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Salman Rushdie in the Postmodern Current: New Venues, New Values

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Salman Rushdie in the Postmodern Current: New Venues, New Values

Salman Rushdie in the Postmodern Current: New Venues, New Values

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to prove that Rushdie's recent novels are not postcolonial in the sense that they abandon the colonial/colonized binary, the embrace of hybridity, and the theme of undermining the coercion and domination of the colonial country assumed in postcolonial discourse. Instead, his recent fiction is labeled postmodern because it is filled with exuberant postmodern techniques such as historiographic metafiction, the hegemony of mode of productions, the postmodern fragmented self, and suspicions of grand narrative. Furthermore, I will argue that there is an association between Rushdie's postmodern narrative technique (his mixing of history and fantasy) and his political stance when it comes to his notion about America, and that postmodernism enables Rushdie to question the historical "truth" and allows him to rewrite or reconstruct South Asia's history which then sets in motion the western discourse of hegemony. Contrary to commonplace commentaries about his anti-colonialist stance, Rushdie's historical and fictional narrative not only assures the hegemonic discourse of late capitalism but also reflects an imperialist political stance. This will be demonstrated by considering Rushdie's manipulation in his novels of alternate history, cultural modes of production such as commodity fetishism and media, postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism, and historiographic metafiction; furthermore, these features of postmodernism which Rushdie uses in his recent novels indicate his position as a postmodern writer.

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Four years ago, I packed up what I have and flew with my husband and my two adorable sons to a new country, a new culture, and a new experience to begin my doctoral studies at the University of Arkansas in late August 2010—a journey that will conclude in summer 2014 when I graduate with a Ph.D. in English.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely parents, Khitam Shadeed and Walid Akkawi, my dear siblings, Khalid, Fayyad, Ala'a, and Azal, my lovely husband Saeed Suliman, and my adorable kids Mohammad and Omar.

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Introduction

When Salman Rushdie's name is mentioned, people recall controversial incidents in the life of this author: The Booker Prize, the Fatwa of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the Knight Bachelor appellation are some of the most important, yet controversial events in Rushdie's life¹. Rushdie's fame as a writer is unquestionable: his novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) has been named the best Booker Prize winner of all time, *Shame* (1983) won the French Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book Prize) and was shortlisted for the 1983 Booker Prize, while *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) won the Whitbread Prize for 'Best novel' in 1995, and the Aristeion Prize in 1996 and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 1995. A look at the MLA international bibliography shows that over 1147 book and journal articles have been written on his novels and his life; 320 articles have been written on *The Satanic Verses*, 300 on *Midnight's Children*, and less than 50 on Rushdie's fiction that were published after the year 2000. Further significant issue about Rushdie is that his works, as M. Keith Booker notes, "has been particularly attractive" to postcolonial critics (2-3). Therefore, Rushdie's works have been

¹I will discuss why the Fatwa was a controversial issue in Rushdie's life in the coming paragraphs but here I would like to refer to the importance of the Booker Prize and Rushdie's Knight Bachelor appellation on the author. *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's second published novel that won the Booker Prize. This novel won Rushdie a good fame and it is widely regarded as the author's masterpiece. The controversy, I believe, happened when this work won the Best of Booker prize because, as Singh states, " 'big beasts' of the book world were left off it, such as Margaret Atwood, AS Byatt, Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro." Moreover, Singh wonders, "How many of those who voted for *Midnight's Children* have actually read it? A survey has found that only one in 25 people had read Rushdie's sprawling Indian tale. And of those, only half had finished it." On the other hand, another controversial issue in Rushdie's life happened after he was named a Knight Bachelor by Queen Elizabeth. Pakistan and Iran condemned honoring Rushdie because they think he is a blasphemous author. In addition, Rushdie was honored by the British government which he, in his essays as well as novels, condemned its institutionalized racism.

analyzed within a postcolonial frame by many scholars and critics such as Michael Chapman, S. Shankar, Brian May, Deepika Bahri, Michael Gorra, and many others. Many of these scholars found Rushdie's works congruent with postcolonial themes and based on that he was categorized by most of them as a postcolonial writer.

Despite this measure of fame, however, the notorious Fatwa of Ayatollah Khomeini that targeted Salman Rushdie has set his work *The Satanic Verses* (1988) as well as his other major works in a polemic place. The Fatwa ensured that Salman Rushdie's name as a writer is known around the world, yet, according to Andrew Teverson, the Fatwa has also served to compromise Rushdie's reputation as a writer for two reasons. In the first place, Rushdie's public reputation as a writer becomes affected by the notion that Rushdie "writes exclusively and bombastically about Islam." However, Teverson impugns this notion when claiming that Rushdie's "interest about religion is only one aspect of much more complex body of writing" that has to do with some political and social outcomes such as, to quote a few examples, the "Thatcherite Britain" policy, "the conquest of Moorish Spain by Queen Isabella in the fifteenth century, Christian fundamentalism in contemporary America, and European avant-garde cinema" (5). In the second place, Rushdie's plight has given a certain stereotype to his fiction. The reader gets a notion that Rushdie's novel "is going to be 'heavy', obsessed with theological detail and hampered by political argumentativeness" (5). In fact, Rushdie tackles his religious and political subjects with "levity, irreverence, and humor" (5) in order to create incongruities and disparity from norms. It is not hard on the contemporary acute reader to discover that Rushdie has been trapped within the fundamental religious conservatism of the East and the foreign policy issues of the West because of the fatwa as well as because of the effect of the western ideology on him. Therefore, his novels may contain double perspective, multifaceted and hybrid themes wavering between

his culture and the host culture and have contributed to frame his reputation not only as a postcolonial but also as a postmodern author. By focusing on Rushdie's novels published after he moved to New York in 1999, this study brings into focus not only Rushdie's politics of postmodernism but also his representation of America after 9/11. The thesis examines how Rushdie's recent novels—*The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), are postmodern novels. While references to postmodern western popular culture and production pepper these works, Rushdie manages to analyze the political situations presented in his novels by aesthetically infusing postmodern ideology in his analysis of past and contemporary history and the political incidents as he views them: criticizing the cultural logic of late capitalism and yet being compatible to western ideology. My argument here doesn't refer to the notion that postmodernism might be pro-western. To the contrary, postmodernism is neither pro-colonial nor pro-western but what I have read in Rushdie's recent novels is a criticism of late capitalism. This criticism doesn't necessarily mean that his novels are subversive to late capitalism but shows that Rushdie has not find an alternative to suggest to the hegemony of late capitalism. In addition, Rushdie doesn't deny the effect of western literary tradition on his writing especially when he re-inscribes the styles, techniques, and themes found in American Literature:

There was a point in my life when I was enormously influenced by the history of American literature: the grand epic tradition -- Melville; then the urban tradition of the post-war American writers. I see myself as a city writer essentially. I have a very urban sensibility, I think. So writing of the city, whether it was Bellow's Chicago or Roth's New York, was very interesting to me, and helpful. ("Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn" para 79)

Some scholars, such as Alice Spencer and Florian Stadler, still read Rushdie's recent novels from a postcolonial perspective, thus dismissing not only the wider intercultural matrix of the

novels but also their direct association with postmodern culture and ideologies. I want to express my disagreement with such scholars because, apparently, their argument is built on what has been established, anticipated, and thought about Rushdie's fiction. I want to argue that Rushdie's recent novels analyzed in this study have lost the postcolonial essence when shifting towards tackling themes that are of much significance to the reader of late capitalism. His recent works set themselves in the wide frame of western culture—mainly America—while containing, in the background, images and reflections about India and South Asia. In addition, the themes and techniques found in those novel refer to postmodern culture and ideology that can also be found in the works of many postmodern western writers.

Although *The Satanic Verses* will not be tackled as a major work in my study, I find it worth noting the effect of its publication on the author in order to prove that Rushdie is tilting towards inscribing western ideology in his works especially the ones published after the year 2000. In the Muslim World, taunting sacred subject matters is considered one of the punishable sins; and conductors of this lampoon become apostate in the eyes of Muslim authorities.

According to some critics, like Andreas Hofele and Marlina G. Corcoran, *The Satanic Verses* is a parody that is “placed adjacent to the discourse of power” (Hofele 87) and seeks to determine and asserts the consequences of the abuse of power and authority upon the individual and society. However, the political escalation behind issuing the fatwa was not basically referring to Rushdie's distortion of the image of Prophet Muhammad, which most critics like Mark Edmundson argues, but because the novel trespasses Khomeini's personal dignity. Spoofing the sacred supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and implicitly criticizing the Shia law were the genuine reasons behind Rushdie's death sentence. It was reported that Khomeini has never read the book but was glued to the news to watch the western media covering, discussing, and

analyzing the language, style, themes and forms of the novel; while in Pakistan and Islamic India, and “by their own admission, virtually none of the Muslim protestors had read *The Satanic Verses*” (Corcoran 155). Thus, the so called fundamentalists started demonstrations against publishing, selling, and translating *The Satanic Verses*. Shabbir Akhtar, who resigned from his position as a race relations officer for Bradford Council after the fatwa, argues, in his book *Be Careful with Muhammad*, that the novel treated the Prophet as an “unscrupulous politician” and spoiled the reputation of the prophet’s wives (Booker 42). I think Akhtar’s statement is relatively dangerous and invested with dogmatic insistence on religious idealism and perfection. The Prophet, as I see him, is both a politician and a scrupulous veteran; but like most politicians he was surrounded by hypocrites. To most people, the word hypocrite is interpreted as a man with double perspectives or a liar, but it has an important significance when it is interpreted in Qur’anic terms, where it recalls the group of deniers who lived at the time of Prophet Muhammad. Their role was to overtly assert their heedfulness yet constantly seek conflict among believers and cause the believers to make concessions regarding their belief. As I see it, Rushdie’s ambivalent ideologies, the obscure reception of the book in the East and the West, and the uprising of the eastern anti-western, the western anti-Muslim in response to *The Satanic Verses*, have served the self-satisfaction of those intellectuals, like Rushdie, who imitate western patterns and manage to find him a place among American postmodern writers.

The West developed two extreme viewpoints on the scale of receiving the Fatwa. The first viewpoint is represented by some iconoclasts who supported Rushdie and considered him an emblem of the fight for freedom of speech which is not allowed in the regulations of the despotic regimes of some eastern countries. Both the author and his Indo-immigrant characters of *The Satanic Verse* were considered as seeking to reclaim their protest against social and political

opposition of both the East and the West. M. Keith Booker argues that the support for Rushdie “showed a disturbingly blatant tendency to employ Orientalist stereotypes in describing Rushdie’s condemnation as evidence of the savagery and brutality of Khomeini in particular and Islam in general” (5). Those supporters haven’t only condemned the fatwa but also called to abolish the blasphemy law against it². Centrally, and based on their own social belief, however, those who have bolstered Rushdie in his dilemma ignored the tradition of Islamic culture and the impact of unconstrained liberty of expression. On the other hand, the other extreme condemned Khomeini’s reaction but understood how offensive the book was to Muslims and impugned the arbitrary defense of liberty that may cause distress to minorities or increase racial tension. However, while Intellectuals, artists, critics and thinkers played their roles in denouncing the fatwa, George H. W. Bush commented that “however offensive that book may be, inciting murder and offering rewards for its perpetration are deeply offensive to the norms of civilized behavior” (1). Bush comments on the uncivilized reaction of Khomeini towards Rushdie’s book by emphasizing a stereotypical oriental aspect. Christopher Hitchens, in an article about Rushdie called “Assassins of the Mind,” claims that when President George H. W. Bush was asked to comment on Rushdie’s issue he replied that “no American interest was involved” (73). The writer went further to comment that “even if Salman’s wife of the time (who had to go with him

²As Richard Webster stated in his book *A Brief History of Blasphemy: Liberalism, Censorship, and Satanic Verses*, the issue of blasphemy is a controversial one because in western society “the law against blasphemy is widely regarded as an archaic one – a kind of legal appendix, which still survives in the body politic, but which seems to have no real function” (3). The issue of blasphemy is one of the important examples that highlights the controversy of a notion when it is perceived by two different cultures. Unlike the archaic perception of blasphemy in the West, condemning blasphemy is still practiced in the Muslim World since it is part of preserving the authoritarianism of the monolithic religion and the Islamic state.

into hiding) had not been an American, it could be argued that the United States has an interest in opposing state-sponsored terrorism against novelists” (73).

Of all discussed perspectives, I believe that Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, Khomeini’s fatwa, and the West’s standpoint on this fatwa add to the tension between the secular West and the Islamic East. And although Rushdie’s re-writing of the history of the rise of Islam caused him a death sentence and shake his reputation as a writer especially in the East, we cannot neglect that his re-writing of the real history of the colonized Indian Subcontinent as he sees it put him as one of the most important Indo English postcolonial writers. However, the aim of this study is to argue that Rushdie’s recent novels are not properly considered as postcolonial because they abandon the colonial/colonized binary, the embrace of hybridity, and the theme of undermining the coercion and domination of the colonial country assumed in postcolonial discourse. Instead, his recent fiction is more properly labeled postmodern because it is filled with exuberant postmodern techniques such as alternate history, the hegemony of mode of productions, fragmentation and the fragmented postmodern city and individual, suspicions of grand narrative, and historiographic metafiction³. Furthermore, I will argue that there is an association between Rushdie’s postmodern narrative technique and his political stance when it comes to his notion about America enable Rushdie to question the historical “truth” and allows him to rewrite or reconstruct the world’s contemporary history which then sets in motion the western discourse of hegemony. Contrary to commonplace commentaries about his anti-

³ Surely all of these appear in his earlier novels as well since many scholars like M. Keith Booker, Timothy Brennan, and Mark Edmundson tackle his earlier works from a postmodern perspective. However, these mentioned concepts become prevalent in his works published after the third millennium because of the coexistence of contemporary history, western popular culture, the logic of late capitalism, and the global context that are deployed in these novels. And that is what allows these works to be read as postmodern novels.

colonialist stance, Rushdie's historical and fictional narrative not only assures the hegemonic discourse of late capitalism but also reflects a neo-imperialist political stance. This will be demonstrated by considering Rushdie's manipulation in his novels of alternate history, cultural modes of production such as commodity fetishism and media, postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism, and historiographic metafiction; furthermore, these features of postmodernism which Rushdie uses in his recent novels indicate his position as a postmodern writer.

In addition, I would like to elaborate more on why I chose to study Rushdie's recent works. As a researcher from the Middle East, I was previously affected by the negative aura that highlights Rushdie's image in the East and among eastern scholars. In the year 2000 I was a second year undergraduate student of English language and literature in a course about modernism when Salman Rushdie was brought up into discussion by my professor. Ironically, Rushdie's name triggered nothing in our minds as students. Therefore, the professor reprimanded us for not reading works of literature outside the syllabus while at the same time encouraged us not to read Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* because, as she stated, "it was bad and offensive to Muslims." Then, when I had the opportunity to study PhD in English in America, where diverse literary works that hold different point of views are taught without prejudice in academic courses, this opportunity encouraged me to study Rushdie's works in order to find answers to his negative acceptance in my culture in general and in Islamic academia in specific. I admit that I avoided tackling *The Satanic Verses* in a major chapter, although the reader will find references of this novel throughout the chapters of this study, because this is my first project and this novel in particular was/is highly attacked by intellectuals in the Middle East. Therefore, since my main focus is on postmodernism, which is still taught in general courses among other genres in our

universities in the Middle East, and since I noticed that Rushdie's recent style of writing, ideology, and themes are somehow adjacent to the ones found in postmodernism, I desired to analyze his recent works through applying features found in postmodernism.

Before reading Rushdie's novels as postmodern, a crucial question is to be asked here: What defines postmodernism? A line of postmodern criticism initiated by the critical thoughts of Irving Howe (1959), Leslie Fiedler and Susan Sontag in the mid-sixties, Ihab Hassan (1969 and after), David Antin (1971), William Spanos (1972) and continuing with the criticism of Jean Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Linda Hutcheon, Fredric Jameson and many others has analyzed the culture of the latter half of the twentieth century. Ironically, what combines these critics together is their inability to reach a solid, argumentative, and consensus definition of the term postmodernism. This controversy over a definition of the term has to do with the multiple proliferation of the social, economic, artistic, and cultural trends in the contemporary world. Therefore, constructing a definition of postmodernism is confusing because this trend, as Linda Hutcheon remarks, is "a twentieth-century phenomenon, that is, a thing of the past. Now fully institutionalized, it has its canonized texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories" (qtd. in Kelly 391). In this sense, a postmodern scholar finds many definitions of this trend constructed by many critics and researchers that sometimes contradict each other.

Therefore, part of the study's methodology is to go through some key postmodern characteristics and techniques that can be applicable to the recent works of Rushdie. However, this study does not compare Rushdie with other postmodern writers because, as mentioned above, this is my first project and I want to focus more on Rushdie's ideology and understand his writing and thoughts from a postmodern perspective. Moreover, my main interest in postmodernism and how it dovetails with the contemporary social, economic, and political

situations in the world encourages me to question whether Rushdie is now a postcolonial or a postmodernist writer. However, I admit that the term postmodernism has confused me through my research for the need of finding a helpful definition that would help me understand this literary genre. The definitions represented by famous postmodern critics like Lyotard and Jameson were a little bit confusing. Yet, Linda Hutcheon satisfies this need in my research when she states that “for me, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concept it challenges” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 1). And here, like the postmodern phenomenon described by Hutcheon, I see Rushdie’s works full of contradictions which is confirmed by John Clement Ball’s statement that “Rushdie’s [projects]...[express] Rushdie’s preference for contradiction and multiplicity instead of a totalizing, unitary truth” (218).

Regardless of a lack of conceptual unity in its criticism, postmodern fiction represents many cultural phenomenon. One of its important topics is history. According to Linda Hutcheon “what would characterize postmodernism in fiction would be ‘historiographic metafiction,’ those popular paradoxical works like Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Grass’s *The Tin Drum*, Fowles’s *A Maggot*, Doctorow’s *Loon Lake*, ...Rushdie’s *Shame* and the list could go on “ (*Poetics of Postmodernism* xi). What I find in common between Rushdie and famous postmodern writers like those mentioned above is the use of nonlinear narrative, irony, pastiche, and the list can go on but most importantly what attracts my attention is how Rushdie shares with those famous writers what Hutcheon calls, “the postmodern ironic rethinking of history” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 5). Maybe in his postcolonial writings, Rushdie has used history as a “nostalgic return” which tells about his feelings and his standpoint as an expatriate writer. However, the shift that happened to him after the third millennium locates his approach to

history as that of postmodern historiographic metafiction which Hutcheon refers to: a “critical reworking, never a nostalgic return” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 4). It is worth noting here that I will deal with the theory of historiographic metafiction in details in chapter four which tackles *The Enchantress of Florence* because this novel is about the 16th-century Renaissance and doesn’t tackle the themes of western cultural production of late capitalism found in the other three novels.

Since Rushdie’s philosophical examination of history is apparent in his works⁴, and since Rushdie’s works tackled in this study revolve around a postmodern analysis of history as a reconstruction of the reality of the past which refers to the concerns of the present-day society that I come to see dovetails with western hegemony, I find it important, to begin with, to give a brief summary of how history is approached in postmodernism. History, in general, is a discourse about the past. It is an attempt to dig in the past in order to understand our ambivalent relationship with the present moment and to give a meaning and prediction to the future. The postmodern approach of history is ambivalent. The works of some critics, such as Alexandre Kojève’s *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*, claim that postmodernism has a direct result in the end of history. “The end of history” expression is not taken literally by those philosophers but as Fukuyama puts it, “liberal democracy may constitute the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ and the ‘final form of human government,’ and as such constituted the ‘end of history’” (Fukuyama xi). In other words, liberal democracy found in the western system is the last political system achieved by mankind and it is considered a triumph, especially if a universal homogeneous system is created,

⁴ Many scholars and critics have proved that Rushdie’s novels can be historical novels.

because this would offer a political and economic liberalism to every nation on earth and the rights of individuals and minorities would be protected. In addition, this western liberal democratic system “dictates a universal evolution in the direction of capitalism” (Fukuyama XV) which sustains safer and beneficial outlets for the individual. This perception of history, on the other hand, is not applicable in nonwestern societies since a movement towards an era of freedom especially freedom of speech, liberal political system, and peace is questionable in the third world⁴. On the other hand, Fredric Jameson argues that postmodernity is characterized by a crisis in historicity; the postmodern age has forgotten how to think historically and this exasperating condition “determines a series of spasmodic and intermittent, but desperate, attempts at recuperation” (*Postmodernism* XI). The death of history concerns Jameson because for him liberal democracy combined with capitalism is not a coincidence. Therefore, he asks historians and novelists to construct counter histories and alternative histories since no one can ever attain an absolute truth about history.

Another reading of history in postmodernism, approached by critics like Linda Hutcheon and Fredric Jameson, leads the reader of a historical novel to the result that history does not rely on truth because there is no absolute truth in postmodernism but, instead, history is created, reconstructed, and represented to the reader by the writer as a text. Therefore, some postmodern critics become skeptic and approaching history is marked by relativism. Thus, truth and reality of any historical incident is analyzed differently in postmodernism based on the individual’s experience and interpretation of the world. It is a matter of how we see, not what we see. Postmodernism encourages the reader to accept that everything is a product of specific historical circumstances and is constructed by how the writer and the reader engage with and comprehend history. Therefore, when interpreting the past, the writer is giving his own constructed historical

explanation. It is within this context that Jameson claims that postmodern historicity has a gap between what actually happened in the past and what is really represented in historical texts. He states that “the past as ‘referent’ finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts” (*Postmodernism* 18). Consequently, Jameson observes that “History is not in any sense itself a text or master text or master narrative, but that it is inaccessible to us except in textual or narrative form, or in other words, that we approach it only by way of some prior textualization or narrative (re)construction” (“Marxism and Historicism” 150). What concerns Jameson is that the historical text reconstructs history based on the writer’s interpretation, which tells what the reader wants to hear about the past while it avoids the actuality of a past event. In addition, this approach of history, from Jameson’s point of view, creates a false connection between the past and the present since this reading of history avoids the actual facts happened in the past. Therefore, this false connection between the past and the present associates postmodernism with the cultural logic of late capitalism. In other words, the reconstructed images of the past relates only to the needs and concerns of present-day society which is dominated and shaped by capitalism.

Therefore, based on what has been discussed above, I note that Rushdie’s interpretation of history, depicted in his recent novels, creates a connection between the past and the present that is symptomatic of the postmodern condition and therefore the cultural logic of late capitalism. Rushdie’s recent novels approach history by focusing on reconstructing the past as well as contemporary history from the author’s perspective, a technique which I come to see as dovetailing with the promotion of western hegemony. For example, *The Ground Beneath her Feet* presents an alternate history of rock music that, in the novel, is defined by an Indian musician Ormus Cama and his beloved American Indian singer Vina Aspara and which is

appropriated by America only when it appears that rock music might be a source of hegemony. Rushdie's representation and evaluation of this alternate history appears to demonstrate the author's perception of contemporary history in which America appears to be hegemonic. Foregrounding America as hegemonic force will be one of the main discussions in all the chapters introduced in this study.

Thus it is clear that Rushdie's twenty-first century fiction employs many prominent features described by postmodern critics. Yet, before analyzing Rushdie's recent novels from a postmodern perspective, it is worth reevaluating Rushdie's status as a postcolonial writer. Such a reevaluation will show that Rushdie's position as a postcolonial writer has changed since he began to reside in New York in 1999. Rushdie has always been placed by critics as a postcolonial author whose major focus in his works during the 1980s and 1990s was the center versus margin binary assumed in postcolonial discourses. He is not only a writer who writes in English, he is also a critic and a "god father" to some young Indo-Anglian writers, dubbed as "Rushdie's Children" (Booker 1)⁵ who apply postcolonial discourse in their writings. Furthermore, Rushdie and his "children" have published, in the West, under the well-known publishers of England and America, novels that talk about the Indian subcontinent through the British colonization and the aftermath of independence. Those writers have tried through their writing to change the western audience's notions of South Asia as being subjugated by the power of the West- an image that is dominating in the writings of E.M. Forester. In addition, *The Far Pavilions* (TV mini-series 1984), *Jewel in the Crown* (1984), *War of the Springing Tiger* (1984), all TV serials produced in western media and cinema during the 1980s, have ridiculed and

⁵ *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie* edited by M. Keith Booker was published in 1999; in it he already argues that Rushdie is more of a postmodern writer than a postcolonial one—before any of the texts I focus on was published.

dismantled, from Rushdie's point of view, the grand history of the colonized subcontinent and resurrected the Indian Raj into a "blackface minstrel-show" (*Outside the Whale* 1).

Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, in her article "The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie," commented on Rushdie's tone and stance in his essay "Outside the Whale" as holding "untypical" tone that is different than that of Rushdie's fiction as well as being "authoritative" although "he [Rushdie] tends toward less authoritative and belligerent discourse" in his novels (6). Needham argues that the reason behind Rushdie's pungent criticism is that these Raj TV series and their writers like Kaye and Scott, have misrepresented and distorted the image of South Asia and, as Rushdie proclaims, "end up being ultra- parochially British" (*Imaginary Home Land* 90) in order to please the western viewers by "refurbish[ing] the 'Empire's tarnished image'" ("Outside the Whale" 129).

While the facts of Rushdie's early career seem to situate him as a postcolonial writer, further analysis reveals some flaws of this label. I would rather take some precautions to call Rushdie a postcolonial writer because he, in the first glance, "expressed discomfort with being placed in any single category" (Booker 310). In the second hand, Rushdie's return to history in his recent novels is not a nostalgic, postcolonial return which, is rather, if I use Hutcheon's statement again, a "critical reworking, never a nostalgic return" (4). Writers of postcolonial discourse sometimes mimic the style of their former colonizers and use it as a tool to undermine and challenge the colonial's dominance and to present the powerful agency of the colonized. Although the common notion of Rushdie is that he attempts to rewrite history from various viewpoints, giving an agency to minorities as well as granting hegemony of the Indian subcontinent over the western colonization, in *Shame*, Rushdie writes: "History loves only those

who dominate her: it is a relationship of mutual enslavement” (71). Thus, Rushdie seems to argue that historical narrative is confined, dominated, and represented by the powerful.

In addition, there are some observations tackled by critics that might weaken the postcolonial discourse of Rushdie’s works. For example, in *Midnight’s Children*, overtly, the story of India is a story of a hostile resistance of the grip of the British colonization. However, Timothy Brennan proclaims that in Rushdie’s novel “there is a striking absence of coverage of the anticolonial movement” (qtd. in. Booker 293). The novel narrates “the 1919 Amritsar Massacre in an appropriately horrifying mode but then skips directly to 1942, and then rushes on to independence” (Booker 293). In the novel, India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru rushes to declare the independence of India before taking all the political and economic precautions and before the complete evacuation of British leaders. Consequently, the novel depicts the situation of India after the independence and how hectic the political structure was. If Rushdie is writing the history of India from an anti-colonial perspective, why hasn’t he pictured a better image of India and its politicians? Or, instead, why hasn’t he better attempted to represent the efforts of reformation in his country after the independence? If this is an anti-colonial novel on the surface, at a deeper level it fails as anti-colonial discourse because the political resistance of the colonizer is not clearly depicted in the narration. In this deeper level, Rushdie resents the political resignation of India as well as its political leaders, and I believe that Rushdie’s resentment comes from one major angle, which is that he himself tries but fails to change the constructed image of the Orient in his fiction.

Even more than failing to change the Orientalist image of India, Rushdie abandons postcolonial resistance and surreptitiously yields to the side of western colonization by creating narrators, such as Saleem Sinai, Jibreel Farishta, Malek Solanka who adopt western thought as a

haven to escape the narrow mindedness of their culture. In *Midnight's Children*, for example, Sinai tells the historical story of India to illiterate Padma who, throughout the novel, was asking Sinai to tell his story in “rational, linear narrative” instead of Sinai’s “digressions and time jumps” (Booker 291). What Rushdie seems to tell his readers is that reading history as a simple, linear narrative story is left for the illiterate and common people who only enjoys history as a story; only the intellectual is able to look at the complexity, the nonlinear interruption of history which eventually affects contemporary political events. Therefore, Rushdie’s use of nonlinear narrative technique in reconstructing history is targeted to one type of audience—a western intellectual one—who can follow his verbosity and who could examine new critical, political, and historical perspectives.

Furthermore, Rushdie has imagined India from the angle of the middle class Indian who took a good education affected by western thought, but in doing so he deliberately left the authoritative political angle blank and unexamined—yet another decidedly un-postcolonial move. I believe that Rushdie is relying on the ‘Elite’ middle class Indians, the “inheritors of the British mantle, the deracinated, speaking English, thinking English, dreaming English, Indians terrified, horrified, revolted by Indians and India, yet unable to escape the umbilical bond” (qtd.in Teverson 7-8) to legitimize the western colonization of India. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the story of India before and after the independence as narrated by Saleem Sinai, the illegitimate child of an Englishman called William Methwold. Methwold’s four houses in India were sold to four Indian families who agreed to purchase everything inside the house and the legal transfer of the property is equated with the national transfer of sovereign power. At the beginning, the Indian families were restless to live among Methwold’s clothes and drinks but by the time the independence becomes close, they have learned to accept and imitate Methwold’s

way of living as well as keeping to the accent he speaks. Here, Rushdie depicts how the Indian resistance to the colonizer merely assuages the guilt caused from an underlying sense of national acceptance of the neo-imperialistic hegemony of Great Britain. I don't see this acceptance of the colonizer's way of life as part of the postcolonial discourse which undermines the authority of the colonizer. To the contrary, it is a way to accept the values of the West that are positively different than that of the colonized culture. In addition, Rushdie, in an interview about the film adaptation of *Midnight's Children*, states that there were visible impacts of the British colonialism of India at that time. He notes:

To give the British their due, they built the railroads and roads, and left behind an extremely efficient civil service center, without which India couldn't function. They wrote a constitution totally lacking in religion, which has been a very valuable thing. They left the country in pretty good shape structurally, although a mess in terms of the calamities that were happening. As with America, the founding fathers of the Indian Independence Movement were great men who were available to lead the country into the moment of freedom. India was very blessed by those leaders— people of deep intelligence, deep philosophy, great sophistication and selflessness. (“Salman Rushdie on India's History & the *Midnight's Children* Movie” para 11).

