

FROM CULTURAL PURISM TO CULTURAL PLURALISM: SALMAN RUSHDIE AND  
THE HYBRID

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by  
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ABSTRACT

FROM CULTURAL PURISM TO CULTURAL PLURALISM: SALMAN RUSHDIE AND  
THE HYBRID

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Salman Rushdie places the immigrant and cultural hybrid at the front and center of the majority of his fiction works. One could describe a great deal of his characters as “cultural hybrids,” meaning that his characters, for one reason or another, have split cultural identities. In other words, they are caught between two cultural influences. As a result of being caught between cultures, the cultural hybrid both experiences feelings of dislocation and seems to fight between the dual cultural influences looking for some sort of cultural equilibrium. At the same time, the cultural hybrid is described as having a keener sense of the world and the strengths and weaknesses of each culture in which they are a part. In some his fiction works (such as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*), Salman Rushdie seems to advocate the idea that immigrant/cultural hybrid is in a better position than the rest of us to appreciate the pluralistic, contradictory nature of the contemporary experience: “The word ‘translation’ comes, etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across.’ Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in

translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (*Imaginary Homelands* 16).<sup>1</sup>

While Rushdie seems to support the notion that there are benefits to cultural displacement, he also seems greatly concerned with social and psychological dangers of this displacement (such as *The Satanic Verses* and *Shame*). Specifically, he seems concerned that if a culture (or one who is part of a certain culture) is dislocated whether or not it is possible for that cultural heritage to survive. He is also concerned for the negative reaction that a homogeneous culture typically gives the hybrid: “In the same passage in *Shame* in which he equates migration with freedom, on which he speculates on an antigravity pill that would ‘make migrants of us all,’ he goes on to reflect, more soberly, on the price of such mobility: on the loss of moral meaning, the lapse of cultural continuity” (Cook 24).<sup>2</sup>

This thesis examines Rushdie’s treatment of the cultural hybrid in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* in order to explore the following questions: Does Rushdie have an ultimate view of the immigrant/hybrid position? Does he provide an answer to the drawbacks of such a position? What sort of world does Rushdie envision for the hybrid? Etc. I analyze key elements from *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in order to answer the above questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands*. London: Granta Books, 1991. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Cook, Rufus. “Place and Displacement in Salman Rushdie’s Work” *World Literature Today* 68.1 (1994): 24.

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## INTRODUCTION

The first time that I was introduced to Salman Rushdie's work was during my undergraduate senior year here at Appalachian State University. I was taking a class in writers specifically concerned with East/West issues and we read a plethora of authors including Orhan Pamuk, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and Salman Rushdie. I noticed Rushdie right away, mostly because my professor had deemed it necessary to devote a full month to reading *The Satanic Verses*, which, for a senior survey, was an unusual amount of time to give to one novel, even if it did stretch well over 500 pages. Before we began the novel, my professor gave us this warning: "About Salman Rushdie: You are either going to forever love him, or absolutely hate him."

After *five* weeks of reading *The Satanic Verses* (it turned out that a month was not at all sufficient to study this work), we began to understand our professor's warning. Rushdie's fiction is not for the faint-hearted as he seems to intend his fiction to *deliberately* disorient and befuddle the reader. For starters, he includes, intermingles, and fuses various story-telling genres from a range of cultural resources both Eastern and Western. This choice alone is enough to make any reader (from any cultural background) feel unsure of the ground they walk upon when reading a novel. However, Rushdie's disorientations do not simply stop at a melding of cultural story-telling conventions. He also incorporates numerous languages, pop-culture references, and historical mentions into his narratives and seldom feels the need to contextualize anything. Rushdie develops and intertwines a grand multitude of characters across multiple timelines, settings, and cultures. As Sandra Huisman puts it: "He blends these elements together into something entirely individual, shaping a kind of writing which stands at the border between Eastern and Western traditions and conventions..." (112).

It is no wonder then that even though my professor, classmates, and I spent every minute of class attempting to unpack and examine all the various nuances and facets of this formidable novel and, despite the amount of time we devoted, still felt that we needed to read it again. We all described to my professor a feeling of having been “unsettled” or “disrupted” by the novel. I, personally remember feeling as if I had been uprooted, tossed around, and thus became forced to consider the ground upon which I stood in the first place. This uprooting was disconcerting, but beautiful.

It turns out this unsettling, disorientation, and uprooting is Rushdie’s point. At the center of the majority of Rushdie’s works are cultural and identity politics. Namely, the dominant theme of these works is of the many connections, disruptions, migrations, and translations between the Eastern and Western worlds. He is deeply concerned with the interconnectivity and fusion of these two worlds and of the peoples associated with and between these Easts and Wests. Given Rushdie’s preference for the complex and disorienting, it should be no surprise that Rushdie places the cultural hybrid front and center of his art. A great many of his characters are “cultural hybrids,” meaning that these characters, for one reason or another, have split cultural identities or are caught between multiple cultural influences. As a result of being caught between cultures, the cultural hybrid both experiences feelings of dislocation and seems to fight between the dual cultural influences looking for some sort of cultural equilibrium. Rushdie’s aim is to replicate this sense of displacement in his readers.

At the same time, the hybrid is described as having a keener sense of the world at large and of the strengths and weaknesses of each culture in which they are a part. In some of his fiction works, Rushdie seems to advocate the idea that the hybrid is in a better position

than “non-hybrids” to appreciate the pluralistic, contradictory nature of the contemporary experience: “The word ‘translation’ comes, etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across.’ Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (*Imaginary Homelands* 16). Perhaps this is also an aim of Rushdie’s complicated tendencies, to hope that his reader can see something beyond what they did before; readers can gain something from being lost in translation.

While Rushdie seems to support the notion that there are benefits to cultural displacement, he also seems greatly concerned with social and psychological dangers of this displacement. Specifically, he seems concerned that if a culture (or if one individual who is part of a certain culture) is dislocated whether or not it is possible for that cultural heritage to survive: “In the same passage in *Shame* in which he equates migration with freedom, on which he speculates on an antigravity pill that would ‘make migrants of us all,’ he goes on to reflect, more soberly, on the price of such mobility: on the loss of moral meaning, the lapse of cultural continuity” (Cook 24). He is also concerned for the negative reaction that a homogeneous culture typically gives the hybrid. In a lot of Rushdie’s works, he intimates that none of the hybrid’s cultural pulls can accept him or her for what he or she is. The hybrid is an outsider to all because he or she, due to these multiple cultural pulls, becomes (like Rushdie’s writing) something completely new.

Therefore, it seems that while Rushdie values cultural displacement and migration, he is also very concerned for the cultural hybrids themselves and whether this world as it is, can smoothly handle the transition (for I believe that Rushdie *does* see the world in transition) from cultural purism to cultural pluralism. He simultaneously seems to advocate for and warn

against the hybrid/migrant position and cultural amalgamation. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine Rushdie's treatment of the cultural hybrid in *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in order to explore the following questions: Does Rushdie have an ultimate view of the hybrid/migrant position? Does he provide an answer to the drawbacks of such a position? What sort of world does Rushdie envision for the hybrid? More importantly, what sort of world does Rushdie envision *with* the hybrid as a part of it?

After reflecting upon a few of Rushdie's novels, I believe it is possible to argue the following: 1). Rushdie *does* paint for his readers a confusing and painful world in which the hybrid must *learn* to function; 2). Rushdie advocates the idea that every hybrid must come to terms with his or her own "migrant consciousness," which is the transition from an awareness of dis-belonging to a realization and acceptance of one's position as "something new" 3); Rushdie believes in the idea that a multicultural, hybridized world can exist and that such a world is both beautiful and preferable to cultural "purism"; 4). Rushdie sees the hybrid as in the perfect position to help the world work towards such a multicultural and hybridized world because of his or her ability to appreciate and see the advantages of pluralism in a way that the non-hybrid cannot.

Any of Rushdie's fictions works, indeed many of his non-fiction works as well, are more than suitable to examine in terms of his ideas of hybridity, the position of migrants, and of a culturally pluralistic world. Choosing novels to study for the purposes of this project proved very difficult. In the end, I settled on *The Satanic Verses* first because I felt that Salahuddin Chamchawala/ Saladin Chamcha is a character of Rushdie's that (literally) embodies the subject position of the migrant in a still cultural purist world. Saladin's journey to understanding himself and his plurality also sheds a great deal of light on Rushdie's views

about the position of *all* migrants in the world, which is important to understand if we are to discover what sort of world Rushdie ultimately envisions as it continues to move toward plurality. I later decided to include *The Moor's Last Sigh* because I believe that it is a novel where Rushdie spends a great deal of time reflecting on the transition of cultural purism to cultural pluralism and envisioning a finally culturally pluralistic (and improved) world. Finally, I chose *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. While it is generally considered a “minor work” of Rushdie’s, and while many believe that it is only a novel about the freedom of speech and importance of storytelling, I believe that this novel fits into Rushdie’s other works in that it is also deeply concerned with inter-cultural relationships and a culturally pluralistic work. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in particular, Rushdie strongly paints the migrant/hybrid as the one that will bring together cultures and lead the world from purism to pluralism.

Before moving on to my analysis and argument, I must make some things clear. First, when I refer to the term “migrant,” I mean someone who has travelled for an extended period time to another country and has lived among another culture. When I refer to the term “hybrid,” I mean one that has two or more cultural influences that either fight against each other or intermingle (or both), making it impossible for that individual to feel a fully integrated part of any one single culture, no matter how much they may wish it so. There are a variety of experiences that one may encounter in order to classify as a hybrid. Most often, two main groups feel an awareness of hybridity: first- and second- generation migrants.

A first-generation migrant refers to a person who was born in one country and then migrated to another during their adolescent or adult life. First-generation migrants typically experience feelings of cultural hybridity because they must find a way to merge their

previously constructed cultural identities with those that they must adopt for survival, or to fit in or because they prefer them. Second-generation migrants are the children of the first-generation migrants who are either born in the home country and leave it for the host country at a very young age, or are simply born in the host country. Second-generation migrants experience as much cultural hybridity as their first-generation migrant parents. Instead of moving from one country to another and having to negotiate new cultural practices into their old ones, second-generation migrants find themselves caught between their parents' home cultural influences and their surrounding environments' cultural influences. Rushdie includes hybrids of both first- and second-generation in his fiction, though I will primarily (though not exclusively) analyze first-generation migrants in the course of this project. However, the effects of hybridity that I describe, though they are mostly supported by an analysis of first-generation migrants, apply to any cultural hybrid.

Second, please note that I stay away from the term "immigrant" and instead use "migrant" or "hybrid." First, not all hybrids are immigrants so using "immigrant" instead of "hybrid" would be an incomplete and incorrect way to speak of the issues I bring up in this paper, even though these issues do apply to most immigrants. Second, and more importantly, in the 1982 essay "The New Empire Within Britain" (republished in *Imaginary Homelands*), Rushdie writes "...I'd like to ask you to think about the word 'immigrant,' because it seems to me to demonstrate the extent to which racist concepts have been allowed to seize the central ground... even British born blacks and Asians are thought of as people whose real 'home' is elsewhere" (132). He notes that the use of the term isn't always used to refer to an actual "immigrant" per se, but instead has been used to refer to the cultural "Other," or any individual that racially stands out against the cultural norm, whether they were born in that

country or not. “Immigrant” is used to “Other” those that some feel do not belong inside the cultural norm.

The word, misused as it is, indicates both a sense of rejection and displacement, but also a sense of transience and impermanence. The message of its misuse is clear, “you Others don’t belong, and you certainly aren’t staying.” Such misuses of the word continue over 25 years later across the world. As Rushdie aptly pointed out in 1982, people in Britain were using the term to refer to any non-white, including those people that had lived in the United Kingdom their whole life. I lived in England from 1998 – 2001, and the term was still occasionally used improperly. Most recently, it has been applied again and again to Hispanics in the U.S., whether they *are* immigrants, new citizens, or have been born and raised in the country. Therefore, I also choose not to use “immigrant” to avoid any misunderstandings of this kind.

Throughout this piece I am also operating under the idea that Rushdie sees us as currently living in a mostly segregated world evolving (inevitability) towards integration. This mostly segregated world is full of people who (whether obviously or not) fear the “Other.” He is concerned with a world that is having trouble making that transition and for the people who are the first to fall between borders and boundaries and are thusly unacceptable everywhere. Rushdie’s ideas as such seem particularly important as we realize, to borrow from *New York Times* journalist Thomas L. Friedman, that we are living in an ever “flattening” world. With the eruption of communication tools, the convergence of technology, and increased access to information via the Internet, intercultural connections have vastly grown in the past thirty years. This means that the world *is* transitioning from a

mostly segregated into an increasingly interconnected world (Friedman). The concern Rushdie seems to have is whether or not the people are ready for such a change.

Finally, it should be noted that while I refer to a “cultural norm” and “cultural purism” I do not intend to imply that every single person of one culture will be the same, think the same, agree to the same issues, or even feel the same way about the culture itself. Every culture is full of its own diversity. I merely imply that every culture has its own dominant practices, outlooks, languages, etc., that identify it as a culture. Therefore, when I speak of cultural norm or cultural purism I do not imply a completely homogenous group of people, rather to the common ground people of a culture generally share among their otherwise diverse selves.

*THE SATANIC VERSES: SMASHING CONSTRUCTED FACES AND (RESPONSIBLY)  
EMBRACING HYBRIDITY*

*The Satanic Verses* is by far Rushdie's most famous and most controversial novel. His portrayal and criticism of religious fanaticism, particularly of Islamic traditions, earned Rushdie great fame and terrible danger almost overnight. In 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Supreme Leader of Iran, issued a fatwa making it good Muslims' duty to kill Rushdie and his publishers on sight. Because of the power of this death-sentence, the British government put Rushdie under police protection, and Rushdie went into hiding. Thus far, Rushdie has not been harmed, though 38 others connected to this novel have been killed in violence under this order.

Because of all of the religion-based attention the book received, one of Rushdie's primary themes was, for a long time, overshadowed: "Critical discussion of the novel has been largely, and understandably, pre-empted by the outrage it aroused in certain Islamic quarters, the *fatwa* that sentenced Rushdie to death and placed a bounty on his head, and the ramifications of what has come to be called 'the Rushdie affair'" (Gane 18). Rushdie stressed before, during, and after the *fatwa* that, while this book is *in part* about religion and religious fanaticism, it is about *migrancy* and translation above all: "If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition..." (*Imaginary Homelands* 394). It is this migrant condition that I focus on in this

chapter. Particularly, I focus on Saladin Chamcha's journey to understanding himself and his plurality in a culturally pure country, and analyze Rushdie's understanding of the hybrid's position in a culturally pure world.

While a great many characters in *The Satanic Verses* are hybrid and attempt to understand their identity as hybrids, Saladin Chamcha is the character that readers follow the most closely and one that also *literally* embodies the hybrid position as dictated by a world that fears and hates the "Other." The other main character of this novel, Gibreel Farishta, also undergoes a major physical change in the novel; however, this change is mostly religion-centered, though there are some cultural elements to his transformation as well. Gibreel Farishta's transformation and fate (at least the cultural aspects of them) are discussed in this chapter, though Saladin Chamcha remains the primary focus.

