and monotheism to Jahilia, is confronted with the question, "What kind of idea are you? Man or mouse?" (93), that is, does one stand strong, or does one compromise? Mahound's introduction of verses that allow three lesser "gods" to join the One God is perceived as a weakness by the town of Jahilia, and his followers become the object of

ridicule in the city. Mahound immediately returns to the cave to ask for a new revelation. He wrestles with Gibreel, and allows Gibreel to pin him to the ground (123), confirming for himself that it is indeed the angel and not Satan this time.

Rushdie has stated of The Satanic Verses, “the point is it is a serious attempt to write about religion and revelation from the point of view from a secular person” (Appignanesi 33) so that this incident can not be read as a misrepresentation of Muhammad's revelation. Rushdie doesn't believe there was a revelation (Appignanesi 33). What we have is a man, Mahound, struggling with a new idea, a new identity, and a new way of looking at the world. His claims in the form of the recitation in Jahilia become public property and thus are open to questioning and skepticism, as Jones points out in his essay. Mahound, in order to retain his integrity, must be uncompromising. Yet, Mahound's idea is *his*, a construct that he is delivering as a message from God. The divine origin of his idea gives Mahound the justification for being uncompromising, yet Gibreel knows that the revelation has come from Mahound himself. Sanga writes, “Rushdie is clearly rendering a satirical reworking of the whole saga [of Muhammad] to cast doubt upon the authenticity and fixity of the holy text and the tenets of orthodoxy that legitimize it” (112). This doubt is reinforced when through the thoughts of the Grandee, the reader discovers that Allah, the God of Mahound, already exists along with other lesser Gods, though he isn't very popular. Mahound's idea is a commingling of old ideas to bring in the new.

The origin of Mahound's idea is discovered by his scribe, Salman. Salman has been a faithful follower since the beginning. When Salman arrives at the door of the poet, Baal, late in the novel, he is a devastated man who is questioning everything and

fears Mahound. Rushdie carefully reiterates that Salman's story of discovering the truth about Mahound is a dream of Gibreel's: "And Gibreel dreamed this" (363), distancing the story from the historical Muhammad. Salman relates to Baal how his suspicions grew as Mahound delivered more and more rules, and how each rule was revealed during a dispute and seemed to agree with whatever was Mahound's position on the matter. The rules also seem to describe an incredibly business-like God: "This was when he had the idea that destroyed his faith, because he recalled that of course Mahound himself had been a businessman. [...] [S]o excessively convenient it was that he should have come up with such a very businesslike archangel" (364). Salman began to test his suspicions, and

when writing down rules rules rules, he began, surreptitiously, to change things. [...] Mahound did not notice the alterations. [...] [W]hat did that mean? [...] I was shaken to my soul. [...] I changed my life for that man. [...] There is no bitterness like a man who finds out he has been believing in a ghost. (367-368)

For Salman, his view of the world had been tied up in the authenticity of Mahound's revelations. Despite Salman's realization of Mahound's source for the divine revelations, Mahound still appears sincere in his conviction that he is God's messenger. Even Salman is aware of this distinction: "Why are you sure he will kill you?" [...] 'It's his Word against mine'" (368). Mahound's revelation is still true for himself and his followers. Rushdie, speaking about Mohammad, but still applicable to the fictional character Mahound, in an interview, says: "I don't believe that Mohammad had a revelation but then I don't doubt his sincerity either. [...] He had that genuine mystical experience" (Appingnanesi 33). Salman's discovery does not change the truth as it is for Mahound.

All that has changed is Salman. His new knowledge that Mahound's idea is merely a construct doesn't change its subjective truth. Salman chooses life over waiting for Mahound to find and kill him, and returns to his home country. Salman will have to build his identity on something else.

Gibreel has two other dreams in which he is the messenger and the people of his dreams compel him to recite or do tasks. A very short episode involves an Islamic Imam who is in exile in London. For the Imam, exile is the precise word. It must “not be confused with [...] all the other words that people throw around: émigré, expatriate, refugee, immigrant, silence, cunning. Exile is a dream of glorious return” (205). For the Imam, all attempts at assimilation are thwarted and resisted. He must remain pure and true to his homeland, “the central heating is at full blast night and day, and the windows are tightly shut. The exile cannot forget, and must therefore simulate, the dry heat of Desh. [...] In exile all attempts to put down roots look like treason: they are admissions of defeat” (208). As Rushdie has pointed out, purity is nearly impossible; identity shifts, especially when one crosses a frontier as the Imam has done. His vision of a glorious return pure and untainted is complicated by drinking water: “The Imam drinks water constantly, one glass every five minutes, to keep himself clean; the water itself is cleansed of impurities, before he sips, in an American filtration machine” (209). Though the water is used to keep himself clean, the water has passed through an American filtration system, one step towards the assimilation that the Imam is so diligently trying to avoid. Chon writes of this episode, “Rushdie's sense of irony reaches its climax when he describes Imam. [...] Obviously Imam is dictating impossibilities to his followers. Even he himself cannot help using modern gadgets despite his insistence on fixing the clock at

Mahomet's time in the seventh century" (77). Purity is impossible.

Gibreel's last dream sequence involves a young girl, Ayesha, whose visions involve taking her entire village on a pilgrimage to Mecca across the Arabian Sea. Gibreel is compelled to lay with the girl. With Ayesha Gibreel does not speak, he is only present, but Ayesha, as she is looking at Gibreel nods as if she is receiving a message. She then takes this message back to her village. Gibreel protests, "I never laid a finger on her. [...] Damn if I know from where that girl was getting her information/inspiration. Not from this quarter, that's for sure" (226). As Ayesha leads her village to Mecca, she is resisted by Mirza Saeed, a wealthy secularist whose wife is a follower of Ayesha. Mirza has two main objections to the pilgrimage. The first is that Ayesha has promised that once they reach the Arabian Sea, it will part and they will walk across dry land. The second is that Mirza's wife, Mishal, has cancer and refuses to go to the hospital because Ayesha has promised once they arrive in Mecca she will be healed. Mirza is skeptical from the beginning, trying his best to convince the villagers that Ayesha is leading them to their doom. In this episode, Rushdie writes the only direct confrontation between the visionary and a skeptic. This confrontation comes after Ayesha has allowed the killing of an infant. Chon writes, "Thus the ideas sprung from the cracked origin are transmitted through the unreliable medium of human communication to the posterity. [...] Rushdie satirizes [...] the visionary prophet Ayesha who agrees to the execution of an innocent baby because it is evident that she is a product of an immoral union" (77). The followers from the village are greatly disturbed by the incident and Mirza takes advantage of their doubt:

"Tell me [...] how exactly does the angel give you all this information?