Rushdie acknowledges some key privileges of western colonialism not only stated clearly in some of his interviews but also one can find traces to western privilege in his so called postcolonial texts. In other words, tracing the influence of western narrative and style on Rushdie is quintessential in tracing his abandonment of postcolonial cause. As a middle-class Indian expatriate, Rushdie is not different than the middle-class characters of his novels. He panders to the West by virtue of his use of western narrative techniques of style such as exotic fantasy, magical realism, stream of consciousness, myth, nonlinear narration; and his characters are fluid, hybrid, and malleable. Some might say that many non-western writers adopt the western narrative techniques so why should Rushdie's case be different? Rushdie, in his memoir *Joseph*

Anton states that in the West he felt bewildered about four roots: place, community, culture, and language and “of these four roots... he had lost three” (53). The root of language remains but Rushdie “[appreciates]...the loss of the other roots” (54). His status as a migrant confuses him, as he states in his memoir:

In the age of migration the world’s millions of migrated selves faced colossal problems, problems of homelessness, hunger, unemployment, disease, persecution, alienation, fear. He [Rushdie] was one of the luckier ones... He was worried that his Indian connection had weakened. (56)

Rushdie’s realization that he is losing his Indian connections triggers him to write about the history of India which the author sees as “not cool. [India] was hot. It was hot and overcrowded and vulgar and loud and it needed a language to match that and he would try to find that language” (56). Significantly, Rushdie’s language is described by many critics such as Gregory J. Rubinson as “distinctive” because “[it] is composed of a mix of “British” English, film slang, Indianized English, Caribbean English, youth slang, and many others” (45). One can notice that English language is the language Rushdie uses in his writing yet the reader finds some words from Urdu or Hindi here and there. Postcolonial writers who writes in English have their own justification of using the language of the Empire to fight the Empire back. However, I come to see Rushdie’s use of the language of the Empire because it represents power and this language, unlike Rushdie’s mother tongue, can reach everywhere and can be hegemonic. I find Rubinson’s statement that “one’s national heritage does not pigeon-hole one’s art” significant because this proves, as Rubinson alludes, that “Rushdie has a great deal more in common with Bares than he has with, say, V.S. Naipaul” (27). Moreover, from a look at Rushdie’s interviews since he moved to America, one can notice how he uses the pronoun “We” when tackling a critical or

political issue of America⁶. In addition, in an interview about *The Enchantress of Florence*,

Rushdie asserts that he is a cosmopolitan writer yet is mostly influenced by western literature:

I come from all over the place. I am not a writer like Faulkner, or like Eudora Welty, or Flannery O'Connor, writers who are deeply rooted in a particular small community and who use their lifetime to explore that, grow their literary universe out of that one place... I am from all over the place, a writer who has spent a lot of his life in a lot of different places. I want to use all the colors and voices and shapes available to me... a lot of that has to do with the history of the form, which in the East has to do with, on the one hand, oral narration, and, on the other hand, the tale of wonder. In the West, I am very attracted to the 18th century, the age of Swift and Sterne, and I am very attracted to the Dickensian combination of highly naturalistic background with highly surrealistic foreground. There was a point in my life when I was enormously influenced by the history of American literature: the grand epic tradition—Melville; then the urban tradition of the post-war American writers. I see myself as a city writer essentially. (“Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn” para 79)

As this statement implies, Rushdie dismisses the historical matrix of Indian history tackled with exuberance in his previous fiction when he becomes a city writer and is influenced by American literature. In addition, in his novels, there is no creation of an archetypal “national hero” but his characters have duality inherent in all his narratives who integrates fantasies of their homeland with the reality of western culture. Finally, “the postmodern ironic rethinking of history” found in Rushdie’s recent works may assert the notion of the hegemony of the west through its cultural logic which is ironically desired in the third world. Therefore, through a reading of Rushdie’s fiction of the last decade, I will explore the ways in which Rushdie, rather than offering postcolonial resistance, perpetuates imperialist discourse, via his use of western narrative techniques of style depicted in postmodernism, fits perfectly into the postmodern criteria of “late capitalism.”

⁶ See for example “Salman Rushdie on Terrorism, Intellectual Freedom and Patriotic Act.”

Since the end of the second millennium, Rushdie's themes tackled in his fiction have changed. He uses contemporary history and the stories of our time to examine who we are and how we examine the world. My first chapter analyzes Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) which doesn't depict the history of India alone but tackles the history of western pop culture and rock music during the 1950s and 1960s as an Indian production. Moreover, the novel takes us from India to England to America where its protagonists find themselves trapped in the western part of the globe. We read the stories of characters that live in a fragmented, chaotic world characterized by cultural shifts and political and social tremors.

The main focus in the novel is on the clashes of competing versions of reality and how alternative reality/history articulates them. I argue that the novel is a postmodern work of fiction in the sense that the alternate historical world of the novel shares with postmodernism the critique of the dominance of the late capitalism. The representation of rock music as a cultural production along with the loss of the historicity of Bombay are the result of late capitalism and also assures the western hegemony. Rushdie reconstructs the history of rock music in a way that connects and disconnects real history with the alternative one in the novel. Rushdie does some changes in the real history through applying alternate history that are seen as an attempt to realize that any attempt to reconstruct history remains confined with the real and cannot surpass it. For example, *In Ground Beneath her Feet* John Lennon is given the credit of the rock song "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" which was actually written and released in 1965 by the English rock band The Rolling Stones. Significantly, the world described by Rai Merchant, the novel's narrator, shares much with ours but in many places goes in its own direction: JFK escapes assassination in Dallas; the Nixon presidency and Watergate exist only in a political novel;

Stephen Dedalus is the great novelist of the twentieth century. There is a version or narrative that encapsulates history and we cannot surpass it even if we try to change it: the West is dominant and its domination is unescapable. Another theme I attempt to analyze through discussing the erasure of local history and replace it with a new one is that interpreting history is subjective and it gives the author the authority to use his imagination in order to authenticate his fiction and to draw the attention of the reader to his interpretation of history and politics. The alternate world of *The Ground Beneath* reflects the loss of the historical sense when tackling V.V. Merchant's attempt to interpret Bombay's past through archeology. Thus, the novel's constructed history perpetuates rather than undermines the western hegemonic discourse.

II

Another aspect seen in postmodern fiction is the postmodern phenomenon as a "cultural dominant" (Jameson 56) which I will tackle in my second chapter about Rushdie's *Fury* (2001). I agree with Jameson that postmodern culture has a relationship with late capitalism and cultural media. He states that "postmodernisms have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader's Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel" (65). What I see is that postmodern fiction, as Hutcheon states, "challenges" the effects of mass media but "[doesn't] deny" it (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 6). An essential aim of much postmodern fiction seeks to bridge the gap between the real and the unreal, present the enigmatic omnipresence of consumption, and to question the relationship between individual's identity and media space. Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, for example, documents these mentioned phenomenon which is

concerned with “how the American dream is manipulated by media” (Wilcox 346). Rushdie’s *Fury* also depicts how the individual (the expatriate individual) is manipulated by the American dream which is represented through the signs, images, and codes of media space and desires to be devoured by America. Despite the fact that America’s postmodern cultural production controls the world, the novel illustrates that the individual as well as his artifact tries hard to either participate in decision-making or, if he can be lucky, practices some sort of authority and hegemony on others. Finally, the chapter offers the conclusion that agrees with Baudrillard’s version of postmodernity; there is hardly any space for opposition or resistance because of the supreme hegemony of the controlling system: “Everywhere, always, the system is too strong: hegemonic” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 163). Thus, the individual, whether he is an American or a cosmopolitan, is left with one choice: to ally with and support the hegemonic regime he might condemn.

III

In the third chapter I will deal with important themes addressed by postmodernists: The effect of late capitalism on the intellectual and his art production. One of the key effects of late capitalism is fragmentation. One can trace this impact on the individual, the intellectual, and his art production. Significantly, the art production mirrors the fragmented self of its producer and other cultural productions such as the media. All these mentioned components are controlled, manipulated, if not directed by the logic of late capitalism. Since one can argue that terrorism is also a production of late capitalism, I argue how *Shalimar the Clown* tackles the issue of terrorism in a distinctive way that combines diverse point views. *Shalimar the Clown*, does not analyze September/11 terrorist attacks through focusing on the contemporary incident itself as many western writers such as Don DeLillo and Philip K. Dick do. Instead, this novel takes the

reader back, after so long, to Kashmir, in 1948, where seeds of terrorism happen to develop in that part of the world, to the French resistance group during World War II, and to California in 1990s. My main focus is to investigate how Rushdie's ideology of terrorism is affected by opposing point of views—the western media and the statements of intellectuals who refuse to follow the media's ideology. Rushdie's constructed ideology of terrorism is mirrored in the novel when he depicts the image of the Islamic terrorist as represented in western media while, on the other hand, he introduces us to terrorists who can be seen as postmodern antiheroes (Max Ophuls and Shalimar the Clown). Those antiheroes are a production of late capitalism. In a further attempt to see this novel as an art production, I give a critique of the postmodern city depicted in the novel in the city of Los Angeles and argue how the city and its inhabitants are affected by late capitalism. In other words, the postmodern city becomes a fragmenting space that accommodates mostly with simulation and globalization. This accommodation affects the individual in a way in which it leaves him in a state of fragmentation. This plethora of arguments will reveal how the novel, as a postmodern art production, reflects the postmodern legacy of late capitalism and doesn't attempt to subvert it.

III

The fourth chapter tackles Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) which has linked Renaissance Florence, the new World (America), the Mughal Empire, and the Ottoman Empire in a magical tale. I will argue how this novel is depicted as a postmodern text through relying on the concept of historeographic metafiction. Rushdie's repetition of what has become his signature style, most notably his use of parody when dealing with history, has critically developed in his recent fiction. Rushdie's use of parody brings together his political awareness of what goes on in the world and depicts the author's tendency towards representing both cultures

as similar. These key concepts will reveal that Rushdie's text undermines and deconstructs accepted historical narratives, which have always set the eastern and western histories as binary opposites.

In addition, there is a central intellectual enquiry taking place in parodying the storytelling technique of the *Arabian Nights* as well as parodying other genres like colonialism and postcolonialism. The role historiographic metafiction plays in this novel is to invite the reader to revise the accepted historical narratives, not only questioning their points of view but also questioning what they mean for us today. Therefore, historiographic metafiction becomes a liberating tool because historical novels have a political resonance, especially when it comes to the ideology of the individual's freedom from the dominant authority or any dominant metanarrative.

In conclusion, I consolidate the major arguments presented above and iterate my point that Rushdie's novels that were published after 2000 are of a postmodern aesthetics. His impulse is to give an alternative reading and understanding of the present and the future by deconstructing the traditional acceptance of cultural authority. In contrast with the common notion that his works are congruent with postcolonial literature, Rushdie's postmodern application of alternate history, the media and consumerism, cultural modes of production created by late capitalism, and historiographic metafiction enables him to question the truth of the contemporary global, historical, economic, and political situations and allows him to create his own political stance as a postmodern writer.

Chapter One

The Ground Beneath Her Feet: Plotting History through Obfuscating its Reality.

“In history, nothing is true but names and dates. In fiction, everything is true but names and dates.”

Anonymous

The Ground Beneath Her Feet (1999)⁷ attracts critical attention not only because of its intertextual references, like most of Rushdie’s fiction, or its profound engagement with the themes and concerns of postmodernity, but also because it marks a shift in Rushdie’s writing. According to Anshuman A. Mondal, the shift in Rushdie’s writing “began to emerge in his non-fiction from as early as 1992 but remained embryonic in his major fictional work until the publication of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*” (Mondal 169). His fiction and non-fiction that were published before *The Ground Beneath* deal with the historical and political tensions of the Indian subcontinent and its relation with England from a colonial/postcolonial point of view: They were written during Rushdie’s residence in England. However, when Rushdie moved to Manhattan in 1999, he, as well as “everybody who came from somewhere else,” started living “the experience of not living where [he] started. It changes [him] in all kinds of ways” (Max 2). In addition, Rushdie, has not only relocated himself in America, he also relocates *The Ground Beneath* to occur primarily in America. Rushdie’s novel foregrounds the history of Rock ‘n’ Roll in the 1950s. However, *The Ground Beneath* doesn’t celebrate the factual history of the real world or specifically this music genre during that era, but it gives an alternate historical

⁷ I will refer to the novel as *The Ground Beneath* from now on.

representation to our world. As other alternate history fiction such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and the Paratime world in H. Beam Piper's short stories, *The Ground Beneath* creates a world that is parallel to our world but in which the past events did not occur in the manner that the reader knows them, so that there is a change in the course of the past history. Thus, since the novel is set in America, the novel's alternate history of the world and of Rock 'n' Roll shapes the novel's characterization of America as the author sees and constructs it. I will discuss that the use of the alternate history in *The Ground Beneath* can be seen as a postmodern gesture for two reasons: First, alternate history is considered a "subgenre of the genre of science fiction" (Hellekson 3) which is depicted in the works of most postmodern western science fiction authors who use this technique such as, Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, and H. Beam Piper's *Paratime*. Second, alternate history shares with postmodernism its concerns about resistance which is eliminated by the hegemony of late capitalism manifested in cultural production, and the postmodern loss of historical sense which is also complicit with western hegemony.

The Ground Beneath: science fiction with alternate dimensions.

The alternate history genre⁸ is a "genre of narrative representation" (Rosenfield 4) that appeared in western literature with the publication of Louis-Napoléon Geoffroy Chateau's first alternate history novel *Napoléon et la conquête du monde 1812-1832* in 1836 (Hellekson 13).

⁸ Alternate history genres are also referred to as alternative history, allohistories, uchronias, parahistories, or alternative universe. I will refer to them here as alternate history because, according to Karen Hellekson, "scholars, writers, and editors prefer this term and use it in book titles and critical analysis" (3).

This is not the place to go through the history of the alternate history genre but I would like to refer the reader interested in the history of this genre to Karen Hellekson's book *The Alternate History*. My main interest is to see this genre from a postmodern perspective since it is central to the argument of the whole chapter. According to Hellekson, the alternate history genre investigates the question "what if the world were somehow different?" (3). When this question is asked, a variety of different narrative forms are generated in alternate history. In addition, Hellekson believes that alternate history shares the answering of this question with the science fiction genre and stresses that alternate history is "a subgenre of the genre of science fiction" (3). Hellekson also argues that alternate history resembles science fiction in its use of "history as the moment of what Darko Suvin calls 'estrangement'" (3), and that both genres share "the use of changed historical points to bring about different realities" (4).

Similarly, Rosenfield notes that "alternate histories are essentially defined by an "estranging" rather than a mimetic relationship to historical reality" and "appeared largely in the scattered pulp science fiction magazines" (5). Rosenfield continues that this genre became more popular after World War II and not only "[hails]... from science fiction circles but also from the cultural mainstream" (5).

I want to move to discuss Hellekson's typology of alternate history. Hellekson divides alternate history into three major divisions: (1) the nexus story which includes time-travel-time-policing stories and battle stories; (2) the true alternate history, which may include alternate histories that posit different physical law; and (3) the parallel worlds story, which is going to be the main focus in this chapter. According to Hellekson,

The parallel worlds stories assume that history can change at almost any point, no matter how apparently insignificant. All events in parallel worlds texts exist simultaneously in

one time line or another. Every possible outcome of an event has occurred. Importantly, parallel worlds texts assume the importance of linear time and are less likely to imply that time is circular. Several parallel worlds stories explicitly base their premises on quantum physics. (9)

Based on Hellekson's statement, there is an implication that all historical events that could have occurred did occur but they are masked in another form in the alternate world.

Relying on the discussion of alternate history as a subgenre of science fiction mentioned above, I would like to analyze in detail how Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath* is a work of alternate history work, and thus rightly considered a work of science fiction. In this sense, it looks back to Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus* (1975), which was clearly a work of science fiction. However, it also displays distinctively postmodernist characteristics that set it apart from Rushdie's earliest work. I will start with investigating the theme of "estrangement" that can be depicted in alternate history and science fiction which will prove that this novel can be seen as a science fiction work. Brecht defines estrangement as "a representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (qtd. in Spiegel 371). Darko Suvin, in his writing about science fiction writing, is affected by Brecht's idea of estrangement and how it makes the familiar subject unfamiliar. Therefore, Suvin extends Brecht's ideology of estrangement to tie it to science fiction. According to Spiegel, "Suvin uses estrangement to characterize the relationship between the fictional and the empirical worlds—in this sense, an estranged fictional world is a world containing marvelous elements which are not (yet) part of the world we live in" (371). In this way, *The Ground Beneath* challenges the reader's notions of the familiar by presenting an alternate world that is familiar to our world yet different because of its alternate variations. For example, in the world of the novel, JFK escapes assassination in Dallas; the Nixon presidency and Watergate exist only in a political novel;

Stephen Dedalus is the great novelist of the twentieth century. These are only a few examples of Rushdie's variant forming of historical, political, and cultural changes that sound familiar yet upon closer inspection reveal themselves to be different. Moreover, in the "estranged fictional world" of the novel, marvelous things happen that are not likely to happen in the world we live in. For instance, Ormus Cama speaks to his dead brother Gayomart who apparently lives, after his death, in a parallel world. Gayomart teaches Ormus songs that will establish the latter's career as the King of rock 'n' roll in the novel's world. Further examples of Suvin's "marvelous elements" in the novel are Ormus's ability to live in "two worlds at once" (347) and that he meets a woman called Maria from another parallel world who "[has] found a slip-sliding method of moving between the worlds" (348). Therefore, in the novel the given examples of the "estranged" element of science fiction makes *The Ground Beneath* an alternate history work.

As Hellekson suggests, Philip K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* is "perhaps the best known of all alternate histories" because it "creates a world in which the Axis Powers won World war II" (3). Similarly, Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath* is concerned with the "what if" question from the role of the individual in the history making process. For example, Rai, the narrator of the novel, questions the individual position and the outcome of his choice in this world. He notes, "What if the whole deal—orientation, knowing who you are and so on—what if it's all a scam? What if all of it—home, kinship, the whole enchilada—is just the biggest, most truly global, and centuries-old piece brainwashing?" (176-177). If Rai ponders about the state of the individual as being a "scam" or the biggest lie, then, as Maurer notes, he should think of freeing himself from all the cultural and familial connections (50). Rai believes that "when you dare to let go [these connections] your real life begins" and "you're actually free to act" (177). As a result, Rai, Ormus, and Vina dare to cut their relationship with the East and anything that tie

them to that culture and go to the West to start their freedom. Significantly, Maurer notes that the three “kings” find their “magical place (which is in effect no-place) [which] becomes ‘their element’ and ‘feels better than belonging’” (51). Therefore, the “what if” question that Rai ponders through help him as well as Ormus and Vina to consider their state as individuals in the world and make them refigure the way to better their lives through cutting the bonds with their culture.

Another “what if” question the novel investigates is what would happen if rock ‘n’ roll had been an Indian creation. In his article “Rock Music,” Rushdie states that “rock ‘n’ roll’s rough, confident spirit of rebellion may be one reason why this strange, simple, overwhelming noise conquered the world [during 1950s and 1960s], crossing all frontiers and barriers of language and culture... it was the sound of liberation, and so it spoke to the free spirits of young people everywhere” (*Step Across this Line* 270). In this sense, what the novel tries to imply in altering the history of rock music is that this vivacious music is supposed to be a tool to refute the Eurocentric stereotype of registering Indians or people of the third world as “other.” Moreover, this turn in the history of rock ‘n’ roll music in the novel is imagined to highlight the need to foreground the voice of the oppressed over the oppressor and insist on emphasizing the valorizing international, yet Indian, experience above that of the hegemonic “West”. Based on what has been discussed, the “what if” question that is common in science fiction and alternate history assures the novel’s place as an alternate history work.

Yet, a question should be asked here, are the outcomes the author tries to attempt when changing the historical events in the alternate world of the novel varies from what truly happened in real history? To answer this question, I will base my argument on analyzing the novel through Hellekson’s the parallel worlds story typology. As mentioned above, Hellekson believes that in

parallel worlds story all historical events that could have occurred did occur but takes a different shape in the alternate world. She states that parallel world story avoids the interruption in linear time from, for example, present to past and instead “[moves] from present to the present, resulting in a different kind of chronology” (48). Hellekson’s statement implies that the chronology of history might differ but the outcome remains the same. Parallel worlds story uses the metaphor of the “time- as- arrow” in which “[they] change the focus from one-way-direction of time –the past moving to the future—to a sideways (or crosswise) direction of time, into another “stream” that also moves from past to future” (51). Therefore, the time that is literary simultaneous in parallel worlds appears to be either in the future or the past. In *The Ground Beneath*, the reader knows that Rock music was transported to Ormus by Gayomart, Ormus’s twin dead brother “two days, eight months, and twenty eight days before any one heard it first;” who also has a “satanic” power to pass the “devil-tunes” to his brother from the other side of life (99): an indication that Ormus’s world is the past of Gayomart’s parallel world. As a result, the chronological order of the history of rock music in the world of the novel is different than that in Gayomart’s parallel world in the sense that in the world of the novel rock music is an Indian foundation; while in Gayomart’s world (our world) rock music is derived from African-American traditional music. Yet, the outcome is the same when America in the world of the novel and in real world appropriated rock music and sets it as a cultural mode of its hegemonic society. In addition, parallel worlds stories, as Hellekson suggests, “do not subvert the question of time; rather, they add another dimension to discussions about the nature of time. Most significantly, they posit a multiplicity of worlds that may be virtually identical, right down to people who inhabit them. Only slight differences may differentiate two worlds” (51). Accordingly, the outcome of the historical events is not different when we set a comparison

between the alternate and the real world. In *The Ground Beneath*, Rai, describes a historical period in the novel that is derailed and out of control. Ormus Cama and Vina Aspara, with their rock 'n' roll band the VTO, try throughout the novel to reconcile with the chaotic reality of the world but never comfortably manage to do it: A thing that reflects one of realities about our postmodern age. I come to see that the slight difference in the chronology of the history of rock 'n' roll in the novel doesn't refuse or refute the real history of rock 'n' roll as being a tool to spread the hegemony of the West. Rushdie, in *The Ground Beneath*, has constructed an alternate history of the world which owes much to the real history of the 1950s-1980s.

In addition, Hellekson continues that “because of the nature of the breaks that result in another time line, parallel worlds alternate histories rely on agency, or the bringing about of action by someone, as agents cause actions to happen” (48). The role of the agent is to try to change the chronology of the course of history in parallel worlds in order to solve problems. In the world of the novel, Gayomart, Ormus's dead brother who lives in a parallel world, is the agent who delivers rock 'n' roll music from his world to Ormus's world in order to be an Indian creation. Interestingly, rock 'n' roll as an Indian creation would have been the source of freeing Indians from the categorization of the “other” and set them to participate in cultural hegemony if America had not appropriated it. Another example of agency in the novel is Ormus's role in forming the history of another parallel world. Maurer states that “Ormus ... has visions of another world. In his visions, historical events as we know them have indeed occurred. But ironically enough they are considered to be an effect of his double vision or madness in the world of the novel” (53). Also, Ormus is an agent in the sense that in his dreams “he stands face-to-face with himself on the streets of an unknown but familiar city [Las Vegas of the subterranean world], and listens to what his own dream image has to say ... the worlds endlessly

transforms itself ... and we can assist in that transformation” (145). Moving between parallel worlds, either physically, through vision, or through Gayomart, helps Ormus learn about a hegemonic tool (rock ‘n’ roll) and this knowledge transforms Ormus into a King of rock music in his world. *The Ground Beneath* has the notion of human agency. Ormus steals, in a way or another, a hegemonic tool and make something for himself out of it. In my point of view, the parallel worlds in the novel cannot surpass the notion that the events of history are unchangeable because, as it is mentioned above, the course of history happens in both worlds, whether as a result of Ormus’s “double vision or madness” or the hole in the time that makes individuals like Maria and her caretaker move between worlds. To prove this argument, I find Paul A. Carter’s comment about the role of the agent in parallel worlds story useful. He states that in parallel worlds stories the protagonist “has no free will... Parallel worlds do not resolve the question of free will, because both still exist; the person exerting the free will exists in both, and the past still exists in each world, unchangeable” (qt. in Hellekson 52). Thus, historical events will happen and are inevitable because the past, although it might appear slightly different, “exists” in these parallel worlds and eventually causes the same effect in the present. Based on that, Ormus has no free will to change the course of history when it comes to change its outcomes. And since rock ‘n’ roll as a history did occur in real world yet, chronologically, turned out differently in the alternate world of the novel, the outcome remains the same: it is appropriated by American cultural production to spread its hegemony.

Ormus's Rock 'n' Roll: An alternate history steered by the postmodern cultural mainstream.

Now that I have tied *The Ground Beneath's* alternate history world with science fiction, I want to discuss what alternate history shares with postmodernism and how the novel reflects what both genres share. Rosenfield believes that alternate history genre “reflects the progressive discrediting of political ideologies in the West since 1945” and shares with postmodern movements “the rejection of all totalizing ‘metanarratives’ in the 1970s” (6). With the end of the cold war and what resulted afterwards of ideologies such as the “end of history” and “the death of political ideologies,” alternate history, as Rosenfield adds, is seen as “the emergence of the cultural movement of postmodernism” and postmodernism “enabled [the alternate history] to move into the mainstream” (7). The acceptance of alternate history in the postmodern mainstream happens because they both have a “distinct relationship to history” (7). Moreover, Rosenfield states that “the postmodern movement’s general valorization of “the other” and its attempt to resurrect suppressed or alternate voices dovetails with alternate history’s promotion of unconventional views of the past” (7).

Thus, alternate history shares with postmodernism the tendency to view history in different varieties that are different than the official or dominant narratives of history. They also share the blurring of fact and fiction which can proliferate different narrative forms about the past and highlight the importance of a cause that constructs a plausible effect: A formation that may shape the individual’s understanding of the contemporary world. Alternate history fiction depicts a lineage that makes room for the real and the imaginary to unfold and underscores the importance of the imaginary which is sanctified by the need to tear contemporary history down and rebuild it anew yet still within the boundaries of the real. Here, it will be useful to consider

Rushdie's ideas about history that can be related to literary postmodernism: "history has outlived its historical moment and no longer fulfills any useful role" (*Step Across this Line* 60); therefore, depicting history as it is, it seems, does not fulfil the message Rushdie wants to deliver to the reader in *The Ground Beneath* while alternate history becomes a useful vehicle because it suggests different alternate (hi)stories to find a better explanation of the contemporary exhausted culture that has replaced the ability to distinguish between the real and the fantasy. However, what I am willing to prove is that the reading of the alternate history in the world of the novel is still confined with the outcomes of the real history because Rai, the narrator, who asks "if the world itself were metamorphosing unpredictably, then nothing could be relied upon any more. What could one trust? How to find moorings, foundations, fixed points, in a broken, altered time?," realizes that "the world is what it is" (184). Constructing an alternate history, I think, is a kind of rebellion against the limitations of real history, yet one may not change the outcomes because they are within the frame of the real history. As Rushdie states "history has become debatable" (*Step Across this Line* 60), but what is thereby called into question is not merely the success of historical reality over the fictitious but, more significantly, the disclosing of the outcome that is leading, manipulating, and deploying real and fictitious history to achieve its supremacy. Therefore, as Yael Maurer suggests, Rushdie's ideology of history help us read *The Ground Beneath* as an alternate history work (51).

Since Rosenfield argues that alternate history shares with postmodernism an interest in creating "unconventional views of the past" in order to valorize the "other" and foreground its voice" (7), I want to argue that *The Ground Beneath's* alternate world is supposed to be a tool to subvert reality. However, since postmodernism is seen through Jameson's lens as "the cultural logic of late capitalism," I come to see that alternate history is like postmodernism in the sense

that, on the surface, it urges the individual to subvert official or dominant descriptions of reality and rebel against the effects of capitalism but deep down the individual cannot escape the hegemony of late capitalism. Now I want to discuss the role of rock music history in the novel as it first appeared as a vehicle for resisting Eurocentric hegemony which, when it is appropriated by the postmodern cultural production of the West, turns out to be complicit with western hegemonic authority.

There is a driving, suspenseful plot in the re-writing of the history of rock 'n' roll in *The Ground Beneath* which suggests that history is at stake here, not only in the structure of resistance but the already immutable history of white appropriation and global commodification. Rock 'n' roll set a new agenda in popular music in the second half of the twentieth century and ushered in a social revolution. It was the zeitgeist of the 1950s which tried to unsettle Americans living in an age of anxiety. However, the foundation of this pop music in the novel comes from an Indian musician, Ormus Cama, who, as he claims, determines to change the world through his music (184) but ends up, according to Maurer, "[reaffirming] the West's power" (52) and centering the importance of the hegemony of western culture. Rushdie is aware that Rock 'n' roll didn't show up out of nowhere; Russell A. Potter, in his book *Spectacular Vernacular's: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism*, argues,

From the minstrel shows of the nineteenth century, through the 'swing' jazz cover bands that cashed in on the Jazz craze of the 1930s, to the white musicians who appropriated jump Blues and called it rock-n-roll, African-American arts have always been dogged by the backhanded compliments of exoticization and commodification (4).

It is vital to recognize that African-American traditional music, being decried according to the cultural and philosophical modes of the hegemonic society, has that kind of resistance which anoints the bearers to demonstrate the bitter awareness of the "past" oppressions, and the

“present” cultural discrimination. In this sense, it could be said that Rushdie, who is fully aware of the similarity between Black slavery and the colonized East, gives India the privilege to produce the most effective music of the age, appropriating it “in advance, two years, eight months, and twenty eight days” from the American commodification (*The Ground Beneath* 96). It is as if Rushdie is returning what was stolen from the Black cultural heritage and giving it to another race that share the same peculiar characteristics from the point of view of the superior as an act of resistance. Rai says, “So according to Ormus and Vina’s variant version of history, their alternative reality, we Bombayites can claim that it was in truth our music, born in Bombay like Ormus and me, not ‘goods from foreign’ but made in India, and maybe it was the foreigners who stole it from us” (96).

The Ground Beneath, as Maurer suggests, “becomes a rock ‘n’ roll legend of the postmodern age [...] a re-imagining of both eastern and western (hi)stories” (51). I agree with her indication that Ormus and Vina “are the eastern Version of western classical and popular myths” who “both subvert and reaffirm the West’s power in shaping images of personal and cultural selves” (51-52). To extend Maurer’s indication, I come to see that in the world of the novel, Ormus sees, at first, that rock ‘n’ roll, as an experience, of freedom plays a role in forming his ideology to rebel against the cultural norms which resulted in cutting his connection with all of his cultural boundaries. The music also urges him to find “what is wrong with the world” which appears in his protest-type songs in 1963 (183). Thus, rock ‘n’ roll reflects an experience of freedom on Ormus when he was still in Bombay. However, in his article “Rock Music” Rushdie questions the role of rock ‘n’ roll as an experience of freedom. As a teenager, Rushdie was affected by the urge of freedom transformed to him by rock music. Yet, when he became an adult himself, Rushdie learned that “freedom is dangerous” because “there is that in us which

doesn't want to be free; which prefers discipline and acceptance and patriotic local tunes to the wild loose-haired love-music of the world" (*Step Across this Line* 271).

Rock music, at first, is depicted as a tool to subvert the cultural norms in the East and the West. As a matter of fact, in all over the world rock 'n' roll music genre has been attacked by people because it undermined the traditional doctrines of familial, social, and national affiliation (Altschuler 6). In the late 1940s, for example, American parents, media, and authoritative institutions linked "juvenile delinquency," practiced through erotic dancing, weed smoking, and mass mania, with their attachment to rock music. Some went further to claim that this kind of music is a "tool in a conspiracy to ruin the morals of a generation of Americans," while others declared that rock 'n' roll was "a communicable disease" because it urged youth to show some mock-satanic sorts of insecurity and rebelliousness towards the long believed norms of society (Altschuler 6). Similarly, Indians's reception of rock 'n' roll was not better than that of the Americans. Rushdie reflects his mother's as well as Indian mothers' fear upon the invading phenomenon in his article "Rock Music" (April 1999). He notes:

After she became aware of my fondness for Bill Haley, Elvis, and Jerry Lee Lweis, my own alarmed mother began eagerly to advocate the virtues of Pat Boone, a man who once sang a sentimental ballad addressed to a mule. But singing to mules wasn't what I was after. I was trying to imitate the curl of Persley's lips and the swoon-inducing rotation of his hips, and I suspect boys everywhere, from Siberia to Patagonia, were doing the same. (*Step Across this Line* 270)

In the novel, attacking rock 'n' roll is echoed when Ormus's father frames much the same reception in relation to music and its performers especially when he "began to hold music responsible for the world's ills and would even argue, in his cups, that its practitioners should be wiped out, eradicated, like a disease, Music was a virus, an infection, and music-lovers were

comparable to those globe-trotting sexual immoralists whose nameless activities had resulted in the global spread of syphilis” (38). Which is to say that the interconnectedness between the three views suggests an ultimate interest of fighting the divergent stream of rock ‘n’ roll quite characteristically to preserve and constitute the cultural stability of the pre-existing tradition.

Although Ormus, uses rock ‘n’ roll as a tool of resistance when he was living in Bombay, after he moves to America, this music, like America’s “big corporations”(441), becomes a reflection of the hegemony of the American capitalist society. One might ask how Indian rock ‘n’ roll music could be responsible for the global political and economic hegemony. My understanding of the novel reveals two answers to this question. First, when Ormus moves to America, he, not only relocates spatially from Bombay to New York, but also relocates his ambition to be driven by its “power and wonder, the place where the future was waiting to be born. America! America!” (100). He also believes when he first arrive to America that “ this boy from Bombay who will complete the American story, who will take the music and throw it up in the air and the way it falls will inspire a generation, two generations, three” (252). Ormus, it seems, dreams of owning the city of New York, from which he will own the whole world through the West’s cultural dominance represented in rock ‘n’ roll. Second, this question can be answered through time discrepancy between two colliding worlds in the novel. Rock music was transported to Ormus by Gayomart, Ormus’s twin dead brother “two days, eight months, and twenty eight days before any one heard it first;” who also has a “satanic” power to pass the “devil-tunes” to his brother from the other side of life (99). I would like to suggest that maybe Gayomart, after his death, resides in a parallel world that is two days, eight months, and twenty-eight days ahead of Ormus’s world. Therefore, one might predict that Gayomart is stealing the most effective phenomenon from that analogous yet unsynchronized world which symbolizes

our real world in order to give India some sort of power to be interconnected with global control. Later, when Ormus and Vina establish the fictional band VTO, it becomes an alternative hegemonic force to the contemporary cultural dominance of the West.