Saladin Chamcha was once called Salahuddin Chamchawala as a boy living in India. As a young lad, Salahuddin was always fascinated by England:

The mutation of Salahuddin Chamchawala into Saladin Chamcha began, it will be seen, in old Bombay, long before he got close enough to hear the lions of Trafalgar roar. When the England cricket team played India at the Brabourne Stadium, he prayed for an England victory, for the game's creators to defeat the local upstarts, for the proper order of things to be maintained.

*(Satanic Verses 38)*

When Salahuddin turns thirteen, his father, Changez, offers him an opportunity to study abroad in England for the remainder of his school years. Salahuddin eagerly accepts his father's offer, and together they board a plane to England. Unfortunately, Salahuddin's first experiences in England are not as ideal as he might have imagined. Changez puts him in

charge of all of the money, which Chamchawala must figure out on his own, never having handled British currency before. He finds the experience “a nightmare” (*Satanic Verses* 42), confused and bewildered by having to operate so differently so quickly. In addition, after his father leaves him, he finds that he is very much an outsider at his new school. He cites a particular example of attempting to eat an English kipper, unable to figure out how to get past the spikes and bones: “His fellow-pupils watched him suffer in silence not one of them said, here, let me show you, you eat it in this way. It took him ninety minutes to eat the fish and he was not permitted to rise from the table until it was done” (*Satanic Verses* 44). These experiences of outsider-ness shamed the young Salahuddin to such a degree that he vowed to conquer England:

...he would be English, even if his classmates giggled at his voice and excluded him from their secrets, because these exclusions only increased his determination, and that was when he began to act, to find masks that these fellows would recognize, paleface masks, clown-masks, until he fooled them into thinking he was *okay*, he was *people-like-us*. (*Satanic Verses* 44)

This early experience of Salahuddin’s is Rushdie’s first critique of the English people and the hybrid position in it. Here, England is a country that does not value diversity, and chooses to ignore or ridicule the different. In other words, the English prefer culturally similar individuals, and it is dangerous or disadvantageous to be an outsider in a country with these values. According to the majority, there is no room for hybridity or otherness in a culturally purist country: one is either part of the group or not. The dominant culture would prefer to ignore or ridicule those unlike themselves, and they definitely do not wish to help

these “others” become a part of their closed circles. There is no room for grey in a place that only seems to see black and white.

During his first few weeks in England, Salahuddin realized how much he didn't know and how much the English people would rather just ignore his struggles than help him to adjust. To his classmates, the new Indian student is simply an entertainment, someone to tease, or someone to exclude from their exclusively English groups. He is perceptive to the fact that these English students will not accept him unless he adopts a “paleface mask,” or, in other words, unless he starts to look, act, sound, and otherwise seem exactly like them. Saladin understands that these English people find difference dangerous and similarity secure. It is no wonder then, that Salahuddin understands that fitting in with England means that he must hide, as much as possible, his identity as an Indian. He must bury this Indian side of himself, and adopt completely an English manner. To him, there is no balance between his identities that the English will simply accept. Instead, he must “find masks... *paleface* masks” to put on until “he *fooled*” the English people that he was one of their own.

The terminology “fooled” and “paleface *masks*” are noteworthy as well. It implies that Saladin is not *really* changing himself, but instead he is learning the art of trickery and disguise very well. Embedded in this type of terminology is the understanding that, essentially, nothing essential has changed in Saladin's character. Rather, he has simply learned to cover up his Indian identity and adopt an English mask. Eventually, Saladin simply loses sight of the idea that this Englishness he chooses to expose in England *is*, in fact, a mask. One cannot truly make the mask the face, though it will take a shattering of this mask for Saladin to realize this.

Sooner or later, Saladin thinks of himself as completely English, without any Indian left in him at all. He no longer recognizes in himself anything except the face and voice that he has constructed in order to fit in his adopted home country: “Mr. Saladin Chamcha had constructed his face with care – it had taken him several years to get it just right – and for many more years now he had thought of it simply as *his own* – indeed, he had forgotten what he had looked like before it” (*Satanic Verses* 33). He has forgotten his old Indian identity, thinking that he has washed it out and replaced it with a new one rather than that he has succeeded in only hiding the Indian beneath the paleface mask. Saladin clearly thinks that identity can be constructed by force of will and habit, rather than thinking of it as made up of experiences and histories. His desperation to fit in with the inflexible English society has fostered and perpetuated these ideas. He constructs in himself English customs, voices, and values. He also goes on to marry an English woman, climb the English social class ladder, collect English money, and move into an English mansion. It is only after all of this that he begins to feel a part of the English society, and that English society *appears* to accept him. Salahuddin buried as deeply as he could all in him that was Indian, and he never wishes it to resurface. Instead he tries to assimilate completely to the England he obsessed over as a child. Saladin goes so far as to choose employment as a voice actor, where hiding his true voice and self is key to success. He also westernizes his name from Salahuddin Chamchawala to Saladin Chamcha.

However, Saladin will soon find out that banishing an old identity for the sake of a newer (and much more convenient one) is not as easy as he thinks. He receives an unpleasant awakening when he goes back to India for the first time in 15 years. At first, Saladin attempts

to impress a more English attitude on his childhood home and family clearly thinking that the Indian way is inferior to his new culture's customs and mannerisms. His mother teases him:

... he has such big-big criticisms, the fans are fixed too loosely to the roof and will fall to slice our heads off in our sleep, he says, and the food is too fattening, why we don't cook some things without frying, he wants to know, the top-floor balconies are unsafe and the paint is peeled, why can't we take pride in our surroundings, isn't it, and the garden is over grown, we are just jungle people, he thinks so.... (*Satanic Verses* 45).

Saladin appears to spend most of his time back in India criticizing the life of his parents and the life he used to live. He looks through the eyes he trained himself to look through and disapproves of anything he thinks the English may not approve of. He seems almost ashamed of his connection to his Indian family and wants to make them as English as he can. The source of Saladin's greatest discomfort is the walnut tree his father planted in the soil of their home when he was born. To Changez, his son's soul resides in that tree; his roots are forever implanted in Saladin's childhood home and country. This metaphor bothers Saladin severely; he even goes so far as to suggest to his father that the walnut tree should be cut down. Such is the panic that Saladin will not be able to integrate himself fully with the English that he goes to any lengths that he can to cut himself off from his place of birth in order to embody more completely the English culture.

Saladin's criticism of his family and his request that the walnut tree be cut down again show that Saladin understands England as a culturally purist country, and that hybridity of any sort is unacceptable in his new English life. If he wants to be truly English, he must cut himself completely off from India. He starts by criticizing his childhood home for its lack

of English values, almost as if he is trying to transform his old life into an acceptable English one, and then wishes to destroy the one thing that, at least metaphorically, binds him to India. Just appearing English in England is not enough for Saladin. Such is his desperation to fit in, and such is his understanding of what “fitting in” means for Britain, that he seeks to erase every last tie to India he has. This may mirror the feelings of many migrants who must also look for some outlet to the pressures as an outsider in a dominant society.

However, after a little time in India, Saladin’s carefully constructed face and voice begin to betray him: “...during his recent visit to his hometown... there had been strange and worrying developments. It was unfortunately the case that his voice (the first to go) and, subsequently, his face itself, had begun to let him down...” (*Satanic Verses* 34). He begins to revert back to the Indian-English jargon. “‘I have a gift for accents,’ he said haughtily. ‘Why I shouldn’t employ?’ ‘*Why I should not employ?*’ [Zeeny] mimicked him... ‘Mister actor, your moustache just slipped again’” (*Satanic Verses* 60). Not only are old habits coming back, but Saladin cannot escape the feeling that he is not himself while in India, and curses India for trying to “drag him back.”

In addition, he seems to fall quite quickly into the arms to Zeeny Vakil, a sort of hybridity theorist and art critic. Her theories are that no art follows one pure tradition, but is rather made up of multiple traditions from multiple cultures, which are simply adopted and adapted, to the needs and fashions of the time:

Rushdie’s chief spokesperson in *The Satanic Verses* for cross-cultural “translations” is the Indian doctor/art critic, Zeeny Vakil. Her book, entitled *The Only Good Indian*, is a scathing attack on “the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straightjacket,” which she seeks to replace by “an

ethic of historically validated eclecticism” (52). Such transformations, based upon what Tzvetan Todorov describes as “the mixture of several traditions, the agglutination of fragments, the hybrid patchwork,” are to Rushdie the imperative needs of our time. (Mann 4)

In many ways, Zeeny represents the idea of hybridity at large in *The Satanic Verses*; in addition to studying and writing about hybridity and the amalgamation of art traditions, Zeeny also chooses to make Saladin her personal project. She notes his attempt to erase his Indian-ness and endeavors to show him that he fundamentally cannot do this, nor should he want to: “Sometimes, when you are quiet... when you aren’t doing funny voices or acting grand, and when you forget people are watching you look just like a blank. You know? An empty slate, nobody home. It makes me mad, sometimes, I want to slap you. To sting you back into life...” (*Satanic Verses* 62). She sees that without his Indian identity, Saladin is hollow.

Saladin’s attraction to Zeeny (which he initially fights, and blames being in India for) is very important here. Rushdie shows that, even if Saladin may not understand it or may otherwise outrightly deny it, deep down he yearns for and is profoundly attracted to the idea of hybridity and fragmented identities. He fell for Zeeny within about 48 hours of landing in India; in fact, he fell for her so quickly he reflects that he wasn’t even sure what was happening at the time. Something subconscious, something Saladin is not aware of or is in the habit of ignoring, seemed to take over his consciousness and put him directly in the arms of someone who could convince him to stop ignoring the *whole* of his identity. This is Rushdie’s first indication that identity is not something to be constructed, altered, or denied. It is a powerful concept that is incredibly important to the making of the self.

Once Saladin gets back onto a plane to go back to England, he actually breathes a sigh of relief as if he has just escaped some serious danger:

I'm not myself, he thought as a faint fluttering began in the vicinity of his heart. But what does that mean, anyway, he added bitterly... Damn you, India, Saladin Chamcha cursed silently, sinking back into his seat. To hell with you, I escaped your clutches long ago, you won't get your hooks into me again, you cannot drag me back. (*Satanic Verses* 35)

This is an interesting sentiment. It seems to imply that Saladin has begun to view India as a dangerous enemy, one that seeks to destroy him. It appears that he thinks that India will keep coming after him and his only choice is to try to escape. Leonard notes: "Saladin Chamcha struggles against the recurring fear of being betrayed by his own skin. Because he has been overusing masks, Chamcha seems not to be able any longer to know which skin is his" (414).

Saladin's slippages, affair with Zeeny, and foreboding feelings that India is out to get him indicate that Rushdie feels that one cannot *really* escape the experiences that make up one's identity. Saladin keeps trying to construct his history, his future, and his identity by simply wishing it to be the way he wants it to be. However, as soon as he returns to India, his old Indian identity reemerges within a few days; his "paleface" mask begins to break and his "brown" begins to show through. Further, his feelings that India is trying to "get hooks" into him show that he still feels a pull toward India (even if he doesn't want it). India will never let go, and Saladin cannot make it let go. No matter how much Saladin wants to be rid of India, the Indian in him will never go away. In fact, it has been buried underneath the paleface mask all this time. Most of all, Saladin's deep attraction to Zeeny Vakil, shows that an attraction to and need for hybridity is also buried in Saladin's subconscious.

Rushdie obviously paints the migrant in a terribly awkward position. First, it is clear that hybridity and otherness are not acceptable avenues of belonging to a culturally hybrid world. Therefore, the migrant or the hybrid who chooses to face his or her fragmented selves by trying to belong must don a paleface mask and enter the center of English society in order to succeed. Rushdie seems to say, however that to attempt adopting the paleface mask in replacement of the underlying ethnicity is really impossible as Saladin's Indian-ness reemerges almost instantly upon his return. One can only hide it for a while but Rushdie paints the return of the hidden identity as inevitable. Saladin's attraction to Zeeny Vakil also shows that he has a deep-seeded need to be a hybrid, but cannot find a way to safely do so. So then the migrant is caught; he or she is expected to assimilate completely, but to do so is a lie. One cannot hide all facets of one's cultural identity, yet hybridity is not an acceptable medium to the majority. So what is a migrant to do? Rushdie seems to imply that, while he understands this predicament and certainly sympathizes with it, he is against the idea that one should try to *become* paleface mask. To attempt to hide and ignore one's entire identity is reprehensible.

On his way back from India, religious fundamentalists take Saladin and his fellow passengers hostage in a flight jacking. When the hijackers' demands have still not been met after several weeks, they take the plane up and use explosives strapped to the chest of their leader to detonate it. Astonishingly, Saladin survives the initial blast and is conscious as he falls quickly through the air toward the ground along with another passenger: Gibreel Farishta.

Gibreel is, in many ways, Saladin's foil in this novel, at least in philosophies about culture and assimilation. Saladin obviously adheres stubbornly to the idea that if one is to

move to another culture, it is far better to assimilate completely with that cultures' systems of beliefs, values, customs. He subsequently changes every aspect of himself in order to fit in with the English culture. Opposing, Gibreel feels that he doesn't need to change a thing about himself to be in England. Even when in England, he remains a "true-to-heart" Indian, refusing to change to suit the needs or wishes of others. He remains through the novel inflexibly Indian. It is almost as if Gibreel would prefer to pretend the England he is in doesn't exist rather than face any culture shock.

This fall from the air is a re-birth for Saladin, and Rushdie takes great pains to make sure that readers understand it as such. The first lines of the book start with birth imagery: "To be born again... first you have to die!" (*Satanic Verses* 3). The birth imagery continues as Rushdie describes the manner in which these two men fall: "...Gibreel and Saladin plummeted like bundles dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork... Chamcha was going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal..." (*Satanic Verses* 5). To finalize the images of rebirth Rushdie writes upon the men's landing:

These were the first words Gibreel Farishta said when he awoke on the snowbound English beach with the improbability of a starfish by his ear: "Born again, Spoono, you and me. Happy birthday, mister; happy birthday to you." Whereupon Saladin Chamcha coughed, spluttered, open his eyes, and, as befitted a new-born babe, burst forth into foolish tears. (*Satanic Verses* 10)

A re-birth of sorts has truly happened for these men. But what sort of rebirth is it? Initially as they are falling, each man remains firmly in his cultural role:

As they fall through the air, their range of expression sets up the initial opposition between [these men]. Gibreel, the angel, sings an old Hindi film

song whose patriotic text insists on the cosmopolitan's 'inviolately subcontinental heart' (6) while Chamcha, the more-British-than-thou toady, counters this blasphemy over England by singing the verses of one James Thompson. (Sharma 607)

Even while these men are plummeting to their deaths (they think) heading towards the British shore, Chamcha still cannot think of anything but English values at the expense of Indian ones. Appalled at Gibreel's song and lack of proper falling etiquette, he launches a counter-offensive in defense of England and his English values. He doesn't wish to believe in Gibreel's song, which states: "O, my shoes are Japanese... These trousers are English if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that" (*Satanic Verses* 5). The song indicates that no matter what one's outer appearance, the inside remains the same. The idea that Saladin will not be able to change his inside no matter what his appearance terrifies him. Rushdie deliberately calls attention to each of these men's cultural allegiances before describing their metamorphoses in order to give his readers an idea about the nature of the transformation itself. Rushdie, interestingly, focuses on Saladin for the duration of the men's change. This is because, of the two men, it is Saladin that goes through the most culturally-focused change.