You never tell us his precise words, only your interpretations of them.

Why such indirection? Why not simply quote?"

"He speaks to me," Ayesha answered, "in clear memorable forms."

"Kindly be more specific."

"The archangel sings to me [...] to the tunes of popular hit songs." (497)

Mirza begins to laugh, and the rest of the village soon joins in. Mizra has exposed the fragmented construction of Ayesha's visions, visions collected from interpretations of pop songs. Yet, one of the questions of the novel is, "What kind of idea are you?", and as Mizra offers Ayesha a compromise that will destroy her power with the villagers, she refuses, and instead delivers a new message from the angel, this time no songs, but a direct quote, "He told me [...] about doubt, and how the Devil makes use of it. [...] He answered: only proof can silence doubt" (499). The villagers then walk into the Arabian sea, and Mizra is the only one that does not see the sea part in front of them.

Gibreel fights off these visions of religious monolithic belief by trying to stay awake, but eventually they seep into his waking self: "the dream-worlds of his archangelic other self begin to seem as tangible as the shifting realities he inhabits while he's awake" (205). His doubts in his vision induce the narrator to appear to Gibreel and talk to him directly: "You wanted clear signs of Our existence? We sent Revelation to fill your dreams: in which not only Our nature, but yours also, was clarified. [...] It is time now to shape up. [...] There's work to be done" (319). Gibreel sets out at this moment to bring his revelation to the city of London. His revelation is one of purity, for

London had grown unstable once again, revealing its true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city that had lost its sense of itself and

wallowed, accordingly, in the impotence of its selfish, angry present of masks and parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable, unrejected burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future.

(320)

When Gibreel again doubts, this time harangued by the ghost of a dead lover, he casts doubt aside and exclaims, “It's a trick. There is no God but God. [...] No compromises; I won't deal with fogs” (335). Gibreel can not tolerate the ambiguity of London, its compromises against purity, and feels that the city is lost. Gibreel intends to deliver an answer. His first attempts, imagining himself as growing larger than Big Ben, end with him getting hit by a car. After a short recuperation, he becomes sick again, and imagines himself flying over London, trying to figure out what is wrong with the English and how he can make them pure. His answer is to make London like India, his familiar habitat, by making it tropical: “the trouble with the English [...] was their weather. [...] I am going to tropicalize you” (354). His vision of a tropical London includes “coco-plants, tamarind, banyans [...] better cricketers [...] religious fervour, political ferment [...] emphasis on the extended family. Spicier food; the use of water as well as paper in English toilets; the joy of running fully dressed through the first rains of the monsoon” (355). This tropical London will also have its disadvantages that seem to negate the purity that Gibreel wishes to instill: “cholera, typhoid, legionnaires' disease, cockroaches, dust, noise, a culture of excess” (355).

This inevitable leaking and impurity echoes the episode with the Imam whose desire for pure water is tainted by an American filtration system. Yet, Gibreel's vision has had an effect on London; the temperature begins to rise. Gibreel's vision of an

Indian-London is false and impossible to realize, but the resulting heat wave is the result of the migrant's influence on his new environment. The migrant can not change his new world into a copy of his old world, but just as the new frontier has an effect on the migrant, so the migrant has an effect on the new frontier. Gibreel seems unable to accept his reality and change accordingly.

Saladin, in contrast to Gibreel, eventually recognizes his mutable identity and comes to terms with his hybrid identity. Saladin had left India long ago for London. His identity is tied to total rejection of his Indian self, and full assimilation with British identity which he perceives as noble. Even in childhood he was rooting for the English team during soccer matches, "for the game's creators to defeat the local upstarts, for the proper order of things to be maintained" (37). London was a mythical place full of "pounds sterling" and "moderation," as opposed to Bombay which is full of "dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumored singing whores" (37). Saladin tells his mother, "England is a great civilization" (39), and he hopes to escape Bombay first chance he gets. Hewson points out that Saladin's attempts at reinventing himself are not new: "Such a failure of imagination is seen in a figure like Saladin Chamcha, an Indian who anglicizes his name and remakes himself in imitation of a Briton. In the process of translation, however, Chamcha becomes merely a voice to everyone" (83).

Saladin is beginning to manifest the otherness he so despises. Upon returning to England, arriving from the sky without passport and identification, Saladin appears to be a newly landed migrant. His demonic self is representative of both his and England's attitude towards immigrants in general. When the police arrest Saladin, they seem to take

it for granted that Saladin is in the shape of a demon, as opposed to a human form, and they commence to physically and verbally abuse him. Saladin can not understand what world he has fallen into. On the one hand, he is confused that his demonic shape “was being treated by the others as if it were the most banal and familiar matter they could imagine,” while on the other hand he is convinced that this must be another world because proper English men would never act like this: “‘This isn't England,’ he thought. [...] [W]here in all of that moderate common-sensical land was there room for such a police van in whose interior such events as these might plausibly transpire?” (158).

