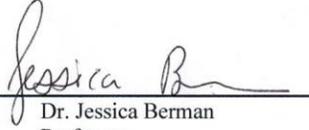


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Title of Thesis: "What's Real and What's True Aren't Necessarily the Same"
Interrogating Identity and The Fantastic in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and
The Satanic Verses

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ABSTRACT

Title of Document: “What’s Real and What’s True Aren’t Necessarily the Same”: Interrogating Identity and The Fantastic in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*
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Directed by: Dr. Jessica Berman

This thesis examines Salman Rushdie’s use of the fantastic to construct multiple conceptions of Indian national identity in *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. In both texts, the “irruptions of the fantastic” work to establish Rushdie’s characters’ mixed identifications with their individualized conceptions of Indian heritage and their individualized conceptions of modernity. With each character, Rushdie complicates any essentialist notion of Indian heritage, European-influenced modernity, and Eastern modernity by presenting his characters as hybrid beings whose identification continuously shifts throughout both texts, to prove that few characters remain fixed in their identification with any of these notions; their shifts in identification tell the reader much about their individualized constructions of India from both within the nation—in *Midnight’s Children*—and outside the nation—in *The Satanic Verses*. It is argued that a character’s reaction to “irruptions of the fantastic” in both texts determines where that character’s identification lies in this complex schema, whether they are identifying more with their conception of heritage or more with their conception of modernity at that point in the text, and how those conceptions of heritage and modernity present Rushdie’s larger construction of India as a postmodern, postcolonial nation.

“What’s Real and What’s True Aren’t Necessarily
the Same”:

Interrogating Identity and The Fantastic in Salman
Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*

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In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie writes that “language is courage. The ability to conceive a thought, to speak it, and by doing so, make it true” (Rushdie TSV 290). This concept of language as an agent of creation, capable of creating a transformative space between what is imagined and what is real, between what is, to borrow Rushdie’s words, “conceive[d]” versus what is “true,” is central to much of his work, but it is especially central to *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. In *Midnight’s Children*, Saleem Sinai, born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, the moment that India gained its independence from England, begins exhibiting mysterious telepathic powers that link him inextricably to the other children born in the midnight hour. As the story progresses, Saleem’s supernatural powers place him central to events that propel the new country’s formative trajectory. In *The Satanic Verses*, the supernatural events occur in England and are tied not to concrete historical events but to the shared experience of immigrants struggling to maintain or reject their Indian heritage while living in the colonizer’s land. The monstrous transformation of Saladin Chamcha and the angelic transformation of Gibreel Farishta reflect the dualism of the way an immigrant is perceived by both other natives of his home country—in this case, India—and by citizens of the new country.

In both texts, the interweaving into the realist narrative of fantastic events in the form of dream sequences, monstrous and angelic transformations, prophecies, and the emergence of magical powers drives much of the plot, but it is whether characters accept these events as real or reject them as imaginary that shapes each characters’ identification with his or her own conception of Indian heritage. *Midnight’s Children* can be split into three generational sections: the first occurs in the late nineteenth century, and follows

Saleem's grandparents, Aadam and Naseem; the second occurs in the early-to-mid twentieth century and follows Saleem's parents, Amina (formerly Mumtaz) and Ahmed; and the final generational section begins in 1947, when Saleem is born, and follows Saleem's story. In each generational section, there is a contention between characters who accept or reject the fantastic events as real. Whether characters accept or reject fantastic events is determined by each character's identification with their own conception of Indian heritage or with a European-influenced conception of modernity. In *The Satanic Verses*, the metamorphosis that Gibreel and Saladin undergo as they fall into London is certainly an irruption of the fantastic, but it is how Gibreel, Saladin, and the supporting characters identify with their conception of Indian heritage that determines how that metamorphosis is perceived. More important than generational conflict in determining whether characters believe the fantastic events is if characters have preserved their identification with their Indian heritage while living in England. As the fantastic events are accepted or rejected, they shape the construction of Indian national identities within the newly independent nation in *Midnight's Children*, and they guide the immigrant's construction of his or her national identity in the colonizer's land in *The Satanic Verses*.

Identification with Indian heritage is by no means a given for these characters, and modernity is by no means an exclusively European construct. Indeed, Homi K. Bhabha talks at length about this dichotomy between tradition and modernity. He says that "the representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks

to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha 2). For Rushdie, the “moment of historical transformation” that would result in these “cultural hybridities” would be the transfer of power from Britain to India in *Midnight’s Children*, while in *The Satanic Verses*, the cultural hybridities are not the result of “moments of historical transformation,” but are instead represented through the continual processes of transformation that an immigrant undergoes and by the multiple ideas of national identity that each immigrant creates in order to maintain a link to their homeland. One such “cultural hybridity” being authorized in both texts is the individual national subjects’ hesitation between identifying with their conception of Indian heritage or with European-influenced modernity. Bhabha also claims that

The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a ‘received’ tradition. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress (2).

Identity is determined by a multitude of factors in Rushdie’s two novels, and one of those factors is the character’s own perceptions of his or her “originary identity” and “‘received’ tradition” (Bhabha 2). Furthermore, the “definitions of tradition and modernity” are certainly “confounded” in both texts. For some characters, their conception of modernity is shaped by Western culture, while for other characters, their conception of modernity is shaped by Indian culture. Though this Western modernity is

more than likely the “normative expectation of development and progress,” Nehruvian modernity is just as influential to these characters—especially Saleem, in *Midnight’s Children*—so much so that these “normative expectations” of exactly what constitutes “development and progress” are certainly being challenged by Rushdie. To avoid making proclamations about how and where a character identifies with his or her Indian heritage that would be “essentialist,” this thesis will posit that a character’s identification with heritage is individualized for that character. That is, they identify with their individual *conception* of what constitutes Indian heritage. Similarly, a character’s identification with any conception of modernity is shaped by a multitude of factors, including where they were born, where they were educated, and their political views.

Heritage is ultimately a construct because, as Edward Said argues, “to take account of this horizontal, secular space of the crowded spectacle of the modern nation...implies that no single explanation sending one back immediately to a single origin is adequate” (Said qtd. in Bhabha 141). In *Midnight’s Children*, identifying with Indian heritage is doubly complicated for the characters in this text because their originary roots are in Kashmir, not India, at least for Aadam Aziz’s generational section. Because Kashmir was an independent princely state allowed to decide with which country—India or Pakistan—it would accede, claiming Naseem, Aadam’s wife, identifies with an *Indian* construction of heritage is difficult. Likewise, Aadam does not identify as an Indian until after the Amritsar Massacre, in which the bruise he receives on his chest after diving for cover from the British firing upon the Indian demonstrators “turned [him] into an Indian” (Rushdie MC 39). For these two characters, there is “no single explanation sending [them] back immediately to a single origin” that is essentially Indian,

because there is no one essential Indian heritage to which they can be sent back.

However, there are constructs of heritage specific to both characters, and those constructs of heritage are built from a variety of factors, like Naseem's Islamic faith and Aadam's relationship with Tai the boatman, both of which provide one of many "explanation[s] sending [them] back" to their origin.

Bhabha expands upon Said's comments about origins by claiming that "counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological maneuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha 149). Bill Ashcroft's concept of the "transnation" agrees with this. While transnation "pivots on a critique of the nation, and a utopian projection beyond the tyranny of national identity...[it] nevertheless acknowledges that people live in nations and when they move, move within and beyond nations, sometimes without privilege and without hope" (13). The concept of "transnation" "exposes the distinction between the occupants of the geographical entity—the historically produced multi-ethnic society whom we might call the 'nation' and the political, geographic and administrative structures of that nation that might be called the 'state'" (Ashcroft 13). Because "transnation is the fluid, migrating *outside* the state (conceptually and culturally as well as geographically) that begins *within* the nation," the nation becomes a "perpetual scene of *translation*," in that it creates a "'betweenness' by which the subjects of the transnation are constituted" (Ashcroft 14). India is certainly a "perpetual scene of translation" in *Midnight's Children* as Saleem's tale constructs a historical narrative for the country, and Saladin and Gibreel's migration outside of India (and their struggle to maintain the link back to India throughout the text) is certainly

indicative of India as a transnation for these characters. Saladin attempts to break beyond “the tyranny of national identity,” but his conception of India “move[s] within and beyond” the physical borders of the nation. The “‘betweenness’ by which...[he is] constituted” is created through his memories of his father, while Gibreel’s is preserved through his faith. It is important to note that this “‘betweenness’” exists for Saladin against his will, because he has renounced the ties to his former nation by attempting to become a “goodandproper Englishman” (Rushdie TSV 43). Saladin’s construction of his Indian heritage, of what his national identity means for him, certainly makes the nation a “perpetual scene of translation” (Ashcroft 14). Rushdie uses the fantastic to demonstrate how the nation translates outside of its own borders, and how characters who struggle with this “‘betweenness’” are changed by it.

It is the collection of voices in both *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses* and, more importantly, their contextualization that complicate the dichotomy between heritage and modernity in Rushdie’s two texts. The voices Saleem hears in his head after acquiring his telepathic power are certainly heteroglot, in Bakhtin’s sense of the word, in that “they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve” (Bakhtin 429). The nature of the voices in Saleem’s head, and by extension, the historical narrative he is trying to solve, are certainly “impossible to resolve” because of this “matrix of forces” that allow them to function (Bakhtin 429). If heteroglossia is defined as “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way,” then Rushdie’s use of the “cacophony” of voices to construct the Indian nation within Saleem’s mind and in his historical re-telling of his personal story’s stake in the identity construction of the new

nation is indicative of the multitude's role in constructing this tale. That is, the history of India is not Saleem's alone, despite how it is inextricably linked to his personal story, but it is the production of the multitude of Indian citizens alike.

Bhabha's claims about the construction of national identity by the national subject and Bakhtin's claims about how speech in the novel "express[es] authorial intentions" can be better understood in Rushdie's texts by analyzing how each character responds to irruptions of the fantastic into the otherwise realistic narrative. In his theory on the genre of the fantastic, Tzvetan Todorov outlines three key elements that determine whether a text is a work of the fantastic. He states that

the fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time, the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work—in the case of naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations (Todorov 33).

This "[hesitation] between a natural and supernatural explanation" occurs for almost every character in *Midnight's Children*, except for Naseem, Saleem's grandmother, and Tai, a Kashmiri boatman, both of whom identify so strongly with their own conceptions of Indian heritage that they accept the supernatural events as wholly natural. The contention between characters who identify with their Indian heritage and those who

identify with a European-influenced conception of modernity is often driven by this hesitation “between a natural and a supernatural explanation” for the fantastic event. Furthermore, though the reader is meant to reject “allegorical as well as ‘poetic’ interpretations” of the fantastic events in Rushdie’s text, these events, though truly occurring, often contain a metaphorical or ‘poetic’ meaning that yields deeper insight into the themes Rushdie is trying to convey.

The first and third criterion of Todorov’s theory are especially important to considering *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, as Salman Rushdie himself has talked about how the inclusion of fantastic elements in his work allows him to “start getting at the truth in a different way” (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”). In an interview with *BigThink* magazine in 2016, Rushdie stated that

What [magic realism] tries to do is...to be grounded in the vision of the real, and then use techniques to express that vision which don’t necessarily have to be realistic. [Latin American authors like Garcia Marquez] used elements of fantasy and dream and included those in the text of the story as though they have the same status as observable facts...If you have ideas that you want to set in motion and interrogate and argue about, science fiction, fantasy fiction, has always done that very well (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”).

Rushdie embraces the label of “magic realism” for his novels, and recognizes the value of the genre for presenting stories that, though they contain supernatural elements, present a version of the truth that is just as valid (if not more so) than what is presented in solely realist novels. When he claims that “elements of fantasy and dream...have the same status as observable facts” (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”), this links back perfectly

to *Midnight's Children*, in which the entire overarching plot is the birth of India and the formative years following that birth. The events he describes in the novel—the Amritsar massacre, the Language Riots, the later birth of Pakistan, the Emergency under Indira Gandhi, to name a few—are all historical events that actually occurred, but in the novel, they are supernaturally tied directly with Saleem's tale. He and his telepathic power often drive the historical events, or else they are driven by them; the only difference is whether Saleem acts as an active agent (however accidentally), catalyzing these events, or is passively shaped by them. Either way, the events are true, factual, documented moments in India's history, and that Saleem is supernaturally bound to them is just as true and factual.

In *The Satanic Verses*, the “elements of fantasy and dream” are not tied explicitly to actual historical events but are equally “grounded in the real,” to borrow Rushdie's phrase. In the quote above, Rushdie argues that though works of magic realism are “grounded in a vision of the real,” they “use techniques to express that vision which don't necessarily have to be realistic” (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”). The events that occur in *The Satanic Verses* “interrogate and argue about” thematic ideas related to the formation of identity for Indian characters who have immigrated to England. Just as Bhabha suggests, these characters' definitions of their home nation—India—change over time, and their definition of India is based on their own perceptions of it. Their ability to preserve their link to their heritage is challenged because of their physical distance from their home country, and as a result, they embody Ashcroft's concept of “transnation” because they “migrat[e] *outside* the state (conceptually and culturally as well as geographically)” and in their new country, they construct their version of India in order to

either preserve or sever their link to it. Their multiple perceptions of the nation are expressed through the heteroglot of voices in the text, and it is in these multiple voices that the struggle between characters who construct a version of India free from Western influence and characters who identify at least partially with a Western-influenced conception of modernity is evidenced. When Saladin and Gibreel transform into living embodiments of evil and good, with Saladin growing horns and hoofs to become Satan, and Gibreel sporting a halo over his head to become the Archangel Gabriel, their transformations are perceived very differently depending on if they have preserved their identification with whatever links them to their Indian heritage. Characters who do identify strongly with their Indian heritage react in horrified disbelief to his transformation, and therefore view it as unnatural, while English characters, or Indian characters who were either born in England or else identify strongly with English culture, view the change as natural. This is in direct contrast to *Midnight's Children*, in which characters who identify with their Indian heritage accept the fantastic events as real, while characters who identify with a European-influenced conception of modernity reject the events as unreal. This contrast can be explained partially by the change of setting. *Midnight's Children* takes place in India, so a fantastic event is viewed as natural because, as Saleem maintains throughout the text, "such things happen" (Rushdie MC 154) and are therefore a crucial, natural part of Indian life for characters who identify with their heritage, even if characters who identify more with English or Nehruvian modernity would dismiss these fantastic events as being unreal. *The Satanic Verses* takes place in England, the realm of Western-centric modernity, so fantastic events occurring there feel out of place and therefore unnatural for characters who identify with their

conception of heritage. Characters in England, who identify with this European-influenced conception of modernity, use frames of reference related to Western literature, film, and philosophy to explain Saladin's monstrous transformation, while Indian characters use their Islamic faith as their frame of reference and therefore regard Saladin's transformation as sinister.

Categorizing the reactions of characters to the fantastic events in both texts using this dualistic structure of identification with Indian heritage or identification with Western modernity by no means suggests that India—and the East in general—did not possess its own modernity. In her work on colonial modernity, Tani E. Barlow argues that “modernity of non-European colonies is as indisputable as the colonial core of European modernity” and that “Anglo-Indian colonialism established regimes of knowledge that were modern and, although jointly if unequally authored by colonizer and colonized, tended to obscure local realities (Barlow 4). Satya P. Mohanty, in his edited volume of essays entitled *Colonialism, Modernity, and Literature: A View from India*, defines colonial modernity as “the particular combination of modern social institutions and colonialist ideology that European colonial rule brought with it; this ideology was based on a wholesale devaluation of traditional social institutions in the societies that were colonized [and] this ideology was used to justify colonial rule, but it is possible to separate the ideology from the institutions (and laws, values, etc.) associated with modernity” (Mohanty 23). In British-occupied India, some of the “traditional social institutions” being “[devalued]” are Naseem's beliefs not only in her Islamic faith but in the supernatural, which she passes to her daughter, Amina. Through these characters, and through Saleem, Rushdie challenges traditional notions of modernity, and in doing so,

attempts to “separate the ideology from the institutions...associated with modernity” (Mohanty 23). This creates what Mohanty calls “alternative modernities,” in which “distinctly modern values such as individuality and radical egalitarianism were articulated in contexts other than the capitalist West” (Mohanty 7). If tradition provides a lens through which the characters in either *Midnight’s Children* or *The Satanic Verses* view the fantastic events, and if tradition preserves their link to their heritage, that is not to suggest that they are decidedly non-modern. Rushdie is certainly presenting the “complexly mediated critiques of...social traditions, both the old and the newly invented one[s],” that Mohanty calls the core of colonial modernities. This is why it is so difficult to categorize characters according to where they fall in this dichotomy of Indian heritage versus Eurocentric modernity. Characters in both novels shift throughout the novel between these two poles, between their link to heritage preserved through tradition and their conception of modernity that may be influenced by Western culture. Their reactions to irruptions of the fantastic change, as well, but those reactions can tell us where a character is identifying at that given moment in the text, and can present a clearer picture of how Rushdie is using the fantastic to present this “complexly mediated critique” (Mohanty 7) of social traditions.

In *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity*, Stephen Morton begins by arguing that Rushdie “not only draws attention to the fault lines in India’s political independence in his fiction but also suggests that India’s postcolonial modernity is itself a fictional composite of different political and cultural discourses borrowed from the South Asia’s rich and complex cultural history as well as the European enlightenment” (11). These “different political and cultural discourses” combine to form the poles of

identification that this thesis will interrogate: Indian heritage—or “history”—and the European conception of modernity “borrowed from “European enlightenment” (Morton 11). Though colonialists believed that Western modernity was the only modernity to exist, Eastern modernity always existed amongst colonized people, and after India’s Independence, Prime Minister Nehru presented “a secular vision of India’s democracy, his plans for India’s economic development, and his principle of Third World non-alignment in matters of foreign policy during the Cold War” and together, these factors “seemed to offer an alternative model for India’s political modernity in the aftermath of colonialism” (Morton 15). Morton also argues that “Rushdie’s parody of Nehruvian ideas such as non-alignment with the United States or the Soviet Union, a secular socialism that celebrates India’s diversity, and industrialization certainly highlights the fault lines in India’s social and political foundations. Yet...Rushdie does so in order to imagine the conditions of possibility for a radical democratic transformation in South Asian society, rather than simply announcing the failure of India’s national independence” (15). Rushdie is challenging the notion of the West as the modern center of the world, but in neither text does he discount that the West does have some bearing on his characters’ conceptions of modernity; in *Midnight’s Children*, Naseem’s and Tai’s quarrels with Aadam are the result of his Western education, which has made him “alien” and which has made him a symbol of “progress” (Rushdie MC 16). Aadam’s Western education, and the conception of modernity that he has brought back to India with him that Tai and Naseem find so threatening, is what passes to Amina, Saleem’s mother, who accepts his worldview only to have it challenged and overtaken by her experience with Ramram Seth. In turn, she passes a mixed identification with her father’s European-influenced conception of

modernity and her mother's identification with traditional Indian heritage to her son, who tells us his story from this mixed perspective. In combining the heteroglot of his relatives' voices, and through his telepathic ability to hear the voices of India's populace in his head, he creates an alternative modernity in his story, and by doing so, presents the nation as culturally hybrid. In *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin's conception of modernity is certainly influenced by Western culture, and as a result, he attempts to renounce his Indian self completely in an effort to become "a good and proper Englishman" (Rushdie TSV 43). He views the traditions of India as antiquated and ridiculous, and this puts him at odds with his father, who is a devout Indian Muslim. When Saladin transforms into the devil, the characters who view his change as natural view it as such because Western films, philosophy, and literature provide a frame of reference through which to naturalize it. This frame of reference is certainly a by-product of Western modernity, but that is not to suggest that Western modernity is the only form of modernity in either text.