Stephen Morton argues that “the fictional re-writing of history of rock ‘n’ roll could be understood as an example of what Rushdie calls disorientation in [the novel] because it decenters the importance of American and British culture in the history of global modernity” (107). I question Morton’s statement here because since Sir Darius Cama bans music in his house, and “all India- Radio was forbidden to play western popular music,” America is the “open-sesame” to Ormus to fulfill his dream (91, 59). It is also recognized, in the novel’s real world and fictionalized world that the West is driving the world’s mass culture of which rock culture is a part; therefore, the creation of any cultural product must be taken to the West and must speak English in order to be disseminated and recognized globally. There is also recognition of the fact that non-western cultural product will always be categorized as non-western and it is not only the West that constructs this notion: it is the “other” culture that keeps reminding itself of its locality and its inability to be conceptualized within the framework of power. India, the homeland of Rushdie, Ormus, Vina, and Rai, colludes with the whole world to prevent Ormus from extending pop cultural music from India. Rushdie, implicitly, shows his averseness of what his homeland actually deprives him from while is given to him on a golden plate by the West: fame, recognition, and power.

The western representation of non-western cultural products has a greater force, not only in exposing them internationally to be experienced by others, but also as a guarantor of the powerful control of global capitalism. Although Rushdie attempts to direct the reader’s attention to the concept that rock ‘n’ roll cannot be owned by any one nation (*Step Across This Line* 270),

rock 'n' roll in *The Ground Beneath* becomes an American mediation in postmodern time between capitalism and the world and also, as Maurer indicates, "reaffirms the West's power" (52). One example of this cultural hegemony appears when Rai describes how the war between America and Indochina, a pseudo-representation of Vietnam, ends:

My idea was that the war in Indochina hadn't ended at the time of the ignominious U.S. withdrawal. They'd left a wooden horse standing at the gates, and when the Indochinese accepted the gift, the real warriors of America- the big corporations, the sports culture of basketball and baseball, and of course rock 'n' roll- came swarming out of its belly and overran the place. (441)

Rai describes rock 'n' roll as an American warrior and since it is, fictionally, famous at the time of war and Ormus is the master of it, Ormus shares in spreading this American hegemony. I don't want to deny the fact that Ormus, in America, has tried to use his music as a tool of resistance especially when America is at war with Indochina. He, during the war, composed critical, enraging songs about the American war, and turning on the Americans' anger towards the country's international policies in Indochina. However, Ormus is asked to leave America within sixty days because of his political stance which is against America's policy. He understands that "he's up against power on a scale he's never encountered before, a power so great it can undo the good work of [him]" (395). Realizing the greatness of the power of America's hegemony, Ormus decides to consent and he uses three lawyers to appeal the court's order and states that "America is a place to live in... I don't want to scoot in and then duck out with the loot" (395). Ormus thus reinforces the idea that a foreign celebrity, even if he is the master of the world's most famous phenomenon, cannot be the figure representing western liberalism unless he relocates his ideology to align with that of western hegemony. Similarly, Rushdie's fictional work during the 1980s articulates postcolonial dimension, attacks the

hegemony of the West, and fights racism because it has to do with the relationship between England and the East. However, his articles collected in *Step Across This Line* between 1992-2002 centers America as the super power and unfolds the “fanatic, tyrannical, intolerant enemies of us all and of freedom in specific in which America is “ the best current guarantor” (297-8).

The novel depicts rock ‘n’ roll’s reinforcement of western hegemony through reflecting the duplicitous nature of a celebrity who faces contradictions and conflicts between what he believes to be right and what authorities want him to represent. Ormus’s songs are “of the protest type, idealistic, strong... [he is] of the party that believed there was more wrong with the world in general than its ordinary citizens” (183). His anger at a world that seems to be falling apart yet pretending that everything is fine intersects with what the West wants: That is to show its nation that there are no upheavals inside and they should not care about what is beyond the peripheries. Rushdie, through Rai’s meditation over a recent earthquake, states:

In the West...[t]he scars left by the quakes are being transformed into regeneration zones, gardens, office blocks, cineplexes, air ports, malls...In the South, however, the devastation continues...To many third-world observers it seems self-evident that earthquakes are the new hegemonic geopolitics. (553-4)

In this sense, while Ormus is using rock ‘n’ roll as a means to resist the seismic events of the West, he comes to realize that, after all, the declarative determinism of the West or America is the only leader and controller of global events and he has nothing to do but to consent. This is made clear by Rai who used to listen to Ormus singing “this isn’t how things should be,” and falls into unnerved dream then wakes “fast and hard...it’s ok. Only a waking dream. The World is what it is” (184).

Furthermore, rock 'n' roll is powerfully fueled through frustration. Rushdie imprints this paradox in the novel in the subplot of Ormus's love relationship with Vina Aspara. Ormus, readers learn, first meets Vina in India; they fall in love and he promises to marry her when she turns 16. Certain upheavals lead Vina to escape to America and leave Ormus unable to follow her because of his Indian passport and poverty. After the death of his father, Ormus's mother manages to take her family to England where Ormus cuts his umbilical cord with "*Wombay*, the parental body" (100), as Rai calls this city, to start his way in the Western World. After ten years Vina finds Ormus and brings him to America to establish the VTO band. Ormus asks Vina to marry him but she refuses claiming that she cannot be committed to one man. Witnessing Vina's infidelity has not prevented Ormus from insisting on marrying her. The couple decides to marry ten years from now, "until she is thirty-seven years old and he has turned forty-four, he will not touch her or be touched by her" (370). The love narrative fulfills several functions in the novel. It reflects the complexity of the western hegemony. The ten year contract between the lovers is deeply imbricated in the politics of authority: Politically as a truce between fighting parties. The uncertainty about the boundaries of each party and the homogeneity between those parties signifies that the dominant party is the one that exists and it is impossible not to speak without annihilating the other. When Ormus and Vina go on stage, "Ormus stands with his back to the audience, facing his fellow musicians like a conductor...while she yells out a number to the audience, which everyone knows by now is the number of days that have passed since she and Ormus had sex" (385). Vina is facing the audience, glamorizing, dominating, and manipulating the audience's beliefs of her and Ormus's love relationship while Ormus is hiding and consenting to Vina's challenges. Vina, the American Indian is saturated by America's role of

dominance; Ormus, the Indian, still learns how to lead. It is here that their music and their body language on stage best express the real history of the hegemonic West over the world.

Another attempt to understand the western hegemony in rock 'n' roll is symbolized in the death of Vina Aspara. Her death on Valentine's Day, 1989 brings to mind Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa that was launched against Rushdie after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie often builds versions of details from his own life into the lives of his characters. Indeed, this climactic event in Rushdie and Vina's lives alike engender a change in the real and fictitious worlds. Rushdie was forced to hide from his persecutors, was protected by England and America, and afterwards, started re-examining his political and ideological affiliations. On the other hand, Vina dies by an earthquake after she leaves America to Mexico to re-examine her life and career with Ormus. The author throws himself into the arms of the West to seek protection while Vina dies because she leaves the protected arms of the West and heads towards Mexico. Both life and death have changed the world. Overnight, people all over the world confine themselves in the image of Vina. Similarly, Rushdie has become to be seen by liberals in the West and in the East as a figure representing freedom of speech. What is significant about the meaning of Vina's death and Rushdie's death sentence is Rushdie's attempt to divide the world into two parts. The majority reasserts the dominance of Vina even after her death and calling her the "liberating force" (483). On the other hand, the small part of the world embodied in "islamist women wearing birdcage shrouds" see the death of Vina as a revelation of "the moral bankruptcy and coming annihilation of the decadent and the godless Western World" (483). This division is nothing but another form of western hegemony deployed in postmodern consumer capitalism. Rai narrates that Vina's living memory is transformed into a property; a Vina doll "that sings a stupid song until its stand first begins to vibrate, then cracks open and gulps her down" (486).

The overall impact of Vina's death resembles in a way the overall impact of the postmodern condition. Groups share a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of sense of grounding and "commercial interests" use this incident to silence the louder voices that are asking for resistance and gear them towards safeguarding hegemony. Although Ormus has been longing for resistance and fighting against the world's messes, his attempts are deflated by the amorphous, boundless, and chaotic world and accordingly, he fails to protect and save Vina from her inevitable death because he has this absence of a rock-bottom level of courage to change the world. But Vina has changed the world after her death through her songs and image doll. Comparably, Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* was banned and his writing about himself and the debate with and against the fatwa are deployed to silence the voices that attacked Rushdie's book in the name of freedom of speech.

Somewhat paradoxically, Ormus and Vina are confined by the conventions of their own culture as well as being exploited by the West without being able to articulate their own sense of choice. Rachel Falconer states that "Rushdie's characters lack such freedom of action, are crazily shaped by external forces, and are frequently borne away by macrocosmic, historical pressure" (471). Whether one sees those characters as constrained by the hegemony of late capitalism or their actions are marked by a politicized struggle for meaning, the materiality of their situation is at odds with their significance. That is to say, America struggles to keep the world under its own hegemony while pursuing an image of a country that is diplomatic, free and just. It is a historical political methodology after all and Rushdie's incorporation of the historical value of rock 'n' roll reveals the paradox of such phenomenon that overtly is seen as highlighting the power of the voices of groups whose view of history are commonly ignored or erased, yet at the same time governed by the dominant first world paradigms. Suffice it to say that, as a postmodern writer,

Rushdie foregrounds political concerns of the world that is both critical and complicit with the dominant structures of consumer society. This leads us to the possibility of attempting to erase local history and construct an alternate history that perhaps might come true at some point in the future as a historical truth.

The Ground Beneath shows some historical figures in different situations. For example, in the alternate reality of the latter novel, the attempted assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963 fails- although another would succeed several years later- and England, like America, is fatally entangled in Indochina. Rushdie takes famous novel characters and narrators and present them as popular writers of the moment: Philip Roth's Nathan Zuckerman, Joseph Heller's Yossarian, and James Joyce's Stephen Daedalus. John Lennon is given the credit for writing the rock song "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" and Lou Reed is a woman. I want to suggest here that this alternate representation of the lives of those historical figures that Rushdie has constructed is still circular and repetitive. Rushdie's deliberate inversion of the real fictional writers and replacing them with their famous narrators remarks a new and alternate revision of the western history in Ormus's fictionalized world which perpetuates the same pattern of the real World. For example, Stephen Daedalus is James Joyce and vice-versa, one is real while the other is a self-reflexive fantasy and both expose the imaginative maneuvers of the interpretation of the past and considers the power play in the politics of the age. Some might refute my interpretation by proposing that Rushdie points out, in this alternate history novel, that all fictions are in a sense alternate history, all fictional worlds being alternate realities that are not the same as our "real" world.

The Ground Beneath: an alternate history and the postmodern loss of historical sense

As mentioned above, alternate history and postmodernism share concerns about history. And since I argued that the alternate history of rock music in the world of the novel fails to be a tool of resistance and follows the aestheticism of the current cultural dominance, in this section I want to argue how alternate history shares with postmodernism the loss of historical sense which is confined to the cultural production of the West manifested in the erasure of Bombay's local history in the novel.

Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, writes about the "disappearance of a sense of history" in the postmodern age (125). His book begins with his statement that "it is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think of the present historically in an age that has forgotten to think historically in the first place" (ix). He argues that postmodernism in its "random cannibalization of all the styles of the past" creates "a loss of historicity" (18). In this sense, authors who tackle history in their fiction try to understand the world and to overcome this loss of the historical sense. However, as Jameson argues, those authors fail in this attempt because of "a historically consumer's appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself" (18). Historical fiction, as Jameson argues, does not produce new ideas to understand history due to the association of the history of the past with the development of capitalist society. Jameson's argument reflects the mode of alternate history. Alternate history, as I argued before, fails in its attempt to create imaginative alternate versions of the present history through breaking the limitations of the real because it is confined with the capitalist cultural dominance.

The alternate world of *The Ground Beneath* reflects the loss of the historical sense when tackling V.V. Merchant's attempt to interpret Bombay's past through archeology. V.V. Merchant, Rai's father, is an archeologist who finds himself attached to the history of Bombay. He "dreamed of the past. That was his promised land. The past was truth, and like all truths, it lay hidden. You had to dig it out. Not just any past: just the city's. V.V. was a Bombayite through and thorough" (59). Through examining the archeological history of the city V.V. Merchant has the potential to demystify the social relations and practices of archeology and history as well as to preserve conventional ideological space for the nation in understanding history. Although Merchant seems to dig for the mysteries of the entire Universe that are contained within Bombay's ancient ruins, he competes for space and recognition with the "rest of India [who] held no interest for Vivvy" (60). Apparently, the government doesn't help Rai's father in accomplishing what he is trying to do; i.e., preserving the past history of the city because, Rai states,

For twenty years, through one of the greatest upheavals in the history of nation, the end of the British Empire, my father, architect, excavator and local historian, burrowed away into the underground memory of the city the British built... for Bombay forgets its history with each sunset and rewrites itself anew with the coming of the dawn... In those days of upheaval the ground itself seemed uncertain, the land... seem to cry out for reconstruction, and before you took a step you had to test the earth to see if it would bear your weight. ... and if my father found the uncertainty too much to bear, if he dug himself into the past, seeking fixity in knowledge, seeking solid ground beneath the shifting sands of the age, well, there's no shame in that. (62)

The fixity in perspectives often does not support Rai's perceptions and opinions since he is part of the city the British built. Merchant's consistent research for fixed truths shows how partial, conventional, and dismissive to all alternate forms he is. Consequently, he and Rai see no shame in embracing the "objective" truth of orthodox history. Rai's father indulges himself in the role

of a historian who falls into what Collingwood refers to as “imaginative sympathy” (Fleishman 5). However, up to this point, Rai is still attached to this authoritative nature of history and his perceptions of the world are limited, conventional, and untalented. The reader learns later that Rai has become affected by his mother’s ideology of developing a malleable nature that faces the uncertainty of the modern world. This ideology is manifested in her dream to build a skyscraper, a borrowed western architecture, and to start building it from the top down, an alternative construction of an already existing phenomenon, I will elaborate more on this idea later in the chapter.

Therefore, by repudiating local self-awareness of the historical consequences of Bombay’s ancient ruins, the narrator is aware that history is in a constant flux, created by the state and the political “momentous nature of those years” (62); it is, at this period, often virtually impossible for alternative views to be heard and accepted by the locals. On the other hand, the production of local historical knowledge is seen as a dangerous impediment to unlimited access to potential resources, political awareness, and local hegemony. If excavation of the landscape is allowed or encouraged, it could provide a vastly enriched understanding of Indian history, authenticity, and hegemony rather than claiming the state to be a British creation. This suggests that the state is not ready to empower its history nor ready to construct a productive understanding of its history. The alternate version the state and the individual (Rai’s mother is an example) attempts to create is associated with the cultural production of the western hegemony (skyscraper, a borrowed western architecture).

The pressures working against conventions and orthodox history compels Rai to try to assimilate a fragmentary present into a unified past. Merchant has always wanted his son to be an architect and excavator. As Merchant tries to convince his son of the value of digging into the

past history, Rai remains silent showing how radically his perception of history is different than that of his father. Merchant passionately argues,

Comprehension of historical appurtenance... reveals the human factor...see where people lived and worked and shopped...and it becomes plain what they were like.” For all his digging, Vivvy Merchant was content with the surface of the world. I, his photographer son, set out to prove him wrong, to show that a camera can see beyond the surface, beyond the trappings of the actual, and penetrate to its bloody flesh and heart. (80)

Rai is anxiously aware that counter perspectives, like Vivvy Merchant’s, supplements his own but he refutes them believing that what is beyond is always more convincing. This sort of dialogue is essential because it brings the attention of western perspectives that challenge those who still believe in the power of local resources. Moreover, the latter often finds it difficult, if not impossible, to gain an audience or acceptance in the West since their historical enquiries do not comply with or no longer fits in the canons of the dominant imperialistic paradigms. Similarly, when Rushdie digs into the historical past of India and Islam in his fiction during the 1980s, which is believed to be confined to the author’s personal trajectory, the West supports Rushdie’s historical representation. However, his fiction at that time blend features of several themes in an unstable or ambiguous combination. Rushdie opens the door for discussing the potentials of history to challenge dominant paradigms in conventional historiographies based on the colonial, neocolonial, and imperialistic perspectives. When this alternate version fights the western hegemony and becomes a repeated motif in his fiction, his public reputation as a writer becomes affected⁸. Therefore, as malleable as Rai, Rushdie, in my point of view, writes *The Ground Beneath* as an attempt to gain this audience back. But what might be at stake is that using the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house sets Rushdie’s recent fiction in ambiguous categories. Rushdie, in *The Ground Beneath*, uses the oppressive structures he once

rejected in his post-colonial fiction and makes them his own terms of reference to submit western ideology over the world which might questions the ideology behind his so called post-colonial fiction. Therefore, the author might appear as an intellectual accomplice to British colonialism in the past, the American hegemony in the present, and at the same time, destroys an idyllic image and mythical component of the Indian identity.

I want to add another creative art, discussed in the novel that helps in erasing the local history of Bombay and sustaining the western hegemony. As Rai doesn't have the potential to be a musician or an architect, he becomes fond of photography. The reader becomes aware that Rai, after returning from a photographic assignment in Vietnam, sounds rather American and his photography, affected by western cultural production, becomes "[his] way of understanding the world" (210). And since time in the novel is not linear, Rai takes the reader back and forth in his narration; the reader questions the photographs Rai has taken after the death of his parents. Rai narrates:

When my mother died I photographed her, cold in bed. Her profile was shockingly gaunt, but still beautiful...she resembled an Egyptian queen. I thought of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut...When I made eight-by-ten prints of the photograph I liked best, I wrote "Hat Cheap Suit" on the back..

When my father died I took his picture before they cut him down...most of the shots avoided his face. I was more interested in the way the shadows fell across his dangling body, and the shadow he himself cast in the early light, a long shadow for a smallish man. (210)

Rai's mother has always been his source of inspiration as the reader comes to learn while his father is the representative of historical tradition. Lady Merchant, as mentioned previously, is the one in the Merchant family who first defies tradition and tries to create something new, sand skyscrapers. That's why after her death, Rai is shocked to see her profile gaunt. Comparing her image with the Egyptian Pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut has much significance to the idea of the

locals erasing their own history. According to Egyptologists, Hatshepsut was one of the prolific builders in ancient Egypt although building projects were not common to the already established buildings of the Queen's predecessors. Therefore, both women brought newness and creativity to the field of architecture. Moreover, Hatshepsut reined for twenty-two years which was longer and more prosperous than other women in the Egyptian Pharaoh dynasty. Portraits and statues of the queen always show her face and the upper part of her body; the same might be recognized in Rai's photographs of his mother. However, there is something strangely touching and significant about the name Rai has written behind the pictures. It doesn't only tell about the physical resemblance of the two women, it also foregrounds the difference in the two women's recognition: The former is a potential queen while the latter is wasted in a "cheap suit" and no one ever, from her people, notices the creativity of building skyscrapers. Skyscrapers isn't known in India at the time the novel describes and everyone from the locals even Vivvy Merchant himself ridicule the idea of such an architecture. Another aspect of Ameer Merchant is that her creative thinking of finding lucrative sources to bring money while her husband wastes this money through gambling sets her as the leader and provider for the family. She has always ruled the family and taken care of it while Vivvy being busy digging Bombay's ruins and gambling. Immediately, before his mother's death, Rai gets to understand that his father's authoritative, traditional ideology is an obstacle standing in Rai's way of understanding the modern world.

On the other hand, Rai photographs his father's dead body avoiding the face which indicates Rai's awareness of the death of authority and patriarchy, and the loss of the sense of history. After the death of Ameer Merchant, Vivvy Merchant couldn't handle the responsibilities nor face his debts so he committed suicide. Ending his life reflects the hidden ties of familial,

traditional, and national anachronistic ideologies of the local culture. This reminds us of Rai's, Ormus's, and Vina's willingness to cut their relationship with their culture. In other words, Rai's recognition of his father's "smallish" body compared to his "long shadow" explains much about the relationship between Vivvy's real achievement and the delusional dreams he has been living with.

There is little doubt, nevertheless, that Rai's intention is to stimulate the reader to pick up the stereotype of Indian people through photographing "inert figures who were everywhere sleeping on the hard pillows of the sidewalks," "political slogans," "whores," and "strangers' funerals" (211-212). Moreover, outside the cinemas he "examined the faces of audiences emerging from dreams into the pungency of the real, with the illusion still hanging in their eyes" (213). Sometimes, he runs away from people who "pursued [him] by insults and stones" accusing him of murdering and assassinating the people they mourned. His potential after the death of his parents is unleashed precisely because of the ambiguous role played by Rai's images in the struggle first to identify, and then later to erase the local history of his race. His portraits become visual representations of his race, a stereotype to their norm of living, and their oscillation between the real and the imaginary. His interest in "compos[ing] pictures with sharply delineated areas of light and dark, . . . with such manic care that the light area of one image corresponded precisely to the darkness in another" (211) coincides with a period in which his photography moved from the enthusiastic pursuit of investigating local history to an almost equally fervent erasure of this history.

From this evidence and Rai's own statements, it appears that Rai is caught in an apocalyptic split between "Wombay's" local history and a pseudo history, along with a third possibility, a transcendent western goal that requires present engagement of history. Rai is sent

on a mission to get some photos about a scandalous Indian farm owner called Piloo Doodhwalah who cheated rich Indians and invested their money in a scam business. During that mission, Rai couldn't get any photos and was imprisoned along with another Indian photographer who has been killed by Piloo. Rai finds the photos the other photographer took, manages to escape, and becomes famous nationally and internationally. As a result, Rai is invited to join "the world-famous Nebuchadnezzar photographers' agency" which was founded by a French photographer along with the "American Bobby Flow, 'Chip' Boleyn from England and a second French photographer" (242). Thus Rai has not only unleashed a scandal about his home country to acquire a name in the West, but he has appropriated and literally "developed" someone else's narrative of history to be indulged in the modern world. Of course, Rai's opportunity to go to the West and start his real life and career after unfolding a national scandal attracts our attention to the same effort Rushdie has done to gain the approbation of the West. Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) records a composed interpretation of the history of Islam which many critics in the Islamic World who refute this book were afraid that the effect of this discourse itself may function as a solid source to this history. In other words, both Rai and Rushdie use real incidents in their country and history; the former spreads a national scandal to the West, the latter composes a scandalous interpretation of history, to assure the western effort of distorting and erasing local history.

In this novel, Rai, the photographer, and the photographed subjects are seen as intervention rather than a work of art, an artistic creation that manipulates truth and creates a new visual language in the new era of image. Lutz and Collins in their book *Reading National Geographic* claim that "the source of many photographic contradictions, highlighting the gaps and multiple perspectives of each person involved in the complex scene. [They] are the root of

much of the photograph's dynamism as a cultural object, and the place where the analyst can perhaps most productively begin to trace the photograph's connections to the wider social world of which it is a part" (25). The photographs record moments of the lives of the subjects, their social conditions, and their identity as it appears at the moment the photo is taken. Then it is left to the reader of those images, who now observes, classifies, and controls those photos, to predict the meanings through uniting those fragmented images together. But as I mentioned earlier, the photographer chooses what to photograph and it all depends on what he beholds; therefore, the reader is directed and controlled by the photographer's interpretations. Rai's stolen photos as well as Rushdie's interpretation of history in *The Satanic Verses* are disavowal of a socially sanctioned identity. It is an aesthetic investment of the fantasy of fragmented images and historical interpretation. After leaving the photos of dead bodies behind, Rai dis-identifies himself with the local history of his country through the dead photographer's images that give him the credit to become accepted in the West. He steals the privilege and fame of something that does not belong to him; from that point he shares with the West stealing of cultural products and appropriating them to fit their purposes and goals. Like Ormus Cama, Rai, by lingering through the ambivalence of complicity and resistance, resolves his problem by leaving Wombay and head to the West to start "[his] life as a man" (243).

The Ground Beneath's alternate history with its association with science fiction, the depiction of an alternate history of rock 'n' roll, and the loss of historical sense manifested in erasing the local history of India overstretches the postmodern mainstream of affirming the western hegemonic ideology through cultural production. Through creating alternate worlds, with the blending of the imaginative and the real, the novel attempts to produce a perception of history which significantly resides within the representational capacity of the real historical event

as being complicit with western hegemony. Therefore, in the novel these attempted alternate versions of the real history assure that the author's imaginative history is confined with the real and cannot surpass it. What Rushdie attempts to provide the reader through the use of alternate history is an access to history, the real history that might be chronologically different but turns out to result the same effects. I think Rushdie, as a postmodern writer, thinks that the loss of totality in history is a good thing because totality is simply an illusion. The postmodern writer needs those gaps to fill them with his interpretation of reality, to foreground differences in cultures and values, and to make those interpretations an alternative narrative of the world. Rushdie's ideology here in *The Ground Beneath* is that the current master narrative always has a certain fictional quality when it claims to tell the whole truth in a single story: Everyone is controlled by western cultural hegemony.

Chapter Two

Children of America and Coca-Cola: Media and consumerism in *Fury*⁹

"We'll tell you any shit you want to hear. We deal in illusions, man. None of it is true. But you people sit there day after day, night after night, all ages, colors, creeds, we're all you know. You're beginning to believe the illusions we're spinning here. You're beginning to believe your own lives are unreal. You do whatever the tube tells you. You dress like the tube. You eat like the tube. You raise your children like the tube. You even think like the tube. This is mass madness, you maniacs. In God's name, you people are the real thing, we are the illusion. So turn off your television set. Turn them off now. Turn them off right now. Turn them off and leave them off. Turn them off right in the middle of the sentence that I'm speaking to you now. Turn them off!"

In the movie *Network* (1976), fictitious newscaster Howard Beale's description of television.

Fury, published a few months before 9/11, warrants critical attention as a text that continues to mark a shift in Rushdie's ideological thoughts for now its setting New York, while India and England appear as flashbacks in the narrator's memories. However, the novel was negatively received among some British reviewers, such as Boyd Tonkin, who calls it "a collective verbal mugging unequalled in its scorn, its savagery; yes, in its sheer fury" (1). In addition, Brian Finney reads it "like a book that was written fast"; a claim that is based on Rushdie's statement that it "[came] out of nowhere and . . . insist[ed] on being written" (1).

Rushdie's *Fury* discusses the individual's plight in living in a postmodern time in a capitalist city. The novel revolves around Malik Solanka, a 55-year old Indian English Professor

⁹ This title was inspired by Jean-Luc Godard. It is arguably the most famous quotation from his film *Musculin Feminin* "This film could be called The Children of Marx and Coca-Cola", which is actually an inter-title between chapters and acts as the thesis of the film. I was inspired by this title because it compares between the 21c century's generation or children and Rushdie's children in *Midnight's children* in the way in which the Children of coca cola are affected by the cultural production of late capitalism.

at King's Cambridge, who leaves academia to become a creator of a beautiful philosopher doll named Little Brain¹⁰. In a BBC nightly talk show, the doll hosts other philosopher dolls such as Galileo, Spinoza, Averroes, Maimonides, and Machiavelli and questions the applicability of their philosophical Ideologies to/in the contemporary world. The media industry, driven by the engine of capitalism, turns Little Brain into a "tawdry celebrity" (Fury 98) without the consent of her creator who becomes disillusioned by the doll's global consumer appeal, yet who still holds royalties from her "tawdry" global success. But one night, obsessing over those "satanic dolls", Solanka finds himself hovering over his sleeping wife and son, carving knife in hand. Panicked because of the suppressed fury inside him, Malik runs away to New York— not from his family, but from what he might do to them. In Manhattan, the protagonist, burdened with the city's fury and noise, wanders the city, which reminds him of Bombay, and asks America to "[devour] him" (44). He welters in a delusional schizophrenic situation until, with the help of an American girl called Mila, starts creating an Internet saga about a battle between cybernetic Puppet Kings and their human master. Meanwhile, Solanka meets Neela Mahendra, a South Asian American producer specializing in documentary programming for television. They start a relationship until Neela decides to go back to her country, the imaginary island of Lilliput Blefuscu, loosely based on Fiji, to immerse herself in her country's political coup. He follows her there and discovers that the members of the revolution have adopted masks of his puppets which have become an emblem of their revolution. The revolutionary project intended by Solanka in the creation of his puppets is turned against their creator's goals and become misinterpreted by fanatical nationalists

¹⁰ I will give Little Brain the pronoun she when I need to refer to her instead of her name.

in Lilliput Blefuscu. After the death of Neela, Solanka returns to London to see his son Asmaan.

At the same time that Rushdie is well known and widely critiqued as a postcolonial writer, he has also arguably, after writing *The Ground Beneath her Feet*, made a huge shift in tackling postmodern themes in his novel after the turn of third Millennium. This text proposes opinions tackled in postmodern theory and art since it approaches the contemporary political situations and cultural artifacts of America instead of the religious considerations that dominated *The Satanic Verses*; he also discusses the American background instead of India that occupied *Midnight's Children*. The novel is a satire that debunks, derides, and bares the economic and media authorities of late capitalism. While *Fury* appears to be about Malik Solanka, in actuality, the novel is about America and its relation to civilization, the new millennium, its citizens, and the rest of the world. It is about the country itself, seen through the eyes of Solanka, and a society perceived as a manifestation of the individual. The novel describes a real time in America in which levels of escalating social antagonism motivate the economic and political life inside and outside the city and how the infiltrated consumerism, hyper-reality and what Jameson calls 'present-day multinational capitalism' (37) is now taking place. The individual lives oscillating between the human and technological worlds, between humanizing machines and mechanizing humans. Media, in the same sense, is developed as a social artifact, and becomes a dominating tool and a revolutionary destructive use-value that led, as Jean Baudrillard puts it, to "the inflation of information and the deflation of meaning" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 79).

By offering an analysis of Rushdie's narrative strategy in his novel, specifically in the light of late 20th century critical theory, this chapter tackles *Fury* through focusing on consumerism and media, which makes the novel, from my point of view, a postmodern work that

proposes a critique of postmodernism. This chapter will attempt to show the effect of media and consumerism in forming the relationship between America and the consumers of American products. Consequently, this formation positions how prevalent the cultural productions of late capitalism are and how the individual passively accepts it. In this sense, I come to see that Rushdie uses Solanka as a representative of the postmodern individual to demonstrate that the very social artifacts the professor/individual might claim to despise or want to resist are those which, in actuality, he accepts and loves. The novel charts a world that is mediated by and constituted in the technologico-semiotic sphere. Despite the fact that the individual/Solanka as well as his artifact tries hard, if he can be lucky, to practices some sort of authority on himself and others, the novel illustrates that America's postmodern cultural production is set as the only source of hegemony and controls everything and everyone. Finally, my paper offers a conclusion that agrees with Baudrillard's version of postmodernity; there is hardly any space for opposition or resistance because of the supreme hegemony of the controlling system: "Everywhere, always, the system is too strong: hegemonic" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 163). Thus, the individual, whether he is an American or a cosmopolitan, is left with one choice: to accept, ally with, and support the hegemonic regime he might condemn.

In order to illustrate Solanka's relationship with western society and his tendency to become involved in postmodern artifacts, I find it important to analyze the reasons behind Solanka's departure from his position as a good professor of history in King's Cambridge in England to become a well-known doll-maker.