While in their custody he begins to notice that the English are not homogeneous as he thought as the different regional conflicts within Britain become apparent. One officer is described as Scottish and they separate into factions, talk of football fueling their nationalism (160-161). Saladin, using his voice talents, is eventually able to convince the police that he is English. They take Saladin to a hospital full of similar freaks, all migrants from different parts of the world turned into some animal form. Chon writes:

The England [Saladin] experiences as an arrested illegal alien is not the England of democracy, liberty, and human rights protection he knew it to be. This “new” England is responsible for the much maligned monsters Saladin meets in the special hospital where Africans, Asians, and other non-Europeans who have been partly transformed into animal forms under the gaze of the prejudiced English are interned. (74)

As Saladin's metamorphosis completes itself, his alien being seeps into the dreams of migrants all over London, becoming an icon for the other that is despised within London. Both Mishal and Anahita, daughters of Muhammad Sufyan, owner of the

Shaandaar Café, idolize Saladin in his demonic form. He is rejected by Sufyan's wife, Hind, whose idea of purity is more in line with Gibreel's idea, viewing the mother country of India as sacred. Saladin is rejected by both the pure England he loves, and one of his fellow Indians who also believes in purity. He is only accepted fully by the children, who seem to be at ease with both worlds despite typical teenage rebellion against their mother's culture. Saladin's demonic shape can be read as hybrid, the mingling of both cultures. His hybridity is demonic in the sense that it is not pure, not pure Indian and not pure British, and even he himself has rejected the part of himself which he considers vulgar. Saladin begins to accept this fact about himself. When he first begins to accept the things that have happened to him and his new physical self his horns shrink a little. He is reacting angrily to a movie article in which Gibreel describes how he missed the plane that he and Saladin were on. Saladin responds, "What happened, happened to us both.' [...] [D]uring Chamcha's brief but violent outburst against Gibreel, the horns on his head [...] definitely, unmistakably [...] diminished" (273). As Gibreel continues to reject his migrant impure identity, Saladin begins the process of acceptance of an impure hybrid self.

As Saladin's demonic image enters the dreams of black and brown migrants all over London, the migrants' reaction is not one of fear, but of recognizing their subjugated othered selves in the dark beast:

While non-tint neo-Georgians dreamed of a sulphurous enemy crushing their perfectly restored residences beneath his smoking heel, nocturnal browns-and-blacks found themselves cheering, in their sleep, this what-else-after-all-but-black-man, maybe a little twisted up by fate class race

history, all that, but getting off his behind, bad and mad, to kick a little ass.

(286)

The non-tint neo-Georgians are afraid of the hybrid dark migrant that threatens their pure neighborhood. The migrants are ready to be empowered by Saladin. Saladin's demonic image is contrasted here with Gibreel's angelic vision. Gibreel's vision is one of purity and of striking the impurities out of London. Saladin's dreams are of forcing change, hybridization, fusion, and impurity. While Gibreel's vision demands adherence to his revelation, Saladin's dream of the demon migrant demands only justice and inclusion. Mishal tells Saladin, "Chamcha [...] you're a hero. I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own" (287).

What finally releases Saladin from his demonic form is an outburst of anger at Club Hot Wax. Early in the novel, Sufyan tries to comfort Saladin with the philosophies of Lucretius and Ovid. Sufyan tries to explain, "Lucretius tells us, [...] 'Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers [...] that thing [...] by doing so brings death to its old self'. [...] [Ovid] avers thus: 'As yielding wax [...] is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our souls'" (276-77). Saladin interprets the philosophies, "Either I accept Lucretius and conclude that some demonic and irreversible mutation is taking place in my inmost depths, or I go with Ovid and concede that everything now emerging is no more than a manifestation of what was already there" (277). Rushdie's idea of identity includes Lucretius's version and Saladin's interpretation of Lucretius. Identity changes as it crosses its own frontiers and the old self dies forever. There is no pure immutable soul. This is indeed the route

that Saladin chooses before his metamorphosis back into human form, “He chose Lucretius over Ovid. [...] *I am*, he accepted, *that I am*. Submission” (287-288). At Club Hot Wax, an allusion obviously to Ovid's idea of wax and inner soul, Saladin focuses in his mind the picture of his enemy, Gibreel. Through a torturous night of pain and screams, melting hot wax and destroying furniture, Saladin is restored to human form, “is there any option but to conclude? – by the fearsome concentration of his hate” (294). Gibreel, the idea of purity, has become the focus of Saladin's hate, and not his hybrid impure self, which he has begun to accept under Lucretius's idea of change.

Though he has returned to his original physical form, there is still evil lurking inside him. Gibreel, when Saladin is arrested soon after landing in England, does nothing to save Saladin. What consumes Saladin now is revenge. He enacts his revenge by creating jealousy in Gibreel towards Allie. Gibreel and Allie eventually leave each other because of Gibreel's anger. The demons are finally laid to rest during race riots that engulf London in fire. Saladin, upon seeing Gibreel (who thinks he is bringing the fire down from the sky onto London), runs into the Shaandaar Café to escape Gibreel and to look for survivors. Gibreel follows Saladin in and forgives Saladin his attempts at driving him crazy and saves him from the burning house (467-68). For Saladin his strange journey is complete, and he accepts his new identity, even returning to his old name, Salahuddin Chamchawala. Gibreel is not healed by the fire and finds himself in Saladin's father's house after having killed Allie Cone. Here he commits suicide in front of Saladin because he can't bear the sickness.

Gibreel's attempts at purity lead to suffering and are exposed as manifestations of the self and not foundational. Saladin comes to accept that identity is not pure, but is a

strange fusion of various influences from multiple cultures that creates his hybrid self. Saladin has embraced his migrant identity, one that can never be pure. The Satanic Verses explores and deconstructs the notion of an immutable identity, and posits that newness enters the world not from foundational precepts, but from intermingling and mutual influence of old ideas. In Shalimar the Clown, Rushdie explores the frontier as a place where this intermingling is manifest.