The fantastic events in these novels disrupt the realist narrative, becoming what Roger Caillois would call "irruptions" of the fantastic. He argues that "the fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday legality" (qtd. in Jackson 28). Caillois also writes that "as opposed to fairy tales or to the Marvellous, which involves a world of enchantment, of constant metamorphoses and miracles where everything is always possible...the Fantastic presumes a well-ordered universe ruled by the immutable laws of physics, astronomy, and chemistry" (Caillois 349). In addition to these "immutable laws," *Midnight's Children* is also ruled by "laws" of history, by the immutable reality that the historical events in the novel did occur, that real people experienced them, that the basic logics of

the historical events—where they occurred, how many people were involved, how many casualties, if there were casualties, etc.—have been written into history books. Rushdie maintains the historical event as is, but he integrates these “irruptions” of the fantastic to disrupt the true, historical narrative in order to present a new version that is in many ways just as true. That these events are “irruptions” is an important distinction to make, as their “irrupt[ive]” nature is part of what makes them fantastic. They “irrupt” into the “well-ordered universe” that Caillois describes, and they disrupt the “immutable laws of physics, astronomy, and chemistry,” and, as I added, of history, as well. Magic realism is a genre that deals in “irruptions” of the supernatural within the plane of everyday reality. Saleem’s “destinies [are] indissolubly chained to those of [his] country” (Rushdie *MC* 1) as a result of his powers, while Saladin and Gibreel’s transformations serve to reflect the dual nature of immigrant experience in the colonizer’s land. Both the presentation and the reception of their physical changes disrupt the “well-ordered universe” (Caillois 349). It is the reactions of other characters that indicate whether the “well-ordered universe” is truly being disturbed. The “immutable laws” are certainly being broken, but whether or not that results in a disruption is entirely decided by the characters.

Overall, this thesis will argue that characters in *Midnight’s Children* who treat the fantastic events as real identify more with their conception of Indian heritage, while characters in *The Satanic Verses* who treat the fantastic events as real identify more with a Western-influenced conception of modernity. However, this thesis will also posit that characters do not remain fixed in their identifications with either. Instead, as a reflection of their hybrid identity as citizens of a hybrid nation, their identification—and their definitions of heritage and modernity—shift over the course of both novels. While some

characters' conceptions of heritage are shaped by the preservation of traditions specific to India—including a belief in the supernatural, fantastic events in the text—other characters' conceptions of heritage are determined by their political affiliations. Likewise, while some characters' conceptions of modernity are shaped by Western cultural influences, other characters identify with a conception of modernity that is entirely Indian. To navigate the complex hybrid space of these multiple conceptions, Rushdie's novels contain a heteroglot of voices that challenge any essentialist notion of one single cohesive national identity. Chapter One of this essay will analyze how a character's reaction to irruptions of the fantastic in *Midnight's Children* demonstrate that character's identification with a complex, heteroglossic Indian heritage, European-influenced conception of modernity, or Indian modernity across the three generational sections; how identification with heritage or modernity is passed down between the generations; and how the shift of power from English colonial forces to the Indian people affects this coexistence—and sometimes contention—between heritage, Western-influenced modernity, and postcolonial modernity. Chapter Two will analyze how the irruptions of the fantastic in *The Satanic Verses* are received by other characters in the novel, and how those receptions are reflective of that character's preservation or rejection of aspects of his or her Indian heritage while living in England. Though the Jahilia sections are important to understanding how Rushdie's re-imagined construction of Islamic history play a vital part in the identification with *religious* heritage, and though these sections certainly present irruptions of the fantastic that interrogate the complexities of identity formation for emigrating Indian Muslims like Saladin and Hind Sufyan, this thesis will remain focused on the fantastic irruption of Saladin's demonic transformation

and the characters' reactions to it. This particular irruption yields insight into measuring a character's identification with *national* heritage, and though characters' Islamic faith preserves their link to India, the Jahilia sections, though certainly fantastic, are focused far more on solely religious identification than national identification.

It would be easy to say that the supernatural events in both texts are simply an aspect of their classification as magical realism. However, these events wield transformative power to disrupt and re-shape the "immutable laws" that Caillois describes. These events also challenge any essentialist notion of one single definition of national identity, heritage, and modernity by allowing the heteroglot of voices present in the text to irrupt—and disrupt—the realist narrative. This heteroglot of voices challenges the notion that modernity is solely a construct of the West by presenting differing frames of reference that the Indian characters in both novels use to construct their own versions of modernity. It is in the space of disruption created by these supernatural events that the reader may begin to "get at the truth in a different way" ("Salman Rushdie: True Stories..."). By analyzing the contentions between characters who accept the fantastic events as real or those who reject the events as unreal, the reader can determine how those characters maintain or re-formulate their Indian identity in their homeland and abroad.

Chapter I:
Midnight's Children

In the opening pages of *Midnight's Children*, the contention between this Western-influenced modernity and Indian heritage is displayed in the character of Aadam Aziz, Saleem's Sinai's grandfather. Aadam, newly graduated from a German medical school, is distracted while praying by the voices of his English friends. He imagines his friend Ingrid is "scorning him for this Mecca-turned parroting" (Rushdie MC 6), while his friends Oskar and Ilse "[mock] his prayer with their anti-ideologies" (Rushdie MC 6). His friends also claim that "along with medicine and politics... India—like radium—had been discovered by the Europeans," and it is this "belief... that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors" that "finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends" (Rushdie MC 6). Despite their voices in his head, criticizing him for carrying out one of the tenets of his faith, Aadam continues trying

to reunite himself with an earlier self which ignored their influence but knew everything it ought to have known, about submission for example, about what he was doing now, as his hands, guided by old memories, fluttered upwards, thumbs pressed to ears, fingers spread, as he sank to his knees... but it was no good, he was caught in a strange middle ground, trapped between belief and disbelief, and this was only a charade after all" (Rushdie MC 6).

Aadam is grappling with his two identities that cannot co-exist inside of him. Though he is trying to reconnect with his ancestral Indian identity, the voices of his friends prevent him from truly "reunit[ing]... with [that] earlier self" (Rushdie MC 6). His German friends expose to him as a "charade" this ritual of prayer, which, before he went away to

college and met them, he would not have questioned. But it is not the barbs of his English friends that finally puncture Aadam's faith and, as a result, shift him completely from belief to disbelief in this crucial aspect of his Indian heritage. It is the ground of his homeland that does that. Saleem tells us that "forward [Aadam] bent, and the earth, prayer-mat-covered, curved up towards him. And now it was the tussock's time. At one and the same time a rebuke from Ilse-Oskar-Ingrid-Heidelberg as well as valley-and-God, it smote him upon the point of the nose" (Rushdie MC 6). Saleem tells us that it was then that Aadam "made a resolve...and was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly believe" (Rushdie MC 6). This resolve creates what Saleem calls "a permanent alteration: a hole" (Rushdie MC 6), and it also propels the final push away from the India of his past into the Euro-centric modernist worldview of his present and future.

Aadam's loss of faith and initial loss of identification with his Indian heritage is further demonstrated by his feud with Tai, the boatman who ferries local Kashmiris and tourists across the lake. Tai is described as a vessel containing all of Kashmiri history. As a child, Aadam traveled across the lake with Tai and listened to the boatman's many stories. Aadam did not know Tai's age, and when he asked, Tai said that he "watched the mountains being born; [he] had seen Emperors die...[he] saw that Isa, that Christ, when he came to Kashmir" and then, he tells Aadam, "it is your history I am keeping in my head" (Rushdie MC 11). The contention between them begins after Aadam returns from medical school in Europe and Tai immediately recognizes the change in him his years abroad have wrought. He angrily laments how Aadam, "a wet-head nakkoo child...goes away before he's learned one damned thing and comes back a big doctor sahib with a big

bag full of foreign machines” (Rushdie MC 15). Later, as he takes Aadam across the lake to meet one of his patients, he exclaims,

big bag, big shot. Pah! We haven't got enough bags at home that you must bring back that thing made of a pig's skin that makes one unclean just by looking at it? And inside, God knows what all...Sister-sleeping pigskin bag from Abroad full of foreigners' tricks. Big-shot bag. Now if a man breaks an arm that bag will not let the bone-setter bind it in leaves. Now a man must let his wife lie beside that bag and watch knives come and cut her open. A fine business, what these foreigners put into our young men's heads. I swear, it is a too-bad thing. That bag should fry in hell with the testicles of the ungodly (Rushdie MC 15-16).

Aadam is unsure what is causing Tai's fury, and he is momentarily stunned by it. Saleem describes Tai's rage as “incomprehensible” to Aadam, who says that “it appears to be directed at his erstwhile acolyte, or, more precisely and oddly, at his bag” (Rushdie MC 16). When he tries to “diagnose” the source of Tai's fury, Aadam reasons that “to the ferryman, the bag represents Abroad; it is the alien thing, the invader, progress. And yes, it has indeed taken possession of the young Doctor's mind; and yes, it contains knives, and cures for cholera and malaria and smallpox, and yes, it sits between doctor and boatman, and has made them antagonists” (Rushdie MC 16). The contention between this European-influenced modernity and Aadam's heritage is evident in this feud with Tai. From Saleem's perspective as he tells his story, Aadam, representing progress, threatens Tai, the vessel of pure (and, if he is to be believed, ancient) Indian history. Tai has remained in this one place, absorbing the history of it into his mind. To him, Aadam is an interloper, an “invader,” bringing with him a bag of sinister items that, to Tai, are largely

useless. When Tai laments how bone-setters will no longer be able to bind broken bones in leaves, because foreign-educated doctors like Aadam will heal the bones with new, modern medicinal techniques, he is expressing a larger struggle between Indian tradition, which he feels is perfectly suitable and should not be amended, and this Western-influenced conception of modernity, which is, to him, inherently untrustworthy and even sinister. This contention is further reiterated later as Saleem reflects on the story he has told thus far. Saleem notes that he “has Tai-for-changelessness opposed to Aadam-for-progress” (Rushdie MC 119).

Tai is mirrored closely with Saleem early on in the novel. In fact, the Kashmiri boatman is twinned perfectly with the story’s narrator. Saleem writes, “so let me conclude with the uncorroborated rumor that the boatman, Tai, who recovered from his scrofulous infection soon after my grandfather left Kashmir, did not die until 1947” (Rushdie MC 35). Saleem, of course, is born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947. Though the text does not explicitly state that Tai died on that particular date, that he died in 1947 is surely no coincidence. His death serves as a passing of the mantle to Saleem. Tai is the vessel of ancient India, because within him, he contains pre-Independence India and Kashmir. After his death, Saleem becomes the vessel of post-Independence India. Tai, by his own proclamation, has lived for hundreds of years. Over that time, he absorbed the rich history and cultural traditions of Kashmir, and fought Aadam, who threatened to contaminate that history and those traditions with his European education. Because he had lived for so long, he was able to sift out the cultural contaminants of European influence and maintain within him, and within Kashmir, this conception of Indian heritage unchanged by the “progress” Aadam represents. Though

Kashmir was not technically a part of the British Empire but instead was “an independent princely state” (Rushdie MC 31), the Maharaja of India “was deputized power over internal affairs of the states” including the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and “[India’s] foreign affairs and defense were under the administrative authority of the British Crown” (Mahesar, Mahesar, et al 3). Though Tai believes that he is keeping “Abroad” away from Kashmir, the British Crown was the authority over the Raj, and the Raj was “deputized power over the state” of Kashmir. Tai’s idea that Kashmir is isolated from Abroad is a delusion, because not only is the region touched by British influence in the form of this governmental control, but the region is also touched by British influence when tourists come to visit and former lifelong residents like Aadam returned from “Abroad.” Tai raged against those trespassers, and as a result believed that he was maintaining the history and the culture within him and within Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Saleem, born at the moment of India’s Independence from the Empire, is the vessel in which post-Independence Indian history and culture will be maintained. Yet because of the European influence in his family, in the neighborhood where he grows up, and in the city surrounding him, the history he contains within him is contaminated. If the history contained within Saleem’s and Tai’s heads is meant to be removed from the influence of Abroad, then by Tai’s definition, the history contained within Saleem would be contaminated. While Tai’s repudiation of anything from Abroad is the antibody that fights against the virus of European influence that threatened to contaminate the history he “[kept] within his head,” Saleem’s body lacks that resistance, and therefore becomes the site where Tai’s conception of pure heritage and this European-influenced modernity meet. Though Tai would believe that Saleem’s version of

history kept inside of his head is contaminated by *Abroad*, Saleem's version of history—as a combination of multiple influences and identities—fits closely with ideas about postcolonial modernity. Morton claims that “India's postcolonial modernity is itself a fictional composite of different political and cultural discourses borrowed from the South Asia's rich and complex cultural history as well as the European enlightenment,” so Saleem's conception of Indian heritage and his grandfather's conception of Western-influenced modernity combine to form this vision of postcolonial modernity that celebrates multiple influences (Morton 11).

This struggle between European-influenced modernity, Indian modernity, and characters' conceptions of heritage is not contained solely within Aadam. The contention is evident all around him, in the complex relationship between the Indian citizens and the British colonizers. After getting married, Aadam and his wife, Naseem, begin traveling to the city. On the way, they see a pamphlet declaring “Hartal!” which means “a day of mourning, of stillness, of silence” and Saleem says “but this is India in the heyday of the Mahatma, when even language obeys the instructions of Gandhiji and the word has acquired, under his influence, new resonances...Gandhi has decreed that the whole of India shall, on that day, come to a halt. To mourn, in peace, the continuing presence of the British” (Rushdie MC 31). Aadam notes still another way that he understands the contention between European-influenced modernity and Indian heritage, when he says that “the Indians have fought for the British; so many of them have seen the world by now, and been tainted by *Abroad*. They will not easily go back to the old world. The British are wrong to try and turn back the clock” (Rushdie MC 31). Aadam's musings are important here, because they demonstrate not only his personal struggle between this

conception of modernity learned “Abroad” and the struggle to maintain a link to heritage free of that conception, but also his understanding of India’s overarching struggle.

This contention between Naseem’s view of their Indian heritage and Aadam’s identification with European-influenced modernity is demonstrated by Aadam’s struggles with his wife, Naseem. Naseem’s first encounter with her husband’s European-influenced modernity is evident after he asks her to move “like a woman” during sex (Rushdie MC 31). In response, she “shriek[s] in horror [and exclaims] ‘My god, what have I married? I know you Europe-returned men. You find terrible women and then you try to make us girls be like them! Listen, Doctor Sahib, husband or no husband, I am not any...bad word woman’” (Rushdie MC 31). Later, after Aadam asks that she come out of purdah, she cries that he “want[s] her to walk naked in front of strange men” (Rushdie MC 31). In frustration, Aadam burns her purdah veils and says, “Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman” (Rushdie MC 31). Though Aadam is requesting that Naseem become a “modern Indian woman,” his idea of what denotes modernity is entirely influenced by his time in Europe, which Naseem makes evident when she says she “know[s]...Europe-returned men” (Rushdie MC 31). In this passage, Naseem identifies with Kashmir, their home, which represents the rich historical and cultural past, one that has little to do with the West. Bombay, to which they are headed, represents a certain version of the future, where “Europe-returned men” like her husband try to infuse the values of the British into Indian life. In Aadam’s view, they are leaving behind the traditions of their rich cultural history, the past of which is archived in Tai. But in abandoning that city lorded over by Tai, the vessel of heritage, they are entering a middle-ground in which the contention between Indian cultural purists,

represented here by Naseem and the references to Gandhi, and the European-influenced modernists, represented here by Aadam and the Indian soldiers “tainted by Abroad” (Rushdie MC 31) fight for supremacy.

Naseem’s struggle to maintain her link to Indian heritage is reflective of the struggle most Indian women faced during this time. In his article, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question,” Partha Chatterjee outlines the consequences of the “mid-nineteenth century attempts in Bengal to ‘modernize’ the condition of women” (Chatterjee 234). This “modernization” was a direct result of the “‘penetration’ of western ideas,” and it was countered by “the new politics of nationalism [which] ‘glorified India’s past and tended to defend everything traditional’ [because] all attempts to change customs and life-styles began to be seen as the aping of western manners [and were] thereby regarded with suspicion” (Chatterjee 234). Chatterjee goes so far as to say that “the movement towards modernization was stalled by nationalist politics” (Chatterjee 234). While Aadam would support this “movement towards modernization,” Naseem would identify with this nationalist cause that “glorified India’s past and tended to defend everything traditional” (Chatterjee 234). When she calls Aadam a “Europe-returned [man]” pejoratively, she does so because he is asking her to behave more like a European “bad word woman” than the “good Kashmiri girl” she wants to be (Rushdie MC 31). Aadam asking her to move during sex and to come out of purdah are certainly an “aping of western manners” (Chatterjee 234), which explains why Naseem, whose identification is with a particular, nationalist view of Indian heritage, is so horrified by both suggestions.

Chatterjee also quotes Sumit Sarkar, who “suggests that the concern with the social condition of women was...an expression of certain ‘acute problems of the interpersonal adjustments within the family’ on the part of the early generation of western educated males” (Chatterjee 237). In explaining how these “western educated males” navigated both the “interpersonal adjustments within the family” and the world outside of their homes, Chatterjee separates the “domain of culture” into two spheres: the “material” and the “spiritual” (Chatterjee 237). In the material sphere, “the claims of Western civilization were the most powerful” and “what was necessary was to cultivate the material techniques of modern western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture (Chatterjee 237-238). Aadam went Abroad to a European medical school so he could learn about these “superior techniques” of “science, technology...economic organization [and]...methods of statecraft” (Chatterjee 237). However, Naseem’s concern is to maintain the “spiritual domain” of the East, which the nationalists would argue is superior to that of the West. If she came out of purdah or moved during sex like a European woman, she would be forfeiting this link to the “spiritual domain,” and, according to the 19th century nationalists, a forfeiture like that could threaten the “self-identity of national culture” (Chatterjee 237).