Fury shows how Solanka leaves the world of academia in England and heads toward the United States. Little Brain, the doll he creates, is supposed to reflect a philosophical and intellectual stand in a world that is described to be chaotic. Solanka's purpose behind creating the

doll and presenting her as a philosophical doll in a tv show is due to his urge to teach the audience how to find a better understanding to the world they live in. However, the novel reveals that the postmodern mainstream which, according to David Harvey, “accommodates with commercialism and entrepreneurialism” as well as consumerism (113) plays a role in changing the image of the doll from being a philosopher doll into an artifact and a cultural image. This reason is one of the things behind Solanka’s fury which causes him to hold his dagger above his wife’s and son’s heads; the professor leaves England in a panic. Another reason that causes him to be a victim of fury is that Solanka was a professor of philosophy at King’s Cambridge before he decided to resign and become a dollmaker. The academic life’s “narrowness, infighting, and ultimate provincialism” had led the narrator to boredom and despair (14). Since Little Brain betrays her creator by following the postmodern mainstream and become a celebrity the doll can no longer be controlled or hold by Solanka. I will discuss the importance of the doll later in this chapter.

On the other hand, the deeper message Rushdie implies in the novel is that England is no longer the empire that used to control the world through colonization. This indicates the existence of a contemporary postmodern time in which the British colonialism of the modern time has been effaced by the reinforcement of America’s postimperial superpower. Now, it is cultural and economic imperialism that control the contemporary world and they are monopolized by America. While the social identity of Professor Solanka in England is situated among the elite migrant class, Solanka has suffered alienation in the world of academia. And even after he quit academia, turned to the mass media industry, and “became a significant player in the global industry of the late 1990s” (Morton 12), the ambivalent atmosphere that was current in the country affected him and he falls into in a state of uncertainty between loving or hating

what he creates and loving or hating what he condemns; therefore, unable to destroy Little Brain's global image as a "tawdry celebrity", he decides to destroy the version of the doll he created, and escapes to America.

1- America, Globalization, and Hatred

Ultimately, the comparison of Solanka's life in England and America suggests the discrepancy in two competing authorities in which the former "has never been cleansed of the filth of imperialism" ("The New Empire within Britain") while America is employing the logic of capitalism. Although Malik Solanka shows his contempt with the American way of life throughout Rushdie's novel, his transition to Manhattan helps him identify himself as a cosmopolitan elite immigrant in a cosmopolitan city. The third person narrator explains that Professor Malek Solanka "had come to America as so many before him to receive the benison of being Ellis Islanded, of starting over" (51)¹¹. Solanka's desire to leave Britain is motivated, as mentioned before, by the lack of his intellectual reception among his colleagues (an alienated Indian- English professor), and the shift in Little Brain's image from a philosopher doll to a celebrity doll, all of which adds up to his "fear of pathological fury, a fury which almost led to him murdering his child and wife" (Morton 124). The accumulated fury of the Professor's childhood and his residence in England for 15 years is combined with Manhattan's "[metropolitan] fury" (*Fury* 3), not in a process of retaliation, but in the shape of Fredric Jameson's postmodern idea of "waning of affect". In this sense, fury did not engender in Solanka an urge of retaliation but rather the opposite—his emotional response waned or was muted. The

¹¹ Stephen Morton interprets this statement as "the quasi-religious noun 'benison', meaning a blessing given by God (OED), and the verb from 'to be Ellis Islanded' in this sentence registers an unmistakable undertone of irony in its account of American citizenship" 124. Solanka wants to be devoured by America and is asking America to delete his past and make him a new person.

first few pages of the novel show that Malik Solanka has a love-hate relationship with New York City. Although he is shocked to feel its lust, viciousness, and decadence, he is enchanted by the vibrancy of the city. Within this ambivalent feeling towards the city, Solanka feels alienated in Manhattan because of the lack of national belonging as an Indian immigrant, a feeling that accompanied him from London to Manhattan. Yet the analogy is limited by the fact that he, unlike any common third world immigrant, is not a stranger in terms of capitalist society because he is embedded in the media industry and a rich celebrity because of *Little Brain*. If we come to question who an outsider is, the best answer is found in Horkheimer and Adorno's statement that the outsider is the hungry, the poor, who can't provide for the expenses of his life and his family's life. In films he is represented as eccentric, or the villain (60). Thus, Solanka's wandering through the city, his aggressive attitude towards the neighbors, the maid, "the educated plumber," who all came to America from different parts of the world, and his identification with the serial killer who dresses in exactly the same clothes Solanka wears, might show him as an outsider. Nevertheless, professor Solanka who gains money from *Little Brain*'s show business meets the criteria of a capitalist society's dynamics of inclusion which appreciates and respects rich businessmen. Indeed, as the story unfolds, Solanka is acutely aware of the American ethos of new imperial power which tends to use cultural artifacts such as the media, the press, and technology to invoke its hegemony on the whole globe. This is the new concept of globalization in which any success with these cultural artifacts is "measured by American-made standards or by Americans enforcing these standards" (Appadurai 124). Although these standards which Solanka achieves might be the source of happiness to others, the professor "in his comfortable Upper West Side Sublet...nursed a glass of red Geyserville zinfandel and mourned" (29). Solanka mourns because he realized the scope of American hegemony which he

loves and condemns. We, and Solanka also, live in a world that is articulated by the state whether we like it or not. Solanka's bewilderment and uncertainty lead me to observe that the sense of the individual's grievance against the state can produce a runaway from one's own reality. Despite this attempt by the individual to flee, the individual is struck and compelled by the reality of the state and authority to accept their hegemony which the individual cannot defy. As Michel Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* the individual in a society belongs to this production of power and discipline (109-110). The individual doesn't influence the social and political structure although he is told the opposite. Slavoj Žižek in his article "Against Human Rights" also states that "in the era of a 'risk society' in which the ruling ideology endeavors to sell us the very insecurities caused by the dismantling of the welfare state as the opportunity for new freedoms" (1). What is to appear as the individual's freedom of choice is not freedom because the individual chooses to believe the lies given to him by the state; and this can be an indicator of postmodernity.

The Functionality of the Media and the Press

The concept of mass media and its effect on individual and collective consciousness has been the subject of much academic debate in contemporary societies, with the result that students and teachers have come to see that the artifacts of the established cultures and society are burdened with meanings. Culture transforms itself continuously because it is inherently predisposed to change and also for the need of its inhabitants to survive the contemporary cultural changes. At the same time those rapid changes force people to consent to the established behaviors and attitudes of the culture. Socio-economic and political systems impose patterns and forms on the individual that integrates him thoughtlessly into these patterns. For example, media culture, like television, advertisement, cinema, and pop music are sophisticated modes of daily

life that are used by those socio- economic and political systems to spread the messages of those systems to the individual by the means of offering seemingly entertaining content to children and adults alike. However, some of these media products, according to cultural studies scholars Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner, have “no pure entertainment that does not contain representations, often extremely prejudicial, of class, gender, race, sexuality, and myriad social categories and grouping” (xiv). For instance, media entertainment nowadays doesn’t differentiate between what children watch as entertainment and what adults watch as entertainment and information. Media tends to skew towards the nonrestrictive, more liberal, end of the spectrum, where images are questionable in terms of cultural morals, and we find that such shocking images stick with us in a more lasting way than a conversation or even words on a page. If we take children’s television networks as an example, we find that some of them, like Disney, offer programs that teach children about nonviolence, how to make friendship, and a taste of what life is like in other families, which on the surface seems to aim for increasing gender and race sensitivity. On the other hand, an acute analysis of these programs leads us to capture some stereotypical images¹² that shape the child’s image about different cultures. Moreover, those children’s programs are continually interrupted and plagued by commercials that are written by toy manufacturers. In other words, entertaining TV shows and commercials “direct [the individual’s] experience into a specular and glittering universe of images and signs, where instead of constituting their own lives, individuals contemplate commodity itself that defines itself through consumption and image, look and style, as derived from the spectacle” (Best and Kellner 90). Therefore, the outcome is that media, whether it is for children or for adults, is a

¹² Pocahontas, for example, still remains and is highlighted as the image of a Latin American woman rescued by a European man.

business trying to make money through children and adults happy while the latter become “the domination of bureaucratically controlled consumption” (Best and Kellner 90).

However, burdened with the challenges of daily life and the social systems, the majority of the audience eschew all the warnings of critics and theorists regarding the hidden messages and ideology of media culture. Most of them prefer to use denial as a defense mechanism because they are afraid to unlock and unveil the codes of the contradictory social and political constructions in a world where the real and the imaginary are blending. The contemporary individual is affected by the ideology of “late capitalism” in which media is one of the dominant forces and renders the individual a passive receiver of any ideology set by authority. What the next section would analyze is the effect of mediatizing and commodifying artistic production (Little Brain) on the individual and the art production itself. Why *Fury* is of interest to the reader interested in postmodernism, is possibly due to its strong elements of the political ambivalent dimension of the hegemony of postmodernism. The state and the individual are mobilized by the cultural production, such as media and the press, and the question of simulation and the hyperreal in the modern world. Moreover, Rushdie is concerned with the zeitgeist (the spirit of the time) of postmodernism which typifies and influences art, fashion, and politics.

The Doll Image

When Solanka realizes that media is one of the hegemonic forces in the world and has this effort to steer the crowd, the professor has thought that his philosophical doll Little Brain might become a significant part that help Solanka affect the ideology of the audience. However, the doll was appropriated by the media industry and is commodified. I would like to echo what I have discussed in the first chapter when rock and roll, according to Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath her Feet*, was started as an Indian invention then developed by Americans, appropriated

to fit the American culture, and then pervaded the whole world. In *Fury*, Rushdie repeats the same pattern when Little Brain is seized by the English media industry which turned her into a commodity fetish. What I intend to argue in this section is Little Brain's role in epitomizing historically the confusion of feelings about the past which is symbolized by the analogy between Methwold Estate in *Midnight's Children* and Little Brain in *Fury*. My purpose is to prove that Rushdie has moved away from colonial/anti-colonial rivalry discussed in his early works and he is moving forward to discover, analyze, and criticize "postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism." Through the ideologies of "progressive imperialism," commodity and sexual fetishism, empowering western women, and through an analysis of Little Brain's aura, I come to realize that Solanka and his creator desire what they hate because what they hate is their avenue to be part of the civilized world.

Rushdie's use and circulation of the doll image in *Fury* is not only directed towards its importance as a commodity fetish, it is also analogous to Methwold Estate's version of imperialism. The particular fact of the First World stealing Indian inventions, such as rock and roll and Little Brain, in Rushdie's recent novels recalls the rivalry between the colonizer/colonized that Rushdie has commented on in his previous works before and after the fatwa. I will use some incidents from *Midnight's Children* to prove my point of view here. This new technique in Rushdie's work can be seen as a "progressive imperialism." Lewis Samuel Feuer defines progressive imperialism as one that is founded upon a cosmopolitan view of humanity, "elevates living standards and cultural life; it brings education and the arts to its more backward areas" (4). Accordingly, this type of imperialism allows conquered people to assimilate into the imperial society (4). As I discussed previously in the first chapter, Rushdie declares his non allegiance with England for its history as a colonized country in his postcolonial

novel *Midnight's Children*. However, in the aftermath of the fatwa, Rushdie was protected by the secret agency of England and received a “badge of honor—the title Sir” from the Queen, a thing for which he was grateful¹³. Despite the fact that *Midnight's Children* was published before the fatwa, there are some polemical incidents in the novel that raise questions about Rushdie's conflicted standpoint on the imperialist domination of the Islamic countries. For example the Methwold Estate in *Midnight's Children*, where the protagonist Saleem Sinai was born, is mentioned in *Fury* as the Estate where Malik Solanka was born and lived his childhood. The Estate's existence in India after independence represents, in the minds of both protagonists, the continuity of the image of England not as a colonial country but as a progressive imperialist Estate established on Indian land. In *Midnight's Children*, William Methwold sells his Methwold Estate which consists of four identical villas to four Indian families. The identical villas recall Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of sameness but this is not what I want to deal with in this section. Methwold refuses to pass the property to the Indians immediately unless the buyers agree to buy everything inside the houses and he insists that the legal transfer of the property will not happen until midnight of India's declaration of independence. As the transfer of power draws closer, the inhabitants of Methwold Estate complain incessantly of having to live among Methwold's things. Yet, they remain unaware of the fact that they have begun to imitate Methwold's habits, from the cocktail hour he keeps to the accent with which he speaks, to the

¹³ Rushdie, as reported in *The Daily Mail* on September, 21, 2012, “was relying on the British police for his very existence.” ‘Yes, the protection I am given is expensive,’ he once declared in a letter of self-justification to the *Mail* from a secret address four years into the fatwa. ‘I am grateful for it; it has, in all probability, saved my life. ‘But it is not only my freedom that is being defended; it is yours, too. What Britain is defending, when she defends me, is her own sovereignty — the right of British citizens not to be assassinated by a foreign power — and her own principles of free speech.’

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2206929/Salman-Rushdie-Set-make-millions-book-life-fugitive-fatwa.html>

books he reads, and the type of attire he wears. The existence of the Estate and Methwold's personal possessions constitute their power in India with the help of Indians themselves who consent to western colonialism's conditions and are willing to experience new structures of the modern world. However paradoxical Methwold Estate's position in Rushdie's novels might appear, I see it not only as a representation of England's version of the will to power, the will to "elevate living standards and cultural life," but also as a masking of the writer's tension of the love-hate relationship between his homeland and the adopted country. Both protagonists, Saleem Sinai and Malek Solanka, were born in a British owned Estate located on Indian land and both witnessed their parents' willingness to adopt the British way of life while trying to hold to their own cultural tradition and identity: a thing that creates a crack in their ideology of belonging. Methwold Estate was one of the indications in Rushdie's work of the prevalence of progressive imperialism which doesn't necessarily include actual rivalry between the colonizer and colonized.

Thus, *Fury* can be seen as part of the new means that characterizes progressive imperialism by the western World. The intellectual endeavor by Solanka to cast Little Brain as a doll philosopher, to give her a name, a shape, a story, and an identity, is enmeshed in exciting new ways by media to be used for the entertainment of the audience and as a tool to spread western ideology. Rushdie highlights the importance of the doll icon in his novel as another source of hegemony through focusing on the significance of the doll image in fulfilling the American dream in the eyes of the beholders—wealth, fame, and undying youth. Unlike the Barbie doll, which is manufactured by the American toy manufacturer Mattel, and which is/was considered "the cultural icon of female beauty" (Dittmar, Ive, Halliwell 283), Little Brain, the Indian British creation, competes with Barbie not only in the body image or the role model

physicality but also in all that represents the life of a celebrity in a postmodern capitalism. Little Brain exceeds Barbie by being represented as “the model of young people” (*Fury* 97). Solanka justifies Little Brain’s hegemonic force on her fans: “The extraordinary thing about her fan base was its catholicity: boys dug her as much as girls, adults as much as children. She crossed all boundaries of language, race, and class. She became, variously, her admirers’ ideal lover or confidante or goal” (98). The “catholicity” and universality of Little Brain, engendered by the media, is abhorred by the doll maker. This is the “wrong history, the wrong dialogue, the wrong personality” of Little Brain as perceived by Solanka (98). His failure to save the originality and the identity of Little Brain parallels the failure of the Indian owners of Methwold Estate to preserve its Indian-ness and tradition. Thus, the Methwold Estate is sold out to another Indian family, Ormus Cama forsakes singing rock and roll after the death of Vina Aspara, and Solanka admits his hatred of his creation and destroys the original form of it. In my opinion, Rushdie’s consistency in making his protagonists in these novels forsake what they have created, and the whole dilemma of anger and fury that comes during and after abandoning and destroying their inventions, symptomize the repressed anger of the history of the colonization/anti-colonization issue, and Fredric Jameson’s argument about the loss of the historical sense; but then, there is the willingness to abandon the past and stay in the present. However, in the novel preceding *Fury*, the protagonists fail to attain an effective standing point against the globalized postmodern world. Similarly, the protagonist of *Fury* turns into a tool for America, the new imperialist power. The narrator states that “the new age had new emperors and [Solanka] would be their slave” (45).

Clearly then, even though Rushdie and Solanka try to break their relationship with anything that has to do with post-colonialism and its notion of the will to power, they unwittingly

end up using their creations as means of control and hegemony in the postmodern capitalist countries. Nevertheless, there are critics who still insist on associating Rushdie's *Fury* with post-colonial fiction. For instance, Alice Spencer, in her essay "The Puppet-Master's Fury: Malik Solanka as Artist," argues that "Solanka is one of a series of a potential post-colonial artist-types" who "is used by Rushdie to explore elements of control and autonomy in the relationship between the artist and his/her creations" (154). I would like to disagree with Spencer's arguments because they don't define the stereotypical image of a "potential post-colonial artist-type," investigated by post-colonial critics like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, according to whom the author's work of art is supposed to be used to address the problems and consequences of the de-colonization of a country and nation. To the contrary, Spencer justifies her argument by stating that "the immigrant writer has a love-hate relationship with both his homeland and his adopted country. He suffers 'yearning' and torments of the Furies, yet such pain is inherent in artistic creation" (160).

Fury doesn't deal with intellectual discourse of European colonization in India. The novel takes us from England to New York; "forbidden Bombay" (80), as Solanka calls it, only appears in his memories about his childhood. If Spencer sees *Fury* as a post-colonial representation of the creator's art, why doesn't she explain Solanka's escape from England to America? Solanka's home is neither England nor America and he is never willing to visit India again. Although Spencer inserts her unwillingness to associate an autobiographical reading of Rushdie into Solanka's life, her argument compares the author's feeling of homelessness to Solanka's, which is not depicted in the novel at all. Many critics and reviewers see this book as

an autobiography and I agree with them¹⁴. This novel marks a new shift in Rushdie's works because India and the postcolonial type are no longer addressed in his works. America becomes the new turning point in national and international history and Solanka wants to be "devoured by" and the "slave of" America. India and being homesick for India has nothing to do with Solanka's fury. His escape to America is the only possible way to escape his past and to lose his roots and this is justified in his invocation "Eat me, America, and give me peace" (44).

Conversely, Spencer contents herself to justify the creator's fury because he fails to preserve his autonomy on his works of art which "are frequently re-invented by their audience" (155-156)". And then she slants this argument by stating that "Rushdie in many respects ironizes Solanka's 'dollifying' art, and his ambivalent attitude to his loss of control over that art once it has entered into the world of mass media and massed interpretations" (154). Spencer's argument falls short here because Rushdie himself, as she notes in her essay, has had this ambivalent attitude towards his works that were/are subjected to the audience's analysis and brought "mayhem" to his private and public life especially after the fatwa. Yet, Spencer's argument here is flawed. Rushdie didn't ironize his attitude. To the contrary, he wrote articles and essays to defend the standpoint of his works and to re-direct the audience to the real purpose behind his

¹⁴ Alice Spencer's argument about not tracing Salman Rushdie's autobiography in *Fury* or any of his novels is based on an interview of Rushdie in *January Magazine* in March 2003:

Is there one question that irritates you beyond all others that journalists always ask you?

Oh: how autobiographical is it? [...]. In every single book I've ever published people have assumed that I was the central character [...]. And yet, all of these central characters, if you look at them, are really unlike each other, you know? So when you sort of add them up, it doesn't add up to a person. However, many reviews of the book like James Wood's "Escape to New York" (2001), Soo Yeon Kim's "Ethical treason: Radical Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*" (2001), and Brian Finney's "Furious Simulation, or Simulated Fury: Salman Rushdie's *Fury*" (2001) state that there are autobiographical details in the novel that refer all obviously to Salman Rushdie's personal life after he left to New York.

works; nevertheless, he couldn't forbid media or the audience from (re)interpreting his works. Little Brain, as the narrator tells us, was happy to leave her creator-father because his goals focus on hermeneutics and abstract philosophy while she wanted to celebrate the material consumer culture. The loss of control by the author and protagonist over their creations is consigned to the conditions of cultural artifacts and the logic of late capitalism which they, like it or not, can't escape.

It is worth noting that Solanka's doll is associated with the launching of Solanka's new pop-culture career and in the meantime with Solanka's separation from his wife and son. In the anatomy of Dubdub's celebrity life as a famous writer and actor, the narrator notes that Dubdub is sunk into depression and ends his life by committing suicide. "The more he became a Personality," the narrator tells us, "the less like a person he felt" (27). Solanka has gone through the same phase of losing his personal life when he rises to stardom through Little Brain. Solanka, as seen in the novel, retreats from his personal relationships with women and with people and focuses more on projects that are attached to postmodern pop-culture and the implicit drive to control "others"; this is manifested in his endeavor to change the dolls from being dolls into homunculi that are easy to control. In his middle twenties, Solanka visited the Rijksmuseum dollhouse in Amsterdam and was astonished "to see the human life made small, reduced to doll size" (15). When he got back to England, he began constructing his dollhouse that started as "science fiction plunges into the mind of the future instead of the past" and then was developed to become "Great Minds" dolls led by Little Brain (16). During that time, Malik Solanka was married to Eleanor, a successful English woman. His wife disapproved of his retreat from the real world to the miniaturized fanciful world the narrator was creating, but to him these dolls were alive:

He thought of them as people. When he was bringing them into being, they were as real to him as anyone else he knew. Once he had created them, however, once he knew their stories, he was happy to let them go their own way: other hands could manipulate them for the television camera, other craftsmen could cast and replicate them. The character and the story were all he cared about. The rest was just playing with toys (95-96).

Solanka's attitude of creating these dolls with stories and then letting them go resembles the theological debate of free will in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. Solanka here sets himself as a god who creates these living dolls with total power and initiative in managing all events, i.e. giving them "characters and stories," but then these dolls follow through and choose their own way of life like real human beings, making it theirs and taking responsibility for it using their capacity to do right or wrong. Solanka, ironically, defies all aspects of religion yet we find him acting like a god. This is an indication of the ambivalent attitude of what Rushdie has in mind: loving, hating and embracing what he condemns.

Furthermore, there are some racial implications in this episode that describes the unchanging stereotypical ideology of the West towards the East. The doll has its own effect on its creator through locating and disorienting him in a postmodern hegemonic culture where sexuality and desire play a significant role in establishing the individual's standpoint in a society. Solanka fights hard to liberate himself from the inherited patriarchal doctrines of his culture or any constraints whether they are religious, cultural, stereotypical, or political. He might look at the doll with a combination of awe and curiosity; the doll may be a substitute for the woman, but also a projection of the man's childlike demeanor especially when Solanka, as a child, was sexually abused by his step father who forced him to dress like girls and play with dolls while harassing him. Therefore, the doll icon is a sexual fetishism that is reminiscent of sexual violence committed against Solanka in his childhood. He wants to liberate himself from his past, in which

he was an object, by becoming a doer, a subject of control only over his project. Solanka's first wife Sara, before leaving him, faces him with the truth about his relationship to his dolls:

Your trouble is... that you're really in love with those fucking dolls. The world in inanimate miniature is just about all you can handle. The world you can make, unmake, and manipulate, filled with women who don't answer back. Women you don't have to fuck. Or are you making them with cunts now, wooden cunts, rubber cunts...do you have a life-size fuck-dolly harem hidden in a shed somewhere, is that what they'll find when one day you're arrested for raping and chopping up some golden-haired eight-year-old... they'll find her show...and there'll be descriptions of a minivan on TV...and I'll think, Jesus, I know that van, it's the one he carries his fucking toys around in when he goes to his perverters' I'll-show-you-my-dolly-if-you'll-show-me-yours reunions. (30)

The doll from Sara and Eleanor's point of views maybe a stereotypical projection of the preoccupation of eastern men with European female sexuality; the doll, as a reflection of cultural hegemony, remains a dominating object within the world of the novel. She is associated with Solanka: her existence is portrayed in the context of the changing dimensions of Solanka's relationship with women and people in his life and the confusion of feeling about minority/majority. No one denies the fact that these stereotypes have been accumulated and investigated by cultural artifacts. The empowerment of western women is often compared to the weakness of eastern ones in the media industry. Solanka's wives never hold the doll because the three share the same dominating characteristics over Solanka. Implicitly, Solanka, as a man from the East, identifies himself with his links to European women who can be seen in the novel as controlling and dominating. The appropriation of the doll into a European doll figure perpetuates the hegemonic control of the doll over her creator. If we see the doll as Solanka's mascot in relation to his richness and fame, the doll is also seen as a reflection of Solanka's decline and bewilderment in his standpoint in life. The question of race is clearly addressed in Solanka's attachment to European women as well as to his "European-like" doll. Like Reinhart, and despite the fact that Solanka has always surrounded himself with European and American people

to feel that he fits in their own criteria and to be among the power holders, he has this feeling of inferiority and primitivism because of his color. Therefore, he tortures himself and destroys his relationship with his wives because of racial dogmas that only occur in his mind. The doll's rebellion against her creator's control epitomizes women's movement to liberate themselves from any cultural control all over the world. But then, Little Brain's liberation becomes a motive to direct Solanka's perspectives towards bigger dreams that will start in America.

In addition, Solanka's sexuality is defined purely in the terms of the European female force that overpowers him: an emblem, maybe, of western imperialism. According to Sara, Solanka wants women—European women—whom he can “make,” “unmake,” and “don't answer back.” He wants a replica of his mother who represents the stereotypical image of an eastern woman being a property for her husband. Little Brain becomes controlling yet oddly sexual, colonizing, and disorienting, although “this was not the life he had imagined for her” (98). The doll “ha[s] outgrown her creator” literally and figuratively especially when she resists the back-story Solanka created and starts making her own way in the world (97-98). The narrator tells us that Little Brain

got her own talk show, made guest appearances in new hit comedies, appeared on the catwalk for Vivienne Westwood, and was attacked, for demeaning women, by Andrea Dworkin—“smart women don't have to be dolls”—and, for emasculating men, by Karl Lagerfeld (“what true man wants a woman with a bigger shall I say *vocabulary* than his own”). (97)

This doll has a lethal force on its creator and whoever stands against her as well. She commodifies the other and questions the male agency in relation to stardom. While he doesn't become a real celebrity for creating the doll, Solanka witnesses Little Brain's success in becoming a “tawdry celebrity”: a thing he “most profoundly abhorred” (98) not because he hates

to be a celebrity but because this success is given to his western-appropriated creation. Here I come to see the garrulous Solanka being, as Kumar states about Rushdie, “complicit to what he lampoons” (32). Rushdie as well as Solanka contradict themselves. Both claim that they have a purpose for creating works of art which are not supposed to be tarnished by the materiality of the present time, yet use their inventions to be part of pop-culture and all the while seeming to enjoy being celebrities. For instance, Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* has had a purpose from his point of view and also has made him a celebrity, but almost a dead one. Then, in 1993 at Wembley Stadium the author joined U2 on stage and “[did] feel, for a moment, what it's like to have 80,000 fans cheering you on” (*Step Across This Line* 95). Later, in 2000, Rushdie performs in U2’s song “The Ground Beneath her Feet” as a way to defy his enemies; again, he uses Ormus Cama’s love song to Vina Aspara to enter the media sphere and go on stage with U2 under the allegation of defying his enemies. Likewise, Solanka remembers that he has followed the steps of his friend DubDub, the celebrity writer and actor, in many things, “but also into *le monde médiatique*, into America” (28). Media is power. And since pop-culture manifests itself in postmodern art, being a celebrity makes Solanka and Rushdie slaves to this new god/art—but still they are enjoying it.

There is a new situation which accompanies the perception of the doll image as it has existed in media space: the doll’s “aura” becomes a commodity and it has an effect on disorienting the audience as well as sustaining western hegemony. Aura is defined in Merriam Webster’s dictionary as “a distinctive atmosphere surrounding a given source.” Walter Benjamin, in addition, defines aura¹⁵ in three different ways in his essays but I will rely on the

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin doesn’t narrow this idea of the aura in one essay. In fact, aura appears throughout Benjamin’s oeuvre. In his essay “On Hashish” Benjamin discusses the aura of another person and in his essay “Little History of Photography” he describes photography as a

common understanding of the term, which he illustrated in his book *On Hashish*. Benjamin defines aura as “an elusive phenomenal substance, ether, or halo that surrounds a person or object of perception, encapsulating their individuality and authenticity” (qtd. in Hansen 340). In his argument about aura, Benjamin observes that painting and sculpture produce unique objects while films and photography are mechanical reproductions of a work of art. He states that “man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain” (Benjamin 19). In addition, Benjamin describes this difference between the singular object of the work of art and the mechanically reproduced as a difference of aura. The aura of a work of art has originality and authenticity which is lost when the work of art is reproduced in different images. However, in Benjamin’s lens, the loss or decay of aura of the work of art paves the way for other interpretations and can be revolutionary when the interpretation leads to the disappearance of “imperialist bourgeoisie” (qtd. in Mitrano 118). Therefore, the beholder, who empathizes with the decay of aura and welcomes the reproduction of the work of art, appreciates the work of art more, and a whole mode of analysis and interpretation is introduced. Nevertheless, the original Little Brain, as Solanka created her and perceives her, has undergone reproduction that can be seen as a postmodern mechanical reproduction; she shifts from a Solanka-made artifact to a T.V. doll philosopher host to a replicated celebrity doll. The doll’s

work of art having an aura, which stands in tension with this essay of Benjamin I am using in which he states that photography is a mechanical production that has no unique aura. Conceived in this way, aura is not a narrow concept related only to technology, but it is a general category of experience that can apply to any object of perception. The key thing about the aura is that it emanates from the godlike position of the artist/creator who has touched the original with godlike hands. Taken from (<http://burnaway.org/2011/12/theory-in-studio-walter-benjamin-and-the-concept-of-aura/>)

aura has not encapsulated Walter Benjamin's call for empathizing with the loss of aura which is productive and neither does the doll's decay and disappearance of aura introduce a revolutionary notion which calls for the disappearance of, or at least, fighting against capitalism and commodity. Little Brain's replicas and reproductions have led to the loss of its aura because the different meanings, forms, and interpretations those reproductions carry direct the consumer into one direction: confusing and distracting the consumer from the effects of cultural reproduction, capitalism, and western hegemony.

As stated previously, Solanka got the inspiration for creating his dolls after he visited the Rijksmuseum dollhouse in Amsterdam. He made replicas of the original work of art but his purpose was to give some uniqueness to his creation by turning them into "homunculi". Solanka tries hard to preserve his favorite doll's aura as a unique quality, but the doll herself after becoming a celebrity rejects her home and claims that her house is a mansion near the palace of the Prince of Wales. After becoming a celebrity doll, Little Brain's reaction towards her origin can be seen as one of the biggest influences of hyper-consumerism and extreme wealth. As a result, this influence is transformed to the audience whose attention is directed not towards the work of art and its uniqueness but towards illusions created by the mechanical reproduction of the doll. Thus, she does not appear as an entertaining project or as a depiction of social reality; to the contrary the media utilizes the doll in terms of the political and cultural production relations of the postmodern era. After the doll becomes attached to the world of media she becomes a mechanical reproduction that serves the interests of 'parties in pursuit of gain' (Benjamin 19). To me this notion is paradoxical when it comes to Solanka's repugnance of Little Brain's status as a celebrity because the creator becomes one of the parties 'in pursuit of gain.' After Little Brain wrote five memoirs and started preparing for her new film,

Professor Solanka remained aloof, refusing all invitations to discuss his out-of-control creation. The money, however, he was unable to refuse. Royalties continued to pour into his bank account. He was compromised by greed, and the compromise sealed his lips...with every new media initiative spearheaded by the character he had once delineated with such sprightliness and care, his impotent fury grew. (100)

This is brilliantly conceived. Solanka uses the money which comes from Little Brain's involvement with a world of commodities as a kind of bridge to live properly in America. Again this ambivalent attitude of the professor tells us about his attachments to what he hates, which is eating away at the very core of his beliefs, but which he can't defy or resist either.

Little Brain's aura is not shattered, but commodified, as all art is under postmodernism. With regard to the decaying of the postmodern mechanical reproduction's aura, which has an opposite outcome to that suggested by Benjamin's theory of the shattered aura, Solanka feels that the doll's aura is lost after losing his control over his creation, because he allows media industry to transform her into a celebrity. He couldn't accept the doll's reproduction since it is different from the image seen by him. The resulting work of the doll's reproduction is a series of images of the doll as a writer, a recording artist, a video game, a cover girl, and a human actress (98) within which there isn't any unique quality to that work of art. Media industry, from Solanka's point of view, has complicated matters further, because the individual perceives not the real but many replicas created by mechanical processes. These processes leave the consumer disillusioned, distracted, yet refusing to unmask the images of the doll. It is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them.