CHAPTER 3

THE FRONTIERS OF SHALIMAR THE CLOWN

In both Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, Rushdie uses identity to explore the commingling of cultures and the migrant experience, and exposes how these identities are constructs. One of the motifs that play prominently in both novels is the frontier, the borderlines between nations, groups, and between the self and other. In Midnight's Children the frontier of time marks the beginning of the novel and Saleem optimistically believes that the new independent India is ushering something new into the world. For Saleem, the border between India and Pakistan marks the demarcation between two worlds, the former representing alternatives, the latter false representations, and Saleem's powers disappear when he enters Pakistan. There are lines between rich and poor, brother and sister, and underworld and overworld, when his mother lived beneath the floor with her first husband, Nadir Khan. The frontiers in The Satanic Verses play a larger role in the characters' lives. Here, the frontier represents literally a crossing over into an unfamiliar territory, and hastens the strange fusions and hybridity of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. Gibreel faced the frontiers of dreams and reality, sanity and insanity, and purity and impurity. Saladin confronted the boundary between the upper-class of the English and the underworld of the migrant.

Writing in Step Across This Line, Rushdie talks about the hero quest as a frontier-crossing story: "The idea of overcoming, of breaking down the boundaries that hold us in

and surpassing the limits of our own natures, is central to all the stories of the quest” (410). Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses can easily be read as reworkings of the hero quest with the migrant as the hero and identity the ever elusive indefinable grail which lies beyond the frontier. Rushdie writes: “To cross a frontier is to be transformed” (411).

Frontiers play a prominent role in Shalimar the Clown, yet they seem not to be places leading from one area to the next, or even catalysts for change, but representative of change and of hybridity. Again, from Step Across This Line, Rushdie writes:

The frontier is a wake-up call. At the frontier we can't avoid the truth; the comforting layers of the quotidian, which insulate us against the world's harsher realities, are stripped away, and, wide-eyed in the harsh fluorescent light of the frontier's windowless halls, we see things as they are. The frontier is the physical proof of the human race's divided self.

(412)

The frontier is the meeting of the self and other, and in this space the strange fusions that occur within the migrant when he/she crosses the border into a new country are ever present. It is a place of ambiguity and in Shalimar the Clown Rushdie represents this ambiguity in the places of Pachigam, Kashmir and Strasbourg, France. These are cities that each straddle the borders between two large nations respectively, Pakistan and India, and France and Germany. Both towns' histories have been formed by conquering empires and migrant populations so the culture that developed is not homogeneous but hybrid. In the novel the areas are still contested, and in the case of Kashmir, there is a defiant regional identity that rejects the claims on the region of both India and Pakistan.

These regional identities might be useful to think of in the context of what Bhabha calls counter-narratives: “Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and disturb its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities” (213). The ambiguity of the counter-narratives of the frontier of Kashmir disturbs the identities by which Pakistan and India see themselves.

Yet, this ambiguity is extrapolated out of the frontier regions into the larger context of the world, as India thinks, “Everywhere was now a part of everywhere else. [...] Our lives, our stories, flowed into one another's, were no longer our own, individual, discrete. This unsettled people” (37). The frontier in this context is globalization, the entire world, in which all individuals are now cast as migrants. In India's apartment building live older women from all across Eastern Europe, living now in the United States of America. India's landlady's speech is interspersed with old world phrases and American pop references.

The apostles of purity also play a large role within Shalimar the Clown. In the story of Max Ophuls, Nazi Germany invades Strasbourg, bringing the ethnic cleansing that aims to make the perfect race. This story is juxtaposed with the rise of terrorism in south central Asia, specifically in the Kashmir region, where Islamic fundamentalists are fighting for a strict pure Islamic society. There are striking similarities between Max's brief brush with terrorist activities fighting the Nazis and the activities of the JKLF who are fighting for a free Kashmir. Both Nazi Germany and the Islamic fundamentalists invade frontiers in order to destroy the ambiguity that is present. In the case of Kashmir, the fundamentalists succeed in creating social unrest and tension between the Hindus and

Muslims in the region. The Indian army also plays its part in creating terror and targeting Muslims as the undesirable element in Kashmir. Kashmir is regularly described as a paradise, and at the end of the novel this paradise is all but destroyed by the purge.

The ambiguity of the frontier is also found in the characters. Max Ophuls is a Jew living in a German-named town, Strasbourg, in France. He is living on the frontier. During the Nazi occupation he became a master of switching identities, at one time infiltrating a Nazi organization as a spy. He later migrates to the United States and becomes an ambassador. India Ophuls is the daughter of Max, and her life and identity are constantly questioned as she looks for the meaning behind her name, her true parents, and the reasons behind the assassination of her father. Boonyi, Max's mistress and India's mother, puts her life on the line to pursue dreams outside her village of Pachigam, and later returns in disgrace to live as a ghost, confronting the frontier of life and death. Shalimar the clown is different. He rejects the politics of the Islamic Fundamentalists and does not submit to their emptying of self for the cause and ideology. He is consumed by his own passions and ideas of purity. Yet, like Max before him during World War II, Shalimar the clown embraces a life of changing identities committing acts of terrorism as he awaits the right moment to enact his revenge. In Shalimar the Clown the characters confront the ambiguity of the frontier in ways that reveal the mutable and hybrid natures of their identity, and help to further illustrate Rushdie's concept of identity.

Noman sher Noman, later named Shalimar the clown, son of Abdullah, a Muslim, and Boonyi Kaul, daughter to Pandit Pyarelal Kaul, a Hindu, enjoy sitting at the feet of Pandit Kaul as he dispenses his philosophical thoughts. The children are not really listening to Pandit. They are there to be near each other because, at the age of fourteen,

they have discovered that they love each other. The narrator uses the opportunity of the relationship between this Muslim and Hindu to introduce the underlying identity of Kashmiris: “Noman called the pandit Sweetie Uncle, though they were not connected by blood or faith. Kashmiris were connected by deeper ties than those” (47). This deeper tie is a shared history of living side by side, of a mutual trade, and shared stories of past and present.