Naseem’s contention with her husband’s European-influenced modernity is an effort to preserve the sanctity of that “inner” sphere, which Chatterjee argues is where “the Indian’s true self” lies (238). While “the material domain” is, according to Chatterjee, “a mere external which influences us, conditions us, and to which we are forced to adjust,” it is also “unimportant” (Chatterjee 238). However, Aadam attempts to move the outer domain into his and Naseem’s inner domain by urging Naseem to become

“modern.” Naseem’s struggle to maintain the inner domain preserves their identity as Indians, and that, according to Chatterjee, is “genuinely essential” (238).¹

After their move, Naseem transforms into the Reverend Mother, and in this transformation, she becomes even more steadfast in her preservation of the spiritual sanctity of this inner sphere. By maintaining her home, and by extension, her “inner spiritual self” and her “true identity,” she is able to pass down her identification with Indian heritage to her children even while Aadam struggles to instill in them the values of the West he learned in the “material” sphere. Saleem describes Naseem as a “prematurely old, wide woman, with two enormous moles like witch’s nipples on her face...[who] live[s] within an invisible fortress of her own making, an ironclad citadel of traditions and certainties” (Rushdie MC 31). One such tradition is that of her Islamic faith, with which she insists her children must be raised. Aadam does not identify as a Muslim, though he most certainly identifies as an Indian—during the Amritsar massacre, as British troops fired on Indian protestors, Aadam fell to the ground and was bruised on his chest by the clip on his doctor bag; that bruise, he says, “turned [him] into an Indian” (Rushdie MC 39). After Aadam accuses his children’s maulvi of “teaching them to hate” and kicks him out of the house for it, Naseem asks, “What will you not do to bring disaster...on our heads...Would you eat pig?...Would you spit on the Quran?...Would

¹ Chatterjee’s discussion of the *ghar* and *bahir*, or “the home and the world” (Chatterjee 238) lends greater insight into the struggle between Aadam’s “view of the world” and Naseem’s. The *ghar*, or home, is considered the domain of the female, while the *bahir*, or world, is considered the domain of the male. Chatterjee claims that “the world is the external, the domain of the material...[it] is a treacherous terrain of the material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme” (Chatterjee 238). Meanwhile, the *ghar* “represents [an Indian’s] inner spiritual self, [an Indian’s] true identity” and “in its essence [it] must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world” (Chatterjee 239). According to nationalist discourse “no encroachments by the colonizer must be allowed in the inner sanctum. In the world, imitation of and adaptation to western norms was a necessity; at home, they were tantamount to annihilation of one’s very identity” (Chatterjee 239).

you marry your daughters to Germans!?” (Rushdie MC 42). All of these questions link Aadam’s dismissal of the maulvi to other religious blasphemies. Her children learning the tenets of Islamic faith is a crucial aspect of maintaining the “spiritual essence” of this inner sphere, and Aadam’s removal of the maulvi corrupts this sphere. To her, Aadam has violated these tenets, and as a consequence, she vows to starve him until he brings the maulvi back to teach their children. Instead of giving in, Aadam eats nothing, not even when he is away from the home, and begins to waste away. The Reverend Mother believes she should let him, because his “starvation would be a clear demonstration of the superiority of her idea of the world over his” (Rushdie MC 43). The Reverend Mother’s “idea of the world” is one in which the traditions of historical India are favored over more secular cultural beacons. In fact, this fight between Naseem and Aadam sprung partially from his faith in the Hummingbird, “the founder, chairman, unifier, and moving spirit of the Free Islam Convocation” (Rushdie MC 39). Though Aadam does not identify as a Muslim, he still believes in the Hummingbird, because “[the Hummingbird] is fighting [Aadam’s] fight” (Rushdie MC 39). To her husband, whom Saleem claims is “wracked with ambiguity,” Naseem says, “You have your Hummingbird...but I...have the Call of God” (Rushdie MC 42).

It is this Hummingbird’s death that presents one of the first irruptions of the fantastic in the novel. The Hummingbird has the supernatural ability to hum “without pause” in a way that is “neither musical nor unmusical, but somehow mechanical, the hum of an engine or dynamo...it [is] a hum that could fall low enough to give you toothache, and when it rose to its highest, most feverish pitch, it had the ability of inducing erections” (Rushdie MC 46). The Hummingbird has a supernatural power, one

that is displayed most prominently during his death scene. Saleem says that “sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts. According to legend, then—according to the polished gossip of the ancients at the paan-shop—Mian Abdullah owed his downfall to his purchase, at Agra railway station, of a peacock-feather fan, despite Nadir Khan’s warning about bad luck” (Rushdie MC 47). Nadir Khan, the secretary of Mian Abdullah and a poet, is mirrored closely with Aadam; their faith in the Hummingbird is not motivated from a spiritual place, but is instead motivated by his political leanings. However, Nadir is still a believer in bad luck, and that is a belief that Aadam would repudiate.

Nadir’s belief in bad luck, though, mirrors him with the “ancients,” all of whom would believe not only that certain items could cause good or bad luck but in most of the Indian traditions characteristic of their cultural belief system. In fact, later, Nadir is described as “half-believ[ing]” the rumors about the Rani of Cooch Naheen, the Hummingbird’s patron, whom some believe is a witch because of her ability to speak many languages and because the scholars of whom she is the patron possibly go to bed with her despite her advanced age. The “ancient” men, referred to as the betel-chewers, explain that not only the purchase of the peacock feather fan but the new moon foretells bad luck on the horizon. They say, “These things matter... We have been alive too long, and we know” (Rushdie MC 49). Once again, the generational influence is evident, in that the older men “know” that “these things [the new moon, buying a peacock feather fan] matter” and “bad luck” can be foretold, whereas the Hummingbird, a representative of the younger, more secular, modern Indian, sees no danger.

When the betel-chewers tell the story of the Hummingbird's death, they say that as his assassins closed in upon him,

the Hummingbird's hum became higher...and the assassin's eyes became wide as their members made tents under their robes. Then...the knives began to sing and...Abdullah's humming rose out of the range of our human ears, and was heard by the dogs of the town...[they] turned and ran for the University...*It is well known that this is true.* Everyone in town saw it, except those who were asleep... And know this: suddenly one of the killers' eyes cracked and fell of its socket...and then [the dogs] were everywhere, baba! (Rushdie MC 48-49) (my emphasis).

Saleem follows this tale by saying, "Dogs? Assassins?...If you don't believe me, check. Find out about Mian Abdullah and his Convocations. Discover how we've swept his story under the carpet..." (Rushdie MC 49). Saleem and the betel-chewers recognize that this fantastic tale could be met with disbelief, which is why Saleem urges the listener to "check" on its legitimacy, and why the betel-chewers say "it is well known that this is true" (Rushdie MC 48). They are giving this supernatural, fantastic moment legitimacy by saying that everyone believes it occurred just like this, and that if one doubts that it occurred that way, he or she can check by asking around about it. If, as Todorov claims, the fantastic is characterized initially by "doubt [that is] sustained...between two poles: the existence of the supernatural and a series of rational explanations" (Todorov 5), then Saleem's encouragement to check into the legitimacy of this supernatural tale, and the betel-chewer's insistence that "it is well known" that the tale is true, accounts for the doubt that would be experienced in a listener or reader of this version of events. Furthermore, this moment is an "irruption" of the fantastic because it presents events that

actually occurred in the history of the narrative. But within this version of the events, there are references to how the Hummingbird's supernatural power complicated his assassins' attempts to murder him.

Aadam's beliefs in European-influenced modernity and his rejection of Indian heritage complicate his ability to work with his patients so much that he refers to the beliefs of the Indian people as the "hegemony of superstition" (Rushdie MC 72), and it is through juxtaposing this view—which regards "all things magical" (or fantastic) as superstition—with the view that "all things magical" are an essential part of India's cultural identity that Rushdie creates one of the many cultural hybridities within the novel. Aadam's section is closed out with the marriage of his daughter, Mumtaz, to Ahmed Sinai. As she departs after her wedding, Saleem says that she is

leaving Aadam Aziz behind to dedicate himself to an attempt to fuse the skills of Western and hakimi medicine, an attempt which would gradually wear him down, convincing him that the hegemony of superstition, mumbo-jumbo and all the things magical would never be broken in India, because the hakims refused to co-operate and as he aged and the world became less real he began to doubt his own beliefs, so that by the time he saw God in whom he had never been able to believe or disbelieve he was probably expecting to do so" (Rushdie MC 72).

Aadam began the novel as a hesitantly faithful Kashmiri Muslim. He becomes a secular progressive whose faith rested instead in modern European medicine and the Hummingbird. In his work, he attempted to blend the European medicine in which he believed with the hakimi medicine in which his patients believed, and the resistance he faced was, in his view, hegemonic, an interesting choice of word for Saleem to use. To

call the traditional medicine of Indian hakimis a “hegemony of superstition, mumbo-jumbo, and all things magical” is an ironic subversion of the concept of hegemony. It is in this space where the “hegemony of superstition” meets the Western-influenced modernity with which Aadam identifies that the hybrid identity of what will become Indian modernity begins to take shape. This “hegemony” (Rushdie MC 72) “challenge[s] normative expectations of development and progress,” and it does so by maintaining the spiritual worldview of Naseem in modern times (Bhabha 2). Through the merging of these beliefs in “all things magical” and Aadam’s repudiation of those beliefs, Rushdie is allowing his characters to engage in the “complex on-going negotiation” of the “social articulation of difference” that Bhabha argues must be navigated in order to “authorize cultural hybridities” such as this one. In English-occupied India, Aadam’s Western medicine would be considered the hegemonic power dominating the more “[superstitious], mumbo-jumbo” hakimi medicine. However, the hakimi medicine is the more prevalent, more trusted option for Indian people, and therefore, it holds more power than the Western styles of medicine, which thus makes it the hegemonic power. It might also be that to Aadam, who has been fighting against the practices of India’s past against Tai, Naseem, and his patients, views the traditions of Indian medicine as hegemonic even if they are not truly so. To him, they are the power ruling over him, in the same way that his wife, Naseem, a staunch believer in the traditions of India’s rich cultural, religious, and historical past, rules over him. Regardless, this passage demonstrates Aadam’s view on the dispute between Indian heritage and European modernity, between Indian past and European present (and future, or so he believes), and it is also anticipates Saleem’s generational section, in which Indian modernity will be born. Finally, it foreshadows his

eventual return to his past, both literally and metaphorically, that will occur later in the book. In returning to Kashmir, and to his Muslim faith, he begins to shift his identification with European modernity back to his conception of Indian heritage. However, he only returns to that prior belief when the world has “[become] less real” (Rushdie MC 72) as he ages.

The contention between characters who identify with their heritage, with European-influenced modernity, and with Indian modernity is continued in the next generational section, which focuses on Saleem's parents, Ahmed and Amina—formerly Mumtaz—Sinai. It is in the sections before Saleem's birth that Saleem talks most about the relationship with the English colonizers and the colonized Indian people, because the years leading up to his birth are the waning days of the British empire's presence in India. In the same way that Aadam, Amina's father, tried to push Naseem, Amina's mother, towards a more modern, progressive view of the world, Ahmed tries to push Amina towards accepting a similar view. Like her mother, Amina holds onto her beliefs in her Indian heritage, while Ahmed, like his father-in-law, moves towards progressive, European-influenced modernity. But the most important contention between heritage and modernity in this generational section is not between Amina and Ahmed, but within Amina herself, because it is in Amina herself that the dichotomy between characters' Indian heritage and this European-influenced modernity begins to disintegrate, and Indian modernity begins to take shape. For Amina, instead of religion, like her mother, she believes in prophecy, despite how she “[speaks] with her father's hatred of superstition” (Rushdie MC 77). However, when she is offered “the gift of a prophecy in return for her gift of a life” after she saves Lifafa Das, the owner of a peepshow machine, she ignores

“her memories of her father’s skepticism and of his thumb and forefinger closing around a maulvi’s ear” (Rushdie MC 85) and goes to hear the prophecy about her unborn child.

This prophecy, and the descent into the underworld of Bombay through which Amina must travel in order to hear the prophecy, are irruptions of the fantastic that demonstrate Amina’s near constant hesitation between doubt and belief, and as a result, between her identification with her father’s Western-influenced conception of modernity and her mother’s belief in heritage. As Amina is led through the poverty-stricken bowels of the city, she loses “her city eyes” (Rushdie MC 89). Saleem says that “when you have city eyes you cannot see the invisible people, the men with elephantiasis of the balls, and the beggars in boxcars don’t impinge on you, and the concrete sections of future drainpipes don’t look like dormitories” (Rushdie MC 89). Losing her city eyes allows Amina to see the poor, one of which is a man with a “white face...long eyelashes and a curved patrician nose” (Rushdie MC 89). She is shocked because “begging is not for white people” (Rushdie MC 89), and she is doubly shocked by the fact that this white man is actually a white woman. This woman laments the death of “the European,” her husband, who “walk[ed] through town at night with blood on his shirt, a white man deranged by the coming futility of his kind” (Rushdie MC 90). This foreshadows the departing of the English in India, but the presence of this white woman in this strange, grotesque underworld is a fantastic event to Amina, because, as she says, “begging is not for white people” (Rushdie MC 89). The loss of her “city eyes” alters her gaze, and this alteration is also a fantastic irruption, in that it allows her to break through the plane of her reality and enter into this spectral underworld. It creates “a break in the

acknowledged order” of white Europeans as absolute power, and this erases the “everyday legality” of their rule (Caillois).

Once she arrives at the home of Ramram Seth, Amina finds that he is sitting “cross-legged, six inches above the ground” and Saleem says that he “must admit it: to her shame [his] mother screamed” upon seeing a man hovering off of the ground. This is an irruption of what Todorov calls “the fantastic-uncanny,” and it serves to bolster Amina’s doubt in the legitimacy of Ramram Seth’s abilities, which returns her momentarily to her father’s European-influenced view of the world. The fantastic-uncanny deals with “events that seem supernatural throughout the story [but which] receive a rational explanation at its end” (Todorov 44). The rational explanation is given not at the end of the story but right away: as it turns out, Ramram Seth is not truly floating. After Amina’s “eyes focused...she noticed a little shelf, protruding from the wall” (Rushdie MC 94). Though this fantastic-uncanny moment is resolved as rational, it serves to bolster Amina’s doubt in Ramram’s Seth’s magical abilities. As Todorov points out about the fantastic, in general, and the fantastic-uncanny, specifically, “doubt...is sustained...between two poles: the existence of the supernatural and a series of rational explanation that erode the case for the supernatural” (Todorov 45). Rushdie’s use of the fantastic here problematizes Amina’s identification with heritage or modernity by allowing her to identify with her heritage first, then her father’s modernity, and then revolve back around to her heritage. The fantastic is used to demonstrate that these identifications are never fully settled, that characters can oscillate between them in the same way that characters (and readers) oscillate between a natural and supernatural explanation for the fantastic events in the text. Her dual identification here is another

example of Bhabha's "cultural hybridities" being authorized, and it is in this cultural hybridity that Saleem's generation's postcolonial modernity begins to take shape. Amina will pass this hybrid identification with her mother's conception of Indian heritage to her son, who will then view these supernatural irruptions as a natural part of Indian life in the modern age. However, she will also pass her father's identification with Western-influenced modernity to her son, who will use his grandfather's repudiation of "all things magical" to ease his listeners' doubts about his tale.

Here, Amina's hesitation between the two poles of a supernatural versus a rational explanation for Ramram's floating shifts solely to the latter, and her doubt in his ability to prophesize is strengthened. Therefore, her doubt tips towards the side of a "rational explanation" for the seer, when she says, "Cheap trick...What am I doing here in this God-forsaken place of sleeping vultures and monkey dancers, waiting to be told who knows what foolishness by a guru who levitates sitting on a shelf?" (Rushdie MC 94). Later, Saleem asks "but what was this Ramram? A huckster, a two-chip palmist, a giver of cute forecasts to silly women—or the genuine article, the holder of the keys?" This question allows doubt to be sustained between the "two poles: the supernatural...and the rational explanation" (Todorov 45). Saleem is encouraging the doubt to become belief, and in turn, this hybrid identification between the two poles—Naseem's heritage and Aadam's Western-influenced modernity—comes into full focus. Amina's "habitual self" that is being "relinquished" here is the "self" that identifies with her father's "idea of the world" (Rushdie MC 43) over her mother's. By "enter[ing] a state of mind in which anything might happen and be believed," in which Ramram is not a "huckster" but is "the holder of the keys," Amina shifts from her disbelief in the supernatural to belief, and in

doing so, she embodies this hybrid space between her parents' dueling identifications, and, by extension, between the two poles of Todorov's model on the fantastic.

However, because this prophecy comes true, it is no longer an example of the fantastic-uncanny. This prophecy cannot be dismissed as rational, because the events it foretells do come to pass. As a result, it is an instance of the fantastic in its true form. While the fantastic-uncanny in the text fosters doubt temporarily—for the character and for the reader—only to shift that doubt towards an acceptance of the fantastic event as having a rational, not supernatural explanation, the prophecies in the novel are always examples of the fantastic, because they demand the character and the reader to accept that they are truly instances of the supernatural. The prophecies disrupt the “everyday legality” of the world in which these characters live by challenging their conceptions of what is real and what is not, of what can be explained rationally and what can be explained supernaturally. Ramram gives his prophecy, previewing such events to come as the simultaneous birth of Saleem and his foil, Shiva, when he says that “there will be two heads—but you shall see only one;” the powers Saleem wields and the circumstances by which he comes to wield them when he says “Washing will hide him—voices will guide him;” and his trip through the jungle while suffering from amnesia and the coven of magicians who recover him when he says “jungle will claim him—wizards reclaim him!” (Rushdie MC 96). Ramram even prophesies events in Saleem's life that tie directly to future national events, specifically Indira Gandhi's Emergency, when he warns that “soldiers try him—tyrants will fry him!” (Rushdie MC 96). Moreover, Amina's “relinquished...hold on her habitual self” that “slipp[ed] away from her” (Rushdie MC 95) once again demonstrates the contention between the modern worldview she learned

from her father, who would dismiss this irruption as superstitious mumbo-jumbo and the palmist as a “huckster” (Rushdie MC 95), and the spiritual worldview she learned from her mother, who would believe that Ramram is the “holder of the keys” (Rushdie MC 95). However, this “relinquished...hold on her habitual self,” like the loss of her “city eyes,” allows Amina to see the fantastic event here as real. As she loses her grip on her father’s secular, Eurocentrically modern view of the world, and embraces her mother’s spiritual view of the world, she is able to accept the prophecy as real and true, and as a result, she accepts the fantastic event as being real and true. Once again, this irruption shifting from being an example of the fantastic-uncanny to being a true instance of the fantastic demonstrates that characters never settle fully into identifying with tradition-favoring heritage or Western-favoring modernity. Instead, their identification shifts between tradition, Western modernity, and Eastern modernity, and in doing so, Rushdie’s characters demonstrate their hybrid identities. To remain fixed in either identification would bestow an “essentialist” identity onto these characters, and because Rushdie’s use of the fantastic problematizes any essentialist notion of identity of the national subject, Amina and other characters shift between a supernatural and a natural explanation for the fantastic events in the text and in doing so, they shift between identifying with their conceptions of heritage and modernity. This shifting between identifications foreshadows Saleem’s generational section, in which his conception of Indian modernity will be shaped by his grandmother’s and his mother’s heritage coming to the forefront.

After hearing Ramram’s prophecy, Amina continues to turn completely from disbelief to belief in the fantastic, but she struggles to make her husband believe in it, as well. After returning home from the city, she reads in the newspaper about a contest to

find the child born at midnight on the night of India's Independence, and Amina claims to know that her son will win that contest. She tells her husband Ahmed, and her new proprietor, British-born citizen, William Methwold, that she "just know[s] for sure" and requires that neither "ask her how" she knows (Rushdie MC 110). Ahmed's reaction of disbelief to Amina's certainty is mirrored exactly with Methwold's, which proves his leaning towards British beliefs and away from Indian beliefs. He argues, "Think of the odds against it, Begum" (Rushdie MC 110). Later, Ahmed tells Methwold about Amina's prophecy, "as a cocktail-hour joke," which proves even further how thoroughly he disbelieves her claim to know beyond all doubt that their son will win the contest. In response, Methwold laughs and says, "Woman's intuition—splendid thing, Mrs. S.! But really, you can't expect us to..." (Rushdie MC 110). That these two characters, one British and one Indian, both doubt Amina's prophecy so certainly demonstrates Ahmed's identification with Methwold's belief system. Both Aadam and Ahmed, who identify with European-influenced beliefs more so than with Indian-influenced beliefs, refute any claim not grounded solely in what they deem real, true, and factual. For Aadam, that means hakimi medicine is not a valid form of medical treatment, and for Ahmed, that means belief in prophecy is a "joke" (Rushdie MC 110).