Let's get back to the idea of the aura and try to resolve Solanka's dilemma about Little Brain's authority and power. The sense of the doll's aura is missing because she lost its authenticity by the time she enters the world of mechanical reproduction. She is liberated from

the tradition, originality, and control of Solanka who wants to preserve her uniqueness and, at the same time, she deludes the audience and consumers by convincing them that they are liberated from their cultural norms. To Benjamin, this liberation directs the beholder's attention to a specific purpose; it is revolutionary and liberating yet at the same time might be totalitarian (21). However, in the case of Little Brain, the decay of her aura combines those paradoxical purposes because the doll is associated with postmodern mechanical production. Another key here is that her reproduction is largely not mechanical, but electronic. Her success depends not on the reproduction of actual dolls but on the promulgation of electronic images of the doll. The liberation of the doll serves to free her from the authority of her creator, while she practices authority on the consumer as she gets strong through the images of mechanical production. Little Brain doesn't consider herself "some plastic-fantastic Barbie Spice," she decides to humanize herself by acting in a movie where she "will be very human" (99). In fact, the readers, the virtual audience, and Little Brain's fans should not forget that she is a doll, and whoever is going to perform her character in front of a camera is going to be human wearing a mask. The third narrator notes that "the actor in the mask is liberated from her normality, her everydayness. Her body acquires remarkable new freedom. The mask dictates all this. The mask acts" (100). It is not terribly surprising to find that this actor falls under the delusion of being liberated after wearing Little Brain's face image- mask, considering how iconic Little Brain and her image continue to be. But, celebrity aside, the whole freedom ideology is questionable: without Little Brain's mask, the actor is unrecognizable. Without the mask, she belongs to normal people, to their sameness. The effect of postmodern cultural production, represented by the doll's different images in the novel, is prevailing especially when the doll and her mask become the construct that influence the perception of the actor among the doll's fans. On the other hand, following

Benjamin's analysis of the nature of mechanical production, the doll image in her different reproductions contemplates and consumes the audience just as the audience contemplates and consumes her. Therefore, the perceiver submits to the reproducibility of images which makes him easy to control.

The Puppet Kings saga brings together everything that I have discussed and analyzed about Little Brain. The Puppet Kings are seen as commodity fetish, the decay of the aura, and a tool of hegemony over their creator and the freedom fighters in Lilliput -Blefuscu but this time through using the internet as a medium. This episode shows Rushdie's shift to using postmodern aesthetics. After being introduced to the magical achievements of computer and internet, Solanka perpetuates the same pattern of Little Brain breaking free from him when he creates an internet saga of the Puppet Kings who at the end rebel against their creator. His new creation is a moment of epiphany for the creator. He realizes that the individual is absorbed and controlled by the inauthentic and politicized images of cultural reproductions. The internet saga, which tells the story of Akasz Kronos and his creation of mechanical puppets, resembles in a way Solanka's story with Little Brain. Akasz Kronos, "the great, amoral cyberneticist of the Rijk," (78) creates cyborgs called the Puppet Kings in order to preserve the Rijk civilization which eventually couldn't be saved. Kronos makes sure that he is the only one who can terminate these puppets whenever he wants to. However, those puppets out mastered their creator and figured out a way to string themselves free out of the control of Kronos and decided to execute their creator who abused them to achieve his goals. However, Kronos disappeared but before he vanished he gave his puppets a riddle:

The puppet kings have been offered by Kronos a choice between their original, mechanical selves and some, at least, of the ambiguities of human nature. What would be their choices: wisdom—or fury? Peace—or fury? Love—or fury? The fury of genius, of

creation, or of the murderer or tyrant, the wild shrieking fury that must never be named?
(168)

Solanka's internet saga indicates that the Professor, finally, finds the peace he was looking for in England. He finds out that human nature is made out of fury and produces fury while machines and dehumanizing objects know the true meaning of wisdom, peace and love. What causes the human's fury is human nature's eagerness to create and develop itself in mechanical production images, which at the end control the individual the way Little Brain and The Puppet Kings end up controlling their master. The story of the Puppet Kings is inspired by the political events happening in the fictional Islands Lilliput- Blefuscu which also, as Kumar suggests, mirrors the Fiji coup of 2000 when the Fijian nationalists demonstrated against the elected government of a non-native Prime Minister. When Solanka follows Neela to Lilliput Blefuscu, he finds that the native Blefuscans wear masks of the Puppet King's characters as an emblem of their revolution against the elected government. The irony is that, though Solanka's appearance is identical to that of Kronos, he is taken for an imposter of the man who is deemed by the islanders to be the 'real' Kronos: Babur, the leader of the military coup. The use of masks, as I see it, echoes Little Brain's actress's feeling of liberation. However, Brian Finney sees the Blefuscans' concealment of their faces behind the Puppet King's masks as an "interplay between simulations and real world events" (287). Finney, moreover, argues that Rushdie illustrates how "the rebellion in Lilliput--Blefuscu parallels the internal psychological rebellion witnessed in the novel's many representative Americans, specifically those, like Jack Rhinehart and Mila Milo, who use New York's urban constructs to mask their own subjective traumas" (287). What Solanka might notice is a reversible attitude from the Battling computers that were popular in the 1960s, where humans fight computers to save humans from computer rules. But now what we see is a

complete submission to the mechanical reproduction and its authorities in this age. The audience sympathizes and interacts with those modes of productions because in the world saturated with replicas and simulacra the real loses its meaning and authenticity. The strength of the images in pop-culture is that it distracts the perceiver from criticizing the mechanical reproduction by giving him the right to participate in its narrative; this is seen in the audience participation in the creation and distribution of Solanka's internet Saga on the web. Although Solanka wants to maintain his traditional dominance over the Saga's content, the producer's purpose is to keep the audience's interest to attain economic and political values.

In a Postmodern World Everything is the Same

What I intend to demonstrate here is how the individual's passive reception of ideology and contemporary relation with objects and images is defined in media culture through the idea of sameness. It is important to recognize that there are three variations on the idea of sameness portrayed in the novel: the first has to do with people from different parts of the world willing to feel homogeneity with Americans when it comes to "moral style"; the second is the role of commercials in imposing the feeling of sameness between Americans themselves and Americans and people in other countries; and finally is the way in which America and Americans endeavor to preserve their uniqueness from the rest of the world. Then I will move on to discuss how the reader of *Fury* understands that media is one of the current forces of hegemony in America that serves to unite consumers through foregrounding stories of for example cultural violence and fury.

Media and the Ideology of Sameness

I come to see the individual's autonomy—or rather lack of autonomy—in the light of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's statement that "culture today is infecting everything with sameness" (41). This sameness from Horkheimer and Adorno's point of view has to do with the state planning projects of identical small apartments in which the individual is convinced to be autonomous while in reality he is subjugated by the projects of the city plans and the capital. The idea of sameness can be extended to represent the daily aspects of the individual's life from work, clothes, food, hobbies...etc. but the choices the individuals have about consuming these cultural artifacts are confined by what the culture industry presents to the individual. Moreover, in contemporary time, if there is anything that holds us all together it is the fact that we all watch the same commercials and TV and go shopping in the same malls and markets. From where does the individual receive this idea of "sameness" or homogeneity? Why is this ideology imposed on the people?

The clues to the answers to these questions are to be found in analyzing commercials. Media, through advertisement, which is nowadays one of the main phenomena in the cultural industry, is distributing this image of homogeneity to the individual and renders him to buy the same brands commercialized on the silver screen in order to sustain the uniformity of the individual with the models and celebrities on TV. Horkheimer and Adorno, in their analysis of the goal of cultural production, state that "something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated" (43). The individual cannot escape consuming the advertised cultural products even if the excuse is lack of money. There are cultural productions for every individual's social class, taste, and preference. However, different cultural artifacts are all the same and have the same purpose of homogenizing the consumer and

whatever diversity remains is constituted of small trivialities (43). Since cultural productions are determined by the culture industry, the consumer has no resistance to either cultural production nor to its categorization. In addition, the different cultural artifacts blend the real with the unreal to the extent that the individual no longer differentiates between those realms. In simple words, cultural production becomes the only replication that can constitute “reality” as closely as possible. Thus, different cultural productions become the same and the consumers, from all different categories, are the same. And through this sameness, the individual becomes a property controlled by the producers of cultural artifacts. In America, homogeneity in this postmodern time is represented by the individual’s fascination with power that is embellished by media forms through the signs and images of Hollywood celebrities, ads and fashion show models, and reality show participants. If people want to simulate the images that capitalism offers, they have to do the kind of work and live the kind of lives that capitalism requires: they have to become postmodern people in a way in which the individual doesn’t only consume the commodity, he consumes the cultural image and the signs of the commodity (Jameson 18). The individual now boasts that he is successful because he has the right brand image: having identified himself with stereotypical images of TV commercials, the individual becomes a commodity. In the novel, this notion is represented by Little Brain as an example of the mediatization and commodification of philosophy. The intellectual endeavor by Solanka to cast Little Brain as a doll philosopher, to give her a name, a shape, a story, and an identity, is enmeshed in exciting new ways by media to be used for the entertainment of the audience and as a tool to spread western ideology. Little Brain becomes “the model of young people” (*Fury* 97). Solanka justifies Little Brain’s hegemonic force on her fans: “The extraordinary thing about her fan base was its catholicity: boys dug her as much as girls, adults as much as children. She crossed all boundaries of

language, race, and class. She became, variously, her admirers' ideal lover or confidante or goal" (98). The notion of sameness which has perverted the whole globe is associated with America's "moral style."¹⁶ As the Americans embody the "moral style," people in the rest of the world—for example in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America—grow up with contact with America through media forms. They get information or misinformation about life in America through movies, commercials, and pop music. The problem is that no one is asked to consider the reality of the images and meanings the receiver gets from media, and ironically what these people care about is to emulate the images of/about American lifestyle that are shown through media resources in order for those people to fit into the category of homogeneity and sameness. Conversely, this phenomenon is also applicable to the American himself who forms his information and knowledge about the rest of the world through media sources, a process which might be problematic because these sources filter all events through an American lens. America becomes the new god which is omnipresent and everyone wants to simulate and emulate its image. Through commodities, America succeeds in spreading the worshiping of its icons and turns the whole globe into iconolaters.

These postmodern concepts are explored when Rushdie, through Solanka of course, ponders the effect of commercials in imposing the idea of sameness on the individual. Solanka realizes that there is a communal feeling permeated by commercials. People might enjoy the knowledge that everyone around the world is watching the same images at the same time. Consumers who are watching the same commercials consume the same signs and thinking that they are "representing the dream of an ideally beautiful America in which all women were babes

¹⁶ See Arjun Appadurai's argument that I summarized and discussed earlier.

and all men were Marks” (*Fury* 34). They consume some things rather than others in order to signify that they are similar to those who also consume these objects and that they are different from those who consume other objects. Solanka also states that “commercials soothed America’s pain. Its gas pain... its loneliness...the pain of manhood and women’s pain” and they transfer this pain into a healing process by buying what they sometimes don’t need (34). Therefore, from Solanka’s point of view, commercials “showed [people] the road. [They weren’t] a part of the problem. [they] solved them” (34). Those signs and objects impose themselves on the consumer and build up a relationship not with the individual but with the different objects that compete to build a communal relationship with the individual and other consumers¹⁷. This is a kind of media reading called “the dominant reading in which the media consumer is relatively passive and takes in the content without consciously thinking or processing the messages. In this case the consumer almost always takes in the dominant message that was intended by media producer” (Holtzman 35). The message in this case is that people, the Americans as well as the other, should eat, look, dress up, and consume the same commodities to achieve the hyperreal life of luxury and happiness represented in those commercials. Conversely, in reality, “the poor souls who can’t afford to live out their commodity fantasies in full are motivated to work harder and harder, until they are trapped in the squirrel cage of spending and working” (Best and Kellner 88), while the rich can enjoy those artifacts with opulence. Solanka notes that “Advertising was a confidence trick, a cheat, the notorious enemy of promise. It was—a horrible thought in that era—nakedly capitalist” (33) in terms of economics and politics. Rushdie/Solanka’s point of view is that “everyone [is] an American now, or at least Americanized: Indians, Iranians,

¹⁷ For more information, see Jean Baudrillard’s “The Ecstasy of Communication.”

Uzbeks, Japanese, Lilliputians, all” (87): This echoes the people’s tendency in all the countries to fall within the “sameness” scale of Americans’ “moral style.” In addition, the professor, certainly, believes that almost all ads contain fallacies that trick and cheat the consumer. Most commercials, especially those ads done by celebrities, manipulate peoples' emotions in order to get them to accept a claim as being true. Although the celebrity is not an expert in the product he commercializes, still his commercial is always an appeal to authority. The consumer might not believe that this celebrity uses this product but the hope that the consumer might experience the same positive phantasmagoria of the famous person in that virtual reality will compensate for the un-lived lives of the consumer, who eventually falls prey to the fallacy of commercials and the political conspiracy of authority.

Similarly, capitalism is currently undergoing a fully processed stimulatory phenomenon in the form of advertisements. Everything is for sale and as such advertised products, and therefore the line between material reality and marketed unreality become blurred. Solanka implies that marketing, through advertising, plays a great role in selling products. However, the distinction between the real and the unreal are dissipated and depleted and since “selling things was low, [now] everyone—eminent writers, great painters, architects, politicians—wanted to be in on act” (33). This tendency to sell things is one of the reasons that links the producer and the consumer to the virtual and simulated signs and images because neither position can avoid the fact that “everybody, as well as everything, was for sale” (33).

On the other hand, commercials bring together two contrasted worlds. Although advertising, on one level, acts as a medium through which the consumer becomes a victim of signs, and the medium separates America from the rest of the globe, the rich from the poor, and the real from the hyper-real, on the level it is through the notion of sameness that commercials

succeed in uniting people, Americans and the Others, so that it becomes easy for the American center to control the world, economically as well as politically. As Solanka ponders advertisements, he is concerned with the power of commercials to annihilate the individual's real identity and turn it to a fake one. He states that "advertising was a confidence trick, a cheat, the notorious enemy of promise" that everyone love (33-34). The professor adds that "advertisement had become colossi, clambering like Kong up the walls of building" (33). I think that what Rushdie implies here is the powerful effect of advertisement which is analogous to the physical power of the fictional characters Colossus and King Kong. The irony that lies behind this resemblance is that the powerful effect of commercials is turning the individual into a subordinate figure while giving itself the privilege to be something superior that controls the city. The annihilating power of commercials allow for a merging of different atmospheres by revealing something shared yet unachievable in a fantasized world that lies behind the differences that place us in a capitalized world. Commercials don't tear the two worlds apart and don't reveal to the consumer the nothingness, the banality, and the empty continuity that lies behind it. Therefore, the consumer is left with no choice but to accept and consume the signs of commercials yet feeling the false freedom of choosing what to consume.

Although the advertising industry, which is largely an American creation, infuses the world with the idea of sameness, America tries to isolate itself by sticking to its difference when it comes to economy, politics, and the people living in America. Solanka meditates that this saturation of an American economic and cultural distinction "insulted the rest of the planet ... by treating such bounty with the shoulder-shrugging casualness of the inequitably wealthy" (6). America and the Americans, most likely, have trapped themselves in an aura that is uncomfortable and inadequate to themselves as well as to the rest of the Globe. *Fury* delves into

the dark side of millennial New York City where feelings of fury and the fear of the uncertainty engulf its inhabitants:

The city boiled with money. Rents and property values had never been higher, and in the garment industry it was widely held that fashion had never been so fashionable. New restaurants opened every hour. Stores, dealerships, galleries struggled to satisfy the skyrocketing demand for ever more *recherché* produce...The future was a casino, and everyone was gambling, and everyone expected to win. (3-4)

This scene describes America at the highest peak of its economic satiation yet implying the end of expansion and the beginning of a recession. "Everyone is gambling" to preserve his future and is bewildered by the paradox of the frightening acceleration of the values of property and the complex cultural codes which the individual tries to apprehend. The transfiguration of New York's cityspace in the novel contextualizes a culture scanning the threat of fury from within and in which the individual more likely projects his current paranoia back into the city. In another situation, Solanka, wandering the city, "didn't feel intruded upon amid these multitudes; to the contrary. There was a satisfying anonymity in the crowds, an absence of intrusion" (7). What Solanka discovers to be absent among the different crowds of the city of New York is the taste of sameness that most immigrants bring with them to the United States because, according to Solanka, "everyone was here to lose themselves" such as the purpose of Solanka himself (7). I think the loss of sameness among the crowd can be seen in light of Appadurai's argument that these people, the immigrants, "have found a way to separate American life (which they value and treasure) from the American "way of life," which in their version of it they frequently abhor" (122). Therefore, in America, Americans and Others, are busy to establish their own way of life and in the meantime lose themselves within this saturation while the idea of sameness is reserved in physical appearance, food, drinks and shopping. This strange paradox of "sameness" in the middle of diversity and the crush to survive in the city is somehow postmodern because it

encourages the individual to encapsulate a subjective performance while participating in the materiality of the city.

Somehow, the comparison between the immigrant's way of life and the American's way of life creates hatred combined with fury among non-Americans directed towards the United States. It is good here to bring into discussion Appadurai's argument about the hatred people from different parts of the world carry for the U.S. government as well as Americans. He claims that this hatred must be understood for two reasons. The first one has to do with the "everyday arrogance of Americans of every type in the world after 1945" when Americans, travelling to third world countries, are considered by people as "cultural ambassadors" carrying with them "American technological, military, cultural, and educational privilege" (119). The second reason is that "Americans invoke the power and arrogance of the American state" through "their style, their possessions, and their practices" that becomes the sign of moral style people from outside America aspire to achieve (120). People from different parts of the world lack these privileges therefore carry with them contempt and hatred towards Americans, even as they desperately fight to come to the United States to "share its freedom." Appadurai continues that those who come to America with this moral contempt "have found a way to separate American life (which they value and treasure) from the American "way of life," which in their version of it they frequently abhor" (122). This hatred didn't only result from the difference in life attitude but can be extended to capture America's international policy. The novel depicts this hatred towards America in the story of the Muslim-Indian cab driver who, all the way up to Tenth Avenue, spew out curses and expletives on American people claiming that "Islam will purify this whole city of Jew pimp assholes" (65). Solanka asks himself why this young-man who is living in New York and has a steady job is consumed with fury and hatred? Solanka answers himself:

When one is too young to have accumulated the bruises of one's own experience, one can choose to put on, like a hair shirt, the sufferings of one's world. In this case, as the Middle East peace process staggered onward and the outgoing American president, hungry for a breakthrough to buff up his tarnished legacy, was urging Barak and Arafat to the Camp David summit conference, Tenth Avenue was perhaps being blamed for the continued sufferings of Palestine. (65-66)

In response to the forces fighting for global, political and economic domination, the whole world has embraced fury because the fighting forces refuse to run their affairs according to their own distinct rules and culture, interfering instead in each other's affairs. The countries who appear to be hewing closely to the western model ally with America to reserve their dominance politically in the geographic area concerned, while the rest blame America for all the mess in the world where "the rulers are brutal, and the ruled, brutish" (Kumar 32). Therefore, fury, whether it is spiking from within (as in New York City in the novel) or from outside the country (in the source of "long-distance hatred" and violence), is directed towards America in specific. As Fredric Jameson puts it, "this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (*Postmodernism* 5). This violence of the new postmodern wave is the main loop that makes the people united because it is encapsulated in the relentless discourse on success, wealth and chic consumer products images spread by media. Solanka notes "Life is fury... Fury—sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal—drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of furia comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover" (30-31). This imagery of a high-tech aesthetic of global capitalism is hitting the threshold of a

new millennium and America is fighting its way to preserve its hegemony and control within and outside yet leaves everyone and everything on the verge of fury.

Aside from the idea of sameness and the effect of commercials on the consumer, I would like to foreground how the press-- when transporting the news or events about violence—unite the majority of the audience. Between tele-technology and the individual, there is an “ecstasy of communication.”⁷ According to Baudrillard, virtual real devices abolish all secrets, spaces, and scenes in a single dimension of information. They render everything visible in an obscene way (*The Ecstasy of Communication* 130). Best and Kellner understand the obscenity of the transparent public and private universes as something ordinary especially “when media began going after political figures’ private lives in a post-Watergate culture that exposed every detail of public figures’ personal lives to public scrutiny” (111). However, what seems most likely is that the old saying that “truth is stranger than fiction” couldn’t be more accurate. But should we take this kind of exposure as a valid truth? Or should we suspect, as Best and Kellner put it, that “such revelations are only the tip of the iceberg, that many, many more secrets and crimes ...are hidden from view, and that society is not as transparent as he claims” (111). Should we ask why does society through communication technology hide certain truths and who is it trying to protect? Faith in the validity of media is an Achilles heel.

Malek Solanka, previously an Indian-English Cambridge Professor of History is aware of the inescapable presence of mass media on individuals and how they decode and articulate stories and incidents in a way that make the so called “discursive communities” overlap. The professor’s education is a mix of Indian tradition and western academic construction in which his way of appreciating or refuting being exposed to mass media may be different from that of many common individuals, but since both Solanka and common individuals live under the effect of late

capitalism and share the same media effects, their discursive communities overlap. Linda Hutcheon defines discursive communities as "extended communities with shared customs and habits that form and are formed by cultural discourses" (*Irony's Edge* 92). The individuals in a discursive community also "acknowledge those strangely enabling constraints of discursive contexts and foregrounds the particularities of not only of space and time but of class, race, gender, ethnicity, [and], sexual choice," as well as "nationality, religion, age, profession, and all the other micropolitical groupings in which we place ourselves or are placed by society" (*Irony's Edge* 92). As described in the novel, however, in such a blended, overlapping community such as New York—one that acknowledges difference in class, race, gender, and ethnicity—it is not surprising to recognize that everyday people look for "totems" (*Fury* 37). Rushdie relates a real incident that happened in 2000 and sparked an international crisis between America and Cuba. A boy named Elián González was taken into custody by The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service after the drowning of his mother in 1999 while attempting to leave Cuba with her son and her boyfriend to get to the United States. The INS fought to keep the boy with American surrogate parents in the United States, which was against the father's demands that González be returned to Cuba. Rushdie depicts the different discursive communities in the novel. He states that after rescuing the boy,

The religious hysteria had begun. The dead mother became almost a Marian figure and there were posters reading Elián, SAVE US" (37). The author also describes how media becomes crazy about recording each and every nuance of Elián's daily life to the American public, while in Cuba "the little boy was being transformed into quite another totem. A dying revolution... Elián rising from the waters became an image of the revolution's immortality: a lie. Fidel, that ancient infidel, made interminable speeches wearing an Elián mask. (37)

News channels like CNN tie the nation together. If we analyze the demonstrations, depicted by Rushdie, done by people in Miami, we find that those demonstrators are not concerned with "the

tragic content of this drama”; what matters for the nation now, as Ira Chernus describes it in analyzing the death of J. F. Kennedy, is that “the nation was tied together by television for the first time. Strange as it may seem, that immensely communal feeling felt good. It was the newly discovered power of the medium, not the message that had such a profound effect” (1). What is strange about this communal feeling is that it is recreated in acts of violence. Acts of violence, like 9/11 that are committed against the people reunite these people and collectively make them condemn these acts of violence. However, they come to mirror what they hate most as they act out against their collective enemy. Solanka assures this point by analyzing the Miami Mob’s actions toward Elian’s plight. He states that “their flight from bigotry had turned them into bigots. They screamed at journalists, abused politicians who disagreed with them, shook their fists against passing cars. They spoke of the evils of brainwashing, but their own brains were self-evidently unclean” (38). Malek Solanka, during Rushdie’s treatment of the Gonzalez episode, questions the reaction of people who receive this story through news and ponders his situation if his relatives were to come between him and his son Asmaan. The media is responsible for generating communal feeling when it triggers the emotion of every parent when it comes to the safety of his children. However, since the communal feeling was meant by the media to unite the crowd, it ignites people’s emotions which, if not controlled, can lead to acts of violence. Luckily, in the story of the Cuban boy, this violence is only depicted as emotional.

Now, let us return to Solanka’s description of “the religious hysteria” surrounding the González case and analyze it. Since Solanka is an “egalitarian by nature and a born-and-bred metropolitan of the countryside” (6), it makes sense that he comments on and criticizes any religious connotation or reference whenever he has the chance. From Solanka’s point of view, assigning a religious image to every current event is considered an act of bigotry which leads

eventually to violence. On the other hand, as theorized by Benjamin, the media makes the “public [the] examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin 33) which makes it easy for the media and authority to steer them. Rushdie, in describing the mobs’ violent, mindless attacks against journalists/politicians, appears to invoke the typical public reception of any incident that sets the nation on the verge of war at any moment. Meanwhile, the media manipulates the mobs and the audience by capturing and spreading the idea and image of the mother and the child into Mary-Jesus icons for salvation-- a salvation from war. Through Solanka’s description, which does not necessarily demonstrate his own thoughts, Fidel Castro is seen as “the devil, Hannibal-the-Cannibal Castro” (37) who might seize the opportunity to ignite a war between Cuba and the US, Communism and Capitalism at any moment. In sum, then, we may say that Elian’s plight and the Miami citizens’ furious actions bring together American political-benevolent actions toward international countries and refugees with the media manipulation of the violent actions of the mob. As a result, *Fury* presents to readers the quotidian banalities of life but tinges those banalities with moments of menace and fury. In a postmodern emergence of simulacra, the images of the quotidian banalities of life and violence are blended together and become something expected and normal because of the techniques of the media. However, the modes of late capitalism, represented by the media and its purpose of spreading communal feeling, may encapsulate fear of violence and fury in order to control the individual.

In addition, Rushdie can be seen as a postmodern writer when he gives a critique of American democratic ideals through the presentation of racist conflicts in capitalist property and moneyed power in *Fury*. Jack Rhinehart, “a usefully non-black specific name” (85), was an African-American journalist who decided to “stay away from America, married a white woman, and moved in *bien-pensant* circles in which race was “not an issue”: that is, almost everyone is

white” (57). Then after he divorced his wife, he goes back to New York and starts dating what he called “the daughters of Paleface” (57). As a matter of fact, Rhinehart feels morally inferior to the white westerners and instead of challenging this kind of feeling within him and challenging the common stereotype of white authority over black, Rhinehart decides to mingle with whites and psychologically becomes a white person regardless of his color. By becoming white it means to act, eat, dress, think, party, and socialize like white people. Solanka informs the reader that “Jack [is] more or less the only black man Jack knew, and Solanka [is] probably the only brown one” (57). Rhinehart’s job as a journalist in war zones hasn’t satisfied his needs for saturated wealth especially when his wife, Bronislawa, has decided to leave him penniless. Moreover, the reader has been told that Reinhart’s refrigerator is stocked with “larks’ tongues, emus’ testicles, dinosaurs’ eggs,” (55) which shows his capacity for “automorphosis and transformation of the self, which Americans claimed as their own special, defining characteristic” (55). Therefore, “he [stops] hyphenating himself and [becomes], simply, an American” (57). As a continuation of his transformation, Jack quits writing meaningful journalism. After abandoning visiting the war zones, Jack begins writing “lucrative profiles of the super-powerful, super-famous, and super-rich”(56). He follows the lives of the rich and celebrities and transforms them into novels in which their main themes are the loves, the misdeeds, the sexual practices, the cars, and every minute detail of their lives. These novels are about “the lives of today's Caesars in their Palaces” (56). It is not sufficient that public figures and the rich provide entertainment to the public; their private lives and their hidden secrets are more appealing, because such hidden secrets verify that these celebrities are not gods but normal people. Rhinehart justifies to Solanka his transformation from being a journalist to becoming a novelist writing about the rich: “ Now that I’m writing about this billionaire in a coma or those moneyed kids who iced their parents, now that I’m on

this diamond beat, I'm seeing more of the truth of things than I did in fucking Desert Storm or some Sniper's Alley doorway in Sarajevo, and believe me it's just as easy, easier even, to step on a fucking land mine and get yourself blown to bits"(56). Solanka detects a "strengthening note of insincerity" in Rhinehart's statement (56). This "bien-pensant" journalist went to war zones to investigate American racism and discovered that the notion of ethnic solidarity is eroded when he finds out the "brutality of blacks against blacks, Arabs against Arabs...the endless color-blind cataclysm of the earth" (57). Therefore, the issue that most hurts him is the cluster of things that has eroded his confidence in the truth behind racism, wars, and the press. Rhinehart doesn't deny the fact that an African American journalist might not be accepted among the elite white who, as it is depicted in the novel, seems to enjoy the privileges of wealth and power in the city. Yet, he doesn't only try to find his place among those elites, he is also willing to go astray, which might be against what he used to believe, in order to be accepted within that particular category. Rushdie offers a critique of a country that plays on the cord of democracy and anti-racism but deep down that society racism still exists.

Salman Rushdie, through the character of Rhinehart, aims at providing the reader with a complete picture of how postmodern American society has become, a "city boiled with money" (3). Rhinehart is consumed with the American-ness of the city of New York. The reason behind Rhinehart's shifting to write "paparazzi" novels is his importunate feeling to become one of the "unit's" holders. His beautiful white wife Bronislawa has been squeezing him for money as an act of "revenge on Satan" as she told the lawyers that she is willing "to keep him the prisoner of [her] ring" (59). Jack's willingness to be part of a super-rich white club costs him his life. He has been killed by a group of rich boys who forced him to write a letter claiming that he killed the girls and now he wants to commit suicide. Rhinehart hasn't challenged the authority of the

white over him; he remained subjugated and inferior to the white in order to please them. What sounds ambiguous is that Rhinehart and Solanka can fit perfectly within New York's life because of their wealth, yet both still feel alienated. Everyone wants to be an American and rich no matter what the cost might be. The difference between them is that Rhinehart chooses to connect with the elite and follow the American way of life while Solanka is yet fragmented and disoriented between his way of life and America's. I also see that the world of media comes not to teach but to entertain. In the novel, Rushdie doesn't elaborate more on Rhinehart's suicide nor does he discuss the media analysis or investigation of Rhinehart's suicide. The media enjoys foregrounding the stories that involve an inferior attacking a superior. However, when the assault is done the other way round, the media stops following these stories, because they distort the image of the superior and the "real" is lost. As Baudrillard puts it, we have lost contact with the "real" in various ways so that we have nothing left but a continuing fascination with its disappearance (*Simulacra and Simulation* 2). Through Rhinehart's story, in addition, Rushdie likewise reveals how the media is infiltrated by multi-millionaire people of authority for the purpose of exploiting and controlling it as well as the individual and society. The doll-maker pondered previously in the novel the effect of money on individuals and their relationship with others as well as society in a way in which "American standards in matters of the heart, or at least in the mating game, had risen even higher than real estate prices" (117). Solanka realizes that Power means to be "filthy rich" and filthy rich means you own power. Since richness and power are what create the S&M club founders' identity, they have the right to collect rare things because

rarity create[s] value, [and] a dead girl's scalp in your pocket...might actually possess greater cachet than would be conferred by the same girl, alive and breathing...The scalp was a signifier of domination, and to remove it, to see such a relic as desirable, was to value the signifier above the signified. (153-154)

What might strike our minds behind this crime which is an act of violence is the question whether the S&M founders are looking for sex or power. Later in the novel, when the investigation of the girls' death reveals that the rich boys were responsible for this homicide, the public was united and had this communal feeling in this act of violence and the public talk was of "the icy ruthlessness of the crimes" (202). Contemporary media makes the individual lose all ability to make sense of the purpose behind its depiction of acts of violence in society. Do we share the communal feeling with the inferior or with the superior in society? Are we truly sharing this feeling because we want to share it or because the media is directing us towards it? I believe that Baudrillard's assumption that the "media are not *co-efficients*, but *effectors* of ideology" (*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* 169) is true and it makes us approach each other and the world through its lens in order to keep us united, not free. I come to see that Rushdie's analysis of the media and its function within a postmodern paradigm embraces Rushdie's shift toward accepting media imagery and narrative in postmodernity. The media, as a postmodern production, provides a type of anesthesia and Rushdie is aware of this effect in controlling the individual and in sustaining the American hegemony.