Somewhere between the plane explosion and the shore, the rebirth/transformation begins. The two men grab onto each other and tumble "end over end" (*Satanic Verses* 7) and press through metamorphosing clouds:

Hybrid cloud-creatures pressed in upon them, gigantic flowers with human breasts dangling from fleshy stalks, winged cats, centaurs, 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. (*Satanic Verses* 7)

Aside from the circumstances of the miraculous fall, there are several very interesting details of note in this scene. First, the air is an appropriate place for this transmutation to take place because it is an extremely liminal space. Since Saladin is falling, he is neither completely in the “air” space (floating or hovering) nor is he on the ground. He falls; he is in the process of migrating from one space to another. Saladin is neither in India nor in England by the time he is given his horns; he is in between, hovering over the shore. The fact that he is hovering over water strengthens the idea of this liminal space. The water connects many countries together, which includes Britain and India. Water, in and of itself, is a transitional space. Saladin then is migration between countries, between land and sea, and between air and water. Rushdie consciously puts Saladin in one the most “in-between” spaces that he can because, as Gane notes, “[a]t the heart of *The Satanic Verses* is the enterprise of imagining how migrants change in the course of migration” (25).

Second, Rushdie has Saladin pass through a cloud that metamorphoses into a variety of physically hybrid creatures. He is literally travelling through a place in which physical hybridity is possible and begins to feel a “cloudiness” within himself. Hybridity presses in upon him and transforms him physically into what he does not wish to see: that he is a hybrid too (though he will not come to this realization easily or quickly). Also, he is going “end over end” with Gibreel Farishta, an inflexible Indian, and feels himself flowing in and out of Gibreel’s being. Something serious is changing in Saladin; his inner self has been infiltrated and his exterior altered. When Saladin lands on the beach of England, miraculously alive and

crying like a newborn, he has already developed the first part of his new figure: two small bumps on the top of his head. Saladin is beginning to turn into a devil-goat.

Practically overnight, Saladin's "bumps" turn into full grown, razor sharp horns. He also has "thick, tightly curled dark hair covering his thighs" which have grown "uncommonly wide and powerful as well as hairy" (*Satanic Verses* 162). In addition "[h]is horns kept banging into things.... Below the knee the hairiness came to a halt, and his legs narrowed into tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, cloven hoofs, such as one might find on any billy goat... his voice mutated into goat-bleats" (*Satanic Verses* 162-163). Saladin has literally transformed into a devil-goat complete with horns and hoofs.

Opposing Saladin's transformation into a devil, Gibreel has begun to take on the characteristics of an angel. When Rosa Diamond finds the newly re-born men she notes that "... around the edges of Gibreel Farishta's head, as he stood with his back to the dawn, it seemed to Rosa Diamond that she discerned a faint, but distinctly golden, *glow*" (*Satanic Verses* 139). Further, "...when Gibreel asked, 'What do these men want?' every man there was seized by the desire to answer his question in literal, detailed terms, to reveal their secrets, as if he were, as if, but no, ridiculous..." (*Satanic Verses* 146). Gibreel Farishta, like Saladin, finds himself transformed.

The reader is forced to ask why Gibreel Farishta transforms into an angelic being while Saladin Chamcha transforms into a devil-goat. Why does one embody evil while the other embodies virtue? Rushdie leaves readers in the dark for quite a while, letting them take the signs and hints for themselves. However, toward the end of the novel, Rushdie sheds some light on the matter:

Might we not agree that Gibreel, for all his stage-name and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses; – has wished to remain to large-degree *continuous* – that is joined to and arising from the past... so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as true... whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* reinvention; his *preferred* revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, ‘false?’ And might we then not go on to say that it is this falsity of self that makes possible in Chamcha a worse and deeper falsity – call this ‘evil’ – and that this is the truth, the door, that was opened in him by the fall? While Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered ‘good’ by virtue of *wishing to remain*, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom an untranslated man. (*Satanic Verses* 441)

Rushdie explains that it is possible to say that Gibreel, who wishes to remain untranslated, is a “good” man for wishing to remain himself in the face of other cultural pulls. Saladin, however, wishes to live in falsity and “revolt against [the] history” that has made him. He was going through a “willing” reinvention and therefore false.

To Rushdie, Saladin is engaging in a seriously evil act. He is denying himself and his history in order to fit in with those who are not otherwise friendly to Others. This sort of behavior is immoral to Rushdie: “Abandoning one’s native identity and forging a completely new identity for himself is not the solution Rushdie suggests for solving the perplexing problem of living with one’s identity in the hybridizing world” (Chon 77). Further,

[c]ontinuity, or the desire for continuity, is here – tentatively and hypothetically – equated with authenticity or the ‘truth’ of the self, and by extension with the ‘good’.... Gibreel, the ‘untranslated man’ who has changed only against his will, is ‘good’; Saladin, a ‘translated man’ who has *chosen* to become English, to invent himself, to rupture his connections to his past and his people, is false, and this ‘falsity of self’ is what opens the way to the greater falsity of evil. (Gane 32)

This idea is further demonstrated in Changez’s sentiments in his letters: “A man untrue to himself becomes a two-legged lie, and such beasts are Shaitan’s best work” (*Satanic Verses* 48). To his father (and to Rushdie), Saladin is being untrue to himself, and has thus *become* a lie. The embodiment of a lie is “Shaitan’s best work,” or is a greatest of evils. For Saladin to ignore his Indian identity and to attempt to completely adopt an English one is morally reprehensible to Changez (and Rushdie):

Saladin’s later metamorphosis into a devil also appears to prove Changez’s ideas: the “Devil has only your body” (48). For Saladin, however, the satanic transformation, although in effect the result of the process of hegemonic description – what Homi Bhabha terms “difference into demonism” - is the realization of his own subconscious, *camera-obscura* fears that the “bad Indian” or the “black fellow” he has suppressed might take over his public self-made image of the “goodandproper Englishman.” (Parashkevova 11)

It is interesting that the attempt to construct one’s identity is called a “lie” as well. It means that, no matter what Saladin thinks, this adoption of an English identity cannot be the whole truth. It is a lie because it does not include another part of himself. Soon, Saladin will see

how right his father is; something miraculous will happen to Saladin that will force him to examine his identity and the attitudes of the English majority.

One of Saladin's first experiences as a devil-goat shows, most vividly, Rushdie's concern about the treatment of the hybrid in a culturally purist world. A day after landing on the British shore, the immigration police takes Saladin away, believing him to be an illegal immigrant. The immigration officials' treatment of Saladin is unusually cruel and vicious. These immigration officers handle Saladin very roughly, strip him naked, make fun of him in his devilish appearance, beat him, and, most cruelly, force him to eat his own goat-like feces. No matter how many times Saladin tries to tell these officers that he is a legal Englishman, they will not listen: "'Who're you trying to kid?'" inquired one of the [immigration officers]... 'Look at yourself. You're a fucking Packy billy. Sally-who? – What kind of name is that for an Englishman?'" (*Satanic Verses* 168). It is clear that all these men see is what Saladin looks like and simply categorize him by his appearance as an "Other." His appearance and his name, without proof of citizenship (and more importantly of class status), are all the immigration officers need to pass judgment upon him.

The interesting thing about this situation is that these immigration officials are not at all in awe over Saladin's devilish features. The goal is clear: no matter what, no matter who, no matter when, treat the detainee with as much malevolence as possible, for whoever is in that truck, these detainees are devils to the immigration officers in some form or another. They are treating him badly not because of his devilish appearance but simply because they think he is an illegal immigrant and because he is a racial minority.

The immigration officials represent the majority culture's fear of the minority Other and their attempts to keep these unwanted Others out of their beloved mono-cultural country.

Immigration officers are employed specifically to keep the Other out and to punish them for attempting to infiltrate in the first place. They are “Other” hunters who must view all Others as the enemy, and because they view Others as the enemy, and because it was England who created these types of jobs, it translates to the idea that (majority) England also views these Others as the enemy that threatens their country. The treatment these officials give those they put into the back of their truck seems almost sanctioned, as if this is general procedure in hopes of making Others never want to try to come back again.

This treatment is so alien to Saladin who hasn’t been treated badly by any part of the majority (in his eyes) since he worked to become part of it.

“This isn’t England,” he thought, not for the first or last time. How could it be, after all; where in all that moderate and common-sensical land was there room for such a police van in whose interior such events as these might plausibly transpire? He was being forced towards the conclusion that he had indeed died in the exploding aeroplane and that everything that followed had been some sort of after-life. (*The Satanic Verses* 163)

Saladin cannot believe that he is in England, for the England he has come to be a part of would never treat him this way. He doesn’t understand why these men are so cruel to him because he sees himself a complete part of the majority of England. This is not the England he knows; The England he knows treats him with respect, and kindness, and inclusiveness. He is so bewildered that he even thinks seriously for a while that he has actually died and entered some sort of purgatory or hell. However, a swift kick helps the reality of the situation sink in: without class, name, or proof of wealth, Saladin has been reduced to his nationality

and outsider appearance. Without wealth and status, he is nothing of importance to the majority.

If this is how anyone different from the majority is treated in Britain, then Rushdie seems to be showing his readers that there isn't room for *any* sort of Other in a culturally purist world, let alone a hybrid. If the panic and fear toward Others is as high as it is for fear of minority infiltration into the majority, if the need to keep these minority Others out is so great, then how will this majority react to hybrids that *do* stake a claim in majority English culture? For cultural purists (as is England for this novel), fragments, boundaries, and divisions are much better than areas where boundaries are fluid or fuzzy. Keeping the Other firmly outside the majority is key, and hybrids that can transcend these boundaries are more dangerous than the Other. It is easier for a hybrid to infiltrate.

While Saladin has all the makings of a “goodandproper” Englishman, readers find that majority England allows him to believe he has succeeded in becoming a full part of society, probably because of his affluence. However, once his name and proof of identity are gone, he is straight back to being just another dangerous Other. It also appears that perhaps, while Saladin believed that he was succeeding in becoming a part of the majority, the majority had him in his “place” the entire time. Saladin’s claim to fame is *The Aliens Show* in which he plays Maxim Alien, an extraterrestrial who goes to great lengths in order to become a T.V. personality. He changes his hair color, voice, and will even shed a limb in order to become a being that will fit in to the society’s needs (sound familiar?). The show

as might be expected, attracts a good deal of criticism. It is seen at best as weird and at worst as politically reactionary reinforcing in a society –

Britain’s – not known for its tolerance toward immigrants, the idea of “aliens”

as freaks and as hopeless aspirants to mainstream culture. Saladin, aka Maxim Alien, is dubbed “a brown Uncle Tom,” brainwashed if not lobotomized by media images of mainstream culture, and driven by a self destructive need to assimilate to a society that despises him (Ironically, Saladin is later fired from the show on the grounds of his ethnicity). (Huggen 91)

Huggen also states, “Rushdie’s description of the show emphasizes the commodified hybridity which is characteristic of a novel that exhibits the metamorphic processes of intercultural fusion in self-parodic commercial processes...” (90).

English society allows him into their mainstream circles because it must but continues to find ways to keep him well within the confines of his “Other” label. While Saladin does technically succeed at becoming a T.V. personality (just as his alien character wishes to be) he is given a role, which is “proper” for him, a hybrid, to play. His character never succeeds in becoming mainstream enough to land his dream job and thus become part of the mainstream culture. Mainstream England uses Saladin and other Others who have a stake in mainstream culture in order to reinforce the ideas that no matter how much one assimilate, they will never simply become part of the majority culture. The majority culture will make sure of that, and will continue to place and describe Others in order to reinforce these boundaries.

This idea is further developed as Saladin spends time in a psychiatric hospital with others who have turned into various hybrid creatures like him.

Standing in front of him was a figure so impossible that Chamcha wanted to bury his head under the sheets; yet could not for was not he himself...?  
 “That’s right,” the creature said. “You see, you’re not alone.” It had an

entirely human body but its head was that of a ferocious tiger.... The manticore ground its three rows of teeth in evident frustration. “There’s a woman over that way,” it said, “who is now mostly water-buffalo. There are businessmen from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails. There is a group of holiday-makers from Senegal who were doing no more than changing planes when they were turned into slippery snakes. I myself an in the rag trade; for some years now I have been a highly paid model, based in Bombay, wearing a wide range of suitings and shirtings also. But who will employ me now?”  
*(Satanic Verses 173).*

Saladin, amazed at all he sees, asks this manticore how the existence of such creatures is possible. The manticore replies: “They describe us... That’s all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct” *(Satanic Verses 174)*. The manticore is referring to the majority culture that hates and fears the Other. The implication is that these creatures exist because they have given in to the portrayal of the migrant that the majority culture paints for themselves. They see the migrant/Other/hybrid as devils, half-creatures, not human, and these migrants give in to these representations of themselves. The feelings are apparently so strong that it can happen very quickly, as it did for the holiday-makers from Senegal who only had to change planes to give in to their transformations. These descriptions make *literal* the demonization of immigrants.

There are two intriguing sentiments in this scene. The first, obviously, is that these people have turned into devils because of the descriptions of the majority culture, which sheds even more light on the inhumane and dangerous position in which the Other lies in this

culturally purist society. Second, there is an implication that many of these people have turned into devils by their own fault:

But the immigrants also carry guilt of their own. The hero of *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin Chamcha, is transformed into a devil-like figure for some other possible reason than the curses he suffered from white people. Before his transformation caused by the plane crash, he was in a deep denial of his Indian origin – denying his very name to make it sound westernized, from ‘Salahuddin’ to ‘Saladin.’ Transformation and metamorphosis uncover a dual aspect of guilt – of the metropolis and of the colonized subject. (Leonard 413)

Yes, it appears that the English mainstream society has the power of description and uses it to the Others’ disadvantage and detriment, but Rushdie’s use of words such as “give in” and “succumb” indicate that there is some fault in the actions of these Others. These Others are *sanctioning* the majority’s power of description and are succumbing to its supremacy and control. So then, according to Rushdie, there are two ways for the migrant to be Devilish: first, by denying or forsaking their *entire* cultural identities, and second by allowing the power of the majority’s description to overcome them.