Though Amina claimed originally to believe in her father's European-influenced "idea of of the world," she identifies almost solely with her mother's Indian-influenced "idea of the world" by the middle of this section (Rushdie MC 43). Ramram Seth's prophecy "had sunk deep into her heart" and as a result, she "somehow escaped the subtle magic of Methwold's Estate, remaining uninfected by cocktail-hours, budgerigars, pianolas, and English accents" (Rushdie MC 110). Even while living in Methwold's

Estate, Amina's belief in Ramram's prophecy preserves her link back to her heritage by connecting her back to her mother's worldview. The parallel with Naseem's view of the world is evident when Saleem conjectures that

running deep in the veins of [his] mother, perhaps deeper than she knew, the supernatural conceits of Naseem Aziz had begun to influence her thoughts and behavior—those conceits which persuaded Reverend Mother that aeroplanes were the invention of the devil, and that cameras could steal your soul, and that ghosts were as obvious a part of reality as Paradise, and that it was nothing less than a sin to place certain sanctified ears between one's thumb and forefinger [referring to when Aadam removed the children's maulvi from the house], were now whispering in her daughter's darkling head. 'Even if we're sitting in the middle of all this English garbage,' [Amina] was beginning to think, 'this is still India, and people like Ramram Seth know what they know (Rushdie MC 110).

Not only has Amina now totally completed the shift from her father's secular, European-influenced view of the world to her mother's spiritual, Indian-influenced view of the world, she is able to maintain that belief in the latter while living in what is essentially England-in-miniature within the borders of India. Methwold's Estate is a settlement for English citizens, all of whom are departing now that power in the country is transferring from British hands to Indian hands. Chatterjee argues that "the crucial need [of the Indian people] was to protect, preserve, and strengthen the inner core of the national culture, its spiritual essence" and that 'no encroachments by the colonizer must be allowed in the inner sanctum...[because] at home, they were tantamount to annihilation of one's very identity" (Chatterjee 239). Amina's home is full of the cultural markers of the English—

which Methwold insists must remain there for two months. Chatterjee would say that having her realm overtaken by these cultural markers “[annihilates] [her] very identity” as an Indian woman. However, Amina’s “spiritual essence” is maintained through her belief in the prophecies she has heard and the prophecies she has made; her “spiritual essence” is maintained through her belief in the fantastic. Amina knows that in India, prophecies will be believed, because “people like Ramram Seth know what they know” and that her feeling about her unborn baby being born at the stroke of midnight, which Methwold is quick to call “intuition,” is instead “guaranteed fact” (Rushdie MC 110). For British-born citizens like Methwold, and for those who identify with Western belief systems like Ahmed, Amina’s prophecy is just a silly superstition, but to Amina, who identifies with her Indian heritage because of her mother’s influence, the prophecy is “guaranteed fact” (Rushdie MC 110). Once again, this proves that characters like Amina and Naseem, who privilege their Indian ways of understanding over the British (or, more generally, European) influences they have encountered, believe the irruptions of the fantastic are natural, whereas characters who privilege this Westernized conception of modernity, view the irruptions as superstition. Though most of those identifications certainly shift over the course of the novel, Amina’s belief in the fantastic remains fixed from Ramram’s prophecy onward, just as her mother’s remained fixed for all of the text.

In Aadam’s Western-influenced conception of modernity, and in Amina’s shifting identification with her father’s view of the world over her mother’s and vice versa, Rushdie problematizes the concept of a cohesive Indian nationalist identity. The presence of “chamchas” like Aadam (who appear in *The Satanic Verses* in characters like the appropriately named Saladin Chamcha) complicate the idea of one set Indian identity

remains free of European influence. Timothy Brennan explains that in *Midnight's Children*, "Rushdie adds a theory of collaboration to the portrait of the Anglicised native—one that is central to his understanding of the failure of nationalism in India and Pakistan. At the heart of the theory is the 'chamcha'" (85). *Chamcha* translates literally to "spoons," and they are so named because they are "collaborators under independence who have propped up the post-colonial status quo; even after the departure of the Raj...the Empire continues to grow fat by being spoon-fed" (Brennan 86). Though "the chamcha does not merely utilize the appeal to the nation but epitomises the appeal's oppressive legacy," it "[recasts] the Empire in native form" (88). He also argues that "Rushdie's diagnosis of Indian nationalism requires a fluid and comprehensive meaning of the *chamcha*. In the Methwold community, as elsewhere in the book, religious mission, national myth, and secular demagogy flow into one another in the process of establishing a stable state" (Brennan 91). Ahmed and Aadam may be examples of Chamchas because they favor "secular demagogy" over "religious mission" (Brennan 91). However, "religious mission" and "secular demagogy" work together to create this "stable state," as evidenced by the diverse population of Indian citizens who come to live in Methwold's Estate. The chamcha plays a crucial role in identity formation, according to Brennan. That Amina and Ahmed pass their beliefs in tradition and Euro-centric modernity to Saleem allows him to make use of this "religious mission, national myth, and secular demagogy" as he works to create a "stable state" in telling his story. Methwold's Estate may be the ideal societal form because of these three factors being able to flow together in order to create this "stable state," and as a result, Saleem's quest

for unity may be trying to establish a similarly stable state for the entire Indian population later in the novel.

The final irruption of the fantastic important to Saleem's parents' section demonstrates further that supernatural transformations are a reality of Indian everyday life and must be believed. After his financial assets are frozen, Ahmed tells Amina that "the bastards have shoved [his] balls in an ice-bucket" (Rushdie MC 153) and that their assets have been "frozen, like water" (Rushdie MC 154). Amina believes that Ahmed is speaking hyperbolically until she reaches into his pants and finds that his testicles have frozen over completely. She exclaims, "Oh, my goodness, janum, I thought you were just talking dirty but it's true! So cold, Allah, so coooold, like little round cubes of ice!" (Rushdie MC 154). Saleem claims that "*Such things happen*; after the State froze my father's estate, my mother began to feel [his testicles] growing colder and colder...although she snuggled up tightly when she felt him shiver as the icy fingers of rage and powerlessness spread upwards from his loins, she could no longer bear to stretch out her hand and touch because his little cubes of ice had become too frigid to hold" (Rushdie MC 154) (my emphasis). Once again, Saleem's narrative voice emerges to proclaim that this supernatural transformation did, in fact, occur in reality when he says that "such things happen." This is a similar claim to when Amina says in India people "like Ramram Seth know what they know" (Rushdie MC 110). In India, a bodily transformation that mirrors a physical reality happens and must be believed. This also harkens back to the Hummingbird incident, when Saleem encourages his listeners to "check" that the events truly did occur. When he reiterates that an event truly did occur, when he argues for the factuality of the event, and when he states seemingly nonchalantly

that these fantastic events just “happen,” he is interweaving the fantastic supernatural events with the everyday reality he experiences. He is making them a part of Indian life just as valid and irrefutable as the historical events he includes. Saleem’s proclamations urging the reader (or listener) of his tale to believe that the fantastic events are truly occurring makes him a proxy for Rushdie himself because, as Rushdie says, these fantastic events allow him—and by extension, the reader—to “start getting at the truth in a different way” (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”). So the truth of the prophecy, the powers, and the bodily alterations extends beyond that they are occurring literally and that they disrupt what is “grounded in the real” (“Salman Rushdie: True Stories...”); what they tell the reader about India and Indian people is what reveals the “truth” that Rushdie is trying to convey.

In the third and final generational section, the irruptions of the fantastic serve to further demonstrate the hybrid blending of Saleem’s mother’s and grandmother’s conception of heritage; his father’s and grandfather’s conception of Western-influenced modernity; and the new Indian modernity that is beginning to take shape, except now, the narrative has moved from the pre-Independence era of Saleem’s parents and grandparents into the post-Independence era. Over the course of this final generational section, Saleem maintains his belief in the fantastic events that comprise his story, while Padma, his romantic partner and the listener of his story, oscillates from belief to disbelief and back again. An early irruption of the fantastic occurs when Saleem discovers his telepathic powers, and when he learns that the other children born in the midnight hour exhibit mysterious powers, as well. Saleem first discovers his power after being found hiding in the washing chest by his mother, who smacks him on the side of the head. After the

initial shock of pain, Saleem hears “noise, deafening, manytongued terrifying, *inside [his] head!*” (Rushdie MC 184). He says his power is

Telepathy then: the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostl[ing] for space within my head. In the beginning, when I was content to be an audience—before I began to act—there was a language problem...I understood only a fraction of the things being said within the walls of my skull. Only later, when I began to probe, did I learn that below the surface transmissions—the front of mind stuff which I had originally been picking up...language faded away, and was replaced by universally intelligible thought-forms which far transcended words...beneath the polyglot frenzy in my head, those other precious signals, utterly different from everything else, most of them faint and distant, like far-off drums whose insistent pulsing eventually broke through the fish-market cacophony of my voices...those secret, nocturnal calls, like calling out to like...the unconscious beacons of the children of midnight, signaling nothing more than their existence, transmitting simply ‘I.’ From far to the North, ‘I.’ And the South East West: ‘I.’ ‘I.’ “And I” (Rushdie MC 192-193).

His telepathic power disrupts his otherwise ordinary life by providing a cerebral radio channel through which he can hear the voices of everyone in India, but most importantly it provides a link to the other Midnight’s Children. Saleem claims that through the “fish-market cacophony,” the other children born in the midnight hour are “signaling nothing more than their existence” by proclaiming “I,” but their existence—and their voices proclaiming telepathically to Saleem that they do exist—is another irruption of the fantastic that demonstrates the supernatural interlinking of this new generation of

children. All over India, these children exist, and they wield supernatural powers just as Saleem does. It is here that the hybrid nation begins to take shape. Though the previous generational sections have demonstrated the nation's hybridity, in that characters like Naseem and Amina, who privilege their heritage, live beside Aadam and Ahmed, whose conception of modernity is influenced by the West, it is here that the hybrid nation as Saleem sees it is pulled to the forefront. It is here that the nation is imagined as being constructed from multiple influences and ideas, all of which, Saleem hopes, will unify the nation while at the same time celebrating the differences between members of its population.

Fred Evans demonstrates how this collection of voices problematizes the concept of collective wholes. He argues that "the hybridity of voices helps us escape another sort of one-sidedness" because the "identification of voice with a univocal and universal type of reason or with a vehicle for the 'Same' overlooks what we have found to be most outstanding about the concept of voice—that, from Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children National Conference...' each voice is always shot through with other ones, and their multiplicity is not constricted by an encompassing force. Voices are never pure; they are always dynamically hybrid, a clamor of all in all" (Evans 76). Bakhtin argues that texts are multivoiced, and in *Midnight's Children*, it is the combination of these voices that further problematizes the idea of a cohesive nation, in which the population identifies with a concrete set of values or cultural markers that represent the nation as a whole. Instead, the "singularities" that Bakhtin describes are "intrinsically linked," according to Evans, but they do not ever combine to form one whole cohesive nation. Evans states that "Rushdie...believes that India is in the grip of two forces. On the one hand, there are

Shiva and the oracle of the Widow—her reduction of multiplicity and creative tension to her own homogenous image. On the other, there are the Midnight’s Children National Congress and the dialogic hybridity they represent” (Evans 86). Bakhtin’s concept of monoglossia would apply to the Widow’s “reduction of multiplicity and creative tension to her own homogenous image,” because monoglossia involves the “development of a ‘unitary master language’” and “the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization” (Evans 86). The Widow is Indira Gandhi, about whom it was said in 1977 that “India is Indira and Indira is India” (Ghosh 3341). To centralize the nation’s identity into one figure erases the “multiplicity” of the nation’s subjects by minimizing the crucial differences between them that make the nation—and the national subject—hybrid. *Midnight’s Children* celebrates the multiplicity of voices that comprise the nation, and therefore, the novel presents a heteroglossic view of the nation that stands in direct contrast to Indira’s centralized, homogenized, monoglossic view.

However, Evans also argues that *Midnight’s Children* presents a space between heteroglossia and monoglossia, called the “third principle,” and this principle is “symbolized by the children of midnight” and as a result, “we should affirm the children’s conference . . . as a multivoiced body” (Evans 76). The “third principle,” according to Saleem, rejects “endless duality of masses-and-classes-, capital-and-labor, them-and-us” (Rushdie MC 292), and instead, Saleem argues that the Midnight’s Children “must represent the third principle... [they] must be the force which drives between the horns of the dilemma; for only by being other, by being new, can [the Midnight’s Children] fulfill the promise of our birth” (Rushdie MC 292). Though Saleem is attempting to create unity amongst the Midnight’s Children, he is not doing so by

encouraging them to unify behind his homogenous image. Instead, he is celebrating their heteroglossic, “multivoiced” body by encouraging them to disregard “duality” and instead, be “other” and “new” (Rushdie MC 292). Part of being “other” and “new” is accepting the multiplicity of voices, and the “articulation of difference” that those voices represent (Bhabha 2). This creates the nation as heteroglossic and hybrid, and this version of the nation stands in direct contrast to Indira Gandhi’s monoglossic and centralized view.

The heteroglot of voices serve to problematize the concept of a unified nation further. Sabrina Hassumani argues that “even though Saleem tells us that his quest throughout the novel is for ‘Centrality’ and ‘Meaning,’ an ongoing alternative narrative voice in the text reveals ‘identity’ to be a construct and ‘meaning’ to be available only in versions” (31). Bakhtin would agree with this claim, because he argues that society is “multivoiced,” so there would be multiple “versions” of meaning in the text with no one true master voice—not even Saleem’s—constituting the one true master meaning. The “cacophony” serves to disrupt the idea that there can be one unified central voice, because to have so many voices “proclaiming ‘I’” (Rushdie MC 193) suggests individual, not collective, identity, and yet the voices are speaking together in Saleem’s mind, which presents them as a collective whole. Though Saleem yearns for this “cacophony” to remain whole, the threat of “fracturing” throughout the novel is felt most by Saleem. It is the eventual fracturing of Saleem’s body that destroys this hope of the unified nation.

The voices in Saleem’s head are perhaps the most important irruption of the fantastic in terms of identity formation in *Midnight’s Children*, because they constitute this “third principle.” If the children’s conference is meant to be the truest representation

of society in the text, then the fantastic is used to present this true representation. If the fantastic is meant to preserve a link back to tradition—and Saleem’s proclamations that “such things happen,” and Amina’s proclamation that “people like Ramram Seth know what they know” because it “is still India” (Rushdie MC 110) suggest that the fantastic is a marker of Indian cultural identity—then Rushdie’s use of a fantastic irruption in Saleem’s telepathic power to present this “third space” further clarifies belief in the supernatural as demonstrating a character’s identification with his or her heritage. It further clarifies the role the fantastic plays in identity-formation for both individual characters and the nation as a whole by presenting hybrid national identity as unified, but also heteroglossic in its presentation of multiple diverse voices through Saleem’s telepathic power. It demonstrates how identity-formation in the nation is influenced by conceptions of heritage that accept the fantastic as well as European-influenced conceptions of modernity that reject it, and how hesitating between acceptance or rejection of a fantastic event reflects the hybrid nature of identity in the modern national subject.

Andrew Gaedtke, in his article, “Halluci-Nation: Mental Illness, Modernity, And Metaphoricity In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*,” argues that “*Midnight's Children* represents this paranoid construction of precarious boundaries between inside and outside as not merely the symptom of a single paranoiac; it is also the project of a newly independent nation attempting and failing, like other nations before and after it to distinguish between what will have been native and what must be regarded as foreign” (723). The consideration of what is native versus what is foreign reflects the struggle between the two poles of the fantastic, doubt and belief, and natural versus supernatural

explanations for the irruptions of the fantastic in the text. Gaedtke writes that “fantastical or mythic elements are sometimes represented as antimodern reversions or resistances to the supposedly ‘progressive’ impulse of a modernity marked by a realist narrative style” (Gaedtke 712). In “Saleem’s shifting accounts of his auditory hallucinations,” there is a “convergence of the secular and religious, or modern and premodern” (Gaedtke 720), and that “his transformation into a ‘supernatural ham radio’...constitutes a synthesis of the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the technological (Gaedtke 720). Saleem’s power is a blending of modernity and “pre-modernity” as Gaedtke says, so it is also a blending of modernity and heritage. If religion provides one link back to heritage for characters like Naseem, and by extension, her daughter, Amina, then Saleem’s proclamations that he may be “divinely chosen” (Gaedtke 720) provide a link to heritage. His blending of “Hindu mythology” and technology (when he calls himself All India Radio, which is “the nation’s primary broadcasting service”) presents his power as a hybrid between heritage and modernity. However, this modernity is solely Indian, in that it is India’s technological advancement in the form of All India Radio, not a technological advancement related to the British. In Saleem’s generational section, the definition of modernity begins to shift.

Through the voices of the Indian population Saleem quickly discovers that he can act as a binding force between all the children, and thus starts the Midnight’s Children Conference. In regards to their birth, and to the strange powers they possess, Saleem says that “through some freak biology, or perhaps owing to some preternatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence...[the Midnight’s Children were] endowed with features, talents, or faculties which can only be described as miraculous”

(Rushdie MC 224). Saleem, in his “one moment of fancy,” believes that “history...had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time,” which links these irruptions of the fantastic almost perfectly to both heritage and modernity. History, or heritage, now “arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise” anticipates a future in which the supernatural will be believed and accepted. These children, with their supernatural powers, will “genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time,” but their difference is born from this acceptance of the fantastic in everyday life that those who identify with their heritage may believe. In short, this link between belief in the supernatural and Indian heritage will be maintained in post-Independence India, so the irruption of the powers these children wield represent how the new generation of Indian citizens will carry this link to the rich belief systems of India’s heritage into the future, thus making it modern. This is where Saleem’s vision of postcolonial modernity is being created. Satya P. Mohanty claims that “colonized people defined modernity for their times through their complexly mediated critiques of their own social traditions, both the old and the newly invented ones,” and now that India is no longer a colonized nation, these the “old” “social traditions,” which Naseem wished to preserve and in which Amina came to believe, are being preserved to become a “newly invented” “social tradition” that is wholly modern in post-Independence India.

Saleem uses scientific terms to explain the supernatural occurrence of the Midnight’s Children Conference. In doing so, he merges India’s scientific modernity and India’s magical heritage. Once again, Saleem accounts for any disbelief the listener of his story might be experiencing by saying “to anyone whose personal cast of mind is too

inflexible to accept these facts...: That's how it was; there can be no retreat from the truth. I shall just have to shoulder the burden of the doubter's disbelief" (Rushdie MC 226). The most important doubter within the story is Padma, to whom Saleem is telling his story as he writes it down. When he tries to express how he is "linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what [their] (admirably modern) scientists might term 'modes of connection' composed of dualistically-combined configurations' of the two pairs of opposed adverbs above," he notes that Padma is experiencing "unscientific bewilderment" in response to his claim. In trying to appeal to Padma using scientific jargon, she begins to doubt the more fantastic elements of his tale. His scientific language here, though Padma clearly understands what he is saying, has shifted her from belief to disbelief, because he is merging the fantastic elements of their heritage with the language of modernity. Padma oscillates between belief and disbelief, depending on exactly what *and how* Saleem is telling her. When he tells Padma that Naseem "began to dream her daughters' dreams," Padma "accepts this without blinking" (Rushdie MC 58). But after he tells her about his link to history using this highly scientific language, she thinks Saleem must be ill, saying, "You are sick; what have you said?" (Rushdie MC 230). This scientific language is an example of Indian modernity, and yet using it to describe these fantastic irruptions disrupts Padma's ability to believe what Saleem is saying. In this way, heritage and modernity, though both now Indian, struggle to co-exist as Saleem tells his tale. Though there are certainly versions of Indian modernity that embraced scientific, technological language, as Saleem demonstrates by his use of such language, Padma here represents the version of modernity that distrusts such language. Padma's conception of Indian modernity is at

odds with Saleem's conception of Indian modernity, which further demonstrates how no one definition of Indian modernity exists.