The novel reveals a contradictory condition in the postmodern individual's willingness to liberate himself from cultural hegemony while at the same time he has a desire to be part of the hegemonic forces that cultural production of late capitalism has. Rushdie uses Solanka as a puppet who leads us to realize that what we might sometimes hate is what actually we become attached to and cannot get rid of. The novel illustrates that the individual as well as his artifact tries hard to either participate in decision-making or, if he can be lucky, practices some sort of authority and hegemony on the lives of others. However, the individual, whether he is an

American or a cosmopolitan, is left with one choice: to ally with and support the hegemonic regime he might condemn. At the moment, Rushdie is on a collision course between exorcising the past and embracing the contemporary American life of the intellectual, the wealthy, and the powerful. The novel mirrors the individual's furies in a postmodern time. "Life is fury," the narrator notes: "Fury—sexual, oedipal, political, magical, brutal—drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths" (30). And yes! This fury drives in disguise the civilized world and its core concepts are perceived by intellectuals, the rich, and people of authority in their willingness to establish a better life. Although the novel is criticized by most reviewers, such as Clements Toby, Troy Patterson, and Karen Valby, as an obsolete novel and not one of his best novels, I come to see that it marks a turning point in Rushdie's style and themes. He still uses the same virtuosity, verbosity, extended metaphor and nonlinear narrative but the themes are no longer touching themes of anti-colonialism which Rushdie's readers have tackled in for example *Midnight's Children* or *The Satanic Verses* (although these two novels already display postmodern characteristics). Rushdie as a postmodern writer exhibits a new playfulness and a new eclecticism mixed with the elements of sociopolitical critique of the world. Rushdie in this postmodern novel reveals how everything is America centered, and even the anti-Americans center their envy and their rage on America. Rushdie wasn't lamenting or satirizing the hegemonic force of America nor did he believe in America's loss of superiority. Since the novel captures certain autobiographical incidents in Rushdie's life through its depiction of Solanka, and although the novel and its protagonist are so critical of American society and American capitalism, still Rushdie and Solanka are willing to become Americanized as everyone else in the

world. America is the master of power in the globe and Rushdie is aware that no one can defy its power¹⁸.

By the time Rushdie published *Fury* in April 2001, America was celebrating the zeitgeist of the Millennium and its economical saturation. The writer almost predicted the terrible attacks on the Twin Towers five months later but his speculations were based on a description of pre-9/11 America as seemingly wealthy and carefree, but with a weakness and fragility just beneath the surface (1). I think if Rushdie predicted a disaster to happen to his new adopted country, it would be internal because of all the fury and anger instilled in the civilized society the author depicted in the novel. Postmodernism, according to Harvey, “seeks a shameless accommodation with the market” (116), therefore, it is not surprising to see how a postmodern city like New York or a postmodern individual like Solanka are dominated by the western cultural hegemony even if they claim to hate it. This is how the novel ends; with Solanka surrendering to the hegemony of the postmodern cultural production,

He had given up the New York subet and taken a suit at Claridge’s. Most days he only left it to allow the cleaners to get in... Retiring eary, he hay wide-eyed and rigid in his

¹⁸ What made me come to this assumption is that two things captured my eyes when I first bought the book. First, the book cover which shows New York’s twin towers still standing up high in the sky touching a cloud which symbolizes the economic and social might of the country that no one can destroy; and second, a statement by *The Tampa tribune and Times* which notes:

Rushdie writes of the pulse of America as if he had lived here his entire life. Few can capture the dark side of our society in such a comedic way. His examination of the uneasy alliance between men and women is insightful and enlightening. This novel succeeds on many levels and is a timely reminder to order the priorities in our lives. Rushdie is now welcomed into the fold as an American author of the highest stature.

What I can tell from this statement is that Rushdie has known America and has studied the history, politics, society, and the economy very well. The fact that some reviewers welcome him as “an American author” can be seen as a privilege to Rushdie who in his recent fiction seems to make an effort to captures all America’s sides, the dark as well as the bright, in order to become Americanized.

comfortable bed, listening to the noises of distant fury... On Christmas Day and New Year's Eve he ordered room service and watched brainless television. (258).

Chapter Three

Shalimar the Clown and the Cultural Production of Late Capitalism

“A specter is haunting the world—the specter of capitalism”

The Communist Manifesto

Shalimar the Clown is arguably one of Rushdie’s postmodern novels in the sense that it “[mediates] upon or [reassesses] postmodern aesthetics”¹⁹ (Keulks 143). In addition, as Keulks argues, the novel probes “postmodernism’s achievements, icons, symbols, and limitations” (143). One of the postmodern conditions the novel also investigates is the experiences and effects of global capitalism which create shifts and changes in the present moment. Best and Kellner argue that “the postmodern turn is intimately bound up with globalization and the vicissitudes of transnational capitalism” (13). Capitalism has led into an expansion of the world market, “the decline of the nation-state,” and loss of control over people, information, and different cultural forms (13). Therefore, a reaction against the hegemony of the commodification of globalization and capitalism has emerged to preserve “specific forms of culture and society against transnational media and consumer culture” (14). Significantly, this reaction creates phenomena such as “the rise of religious fundamentalism” and the “emphasis on the local, the particular, the marginal, and the heterogeneous” in some versions of postmodern productions (14). The contemporary postmodern cultural productions—mass media is one of them—are capitalist-driven. Therefore, in order to sustain the hegemony of late capitalism, these cultural productions—and my focus here is on the media—create different kinds of resources that attack

¹⁹ According to David Harvey, postmodern aesthetics “celebrates the differences, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms” (156).

whatever goes against the hegemony of late capitalism. In other words, terrorism—as I will elaborate more throughout the chapter—is arguably a production or a reaction against globalized economy and culture. Therefore, the media, specifically after 9/11 attacks, plays a fundamental role in producing images and manipulating the facts which direct the individual's thought towards what the authority of mass media wants him to believe.

Thus, late capitalism and the tools (cultural production) it uses to sustain its hegemony shape and reshape the society and the individual, as well as other cultural productions. The effect of late capitalism in contemporary time is evident in the cultural and art productions of architects, musicians, intellectuals, and novelists, to name but a few. Those producers (Salman Rushdie is one of them) are affected and manipulated by the discourse of postmodernism and late capitalism that can be contradictory sometimes. Thus, since postmodernism, in Jameson's lens, is "the cultural logic of late capitalism," my main argument will be that late capitalism produces fragmented intellectuals, such as Rushdie, who in return transform their fragmented conscious into a literary production—*Shalimar the Clown*. Consequently, this postmodern work reflects the ideologies and the effects of its producer and of other cultural productions, such as the media (which encapsulates the logic of late capitalism). In other words, the major part of this chapter will examine the discourse of terrorism as represented in western media, which is affected and controlled by late capitalism, and other opposing statements of some intellectuals who refute the media's projection. Then I will show how Rushdie is a postmodern fragmented intellectual who is affected by those opposing arguments which can be encapsulated in his novel: he accepts the dominating western media's discourse of terrorism through depicting the image of the Islamic terrorist as circulated in western media, yet he introduces us to Shalimar and Ophuls whom I will argue are representations of the postmodern fragmented self and of the postmodern

antihero created by the conditions of late capitalism or, to be more specific, the American hegemony. The other minor part of this chapter will give a critique of the postmodern city (Los Angeles) and its inhabitants and how they are shaped by the logic of late capitalism. This plethora of arguments will reveal how the novel, as a postmodern art production, reflects the postmodern legacy of late capitalism and doesn't attempt to subvert it.

I would like to begin with a brief summary of the novel. *Shalimar the Clown* opens in Los Angeles where India Ophuls, the daughter of Max Ophuls, a retired diplomat and spy and famous hero of the French Resistance against Vichy France and Nazi Germany, witnesses her father being butchered at the entrance to her apartment. The assassin is Shalimar the Clown, who met Ophuls in Kashmir when the latter was the American ambassador in India. The narrative reverts us to the past by 30 years to Kashmir, which is described as an earthly paradise before India and Pakistan go to war over it. Shalimar the Clown, a Muslim boy, falls in love with Boonyi, a Hindu girl, and they end up making love. The two families decide to combine their love in a legal wedlock in the name of "Kashmiriyat" which symbolizes Kashmir's tolerance and multiculturalism. However, after getting married, Boonyi finds that a dull domestic life is not part of her dream and decides to seize the first moment to escape from her village and her husband. Soon after a war starts between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the Maharaja, the leader of Kashmir, supports the annexation of Kashmir by India; in order to prevent this annexation by the Hindu state, militant Muslim revolutionaries from Kashmir and Pakistan start coming to the valley, represented first in the novel through the character of the iron mullah Balbul Fakh who has "beautiful pale eyes that [seems] to look right through this world into the next one" (187-188). His mission is to teach Muslims the religious doctrines of Islam and to

encourage his Muslim brothers to fight the non-Muslims in the valley: a description that matches the image of the stereotypical Islamic terrorist spread by western media.

Meanwhile Max Ophuls is assigned as the American ambassador in India. His mission is to establish an understanding agreement between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, to sell weapons to the military Muslim revolutionaries in the valley, and yet to rehearse his counter-terrorist ideology for the United States. Ophuls insists on visiting Kashmir, and the authorities there ask Shalimar's father, who is "the headman" of the village of Pachigam and the leader of travelling performers, to perform a play for Ophuls about the history of Kashmir. After seeing her dancing during the performance, Ophuls takes a fancy to Boonyi and realizes that she is willing to escape her world to be his mistress. After the performance for Ophuls, Boonyi doesn't return to her village with the band because she elopes with the Ambassador to Delhi. Consequently, Shalimar bends himself to revenge. He goes to the mountains and joins an Islamist terrorist network. The reader follows Shalimar's training as he is turned into a killing machine who favors the knife as his weapon. He practices military techniques to prepare himself for his ultimate goal which is killing Boonyi and the ambassador. After killing Boonyi and the ambassador, Shalimar discovers that Boonyi has a daughter called India. As he once promised Boonyi to kill her and her offspring if she betrays him, Shalimar, who entered prison after killing Ophuls, manages to escape in order to kill India. The book ends with Shalimar holding the knife and India, who changes her name to Kashmira, pointing her bow and arrow towards him.

I

Before I start with the argument about the media and the discourse of terrorism, it is significant to explore the concept of the fragmentation of the subject, which is one of the key aspects of postmodernism, in order to understand how Rushdie and his characters are depicted as

fragmented subjects. Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, has offered us an analysis of the psychological effect of late capitalism. He uses architecture, fiction, and other artistic productions to argue that our contemporary culture, the effect of mass media on the individual, and the effect of dislocations as a result of globalization of production have created a new dominant consciousness: “a postmodern schizo-fragmentation” (372). One of the characterization of this fragmentation, as Jameson puts it, is that the subject “has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience” (25). The subject becomes more fragmentary. But what leads this subject to be fragmented? As Jameson argues, the conditions of late capitalism have created modes of consciousness; one of them is the loss of the historical sense. The key effect is a loss of continuous sense of narrative over time. As a result, this loss of historicity creates a fragmented subject (63). Our understanding of the past is no longer based on facts or true information. We grasp the past through a plethora of information about the past that is transformed to us through new technologies: media capitalism is one of them. Therefore, the subject can no longer acquire an understanding of the past nor the future and the result is “heaps of fragments” (25).

Thus, fragmentation is an important aspect of postmodernism and it can be reflected on the culture itself, the intellectual’s conscious subject, and his art production. When we think of the contemporary time, we think of the multiple views, concepts, theories, movements, and diverse cultures that co-exist together. This hybridity emphasizes fragmentation, discontinuity, and chaos seen in the subject. Yet, this same fragmentation can be depicted in the culture because of the domination of media and globalization in which different ideologies, religions, and fashions blend together and form the postmodern culture. Therefore, as Jameson argues,

postmodernism becomes the dominant cultural form under late capitalism (406). Claudia Strauss questions “how to explain the sort of fragmentation discussed in postmodern theory and displayed in postmodern art.” She also asks “if [art] is a reflection of the consciousness of its producer” (364). Strauss relies on Jameson’s acknowledgements to answer these questions. She argues that Jameson’s explanation implies that “current material conditions have created artists and intellectuals with a historically determinate form of consciousness, the structures of which are in turn reflected in the structures of their music, architecture, novels, and theories” (364). Therefore, the subject has been dominated by the effects of late capitalism: the media is one of these effects. Consequently, they shape and form the “unconscious” of the artists and intellectuals in contemporary time which in turn is reflected in their art production. What the postmodern culture, its artists, and its cultural production share is fragmentation.

In this sense, how can the reader see Rushdie as an intellectual observer? Does he, as an artist in a postmodern culture, hold within him a fragmented consciousness that is manipulated and dominated by mass media when tackling the discourse of terrorism? Is this novel, as an art production, a reflection of Rushdie’s consciousness? In another attempt to see this novel as a postmodern art production, I would like to investigate how the discourse of terrorism is tackled in western media and in the statements of some intellectuals who oppose the rhetoric that permeates the majority of the mass media’s discourse on terrorism. Then I will investigate how Rushdie is affected by the dominating western media’s discourse of terrorism in his projection of terrorism. However, simultaneously, Rushdie displays the ideology of the opposing intellectuals manifested in the character of Shalimar and Ophuls whom I will argue are representations of the postmodern antihero terrorist.

Terrorism in Western Media:-

After the attacks on the World Trade Center, the American media broadcasted the plane attacks on the World Trade Center and “took over TV programming for the next three days without commercial break as the major television networks focused on the attack and its aftermath” (Kellner 54). Media networks brought “national security state intellectuals” in an attempt to analyze and explain the “horrific event” (Kellner 55). Not only American media was dominated by explaining the attacks. Global media with its news networks also played the video of the planes attacking the World Trade Center in the background while hosting local, global, and western intellectuals to present their feedback. I remember, though, other images, videos, and documentaries broadcasted through Al-Jazeera, CNN, and Fox News, picturing Osama bin Laden and his followers, wearing turbans, having long beards, and walking through the rough mountains of Tora Bora that separates Afghanistan from Pakistan. The media informed viewers that this terrorist group utilized suicide bombers as weapons. The circulation of this footage and notion, surely, stuck in the minds of the audience and attempted to stereotype the image of the terrorist according to what the media displayed. Moreover, the images and discourses of the US television networks along with the Bush administration’s declarations and explanations of the attack has resulted in associating terrorism with Islamic fundamentalism. Consequently, the “Global War on Terror,” a term created by western media and authorities after the 9/11 attacks, invoked an international military campaign on international Islamist terrorists and Al Qaeda.

On the other hand, a few intellectuals and political activists like Susan Sontag and Jean Baudrillard analyzed the 9/11 attacks differently. Sontag, for instance, dissented from the overwhelming response to 9/11, which labeled the attackers as “cowards”, through claiming instead that “we,” the Americans, are the cowards:

The disconnect between last Tuesday's monstrous dose of reality and the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures and TV commentators is startling, depressing. The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantilize the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a "cowardly" attack on "civilization" or "liberty" or "humanity" or "the free world" but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word "cowardly" is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards. (Sontag Paragraph 1)

Sontag triggered outrage in her claims against the patriotism of Americans, who died in September 11 attacks, because she saw that these attacks were the consequence of the American international policy especially in America's war in Iraq. Her argument is concerned with the international politics of the Bush administration. On the other hand, her refusal to follow the consensus claims of calling terrorists cowards is considered by many intellectuals and pundits "as the exemplar of anti-Americanism at a moment of frenetic American patriotism" (Haberski paragraph 4). However, Sontag defied all these accusations by presenting a discussion of Abu Gharib Prison and the atrocities practiced in it; and here Haberski defended her claims by stating that "As with her critique of Bush's initial response to 9/11, Sontag was once again tagged as anti-American. She was indeed anti-something, but she didn't need to be simplistically anti-American to make a point about how dangerous Abu Ghraib was to the domestic health of the United States" (Paragraph 8).

Moreover, Jean Baudrillard argues against associating terrorism with Islamism. He states that terrorism "reaches far beyond Islam and America" and the 9/11 proliferations represent a clash "of triumphant globalization battling against itself" which "unfolded a fourth world war": The First World War was about ending colonialism; the Second World War was about ending

the Third Reich; the Cold War ended communism (12). In Baudrillard's view "the Fourth World War is elsewhere. It is what haunts every world order, all hegemonic domination—if Islam dominated the world, terrorism would rise against Islam, *for it is the world, the globe itself, which resists globalization*" (*The Spirit of terrorism* 12). Baudrillard blames globalization and the United States (the dominant forces in the world) for representing a new kind of terrorism in which the latter tries to make the "other" pay for it²⁰. Baudrillard was accused of justifying terrorism when he applied a relativistic analysis of terrorism:

For it is that superpower [i.e. America] which, by its unbearable power, has fermented all this violence which is endemic throughout the world, and hence that (unwittingly) terroristic imagination which dwells in all of us. The fact that we have dreamt of this event that everyone without exception has dreamt of it—because no one can avoid dreaming of the destruction of any power that has become hegemonic to this degree—is unacceptable to the Western moral conscience... At a pinch, we can say that they *did it*, but we *wished for it*. (5)

Baudrillard as a postmodernist analyzed the process of terrorism relativistically but this analysis didn't prevent him of being accused of following the wave of anti-Americanism. To sum up, American media and authority shape the discourse of terrorism and I agree with Kellner's argument that the American media along with the Bush administration have "established a binary dualism between Islamic terrorism and civilization" (5) and they draw "a line between those who supported terrorism and those who were ready to fight it" (7).

²⁰ Baudrillard's statement about blaming globalization for producing a new kind of terrorism is not new of course, but is just the contemporary version of the "savage war" that has been central to the American national narrative since the beginning. The reader might want to take a look at Richard Slotkin's work on this in his *Myth of the Frontier* trilogy; especially at the volume on the most recent aspect of this, *Gunfire Nation*.

The Fragmented consciousness of Rushdie

Since the events of September 11, 2001, many writers, film directors, painters, musicians have been working on projects that indirectly shape the collective image of that tragic incident. More importantly, September 11 has influenced western cultural production. According to Muhammad Safer Awan, “the twin towers have gone up in flames again and again in a plethora of textual and visual narratives like novels, short stories, films, documentaries and prose analyses” (522). Thus, the works of postmodern western novelists like Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Bret Easton Ellis’s *Glamorama*, Martin Amis’s short story “The Last Days of Muhammad Atta,” and Thomas Pynchon’s *Bleeding Edge* have directed their responses to the attacks toward the domestic sphere where “cataclysmic public events are measured purely and simply in terms of their impact on the emotional entanglements of their protagonists” (Gray 134). By reconsidering universalized western ideology, those writers have also depicted the war on terror and on terrorists who got their education from within the Western World, America and Europe. Some, like Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, shed light on the subjective psychological dilemma that has followed 9/11 and follow a narrator’s quest for hope and recovery. On the other hand, John Updike’s *Terrorist* attempts to investigate the personal life of terrorists and the motivations that lead them to attack significant targets in first world countries. However, what shapes those writers’ investigations is their established beliefs about the “other” who might feel inferior and who hold hatred towards the openness, benevolence, and resilience of the West. For example, while analyzing John Updike’s *Terrorist*, Richard Gray argues that “Updike uses his own undoubted distaste for the secular temper of contemporary America and a world of commodities as a kind of bridge, a way of assuming the vision of a

young Arab-American boy” (135). Gray continues that *Terrorist* tries to address the idea of the “other” but failed to “[get] under the skin” of the bomber, Ahmad Mullaway Mulloy (136).

Like other American and European writers, Rushdie makes his mark in commenting on the 9/11 attacks in non-fictional articles and essays published immediately in, to mention a few, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Guardian*. His articles reflected his distaste for the attacks on America and “[acceded] rather easily to the most prevalent stereotypes about Islam”²¹ (Sawhney and Sawhney 433). And after four years, Rushdie published *Shalimar the Clown*, a novel about terrorism which doesn’t directly touch the September 11 attacks as most writers of post 9/11 do, but sets Max Ophuls as an apt symbol of the World Trade center. Rushdie shares with DeLillo and Updike their distaste of the commodification of almost every aspect of life and their novels reflect this notion. However, their art production might also imply that terrorism is an outcome of late capitalism. In addition, what makes this novel distinct is that it investigates the seeds of founding terrorism in the East. In other words, the novel hasn’t concentrated on the plight of Americans after the attacks or focused on the development of terrorists raised within the Western World. To the contrary, the writer investigates the seeds of terrorism as they grow in the 1980s, sends us back to World War II and writes about the history of the French resistance, then traces terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s as it reaches Europe and America. In *Shalimar the Clown*, there is passionate analytical insight, an ability to “get under the skin” of the terrorist(s), and an argument about the personal and cultural motives.

²¹ I want to make the assumption that beside the dominant discourse of terrorism shaped by Western Media, Rushdie has this distaste because he has suffered from the atrocities of the Khomeini’s fatwa. Therefore, Rushdie may feel obliged, through his analysis, to address terrorism and to construct the image of the terrorist based on Khomeini’s image.

Salman Rushdie, as a postmodern writer, can be seen as deploying the two ideologies about terrorism discussed above (the western media's discourse vs. the intellectuals') in his non-fictional and fictional productions significantly after the attacks on the Twin towers and the Pentagon in 2001. I find it important to seek Rushdie's established definition of the fundamentalist which is depicted in his essays after September 11 because his analysis of terrorism and terrorists follows the American media narrative while his novel deals with what Rushdie once claimed about all his novels and *The Satanic Verses* in particular that "the real purpose of fiction is not to distort facts but to explore human nature, to explore ideas on which the human race rests itself" (Pipes 111). In "Fighting the Forces of Invisibility" (October 2 2001) Rushdie states that:

Terrorism is the murder of the innocent; this time, it was mass murder...The fundamentalist seeks to bring down a great deal more than buildings. Such people are against...freedom of speech, a multi-party political system, universal adult suffrage, accountable government, Jews, homosexuals, women's rights, pluralism, secularism, short skirts, dancing, beardlessness, evolution theory, sex.

Rushdie's definition of terrorism works in with the western consensus definition of the phenomenon.

Paradoxically, Rushdie, in the same article, denies any implication suggested by authorities in the West to connect the attacks with Islam as a religion although he links terrorism with fundamentalism which carries religious connotations. In the same article, he continues: "Islam is tough on suicides, who are doomed to repeat their deaths through all eternity" and he asks Muslims everywhere "to face up [Islam's] bin Laden." In this sense, Rushdie differentiates between the actual Islamic doctrine and the misleading fanatic practices done by Islamic groups like bin Laden's.

On the other hand, in “A War That Presents Us All with a Crisis of Faith” (November 2001), Rushdie refutes the notion that Islam has nothing to do with those terrorists and associates fundamentalism with Islam:

If this isn't about Islam, why the worldwide Muslim demonstrations in support of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida? Why did those 10,000 men armed with swords and axes mass on the Pakistani-Afghanistan frontier, answering some mullah's call to jihad? Why are the war's first British casualties three Muslim men who died fighting on the Taliban side?

In his non-fiction essays, Salman Rushdie weaves two rival conceptions of Islam: the first detaches the religion from not-Islam-related yet Islam-claimed Jihad and the other reveals his orientation in linking “worldwide Muslim demonstrations” with bin Laden and terrorism. Rushdie's rejection of terrorism which appears in his articles is an attempt to avoid being categorized as the “other” or as anti-American, as established by western media narrative, because if he accepts terrorism, it “others” him utterly and renders him complicit with terrorism against the West. Rushdie's ambivalent analyses of terrorism seems to echo the western consensus about Islam but at the same time they echo Rushdie's historical and personal experience with Khomeini's fatwa. In addition, his ambivalent notion about terrorism adds many questions to Rushdie's location in literature, his new affiliations to the western world, and “the explicit political ends of his [recent] works” (Sawhney and whney 432).

Shalimar the Clown: A Postmodern art production

As a postmodern work, Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* occupies two contradictory conditions: the first one reveals an author victimized by terrorism and he, in this regard, is associated with western culture; the second is one in which Rushdie is in an ambivalent relationship with terrorism because of the complex and unusual situation of Kashmir. Since the novel follows the protagonists' fight for survival, the first categorization is reminiscent of

Rushdie's plight during the Fatwa. Rushdie, acting here as both victim and witness, uses his plight as a victim that ensued over Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa and applies it in this novel as a recovery. This recovery underlines a categorization in his examining modes of terrorism which might associate him with what media narrative assures about terrorism.

Now, how does the novel reflect the western media narrative about terrorism and the terrorists? In the section called "Shalimar the Clown," the novel follows the seeds of Islamic terrorism which appeared after the defeat of Soviet Union in Afghanistan as did many documentaries about terrorism. However, before these terrorists take their violence to the western world, the novel depicts these terrorists in a "forward camp" where "quantities of weapons" are available and where trainers are ready to teach the volunteers to use these weapons" (431). Aside from their training, "the five daily prayers at the camp were compulsory for all the fighters and the only book permitted at the site... was the Holy Qur'an" (432). The narrator tells us that between the prayers and the training there is "much discussion of God" (432). These discussions are meant to change the "ideology" of the fighters about "everything they thought they knew about the nature of reality, about how things worked and what things were" (433). The novel implies that these discussions about the nature of things which the Iron Mullah transforms to his fighters manipulate the fighters' way of thinking and the way they observe life. The novel also depicts the image of the terrorist similar to that circulated in western media. The narration reports characteristics of terrorists as

Junk... came to life and took human form. The men who were miraculously born from these rusting war metals, who went out into the valley to preach resistance and revenge, were saints of an entirely new kind. They were the iron mullahs... Their breath was hot and smoky, like burning rubber tyres, or the exhalations of dragons. They were to be honored, feared and obeyed. (188-189)

Isn't it the reflection of the physical image of Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar shared through the media?! The narrator also tells us that Balbul Fakh, aka the Iron Mullah, has a "long straggling beard," "pale eyes" and wears "a long, threadbare woolen coat and a loosely tied black turban" (188). Moreover, the novel depicts how the Mullah preaches—which might also reflect how western media depicts the language of bin Laden: "He began preaching hellfire and damnation. He spoke the language harshly" (188). There is also another depiction of suicide bombers and how this terrorist group attract young people and turn them into suicide bombers. The novel follows terrorist attacks in South Africa but nothing was produced in any western country. Thus, similar to the discourse of terrorism and the image of the terrorist circulated in western media, the novel gives the terrorist a distinct reality. The novel also reflects Rushdie's definition of the fundamentalist as killers of joy. Through following the destructive deeds of the terrorists, the narrator reveals how these terrorists kill singers and dancers in Pachigam (495) and order women to follow the Islamic doctrine of covering themselves from head to toe or be killed (491). what the narration in the novel implies about the individuals who join Islamic terrorist groups is that those insurgents lack ethics, as in the story of the Muslim Gegroo brothers of the village of Shirmal who raped the Hindu Zoon Misri of the village of Pachigam and were able to escape, with the help of Mullah Balbul Fakh, to join the Islamic insurgents in the mountains; or in the story of the Muslims Jihadists who after lacing the fund for food and weapons decided to attack the villages in Kashmir and force the people to help hiding and feeding them while the terrorists raped the villagers' women. The author seems to encourage the stereotypical image of a terrorist as being a scary, narrow-minded, unethical person/clown who can be easily motivated and manipulated by the courses of life; and the novel directs the reader to remember that beneath their clownish personality lies threat in the shape of terrorism that is violent and extreme.

The novel, moreover, highlights the destructive forces of terrorism not on western land but on Kashmir. The novel reveals how Indian authorities launch their armies to fight the terrorists and kill anyone suspected to be a terrorist. What resulted from the fighting of both parties against each other is the destruction of many Kashmiri villages as well as the elimination of the village of Pachigam. The narrator tells us that “the village of Pachigam still exists on the official maps of Kashmir... What happened that day in Pachigam need not be set down here in full detail, because brutality is brutality and excess is excess... There was no Pachigam anymore” (504-505). Kashmir is destroyed, as G Suray notes, by “the seed of distrust and hatred sown by the fundamentalists and extremists, the by-products of a savage and cruel dissection of the nation, gradually take enormous forms and engulfs the whole valley in its fire” (paragraph 37). Thus, Islamic terrorists in the novel fit in the criteria and the image of terrorism constructed by western media—acts of violence against civilians, fighting freedom of speech, and attempting to take the world back under the control of radical Islam²².

On the other hand, Rushdie is good at weaving the destructive forces of terrorism on Kashmir into a captivating story that makes it open to numerous interpretations. Among other things, the novel is a story of globalization:

Everywhere was now a part of everywhere else. Russia, America, London, Kashmir. Our Lives, our stories, flowed into one another's, were no longer our own, individual, discrete. This unsettled people. There were collisions and explosion. The world was no longer calm. (61)

²² If Rushdie did not employ iconic images of terrorism, he would have difficulty connecting with a Western audience, which knows these images so well. But it is an important point about Rushdie as a postmodern author that he is employing images of images, not images of something in reality.

This quote is seen by many critics as manifesting Rushdie's cosmopolitan borderless world. As Ana Cristina Mendes suggests the novel, as depicted in this quote, "[postulates] likewise a new age of the post-frontier ... [where] the way transnational terrorist networks and fundamentalist movements have assisted in the weakening of territorial borders" (97) . Alternatively, this quote, on the surface, highlights the fictionalized idealistic world, united by happiness and misery instead of politics, and where metanarratives and objective truths do prevail. But deeper, this imaginative universe, represented in the novel by France, London, California, and Kashmir (the idealistic, idyllic village of Pachigam), argues that universalism and objective reality of an idealistic world will cease to exist in reality because they will be intervened by an outer, more authoritative world (the postmodern world) that will change its core for the sake of dominating it in the name of freeing this world from its tradition. The claim of the West to spread modernization to the rest of the globe covers the purpose of controlling the world under the name of unity and freedom. Thus, freedom is embellished by hegemonic geopolitical terms from above, but deep down, as Ophuls tells India: "Freedom is not a tea party, India. Freedom is a war" (27). However, what Rushdie may thematize in his novel is making the reader see a legitimacy of the terrorist's perspective (fighting against the economic and political productions of capitalism) even if he rejects it and gives the chance to the reader to sympathize with and/or condemn the acts of the protagonists.

My question is, if people in any country had fallen under the atrocities of this kind of war, what is to be expected from them? To run? Save their lives? To be trapped in war zones? Or to fight for their freedom? As the narration illustrates how some people of France escape the atrocities of the Nazi's invasion and how some of them choose to fight for their freedom, the same thing happens in Kashmir where some people decide to escape to India or Pakistan while

others decide to fight through joining Islamic insurgent groups. The Indian military has its legal possession of the Kashmiri valley because Kashmir has supported the Indian presence, and “to say otherwise was to break the law” and be considered a criminal (155). Therefore, the Indian military position, represented in the novel through the character of Colonel Kachhwaha, pins down subversive Kashmiri people, “not just Muslims but the meat-eating pandits as well” (158). Following the narration of the collision between Kashmir, India and Pakistan, resisting the occupation of Kashmir appears at the very beginning by a group called “the Liberation-front-wallahs” (173) whom later, the reader knows, become “nationalist subversives rather than religious fanatics” (201). However, the Liberation-front group is replaced by the so called Islamic terrorists—represented in the novel as “iron mullahs.” The “Liberation front” group is attracted by young men who had talents like Anees, Shalimar’s brother, who could “[create] miniature marvels of paper-chain cutout figures” (173). Therefore, there is nothing mentioned in the novel about people rejecting the acts of the “liberation front” group. What might be suggested is that the novel has given a validity to this group by avoiding to project any sort of rejection to this group since it doesn’t have any religious aims or doctrines and since the group aims at fighting the Pakistani-Indian invasion of the valley.