Rushdie indicates that it is within these Others’ powers to fight against the demonization of themselves. They don’t *have* to succumb to these descriptions, but they allow themselves to and so turn into something monstrous. The highlight of this chapter is the hybrid creatures’ escape from the institution in which they are held:

The great escape took place some nights later.... It turned out to be a well-organized affair on a pretty large scale... they ran out of that ward of nightmares into the clarity of a cold, moonlit sky, past several bound, gagged

men: their former guards.... The monsters ran quickly, silently, to the edge of the Detention Centre compound, where the manticore and other sharp-toothed mutants were waiting by the large holes they had bitten into the fabric of the containing fence, and then they were out, free, going their separate ways, without hope, but also without shame. (*Satanic Verses* 176-177)

Rushdie shows a way for these hybrid creatures to regain their honor after partially allowing themselves to succumb to the negative and powerful demon-descriptions of the majority culture. They realize that they have a choice about whether or not to put up with this naming, describing, and demonization and choose to stand up and fight instead. This scene is an important metaphor in the novel. It shows a group of hybrids standing up, organizing, and striking out against the majority that locks these hybrids away, hiding them from the rest of society. They must stand and unite together for this work. On the way out, Rushdie shows us that the guards, representative of the majority class that keeps them hidden and demonized, have been gagged (a very symbolic detail). They no longer can use the power of description to demonize these hybrids; the hybrids have taken away their power to speak against them. By choosing to unite, escape, and run, these hybrids have chosen a path of difficulty (for they run “without hope”) but also one in which they can live with themselves. They are different, and hybrid, and go out into a world where there are more people of the majority who seek to describe and destroy them, but they have at least chosen not to succumb to the fear of facing them.

This metaphor is Rushdie’s way of showing hybrids who live in cultures where difference is dangerous and where Others are demonized for their difference that it is possible to unite and fight against these injustices. The message is that the road will be

difficult and dangerous, but it is possible. This path is also the only honorable path to take. It is one in which a hybrid can regain or keep honor instead of attempting to deny identity or allow others to define them, which is evil. Rushdie allegorically speaks to his fellow hybrids and tells them to choose honor (the harder path) instead of evil here that this world is theirs too, and to take it by storm if necessary. This escape is the first time where Rushdie indicates that the hybrids have a responsibility to themselves to face the dominant majority and stand up for themselves. He continues these ideas through the rest of the novel.

After Saladin's escape, the Sufyans who own and run the Shandaar Café, a safe place for Indians to rest and eat, graciously (or almost graciously) take him in. There, Saladin recovers from the shock of the crash and subsequent transformation, but continues to adamantly resist this transformation *and* his Indian identity. He refuses to acknowledge that the Sufyans are "his people":

Mr. Muhammad Sufyan, ex-communist, who like Chamcha has lost class... by coming to England, welcomes Chamcha home "among your own people, your own kind." To which Chamcha, rejecting the double degree of *declassement*, replies... "You're not my people I've spent half my life trying to get away from you." (Sharma 608)

Such, still, is his need to separate himself from "his people" and align himself with the British that he resists anything Indian he comes into contact with. For example, upon being served breakfast on morning, Saladin greatly protests against being fed Indian food instead of "cereal complete with toy silver spacemen" (258). Saladin also rejects Mishal and Anahita's claim to be British. Judging them upon what he sees such as their skin color, residence, friends, and class status, he initially decides that they are *not* British "not *really* in any way

he could recognize” (*Satanic Verses* 259). Saladin is judging them with the same eyes the immigration officials judged him once he fell from the sky. Most of all, Saladin refuses to go along with any implication that he is some sort of symbol for other migrant hybrids:

“Chamcha,” Mishal said excitedly, “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”... “Go away,” cried Saladin, in his new bewilderment. “This isn’t what I wanted. This is not what I meant at all.” (*Satanic Verses* 287)

The idea of representing people he has attempted to separate himself from for so long, people he is also somewhat (ironically) prejudiced against, horrifies him. He doesn’t *want* to embrace any idea that puts his Indian identity out into the open or that aligns him with people that the English majority are against.

The more Saladin resists acknowledging his full cultural identity, the more he refuses to align himself with other British-Indian hybrids, and the greater he protests there being a good reason for his devil-goat transformation, the worse this transformation gets:

...it became impossible not to notice that [Saladin’s] condition was worsening steadily. His horns... had grown both thicker and longer, twirling themselves into fanciful arabesques, wreathing his head in a turban of darkening bone. He had grown a long thick beard... indeed, he was growing hairier all over his body, and had even sprouted, from the base of his spine, a fine tail that lengthened by the day.... (*Satanic Verses* 284)

The more Saladin resists his change, the more he refuses to face his soul’s transformation, as well as his body’s, the worse this condition gets. Because Saladin’s transformation into a

devil is partially representative of an identity he cannot hide and of his guilt for trying to hide it, the worsening of his condition is therefore representative of his increased evilness for denying the truth within himself. Rushdie suggests, then, that the more a hybrid denies his or her identity, the eviler the denial is; the attempt, however, to come to terms with a hybrid's migrant consciousness (the transition from an awareness of dis-belonging to a realization and acceptance of one's position as "something new") and the acceptance of being *between* cultural situations, is therefore considered "good."

Saladin even resists the idea that his soul is transformed, remade, or stamped with new markings. Muhammad Sufyan attempts to console Saladin with his ideas about the transformation of the soul:

"Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers," – that is, bursts its banks, – or maybe, breaks out of its limitations, – so to speak, disregards its own rules, but that is too free, I am thinking... "that thing," at any rate, Lucretius holds, "by doing so brings immediate death to its old self." However,... poet Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, takes diametrically opposed view. He avers thus: "As yielding wax" – heated, you see, possibly for the sealing of documents or such, – "is stamped with the designs and changes shape and seems not still the same, yet is indeed the same, even so our souls, – you hear good sir? Our spirits! Our immortal essences! – are still the same forever, but adopt in their migrations ever-varying forms... Your soul, my good poor dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form."

(*Satanic Verses* 285)

To Muhammad, Ovid had it right: the soul is a constantly changing entity. They are essentially made up of the same fundamental nature throughout life, but adopts “ever-varying” forms as it migrates through time, experiences, spaces, etc. The soul is “as yielding wax” and can be molded and changed to make it look like something different, but at the core, the soul is essentially the same. Instead, “He chose Lucretius over Ovid. The inconstant soul, the mutability of everything, das Ich every past speck. A being going through life can become so other to himself as to *be another*, discrete, severed from history” (*Satanic Verses* 297). He wants to believe that he has become cut off from his own history, that the soul is an inconstant being and that his has currently been replaced with another or otherwise cut off from himself.

Saladin rejects Muhammad’s point of view because it would mean that he cannot erase certain aspects (such as an Indian self) from his soul. To accept such a hypothesis means that his Indian-ness was there the entire time, and the only reason he has metamorphosed is because he has attempted to hide it for so long, thereby corrupting his own soul. He refuses to believe that the Indian-ness within him has been underneath his skin all this time.

As we continue through the narrative, however, Saladin cannot keep this belief going. Eventually, Saladin regains his human form when he learns the power of hate, and concentrates on his foe, Gibreel. After a night of thrashing, screaming, and destroying objects in hatred for Gibreel, Mishal finds “Mr. Saladin Chamcha himself, apparently restored to his old shape, mother-naked but of entirely human aspect and proportions, *humanized* – is there any option by to conclude? – by the fearsome concentration of his hate” (*Satanic Verses* 304). After he regains his human form, Saladin Chamcha reenters the world to recover his

rights and moves back into his wife's home (despite the presence of her lover) to pick up the pieces of an old life.

While figuring out what to do next with his life, Saladin begins to think about hybridity in a new light. He still struggles between his English and Indian identities, as indicated in a dream about loathing and loving Hyacinth who represents the East, Saladin's Indian-ness and his migrant condition. However, his views about hybridity eventually begin to change. He begins to have hope for a world in which he can exist as he really is: *both* Indian and English. While watching television one evening, an activity he has become obsessed with since arrive back at his hold home, he catches sight of a show where he sees a tree which has been bred from two different species of trees. The hybridized tree seedling takes root in the English earth and he takes from this hope for his own hybrid life: "Amid all the televisual images of hybrid tragedies – the uselessness of mermen, the failures of plastic surgery, the Esperanto-like vacuity of much modern art, the Coca-Colonization of the planet – he was given this one gift. It was enough" (*Satanic Verses* 420).

He also starts to actively find attractive Mishal, one he now recognizes as "his people." When Jumpy invites Chamcha to a black power rally people of various ethnic descents arrive to protest the government. Chamcha still cannot bring himself to protest the British government, but the rally provides Saladin with an opportunity to see Mishal. Mishal, along with Zeeny Vakil, has been haunting Chamcha's dreams. Mishal, like Zeeny, has begun to represent a different sort of living. Both women, each living in a different country, represents the possibility of living *between* cultures, the possibility of hybridity at work. These women are beginning to dominate his dreams indicating that, just like when he fell into the arms of Zeeny Vakil, he is deeply attracted to the idea of hybridity.

However, while watching Mishal at the meeting, he has a flash of intuition that if he pursues her, he will die: “He experienced the kind of blurring associated with the brightly lit, no-smoking-allowed meeting hall, but the other was a world of phantoms, in which Azrael, the exterminating angel, was swooping towards him, and a girl’s forehead could burn with ominous flames” (*Satanic Verses* 430). Chamcha realizes that his transformation is not going to go away:

...the change was in him was irreversible. A new, dark world had opened up for him (or within him) when he fell from the sky; no matter how assiduously he attempted to re-create his old existence, this was, he now saw, a fact that could not be unmade. He seemed to see a road before him, forking to left and right. Closing his eyes, settling back against taxicab upholstery, he chose the left hand path. (*Satanic Verses* 433)

Saladin begins to understand that his transformation is never going to leave him. When he fell from the sky, and when a new hybridity entered into him forcing him to face hybridity at large, he was experiencing a life-long and unalterable change. He cannot simply attempt to construct his worlds. Wishing or believing one’s identity to be one way does not work; one cannot escape who one is. Saladin makes a major move; he chooses to accept this idea. He changes his mind and chooses Ovid over Lucretius: “By the end of the novel, Saladin recovers his genuine identity – his genuine skin. The inaugural fall in disgrace is transformed into an elevation, thanks to inner transportation” (Leonard 417). In other words, Saladin has learned to be flexible with his identity, and accept his transformations (supernatural and cultural).

The end of the novel is particularly appropriate; as Saladin begins to understand and accept his hybridity, he eventually buys a ticket to India and returns East to his father's deathbed. While there, Saladin reunites and reconciles with his father (who is responsible for planting the tree where Saladin's soul resides), professes his love for Zeeny Vakil (representative of the idea of hybridity), re-adopts the Indian version of his name, and immediately gets involved with the demonstration to nationally integrate India. His choice to be involved with the attempt to integrate India mirrors other hybrids in England attempting to fight for their rights in Britain. Rushdie seems to find that the hybrid has a job to do: to hybridize the world and bring cultural purism to an end (an idea revisited in detail in the *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* chapter). This trip to (and his subsequent decision to stay in) India is a process of reintegration for Saladin, he has faced, understood, accepted, and learned to embody his Indian-ness. He establishes peace between himself and his Mother country. Saladin "even finds 'his Urdu returning to him' (545). Saladin, that is, apparently discovers that you *can* go home again and become reattached to roots severed decades before" (Gane 36).

Rushdie only allows Saladin to live happily once he learns to be flexible and accept his surroundings, transformations, and identities. He is indicating that happiness and peace can never truly come until one has addressed, understood, and accepted their identities. Despite the fact that Gibreel starts out as an angel, he continues to refuse to accept all sides of his identity and his transformation and stubbornly remains as Indian as Saladin wanted to remain English. Gibreel attempts to change London so that it suits his needs. Thus, Gibreel is destroyed by the end of the novel. The fates of each of these characters add yet another layer to Rushdie's message to the hybrid. Not only must the hybrid accept his or her identity and

know that that identity shall always morph, change, and mold to the surroundings, but failure to do so will ultimately lead to self-destruction. According to Mann, “[Rushdie] underlines his thesis at the level of plot as he portrays Gibreel Farishta, the ‘untranslated,’ unbending, monomaniacal man dying because of his ‘brittleness,’ and Saladin Chamcha, the ‘translated,’ changing, growing man surviving because of his ‘flexibility’ and readiness to ‘come into newness’” (4).

Rushdie says of this novel:

*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. Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves. (*Imaginary Homelands* 394)

Embedded within this “love-song” is a critique of the hybrid position of the world and the hybrid’s responsibilities within it. His main point of reference when discussing these ideas is Saladin’s transformation to a devil-goat. The metaphor helps to continue and expand upon his critique of the majority culture in England and that culture’s response to and fears of minorities. This response is largely disturbing and unsettling for readers. They begin to understand that the minority experience in majority cultures is extremely dangerous and confusing. It shows how detrimental this sort of treatment is to the minority and hybrid (especially in the psychiatric ward scene).

Further, Rushdie shows that these majorities fear the hybrid more than they fear the minority. The hybrid has a greater ability to infiltrate the majority's understanding of exclusivity and blur the lines between "us" and "them." Therefore, the hybrid is in even more of a precarious situation in the midst of cultural purism than the minority. However, Rushdie seems to put forth the message that the hybrid must embrace his or her hybridity, accept it, and not compromise it for the sake of ease, fitting in, or hiding a hybrid status. Such behavior is morally reprehensible for it involves hiding one's true self and adds the division between majority and minority. In addition, Rushdie implies that one's identity cannot remain hidden; it will always be there, though it remains in a constantly transforming state. Instead, Rushdie says that it is the duty of the hybrid to help fight against such divisions between minorities and majorities, to stand up for hybridity at large.

This novel is ultimately a message to Rushdie's fellow migrants (and an eye opener to those who have no experience living in the migrant condition). He asks hybrids to take a close look at the world they live in. As the world still holds culturally purist sentiments, there is no room for the hybrid or hybridity. Since identity is undeniable and is inevitably transformed by new environments, peoples, and places, the hybrid population will continue to rise and will continue to be discriminated against. The answer is not to hide this identity, to amalgamate with a dominant group in hopes of becoming one of these peoples, but to accept one's hybridity, allow one's identity to remain flexible, and to help bring the world to a place where flexible identities and hybridities are accepted or even celebrated. Rushdie recognizes the difficult journey he is asking hybrids to take, but it is one that he implies is necessary and a duty to hybridity. The possibility of continuing to live in a world where the dominant fears and actively hates the Other is not a possibility that Rushdie is willing to

accept. He asks the hybrid to learn to function in this world and come to terms with his or her migrant consciousness so that they may take steps to change and integrate the world into a more multicultural-friendly place.

### *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH: PAINTING PLUARLISM*

*The Moor's Last Sigh*, published in 1995, tells the complicated history of a Christian-Jewish family in India. Moraes Zogoiby, commonly known as "Moor," is the narrator of the story and the last survivor of a family descended from Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer and the founder of a rich family spice-shipping empire. *The Moor's Last Sigh* envisions a transition from cultural purism to cultural pluralism specifically through Aurora's artistic endeavors. She attempts to imagine a world where there are no more insider/outsider issues, us/them sentiments, or "freaks" to exclude, which prevent individuals from interacting with each other. In her art, she creates a world in which nationality, boundaries, and divisions are no longer an issue.