In response to Padma's doubt about the powers of the midnight's children and about his own link to history, Saleem admonishes both Padma and the general reader "not to make the mistake of dismissing what [he has] unveiled as mere delirium; or even as the insanely exaggerated fantasies of a lonely, ugly child [as he has] stated before that [he is] not speaking metaphorically; what [he has] just written (and read aloud to stunned Padma) is nothing less than the literal, by-the-hairs-of-[his]-mother's-head truth" (Rushdie MC 230). Once again, Saleem is accounting for the doubt either Padma or the reader of his story might be experiencing. This doubt is consistent with the first and second criteria in Todorov's definition of a fantastic text, which states that the reader will experience "[hesitation] between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described" and that "this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time, the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work" (Todorov 33). Saleem accounts for this doubt and debunks it with his claim that despite the fantastic nature of the events he is describing, everything that is happening is the "literal...truth" (Rushdie MC 230).

This doubt that Saleem tries to counter throughout the novel is crucial to determining what is real in the text. Abraham P. Abraham argues that

Rushdie's novel operates on several different levels of reality, including the political, the personal and the factual. Each of these provides a lens through which one could see the story in question. Each lens will provide a different vision, but each of those visions remains valid in its own right...Legitimacy lies not in facts, but in the

willingness and ability to believe. Saleem emphasizes this point when he continually defends the validity of his fantastical narrative to Padma, his skeptical listener.

Through the fantastic, the realistic makes its voice heard” (21-22).

Saleem’s summation of exactly what constitutes reality agrees with this last claim. His constant reminders to “check” that the stories he is telling occurred this way and that “such things happen” support Abraham’s claim that “legitimacy lies not in facts but in the willingness and ability to believe” (Abraham 22). If Saleem can get Padma to push past her doubt to believe the fantastic events in his story, the “realistic [will] make its voice heard” (Abraham 22). In one of the most important passages in the novel, Saleem says that

Reality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real. A thousand and one children were born; there were a thousand and one possibilities which had never been present in one place at one time before; and there were a thousand and one dead ends. *Midnight’s children* can be made to represent many things, according to your point of view; they can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of modernizing, twentieth century economy; or as the true hope of freedom, which is now forever extinguished; but what they must not become is the bizarre creation of a rambling diseased mind (Rushdie 230).

For a character constantly trying to remove doubt that the supernatural occurrences in his narrative truly did occur, Saleem’s claim that “reality can have metaphorical content” seems to contradict what he has argued thus far in his tale (Rushdie MC 230). It also complicates the central thesis of this analysis by positing that the events unfolding here

can be both real and metaphorical. However, Saleem has also said that everything he is saying is the “literal” truth, which means that the fantastic event did truly occur and is therefore not *only* metaphorical. Saleem’s point demonstrates that each of these events, though they are physically occurring, are metaphorical representations of a true, real situation. For instance, when Ahmed’s testicles freeze, it is because the banks have “frozen” his assets. That, in turn, leads his wife to begin betting on horse racing, which brings money into the household. The metaphorical meaning behind their freezing is what tells us the truth, though the reader must conjecture exactly what that metaphorical meaning is. It could be that with his money frozen, and his wife now taking on the role of breadwinner, Ahmed has been emasculated, so his testicles, a physical representation of his manhood, have frozen, making him as physically impotent as he is emotionally. The Hummingbird’s hum may literally have broken a man’s glass eye and called all the dogs in the street to defend him, but the metaphorical reasoning behind the Hummingbird’s final attack is what gives his attack meaning. That all of his assailants died with him may symbolize that his death will deal damage to his enemies even after he is gone. The supernatural powers that the Midnight’s Children possess, though they truly do possess those powers, represent the hopes for the new nation pinned onto this new generation of children. Because they will never know a colonized India, the possibilities for what these children might accomplish for the new country are so boundless that they traverse the “real” and enter supernatural territory, what Saleem says is “the true hope of freedom” (Rushdie MC 230). Because the colonialists will no longer occupy their country, there will be no ruling body to renounce their supernatural gifts as unreal. Their “supernatural” gifts will be considered natural as Saleem’s conception of India’s heritage returns to the

forefront to become its future, to become modern. Or, as Saleem says, “[the Midnight’s Children] can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of modernizing, twentieth century economy” (Rushdie MC 230). But this “defeat” is where the contention is complicated to an even higher degree: if the Midnight’s Children are meant to represent the “last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in [their] myth-ridden nation” (Rushdie MC 230), then they are the final round of believers in the Indian worldview of Naseem and Amina. Though Saleem is arguing that his mother’s and grandmother’s worldview could become modern in the new nation, there is a chance that after them, the nation will be comprised of citizens who believe solely in the European-influenced worldview of Aadam and Ahmed, or the nation may be comprised solely of Nehruvian modernists. Indian modernity in the Nehruvian sense envisioned a nation unified by “secular socialism” and “industrialization” (Morton 15), not by a shared belief in the traditions of the past. Citizens who identify with either of those conceptions of modernity will be the ones who view the “modernizing, twentieth century economy” as favorable to the “myth-ridden” past. They will finally have traded Naseem’s, Amina’s, and Saleem’s definitions of heritage for Aadam and Ahmed’s, or Nehru’s definition of modernity entirely. Without a belief in heritage, the nation will repudiate instances of the fantastic that, up until now, have provided a means to predict the future through prophecy and powers that represent the endless possibilities of that future. This, in turn, will repress the hybrid combination of Naseem’s, Amina’s, and Saleem’s views on the place of heritage in modern society, and in repressing that, the multiple voices of the nation will be silenced.

The trade of Naseem's, Amina's, and Saleem's definition of heritage for Aadam's and Ahmed's definition of modernity is never final, however. Just when it seems that Aadam's and Ahmed's or Nehru's definitions of modernity have been accepted wholly by the citizens of India, the heritage of the supernatural-as-natural re-emerges. After Saleem slices open his finger and, upon needing a relative to provide a blood transfusion, learns his parents are not his parents, the past comes into the present, and as a result, the supernatural is believed and feared. A woman tells Saleem and his uncle, Hanif, that she saw the "pierced feet" of the statue of Jesus bleeding on Good Friday. She is very distraught, asking "why these old things can't stay dead and not plague honest folks?" (Rushdie MC 281). Saleem says that though his uncle "roared with laughter" in response to this question, he, meaning Saleem,

remain[s] today half convinced that in that time of accelerated events and diseased hours the past of India rose up to confound her present; the new-born, secular state was being given an awesome reminder of its fabulous antiquity, in which democracy and votes for women were irrelevant...so that people were seized by atavistic old ways, their old regionalist loyalties and prejudices, and the body politic began to crack" (Rushdie MC 281).

It is important to note that Hanif, who "[roars] with laughter" in response to the woman's fantastic story, is a "the only realistic filmmaker working in the Bombay film industry" (Rushdie MC 237). His effort to make realistic films to offset the Indian cinematic epics affiliates him with this new modernity that denies its past. Saleem, however, is aware of what this woman's proclamation means. Since this is at least ten years after the birth of newly independent India, when, according to Saleem, the "last throw of everything

antiquated and retrogressive in [their] myth-ridden nation” (Rushdie MC 230) should have been effectively erased in favor of “modernity,” it is jarring to this woman that the “atavistic old ways,” as Saleem calls them, have returned to “plague honest folks” (Rushdie MC 281). This “new-born secular state” is an example of Nehruvian-era modernity, and though this modernity may be preferable to the European-influenced modernity in that this modernity is the by-product of the newly independent Indian government, it still requires a renunciation of the “atavistic old ways” of India’s past. If Morton is right, and Rushdie is criticizing this Nehruvian vision of modern India “in order to imagine the conditions of possibility for a radical democratic transformation in South Asian society, rather than simply announcing the failure of India’s national independence” (pg), then he is using the fantastic to do so. Characters who believe in the “atavistic old ways” of India’s heritage also accept these irruptions of the fantastic as real, while characters who identify with a certain Nehruvian version of Indian modernity deny those events as truly occurring.

The rising-up of India’s past drives the most jarring irruption of the fantastic at the end of the novel. After telling her his story, Padma and Saleem get married. As they are leaving the ceremony, the cracks that Saleem has been claiming are appearing in his skin finally rupture, at least in his prophecy. He claims that he must “write the future as he has written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of a prophet” (Rushdie MC 532). He says he and Padma will drive south, to the train station where he will be swallowed by the crowds. He will be “alone in the vastness of the numbers, the numbers marching one two three” (Rushdie MC 532). He says

I will see familiar faces in the crowd, they are all here, my grandfather Aadam and his wife Naseem, Alia and Mustapha and Hanif and Emerald, and Amina who was Mumtaz...now I see other figures in the crowd, the terrifying figure of a war-hero with lethal knees, who has found out how I cheated him of his birthright, he is pushing towards me through the crowd which is now wholly composed of familiar faces... Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust just as, in all good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace (Rushdie MC 532).

Many of the irruptions of the fantastic in this book have been prophecies, but this particular prophecy is the most significant because in it, heritage and all version of modernity—both Eurocentric and Indian—literally and metaphorically meet, and it is in their meeting that the trajectory of the new hybrid nation is foretold. The ghosts Saleem sees in the crowd are truly there, but the metaphorical reasoning behind their return is what matters. The ghosts represent the generational contentions between heritage, European-influenced modernity, and the “alternative modernity” of India’s new nation, in this moment when heritage is definitively “trample[d]” out of existence. Though the struggle between “everything antiquated and retrogressive in [their] myth-ridden nation” and the “modernizing, twentieth century economy” has raged through the colonialist

period of Aadam and Naseem, the pre-and-early-Independence period of Ahmed and Amina, and even in post-Independence India, the former has finally been lost in this “tramp[ing]” of the Midnight’s Children. If the children were meant to be the “true hope of freedom,” Saleem is right that in their “tramp[ing]” that hope “is now forever extinguished” (Rushdie MC 281). Saleem and the other children are being “trampled into voiceless dust.” This silence is most dangerous for India, because the children, with their supernatural powers, contain within them Indian heritage and Indian modernity. Their fantastic, supernatural abilities represent the “myths” of the past, and the powers themselves metaphorically represent the possibilities for the future of the nation. For Saleem, especially, to be trampled represents the vessel of Indian history being reduced to “voiceless dust,” and for the vessel of history to be silenced means that the people will forever forget their past. Because Saleem also contains within him the power to prophesize, when he is trampled, the people will lose their ability to know the future. Both poles of the struggle between Indian heritage and Indian modernity are effectively lost, and the nation is adrift somewhere far removed from either. The struggle between belief and disbelief in the fantastic will shift solely to disbelief in this world without the Midnight’s Children, and in that disbelief, the link to India’s cultural heritage will be lost to the doubt shaped by the influence of European modernity, and by the new Indian modernity shaped first by Nehruvian politics and later by Indira Gandhi. The promise of a future that is proudly Indian but that is also a proud hybrid combination of multiple influences and histories is lost as the children, with their powers that represent the infinite possibilities for the nation, are trampled. The promise of the multiple “view[s] of the world” that have been presented throughout the novel—and which, when combined,

comprise the nation's "cultural hybridities" that Bhabha describes—has been erased. Without these multiple ways of believing combined into a whole, Saleem believes, the nation, like his body, will be "trample[d]" (Rushdie MC 532).

Rushdie says that though Saleem's story "does lead him to despair," because "the story is told in a manner designed to echo, as closely as [Rushdie's] abilities allowed, the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration... the narrative constantly throws up new stories [and] . . . 'teems' (Rushdie qtd. in Ashcroft 14). Ashcroft argues that "Saleem's tragedy is of course the tragedy of the post-colonial nation [but] it is also the tragedy of the idea of the bordered nation itself, the very concept of a bounded utopian space within which a diverse people could come together as one" (Ashcroft 14). The idea of unity in the nation is challenged here by Saleem's ending, because Saleem's ultimate goal was to create a unified narrative, and he has been "trampled into dust."

Sabrina Hassumani writes that the ending of the novel "is not really an ending because it has yet to occur" (45). In ending his novel this way, Rushdie is "subvert[ing] closure—which is the hallmark of the modern novel—and instead gives us an open text" and it is this "open-ended finale [that] further highlights the idea of hybridity: by not giving us a definite ending, Rushdie leaves the door open for multiple alternatives. And just as he refuses to essentialize any one genre in this text, he refuses to essentialize the ending as well" (45). The fantastic is but one genre in *Midnight's Children*, and it certainly does not "essentialize" Indian identities, because, as Hassuman argues, "the implication [of Saleem's proclamation that 'there are as many versions of India as there are Indians'] is that there are no absolute versions and that, in fact, all versions are constructs [and] 'India' is revealed to be a myth along with the other popular myths of the

day: 'money' and 'god'" (46). These constructs, when used to classify character reactions to the irruptions of the fantastic in the text, help us chart the characters' fluctuations in identification with many versions of heritage and modernity. The fantastic is used to disrupt any essentialist version of national identity that demands a concrete definition of heritage or modernity be created. As characters oscillate between the poles of Todorov's schema of the fantastic, as they hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation for the event, they reflect the hybrid nature of their identity as individuals and the nation's identity as a whole.

Chapter II: The Satanic Verses

The Satanic Verses begins with an irruption of the fantastic: Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, two of the biggest stars of Indian cinema, are falling from the sky after the terrorist-hijacked plane on which they were flying explodes. They “[fall] from a great height, twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without benefit of parachutes or wings, out of a clear sky” (Rushdie TSV 3). As they fall, they are surrounded by the remnants of the “migrants aboard” described as

quite a few wives who had been grilled by reasonable, doing-their-job officials about the length of and distinguishing moles upon their husbands’ genitalia, a sufficiency of children upon whose legitimacy the British government had cast its ever-reasonable doubts—mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed off selves, severed mother tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home* (Rushdie TSV 4-5).

This airplane explosion is the site of an abruptly aborted migration, as evidenced by the narrator’s descriptions of the falling debris. The debris, which could have been described generically and gruesomely as containing the falling bodies of the airplane’s passengers, is instead imbued with significant political overtones, including the questions surrounding the “legitimacy” of migrant children as British citizens. The other “remnants” described as “equally fragmented [and] equally absurd” are all lost pieces of the migrant, here represented literally but given higher significance once again in their metaphorical meaning. The “sloughed off selves” could literally mean the falling dead

bodies devoid of a soul, but the metaphorical meaning is the identities forged in the migrant's home country being erased in favor of an identity befitting the values of the country to which the migrant is traveling. Though the "severed mother tongues" may in fact be falling from the sky after the bodies containing them were blasted apart by the explosion, the metaphorical meaning is the loss of the home country's language that must be traded for the language of the migrant's new country. Finally, and most significantly, the loss of the words "*land, belonging, [and] home*" represents the dislocation of national identity as the "*land*" is abandoned, and thusly the migrant no longer "*belong[s]*" to the land he or she once called "*home*" (Rushdie TSV 5).

Furthermore, the air through which these migrants enter England is described as the "soft, imperceptible field which had been made possible by the century and which, thereafter, made the century possible, becoming one of its defining locations, the place of movement and of war, the planet-shrinker and power-vacuum, most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic—because when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible" (Rushdie MC 5). Saladin and Gibreel are here traveling through the space of "movement and of war" and it is in that "metamorphic" space that they begin to mutate. In this "transitory zone," they transition from citizens of India to immigrants of England, despite that Saladin, at least, identifies more as a citizen of England than a citizen of India. Their unconventional means of entering the country, through the "soft, imperceptible field" of the air, has made them not dissimilar to migrants rowing to English shores; both spaces function as unconventional entry points and as "transitory zones" for the migrant, in which the identity formed in the country of origin is "sloughed off," and a new identity begins to take shape.

Gillian Gane, in her article, “Migrancy, The Cosmopolitan Intellectual and the Global City” refers to this air-space through which Saladin and Gibreel fall as a “charged and transformative site, simultaneously empty and dense with meaning” (19). The “air-space” as the setting for Saladin and Gibreel’s transformation is fitting, according to Gane, because “Rushdie shows a sharp awareness of how air-space is implicated in globalization and postmodernity—air space as the twentieth-century theatre of war, air travel as distance-erasing planet-shrinker,’ and, related to this, the discontinuities perceived by those who fly great distances; on the other hand, he mythicizes air-space as a zone of illusions and metamorphoses where ‘anything becomes possible’” (Gane 19). As for the descriptions of the pieces of the migrant that fall from the air, Gane writes that “the catalog of the debris of the migrant soul defines a negative baggage, so to speak, enumerating what has been lost, broken, left behind, forgotten; it is a litany of loss, disruption, and discontinuity. Migration is not only the birth of a new self, but the death of an old one” (Gane 23). Though Gane argues that the “birth of a new self” is also the “death of an old one,” the characters’ “old [selves]” never fully die in Rushdie’s novels. It is because their old Indian selves live alongside their new English migrant selves that they become hybrid. Though the descriptions of the falling debris certainly “[enumerate] what has been lost, broken, [and] left behind” by the migrant, these items have certainly not been “forgotten” by Saladin and Gibreel, who, after landing on the beach, remember their “old [selves]” (Gane 23) completely.

Throughout this fantastic irruption, as Gibreel and Saladin fall through the air, they shout at one another, and the narrative voice takes into account that the reader may be experiencing doubt. He says, “Let’s face it: it was impossible for them to have heard

one another, much less conversed and competed thus in song. Accelerating towards the planet, atmosphere roaring around them, how could they? But let's face this, too: they did" (Rushdie TSV 6). In fact, the narrator repeatedly asks questions throughout this opening chapter designed to interrogate the doubt the reader might be experiencing. He asks, "how does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made? How does it survive, extreme and dangerous as it is? What compromises, what deals, what betrayals of its secret nature must it make to stave off the wrecking crew, the exterminating angel? The guillotine? Is birth always a fall? Do angels have wings? Can men fly?" (Rushdie TSV 8). Because doubt is a crucial part of a supernatural event functioning as an instance of the fantastic per Todorov's theory, these questions prove that this fall through the sky is a fantastic moment in the text. They also further the question of metamorphosis, and introduce the concept of "newness," which is, in itself, an irruption of the fantastic. The metamorphoses experienced by Gibreel and Saladin, supernatural though they may be, are an example of this "newness com[ing] into the world" (Rushdie TSV 6). The narrator is asking the reader to consider the origin of newness, and this question constructs a framework of analysis that begins by doubting the "newness" that Gibreel and Saladin are bringing in to the world, only to accept, through witnessing the transformations of Gibreel and Saladin, the birth of that newness.