The village of Pachigam relies on the shows of the performing troupe, who act out the “*bhand pather*, clown stories” (61), for its economic well-being. Both Muslim and Hindu alike perform, and the village hierarchy also reflects the symbiotic relationship between Muslims and Hindus. Though Muslims are the majority, Abdullah, the village leader, allows three Hindus and a Jew to sit on the village council of five, which is not looked on positively by the militants: “The enemy was within Pachigam, a degenerate village where, in spite of a substantial Muslim majority among the residents, only one member of the panchayat was of the true faith” (119). They pride themselves on being able to live together. This creates the ambiguity of the valley. Their identity is not sequestered by religious ideology, but integrated within mutual support and history. Abdullah, on the eve of a great performance, says:

Today our Muslim village, in the service of our Hindu maharaja, will cook and act in a Mughal—that is to say Muslim—garden, to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which Ram marched against Ravan to rescue Sita. What is more, two plays are to be performed: our traditional *Ram Leela*, and also *Budshah*, the tale of a Muslim sultan. Who tonight are Hindus? Who are the Muslims? Here in Kashmir, our stories sit happily

side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we
laugh at the same jokes. (71)

This idea of stories sitting side-by-side is echoed later in a scene describing the villagers gathering together to tell stories to the children: “The women of the village would take turns to tell them family anecdotes. Every family in Pachigam had its store of such narratives, and because all the stories of all the families were told to all the children it was as though everyone belonged to everyone else” (236). Stories, in Shalimar the Clown, are juxtaposed next to real life, so that a dissonance is created between the idealism and romanticism presented in the stories, and the real life struggles that the characters encounter. Often the characters compare their own lives to the stories, as Boonyi does when she thinks of Shalimar the clown, “Was he her epic hero or her demon king, or both?” (50). Abdullah, before a performance, is described as making contact with an old king, and becoming him, so that he has to be shaken out of a trance.

Aligned with the stories is history, and Kashmiri history is a hodgepodge of migrations and conquering empires. Alexander the Great, from whom Firdaus Noman, wife of Abdullah Noman, claims lineage, is part of one of the dominant stories. Firdaus' family moved to Pachigam with her grandfather, bringing along with them the legend of giant ants and hidden gold, the story supposedly passed down from generation to generation from Alexander: “My people, Iskander's progeny, knew the secret locations of the treasure-laden anthills” (74). These stories and histories inform the identity of Pachigam, creating multiplicity. The exchange of stories with the children allows this multiplicity to be internalized, creating new identities, hybrids. This hybridization is realized in the union of Shalimar the clown and Boonyi.

The two children's love for each other is representative of ambiguity. They do not see the dividing lines that separate them as Hindu and Muslim. As Boonyi thinks about her relationship with Shalimar, she imagines another line that she has just agreed to cross with Shalimar: the sexual frontier: "Would they exalt each other or be destroyed by what they had resolved to do? Had she chosen foolishly or well? For certainly she had invited him to cross a powerful line" (50). She realizes the taboo that they are breaking, but this line is also symbolically the cultural line between Hindu and Muslim. Their love must be kept secret, not just because of sexual taboos being broken, but also social taboos. When they are revealed by a spy from the Indian army, Gopinanth, who is also in love with Boonyi, the village meets to decide what to do. Again, the principle idea of Kashmiriness is reiterated in defense of the children: "Abdullah then mentioned *Kashmiriyat*, Kashmiriness, the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences. [...] 'There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri—two Pachigami—youngsters wish to marry, that's all'" (110). Holding the wedding presents difficulties as distant relatives arrive, yet a harmony is struck as two wedding ceremonies are held, one Hindu, one Muslim. The novel works to create the idea that in Kashmir identities are not fixed, are fluid and able to influence each other. The people of Pachigam celebrate their history of commingling with far-off cultures and stories. The community of the Kashmir valley represents Rushdie's idea of identity realized: a community that celebrates the ambiguities of identity and embraces the duality that their shared history and stories reveal.

Kashmiriness is threatened by the dispute between Pakistan and India, nationalistic identities that are fighting over Kashmir. In effect there are three factions

vying for control over the region. The first is the Kashmiris who chant, “Kashmir for Kashmir.” The others are Pakistan, whose interests in the region are represented mostly by Islamic fundamentalist groups, and India, represented by Colonel Kachhwaha and in the Indian army stationed at Elasticnagar.

Colonel Kachhawaha believes in discipline: “Discipline was all. Dignity was all” (121), and he despises the Kashmiris whom he perceives as being ungrateful for the security that his army is providing. Kachhawaha believes in the clarity that war provides: “[War’s] highest purpose was the creation of clarity where none existed, the noble clarity of victory and defeat” (129). The colonel creates an elaborate set of justifications to clarify the legal issues concerning the military presence in Kashmir: “The legal position was that the Indian military presence in Kashmir had the full support of the population, and to say otherwise was to break the law. [...] Not even the truth could be permitted to dishonor the nation” (96). This sharp line enables Kachawaha to deem illegal even thoughts that might demean or subvert the military presence in Kashmir. He even has trouble suppressing his own illegal thoughts: “If it was not subversive to say that Elasticnagar was a dump then he would have said that it was a dump. But it could not be a dump because it was Elasticnagar and so by definition and by law and so on and so forth” (98). He is especially suspicious of the Muslims in Kashmir, and all that is holding him back is the law. When the troubles start to escalate, the colonel receives the go-ahead to use the brutal force he had always wanted to use: torture, rape, and other forms of violence. Everyone is a suspect or subversive housing terrorists. Colonel Kachhwaha's zeal for expunging the subversive forces in the region leads to the destruction of the village of Pachigam.