In this chapter, I walk through some of Aurora's major paintings chronologically in order to more easily trace her development as an artist and the progression of her ideas of an idealized pluralistic world. She re-envisioned India, a country rich with diverse but fragmented peoples, as a place as cooperative and collaborative as Alhambra was in the times of Boabdil. She uses Moor, the ultimate misfit, as an inspiration for and talisman to her work. She attempts to paint a world in which he is no longer an outsider but rather a representative of an ultimate alliance between all peoples, where illusions of boundaries are broken, and where people are bound together by their humanity while celebrating their differences. It should be noted that I do not analyze two of Aurora's most important works, *The Kissing of Abbas Ali*

*Baig* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, because they are painted for purposes other than to advance or to contemplate the idea of a hybrid world. *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig* is painted in response to a real event that inspired Aurora at a cricket match. *The Moor's Last Sigh* serves as an apology to her son and names her killer. Instead, I choose a major work from each of her major "Moor" periods and analyze the progression of her construction of an ideal, hybridized world.

Aurora creates her first major work as a teenager while under house arrest for throwing out some precious items from the house. She uses the time to paint a vast mural on every wall and the ceiling of her room, which appears to unify her family's past, present, and future into one representation, and also unifies her family with the idea of mother India with her diverse history and cultures. At the heart of this work, is Aurora's grief at losing her mother: "[t]he room was her act of mourning" (*Moor* 61). At the center of the painting, is Belle's (Aurora's mother) face and when her father, Camoens, sees the mural for the first time, both of them weep in mourning together.

While the painting is most certainly a tribute to Belle and a representative of Aurora's deep feelings for her and devastation over her loss, this is the painting where a major theme of Aurora's begins to emerge: the presence of a common humanity amidst illusions of division. In this mural, she moves away from the personal, and begins to see and position her family in the larger scheme of "Mother India":

Aurora had composed her giant work in such a way that the images of her own family had to fight their way through this hyper-abundance of imagery, she was suggesting that the privacy of Cabral Island was an illusion and this

mountain, this hive, this endlessly metamorphic line of humanity was the truth. (*Moor* 60)

Family events certainly inspired this mural but they do not necessarily dominate it. Her family's images must "fight" for attention. Instead, what grasps most of the viewers' eyes is the crowd. Camoens notes that upon his first viewing: "the rapid rush of the composition drew him onwards, far away from the personal and into the throng, for above and around and beyond and below and amongst the family was the crowd itself, the dense crowd, the crowd without boundaries" (*Moor* 60).

The "crowd without boundaries" is very important here. It interweaves with the family that thought itself rather secluded on Cabral Island, separated from the rest of the world. Yet Aurora seems to move past this conception and the act of interweaving her family's representations within the crowd shows that she feels fundamental separation between peoples of all sorts is impossible. Privacy is an illusion. Connection is inevitable. Therefore, it appears Aurora feels that boundaries and borders are entirely imaginary and human constructed. In other words, they cannot *really* exist. They are a fantasy of human minds. The family is not an isolated country in and of itself, nor is any other majority, or minority, in India according to Aurora. She painted every person represented in the mural as a part of Mother India, who can be both loving and cruel to all of her diverse and dissimilar children equally: "Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion, Mother India who loved and betrayed and ate and destroyed and again loved her children, and with whom the children's passionate conjoining and eternal quarrel stretched long beyond the grave" (*Moor* 61). Aurora seems to imply that Mother India has no quarrel with loving or betraying anyone across identities, that Mother India will love or betray whomever she will

whenever she wishes despite that person's religion, race, class or caste, or ethnicity. Mother India represents life itself; life does not care for one's categorical identities. People of every race, class, gender, religion, etc. will experience both fortune and misfortune throughout life. Rather, this crowd without boundaries suggests that Aurora feels that the "endlessly metamorphic line of humanity" is the "only truth." Aurora's painting does not separate the crowd by any distinctions. The crowd is represented simply as a wave of people whose only noticeable feature is their humanity and their vastness.

Reasons for Aurora's concern about the illusion of boundaries and the truth of humanity could possibly stem from her own fragmented background. She is a non-practicing Christian in a Hindu dominated India. Her ancestors are Portuguese and her wealth comes from shipping spices to multiple nations. She goes on to marry a poor Jew and becomes mother to the ultimate misfit of the novel: Moor. Aurora's identities have always been fragmented and she cannot apply labels to herself. Because of this multifarious background, she processes the world without one dominant lens, but multiple. Through those multiple lenses, she finds that the boundaries by which everyone defines themselves mean nothing. Instead, people in India have a common denominator: whatever ethnicity or religion, all people are bound as children of India. This theme of a common humanity will continue to develop as Aurora's artistic endeavors advance.

Aurora's next major work comes much later in the novel, after she has married and has become mother to Moor. This painting is from the "early period" of her "Moor paintings" which date between Moor's birth in 1957 and the year of her daughter Ina's death in 1977. It is a rather complex and surreal painting with a great many important details:

Once the red fort of Granada arrived in Bombay, things moved swiftly on Aurora's easel. The Alhambra quickly became a not-quite Alhambra; elements of India's own red forts, the Mughal-palace fortress in Delhi and Agra, blended Mughal splendours with the Spanish building's Moorish grace... and the creatures of Aurora's imagination began to populate it – monsters, elephant deities, ghosts. The water's edge, the dividing line between two worlds, became in many of these pictures the main focus of her concern. She filled the sea with fish, drowned ships, mermaids, treasure, kings; and on the land, a cavalcade of local riff-raff – pickpockets, pimps, fat whores hitching their saris up against the waves – and other figures from history or fantasy or current affairs or nowhere crowded towards the water like the real life Bombayites on the beach, taking their evening strolls. (Moor 226)

Aurora discusses this painting with Moor: "Call it Mooristan," Aurora told me. "This seaside, this hill, with the fort on top.... One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo'ing into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it Palimpstine. And above it all, in the palace, you" (*Moor* 226).

Aurora is attempting to create "one universe, one dimension, one country, one dream" where people and creatures of all types walk the beach together without boundaries, divisions, and margins. She has included creatures and peoples from all possible avenues: mythological monsters and current-political figures, kings and pickpockets, mermaids and famous historical notables, religious deities and secularist characters, "somebodies" and "nobodies." Aurora left nothing and no one out of this painting. She intermingles these peoples and creatures, and shows them sharing a land and a sea together. There are no

divisions of time, of reality and fantasy, of wealth and poverty, ethnicity etc; Instead, Aurora has created a world in which literally all boundaries are broken. Aurora's use of so many types of creatures and people represent the diverse population of India as a whole. India is made up of a great many religions, castes and classes, ethnicities, and histories. Instead of melding or remaining tolerant of each other, India has drawn a great many boundaries between its people, boundaries that Aurora seeks to eradicate.

It should be noted that even though Aurora attempts to create a boundary-less, integrated world, she does not seek to do so at the risk of erasing individuality period. While her first mural paints an un-individualized crowd, she was attempting to exaggerate humanity at large. Here, now that she has grown and developed her ideas, she paints every single type of person and creature that she can imagine, but these creatures and people do not lose their humanity in the process. They are extremely individual; they have their own background, history, style, look, and beliefs. The difference is that they are not segregated into groups based on these categories they belong to, but instead intermingled and interwoven. Aurora does not find that a boundary-less world means that people will give up their belief systems, ethnicities, etc. in order to make it work, but that pretenses and prejudices between people will be dropped instead. Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Caucasians, and Indians can all interact freely. Individuality would remain and would be exhibited unreservedly, but it would not interfere with friendships, cooperation, or alliances between different peoples.

Aurora even seems to erase the boundary between the land and sea: "Often she painted the water-line in such a way as to suggest that you were looking at an unfinished painting which had been abandoned, half-covering another" (*Moor* 226). The boundary between land and sea has been toyed with, blended, made impossible to tell apart. They "half

cover” each other, leaking into each other’s worlds, and merge, making it impossible to tell if “it was a waterworld being painted over the world of air, or vice versa” (*Moor* 226).

Another important detail in this particular painting is Aurora’s choice in choosing to model the fortress in her painting after Alhambra, the famous Moorish/Spanish castle. Particularly, she chooses to paint Alhambra as it was during the times of Boabdil, the last Moorish King of Spain, before the take over by Catholic King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. She tries to recreate Boabdil and his Alhambra, a place in which cultures, religions, races, and political viewpoints are woven together and people of varying differences and identities live together happily and productively. This choice was very deliberate on Aurora’s (and Rushdie’s) part. Moorish Spain seems “to have solved the problem that has figuratively and literally torn India apart in the twentieth century” (Cantor 324), namely the problem of cooperation among very diverse yet segmented people. Rushdie and Aurora seem to call for a return to the tolerant and cooperative sentiments of 13<sup>th</sup> century Moorish Spain:

In one form or another, Moorish rule lasted nearly eight centuries in Spain, and during much of that period, Muslims, Christians, and Jews were able to live together in relative peace and harmony and to spur each other on to ever greater cultural achievements. In such diverse areas as architecture, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, music, literature, and philosophy Moorish Spain equaled and frequently surpassed contemporary cultural developments across the Pyrenees in Christian Europe....The rich diversity of culture in Moorish Spain came to an end only when Catholic forces succeed in reconquering the whole of the Iberian peninsula and expelling the last of the Moorish rulers.” (Cantor 325)

It is absolutely no mistake that Aurora chooses to ground her scenery in Alhambra under Boabdil's rule. She has erased all boundaries that she can possibly erase and has created her own Alhambra at the top of the hill overlooking the division-less scenery below. Aurora's "paintings where the world of Granada and that of Bombay are blended into an imaginary 'Mooristan' or 'Palimpstine' can be considered as Aurora's 'attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation... using Arab Spain to re-imagine India'" (Beck 24). She wants the present to remember a past where interculturality, cooperation, and tolerance worked, and for separatist, purist India to take a lesson from that past.

Aurora, to make this point even more apparent, even blurred the Moorish-ness of Alhambra in this painting. Alhambra became "not quite Alhambra." Instead, Aurora chose to add some of India's architectural styles into this Alhambra on the hill of her painting to show that India needed to house similar tolerances in its equally diverse population. The painting seems to imply that a return to such sentiments would be ideal.

Aurora tells Moor to think of this work as a "Mooristan" or a land of hybrids, a land in which Moorish-Spanish tolerant sentiments once again rise. She tells him to call it "Palimpstine," indicating that layers, rewriting, and hybridity are the point. A palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or that has been scraped off and used again. It not only carries the most apparent message on top of the scroll itself, but hints and histories of various messages of all types. New layers are added to the old, changing the face of the palimpsest but never its history. Aurora says that she has created a Palimpstine, a land in which exists a certain face but that face is the product of its history, layers, and diversity. All of India shares these histories, layers, and diversities, so all of India shares, in some way, the same face, or a common humanity. She has painted a land in which that fraternity, that commonality among

differences is recognized and celebrated: “Aurora Zogoiby was seeking to paint a golden age. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains crowded into her paint” (*Moor* 227).

Lastly, we must note that Aurora’s inspiration and centerpiece in this painting (and a great many paintings to come) is Moor. Moor is the ultimate hybrid in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*.

First, he has a wide variety of cultural and ethnic histories. Given Rushdie’s usual themes,

[it] is hardly surpris[ing] to find a narrator and title character who claims a Jewish father, a Christian mother, descends from Portuguese stock, lives in India, speaks English, bears an Arabic last name, and seems to be a latter-day incarnation of his legendary ancestor Boabdil, the last Moorish King of Spain (Greenberg 94).

But Rushdie does not stop at making Moor merely a cultural hybrid. He, like Aurora, attempts to erase any boundaries or “place” Moor might have: “Moor, over the course of the novel, appropriately becomes a misfit in every sort of way: he is a religious and ethnic mongrel, a dispossessed heir, a banished son, a political refugee” (Greenberg 94). Also, Moor was born with a deformity in his right hand that makes it appear that he has a constant fist. It is no wonder, with all of Moor’s hybridities, differences, and his inability to truly merge with any crowd (as much as Moor would hate to admit this to be true), that Aurora chooses him to reign over this painting. Aurora creates a world in which he will no longer be an outsider but a representative of a life without borders. Aurora makes Moor the figurative King of the Borderless.

It should be very apparent at this point that Aurora’s concern for identifying and embracing a common humanity has now developed further into practically applying this

concept in her work by creating a world in which borders have been blurred or erased completely. All types of people and creatures stand (or swim) together in one place: a 13<sup>th</sup> century Moorish-Spain inspired land. And, above it all, in the India-infused Alhambra, stands Moor, the most definitive of hybrids, to reign and watch over such a world.

Aurora's next major work, painted right after her daughter Ina dies, is called *Moor and Ina's Ghost Look into the Abyss*. Though Aurora's paintings are usually of a surreal, sometimes disturbing nature, this particular painting marks the beginning of Aurora's "high period" in the Moor paintings. This new period is characterized as the "high period" for its raw emotion, energy, and power and its "apocalyptic canvases" (*Moor* 236). The inspiration for this painting does indeed come, in part, from her daughter Ina's eventual demise: "Aurora poured all her agony at the death of a daughter, all the maternal love that had remained unexpressed for too long..." (*Moor* 236):

Aurora... painted a Moor painting in which the line between land and sea had ceased to be a permeable frontier. Now she painted it as a harshly-delineated zig-zag crack, into which the land was pouring along with the ocean. The munchers of mango and singhani, the drinkers of electric-blue syrups so sugary that one endangered one's teeth just by looking at them, the office workers in their rolled trousers with their cheap shoes in their hands, and all the barefoot lovers walking along the version of Chowpatty Beach beneath the Moor's Palace were screaming as the sand beneath their feet sucked them down towards the fissure, along with the cutpurses, the neon-lit stalls of the snack vendors, and the trained monkeys in soldier's uniform.... They all poured into the jagged darkness along with the pomfret and jellyfish and

crabs.... And in his palace on the hill, the harlequin Moor looked down on the tragedy, impotent, sighing, and old before his time. (*Moor* 236)

This painting is in serious direct contrast to her earlier “Mother India” mural and the paintings of the “early period” in which Aurora focused on creating a boundary-less world where absolute tolerance and harmony is observed. Instead, something seems to have broken for Aurora. She creates an impermeable boundary between land and sea; in fact, she goes further than creating simply a boundary: she creates a full-blown, rigid, jagged crack. It is a crack that violently swallows the screaming beach-goers of her tolerant, boundary-less, hybrid, Alhambra-like world. The joy, the peace, the sweet treats, the entertainment are all sucked away into the abyss. Office workers and cutpurses together fall into the chasm, probably to their doom. There is violence, screaming, darkness, and above all, a sense that the apocalypse has arrived in Aurora’s idealized world. Ina’s death certainly contributed to this painting; the loss of a child has destroyed Aurora’s world. But just like her original “Mother India” mural, from the depths of deep personal feeling also emerges a concern for nationality. Aurora, in addition to expressing her grief at losing a daughter also expresses “her larger, prophetic, even Cassandran fears for the nation, her fierce grief at the sourness of what had once, at least in an India of dreams, been sweet as sugar-cane juice” (*Moor* 236). There is also another event that occurs at the same time as Ina’s death that I believe supplied Aurora with inspiration to paint this work: The Emergency of 1975.