Even in this scene, Saladin and Gibreel's reactions to the fantastic event are starkly opposite. While Gibreel accepts their fall joyfully, Saladin is more anxious, unaccepting, and finally, bitter. Gibreel, singing, dancing, and swimming through the air, is exclaiming, "Proper London, bhai! Here we come! Those bastards down there won't know what hit them. Meteor or lightning or vengeance of God. Out of thin air, baby"

(Rushdie TSV 4). Meanwhile, Saladin is falling “down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal” and, in response to Gibreel’s theatrics while falling, he “feel[s] a low agitation for [Gibreel’s] refusal to fall in plain fashion” (Rushdie TSV 5). Their falling styles are contrasted further, in that “Saladin nosedived while Farishta embraced air, hugging it with his arms and legs, a flailing overwrought actor without techniques of restraint” (Rushdie TSV 5). Their contrasted falling styles mirror the later stances they take on the fantastic irruption of their angelic and demonic transformations: Gibreel leans into the fall—and to the transformation—entirely, at least at first, accepting it without a fight and seemingly without a care, whereas Saladin experiences fear and doubt as he plummets towards Earth—the same fear and doubt he will feel in response to his transformation. He also experiences irritation that Gibreel is not falling the same way. Falling “in plain fashion” may refer solely to the position in which they are falling, so in this case, Gibreel’s “embrac[ing] of the air” is what causes Saladin’s irritation. But it could also be that Gibreel’s refusal to fall fearfully, to experience a reasonable, rational reaction to their impending demise is exacerbating Saladin’s irritation. Here, Saladin is reacting to his fall as most would, while Gibreel is reacting bizarrely.

As they fall, Gibreel experiences an irruption of the fantastic only he can see when the ghost of his former lover, Rekha Merchant, comes floating by on a magic carpet. As they are falling through “the hole that went to Wonderland” clasped together in a hug (Rushdie TSV 7), both see “a succession of cloudforms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, gods into bulls, women into spiders, men into wolves. Hybrid cloud creatures [that press] in upon them, gigantic flowers with human breasts dangling from

fleshy stalks, winged cats, [and] centaurs” (Rushdie TSV 7). As he is falling, Saladin begins to shift into accepting the fantastic event unfolding around him, as evidenced when he says that “in his semi-consciousness [he] 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 [Gibreel] whose head nestled now between his legs and whose legs were wrapped around his long patrician neck” (Rushdie TSV 7). It is here as they transform into one and back again that hybridity is first named. Their hybridity is the result of their physical conjoining resulting in Saladin’s belief that their two selves have become one. Now that he and Gibreel are merged in an embrace, Saladin is beginning to adopt Gibreel’s view of their fall, meaning that he is beginning to recognize the fantastic nature of it and thusly allow himself to be “seize[d]” by notions he would, only moments earlier, have dismissed as ridiculous. This physical merging of his and Gibreel’s bodies in an embrace has made him one with Gibreel, and that has allowed him to adopt Gibreel’s view on the fall, however temporarily. They are described later as falling through “the transformation of the clouds...and there was a fluidity, an indistinctness, at the edges of them” (Rushdie TSV 8). Saladin and Gibreel are merged into one form here, and even if Saladin cannot see Rekha Merchant, that is not because he does not believe that she is there, and is repudiating this fantastic irruption. Instead, it is because, as Rekha says, “[she] is for [Gibreel’s] eyes only” (Rushdie TSV 7). Then, as they fall, Saladin randomly urges Gibreel to fly and to sing as a means of powering his flight, and it is only because he does so that they make it safely to the English shore.

Saladin’s doubt returns after he is firmly planted on the ground. As he was falling, “he [had] felt his heart being gripped by a force so implacable that he understood it was

impossible for him to die [and] afterwards, when his feet were once more firmly planted on the ground, he would begin to doubt this, to ascribe the implausibilities of his transit to the scrambling of his perceptions by the blast and to attribute his survival, his and Gibreel's to blind, dumb luck" (Rushdie TSV 9). Saladin began the fall trying to fight that it was truly happening, but as he fell, he "transform[ed]" (Rushdie TSV 7) once he was locked in an embrace with Gibreel, but now that they have reached the ground, he doubts the feeling of certainty he felt while in the air that he would survive and dismisses their survival as "blind dumb luck" (Rushdie TSV 9). This suggests that in that space of metamorphosis and change, neither locked into their post-fall identities permanently. Instead, they interchanged. Their rapid switch between accepting the fall and, in Gibreel's case, the appearance of his deceased lover, as either truly happening or simply being imagined proves how in that space of transformation, their doubt or lack thereof, which will become a crucial part of their identity formation in Britain, is as "insecure and transitory" as the air through which they had to fall in order to experience these rapid shifts between the two (Rushdie TSV 5).

Saladin shifts back to disbelief because he rationalizes the feeling of certainty he experienced during the fall. He says he had no doubt that the feeling of certainty was the will to live, unadulterated, irresistible, pure, and the first thing it did was inform him that it wanted nothing to do with his pathetic personality...it intended to bypass all of that, and he found himself surrendering to it...as if he were a bystander in his own mind, in his own body, because it began in the center of his body, turning his blood to iron, changing his flesh to steel, except that it also felt like a fist that enveloped him outside, holding him in a way that was both unbearably tight and

intolerably gentle; until finally it had conquered him totally and could work his mouth, fingers, whatever it chose (Rushdie TSV 9).

Gibreel, on the other hand, “never repudiated the miracle” of their survival, because “unlike Chamcha, who tried to reason it out of existence, he never stopped saying that the gazal had been celestial, that without the song [which propelled through the air], the flapping [of his arms] would have been for nothing, and without the flapping it was a sure thing that they would hit the waves like rocks or what and simply burst into pieces on making contact with the taut drum of the sea. Whereas instead they began to slow down” (Rushdie TSV 10). Once they are found, they discover they are the only survivors of the air disaster, and Gibreel, described as “the more voluble of the two” tells their rescuers “in his wild ramblings that they had walked upon the water, that the waves had born them gently in to shore” while Saladin says merely, “God we were so lucky... How lucky can you get?” (Rushdie TSV 10). Gibreel expresses out loud the version of the story that, to their rescuers, is fantastic to the point of absurdity. Saladin expresses a more reasonable explanation, one that their rescuers would be more likely to believe. He has completely returned to the side of doubt, choosing to believe that it was mere luck, not a miracle, that saved his and Gibreel’s lives. Gibreel, on the other hand, accepts the miracle, and thus, accepts that this was a supernaturally driven event. In this contention, it is evident that luck is grounded in the real, while miracles remain in the realm of the fantastic.

The omniscient narrator makes an appearance here when he says, “I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and –potence, I’m making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope. Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed” (Rushdie TSV 10). Here, the narrator is mirroring

Saleem's role in *Midnight's Children*: he is assuring a skeptical listener that this fantastic event did, in fact, truly occur. He is eliminating doubt. Then, the narrator goes on to ask more questions designed to further that proclamation that the event is truthful. He asks, "Which [Gibreel or Saladin] was the miracle worker? Of what type—angelic, satanic—was Farishta's song?" and then he asks "Who am I?" before answering, "Let's put it this way: I am the one with the best tunes" (Rushdie TSV 10). These questions serve to foreshadow explanations that will come later, and also to address skepticism about the validity of this narrative voice. Though proclaiming that he is "the one with the best tunes" does not necessarily denote authority or inspire trust, since this narrator is the definitive voice eliminating doubt about these fantastic events, the reader must take him at his word.

When they are discovered on the beach by Rosa Diamond, an eighty-eight year old woman who lives on the coast and waits expectantly for ghosts of England's long-ago wars, Gibreel is experiencing "pure delight" and urging Saladin to "rise 'n' shine [so they can] take this place by storm!" (Rushdie TSV 135), while Saladin is lying in the sand weeping. He is "full of questions" asking, "Did we truly...with [Gibreel's] hands flapping, and then the waters, you don't mean to tell me we *actually*, like in the movies...so that we could, across the ocean-floor, it never happened, it couldn't have, but if not then how, or did we in some way, escorted by mermaids, the sea passing through us as if we were fish or ghosts, was that the truth, yes or no" (Rushdie TSV 136). Despite how Saladin is once again questioning how the events just occurred, while Gibreel simply accepts that they have occurred and does not question how, he is considering fantastical reasons. He wonders if they were "escorted by mermaids" or if the "sea passed through

them as if they were fish or ghosts” (Rushdie TSV 136). However, the explanations he puts forward, fantastic though they may be, are interspersed with frequent reminders to himself that none of them are true, because it all “never happened, it couldn’t have” (Rushdie TSV 136). In fact, once Saladin opens his eyes “the questions acquired the indistinctness of dreams, so that he could no longer grasp them” (Rushdie TSV 136). While Gibreel is accepting their fall and survival wholly, Saladin is questioning how it could be possible. Gibreel believes the fantastic event while Saladin doubts it.

Why Gibreel becomes the archangel and Saladin the devil is explained partially by their pasts. Saladin grew up wealthy and spent much of his adolescent life in boarding school in England. As he prepares to begin his first term, he is determined "to become the thing his father was-not-could-never-be, that is, a goodandproper Englishman" (Rushdie TSV 43). He explains that "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*" (Rushdie TSV 44). Saladin is formulating a hybrid identity here, though his assertion that he has “fooled them into thinking he was *okay*, he was *people like [them]*” demonstrates that he believes he has become solely British. However, he is half his true Indian self, and half self constructed in the image of English values he has learned from his classmates. There is a scene in which he struggles to eat a kipper for the first time and decides that "England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it" (Rushdie TSV 45). When he finally does eat it, he declares that "the eaten kipper was his first victory, the first step in his

conquest of England" (Rushdie TSV 44). Here, he believes his English identity will be forged only after winning his "conquest of England" (Rushdie TSV 45). This victory allows Saladin to think that his identity as an Indian-born man has been "sloughed off" (Rushdie TSV 3). But because of his contention with his father, an Indian man proud of his country and distrustful of Britain, Saladin is not able to slough off this identity completely.

This contention is seen most clearly when Saladin returns home to cut down his birth-tree, in which his father believes his "only son's soul...resides" (Rushdie TSV 45). This is a Kashmiri custom in which the birth-tree is "a financial investment of a sort," according to Saladin. He explains to Zeeny, his friend, that "when a child comes of age, the grown walnut is comparable to a matured insurance policy. It's a valuable tree, it can be sold, to pay for weddings or to start in life. The adult chops down his childhood to help his grown up self" (Rushdie TSV 66). At this tree-chopping event, which is supposed to be solemn, Saladin is giving off an air of flippancy and disdain for the tradition. In fact, Changez, his father, is unable to look Saladin in the eye "because the bitterness he saw came close to freezing his heart" (Rushdie TSV 47). He orders his wife, Nasreen, to "tell [her] son...that if he went abroad to learn contempt for his own kind, then his own kind can feel nothing but scorn for him" (Rushdie TSV 46). Their unvoiced disagreement here is a result of their belonging to two separate generations. Saladin's parents mirror half of Saleem's grandparents' generation (Naseem's half) in that they try to uphold the traditions of India's past and respond distrustfully to anyone who repudiates those traditions. Ahmed, Saleem's dad, was attempting to move away from such beliefs and customs, and his mother believed them despite the skepticism passed down to her by

her father, while here, both of Saladin's parents are attempting to uphold the traditions of India's past, and their son is denying them outright in favor of English modernity he learned in his years at a British boarding school. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's grandfather and father identified more with their European-influenced conceptions of modernity, while Saleem's grandmother and mother identified more with their conceptions of heritage that privileged faith in God and a belief in the supernatural. Saleem, in turn, identified with all of these influences, and as a result, was a representation of the hybrid nation as being comprised of multiple voices. In *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin's father attempts a similar generational transmission of belief in God to his son who rejects this belief in favor of appearing like a "good and proper Englishman" (Rushdie TSV 43). This crucial difference between the novels demonstrates the importance of passing certain belief systems between generations, and how the rejection of certain belief systems jeopardizes a character's identification with his or her heritage, both familial and national.

Later, his father re-marries and becomes a devout Muslim, which greatly unsettles Saladin. He calls his father's shift from a "Muslim in the lackadaisical, light manner of Bombayites" to a devout Muslim a "transformation," one that is marked by the physical evidence of his father's handwriting changing from "florid confidence" to "narrower, undecorated, [and] purified" (Rushdie TSV 48). Changez's transformation to a more devout Muslim once again harkens back to *Midnight's Children*, when Aadam wars with his wife, Naseem, over her strong Muslim faith. Saladin wars with his father in the same way, and it is in this war with his father that the contention between Saladin's Indian heritage and his identification with European-influenced modernity is most evident. His

father claims repeatedly that “the devil has only [Saladin’s] body” and his soul is “kept safe...in the walnut tree” because, according to him, “A man untrue to himself becomes a two-legged lie, and such beasts are Shaitan’s best work” (Rushdie TSV 48). Once again, we see a contention between generations, with the older harkening back to the belief systems of Indian heritage. But in *The Satanic Verses*, the younger generation attempts to shun that heritage in favor of their conception of European modernity.

The narrative voice agrees with Saladin’s father. He claims that “a man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator’s role, according to one way of seeing things; he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations” (Rushdie TSV 49). However, the narrator presents the opposing viewpoint on Saladin’s willful transformation when he says that

from another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him socio-politically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. A man who invents himself needs someone to believe in him, to prove he’s managed it. Playing God again, you could say. Or you could come down a few notches, and think of Tinkerbell; fairies don’t exist if children don’t clap their hands. Or you might simply say: it’s just like being a man” (Rushdie TSV 50).

This passage switches from a rational to a supernatural explanation and back again, and the switch between the modes of understanding is motivated by this larger question of hybridity. Bhabha claims that hybridity is the result of “the social articulation of difference” and that this articulation “is a complex, on-going negotiation” (2). The

narrative voice here is demonstrating Saladin's "complex, on-going negotiation" from two perspectives by switching between an acceptance and a rejection of Saladin's desire to transform into a "goodandproper Englishman" (Rushdie TSV 43). One explanation allows for the "difference" between Saladin's identification with European-influenced modernity and Changez's identification with his conception of Indian heritage. This allowance is evident when the narrative voices says that there is "heroism in his struggle" and that his ability to "become disguises" is not a renunciation of his national identity forged in his homeland but instead is the result of his ability to "survive" (Rushdie TSV 50). Changez, who privileges heritage over this Eurocentric modernity, would agree with the narrator's assertion that Saladin transforming himself into a proper Englishman makes him "unnatural, a blasphemer, [and] an abomination" (Rushdie TSV 50). Saladin, who privileges modernity over heritage, would agree with the narrator that his transformation, though it is a disguise, is an act of "heroism" (Rushdie TSV 50). The "secret [self]" within him—the other half of his hybrid identity—is tucked away, and the self he has invented in its place "needs someone to believe in" it in order for it to be fully realized. Though this could be construed as "playing God," the construction and presentation of this hybrid identity could also be just as fantastic as the existence of fairies, which require children to believe in them in order for their existence to be fully realized. Without someone fully believing that he is a "goodandproper-Englishman" (Rushdie TSV 43), that half of Saladin's hybrid identity is no more real than Tinkerbell.

Gibreel, on the other hand, never turned from his Indian heritage completely, not even after changing his name. He was born Ishmail Najmuddin, and he changed his name to Gibreel Farishta "in homage to [his] dead mother" who "called [him] *farishta*,

because...he was too damn sweet” and because he was “her personal angel” (Rushdie TSV 18). His father was a hard-working lunch-runner, carrying dabbas on his head with a “zeal [that] remained unrelenting” (Rushdie TSV 19). After his father dies, Gibreel is given a rational explanation from his father’s boss, who says that “[Gibreel’s father] just ran himself into the ground...he just ran out of steam” (Rushdie TSV 20). Gibreel “[knows] better”; he knows that “his father had finally run hard enough and long enough to wear down the frontiers between the worlds...he had run clear out of his skin and into the arms of his wife, to whom he had proved, once and for all, the superiority of his love” (Rushdie TSV 20). This explanation for his father’s death, coupled with the narrator’s proclamation that Gibreel “knew better” than the rational explanation for his father’s death, foreshadows Gibreel’s acceptance of the fantastic events of the text that leave Saladin incredulous, doubtful, or angry. Later, after his father’s boss, Mhatre, takes the orphaned Gibreel in, he informs Gibreel about “about the philosophy of rebirth” and thusly gets Gibreel “off on the whole reincarnation business, and not just reincarnation” (Rushdie TSV 21). His guardian, Mhatre’s, stories are said to have a “profound effect” on Gibreel “because even before his mother’s death he had become convinced of the existence of the supernatural world...he grew up believing in God, angels, demons, afreets, djinns, as matter-of-factly as if they were bullock-carts or lamp-posts, and it struck him as a failure in his own sight that he had never seen a ghost” (Rushdie TSV 22). Just as with Naseem’s children in *Midnight’s Children*, Gibreel learned his faith and his belief in the supernatural from his mother. This explains why, when faced with the fall from the airplane and his surviving the crash, he does not question the validity of the events, whereas Saladin disbelieves them immediately. Saladin refutes his Islamic faith in

favor of his English leanings, and he dismisses the supernatural as “superstitious flummery” of India far removed from the “real world” of England (Rushdie TSV 75), while Gibreel knows the faith of his devout mother as well as the stories told to him by his caregiver, Mhatre, are true and factual.

However, after suffering a mysterious illness, Gibreel loses his faith after a prolonged illness. During his illness, he had “spent every minute of consciousness calling out to God” asking why he was sick. Though “the anger with God carried him through another day,” it eventually “faded and in its place there came a terrible emptiness, an isolation, as he realized he was talking to thin air, that there was nobody there at all...then one day he found that he no longer needed there to be anything to feel. On the day of metamorphosis the illness changed and his recovery began (Rushdie TSV 31). Gibreel breaks his faith by consuming bacon, ham, and other meals comprised of pig meat. In response to a woman staring at him and laughing at him eating pork, he shouts, “Don’t you get it?...No thunderbolt. That’s the point” to which the woman replies, “You got your life back. *That’s the point*” (Rushdie TSV 31). This woman is Alleluia Cone, an English “climber of mountains [and] vanquisher of Everest” (Rushdie TSV 31). His belief in reincarnation does not falter, except now, it is motivated not by Allah but by Alleluia. In her statement he sees a “challenge” one that says “*change your life, or did you get it back for nothing?*” (Rushdie TSV 31) and though he tries to ignore that challenge, he eventually flees his life as an actor and boards the doomed plane for England. When the narrator asks, “Why did he leave?” he answers with, “because of her, the challenge of her, the newness, the fierceness of the two of them together, the inexorability of an impossible thing that was insisting on its right to become. And, or,

maybe: because after he ate the pigs the retribution began, the nocturnal retribution, a punishment of dreams” (Rushdie TSV 32). Though it seems like Gibreel has traded his identification with Indian heritage, here represented by his faith in Allah, with an identification with British modernity, here represented by his taking Alleluia’s encouragement to heart and fleeing India to follow her to England, Gibreel still identifies mostly with his Indian heritage. Though he breaks with his faith abruptly by eating the pork, enough traces of it remain to make him feel, as he dreams terrible dreams, that his nightmares are punishment for breaking his faith. In believing that he is being punished for breaking his faith, Gibreel proves he still believes in it, even if only somewhat. If Gibreel truly believed Allah did not exist, then he would not believe punishment was possible, because the entity enacting the punishment would not exist. This continuing belief, though reluctant, and though mostly denied by Gibreel, preserves his link back to his heritage, and resultantly, it preserves his belief in the fantastic.

Saladin refutes God completely, and after the fall, attempts to reconstruct his identity as a British citizen. As he begins to transform into his devilish form, Saladin looks in the mirror and “attempt[s] to remind himself of himself” (Rushdie TSV 139). He assures himself that, “[he is] a real man...with a real history and a planned out future. [He is] a man to whom certain things are of importance: rigor, self-discipline, reason, the pursuit of what is noble without recourse to that old crutch God. The ideal of beauty, the possibility of exaltation, the mind” (Rushdie TSV 140). These are the values of the English, who, in his mind, and in his father’s mind, repudiate God in favor of more secular ideals. To further this repudiation of his heritage, Saladin says, “damn all Indians...those bastards, their lack of *bastard* taste” (Rushdie TSV 141). Immediately

after saying that, the narrator informs us that “It was at this moment that the police arrived to arrest him” (Rushdie TSV 141). The juxtaposition of Saladin voicing out loud his frustration with Indian people and the immediate arrival of the police is telling. In the same way that Gibreel fears the “punishment of dreams” that result from his loss of faith, Saladin’s punishment for the repudiation of his Indian heritage appears to be the arrival of the police to arrest him.