I would like to investigate the opposite discourse of terrorism where intellectuals associate the emergence of terrorism with American international policies and how this is reflected in the novel. In analyzing Islamic terrorism in the novel, the subject of the hatred of America and America being the enemy is clear especially in the relationship between Shalimar the terrorist and the American ambassador. The ambassador’s adopted acts of western hegemony have an impact in changing Shalimar’s identity from a mundane band clown into a professional assassin. This hatred that might change the individual’s ideology toward adopting acts of

terrorism is not necessarily provoked by political or religious attitudes. Rushdie has a significant claim of what might turn a common individual into a terrorist. In an interview with Allan Gregg, Rushdie states that:

people don't always take political positions, or even something as extreme as terrorists positions for purely ideological reasons.... People do these for active human reasons. And in Kashmir, for instance... people have joined the Jihadists because they're broke and need a paycheck... Sometimes people who joined these groups are very ideologically motivated, very narrow focus program thinkers... sometimes very weak characters... [who] have their view of the world shifted by charismatic powerful individuals.

Based on Rushdie's statement, the individual, sometimes, can be transformed into a terrorist for "human" and personal reasons. This is depicted in the character of Shalimar the clown whose wife's betrayal urges him to seek revenge and in turn transforms him from a clown to a killing machine.

The Postmodern Antihero Terrorist

Thus, Based on Jameson's notion of the postmodern fragmented self, it is not hard to read the character of Shalimar as a fragmented individual shaped by the conditions of late capitalism. The postmodern era in which international terrorism is one of its components presents us with the anti-hero terrorist who, instead of fighting injustice, seeks revenge. Shalimar can be seen as the postmodern anti-hero²³ who reflects the complexity and ambiguity of postmodern life. As

²³ Rita Gurung, in her book *The Archetypal Antihero in Postmodern Fiction*, differentiates between the traditional hero and the postmodern anti-hero. While the hero, depicted in classic literature, is the dignified heroic leader, the postmodern antihero is petty, ignominious, ineffectual and passive" (4). In addition, the anti-hero reflects the common man and he is an example of "antiheroic ordinariness and inadequacy" (3). Gurung adds that the "postmodern antihero is himself a victim of alienation, cultural and spiritual sterility, seeking solace and refuge in alcohol, self-deception, power, social withdrawal, and anonymity" (8-9). When postmodern fiction presents anti-heroes, their characteristics and qualifications "feature spiritual aridity, mundane lives, failure, attraction towards evil and chaos" (12). They also usually follow the norms of the established political/social institutions and tries to forget about their passivity

“the Gilded Age gave us Jay Gatsby, the Great Depression spawned Tom Powers, and Vietnam gave birth to a spectrum of sociopaths, from Michael Corleone to Travis Bickle” (Bender, paragraph 2), Shalimar reflects, as other postmodern anti-heroes, the common man who is affected by the era’s hegemonic conditions that insist in marginalizing and categorizing him first, as a third world poor passive clown, and second as a terrorist. As a result of the dominance of late capitalism, Shalimar exorcizes his inner torment through seeking revenge. Revenge can be read as an act of rebellion that some postmodern antiheroes adopt to fight against the prevalent established systems. Yet, sometimes these acts of rebellion are espoused by moral compromises the antiheroes perpetrate to achieve a desired end.

The reader questions how a mundane man who looks ineffectual and passive is turned to be a terrorist. When the reader first meets Shalimar as the driver of Max Ophuls in California in the mid-1990s, and through the lens of India, the ambassador’s daughter, Shalimar is a “handsome man, even a beautiful one... there was pain in his face” (15) and that the name, Shalimar, means “abode of joy” (22) which doesn’t reflect the status of the driver at all. The narrator also later tells the reader that after the assassination of the ambassador,

It became clear that the assassin had deliberately drawn his victim almost as close as a lover, had effaced his own personality with the strategic discipline of a great warrior in order to study the true face of the enemy and learn his strengths and weaknesses, as if this vicious killer had been gripped by the need to know as intimately as possible the life he planned so brutally to terminate. It was said in court that such despicable behavior proved the murderer to be a person so inhumanly cold-blooded, so calculatingly icy of heart, so fiendishly diseased of soul that it would never be safe to return him to the company of civilized man. (52)

through being indulged in moral flaws. On the other hand, there are anti-heroes who usually fight against the prevailing established political/social institutions. Usually antiheroes act as representatives of marginalized social groups which heavily affects their decision making with an inherent bias. Clearly, there is no “single, specific type” of a postmodern antihero but “a chameleon of anti-heroic qualities, subjectified by authorial need, which of course is suitably postmodern” (Sanborn 10).

The first impression readers get from the first chapter is how this Kashmiri, handsome man whose English was “barely functional” (16) is a villain and a terrorist although, importantly, the killing of Ophuls is not a terrorist act. It is a simple act of premeditated murder, for reasons of personal revenge. Up to this point, the reader doesn’t know the motivation behind Shalimar killing the ambassador; is it political or religious? It is, of course, neither. But the marvelous description of the ambassador at the beginning of the book as a great father, “one of the architects of the postwar world, of its international structures” (10), a politician, and a media celebrity, all these, unwittingly, with the stereotypical image of a terrorist marked by the media before and after 9/11, direct the readers’ assumption to symbolic element of 9/11 terrorism that the assassination was politically motivated. And since Shalimar is a Muslim from Kashmir—his acts of terrorism, though, is not associated with terrorist groups—the reader might assume that the assassination might also be religiously motivated. However, as the novel unfolds, the reader learns that Shalimar follows Ophuls to seek revenge. Shalimar’s moral choice to kill the ex-ambassador is seen as a result to the power class which leaves characters like Shalimar deploy an unpleasant means to reach redemption.

Furthermore, when readers move on with the plot, they know more about the childhood of Shalimar who performs as a “clown prince” in a traveling band (79). Boonyi describes him in a charming way: “How handsome he was, she mused tenderly, how funny in his clowning, how pure in his singing, how graceful in the dance and gravity-free on the high rope, and best of all how wonderfully gentle of nature. This was no warrior demon!” (79). The reader is charmed with the idealistic life of Pachigam which affects the behavior of its inhabitants. Here, the idealistic/idle society of Pachigam, significantly before being destroyed by western hegemony and the sabotage of terrorism, shapes the individual in a way that stabilizes his inner psychology

and prevents him from committing bad choices. The promises Shalimar keeps telling his beloved and wife Boonyi of a better life and of living in a heaven on earth are a reflection of the effect of the idealistic society he lives in and also tell more about his passionate, meek, loving personality which is neither heroic nor anti-heroic but mundane. After Boonyi's infidelity, the reader is encountered with Boonyi's point of view of Shalimar as "super-idiot number one" because he didn't "[try] to save her from herself" (320). She is surprised by the "trusting letters" he sent her after she eloped with the ambassador. She lives in bewilderment asking:

What kind of husband was he anyway, this clown? Was he storming the capital in his wrath like a Muslim conqueror of old, a Tughlaq or Khilji at least if not a Mughal, or like Lord Ram, was he at least sending the monkey-god Hanuman to find her before he launched his lethal attack on her abductor, the American Ravan? No, he was mooning over her picture ... like an impotent goof, accepting his fate like a true Kashmiri coward. ... He was behaving like the performing dog he was, a creature who imitated life to make people laugh but who had not the slightest understanding of how a man should live. (322)

Shalimar, from Boonyi's point of view, lacks the characteristics of the archetypal hero who makes mythological heroic efforts to set a city on fire to help a damsel in distress. However, the reader knows that Shalimar has lost his love for Boonyi or, in other words, she becomes his enemy the moment she betrayed him; and his loving letters are only a technique he used as a way to win her trust back so that he can kill her. The narrative focuses much more on how Shalimar uses the technique of "a great warrior in order to study the true face of the enemy and learn his strengths and weaknesses" (52). The narrative questions the deceptive characteristics the terrorist might have to achieve his goal. For example, the terrorist might be disguised as a meek, friendly, harmless, weak person.

A further attempt to analyze Shalimar's character as a postmodern antihero is tackled through examining the subject of terrorism and its relation with American international policies.

this is manifested in the novel in the depiction of the history of the world climate of terrorism during the Vietnam War which wins America hatred nationally and internationally. David Simmons in his book, *The Anti-Hero in the American Novel: From Joseph Heller to Kurt Vonnegut*, states that “events such as the Vietnam war and subsequent peacenik movement, the civil rights crusade, the wide-scale use of hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, and the emergence of hippies all suggest that the 1960s was a highpoint for rebellion against the state” (iv). This is not only seen in American culture but in the countercultural opposition to American hegemony and the American representation as a “counter-state” to other countries has spread all over the world during the 1960s and interacts with the postmodern condition of terrorism depicted through the lens of Jean Baudrillard which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. The novel sustains the American political hegemony as well as the American hatred by the Kashmiri people. After Boonyi’s betrayal of Shalimar, and when trying to get involved again to his job as a clown in the traveling band, Shalimar suggested a change in the play the band always performed about the love story between Akbar, the Mogul leader and Anarkali, the slave:

He proposed that the scene in Anarkali play in which the dancing girl was grabbed by the soldiers who had come to take her to be bricked up in her wall might be sharpened if the soldiers came on in American army uniform and Anarkali donned the flattened straw cone of a Vietnamese peasant woman. The American seizure of Anarkali-as-Vietnam would, he argued, immediately be understood by their audience as a metaphor for the Indian army’s stifling presence in Kashmir, which they were forbidden to depict. One army would stand in for another. (377)

However, everyone in the band knows that Shalimar doesn’t think of it as “an army standing for another” but that his suggestion portrays his condition of being cuckolded and betrayed by an American. Still, in this sense, Shalimar is turning himself into a postmodern anti-hero whose characteristic lies in being a victim who defies the state and whom the reader comes to sympathize with but not admire. Contrary to the sound, in this depiction, the anti-hero is not the

villain who unwittingly ends up challenging those in power; Shalimar is a victim of the dominant power of the Americans in the East. Therefore, he has a cause that allows him to fight this power and seek revenge. For the terrorist, the West with its modernization and globalization is always to blame. Shalimar tells his mother,

Once we stop being asleep we can see that there are only enemies for us in this world, the enemies pretending to defend us who stand before us made of guns and khaki and greed and death, and behind them the enemies pretending to rescue us in the name of our own God except that they are made of death and greed as well, and behind them the enemies who live among us bearing ungodly names,[...], and behind them the enemies we never see, the ones who pull the strings of our lives. That last enemy, the invisible enemy in the invisible room in the foreign country far away: that's the one I want to face, and if I have to work my way through all the others to get to him then that is what I'll do. (404)

The moral complexity of Shalimar, which is caused by his wife's infidelity, frames him as a postmodern anti-hero. Now he wants to kill everyone not just the cause of his suffering. Then, the novel presents us with a character who joins a terrorist group, learns their fighting techniques, but doesn't agree nor support their cause. Shalimar's problem appears to be his moral confusion he experiences after the betrayal of his wife and his decision to join the terrorists, it seems, is the only route he can follow in order to achieve his primary goals: to kill Ophuls.

This turning point of Shalimar's belief or his constructed truth about the enemy fits well in the argument of the postmodern antihero who not only rebels against the established system but also loses communication with his culture. The society or community, to the postmodern antihero becomes a prison that restrains his freedom of choice and his constructed truth about the society and the "other." The individual creates a truth according to his personal beliefs and experiences if not according to his psychological condition. Therefore, Shalimar's moment of epiphany that "there are only enemies for us in this world" might rule out the disagreement of other individuals' truths, the very distinction between right and wrong, as long as he strongly

believes in it. Therefore, no rational negotiation or argument might convince Shalimar to change his constructed belief about revenge. He loses the communication with anyone who observes his irrational acts. For instance, when Shalimar's mother asks him to forget about "monsters in his waking dream, to set aside thoughts of vanished America," and to embrace his wife and forget about her misdeeds, she was afraid that this proposal "would make her an enemy too and she didn't want that" (404-405). Her acceptance of Shalimar's truth is not seen as, a mutual respect of the other's beliefs; to the contrary, it is based on fear of being trapped in the same criteria as others. On the other hand, Shalimar's father doesn't see Shalimar's actions as the action of the devil. Abdullah tells his wife,

That's not a devil talking, it's his manhood... He's still young enough to have the idea that he can change history, whereas I am getting accustomed to the idea of being useless, and a man who feels useless stops feeling like a man. So if he is fired up by the possibility of being useful, don't put out that flame. Maybe if my hands still worked I would strangle a few myself. (407)

The image of a "man", it seems, haunts the minds of the men in Pachigam because it stands for the ideology of knowing what is right and what is wrong: a thing that is heavily rooted in a cultural background. Therefore, we see how Abdullah supports his son's decision of fighting the enemy. To the people of Kashmir, joining the so called Liberation front is considered an act of heroism and a standing point of the image of the "man" while it is seen from the state's point of view as an act of terrorism. In this sense, Shalimar, as an antihero, is in a state of fragmentation. He is lost between acquiring his own constructed truth over the other, of what the culture expects him to perform as a hero, and the dominant discourse of the terrorist group. Significantly, each individual has the right to establish his own truth as long as it doesn't defy the constitutions of a culture or a government. If otherwise, the individual is subjected to punishment or might be considered a terrorist. However, Shalimar's constructed belief fails to acquire an understanding

of the logical argument of the other, whether this other is part of his race or a foreigner. This is due to the fact that his moral sense becomes divided between Pachigam's encapsulation of tolerance and his urge to revenge who betrays him. The novel illustrates how Shalimar fails to commit to his culture's call for tolerance when he refuses to accept his wife's infidelity nor understands his wife's ambition. He also becomes a terrorist, seeking revenge on the ambassador and Boonyi, and becomes part of an illegal outraged group trying to fight against the West. Therefore, Shalimar resembles, in a way, the image of the terrorist created by media in the sense that he lacks the tolerance that is needed to build a communication between him and the other.

On the other hand, Max Ophuls can be read as the postmodern antihero in the sense that he ruins his image as a French resistant hero when he, after World War II, becomes complicit with the American hegemony. His fragmented self, at the very beginning, is the result of the conditions of World War II that have completely changed his life, separating it into distinct, disconnected periods. His fragmentation after the war becomes the central, inescapable fact of his existence. However, when he becomes the American ambassador in India, his fragmented self is the result of the ever-changing nature of late capitalism. In this sense, I would like to investigate Ophuls's character as a postmodern antihero and a postmodern fragmented self.

World War II and its aftermath have changed Ophuls's beliefs about heroism and glory. After leaving to America, Ophuls ceased to be a resistant hero (manifesting largeness, dignity, and heroism) and in turn becomes the representation of the force that opposes this act of heroism. *Shalimar the Clown* narrates the story of Ophuls, aka the Flying-Jew, who fought the Nazi occupation of France during World War II. He joined the French Resistance group—a terrorist movement—that fought against the Nazi occupation of France and against the collaborationist

Vichy regime during 1940-1944²⁴. Ophuls, around whom the story of the French resistance in the novel revolves, is a wealthy Ashkenazi Jew and a “Strasbourggeois,” born and raised in Alsace, but who “like most people from his part of the country... had been raised to distrust Paris” (224). Paris, during that time, was filled with anti-semitism following the promoted Nazi legislations. Although Ophuls had great potential as a lawyer and in the world of art forgers in Paris, he preferred to stay with his parents in Strasbourg and worked in their printing business as well as teaching economics at the university. When Strasbourg was evacuated in 1939, Ophuls’s parents refused to leave either the city or their business to join the “one hundred and twenty thousand Strasbourggeois [who] became refugees in the Dordogne and the Indre” (228), nor did they think of escaping to any other safe place. Ophuls’s father thought that refusing to leave the city was, from his side, an act of resistance and a way to “face the enemy down” (232). Max, however, urged his parents to escape with him. Apparently, when the war started, Ophuls lacked that spirit of resistance his parents had or maybe he was more realistic. The novel also shows a significant stereotypical characteristic of the Ophuls as a “*mensch*” who is “[a] good Jewish man, developed over almost fifteen hundred years of Eastern European, or Ashkenazic, Jewish tradition” (Rosenberg 1). Therefore, as represented in the novel by Ophuls’s family, the Jews’ refusal of using violence as a way of resistance, even though they might be appalled by violence constructed by the “other,” is an important theme in the novel which reveals their preference of

²⁴ Philippe Pétain was the head of state of Vichy France from 1940-1944. Pétain and his government “[were] enmeshed in a collaborative relationship with the Nazis and [were] charged with the administration of the southern “unoccupied” zone of wartime France” (Sobanet 171). Pétain’s collaboration with the Nazis put his government in the representation of Nazi puppets. The majority of the French population supported Philippe Pétain’s government despite its pro-Nazi collaboration. For more information, read Milton Dank’s book *The French Against the French*.

preserving their tradition and morals over violence and war. What Max Ophuls feared was not the end of family business or wealth; he feared the destruction and the emptiness of the claustrophobic city streets and thought “if he moved fast enough, like an American comic-book superhero, like the Flash, like a Jewish Superman, maybe he could create the illusion that the people of Strasbourg were still there” (236). The author opts for considerable representation of the resistant/terrorist as a hero here by implying the image of the “Jewish Superman” which also specifically refers to Ophuls’s ethnicity, and his later depiction as a heroic resistant “Flying Jew.” There was a super being inside Max Ophuls—like Clark Kent who was a real superman trying to assimilate—but he didn’t notice it until he was eroded by anger and revenge.

I would like to elaborate more on Ophuls’s image as the “Flying Jew” which can be associated with the heroic, non-violent acts of the heroic Superman Jew depicted in comic books. Harry Brod in his book *Superman is Jewish? How Comic Book Superheroes Came to Serve Truth, Justice, and the Jewish-America Way* “considers questions about the Jewishness of more Superheroes than just Superman” and shows that “the history of Jews and comic book Superheroes, that very American invention, is the history of Jews and America, particularly the history of Jewish assimilation into the mainstream of American culture” (xix). My focus is going to be on Brod’s depiction of Superman as Jewish and how his super-heroic acts and Jewishness are similar to Max Ophuls’s heroism. First, I would like to mention some of Superman’s depiction and identification as a Jew as argued in Brod’s book. Superman’s story, as Brod illustrates in his book, is the story of Moses who was “sent off in a small vessel by his parents to save him from the death and destruction facing his people” (5). Brod, later, refers to this journey as “the great holocaust” in planet Krypton (9). Superman is sent to Earth which “could readily be seen as standing for Europe, on the verge of self-destruction, and America, with its promise of

new life” (5). Superman was adopted by non-Jew family who lived in a small village called Smallville then later he moved to the big city Metropolis. This movement is seen from Brod’s lens as “[mirroring] Jewish immigration pattern” (9). However, Brod sees that “Jerry Siegel’s [the creator of Superman] accomplishment was to chronicle the smart Jewish boy’s American dream...it wasn’t Krypton that Superman really came from; it was the planet Minsk or Lodz or Vilna or Warsaw” (Brod 9). In this sense, Max Ophuls shares many parallels with the Jewish Superman. His parents were victims of the Holocaust and he fled the Nazi atrocities and accordingly was dubbed as the “Flying Jew” (257). He flew an aircraft escaping from Molsheim to Clermont-Ferrand and became “one of the great romantic heroes of the Resistance” when he broke the world record of high speed although the plane owner warned him that the plane didn’t have enough fuel (257). Ophuls’s immigration from occupied France to America, or as the narrator best put it, “choosing the burnished attractions of the New World over the damaged gentility of the Old” (262), is similar to Kent’s immigration mentioned above. And there, in America, the Flying Jew fulfills his American dream when he becomes the American ambassador in India.

In fact, Max Ophuls has another “super power”—“his real gift for forgery” (239)—which has helped many resistants and people escape France by forging their documents. The narrator notes “as [Ophuls] labored, he had the sense...of a higher power working through him” (240). Nevertheless, this higher power was contained in a moral code. On one occasion, when he was not satisfied with the adequacy of the paper and ink used for forgery, Ophuls “broke into a deserted art-supplies store and took what he needed, promising himself that if the liberation ever came he would return and repay the owner, a promise that, as he recorded in his book of wartime memories, he faithfully kept” (239). Ophuls is clearly meant to be viewed by western readers,

who probably grew up reading comic books of superheroes, as a legitimate good guy/superhero and who has the characteristics and aspects of a Jewish superhero.

Furthermore, is there an equation between the Jewish Superheroes of comic books and physical violence? Brod's approach to this notion "valorizes the ways Jewish men expressed a fight against anti-Semitism through their fantasy comic book creation [which] is not the same as endorsing the use of violence" (xxvii). He continues, "I'm situating the meaning of good guys beating up bad guys in the context of a Jewish people with the history of anti-Semitic violence practiced against them" (xxvii). This is also applicable to Max Ophuls who witnessed the atrocities of the Nazi occupation and was "hungry for revenge" (263). When he reached Clermont-Ferrand he

Joined the Action Section of Combat Etudiant under the work name "Niccolo" and learned about blowing things up. The first and only bomb he threw... [targeted] the home of Jacques Doriot, a Vichy stooge who ran the pro-Nazi Doriot Association. The explosion—the gigantic excitement of the moment of power, followed almost immediately by a violent involuntary physical reaction, a parallel explosion of vomit—taught him two lessons he never forgot: that terrorism was thrilling, and that, no matter how profoundly justified its cause, he personally could not get over the moral hurdles required to perform such acts on regular basis. (263)

Ophuls's feeling of power is mixed with his shame of conducting violence and being beaten by its "moral hurdles." His strong opposition to terrorism helped account for his fame as an intelligent cunning forger and as a stereotypical mensch. Ophuls, however, elevates a totally oppositional view of terrorism when he assures his disagreement with terrorists' acts of violence "no matter how profoundly justified [their] cause" (265). The novel illustrates this moral code of Ophuls and the Resistance by the absence of descriptions in the novel of actual acts of violence perpetrated by the French resistance, which is opposite to the moral judgment of the Nazis. In the novel, terrorist acts by the French Resistance are not seen, nor heard. The reader knows that a

house was bombed, a person was killed, but doesn't hear the bombing, nor see the carnage. What the reader sees and hears is, for example, Ophuls' "violent involuntary physical reaction" (263). While readers follow the disastrous and terrifying detailed descriptions of the atrocities of the Nazis and the traitors, they are provoked by German's acts of violence. The narrator tells us about the flames eating up Ophuls's house (254), "the numbers burned" in concentration camps (255), Ophuls's parents' death "as mere bodies, bodies that reacted this way to pain, this way to greater pain, this way to the greatest pain imaginable, bodies whose response to being injected with diseases was of interest, of high scientific interest" (255-256), the assault on Strasbourg university where 139 students and faculty members died (266), the 1,200 students arrested for having false papers (267), and what Ophuls wrote in his memoir about the arrest and killing of Jean-Paul Cauchi, their founder, and the "souring feeling possessed [him] at times, tempered by the perpetual knowledge that one could crash or be shot down at any moment, without warning, and die in the dirt like a dog" (271-272). Contrary to the Nazi's atrocities, the acts of the French Resistance were not surely about revenge. They were about tying up as many Nazi military resources as possible in the midst of all-out war, to help with the war effort.

Faced with violent reactions by the Vichy regime and the Nazis against the operations of the French terrorists, Rushdie's reader is left sympathizing with and validating terrorists' actions, if not asking for some violent action to defy the enemy²⁵. Rushdie's narrative regarding the acts of the French resistance makes acts of violence, if they are there, feel inevitable and mandatory. On the other hand, the reader becomes more aware of and more sympathetic to all of these qualities of Ophuls: his intellectuality, genius, and humanity. Soon after "the Great Raid" took

²⁵ Of course, Rushdie can also rely on the fact that Western readers will *already* have a positive vision of the French resistance.

place in 1943, Ophuls had another success—“he was the man who seduced the Panther, Ursula Brandt” (265). She was one of the effective members of the Reich whose significant contribution of finding and killing members of the French resistance was highly appreciated in Germany. Ophuls, disguised as Sturmbahnführer Pabst—a German officer—spied on Brandt’s team, took her trust, and became her lover. Once Ophuls’ disguise was discovered, he fled, but “Ursula’s Brandt’s position became untenable” (270) and she was accused of betraying the third Reich. It is Max Ophuls’ foxy, non-violent- tactics that served the French Resistance which offer the reader a suggestion that the French Resistance aims at fighting the Nazis in order to free France; but it is not a group that engages in terrorism as it was dubbed during and after World War II. The novel attempts to show the terrorists of the French Resistance as heroes fighting the enemy amidst a declared war. Chaliand and Blin argue that “the terrorists of the French Resistance were heroes because they were fighting the Nazis and because, in any case, their tactics avoided direct action against the civilian population... The ethics of warfare judges motives and motivations, and not necessarily the acts themselves” (Chaliand and Blin 211). Therefore, part of the fighting tactics of the French resistance and Max Ophuls involved avoiding violent acts against civilians and getting involved in a sexual relationship with the enemy. This attitude legitimizes and promotes this terrorism and here Max is depicted as a hero.

It would seem that, on the other hand, there is a shift from perspectivism that allowed Ophuls to get a better meaning of a complex but singular reality about the war, to foreground difficult questions as to how to interpret different realities. Ophuls got out of World War II with few illusions. He grapples with questions about the incidents, atrocities, and outcomes of the war and how those different realities coexist and collide. Ophuls notes, “War, for us, signified disaster. But was it the case that France, to spare itself a defeat, had refused to fight? I do not

believe it... As I whistled over the heads of my sleeping countrymen, I did not believe it either. France would soon awake” (261).

He also questions his heroic deeds during the war that established his image as “the grand myth of the Resistance.” He questions, “Had he really broken the record in spite of Finkenberger’s warnings about fuel? Had he really flown at or near rooftop level all the way, or had he escaped radar detection by luck, and no account of the strong element of the unexpected in his dash?” (260). Ophuls falls into a state of depression after the war because he can’t trust anyone; he tells his wife that distrust “is the damage we will all carry over into the future” (280). World War II was a shock to Ophuls because what Ophuls seems to see before him is not only the collapse of the world order but also a prophecy of the future. Now he feels the superimposition of different worlds and oscillates between resisting what the future holds or accepting the fragmentation and the disorientation of the postmodern age. Thus, since post World War II creates a “new forms of society, new balances of power and new difficulties” (Gurung 29), Ophuls moves to America; “choosing the burnished attractions of the New World over the damaged gentility of the Old” (262).

This movement marks a shift in Ophuls’s life from a resistant hero into a representation of the force that opposes any notion of resistance. This heroic figure, who felt sick after bombing the house of an enemy, pledges allegiance to the politics of the new world, becomes a counter-terrorist chief in India, and sells weapons to the guerrilla fighters in India and Pakistan. Unsurprisingly, the shift in Ophuls’s ideology of war and resistance happens when he agrees with the legacy of late capitalism. He becomes the American ambassador and believes in and accepts “the innate superiority of the West” (326) over the globe. The narrator tells us that Rusk trusted Ophuls to represent America in India because “those Indian gentlemen need a good old

American spanking and it's our belief you're just the man to hand it to 'em" (290). This notion reflects the ideology of the American authorities and media in validating the global war on terror after 9/11. In addition, Ophuls was believed to be the right man to handle the "Indian gentlemen" because he wrote a book called *Why the Poor Are Poor* which took India, China, and Brazil as case studies. The last chapter of his book "proposed a means by which these 'sleeping giants' might awake" (290) and it was the first time "a major western economist had seriously analyzed what came to be known as 'South-South collaboration'" (290). Ophuls's production is an analysis of what might result of the conditions of late capitalism. It holds a fear that those "sleeping giants" might resist the hegemony of capitalism if "Third World economies" learn how "to bypass the U.S. dollar" (291). Ophuls, as a postmodern fragmented individual seems confused as to which ideology he should support, and how he should act with respect to it. His book is an attempt to understand the past and the future and unfold it in an organized experience. Ophuls's attempt reflects how Jameson sees the postmodern subject: the subject "[organizes] its past and future into a coherent experience" (25). But since this subject, as Jameson states, has "lost [this] capacity..., it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but 'heaps of fragments'" (25). In this sense, Ophuls's book reveals his fragmented subject which desires, in one hand, the American hegemony, yet, on the other, acknowledges the fallouts of late capitalism.

Thus, as any postmodern fragmented individual might do, Max Ophuls questions the American decision of assigning an academic person to deal with South Eastern collaboration. His wife puts an end to his bewilderment when her reply affirms one of the dominant forces of late capitalism: "Glamour, dear, glamour. Ha! Don't you get it, you dope? Everyone loves a star" (291). As a matter of fact, to America, Ophuls illustrates two characteristics of the operations of

American hegemony in late capitalism. Primarily, as Andrew Teverson notes, the U.S. tries to overcome its weaknesses through “[leading] efforts to establish a global political and economic consensus in the wake of the Second World War” (218). In the second, the politicians of the United States deploy what Harvey calls “mediatized politics shaped by image alone”²⁶ (330). The American authorities acknowledge the dominant factor of the “mediatized” image in late capitalism even if it holds beneath it “a friendly face of fascism” (Harvey 330). Therefore, Ophuls’s image as a hero, a star, and an academic person is “mediatized,” cultivated, and polished to be used as a source of hegemony on Third World countries especially when this ambassador claims that he shares with those countries the same “defined and redefined” status of people under war (222). Furthermore, when Ophuls gives a speech at the Rashtrapati Bhavan banquet, made for Ophuls’s honor, the attendants are enchanted by his magical words and the same experience he shares with them although the circumstances are different. The narrator notes that “everyone was suddenly in a heightened emotional state” during Ophuls’s speech but also “few people paid much attention to these rather too generalized sentiments at the time; it was the handclap that stuck in the mind. Those few seconds of undefended human contact caused Max Ophuls to be seen as a friend of India” (223). Ophuls is believed to have an invincible reputation of a hero who not only follows the stereotype of an Eastern European Jew—“[emphasizing] brain not brawn” (Brod 11)—but also he has the physical masculine shape that causes him to be

²⁶ Harvey refers to this notion when he discusses the election of Ronald Reagan to the most powerful positions in the world. Harvey states that Regan’s image has been “cultivated over many years of political practice, and then carefully mounted, crafted, and orchestrated with all the artifice that contemporary image production could command.” He continues that “[Reagan’s] image could be deployed... to demolish any narrative of criticism that anyone cared to construct.” However, this “mediatized” image holds beneath it a “friendly face of fascism.” (330).

regarded as a star. It is the polarization of the superhero/genius (manipulative tactics) that distinguishes Ophuls from the previous American ambassadors as well as the assertion to prove who is in control and in hold of power. After suffering from the atrocities of the Nazi occupation and his status as a minority regardless of his cunning and talented potentials, Ophuls seems to find himself in a powerful position when he speaks in the name of a powerful country like America. Indeed, Ophuls becomes a representative of the hegemony of western late capitalism or, to put it clearly, as Tom Barbash notes, Ophuls is a “place holder for all that is western, a peacock, a meddler in the business of others, in essence everything loathed by terrorists” (qtd.in Guttman 41).

Ophuls remains in this state of fragmentation due to his fear of how others might view him after his scandalous relationship with Boonyi that costs him his position. Here, the media, as a production of late capitalism, shapes his image in California during the 1990s. The American media polishes his image as “the Resistance hero, the philosophical prince, the billionaire power-broker, the maker of the world” (44) but can’t efface the plurality of concepts and ideologies that exist side-by-side in his fragmented self. Therefore, when he has an interview on a talk show to discuss his memoir, in which he writes about his experience in World War II and as a previous ambassador in India, Ophuls turns the social discussion into a political one where he condemns the situation in Kashmir and blames fanatic “pandits” and the “assassins of Islam” for the fall of Kashmir (45). He also mentions his sympathy with the killings of innocent Muslims and blames those “who live in these luxury limbos, the privileged purgatories of the earth” for “[setting] aside” the fall of paradise/Kashmir (45). The narrator reveals Ophuls’s fragmented status: “Max Ophuls could not stop speaking. Once he had begun it was plain that a great tide had risen in him which would not be denied” (46). However, Ophuls’s “soliloquy” is “cut” before the show

appears on the TV channel which again adds up to his fragmentation. It seems that the novel displays and reflects how political agendas work in our world especially when the media attempts to present to the audience what they want to hear and what the authority wants them to hear.