The Emergency refers to the 21-month period from 1975-1977 where President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declared a State of Emergency in India at the firm recommendation from the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in the summer of 1975. Starting in the early 1970s, wide-spread discontent overwhelmed India. Large portions of the population demonstrated

against rising prices, a fall in the supply of essential supplies, growing unemployment, and the corruption in government administration (particularly relating to accusations of poll-fixing to re-elect Gandhi and other administrative officials) (Frank 348-351). During The Emergency, in order to combat this unrest with authority and control, Gandhi suspended all elections, granted herself an astonishing amount of power, and launched a massive offensive on civil liberties. She was extremely concerned with putting down any political opposition and had thousands of political protestors, opposing party members, and strikers arrested. Sterilization programs were put into place to control the population, censorship was heavy, and a beautification program was put into place, which tore down slums and left more people homeless. Eventually, Gandhi even created laws and amended the constitution in order to bypass the president so that her rule could amass more quickly and her power could become absolute (Frank 371-380).

One of the major effects of this Emergency was an increased fragmentation in India. The nature of the Emergency derived from anti-poor, elitist, and intolerant sentiments. It favored a rich, urban, Hindu majority (Hewitt 2). It not only drastically violated the rights of the people for the sake of an authoritarian government, but it also increased divisions, boundaries, and segregation. "Us-them" attitudes became key, boundaries were drawn, and sturdy identities constructed. In the novel, Moor notes: "After the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews" (*Moor* 235).

In other words, the Emergency effectively moved India in the exact opposite direction of her ideal world she paints. Instead of working to erase and blur boundary lines, the Emergency solidified them. Aurora sees this division as detrimental to India. The Emergency

and its effects, particularly the newly hardened boundaries, are represented by the crack in Aurora's painting. Such a crack separates and destroys the world she was hoping to create. The crack sucks the life away from her world in a vortex of violence and destroys its possibility. The apocalyptic scenes that Aurora paints during this "high period" express her horror at what the nation might become if the legacies of the Emergency were to hold and despair at what opportunities the country might lose.

Aurora's paints another major Moor painting the day she meets her foil, Uma Sarasvati, called *Mother-Naked Moor Watches Chiméne's Arrival*. In this painting, Aurora focuses on the hybrid, rather than on a boundary-less world:

In a chamber of Aurora's fictional Malabar Alhambra, against a wall decorated with intricate geometric patterns, the Moor stood naked in the lozenge-patterned Technicolor of his skin....To the Moor's left was his fearsome mother, Queen Ayxa-Aurora in her flowing dark robes, holding up a full-length mirror to his nakedness. But the lozenged Moor was not looking at himself in the mirror, for in the doorway to his right stood a beautiful young woman – Uma, naturally, Uma fictionalized, Hispanicised, as this 'Chiméne,'... introduced without explanation into the hybrid universe of the Moor – and between her outspread, inviting hands were many marvels – golden orbs, bejeweled birds, tiny homunculi – floating magically in the lucent air. (*Moor* 246-247)

This painting shows the obvious tension between Aurora and Uma. Aurora aptly portrays that both women wish to capture the attention of the Moor. Uma, the more appealing of the two women in this painting, distracts the Moor from his mother by offering him many beautiful

treasures and “marvels.” According to the painting, the Uma figure seems to have bewitched him with these objects, as they seem to magically float in the air between her hands. On the other hand, there is also the Aurora figure, holding up nothing but a mirror to the Moor. It appears as if the Aurora figure is attempting to show the Moor what and who he is at the core of his being to remind him of his identity, though his attention seems to be pulled elsewhere.

Throughout the novel, Aurora represents a world in which boundaries are erased and majority privilege no longer exists. Uma, as a part of the majority Hindu class (at least while the Hindu people are in the majority), is a character that reinforces the segregated world as it is. These representations can be shown through the art of each woman. Aurora paints hybridized worlds in which there are no boundaries, no majority privilege, and no intolerance for others. Uma, a sculptor, reinforces the majority’s dominant ideas through her art (whether or not she actually believes in them is unclear). Moor notes: “My first exposure to Uma’s work... was also my first intimation that she was in any sense religious. That she should now commence giving interviews declaring herself a devotee of lord Ram was bewildering, to say the least” (*Moor* 262). Her apparent devotedness to Hinduism is what wins her over in the Hindu majority’s eyes, while Aurora’s secularist surrealist works of an equal and hybridized world was “mauled” by the same people for being amoral. Aurora says of Uma, “That girl of yours is the most ambitious person I ever met, excuse me...She sees how the breeze is changeofying and her public attitudes are blowing in that wind” (*Moor* 262). While, at first, Moor attributes these statements to jealousy on Aurora’s part (which may not have been a *completely* false assumption), it turns out that Aurora is right about Uma’s duplicity. Later, it will become apparent that she deliberately causes the rift between Moor and his mother, and that she attempts to trick Moor into killing himself.

Ultimately, Aurora represents a life that intentionally goes against the norm in favor for the possibility of a better world, while Uma deliberately calculates the majority opinion and works hard to reinforce and stay a solid part of it. Moor is caught in the middle. He seems to see the appeal in Aurora's ideas, yet longs to not always be a "freak" of society. As Aurora's painting aptly points out, Moor is attracted to the treasures and marvels of belonging to the majority. He feels that his connection to Uma can provide him with a solid identity and he is definitely distracted by those offers.

Essentially, Aurora has painted the hybrid as caught between two life options: one in which he abandons his amalgamated identity to become a part of the majority, and one in which he gives up the idea of being a part of the majority for the sake of developing a hybridized world. Aurora has painted the hybrid as King, and seems to imply that the hybrid has a responsibility to embrace his hybridity (as discussed in *The Satanic Verses* chapter). Aurora's painting shows Moor's distraction as a most severe tragedy: [Aurora] created this cry of pain, in which a mother's attempts to show her son the simple truth of himself were doomed to failure by a sorceress's head-turning tricks; in which mice gnawed away the possibility of music and vultures waited patiently for their lunch" (*Moor* 247). Aurora seems to imply that without the hybrid embracing his hybridity, the world that Boabdil/Moor lives in, the hybridized and boundary-less Alhambra, will fall. Her boundary-less world becomes an impossibility without hybrids to unify the opposites of the world.

Aurora's paintings have so far shown that Aurora paints a world that is unified by their common humanity, is division-less and tolerant, though not lacking in individuality, and has shown that such an ideal world requires hybrids to embrace their fragmented selves in order for it to develop. Her "Moor in Exile" series, however, are some of her most profound

and negative works. They show how Aurora sees the world after her son chooses a life in which he attempts to blend in with the majority and abandons his hybridity as well as he can.

After Uma's death and the rift with Aurora hits its peak, Moor decides to join Raman Fielding, a vicious political cartoonist and the leader of a terrorist force battling secularism, communism, unionism, feminism, and anything else he deems detrimental to the interests of the Hindu majority (everything Aurora seems to support). Moor is deliberately trying to shed himself of Aurora and her pressures for him live a hybridized life:

I need no longer live a provisional life, a life-in-waiting; I need no longer be what ancestry, breeding and misfortune had decreed but could enter at long last, into myself – my true self, whose secret was contained in that deformed limb which I had thrust for too long into the depths of my clothing. No more! Now I would brandish it with pride. Henceforth I would be my fist; I would be a Hammer, not a Moor. (*Moor* 295)

Aurora has lost her unifying figure, her representative of a country without boundaries. Moor has deliberately rejected her in favor of the ideas that she works against. With Fielding, he doesn't feel like he's someone's idea anymore, but has an identity of his own and *can* fit in with a crowd, despite his outsidership. This betrayal has profound effects upon Aurora. Moor notes that in one of the paintings of this period

Aurora/Ayxa sat alone in these panels, beside the infernal chronicle of the degradation of her son, and never shed a tear. Her face grew hard, even stony, but in her eyes there shone a horror that was never named – as if she were looking at a thing that struck the very depths of her soul... as if the human

race itself had shown her its most secret and terrorizing face, and by doing so had petrified her. (*Moor* 304)

Aurora has seen the possibility of her hybridized world crumble. We have already discussed how Aurora feels that the hybrid is central to making her idealized hybridized world work. Since the major hybrid of the novel, Moor, has forsaken this idea in favor of existing within a majority driven world. Aurora feels as if humanity has reared its ugly head and has shown her that it will never allow her dream to come true. The world will remain segregated and divided if there is no one willing to connect opposites.

Aurora's work shows her despair at the idea that hybrids will not want to stand apart to help work toward this world but may *seek* to become part of the majority:

[Aurora] abandoned... the hill-palace and sea-shore motifs of the earlier pictures.... The unifying narrator/narrated figure of the Moor was usually still present, but was increasingly characterized as jetsam, and located in an environment of broken and discarded objects... Here, everything was a collage, the huts made of the city's unwanted detritus, rusting corrugated iron, bits of cardboard boxes, gnarled lengths of driftwood... the people themselves were made of rubbish, who were collages composed of what the metropolis did not value: lost buttons, broken windscreen wipers, torn cloth, burned books, exposed camera film.... And the Moor-figure... sank into immorality, and was shown as a creature of shadows, degraded in tableaux of debauchery and crime. He appeared to lose in these last pictures, his previous metaphorical role as a unifier of opposites, a standard bearer of pluralism, ceasing to stand as a symbol – however approximate – of the new nation,

being transformed, instead, into a semi-allegorical figure of decay... This 'black Moor' was a new imagining of the hybrid – a Baudelairean flower, it would not be too far to suggest, of evil... and of weakness: for he became a haunted figure... obliged to become a soldier in some petty warlord's army... reduced to mercenary status where once he had been king, he rapidly became a composite being as pitiful and anonymous as those amongst whom he moved. Garbage piled up, and buried him. (*Moor* 301-303)

Aurora's previously idealized world has turned into nothing but garbage and wreckage; even the painting itself is composed, in part, of trash. The world that was once seascapes, beaches, sky, and light, is completely destroyed. The apocalypse has hit leaving nothing but "broken and discarded objects." Now that Moor has decided to join in with the man who keeps segregation going, now that she has lost her unifier to a divider, the world is a junk yard. Most of all, the people themselves are made up of trash and discarded items, as if they too no longer have any value.

Moor/Boabdil too has also undergone quite a transformation. He has ceased to be "a standard bearer of pluralism," and instead seems to represent decay, evil, and weakness. Worst of all, it seems that he has ceased to be King. Instead he has been "reduced to mercenary status," forced to become a soldier in someone else's army. The implication is that the King has chosen to abdicate his throne in exchange for obedience and allegiance to someone else's kingdom, reign, and rules. Moor/Boabdil has become anonymous; the hybrid, choosing to give up for an anonymous place in the majority, has ceased to be anything special. Instead, garbage piles up and buries him with the rest of his people, with all people.

“The Moor in Exile Sequence” sticks most to the actual history of Alhambra and Boabdil in 13<sup>th</sup> century Spain. Boabdil, the last Moorish King of Spain (representative of a place in which tolerance is practiced and where all cultures productively work together), gives up his kingdom to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella (representative of majority and segregation). As Cantor states: “Ferdinand and Isabella become Rushdie’s villains, presented as the destroyers of the golden age of multicultural toleration under Moorish rule” (325). Rushdie alludes to the fury of Boabdil’s mother, Axya, upon his handing over Alhambra to Ferdinand and Isabella: “*Well may you weep like a woman for what you could not defend as a man....* Meaning that she despised this blubbing male, her son, for yielding up what she would have fought for to the death, given the chance” (Moor 80). In this painting in particular, *Aurora is Axya*, *Moor is Boabdil*, and *Alhambra is a boundary-less India*. This paneled painting represents Aurora/Axya’s reaction to the world her son willingly gave up to those she perceives as the enemy. This is an interesting turn to her earlier paintings and adds another component to her perception of her idealized world: There is no other world worth having: if the world does not move toward the erasure of boundaries and the practice of tolerance, it inevitably degrades to a world that produces nothing of benefit.

Though Aurora’s paintings do not hold promise for the actual development of a hybrid world, Rushdie does not leave readers feeling as if such a world is completely impossible. As Moor reflects upon his family history at the tail end of his short life, he ponders

The Alhambra, Europe’s red fort, sister to Delhi’s and Agra’s – the place of interlocking forms and secret wisdom, of pleasure-courts and water-gardens, that monument to a lost possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing,

long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament... to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self. Yes, I have seen it across an oceanic plane, though it has not been given to me to walk in its noble courts. I watch it vanish in the twilight, and in its fading it brings tears to my eyes.

*(Moor 433)*

Here, Moor seems to be drawing a comparison to the continued existence of Alhambra (the actual building) to the continued existence of hope for a world that Alhambra used to represent. While the actual practicality of a boundary-less world fell through for this narrative, while its possibility failed to Aurora because of her son's choice to ignore his hybridity and join the majority, Moor feels its prospect still stands. He says he has seen Alhambra (a hybridized world), though far from his reach and without the possibility of his walking through it. It is possible to interpret this last of Moor's sentiments as Rushdie himself saying that he does not think that this idealized world will occur while he is alive and while people of this world continue to define themselves by the groups they belong to, but the promise of Aurora's construction of India (and of the world) still holds. Rushdie seems to continue to believe in a world that unifies itself based on its common humanity, drops all boundaries, depends upon the hybrid to develop it, and results in a more productive and beneficial setting. All that is necessary is for those who live between boundaries to show the rest of the world how to make such a world possible by refusing to "blend-in" with the norm, but create new, more tolerant and productive spaces.

### *HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES: HYBRID PIONEERS IN THE NEW WORLD*

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* was the first novel that Rushdie published after the fatwa was issued, during his subsequent exile. Rushdie decided to publish such a book after his nine-year old son, Zafar asked him to write books that children could understand. Rushdie obviously complied with his son's request, though this novel should not be dismissed as a simple children's tale. It is often considered a "minor" work of Rushdie's, and is frequently regarded as a direct response to the fatwa and Rushdie's consequential exile. It is certainly easy to read *Haroun* as a work that departs slightly from his usual themes and concerns, instead offering commentary about the importance free-speech and freedom in literature; However, if one reads closely, one will find that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a complex allegory for *many* problems of society that Rushdie felt prevalent at the time.