Rushdie's apostles of purity are represented in Shalimar the Clown in part by fundamentalist terrorist, whose idea of purity demands that impurities be expunged. The Islamic terrorists roam the region in small bands, all with numerous names. The text follows Shalimar the clown into one of the training camps in Pakistan. The iron mullah delivers a speech meant to encourage and teach the terrorist recruits. Shalimar recognizes that in order to be a part of the organization he has to leave his old self behind. The speech is littered with the word "truth." Truth is never defined, though one could presume it is the truth as presented by Islam:

Ideology was primary. [...] The True warrior was not primarily motivated by worldly desires, but by what he believed to be true. Economics was not primary. Ideology was primary. [...] In the world of truth [...] there was no room for weakness, argument, or half measures. Before the power of truth, every knee must bow, and then truth will protect you. [...] Only the truth can be your wife. (266)

After this speech one of the recruits strips naked as he says, "I have no name except the name of truth. [...] I have no body but the one that will die for the truth. I have no soul but the soul that is God's" (267). The Islamic fundamentalists seek purity in religious ideology, as opposed to Colonel Kachhwaha's clarity found in war and secular law. Islamic fundamentalists enter Kashmir and begin to demand that women wear burqas when they had never done so before. They begin to kill, torture, and attack all non-Muslims in the same manner in which the Indian army attacked non-Hindus.

The village of Pachigam, which has embraced its ambiguity and hybridity, is threatened by the purity propagated by the fundamentalists. The villagers of Pachigam,

in a last act of solidarity with their non-Muslim neighbors, refuse to don the burqas:

The leader [...] ordered everyone into the street and announced that since the women of Pachigam were too shameless to conceal themselves as Islam required they should take off their clothes completely so that the world could see what whores they really were. [...] Firdaus Noman stepped forward, took off her phiran and began to undress. Taking their cue from her, the other women and girls of the village also started to strip. A silence fell. (302)

The paradise of Kashmir does not last and when India Ophuls visits Kashmir later the village of Pachigam is in ruins, and in Shirmal, Hasina Yambarzal, who had vehemently resisted the burqa, greets her from behind the veil. Her husband, Bombur Yambarzal, confined to house arrest, sits in the corner waiting to die. Whatever identity had once defined Pachigam and Shirmal has been erased by conflicting views of purity. In reference to Serbian nationalism, Bhabha's comments on the destructive force of the idea of purity mentioned before are relevant to this situation:

The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, "ethnically cleansed" national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. (7)

As Pyarelal, the pandit, laments, purity doesn't distinguish between moral or immoral, sees nothing but what is impure:

Our natures are no longer the critical factors in our fates. When the killers

come, will it matter if we lived well or badly? Will the choices we made affect our destiny? Will they spare the kind and gentle among us and take only the selfish and dishonest? It would be absurd to think so. Massacres aren't finicky. I may be precious or I may be valueless, but it doesn't signify either way. (295)

The ambiguity of the frontier is represented by the region of Kashmir, and the characters are indelibly changed when they cross frontiers. In Kashmir ambiguity persists, but as the iron mullah points out, the world is different outside Kashmir: "By crossing the mountains they had passed through a curtain and stood now on the threshold of the world of truth, which was invisible to most men" (266). Leaving Kashmir in this way is retrograde, a return to ideas of purity. Kashmir is the frontier, the land of hybridity and change. The Islamic fundamentalists have retreated from the frontier to reestablish their truth, and to solidify their purity. For the other characters crossing a frontier has the effect that Rushdie describes above: it changes them through new influences.

Max Ophuls' identity is bound up in crossing frontiers and changing his identity. When he joins the resistance movement in Strasbourg, staying because his parents refused to leave, Max Ophuls becomes a preparer of fake identification papers. This skill was refined by copying master paintings. When an art collector looks at the paintings, he says that Max should enter into the world of forgery. Max comments, "These aren't forgeries [...] because there are no originals" (139), as there are no original identities. He continues to use this skill through his career in the resistance movement until he flees to England. When he finally does leave Strasbourg, he does so in a plane, becoming an icon

of the resistance, nicknamed “The Flying Jew.” It is no coincidence that Max Ophuls is crossing frontiers in this plane, leaving behind the ideological purity of the Nazis and entering the ambiguous underworld of the resistance. He joins the university he had worked for in Strasbourg, which has set up a school in exile, and takes on the pseudonym of a dead author, Sebastian Brant. The university is a cover for the resistance and Max immediately takes on the role he had held in Strasbourg, creating false papers and identities. He also writes papers that detail a new world co-operation, “in which he foresaw the need for entities similar to those that would afterwards come into being as the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank” (165). His biggest achievement is infiltrating a Nazi organization notorious for uncovering members of the resistance. Here, using all his skill with changing his identity, he enters into a love affair with Ursula Brandt, the Panther, and is able to discover vital secrets that aid the resistance, and ruins the Panther's credibility with the Nazis.

The newly conquered front lines of the Nazi advancement are a frontier of ambiguity similar, but not identical, to the frontier of Kashmir. In Kashmir the ambiguity is presented as intrinsic to the history and cultural landscape that composes Kashmir. In the case of Max, the Nazis and the resistance create the ambiguity through their conflict. The conflict between the resistance and the Nazis echoes the later conflict that occurs in Kashmir, as two sides seek to establish clarity and destroy ambiguity. However, in the case of the resistance, the ambiguity is created by spies, false identities, and infiltration. Alsace, the province in which Strasbourg lies, is presented by Max as a frontier place, akin to the whole of India:

[...] since that part of the world where he was raised had also been defined

and redefined for many centuries by shifting frontiers, upheavals and dislocations, flights and returns, conquests and reconquests, the Roman Empire followed by the Alemanni, the Alemanni by Attila's Huns, the Huns by the Alemanni again, the Alemanni by the Franks. (138)

Yet, France, in which the fighting takes place, is not presented in the same light. The ambiguity that takes place in France is the result of the conflict.