The reactions of the police to Saladin are particularly interesting when considering them through the lens of the fantastic. To the officers and immigration officials, Saladin’s story about how he arrived in England is so fantastic that it is absurd. They are unable to believe that this event truly occurred because they are so used to “the fishing-boat sneaker-ins” constructing fantastic stories regarding their entry into the country that they simply view Saladin’s tale as another example of that. They laugh at the absurdity of it, but they do not respond distrustfully to the next irruption of the fantastic: Saladin’s “goaty, unarguable horns” (Rushdie TSV 144). Saladin’s natural explanation for his entry into the country—that he fell from the *Bostan*—is viewed as absurd, but the supernatural irruption of his devilish transformation is viewed as natural by the police. Here, the contention between belief and disbelief is demonstrated through the Indian character presenting a rational explanation, and being disbelieved, and the British characters perceiving an irruption of the fantastic as rational, while Saladin disbelieves it. What the British characters view as supernatural, Saladin views as rational, and vice versa. The cultural implication of their differing perceptions is explained later, when Saladin is told that the British wield “the powers of description,” and, as a result, they are able to make the migrants undergo monstrous physical transformations simply by saying

they are monstrous. To Saladin, the transformation is supernatural, because he does not view himself as monstrous, but to the British police officers, Saladin, because he is a foreigner, is monstrous, and therefore, they view this irruption as natural.

Before he is removed from the home, Gibreel makes an entrance, wearing “a maroon smoking jacket and jodhpurs” that belonged to Rosa Diamond’s deceased husband, Henry. While Saladin is immediately perceived as an immigrant who illegally entered the country, Gibreel, in his English smoking jacket and jodhpurs, is perceived as non-threatening. The halo around his head provokes a strange reaction in the officers, one they will deny experiencing later. Though the narrative voice tells us that what the policemen think they saw is “ridiculous” and it left the officers “shak[ing] their heads for weeks,” their desire to “reveal their secrets” to Gibreel demonstrates that they were overcome by his angelic nature, the believability of which was bolstered even more by the fact that he was wearing expensive British clothes and not plain pajamas like Saladin. They treat Saladin’s horns as natural; no one is exclaiming in horror upon seeing them or questioning if they are really there. But they doubt themselves when they think they see a halo around Gibreel’s head and they deny seeing it later on when thinking back upon the incident.

Once again, this episode links back to the proclamation in *Midnight’s Children* that the metaphorical meaning behind something fantastic is what betrays the truth of the matter. To the officers, Saladin, with his horns, is taking the natural animal form of a foreign Other, while Gibreel, with his expensive smoking jacket, is such a “reputable looking gentleman,” so civilized by the clothes he is wearing, appears wholly angelic. However, Saladin is seen as demonic and Gibreel is seen as angelic, despite that both are

initially perceived to be “sky-divers” (a facetious name for “immigrants”) because of the clothes they are wearing. Because the officers are jarred by the sight of Gibreel in his smoking jacket, they deny having seen it later, though they never change their perception of Saladin as monstrous. To them, the sight of Gibreel in the smoking jacket, though pleasant, is unnatural, so they see the halo but deny having seen it later, but Saladin, in his monstrous, goat-like form, is natural, so they accept his metamorphosis wholly.

According to Lindsay Balfour, monsters “are the perfect incarnation of spectral and tangible horror; they allow terror to take shape in dehumanized form and allow that form to be the subject of abuse and violence because it is not considered to be precarious in the way human bodies are” (Balfour 3). This begins to explain why Saladin, a foreign Other in the eyes of the policemen, appears monstrous to them. Balfour says that “this perception of otherness, as something to be repressed or dislodged from the self, not only reveals the extent to which otherness is a projection of our own anxieties about the self; it might also account for the lengths to which we might go to distance ourselves from *unheimlich* reality” (Balfour 3). This would explain why the British characters would describe as monstrous anyone who is not British. This “representation of the racial other” as the “perfect incarnation of spectral and tangible horror” explains why the British police officers responded so nonchalantly to Saladin’s demonic transformation. Since Saladin’s transformation is their creation, born from their “powers of description,” as the manticore in the hospital tells Saladin, they would view this irruption as natural, whereas Saladin is completely horrified by it, because he does not understand it. Balfour explains that

Saladin Chamcha's slow mutation into a demonic half-man, half-goat figure finds startling resonance in the War on Terror and anti-immigration racism [as] Rushdie himself makes this link in his essay 'The New Empire Within Britain,' in which he not only compares the British police force to the colonial army in India but refers to the white British fear of immigrants swamping the country in large numbers. In this context Saladin becomes not only a devilish creature upon which the most loathsome elements of humanity are projected; he is also the scapegoat who bears the brunt of our anxiety about the unknown outsider. Saladin thus becomes the sacrificial goat(man), betrayed by Gibreel to take the fall (again) for British anxieties about immigration (Balfour 5).

It is important to note that, as he is being dragged out of the door by the police, Saladin begs Gibreel to help, and Gibreel does not. When he sees Gibreel in the window looking down upon him being taken away, he sees that there "[isn't] any light shining around the bastard's head" (Rushdie TSV 146). The Indian character cannot see the irruption of the fantastic here, but the British characters can. Later, Saladin and Gibreel, and the characters who interact with them, will see Gibreel's physical transformations, but for now, his transformation is seen only by the British characters. Both transformations are a construction of British perceptions of these two migrants in this scene, while it is simultaneously a construction of either characters' identification or disidentification with their Indian heritage. The irony here is that Saladin, who identifies as a proper British citizen, and who repudiates his Indian heritage entirely, is perceived as the monstrous Other, while Gibreel, who has repudiated his faith but not his Indian heritage, is still perceived as an Other, but as an Other that is not monstrous.

In the van of the police truck, Saladin suffers dehumanizing, cruel abuse at the hands of the police. They pull down his pajama pants and find “thick, tightly curled dark hair covering his thighs” which had become “uncommonly wide and powerful” (Rushdie TSV 162). Below his knee, the hair stopped, “and his legs narrowed into tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, clove hoofs, such as one might find on any billy-goat” (Rushdie TSV 162-3). Saladin is also “taken aback at the sight of his phallus, greatly enlarged and embarrassingly erect, an organ that he had the greatest difficulty in acknowledging as his own” (Rushdie TSV 163). In response to the officers treating his metamorphosis “as if it were the most banal and familiar matter they could imagine” (Rushdie TSV 163), Saladin claims that

this isn't England...How could it be, after all; where in all that moderate and commonsensical 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. If that were the case, his long-standing rejection of the Eternal was beginning to look pretty foolish.—But where, in all this, was any sign of a Supreme Being, whether benevolent or malign? Why did Purgatory, or Hell, or whatever this place might be, look so much that of Sussex of rewards and fairies which every schoolboy knew? (Rushdie TSV 163-164).

In this passage, the van is treated as a separate space, as a vessel containing within it a supernatural, fantastic event that Saladin cannot believe is occurring. The van is moving through the “moderate and commonsensical land,” but within it, just like in the air after the *Bostan* explosion, fantastical events are occurring that Saladin's rational brain cannot

fully grasp. He is “forced” towards the conclusion that he has died and is in the afterlife, but even that explanation is not enough to allow Saladin to fully grasp the reality of his transformation. To believe that he has died and is in the afterlife is a rejection of the fantastic event; being dead and in purgatory is a far more rational explanation to Saladin than that he has transformed into a goatman and is being degraded by police in the “Sussex of rewards and fairies” of his childhood. Saladin’s utter disbelief in his transformation is evident after several “soft, pellety objects” appear on the floor under him, and he is “consumed by bitterness and shame” (Rushdie TSV 165). He says that “he was—had gone—to some lengths to become—a sophisticated man! Such degradations might be all very well for riff-raff from villages in Sylhet or the bicycle-repair shops of Gujranwala, but he was cut from a different cloth!” (Rushdie TSV 166). Saladin wants his repudiation of his Indian heritage and his favoring of the English to make him better than the “riff-raff” from India, but he is treated just as badly as they would be. He knows he is a “sophisticated man,” but the officers only see a beast.

The most jarring instance of the fantastic in this novel comes when Saladin wakes up in the hospital after being savagely beaten by the officers. He discovers that he is not alone in his ghastly transformation. Strange sounds wake him, like “the snorting of bulls, the chattering of monkeys, even the pretty-polly mimic squawks of parrots or talking budgerigars” (Rushdie TSV 171). The “sanatorium, or whatever the place call[s] itself” also stinks like “jungle and farmyard odors mingled with a rich aroma similar to that of exotic spices sizzling in clarified butter—coriander, turmeric, cinnamon, cardamoms, cloves” (Rushdie TSV 173). Upon the many hybrid creatures he meets in this sanitarium, he encounters a manticore with “an entirely human body, but its head [is] that of a

ferocious tiger, with three rows of teeth” who tells him that “there is a woman...who is now mostly water-buffalo...there are businessmen from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails...there is a group of holidaymakers from Senegal who were doing no more than changing planes when they were turned into slippery snakes” (Rushdie TSV 173).

. These monstrous transformations are the result of British constructs of migrants from other countries, of people who are ethnically different than they are, who are Other. If the British describe them as monstrous, they become monstrous. All of these characters are foreigners, and all have been transformed while within the borders of England into a hybrid animal form. Within England, they are considered out of place by the British, and so they are given these monstrous qualities. Saladin’s transformation is caused by the plane crash, as the narrative voice proves when he says that in the air, mutations occur (Rushdie TSV 3). But that his transformation is *demonic* is caused by the descriptions of the British police and also by his final interactions with his father in India, in which he definitively turned his back on his Indian heritage. It is also caused by his sheer disdain for Indians, and finally, by his desire to “transform” into an Englishman. Saladin’s desire to assume the identity of a proper Englishman is evident in the van when he insists he is a natural citizen to the officers, and again, here when he says that he “has lived [in England] for many years and [his transformation] has never happened before” (Rushdie TSV 176). The manticore tells Saladin that “some of us aren’t going to stand for it,” meaning the forced transformation. He says they are “going to bust out of [there] before they turn us into anything worse” and that “every night he feels a different piece of [him] beginning to change” (Rushdie TSV 173-74). When Saladin asks how the British transform them, the manticore says, “they describe us...that’s all. They have the power of

description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct” (Rushdie TSV 174). Saladin protests, saying that he “has lived [in England] for many years and it has never happened before” (Rushdie TSV 174). Later, he says that “we [the immigrants] strive for the heights but our natures betray us” (Rushdie TSV 176).

These transformations reflect the otherness of these migrants in the eyes of the British, who prescribe these monstrous traits upon them through their “powers of description” (Rushdie TSV). As they flee, Saladin sees “many shadowy figures running through the glowing night...beings he never could have imagined...men and women who were also partially plants, or giant insects, or even, on occasion, built partially of brick or stone; there were men with rhinoceros horns instead of noses and women with necks as long as any giraffe” (Rushdie TSV 176). In her article, “Sympathy for the Devil: (Re) Reading *The Satanic Verses* after 9/11 and Learning to Love the Monster (Within)” Lindsay Balfour discusses how othering foreign peoples clears the moral path to perpetrate violence upon them. She states her purpose as “seeking to understand the extent to which *The Satanic Verses* troubles dominant constructions of the grotesque in order to comprehend whether we can be beckoned or interpolated by lives that are different to our own” (Balfour 2). So far, Rushdie’s use of the fantastic has problematized the idea of one single “origin” to which all Indian characters look back after migrating (Bhabha 2). Here, Rushdie’s use of the fantastic in the form of Saladin’s and the other immigrants’ grotesque transformations is an attempt to problematize how the dominant group in society—in this case, England—constructs the migrant, and to determine if we can understand those who have been constructed this way by seeing past the monstrous qualities that have been used to describe them.

Gane tries to answer the question of why Gibreel became angelic but Saladin became demonic. Because Gibreel is “the ‘untranslated man’ who has changed only against his will,” he is “‘good’” (Gane 29). Meanwhile, Saladin is a “‘translated man...’ [who] has chosen to become English, to invent himself, to rupture his connections to his past and his people, [and] is false” (Gane 30). It is this “falsity of self...[that] opens the way to greater falsity of evil” (29-30). Saladin’s effort to become a “translated man,” one who is regarded as British, not Indian, has falsified him, and that, in turn, has “open[ed] the way to greater falsity of evil” (Gane 29). When Saladin tries to “conquer England,” and because he has continuously rejected his Indian heritage in favor of English modernity, he demonstrates this “chosen and willing [discontinuity]” of his selfhood. Gibreel, on the other hand, who never pretended to be British, remains true to his Indian heritage and therefore preserves the “truth” of his Indian self (Gane 29). When their transformation occurs, he becomes angelic because he has never “falsified” himself by pretending to be English as Saladin has.²

While some theorists believe that identity is formed by the “foregrounding [of] mobility, migrancy, and deracination and associated with the valorization of the hybrid” there are “other discourses of origins, authenticity, indigeneity, and unitary identity,” according to Gane. Gane believes that Rushdie sides with the former. In fact, Rushdie claims that *The Satanic Verses* “celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings,

² For more on how the Gothic tradition and the grotesque explain the physical transformations experienced by the migrants, see Katharina Donn’s “Migration And The Grotesque In Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*” and Gaurav Majumdar’s “The Jolt Of The Grotesque: Aesthetics As Ethics In *The Satanic Verses*.”

cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs..." (28). Though Saladin's grotesque transformation appears to be a condemnation of his desire to become "translated," the novel instead is celebrating how national identity is a combination of influences and choices. Saladin chooses to identify more as an Englishman than as an Indian man, but he cannot lose the Indian part of his identity completely. Though he fights against being characterized as partially Indian, in the end, he becomes a symbol of resistance amongst the migrant population of London and accepts his Indian heritage.

Rushdie is problematizing the concept of the migrant's construction of identity by presenting these fantastic transformations into the ultimate good and evil forms. Brennan argues that "what we have in these images is more than an attempt to capture the immigrant's confused identity, or even an attempt to elaborate the by-now familiar point that the oppressed, simply because they are oppressed, are not necessarily 'angelic.'" Beyond all the layerings of religious paranoia at the psychic level, what we have is a grotesque imaging of racist fantasies. For it is the British 'mainstream' that ascribes to the black newcomers a devil's role" (Brennan 155). Furthermore, "Gibreel and Chamcha...are the polarities of the novel—one the self anointed angelic/prophetic presence who hears infernal voices; the other, the 'good' immigrant turned Shaitan in the English metropolis. The narrative deliberately confuses supernatural and the everyday precisely by switching rapidly between these characters' psychic imaginings and their normal activities as *actors*" (Brennan 157). The "characters' psychic imaginings are certainly evidence of a confusion between "the supernatural and the everyday," but the angelic and devilish transformation are doubly indicative of this same confusion. Once again Rushdie is problematizing the conception of identity using the fantastic. However,

unlike *Midnight's Children*, the fantastic elements that “[confuse] the supernatural and the everyday” are far more sinister in *Satanic Verses*, and therefore far more disruptive. The fantastic irruption of Saladin’s transformation demonstrates the frightening dilemma of the “immigrant’s confused identity” that Brennan describes, and the cruel, grotesque dehumanizing nature of “racist fantasies” of the native British people.

Hybridity erases the possibility of one singular or autonomous identity, be it an individual identity or the identity of a nation, so Saladin’s desire to be fully English is impossible to actualize. Bhabha argues that “hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements—the stubborn chunks—as the basis of differential identities: the regulation and negotiations of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, ‘opening out,’ remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender, or race” (219). About Saladin, Bhabha states that

For Chamcha stands, quite literally, in between two border conditions. On the one hand lies his landlady Hind who espouses the cause of gastronomic pluralism, devouring the spiced dishes of Kashmir and the yogurt sauces of Lucknow, turning herself into the wide land mass of the subcontinent itself...[and on Chamcha’s other side sits his landlord Sufyan, the secular ‘colonial’ metropolitan who understands the fate of the migrant in the classical contrast between Lucretius and Ovid. Translated, by Sufyan, for the existential guidance of postcolonial migrants, the problem consists in whether the crossing of cultural frontiers permits freedom from the essence of the self (Lucretius) or whether, like wax, migration only changes the surface of the soul, preserving identity under its protean forms (224).

Saladin falls in between these two characters, and this leads Bhabha to question if his essential self has been completely replaced, or if the changes have only occurred on the surface while underneath, Saladin's identity has remained the same. Bhabha also argues

that the conflict of cultures and community around *The Satanic Verses* has been mainly represented in spatial terms and binary geopolitical polarities... This obscures the anxiety of the irresolvable borderline culture of hybridity that articulates its problems of identification and its diasporic aesthetic in an uncanny disjunctive temporality that is, at once, the *time* of cultural displacement, and the *space* of the untranslatable (Bhabha 225).

Though the contention between heritage and modernity is one such "binary geopolitical polarity" that "obscures the anxiety of the irresolvable borderline culture of hybridity," it is still able to help the reader classify the characters' reactions to irruptions of the fantastic. Because characters shift between the two poles of binary, one can still see the "irresolvable borderline culture of hybridity" that Bhabha describes.

A generational conflict in perception arises in the reactions of the Sufyans to Saladin's demonic transformation. Muhammad Sufyan, owner of the Shaandaar Café where much of the action takes place in the novel, is a former schoolteacher, "self-taught in classical texts of many cultures" who is "least doctrinaire of hajis and most unashamed of VCR addicts" (Rushdie TSV 251). He identifies "not so much an immigrant as an emigrant" due to his being dismissed "from post in Dhaka owing to cultural differences with certain generals... when Bangladesh was merely an East Wing" (Rushdie TSV 253). In response to Saladin's horns, Muhammad quotes Lucius Apuleius of Madaura, a Moroccan priest, when he says, "Once I'm an owl, what is the spell or antidote for

turning me back into myself?” (Rushdie TSV 251). He calls Saladin a “poor misfortunate” but quickly reminds him that there is “no point wallowing [and a] constructive attitude must be adopted” (Rushdie TSV 252). His wife, on the other hand, responds to Saladin’s transformation by “extend[ing] a trembling arm” and “howl[ing]... ‘that over there... what thing is come upon us?’” Later, she “[wails] ‘what sort of haji is this? Here is Shaitan himself walking in through our door, and I am made to offer him hot chicken yakhni, cooked by my own right hand” (Rushdie TSV 253). Then, she asks, “from where plague-breath comes that he’s breathing? From, maybe the Perfumed Garden?” This is the first Indian character to react in horror to Saladin’s transformation. Meanwhile, the Sufyans’ teenage daughters, Mishal and Anahita, respond with “Radical” and “Crucial. Fucking A,” respectively, in response to Saladin’s goatish body.