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a tale about a boy, Haroun, and his story-telling father, Rashid, who travel to a moon, Kahani, that orbits the Earth at so quick a speed that no Earthling has been able to detect it. This moon is the source of all of Earth's stories, which actually run together in a giant ocean. Haroun and his father have traveled there, with a reluctant but polite water genie, to reinstate his father's story-telling subscription. Along their travels, however, Haroun and Rashid find themselves caught in the middle of a controversy between the two peoples of Kahani: Guppees and Chupwalas. The Chupwalas, it appears, under the leadership of the dreaded Kattam-Shud, have kidnapped the Princess of Gup,

Batcheat, and have started to poison the sea of stories, hoping to eradicate stories from the world forever, favoring absolute silence instead. Haroun embarks upon a quest to save the sea, Batcheat, and the people (Guppees *and* Chupwalas) of Kahani as well.

That this is an allegory advocating freedom of speech and of literature is, of course, an undeniable fact. Indeed, how could such allegory be ignored? However, I believe that the overwhelming presence of one allegory can easily over shadow another, equally important allegory in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, an allegory of cultural confrontation, borders, exclusion, and identity. In other words: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* “achieves a good deal more than a...retelling of Rushdie’s suffering under the *fatwa* and... it clearly continues the political and aesthetic concerns of his earlier work” (Köing 53).

In this chapter, I show that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a novel where Rushdie posits (and even seems to call for) reconciliation and cooperation of culturally dissimilar peoples because he believes that communication and harmony between all cultures can lead to the world he envisions in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Additionally, I show that Rushdie sees the migrant as the bringer-together of peoples to help create this world. I will first show how Rushdie sets up the moon Kahani as a place of cultural purism and disparity. I then engage in a discussion of Haroun as a migrant and of the advantages that this status gives him. Finally, I discuss the ending as not *only* a triumph for story-telling and free-speech, but as a triumph of pluralism over segregation.

Rushdie illustrates Kahani as a segregated and very culturally tense moon almost as soon as Haroun sets foot on it. Iff, the Water Genie who brings Haroun to the strange new land, explains how the planet has been perfectly divided into two segments: north and south. On the one hand, the north side belongs to Guppees. Thanks to the Eggheads of Gup (a

bunch of very brainy creatures) and a Process Too Complicated To Explain (or P2C2E), the Land of Gups is bathed in perpetual light. They have found a way to control Kahani's orbit so that the sun will forever shine on their half of the moon at all times. The Guppees are a people that value talking; indeed, for some creatures such as the Plentimaw Fish, shark-sized angelfish born with (and usually utilizing) multiple-mouths, *not* talking is considered a horrible offense to whoever the listener may be. The Guppees exercise complete freedom of speech, such freedom that even on the way to battle with the Land of Chup, Haroun notes that everyone was talking and debating with each other about whether the decision to go to war was a right decision and not all are in favor. Haroun describes the talk as sounding "mutinous" but notes: "such was the freedom evidently allowed the citizens of Gup, that the old General seemed perfectly happy to listen to these tirades of insults and insubordination without batting an eyelid" (*Haroun* 119).

Opposing the Land of Gup, the Land of Chup basks in perpetual silence. Instead of traditional speech, communication is conducted purely through a complicated sign-language art called Abhinaya that uses combinations of gesture, eye movement, and foot placement to transmit messages. Also, the people of Chup are always cloaked in darkness. Their eyes have white pupils, grey irises, and black on the remaining surface of the eyeball. They are entirely blind in bright light for, starkly opposite to the Guppees' eyes, Chupwalas see by the reflection of darkness from objects, instead of the reflection of light. Because they are always in the darkness, the Chupwalas have learned to communicate and cooperate with their shadows. Each Chupwala's shadow serves as a sort of sidekick and friend. Recently, select Chupwalas have even learned to disconnect their shadows from themselves in order to make it possible for a single person to be in two places at once.

Rushdie clearly intended for these two peoples and their lands to stand in binary opposition to each other. Conflict between these two starkly opposite peoples seems inevitable. It is tempting to read that conflict as a colonizer/colonized struggle. Undeniably, there are hints that Rushdie set it up as such. After all, the Guppees are implicated in creating boundaries between their land and the land of the Chups. After all, it *was* the Guppees' Eggheads that stopped the sun from setting on them and rising on their opposing peoples. Also, Rushdie mentions a wall that the Guppees erected in order to more concretely divide the two lands: "In between the two [lands] lies the Twilight Strip, in which, at the Grand Comptroller's command, Guppees long ago constructed an unbreakable (and also invisible) Wall of Force. Its goodname is Chattergy's Wall..." (*Haroun* 80). Chattergy's wall is probably a clear reference to Hadrian's Wall, a small but very long barrier built at the command of Emperor Hadrian in order to clearly denote Roman Territory. The wall was not enough of a defense to have held back any invasion efforts from those living outside of Roman territory. Its purpose was more to physically mark the edge of Roman territory, imposing boundaries between Roman insiders and "foreign" outsiders, than to provide protection. Clearly, the Guppees have intended a similar purpose with Chattergy's wall.

It is also difficult to ignore the fact that the Guppees, the potential colonizer, are the lighter-skinned of the two peoples; the people of Chup keep their skin a darker green. Also, it is possible to read Kattam-Shud's attempt at poisoning the ocean as a way for the colonized to rise up and rebel against the tyranny of the colonized. It is not surprising, then, that many critics have made the assumption that Rushdie is writing a tale about colonialism:

"Consequently, it can be argued that, in a postcolonial light, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

exposes the physical and psychological damage caused by the tyranny of colonialism and imperialism” (König 56).

While it is possible to say that Gup is the colonizer and Chup is colonized, and while this argument is important and should not be ignored, I believe that Rushdie was not trying to tell a decolonization tale, or at least that he wasn't *mostly* telling a decolonization tale, but rather a desegregation tale: a tale where two purist countries get out of their own way and end up embracing a profitable multiculturalism. The relationship between Gup and Chup is less about colonization than it is about separation. One would expect, if *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* were purely a decolonization tale, that Gup would exercise more control over Chup, seeking to take-over and eradicate Chup's starkly opposite culture in favor of their own. Instead, it seems that separation is the only goal. The Guppees do not want anything to do with the Chupwalas; they are content to live separately and forget the Others. The wall is there to denote a boundary and reinforce the light/dark divide.

The only reason the Guppees are forced to face the Chupwalas at all is when, under the instruction of Kattam-Shud, the Chupwalas start poisoning the shared ocean. Further, Kattam-Shud is less poisoning the ocean in order to conquer Gup (though this does seem to be on his agenda) and more poisoning it because he fears stories and the fact that he *cannot* conquer them: “‘Your world, my world, all worlds,’ came the reply. ‘They are all there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all’” (*Haroun* 161). It is because of this fear of not being able to conquer something that I believe makes it harder to argue that the colonized are fighting back. Kattam-Shud's primary goal is to appease his own fears, not to seek justice for the tyranny of colonization.

Instead of depicting one side as an evil colonizer and the other as the righteous colonized, Rushdie is critical of both the Guppees and the Chupwalas for both peoples have engaged in cultural purist ethics. Whether or not it was the Guppees that instigated the final separation between the two worlds, both sides have (since the division) embraced their differences and would much rather stay separated than engage with each other. Neither side feels they can learn anything from each other until Haroun, an outsider, a migrant, shows them that this is not so. Haroun doesn't help to beat back the "evil" Chupwalas, nor does he sympathize with the Chupwalas and vow vengeance on the colonizing Guppees; instead, by the end of the novel he will have proved to the people of Kahani that intercultural exchange and communication can be profitable, while segregation and separation is limiting and unrewarding.

Haroun is definitely a migrant character, though not a migrant character that is typical of Rushdie's hybrids. He is sort of both (and neither) a first- and second- generation hybrid. He is not *really* a first-generation migrant for he doesn't stay in Kahani for more than two or three days, but he does start to pick up on the practices of some Guppees and utilizes them without realizing it right away. For example he finds himself arguing and debating with the Gups as they travel toward war, even though he finds the practice puzzling: "'Nonsense,' said the Water Genie, 'Adjectives can't talk.' 'Money talks, they say,' Haroun found himself arguing (all this arguing was proving infectious)" (*Haroun* 118). Also, he finds himself beginning to speak like those around him, more than once stammering "but but but" just like his Hoopoe friend, or restructuring his sentences as the Water Genie structures his: "'Advanced or not,' Haroun retorted, 'you've made a mistake this time, you're up the spout,

you've got the wrong end of the stick.' He heard himself beginning to sound like the Water Genie, and shook his head to clear it" (*Haroun* 57).

Obviously, he is not *technically* a second-generation migrant either because his father and mother have never lived on Kahani. However, Haroun's father has imparted knowledge of Kahani, the Sea of Stories, and his story telling prescription onto Haroun for years. For example, whenever Haroun asked his father where the stories he told came from

“... [Rashid] would narrow his (to tell the truth) slightly bulging eyes... and stick his between his lips while he made ridiculous drinking noises, *glug glug glug*.... ‘From the great Story Sea,’ he'd reply. ‘I drink the warm Story Waters and then I feel full of steam.... It comes out of an invisible Tap installed by one of the Water Genies,’ said Rashid with a straight face. ‘You have to be a subscriber.’” (*Haroun* 17)

Haroun has grown up with these stories much in the same way that second-generation migrants grow up with their parents' stories of homelands. In this way, Rushdie has made Haroun a migrant of all types; he grew up displaced and remains displaced.

Haroun's hybridity and displacement are shown in other ways as well. Haroun and his father are painted as outsiders in their own town, a city so said that it has forgotten it's own name, located in the country of Alifbay: “And in the depths of the city, beyond an old zone of ruined buildings that looked like broken hearts, there lived a happy young fellow by the name of Haroun, the only child of the storyteller Rashid Khalifa, whose cheerfulness was famous throughout that unhappy metropolis” (*Haroun* 15). It's a sharp contrast to paint Haroun and his father as happy in such a morbidly unhappy location. The contrast is made within the very first page of the story as well! Rushdie wasted no time in making Haroun stand out in a

crowd. This outsider status clearly applies to his entire family. Rashid is the cheeriest man in the metropolis and Haroun's mother, Soraya, sings songs daily. Even Rashid, though he is not just another face in the crowd himself, notes that there is something truly special about Haroun in particular. He constantly says to his son: "There's more to you, young Haroun Khalifa, than meets the blinking eye" (*Haroun* 19).

Additionally, Haroun, though he picks up on various practices and ends up leading a cultural revolution, is clearly an outsider of both communities of Kahani as well. He's never been to the moon before, and naturally the customs there seems strange and outrageous to him. He must depend upon Iff the Water Genie and Butt, the Hoopoe (his mode of transport) to explain the strange new practices and conventions that he sees. Haroun often finds the ways of the Gupees and Chupwalas equally frustrating and interesting.

So while it isn't possible to say that Haroun fits into a "typical" hybrid modality (though, one must wonder if there really can be a typical hybrid anything), Haroun is definitely a displaced boy. He fits in neither with his own people in Alifbay as they are in the beginning of the novel, nor does he fit in with the people of Kahani for more obvious reasons. He is caught somewhere in the middle. The only place he does feel at home is among his family members, who are other hybrid/outsideers in their own way. Ultimately, Haroun is an outsider looking into Kahani with the same objective viewpoint discussed in *The Satanic Verses* and it is this very migrant/outsideer/displaced position that eventually allows Haroun "to identify the true cause of the conflict and find a solution that eliminates the root of the problem, namely, the polarization itself on the moon" (Köing 56).

Because he has never really fit in anywhere, because he has always been, in one way or another, an outsider, Haroun has an ability to see things very independently, without the

weight of bias from growing up immersed in any culture. Indeed, he is resistant to both cultures of Kahani, refusing to fall in with any one culture, and makes judgments upon both exactly as he sees fit: He is quick to point out when Guppee points of view don't make sense "That's totally illogical" (*Haroun* 79, in response to a quip about Haroun's lack of education about the moon from Butt the Hoopoe). He is also brutally honest about his perceptions of the leaders of Guppee, refusing to see them for anything but what they are:

It was easy to identify General Kitab, a weatherbeaten old gent with a rectangular uniform made of finely-tooled gold inlay leather... then there was the Speaker (that is, the leader) of the Chatterbox, a plump fellow who was even now talking unstoppably to his colleagues on the balcony; and a frail, small white-haired gentleman wearing a circlet of gold and a tragic look. This was presumably King Chattergy himself. The last two figures on the balcony were harder for Haroun to identify. There was a you and at present extremely worked-up fellow with a dashing but somehow foolish look to him (Prince Bolo...); and lastly, a person with a hairless head of quite spectacular smoothness and shininess, bearing on his upper lip a disappointingly insignificant moustache that looked like a piece of a dead mouse. (*Haroun* 89)

Haroun doesn't paint the Land of Gup, the land of light, freedom of speech, and stories (the land that anyone reading this tale might consider a little closer to Utopia than our current world) in an always favorable light, as is shown from the example above. He never painted any Guppee as perfect or glorious or righteous when describing them (and Rushdie never writes them that way), but instead told us exactly what he saw, even if that made the Land of Gup and the Guppees less impressive to readers. Indeed, sometimes he seems almost

annoyed with the amount of chatter that goes on in Gup, while, to the Guppees, an always talkative land is virtuous.

In other words, Haroun is not sucked in by the Guppees and their culture simply because he's there or because he believes that they are the "good" side of the moon. Even when he meets this supposedly "evil" side, the land of the Chupwalas for the first time, he notes that these constructed binaries are "not as simple" (*Haroun* 125) as they appear. He begins to understand that the Chups themselves are not evil, but are, instead under the power of an evil *man*. His concern isn't to understand anything as impressive, good, evil, etc, simply because he's heard that there is a good side and a bad side of Kahani. Indeed, he didn't get involved with the war between Gup and Chup to save the Princess, to side with Gup, or to specifically oppose the Chups. He got involved in order to keep the Water Genies from cancelling Rashid's story water subscription, and because he sees value in the telling of tales. Tale telling, after all, is one of the few activities in Alifbay that gives the people any joy, a fact Haroun would have been made very aware of as he travelled with his father during his story telling journeys.

Haroun has no other goal than to understand the truth as he sees it and not to let himself to get caught up in either of the binary oppositions (and to reinstate his father's story stream supply, of course). The reason he can resist these binary oppositions is because he can avoid indoctrination by any one homogenous group. He has always seen and must always see, multiple perspectives living as an outsider. This gives him an edge over "insider" Guppees and Chupwalas who have never had to look beyond their own understanding of the world: "Haroun becomes a leader who makes decisions independently, and his solution to the

crisis indicates that he has not succumbed to the rigid, black-and-white...worldview” (Köing 55-56).