Throughout his life, Max will continue to live in ambiguities and shifting identities. During the war he migrates to the United States and, through notoriety established by his writings of the resistance, eventually becomes an ambassador to India. In a short amount of time Max crosses several frontiers, adopting new identities along the way, including his flight from Strasbourg, escape to England, migration to the United States, and ambassadorship to India. He is also a married man who has frequent affairs, adding another layer of ambiguity to his identity. The scandal in India, when he takes Boonyi Noman, now wife to Shalimar the Clown, as his lover, sends Max out of India. He is later employed as the U.S. counterterrorism chief, an identity he does not reveal to his daughter, India, because "The person who held the job could not be named, his movements were not mentioned in the newspaper" (335). Max is a perpetual migrant, crossing frontiers his entire life, and never settling down in any specific corner of the world.

India Ophuls is not as traveled as her father Max, and her duplicitous identity is not of her own making, nor employed for survival. Her past, a past seemingly ambiguous and multiplicitous as that of her father's Strasbourg and her biological mother's Kashmir, is hidden from India by her adopted mother, Max's wife, Peggy Rhodes. India, with her

“dark hair, her un-English complexion, the absence in her face of any trace of Peggy Rhodes's genes” (346) is clearly not Peggy's daughter, but does not find the truth until she is seven. Peggy tells her she knows nothing of India's biological mother. Then Peggy tells India about Max, but they are only allowed to see each other a couple of times a year, though no explanation was given to India:

These were the confusions inside which India Ophuls grew up in the 1970s. [...] [A]s she neared thirteen she wore the stricken look of a storm-tossed ship heading toward jagged inescapable rocks. [...] There followed a delinquent descent into hell. Hell seemed preferable to the overworld of lying mothers and absent fathers in which she was trapped. (349-350)

India doesn't know her true mother or the history of her name, and she has a longing to complete the picture: “She was twenty-four years old. She wanted to inhabit facts, not dreams. [...] She wanted her lost story to be found” (12). She is forced into further ambiguity and confusion upon her father's death. Her identity is only clarified when she crosses into the frontier region of Kashmir and stands where her mother, Boonyi, was killed.

After the assassination of Max by Shalimar the clown, the police discover that the murder was motivated by revenge for Max and Boonyi's affair. India realizes that when Shalimar the clown had been spooked by her appearance, it was because he saw Boonyi in her: “She went to her bedroom, stripped off her clothes and examined her body in the mirrored closet door [...] trying to see in her unclothed form what he had seen in her when she was fully attired. [...] Slowly her mother's face began to form in her mind's eye” (340). The gift of her mother from Shalimar the clown helps her to focus her

identity. After visiting her mother's grave in Kashmir, India, now taking her birth name of Kashmira, wants revenge against Shalimar. Kashmira draws a contrast between her motivation for revenge and Shalimar's: "A woman, my mother died for the crime of leaving you. [...] A man, my father, died for taking her in. You murdered two human beings because of your egotism your amazing egotism that valued your honor more highly than their lives" (379). Kashmira's revenge is acted out in the court room during her testimony, sentencing Shalimar the clown to death. Afterwards, Kashmira is able to return to her old life, with none of the insecurities about her identity that she had before, having discovered the story of her past. Kashmira has been released from Peggy Ophuls's definition of her identity and by acquiring her lost history and stories is able to embrace the ambiguity of Boonyi's Kashmir and Max's underworld.

Shalimar the clown, like Max Ophuls, adopts multiple identities and travels around the globe in the underworld. Shalimar the clown is trained to be an assassin at the Islamic fundamentalist training camps in Pakistan. His motivation is not the creation of a pure Islamic society, though he does sympathize with the drive for purity and truth that motivates the recruits at the camps. Shalimar is motivated by revenge against Boonyi, his wife, and Max Ophuls, the man Boonyi left him for:

Sooner or later he would find his way to the American Ambassador as well and his honor would be avenged. [...] Honor ranked above everything else, above the sacred vows of matrimony, above the divine injunction against cold-blooded murder, above decency, above culture, above life itself. (258)

For Shalimar the clown, his idea of purity is tied up in the concept of honor. Like

Colonel Kachhwaha, who valued clarity and the law, the purity of honor justifies Shalimar's existence and actions. By holding honor as the highest ideal, honor of Islam, honor of God, and honor of self, all other considerations recede into the background and are held in juxtaposition to honor:

Because once we stop being asleep we can see that there are only enemies for us in the world, the enemies pretending to defend us who stand before us made of guns and khaki and greed and death, and behind them the enemies pretending to rescue us in the name of our own God except that they're made of death and greed as well, and behind them the enemies who live among us bearing ungodly names, who seduce us and betray us.

(248)

Shalimar begins to see dishonor in all aspects of his life thanks to the infidelity of Boonyi. The dishonor is manifested in an us-versus-them mentality. The enemies are them; the enemies are pretenders.

Shalimar the clown's idea of honor may extend to honor of established ways of life. He indeed crosses a frontier with his marriage to Boonyi, but this is accomplished through her encouragement and drive. The marriage within the context of the village of Pachigam is not so groundbreaking. Shalimar the clown is on the cusp of frontiers, but never seems to cross, as is illustrated in his talent as a tightrope walker. His signature move leans him impossibly over the edge so that he looks like he is going to fall before correcting himself. He sees the same danger in the actions of Boonyi: "Right now in real life Boonyi was the one leaning out from the high wire, brazenly flaunting her new status as lover and beloved, defying all convention and orthodoxy, and in real life these were

forces that exerted at least as powerful a downward pull as gravity” (93). Shalimar sees the line of the tightrope as a safe place, and leaning too far over the frontiers of empty space alongside the tightrope is dangerous. The love of Boonyi and Shalimar is within the safety of the tightrope, and proves for Shalimar to be within the acceptable danger limits. This is contrasted with Boonyi who is determined to push the limits to the end, and indeed does when she later returns to the village in disgrace, discarded by Max Ophuls and obese. Upon hearing of the affair, Shalimar the clown swears revenge to protect the honor of the line. Shalimar, in this way, becomes an apostle of purity, one of those who wreak “havoc among mere mixed-up human beings” (Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands 394).