These differing reactions—with Muhammad, Mishal, and Anahita treating Saladin’s transformation as natural, and Hind treating it as horrifically unnatural—are the result of the same oscillation between identification with European influence and identification with Indian heritage. For the older Sufyans, this oscillation mirrors the same struggle between Aadam and Naseem. In the early days of their marriage, Hind tried to read the same texts that her husband could quote verbatim, like “the novels of Bibhutibhushan Banerji and the metaphysics of Tagore” (Rushdie TSV 254). In the meantime, because she “admired the pluralistic openness of his mind,” she

struggled, in her kitchen, towards a parallel eclecticism, learning to cook dosas and uttapams of South India as well as the soft meatballs of Kashmir. Gradually, her espousal of the cause of gastronomic pluralism grew into a grand passion, and while

secularist Sufyan swallowed the multiple cultures of the subcontinent...his wife cooked, and ate in increasing quantities, its food. As she devoured the highly spiced dishes of Hyderabad and the high-faluting yoghurt sauces of Lucknow her body began to alter, because all that food had to find a home somewhere, and she began to resemble the wide rolling land mass itself, the subcontinent without frontiers, because food passes across any boundary you care to mention {Rushdie TSV 254}.

In the meantime, though, Muhammad Sufyan does not gain a pound from this multi-cultural food, which Hind takes as a personal insult. Muhammad also implores Hind, “let us not pretend that Western culture is not present, after these centuries, how could it not also be part of our heritage?” (Rushdie TSV 254) which demonstrates the hybrid nature of his identification with India; he can swallow Indian food and not gain a pound, but his wife, engorged on the foods of the subcontinent, gains significant weight. Hind’s identification is solely with her Indian heritage, in the same way that Naseem’s identification is solely with her heritage. Muhammad, like Aadam, is a mixture of Indian and Western influences.

Hind feels extraordinarily out of place in England, whereas Muhammad feels happily at home. Though he is “deprived of vocation, pupils and respect...he [bounds] about like a young lamb, and even [begins] to put on weight, fattening up in Proper London as he had never done back home” (Rushdie TSV 257). In the same way that Hind grew larger as she consumed the food of her homeland, Muhammad is becoming larger as he consumes the food of their new land. Hind not only resents her husband’s weight gain in England, she also laments the Indian cultural identifiers that comprised part of the identity she had to “slough off” (Rushdie TSV 3) when she entered England. She laments

the loss of “her language” as she is “obliged, now, to emit these alien sounds that [make] her tongue feel tired” and “her familiar place,” asking

what matter that they had lived, in Dhaka, in a teacher’s humble flat, and now, owing to entrepreneurial good sense, savings and skill with spices, occupied this four-storey terraced house? Where now was the city she knew? Where the village of her youth and the green waterways of home? The customs around which she had built her life were lost, too, or at least were hard to find. Nobody in this Vilayet had time for the slow courtesies of life back home, or for the many observances of faith (Rushdie TSV 257).

This links back to the description of the remnants of migrant passengers on the *Bostan*. Hind has lost her “mother tongue,” (Rushdie TSV 3) and must now speak the “alien sounds” (Rushdie TSV 257) of her new home; she has lost her “home” (Rushdie TSV 3) which, though modest, was in the “city she knew” (Rushdie TSV 257); and she feels no sense of “belonging” (Rushdie 3) because no one in her Vilayet will observe with her the customs and courtesies she knew back home. Hind’s purely Indian self has been “sloughed off” in the same way as the “sloughed off selves” of the migrants onboard the *Bostan*, but her memory of that self—of being a teacher’s wife, living in a “teacher’s humble flat,” observing her faith, being able to “bask in [Muhammad’s] dignified position”—remains. Muhammad has memory of his “sloughed off [self]” too, but he does not identify as strongly with that self as Hind identifies with hers.

To Hind, London is also a place of danger long before the living embodiment of the devil strides through her door. In this “demon city in which anything could happen” (Rushdie) she experiences discrimination for being an immigrant. She says that

windows shattered in the middle of the night without cause, you were knocked over in the street by invisible hands, in the shops you heard such abuse you felt like your ears would drop off but when you turned in the direction of the words you saw only empty air and smiling faces, and every day you heard about this boy, that girl, beaten up by ghosts.—

(Rushdie TSV)

Though Hind and Muhammad never experience the “powers of description” that turned Saladin into a monstrous goatman, they still experience threatening behavior from the English people around them. This “land of phantom imps” drives Hind to stay in the Shaandaar Café, because there, she is safe from not only the British who discriminate upon her but “her own people,” as well. Some, like the “sharif [who gives] telephone divorces to wives back home” are almost reputable, except they “[run] off with some haramzadi female,” which violates Hind’s ideals of what makes a person reputable. A “haramzadi female” is a girl born to unmarried parents, so for a “reputable” person like this lawyer to run off with one demonstrates to Hind their disidentification with the ideals of their homeland, which completely undermines their reputability. The other type of person that Hind cannot trust are people who bring the more dangerous customs of their homeland to England with them, like the killing of girls for dowry. To Hind, these people perpetuate the dangerous mischaracterization of migrants. To combat these anxieties, Hind keeps in touch with her Indian heritage by remaining locked inside the Shaandaar Café, inside of which she can “deny the ghosts outside” (Rushdie TSV 259). In order to “stay in touch with events in the *‘real world’*” (Rushdie TSV 259) (my emphasis), she “[sends] others out...for the endless supply of Bengali and Hindi movies on VCR” and

she keeps “an ever-increasing hoard of Indian movie magazines” (Rushdie TSV 259). India is the “real-world” to Hind, while England is described similarly as being “the real world” to Saladin. Hind preserves this link back to what she believes is reality through consuming only Indian entertainment, while her children and her husband consume predominantly Western entertainment.

Finally, Hind laments how her daughters, Mishal and Anahita have come to adopt British customs at the expense of their Indian heritage. Both girls are “infected” by “the poison of this devil-island” and as a result, they are “growing up refusing to speak their mother-tongue, even though they understood every word” (Rushdie TSV 258). This leads Hind to ask “why else had Mishal cut off all her hair and put rainbows into it” and to lament how

every day it was a fight, quarrel, disobey, --and worst of all, there was not one new thing about her complaints, this is how it was for women like her so now she was no longer just one, just herself, just Hind wife of teacher Sufyan, she had sunk into the anonymity, the characterless plurality, of being merely one-of-the-women-like her. This was history’s lesson: nothing for women-like-her to do but suffer, remember, and die (Rushdie TSV 258-59).

Her children are being lost to modern English life, with one dyeing her hair, and both refusing to speak “their mother-tongue” (Rushdie 258). As her children are lost to England, she becomes, like Naseem, a vessel of Indian cultural heritage that can do nothing to stop her children from turning away completely from their homeland towards the culture of the West. Hind and Naseem both can only “suffer, remember, and die” (Rushdie TSV 259).

This is why Saladin's arrival at the café is so jarring for her. According to the narrator, the "arrival of a fully developed devil, a horned goat-man, was, in the light of the foregoing [unpleasant experiences she has had in England], something very like the last, or at any rate the penultimate, straw" (Rushdie TSV 259). While Hind's perceptions of Saladin's transformation are filtered through her despair over leaving India and her distrust towards England, Muhammad's perception of Saladin's transformation are filtered through the vast mental catalogue of Western texts he keeps in his mind. After he is told about how Chamcha fell from the plane, he

[sucks his] teeth, [and] [makes] reference to the last edition of *The Origin of Species* 'in which even great Charles accepted the notion of mutation in extremis, to ensure survival of species; so what if his followers—always more Darwinian than man himself!—repudiated, posthumously, such Lamarckian heresy, insisting on natural selection and nothing but,--however I am bound to admit, such theory is not extended to survival of individual specimen but only to species as a whole; --in addition, regarding nature of mutation problem is to comprehend actual utility of the change (Rushdie TSV 260).

Meanwhile, Hind, upon seeing her daughter, Anahita, lay her hand on Saladin's shoulder to comfort him, exclaims, "How to tolerate?—Honour, safety of young girls, cannot be assured.—That in my own house, such a thing...!" (Rushdie TSV 260). Mishal, her older daughter, asks, "Dju you think its temporary? Some sort of possession thing? —could we maybe get it you know exorcized?" She asks this as "omens, shinings, Ghoulies, nightmares on Elm Street"—all Western horror movies—"[stand] excitedly in her eyes" (Rushdie TSV 260). Her father, described as "just as much of a VCR aficionado as any

teenager” “considers the possibility” of Saladin being possessed “seriously” (Rushdie TSV 260). In these reactions to the fantastic event of Saladin’s transformation, one can see Hind’s identification with her Indian heritage, in that she responds in horror to the transition, and treats it as unnatural; one can see Muhammad’s identification with Western-influenced modernity, in his referencing of Charles Darwin; and one can see the same identification with Western modernity in their daughters, who use Western horror movies as their frame of reference to begin trying to decipher the meaning of Saladin’s transformation.

Meanwhile, Jumpy Joshi, Saladin’s friend who brought him to the café, views the transformation as a consequence of the treatment of migrants in England. He cuts them all off to announce that “the central requirement...is to take an ideological view of the situation...[to ask] objectively...what has happened here? A: Wrongful arrest, intimidation, violence. Two: illegal detention, unknown medical experimentation in hospital...and thirdly...psychological breakdown, loss of sense of self, inability to cope. We’ve seen it all before” (Rushdie TSV 261). This reaction demonstrates Jumpy’s combined identification with his Eastern heritage and this Western-influenced modernity, in that he recognizes the monstrous transformation as the result of unnatural, “unknown medical experimentation” in the hospital, but he recognizes it as a natural response to “intimidation, violence...illegal detention” all of which led to a “psychological breakdown, loss of sense of self, and inability to cope” (Rushdie TSV 261). While the British police view the change as natural because to them, Saladin is just a monstrous, animalistic Other, Jumpy views it as a natural response to being viewed in such a way. The monstrous transformation is unnatural and horrifying, and seeing it as such

demonstrates Jumpy's identification with Eastern heritage. But, his using psychological terms as a frame of reference to explain the change demonstrates the same identification with Western modernity that Muhammad demonstrates by quoting Darwin.

The reader comes close to a definitive explanation of exactly what caused Saladin's transformation when Joshi says "we have seen it all before" and that "what you believe depends on what you've seen" (Rushdie TSV 261). These statements reiterate that Saladin's transformation is a natural consequence of being detained by British police. In response to the "unknown medical experimentation," there are "murmurs of assent, as memories of intra-vaginal inspections, Depo-Provera scandals, unauthorized post-partum sterilizations...because what you believe depends on what you've seen,--not only what is visible, but what you are prepared to look in the face...in those policed medical wards, anything could happen" (Rushdie TSV 261). Though Hind has seen the discrimination perpetrated against immigrants, she has not seen the monstrous transformations that result from spending time in the "policed medical wards" like Jumpy has. Though Muhammad has *not* seen the monstrous transformations that result from time spent in the policed medical wards, he has seen reference to "mutation in extremis" in Darwin, while his daughters have seen Western horror films, which provide a frame of reference that allows them to see Saladin's transformation as being a natural result of demonic possession. In each case, what they believe depends on their having seen it before. They are able to "look in the face" the reality of Saladin's transformation because they have these frames of reference through which they can interpret the change, while Hind, who remains locked in the Shaandaar Café and watches only Indian VHS tapes and reads only Indian magazines, does not have the same frames of reference.

Upon being offered refuge at the café, Saladin further reiterates his disidentification with his heritage. After Muhammad asks, “where else would you go to heal your disfigurements and recover your normal health? Where else but here, with us, among your own people, your own kind?” Saladin tells himself, “I’m not your kind. You’re not my people. I’ve spent half my life trying to get away from you” (Rushdie TSV 261-62). Though he identifies briefly with Mishal and Anahita, who claim they are British, as “Bangladesh in’t nothing to [them]. Just some place [their] Dad and Mum keep banging on about,” Saladin does not consider them as purely British as he is. He wants to tell them that they are not really British, “not in any way he could recognize” (Rushdie TSV 262). This is a reinvigoration of his identification with England even after being abused by the British police and disfigured by their powers of description.

In *Midnight’s Children*, characters like Naseem, Amina, and Saleem treat irruptions of the fantastic as natural and demonstrate their identification with Indian heritage, while characters like Aadam, Ahmed, and, to a certain extent, Padma, treat irruptions of the fantastic as unnatural or as superstition and demonstrate their identity first with Western-influenced modernity and later with Indian modernity. In *The Satanic Verses*, Hind Sufyan, who identifies with Indian heritage, reacts to the irruption of the fantastic with distrust and horror, treating those irruptions as unnatural, while her husband, daughters, and, to a certain extent, Jumpy Joshi, treat it as natural and easily explainable with knowledge gathered from Western texts. Saladin, who *disidentifies* strongly with his Indian heritage, views the change as being unnatural in the same way that Hind, who identifies with her Indian heritage, views it as unnatural. However, Saladin views the change as unnatural because he believes himself to be mostly British,

and as a resultant, he cannot link his change to being a migrant in the same way that Jumpy Joshi does. The British police, who link the change to Saladin's being a migrant, view the change as natural because it is their "power of description" that creates the change. In both texts, the generational divide between subsets of characters can explain which frame of reference a character will favor when responding to an irruption of the fantastic, because in each generation, there are characters who identify or disidentify with their Indian heritage and identify or disidentify with a Western-influenced conception of modernity. In *Midnight's Children*, though, the characters who identify with their Indian heritage view the irruptions as a natural part of Indian culture, which is why they are likely to view them as real. In *The Satanic Verses*, characters who identify with their Indian heritage—either through religion, as Hind does, or through parentage, as Saladin does—view the irruptions as unnatural within England, and the differences between the texts can be explained partially by the change in setting. While the irruptions of the fantastic are natural within the borders of India to characters who identify with their Indian heritage, in England, one character, Hind, who identifies with her Indian heritage, finds the irruption unnatural, but another, Saladin, who identifies with British modernity, finds it just as unnatural. Meanwhile, Indian characters who identify with English modernity within England *besides Saladin himself* view the change as natural. For characters like Muhammad, Mishal, and Anahita Sufyan, they filter Saladin's transformation through their knowledge of Western film, philosophy, and literature. Saladin's frame of reference for his change is filtered through his father's disapproval, and through his father's warning of adopting a hybrid identity makes one an "a two-legged lie" and an example of "Shaitan's best work" (Rushdie TSV). In this way,

Saladin's frame of reference for his change is *not* identified with British modernity but instead is influenced by his heritage. Because these characters are hybrid, their national identity is constructed through a combination of multiple influences. Their conceptions of heritage and modernity are dynamic, because there is no one set "origin" between them to construct an essentialist definition of heritage, despite how they are all from India.

Identification or loss of identification with India constructs a frame of reference through which a character interprets the irruption of the fantastic. Characters who identify with Indian heritage see the fantastic irruption of Saladin's change through whatever links them to their homeland—in Hind's case, religion, and in Saladin's case, his father.

Characters who identify with English modernity view the fantastic irruption of Saladin's change as explainable by psychology, evolutionary biology, Western films, etc.

At the end of the novel, Gibreel, overwhelmed by the task of "being God's avenging angel," commits suicide (Hassuman 76). According to Hassuman, the "narrator asks whether Gibreel is to be considered 'good' by virtue of wishing to remain at bottom an untranslated man" and "this question is answered in the negative because such distinctions (of 'good' and 'bad') rest on an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogenous, nonhybrid, 'pure' which is a fantastic notion" (Hassuman 76). Gibreel commits suicide because he "believes in just such a fantastic notion, and therefore ultimately resists his metamorphosis" (Hassuman 76). Gibreel's suicide that results from his desire to remain "homogeneous, nonhybrid, [and] 'pure'" is evidence that this novel is a celebration of hybridity, and that one point Rushdie is attempting to make most clearly is that non-hybrid, pure identities are a fallacy. Furthermore, Hassuman argues that "just as Gibreel submits to a 'pure, rigid version of Islam...Chamcha allows himself

to be represented by the dominant British narrative that otherizes him and he becomes a devil. The difference between Azrael and Chamcha is that the latter permits himself a flexibility that allows him to continue to transform into Salahuddin Chamchawalla, a character who incorporates (rather than sheds) all his previous versions” (Hassuman 80). Once again, this is evidence that hybrid identity is a combination of multiple influences. In the end, all of Saladin’s previous selves, his “previous versions,” as Hassuman calls them, from his childhood in India to his identification as “goodandproper Englishman,” to his transformation into a beastly goatman, to, finally, his “[incorporation]” of all of these, are crucial parts of his whole being despite how they seem to contradict one another. In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie creates constructs of identity that are as shaky as the construct of India itself. In *The Satanic Verses*, the constructs of identity are even shakier because they are not sustained within the concrete borders of India. The link to this construct of heritage and the construct of what constitutes European-influenced modernity are equally uncertain. Unlike *Midnight’s Children*, though, *The Satanic Verses* presents harsh consequences for characters who reject their link to this construct of heritage. Saladin’s devilish transformation is one such demonstration of the consequences for becoming “translated.” However, Hassuman is right in her claim that even so the constructs of good and evil are uncertain. Though Saladin embodies the devilish form as a rebuke for his “translation,” he survives in the end, while Gibreel kills himself to avoid subscribing to the identity construct of the Archangel. Hassuman claims that “as he does in *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie attempts to undermine almost all the ‘pure’ spaces in *The Satanic Verses*. Thus, though Gibreel gets seduced into an absolutist narrative, the novel as a whole is hybrid of many different spaces” (Hassuman 89). The fantastic is a

tool Rushdie uses to “undermine almost all the ‘pure’ spaces” in both novels, but in *The Satanic Verses*, he uses the fantastic first to present what appears to be a consequence for becoming hybrid, only to celebrate hybridity in the end.

Conclusion

Viewing the fantastic events in Rushdie's two novels as irruptions of the fantastic that alter the supposedly "changeless everyday legality" of English rule and influence (Caillois qtd. in Jackson 28) allows the reader to see the metaphorical truth these events symbolize. It is important to accept these events as real, true, and factual, and to accept the ramifications of them as such. When these fantastic events are accepted as real, the reader can see how they portray the complexities of national identity. How characters react to the irruptions of the fantastic tells us much about characters' conceptions of heritage and modernity, and these conceptions of heritage or modernity demonstrate Rushdie's construction of the nation as a dynamic, hybrid combination of influences, ideas, and choices. In *Midnight's Children* reactions to these irruptions show the generational conflict between characters and the trajectory of European influence in India as well as the construction of Indian modernity. The apocalyptic prophecy at the end of *Midnight's Children* foretells a dismissal of the fantastic events as fabrication, falsification, hyperbole, or solely metaphor. The larger effect of such a dismissal is the nation turning its collective gaze away from its rich cultural history, in which the supernatural is not *super* at all, but instead is natural, real, and true. In its place, the Indian people will favor a secular Indian modernity that erases their past. In *The Satanic Verses*, the generational conflict in belief plays a more minimal role, and instead, the symbolic resonance of Saladin Chamcha's demonic transformation and Gibreel Farishta's angelic transformation capture the real "truth" of the story. Their transformations demonstrate the dual nature of the immigrant experience in Britain--the struggle to maintain or refute one's Indian identity within the borders of the colonizing entity. In

both novels, the irruptions of the fantastic accomplish Rushdie's goal to "[get] at the truth in a different way" and to take "ideas that [one] want[s] to set in motion and interrogate and argue about" ("Salman Rushdie: True Stories..."). The ideas that Rushdie is "interrogat[ing]" are different in each novel, but the irruptions of the fantastic allow Rushdie to tell both truths. Rushdie uses the fantastic to tell us "the truth" about how individualized conceptions of heritage and modernity combine to form the hybrid identity of the modern nation and the modern national subject. Though Saleem is right that "what's real and what's true aren't necessarily the same," in *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, what appears too supernatural to be believed is very real, and both the realness of the event, and the metaphorical resonance behind it, tell the reader what is true.

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