Just as Haroun judges both cultures by what he sees using his independent objective migrant view point, he also points out that a relationship between Chup and Gup could be very profitable for both sides if they would only let go of their grasps on their binary oppositions to see the potential in communication, if for no other reason than they might actually find each other interesting. The thought of the degree to which these binaries have been constructed begins to baffle him, for, according to Haroun, how could these two peoples not see the potential for a better world if only the sides would break down their walls?:

As he watched the Shadow Warrior’s martial dance, Haroun thought about this strange adventure in which he had become involved. “How many opposites are at war in this battle between Gup and Chup!” he marveled. “Gup is bright and Chup is dark. Gup is warm and Chup is freezing cold. Gup is all chattering and noise, whereas Chup is silent as a shadow. Guppees love the Ocean, Chupwalas try to poison it. Guppees love Stories, and speech; Chupwalas, it seems, hate these things just as strongly.... But it’s not as simple as that,” he told himself, because the dance of the Shadow Warrior showed him that silence had its own grace and beauty (just as speech could be graceless and ugly); and that Action could be as noble as Words; and that creatures of the darkness could be as lovely as the children of the light. “If Guppees and Chupwalas didn’t hate each other so,” he thought, “they might actually find each other pretty interesting.” (*Haroun* 125)

Haroun's hybridity, and the consequential objectivity that hybridity gives him, sets into motion the transition of Kahani as a world of segregation to a world of cultural pluralism. But it isn't Haroun alone that gets this transition going. Other outsiders/hybrids also aid this change. For example, it is Rashid who serves as translator between Mudra and the Guppees. Upon first meeting Mudra, the Guppee army is wary of him, believing that he wishes them harm. They believe that he is advancing towards them saying "murder, murder." It is Rashid (another outsider on Kahani) who can see past the surface of what the Guppees *believe* is happening, past the binaries and the preconceived notions of Chupwalas and see what is *actually* happening: "It's the hand movements,' Rashid answered... 'He has been using the Language of Gesture. As for what he said it wasn't "murder," but *Mudra*. That's his name. He's been trying to introduce himself!'" (*Haroun* 130).

Mudra also aids the transition. He is certainly not a hybrid but an outsider in his own community. Rashid informs the Guppees that "Mudra is no longer an ally of the Cultmaster's [Kattam-Shud]. He has become disgusted with the growing cruelty and fanaticism of the Cult of the tongueless... and has broken off relations with Kattam-Shud" (*Haroun* 131). Mudra becomes the first friendly contact with the Guppees, working with them to eliminate a common enemy. It is with this exchange that both groups, at the very least the Guppees, see that communication and interaction can actually be the answer instead of segregation and binarism. This exchange is obviously profitable, for working together, Mudra and the Guppees devise a tactical plan to destroy Kattam-Shud. This successful encounter is symbolic of various endeavors that Rushdie believes will become possible when different peoples speak to, and seek to understand, each other. And let us not forget who it was that made it possible: a hybrid, Rashid. Without him, Prince Bolo, leading the army, may have

tried to fight him or set his army upon him because Bolo *knew* that Chupwalas were evil, and therefore he *knew* that Mudra was trying to kill them. It took a hybrid's objectivity, the hybrid's ability to think in multiple perspectives, to show the Prince and several Guppees a new truth.

Blabbermouth, the unusual page of the Chatterbox, also helps with the transition from segregation to integration. Rushdie wastes no time in marking her as an outsider in her community. She is a girl breaking the rules of Gup in order to do a boy's work as a page. Additionally, Blabbermouth, an outsider, is very interested in and finds beautiful Mudra: a Chup!: “ – By the way, ’ [Blabbermouth] added, blushing slightly, ‘isn’t he *something*? Isn’t he *wicked, awesome, sharp*? – Mudra I *mean*” (Haroun 135). She can look past her people's indoctrination with the idea that all Chupwalas are evil and judge for herself what she finds in her first encounter with a man of the Chup, and she finds that she likes him, and wants to stay by him. It is Blabbermouth that Mudra find perfectly fit to serve as an Ambassador for the new Kattam-Shud-free Chup. He takes her into his employ to learn the language and the customs and serve as a communicator between the two lands in order to expand upon the newly amalgamated world.

Clearly, even without Haroun, the hybrid/outsider/non-purists in this story play important roles in bringing and end to the segregation of the Guppees and Chupwalas. Each of them, when they have stepped outside of their own community, or because they were never a true part of any community, are able to see past cultural stigmas and instead see things as they really are. There is possibility for a new and improved world, one free of cultural isolation and instead full of interaction and integration, and fruitful for a relationship between the two lands of Kahani.

It is Haroun's ability to step outside of the center of the problem, to see the big picture, that ultimately enables him to destroy, once and for all, one of the sources of Kahani's problems. Haroun uses Wishwater to stop the P2C2E that keeps the moon orbiting in a way that restricts the sunlight to Gup and darkness to Chup. This wish, has astronomical effects:

Haroun's fairy tale wish has a "sci-fi" effect: as the Moon starts to rotate, sunlight destroys the shadow world, undoes Ayatollan "black magic" (*Haroun* 173), and breaks "the ropes...woven out of shadows" (*Haroun* 174). when "The coastline of the land of Chup" is "lit up by the evening sun for the first time" (*Haroun* 176), it becomes part of the "real" (or dialogic) world again, one in which light and dark, silence and talk, can reciprocate and compromise, can share and debate, can give and take.... (Merivale 201)

Haroun, *literally*, breaks down the greatest barrier between Gup and Chup and, in doing so, unifies the entire moon in an even distribution of sunlight and shadow. Haroun blurred the lines between the two lands; he made the boundaries between them more fluid and permeable.

Haroun could have made a great many wishes. He could have wished that Kattam-Shud give up, and that the Chupwalas remain forever and quietly on Chup, never to bother the Guppees or the Sea of Stories again. He could have wished for the ocean to be free of pollution forever. He could have wished for the Guppees to win the battle on Kattam-Shud's castle. He could have wished for an endless supply of unpolluted stories for his father, and for a quick getaway from Kahani as the battle waged. But he didn't. Haroun understood that the source of the problem between Gup and Chup was the division itself, and Kattam-Shud.

The movement of the sun melted both the shadow ship responsible for poisoning the Sea of Stories and the castle in which Kattam-Shud took refuge (getting rid of one problem), but as Merivale accurately points out, this was not the only effect of Haroun's wish. By reintroducing sunlight back into Chup, and thereby eliminating the only true distinction between Chup and Gup, Haroun singlehandedly brought the worlds together.

I must point out that I do not agree with Merivale that Chup is reintroduced to a "real" world. I believe instead that Chup was always a "real" world, but a different kind of world from Gup. To imply that, without speech, warmth, and light, Chup is not a "real" world is similar to saying that, for example, China isn't a "real" world because it is dissimilar from the U.S.. Rather, Gup and Chup, because of their divisions, have simply grown into two very different cultures. Before, the light barrier prevented any sort of cultural exchange. Each world was equally "real," but each valued something different.

Also, such an implication implies that there was a triumph of Gup over Chup, or as if the Chupwalas in total were destroyed instead of a few power-hungry evildoers. Haroun's actions and the subsequent reorbiting of the moon should not be read as a triumph over any one side. Gup, the light/democratic/speech side, does not "win" anything since it was their super technology that was destroyed. After all, it was their technology was keeping the problem alive in the first place. According to Mudra, Chup was under the rule of a tyrant at the time of the poisoning of the Sea of Stories and the kidnapping of the Princess, a tyrant with whom the people of Chup were growing increasingly frustrated. Therefore, there can be no winning or losing for Chup and Gup in a war against each other per se, only against Kattam-Shud. Rather, both sides won and lost something: what both sides lost was a segregated and uniform culture, and, in doing so, won the benefits of plurality. In the end, it

was never that one side is evil and the other is not. It's that neither side really understands the other, and this misunderstanding and inability to gain further understanding is the problem. Haroun and the other hybrids serve as key players in the paving of a path toward communication and understanding because they, having stepped outside of their own communities or because they have always been between one, have had to learn to function with multiple perspectives of the world and its experiences.

Also in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie seems (again) to indicate that a transition from cultural segregation and purism to integration and pluralism is powerful and inevitable:

If Haroun had been in Gup City at that moment, he might have enjoyed witnessing the consternation of the Eggheads in P2C2E House. The immense super-computers and gigantic gyroscopes that had controlled the behavior of the Moon... had simply gone crazy, and finally blown themselves apart. "Whatever is doing this," the Eggheads reported to the Walrus in consternation, "possesses a force beyond our power to imagine, let alone control." (*Haroun* 172)

The above paragraph reads very allegorically. It is a paragraph that readers are meant to pay attention to; Rushdie interrupts the flow, place, and time of his narrative in order to insert it at the height of all of the action. Rushdie is giving his readers a message. A transition in the world is coming, integration will take place, and all boundaries we have set between us must and will break. This is a change "beyond our power to imagine, let alone control." As more and more people in this world fall between boundaries and cultures, and we must say that there will be more for that is the only option for a world growing increasingly more

connected via technologies and international business enterprises, the boundaries themselves may become obsolete entirely, or at the very least, will become more fluid. Our very own “super computers” and “gyroscopes” that draw lines, that create concepts of “us” and “them” will eventually go berserk and blow themselves apart. All of the world will eventually be equally basked in sunlight and in darkness. According to Rushdie, the breaking of boundaries will lead us to a nation that doesn’t define itself by those boundaries, but instead seeks to incorporate and interweave (though not to erase) different strands of culture to create a nation that is richer for its diversity.

It is no coincidence that hybrids and outsiders instigate the transition of Kahani from a place of segregation to a place of fruitful interaction. Rushdie was deliberate in this choice. Clearly, he sees hybrids and outsiders as the leaders in creating the ideal world he envisioned in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. They are able to see outside and beyond cultural norms, values, and practices, and are more easily able to understand issues objectively and to make connections than those who are culturally singular. Therefore, hybrid migrants or other outsiders *must* be the ones to lead the world to transition for that very reason. There is no one else who can. In order to help the world make the first steps toward cultural pluralism, one must, according to Rushdie, make the choice to step outside, or to think outside, (or must already be outside) of their cultural predispositions, to *really* see things from another’s point of view, to deliberately become an outsider in order to gain the ability to make these connections.

Before ending this chapter, I wish to discuss for a moment, the Sea of Stories as a reiteration of the world that Rushdie envisions, as discussed in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. I do not wish to repeat what the preceding chapter has worked to argue, but instead with to reinforce its ideas. The Sea of Stories itself is far too great and heavy a symbol in *Haroun* to

simply ignore. The Sea of Stories is an allegory (yet another one!) for the world that Rushdie envisions.

[Haroun] looked into the water and saw that it was made up of a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents, each one a different color, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry...all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here... so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead but alive....” (*Haroun* 72)

Haroun’s description of the Sea of Stories is rich with implications that everything is better, healthier and alive when diverse individuals are allowed to incorporate among themselves freely. The Sea of Stories is beautiful because of the intermingling colors. Better, yet, each story remains separate but permeable. Stories “weave in and out” of each other and, in doing so, create new stories from them. The story sea becomes richer and richer with narratives as these boundaries are permeated. In other words, “The story sea... represents the idea of a nation that is redefined in each moment of its existence and is able to incorporate new strands into the national narrative as they become part of the on-going performance of national life” (Teverson 461).

Teverson also makes the connection between Rushdie’s Sea of Stories and cultural boundaries and purism.

...the borders and boundaries we have erected around the stories of different peoples and nations are permeable.... It is in this respect that the story sea as an image of Rushdie’s hybrid sources comes to reflect one of the dominant

arguments presented in the plot of *Haroun* - that the establishment of strict and impermeable boundaries between different cultures gives a false impression of the ‘purity’ of each culture and prevents cultural groups from discovering that their respective social narratives provide as much of a basis for dialogue and communication as they do for segregation and separation” (458).

In this way, the Sea of Stories reinforces the ideas present in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Rushdie is trying to show us how beautiful a world such as one that functions like the story sea, like Aurora’s art and how much more improved such a world is when boundaries are permeable, and different factions intermingle. Rushdie seems to ask us to think of the possibilities, think of what we, as humans different but equal, might accomplish if only we learned to talk to each other, and to not fear “otherness.”

## CONCLUSIONARY REMARKS

I set out to study Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in order to explore how Rushdie treats the cultural hybrid and why he places the cultural hybrid at the focus of his work. Rushdie ultimately shows that the hybrid is placed in a very confusing, painful, and dangerous culturally purist world. Particularly, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* uses Saladin Chamcha's transformation to really dramatize the negative experiences of the hybrid or Other in culturally purist places. This response is largely disturbing and unsettling and shows how detrimental culturally purist sentiments can be to a growing hybridized population. While Rushdie understands and sympathizes with this position, Rushdie makes it very clear that he feels that one must acknowledge, accept, and put forth one's full cultural identity, even if one's full identity puts a person in a more dangerous position. Rushdie obviously considers the denial of one's full cultural identity morally wrong for adding to the division between majority and Other. In addition, Rushdie implies that one's identity cannot remain hidden; it will always be there, though it remains in a constantly transforming state. Instead, Rushdie says that it is the duty of the hybrid to help fight against such divisions between minorities and majorities, to stand up for hybridity at large.

Despite the bleak surroundings for the hybrid and the culturally purist sentiments at work in Rushdie's novels, Rushdie never seems to let go of the idea that a world without

boundaries and divisions is possible and preferable to cultural purism. This world does not amalgamate identity per se, but allows identities (however fragmented or not) to work profitably. He indicates that when boundaries are dropped and people with different identities integrate feely in peace and harmony that they will work together, pulling from multiple cultural ties in order create greater cultural achievements. Without the distraction of “us” and “them,” different peoples from across the world can learn and benefit from each other.

Rushdie sees the hybrid as in the perfect position to help the world work towards such a multicultural and hybridized world because of his or her ability to appreciate and see the advantages of pluralism, advantages that one who is a “non-hybrid” may not readily see. All that is necessary for this move to a boundary-less world to begin is for those who live between boundaries to show the rest of the world how to make such a world possible by refusing to “blend-in” with the norm, but work to create new, more tolerant and productive spaces. Rushdie recognizes and sympathizes with the difficult journey he is asking hybrids to take, but it is one that he implies is necessary and a duty to hybridity. Any action outside of this duty is hurting rather than helping hybrids.

Rushdie’s work is particularly relevant in the world as the population of hybrids continues to grow, the world “flattens,” and more cultures and peoples interconnect and form relationships. He implies that the transition from a segregated to an integrated world is inevitable. We *are* moving toward a world where we, as diverse peoples, must learn to deal with each other. Rushdie simply seems to be concerned with how this transition will go. He fears that tensions between peoples may grow as those who were culturally segregated realize that the boundaries are getting fuzzier. The hybrid may encounter even more negative experiences as cultural purist countries try to slow down or refuse interconnectivity and

change. However, in all of his fiction, Rushdie seems to show that they can (and must) play an integral part to this world transition, and that the hybrid has the ability (and responsibility) to create new avenues and spaces for this interconnection to work while minimizing the tension between peoples. Hybrids live between boundaries, which allows them to see more of the big picture than those that have been working under one dominant world viewpoint. In other words, they are already a step ahead of the game. Hopefully, with the help of the hybrid, the world will look as Aurora painted it. Individuality is valued, but boundaries are gone. As a result, cultural progress is at an all time high and peace and tolerance reign. I hope that as more people become aware of this transition, and perhaps as more people read Rushdie and other authors like him, that it will not *only* be up to people with hybridized identities to help work toward a world transition, but that all people sign on to re-create a Moorish-Alhambra world.

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