In Shalimar the Clown, as in The Satanic Verses, boundaries and frontiers play an intricate role in how identity is developed and maintained. More so in Shalimar the Clown than in the two other novels, Rushdie is exploring the consequences of denying the hybridity of identity and as Saleem says in Midnight's Children, “It's a dangerous business to try and impose one's view of things on others” (243). Identity in Shalimar the Clown is mutable, and influenced by events and histories outside of the control of the characters, yet also constructed from the stories and histories that the characters tell each other. The characters of India Ophuls and Shalimar the Clown navigate through the ambiguities of the frontier. India breaks away from Peggy Ophuls’s control, while Shalimar the Clown embraces purity and becomes an assassin, abandoning the hybridity of Kashmir. More importantly, Rushdie illustrates through the frontiers of Kashmir and Strasbourg the ambiguity of identity that is threatened by nationalistic purity.

CONCLUSION

Defining Rushdie's concept of identity is problematic because by the very nature he suggests, identity is mutable and not foundational. Instead, identity is defined in negative terms, allowing the definition to eliminate those elements that do not fit into Rushdie's concept, and avoid establishing anything resembling a monolithic definition. Therefore, according to Rushdie identity is *not* pure, static, foundational, or innate and to insist upon the positive aspects of these would be potentially dangerous or harmful.

Considering these parameters for identity, do the three novels explored fit into them? In Midnight's Children Saleem is aware that he is making a construct when he relates his story. He addresses his audience and makes references to his historical inaccuracies and the readers' possible legitimate questions of his authority as a narrator. In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie explores how the migrant is a hybrid identity indelibly changed when crossing into another country. Both Gibreel's and Saladin's identities are shown to be not pure or whole, but comprised of conflicting influences. Both characters, in attempts to establish a pure identity and impose their versions of truth, create instability and suffering in their relationships. Gibreel's dream of the revelation of Mahound is exposed not only as a construct, but a hybrid of preexisting ideas, so that in answer to Rushdie's question of how newness enters the world, the strange fusions that occur when old ideas and identities converge is suggested. In Shalimar the Clown, identity is changed by the crossing of frontiers and cultural identities do not exist in

exclusivity, but are bound up in mutual influence and shared stories. The frontier in Shalimar the Clown is a place of hybridity and ambiguity. More than Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, Shalimar the Clown illustrates the destructive force of monolithic ideas that strive for clarity in spite of ambiguity, and the terrible price insistence on purity and clarity of identity and truth takes. The three novels support the negative definition of Rushdie's concept of identity.

Undoubtedly, Rushdie's novels and his concept of identity can be seen as a response to colonialism. Midnight's Children takes place within the context of Indian independence from the British Empire, and the struggles for self-identification that took place in India. As Said has illustrated, the colonial project succeeded in part due to its ability to define and identify the East and the other, so that a crisis of identity, after colonial rule, is a logical after-effect in former colonized nations. Rushdie's novels, in the context of post-colonialism, as a resistance and response to colonial imperialism, do critique the power structures that support British dominance. The scenes of William Methwold's corrupting tea time in Midnight's Children and the officers who arrest Saladin in The Satanic Verses illustrate this critique well. However, there is also a critical analysis of how identity is formed from within the former colonized nations, so that Gibreel's Indian purity is put into question, and Saleem's history of himself and Indian independence is not left unscathed.

By exploring and being critical of how both post-colonial nations and migrants construct their identity, Rushdie is looking beyond a post-colonial context. The progression of his novels, ending with Shalimar the Clown, shows a greater concern for global identity politics. While one can not show an explicit progression with only three

novels, there is evidence that Rushdie is not primarily concerned with the post-colonial experience, so that to apply such a label to his body of work as a whole would profoundly limit possible readings of his works. Shalimar the Clown is a perfect example. The novel takes place in Kashmir, Rushdie's native home, but the novel quickly expands out from Kashmir, making connections all over the world and taking place in no less than eight countries.

By juxtaposing Strasbourg and the Nazis with Kashmir and terrorism, Rushdie has lifted post-colonialism from a former colony concern to a global concern. The specter of colonialism and identity politics concerns all. Another tool Rushdie uses in Shalimar the Clown is shared stories and histories that seem to stretch around the entire globe. India Ophuls's thoughts, again, come to mind, "Everywhere was now part of everywhere else" (37). Culture and identity are not fixed and do not belong to one ideology or geographical location. The intermingling of stories and the identification with various histories helps to create a world in which cultural identities can locate a common bond.

This idea is explicit in Shalimar the Clown, yet in the other novels, Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, the idea is there, just more subtly so. In Midnight's Children Evie Burns is an American girl who immediately captures the attention of Saleem. The children discuss the actors of the Lone Ranger, with Saleem commenting that Clayton Moore "was too fat for the Lone Ranger, in my view" (207). Even during this time in India the effects of globalization and cross cultural connections are being felt. Saleem is comfortable relating both Indian stories and American television in order to construct his own history. The Satanic Verses takes place mainly in Great Britain and the

story of Rosa Diamond illustrates the hybrid nature of the English. As Chon points out, William the Conqueror's invasion “was the last invasion, and the invading force has been incorporated into the mainstream of English life. However, this historical event that gives unity and solidity to the English identity itself shows that the unity was achieved by the influx of an external element” (74). Rushdie shows his readers that history and frontiers are never pure and foundational truths by which to build an identity.

By interconnecting the different spheres of world in this way, Rushdie exposes the interconnection and mutual influence between countries. What this global narrative also exposed is the concern with identity that belongs to everyone, not just formerly colonized persons. Bhabha, in The Location of Culture, states:

To that end we should remember that it is the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-national histories of the “people”. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. (56)

Rushdie is drawing his readers’ attention to a new global reality that must move past the identity politics that shaped the colonial world of the past, and into a recognition that all identities are bound up and mutually dependent on each other for meaning and definition.

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