II

Los Angeles: A Postmodern City that Forms a Fragmented Individual

Part of what the novel reveals about late 1980s America is the historical, political, and economic conditions of the country. *Shalimar the Clown* opens in Los Angeles and depicts the city in late 1980s- early 1990s which is arguably “the apex of postmodern period” (Keulks 145). Historically speaking, the 1980s under the rule of Reagan “represented morning in America” while “the 1990s were the morning after” (Willbern 141) because of the American attempts to end the Cold War with the hope that America is the victor. This resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union afterwards. In addition, America and Americans follow Reagan’s promises to rebuild a better country in the fields of economy and politics. In the novel, the narrator refers to these incidents,

[Ophuls] foretold the Cold War’s accelerated ending, the Soviet Union’s house-of-cards collapse. He knew that the Wall would fall [...]. He foresaw the invasion of Western Europe by elated job-hungry Osis in their Tarbants. Ceausescu’s Mussoliniesque ending, and the elegiac presidencies of the writers, of Vaclac Havel and Arpad Goncz, these too he foresaw. (31).

However, the promised reformations of Reagan’s political and economic policies (Reaganomics) “concealed a coherent politics” (Harvey 330). It is described by Carey McWilliams as “the friendly face of fascism” (qtd. in Harvey 330). For example, the expansion of “the budget deficit through defense spending and [forcing] a recalcitrant congress to cut again into the social

programs” increased the poverty level and spawned racial inequality (Harvey 330). Moreover, as Harvey states, “for the young and the rich and the educated and the privileged things could not have been better.” (331). The political-economic situations during the Reagan’s presidency increased the gap between the rich and the poor and “with it, the whole culture of cities were transformed” (Harvey 331).

The novel mirrors how postmodernism is produced by the era’s political-economic conditions. These conditions shape a fragmented individual and a postmodern city. The novel begins with Max Ophuls, an ex- American ambassador, visiting his daughter on her 24th birthday and shows how he is viewed by the people of Los Angeles as “one of the architects of the postwar world, of its international structures, its agreed economic and diplomatic conventions” (10). In addition, the neighborhood is inhabited by Old Central and East European people²⁷. To the female neighbors, “his arrival [is] the high point of their month,” and they “[stare] at Max, admiringly, with the open lust of toothless age” (11). On the other hand, “the neighborhood’s old men” see Ophuls as “an affront” because the ladies are interested in him (12). His status as a rich man is manifested in the birthday gift he gives to his daughter: a “silver luxury speedmobile with batwing doors, the same futuristic machine in which people were time-travelling in the movies that year” (19). Ophuls’s richness and the luxurious car can be seen as an aesthetic twist to express class power. Ophuls’s status is compared to the inhabitants of the neighborhood represented in Olga Volga, “the last surviving descendant of the legendary potato witches of Astrakhan” (13). Although she admires Ophuls, the luxurious car provokes her memories about

²⁷ Those inhabitants reflect the diverse dwellers of a postmodern city like Los Angeles where postmodernists writers like Rushdie acknowledge their difference in subjectivity, gender, race, and class.

“the hard times” of the history of the twentieth century and how these times help constructing Ophuls as a powerful man while she, as well as her neighbors, are the victims of that history. Olga Volga blames “poverty; also oppression, dislocation, armies, servitude” for incentivizing the individual’s status in this society. She continues that “today’s kids they got it easy, they know nothing, I can see you are a man of sophistication who has gotten around some. Of course dislocation, survival, the necessity to be cunning like a rat. Am I right?” (14). Thus, Olga Volga and Ophuls, in their class difference, are produced and shaped by fragmentation of late capitalism.

Moreover, they are also manipulated by another production of late capitalism: the postmodern city. As Harvey states, “it is not hard to read a postmodern novel as a metaphorical transect across the fragmenting social landscape, the self-culture, and the local modes of communication” in postmodern cities like London, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles (114). Los Angeles²⁸ is seen as a postmodern city which leaves its inhabitants “in a state of disorientation, fragmentation, and constant decentering” (Brandt 552). The novel introduces the reader to Los Angeles through framing two characteristics of the city. First, to the “Old Central and East European” immigrants who left behind them their “familiar” countries, this city is a “shadowless lotus-land” (11), a city “of lost happiness and peace,” and a city “of mislaid calm” (14). They are merged with its shadowlessness and its “mislaid calm” in an attempt to find a meaning to their lives; yet they live, as Olga Volga states, “neither in this world nor the last, neither in America nor Astrakhan ... A woman like me, she lives in someplace in between.

²⁸ According to Soja, Los Angeles is considered a postmetropolis because it reflects “the postfordist industrial metropolis, cosmopolis, exopolis, the fractal city, the carceral archipelago, and the simcity” (qtd. in Brandt 554). These characterizations are the effects of the development of postmodernism in late capitalism.

Between the memories and the daily stuff” (14). Olga Volga’s statement suggests that her disoriented and fragmented self is affected by the postmodern city and she is left with no choice but to absorb the city’s patterns.

On the other hand, in the novel, Los Angeles is characterized, through Ophuls’s daughter’s lens, as an “illusion” despite its nakedness (6). The city is seen as an “illusion” because of the effect of “the billion-dollar industries of film, television and recorded music” (39) which play with simulacra and which eventually become controlled by late (i.e. postmodern) capitalism. India Ophuls, being involved in film industry, knows better how media industry has an effect in collapsing the boundaries between the real and the illusionary. However, she doesn’t connect the effect of art production on the city until after her father’s assassination which urges her to investigate the reason behind his death. India, at the end, finds out that her father’s public image is also an illusion. She learns that behind that “model of probity” (36) and “billionaire power-broker” (44) lies a corrupt man (44). Although, as the reader learns, Ophuls during the 1960s has been America’s “most scandalous ambassador” (6), his image, during the 1980s, is polished by media, class power, and power relations and manage to assign him as “one of the architects of the postwar world” (10). Ophuls’s character has merged with the real yet illusionary characteristic of Los Angeles. The “illusion” of the city—expressed through the metaphor of the “visually delightful” aspects of life, which is praised by Ophuls before his death—becomes something the city and its inhabitants apparently share. In its portrayal of the city as an illusion, which is a reflection of the invasion of art production, and in its portrayal of the city’s effect on its inhabitants, *Shalimar the Clown* seems to suggest that the city, its dwellers, and its industry are manipulated and controlled by late capitalism. And since the novel, in itself, is an art

production that portrays these inversions and reflections, it can be seen as part of a whole range of art production that is created in a postmodern era and is controlled by postmodernism.

Clearly, through a close critical reading of *Shalimar the Clown*, we can see that there are many interpretations of an event and it is hard to tell which the true one is—in a postmodern world dominated by late capitalism there is no single true interpretation. Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* addresses the effect of late capitalism on the city, its inhabitant, the individual, and the intellectual and his art production. What links these cultural productions together is fragmentation and disorientation. The novel also addresses the theme of 9/11 and the war on terror through representing two opposite discourses—the western media narrative vs. the anti-American narrative—both emerged out, shaped, and formed by the conditions of late capitalism. The novel as an art production complies with the dominant discourses of the society and the postmodern world. It also suggests Rushdie's new affiliations and consent to the dominance of the western culture, as Max Ophuls himself did when he refused to get back to France after being freed from the Nazi occupation and preferred to be part of the American power, and condemns the network of terrorism which is now revolves around Islamism, its regional and international impact on culture and the individual.

Chapter Four

Historiographic Metafiction in *The Enchantress of Florence*

“The curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike.”

The Enchantress of Florence

Like his other novels published after 2000, Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* is a postmodern novel. Just as critical analysis of his works during the 1980s and 1990s alludes to their postmodern mode, criticism of *The Enchantress of Florence* makes clear that the novel exhibits several postmodern traits. For instance, the novel contains the illusion of reality and its artifice; deals with historiographic metafiction; questions objectivity and decenters subjectivity; uses magic realism, parody, pastiche, and temporal distortion narrative. In this chapter, my main focus is to show in what way this novel is a postmodern text. In order to do that, I will rely on the concept of historiographic metafiction which Linda Hutcheon sees as a key feature of postmodernism. This key concept will reveal that Rushdie's text undermines and deconstructs accepted historical narratives, which have always set the eastern and western history as completely different and opposite. Rushdie constructs an alternative fiction through rewriting the western and eastern renaissance history as being similar. In other words, this novel highlights the similar political and historical incidents that Florence shares with Sikri during the 16th-century. It shows that both cultures are ruled by despotic regimes, and that the theme of humanity and the freedom of mankind which is an expected western notion is an illusion. I will also argue that the novel as a historiographic metafiction parodies other texts and genres in an attempt to give a different connotation to precedent texts. The role historiographic metafiction plays in this novel is to invite the reader to revise the accepted historical narratives, not only questioning their points

of view but also questioning what they mean for us today. Therefore, historiographic metafiction becomes a liberating tool because historical novels have a political resonance, especially when it comes to the ideology of the individual's freedom from the dominant authority or any dominant metanarrative.

Through blending reality with fantasy, history with fiction, Rushdie manages to interlink the ideals of the East with those of the West in a provocative historical novel. The narrative of the novel draws heavily upon genres from both cultures. For instance, the legends of the *Arabian Nights* are interwoven with western genres including romance, fantasy, historical fiction, and the Renaissance epic, to mention a few. Furthermore, the novel's intricately woven narratives of eastern and western cultures reveals how, during the Renaissance, these cultures are similar. Florence is "in full swing," the Mughal Empire in India is at its height under Akbar the Great, England, under the rule of Elizabeth I, is "Akbar's contemporary" (Conrad 433), and America, as the new world, is discovered. Joan Conrad demonstrates that "in the ethnocentrism of the West, it is rare to make connections between these contemporary moments, and yet Rushdie links them. In this, however, he is not so much fictionalizing this interconnected world, but bringing it to light" (433). This implies that Rushdie is one of the pioneers who interlinks the narratives of different cultures in a single work of art in an attempt to show how these cultures, throughout history, mirror each other's sensibilities. Rushdie introduces us to a magical tales that unveil other tales about a storyteller, an emperor of the Mughal Empire, a beautiful princess/sorceress, and the urban realm of Renaissance Florence.

Essentially, *The Enchantress of Florence* relies on the narration of the genealogy of the Mogul emperor Abul-Fath Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar to reexamine eastern and western history. The interwoven narrative takes the reader back to the 16th-century-Renaissance Italy and

India. It opens with the arrival of a yellow-haired traveler to Sikri, the “victory city” of the Mogul emperor Akbar (6). The foreigner has many names and many identities: he is Uccello di Firenze when he approaches Akbar’s court as the “English Ambassador;” then he is Niccolo Vespucci when he is imprisoned by Akbar’s prime minister; and finally he is the "Mogor dell’ Amore," who claims to have a story to tell to Akbar himself, “a story which could make [the foreigner’s] fortune or else cost him his life” (10). Reminiscent of Scheherazade in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, the Mogor dell’Amore recites intricate, interrelated, and interwoven stories which will decide his future or his death since it results in telling Akbar that this blond-haired foreigner is Akbar’s uncle.

The Mogor dell’ Amore tells a story that begins with three Florentine friends, Niccolo il Machia (Niccolo Machiavelli), Ago Vespucci, and Nino Argalia. The latter is separated from his friends because of the political events occurring in Italy at that time, eventually finding his way to the Ottoman Empire where he becomes a Muslim Pasha of the Ottoman regime. During one of the conquests Prince Argalia leads for the Ottoman Empire, he finds the Mogul princess, Qara Koz (the lost aunt of Akbar the Great) forsaken by her beloved Shah Ismail, king of Safavid. Qara Koz has a beguiling power that bewitches all who behold her and Argalia is no exception. After falling in love with Qara Koz, he takes her first to Istanbul, then to Florence, where she enchants all the people with her beauty and magical power. She becomes an enchantress or a Jesus-like saint who causes barren women to become pregnant and brings sight to blind people and many other miracles.

Eventually, Qara Koz’s power weakens and her beauty starts to fade. The Florentines brand Qara Koz a sorceress and decide to kill her after accusing her of hexing the ruler of Florence with syphilis. During a public uprising against Qara Koz, Argalia is killed while trying

to protect her. The Mogul Princess flees with her servant and Argalia's friend, Ago Vespucci, to the New World hoping to find a passage to go back to her native India. However, the princess's journey home stalls in the New World and she dies there. Based on the story of Ago Vespucci and the Qara Koz's servant, the Mogor dell'Amore believes that he is the son of Qara Koz and Ago Vispucci. He is ordered by his mother to go to his country of origin and claim his legacy. During the telling of this story by the Mogor dell'Amore, Akbar is enchanted by this story but holds some suspicions when he calculates the age and the historical dates of his lost aunt and compares this calculation with events related in the Mogor dell'Amore's tale.

Later, Akbar, directed by his fantasy and imagination, refuses the story of the Mogor dell'Amore. Akbar claims that Qara Koz died after giving birth to a daughter and that Ago Vespucci had an incestuous relationship with this daughter who looks exactly like Qara Koz. Akbar further contends that the Mogor dell'Amore is their son produced from this incestuous union. After this rejection by Akbar, the Mogor dell'Amore leaves Sikri but not before he casts a spell causing the gradual drying up of "the Lake of Life" that sustains the city and bringing about the deterioration of Sikri and death to all its peasants. As the city dies, Akbar decides to leave with whoever manages to escape and again leads the nomadic life which is the legacy of Genghis Khan's offspring. One night after fleeing Sikri, the lost princess, Qara Koz, comes back to life through Akbar's imagination. The phantasm of Qara Koz reveals to him that because Qara Koz is a barren woman, the Mogor dell'Amore is the son of her servant's daughter and that the Mogor dell'Amore doesn't know this story. The novel ends by implying that Akbar the Great will start an incestuous relationship with his aunt, whom he manages to bring to life through the power of his imagination.

The novel contains a variety of themes and allusions that reflect our contemporary time: it highlights cosmopolitanism, challenges behavior in the past, and addresses and reconstructs some orientalist notions. The novel, in addition, relates to postmodernism and the theme of revisiting and rewriting history when it presents a deconstruction of the accepted historical narrative that claims that the East and the West are binary opposites. To me, what makes the novel most significant is the fact that it is an accessible and important example of historiographic metafiction.

Linda Hutcheon in her book *Poetics of Postmodernism* argues that postmodernism is “fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political... but whatever the cause, these contradictions are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of ‘the presence of the past’” (4). Therefore, based on Hutcheon’s argument, postmodern music, art, architecture, and fiction refer to the past in order to comment on the present, or as Hutcheon argues: “this is not a nostalgic return; it is a critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society” (4). Postmodernism, from Hutcheon’s lens, thinks of history as unreliable because we know about history through the text; therefore, there is an interconnectedness between history and fiction. Writers who write about history revisit the past in order to deconstruct and reconstruct it. Those writers propose a critical reading to history in order to comment and/or give meaning to the present. In other words, many historians have used the technique of fiction to create alternative fiction that represents the imaginative version of the real world. This is what the postmodern novels do. According to Hutcheon, the postmodernist confronts the paradoxes of fictive/ historical representation, the particular/ the general, and the present / the past. Thus, the postmodernist is challenging the authority of histories by acknowledging that the "fact" presented is the author's subjective interpretation. For Hutcheon,

Historiographic metafiction incorporates literature, history, and theory in the sense that “its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs ... is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past” (5). She also defines this term:

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact or fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (93)

Thus, historiographic metafiction challenges ideologies such as the historical truth or the accurate knowledge of the past.

When it comes to postmodern novels, Hutcheon assures that historiographic metafiction is “novels that are intensely self-reflective but that also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge” (285-286).

Historiographic metafiction bridges the gap between historical and fictional works by combining both genres together. For postmodern novels, a representation of the past happens when the past is opened up to the present (209). In order to accomplish this representation of the past, historiographic metafiction “plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record” (294).

Hutcheon gives examples of authors whose fiction can be read according to historiographic metafiction. For example, E.L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime* and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* reveal, from Hutcheon’s lens, “a theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human construct (historiographic metafiction) [that] is made the ground for [a] rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past” (5). History was/is a text and our understanding of history is generated from our access to texts. Historical events become part of the postmodern plot and

historical persons sometimes dominate the postmodern novel. The similarities and even the differences of historical incidents or figures suggest a kind of integrated unity with the fictional.

Unlike Rushdie's other historical novels, which deal with contemporary history, *The Enchantress of Florence* takes the reader further back to the 16th-century of the Medici era of Florence and the Mughal Empire of Akbar. As Rushdie states in a telephonic interview with Mukund Padmanabhan, this novel is the "most researched book [he] has ever done" (para 2). This is not the first time Rushdie refers to history or draws a comparison in his works between the East and the West. For example, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are seen by some critics, such as Linda Hutcheon, Brenda K. Marshall, and Nadeem Jahangir, as historiographic metafiction. In addition, *The Satanic Verses* attempts just such a comparison even as it "celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs" (Ismail, "A Bit of This" 119). However, the comparison between the East and the West in *The Enchantress of Florence* is different than the "hybrid, intermingling" celebration that characterizes *The Satanic Verses*. Instead, the comparison between cultures presented in *The Enchantress of Florence* highlights the interconnectedness among cultures that was absent during the Renaissance art production. This absence was due to the effect of how history was complicit with the powerful and how colonialism and anti-colonialism as well as capitalism and anti-capitalism shape the individual's understanding of different cultures. Although one might assume that these two discourses can also be seen as binary opposites, the novel seeks to undermine those binary oppositions and demonstrate that "the curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike" (135). Therefore, in the novel, the encounter between the Mogor dell'Amore, who represents the West, with Akbar, who represents the East, is not a

struggle between binary opposites but rather a synthesis of discourses. Rushdie attempts to challenge these stereotypical binaries through the depiction of a discursive synthesis.

The novel is set in the 16th-century Renaissance; a time when England, Italy, and the Mughal Empire encompassed an innovative development in art, commerce, and expansion. During the 15th-century, Italy was arguably known for its “extraordinary cultural and intellectual movement” known as the Renaissance. This movement “involved a rebirth” of arts, new ideas and new political, social, and economic forces (Abrams and Greenblatt 396). One of the key thoughts emphasized in Renaissance Italy’s art is “the dignity and potential of the individual and the worth of life in this world” (Abrams and Greenblatt 396). On the other hand, an examination of the Elizabethan period reveals how this country influenced playwrights like Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Webster, to produce a literary tradition that constituted the historical-cultural context of that period. In addition, the desire for commercial profit led England, under the rule of Elizabeth, to “[develop] relations with Oriental countries [such as the Ottomans and the Mughal Empire] through commerce and diplomacy” (Bayouli 2). Simultaneously, the Mughal Empire, under the rule of Akbar the Great, flourished in variety of areas such as literature, art, religion, the style of government, and economy (Bashir 64). This historical survey implies that during the Renaissance the West and the East were equal in the development of cultural, intellectual, economic, and political movements and refutes the notion that the western culture had excelled more than the “other.” In *The Enchantress of Florence*, Rushdie captures the development of these cultures. For example, the novel refers to Florence’s creative painter, “Alessandro Filipepi,” and his infatuation with “Simonetta Vespucci,” who becomes the source of inspiration to his most famous paintings. The narrator states that “the painter Alessandro Filipepi painted her [Simonetta Vespucci] many times, before and after she died, painted her clothed and naked, as

the Spring and the goddess Venus, and even as herself” (133). Simonetta is believed to be the most beautiful woman of her age and “no man could look at her without falling into a state of molten adoration” (133). Since both Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici “were crazy about her,” both patronage Filipepi and his paintings.

Similarly, under the patronage of Akbar, the “Mughal period [was] really the pinnacle of Indian artistic achievement” (“Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn” para 67). The novel introduces us to Dashwanth, one of the leading painters of Akbar’s court, who does graffiti on the walls of Fatehpur Sikri (116). Dashwanth acquires a talent for painting not only the portraits of “the grandees of the court,” but also accurate prophetic caricatures of them. For instance, Dashwanth paints Akbar’s chief nurse’s son, Adham, as having a “cruel,” “sniveling murderous” face and paints him “falling from the castle ramparts onto his head” (116). The narrator tells us that “six years later when Adham, in a delirious bid of power, physically attacked Akbar and was sentenced by the emperor to be hurled headfirst to his death off the city walls, the monarch remembered Dashwanth’s prophecy with amazement” (116). He also paints the legendary hero Hamza which mirrors the deeds and greatness of Akbar himself. In this attempt, Dashwanth, the narrator tells us, paints “Mughal Hindustan” and he predicts the “invention” of the empire under Akbar’s reign (116). This prophetic painter’s talent doesn’t stop here. When the story of Qara Koz, Akbar’s lost aunt, is revealed, Akbar orders Dashwanth “to paint her into the world...for there is such magic in your brushes that she might even come to life, spring off your pages, and join us for feasting and wine” (118). What the novel implies is that examining the paintings of the Mughal period is not only a reflection of the cultural development of Akbar’s empire, but also it is equated with that of Florence.

What is significant about presenting the artistic development of both cultures in the novel is that it doesn't only blur the boundaries between history and fiction, it also revises the narrative history of Sikri's art as a mirror of Florence's art. When the Mogor dell' Amore tells Akbar how Filipepi, after the death of Simonetta, "went on painting her, over and over, as if by painting her he could raise her from the dead," Akbar comments that Filipepi's act is "the same as Dashwanth" (135). Rushdie deliberately mirrors the artistic innovations of both cultures in order to become, as he states, "a metaphor of what I was doing in the book: taking elements of the Renaissance, elements of Mughal India, bits of the Ottoman Empire, etc., and pushing them all together into the same canvas" ("Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn" para 68). This similarity, which is also manifested in the book in the words of the Mogor dell' Amore that "this maybe the curse of the human race... not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike" (135), attempts to ask the reader to question the accepted narrative history that both cultures are different and revision them. It also asks the reader to question what these narratives that the novel constructs mean and what they should mean for us today.

Furthermore, the novel doesn't only introduce the reader to sheer mirroring of the developments of both cultures. If it does so, one cannot avoid thinking of the novel as a comparison between the East and the West and which culture's innovative development excels the other's. In fact, the novel implies that Renaissance history can be fully understood in the light of the western relationship with the Orient through highlighting the history of exchange, trade, travel, and diplomacy between both cultures. This is manifested in the novel in the letter Queen Elizabeth I of England sent to Akbar. What the narrative story of the letter reveals to the reader is Akbar's maintained relationship with other cultures and empires. It also tells the real history of Akbar who welcomed the Portuguese Jesuits as well as the English merchant adventurers in his

court. Historically speaking, Queen Elizabeth's letter to Akbar is very famous but what is really significant is that the letter, which was carried by an English traveler named Ralph Fitch, was never delivered to Akbar (Baber 170). The novel reconstructs this incident (Akbar receives Elizabeth's letter) in order to dismantle the accepted historical narrative of the superiority of the West over the East and to show how England had good relationships with the Mughal Empire by virtue of the interchange of goods and trades between both cultures.

As a postmodern tool, historiographic metafiction accentuates Rushdie's imagination in reconstructing the historical theme of humanism. Arguably, humanism "[is] a fundamental intellectual current in the Renaissance" (Abrams and Greenblatt 396) and it is also considered a western privilege by virtue of advocating social, political, and economic reformations. Rushdie parodies this theme when he constructs histories and narratives about the despotic system of Florence and equates it with that of the Mughal Empire. For Rushdie, this parody is never devaluing of past beliefs. It is more a change in point of view so that the reader becomes aware that both cultures didn't live, and still they don't live, in different worlds but that they all share the same cultural ideologies. In one of his interviews, Rushdie reminds us that history is an unreliable narrative construction when he announces that he is aware of his attempt to reconstruct both histories and to place them in a new context:

What I really wanted to do was to allow this quite free-flowing, inventive story to arise out of truth... And because I was trained as a historian... I have some respect for the historical record—and I am enough of a historian to know as well that the historical record is imperfect, that there are gaps, that there's all kinds of possibilities of interpretation. So it's not rigid... Non-historians think of history as being a collection of facts, whereas actually it's not—it's a collection of theories about the past. We revise our view of the past all the time, depending on our own present concerns. ("Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn" para 53)

Significantly, this constructed history of the Renaissance which is set in a new context helps Rushdie criticize the past in order to shed light on the present. Rushdie's constructed history found in his novel also speaks in our times with startling different connotations.

Thus, in a further attempt to show how the East and the West are connected together, the novel reconstructs the history of the ruling systems of both cultures and presents them as both despotic. The novel ironizes many of our established historical representations of western Renaissance as a time of noble culture and of enlightened humanism. This is manifested in the violent actions the authority of Florence inflicts on its inhabitants and how the individual perpetuates the same violent actions when he challenges the State. Although the novel notes how the people of Florence enjoy freedom of action, utterance, and daily behavior, an acute examination of the family names mentioned in the novel (the Machiavellis, the Vespuccis, and the Medicis) reveals that these families are the leading merchant class and upper class who, historically, had the right to participate in the government and to elect members to present them in the parliament. In addition, the city, as seen in the novel, is ruled by despotic systems even if the Florentines seek to change their government and leaders many times. The Florentines attempt to challenge their ruling system but, in some sense, changing the government doesn't go smoothly; it often results in violence towards citizens. In the novel, one effective example of the state's violence against its citizens is when Niccolo il Machia is taken to prison after the "fall of the republic and the dismissal of the gonfaloniere Pier Soderini, the chief of the republic's governing body" (237). Il Machia is tortured and "people had wanted his death, or at least had not cared if he lived or died" (237). Rushdie reconstructs Machiavelli's history by making him the victim of the state's violence. Il Machia is represented in the novel as a republican who

serves the Florentine's republic. He doesn't also support totalitarian government. Therefore, when the Florentines bring back the Medici to rule the city, Machiavelli is tortured and exiled.

On the other hand, the state's violence doesn't hamper the Florentines from changing their government in order to gain a better life. However, the Florentines use violence against the dismantled rulers as a means to acquire an authoritative voice in Florence. A significant example of the people's violent reaction against the state is first described in the novel to the reader and to Akbar through the Mogor dell'Amore's story. Both the reader and Akbar encounter the historical incident happened in Florence on Easter Sunday, April 26, 1478,

On Easter Sunday...the Plazzo della Signoria was festooned with the swinging dead, eighty of the defeated Pazzi conspirators hanged from its windows that weekend by Lorenzo de' Medici, including the archbishop in full regalia... a hanging archbishop was different, that was a sight worth seeing... In the Piazza [the boys] ran into their pal Agostino Vespucci blowing loud raspberries at the murderous dead and making obscene masturbatory gestures at their corpses and shouting ' Fuck you! Fuck your *daughter!* Fuck your *sister!*... at them as they twisted and stank in the breeze. (132-133)

Despite the fact that some might read the Florentines' physical and verbal freedom of expression as a reflection of the Florentines' autonomy over the unwanted state discourse, the novel reveals how rulers seek to legitimize their political control through instilling fear in the individual.

Therefore, some authoritative coercion and violence, represented in people's fear of the wrath of the Pope, intimidate some people in Florence. Most notably, Ago's father, who worked for Lorenzo de Medici before the Pazzi conspirators took hold of power, states that "the fucking Pope's army will come after us now because we killed the fucking priest" (132). The reader can notice how the state instills fear in the people and how the state's authority uses violence to reserve its hegemony.

Similar to Florence's regime, Sikri's regime sometimes uses violence against the people of Sikri, yet takes it one step further. As implied by the narrator, Sikri's regime practices a discourse of coercion—a coerced silence—against the people of Sikri when the emperor resides in the city. As the narrator tells us,

[The emperor's] ministers of works had not allowed any construction to go forward during the emperor's sojourns in the new imperial capital... the stonemasons' tools fell silent, the carpenters drove in no nails, the painters, the inlay-workers, the hangers of fabrics, and the carvers of screens all disappeared from view. (28)

The narrator also continues:

The command of silence felt, in the mud city, like suffocation. Chickens had to be gagged at the moment of their slaughter for the fear of disturbing the repose of the king of kings. A cartwheel that squeaked could earn the car's driver the lash, and if he cried out under the whip the penalty could be even more severe... 'When the king is here we are all made mad,' the people said, adding, hastily, for there were spies and traitors everywhere, for joy.' The mud city loved its emperor, it insisted that it did, insisted without words, for words were made of that forbidden fabric, sound. (29)

However, the coerced silence forced on the people of Sikri is not permanent because its reinforcement needs the presence of Akbar in Sikri. When Akbar sets off "to his never-ending (though always victorious) battles against the armies of Gujarat and Rajasthan, of Kabul and Kashmir" (29), the discourse of Sikri's regime shifts to freedom. The narrator tells us,

The prison of silence was unlocked, and trumpets burst out, and cheers, and people were finally able to tell each other everything they had been obliged to keep unsaid for months no end. *I love you. My mother is dead. Your soup tastes good. If you do not pay me the money you owe me I will break your arms and elbows. My darling, I love you too. Everything.* (29)

Yet the novel questions this freedom when we learn that only the authority in Sikri, represented by Akbar, has the power to rearticulate the structure of discourse. In the novel, the reader learns

that Jodha, the imaginary queen of Akbar, also gains a kind of authority allowed by the emperor himself. Therefore, when Jodha tells Akbar “of the privation the people were suffering because of the desire of overzealous officials to ease his time at home,” and since Akbar relies on Jodha’s wisdom, he gives orders for the people to “make as much racket as [they] like” and the city “burst into joyful clamor” (29-30). Although the people of Sikri are happy to practice some sort of freedom, this is still a controlled freedom of speech since Akbar allows them freely express their own emotional utterance with each other. Yet, Akbar makes it clear that the sanctity of the authority should not be criticized nor challenged. As implied in the novel, Sikri’s discourse remains despotic for it neither allows the individual an agency to exercise new perceptions of behavior or speech nor the ability to make fundamental changes in their reality unless these changes are articulated by authority. The established discourse of Sikri is always policed by Akbar and his authority to prevent any deviation or disturbance in the established cultural norms.

Thus, Rushdie highlights and parodies another important theme that invigorates the Renaissance culture: the individual’s freedom of choice. What I want to argue here is that the relative freedom to which the reader can relate in Florence is an illusion; and, the novel, in return, asks the readers to revise their understanding and treatment of the twenty first-century-individual’s freedom. The people of Florence, the reader learns, overthrow every authoritarian power that controls them in favor of a new ruling system that might benefit them. One moment the citizens overthrow of the Pazzi conspirators and their religiously restricted doctrine. Then, the Florentines practice sodomy which can be argued as an act of rebellion against the forced religious doctrine. Later, they are ruled by the Medici family until the people decide to establish the Florentine Republic and get rid of the Medici rulers. At the end, the Florentines dismantle the Republic of Florence and bring back the Medici to rule. Although one might read these historical

incidents, represented in the novel, as a manifestation of the individual's agency to choose the authority to rule him as part of his freedom of choice, significantly, like that of Sikri's people, these acts of freedom of choice are manipulated and controlled by the State's authority. Therefore, the reader finds that the citizens indulge in religious practices under the reign of archbishops of the Pazzis. Then, when they get rid of the Pazzis after Easter Sunday and decide to enjoy their sexual liberty through bringing back sodomy, the narrator tells us that the Vatican doesn't approve of the people's sacrileges. Subsequently, the authorities of Florence, "with the full support of the Church, established a Decency Office, whose job it was to build and subsidize brothels and recruit prostitutes and pimps from parts of Italy and Europe to supplement the local tarts" (144). The Church's decision to fight sodomy with prostitution and with reopening brothels reveals the authorities' willingness to coerce the individual's desired freedom in order to prevent him from committing the forbidden sin. Historically speaking, it was believed that the Black Death that wiped out most of the inhabitants of Europe during the Middle Ages was caused by sodomy since "sodomy and sodomites were the cause of all manners of evils, the worst of which was the plague" (Fone 187). Notably, the Church's decision to fight sodomy through reopening brothels is not an attempt to bring a social renewal/change of the city's discourse. To the contrary, reforming the citizens' sexual behavior to be compatible with the norms of nature is one of the authority's goals. The second goal, it seems, is to revive the state's economy through bringing prostitutes from all over Europe to Florence which will attract tourists to the city.

Rushdie uses the individual's struggle to gain his freedom from the hegemonic authority to reach an ultimate logical conclusion for today's reader: that we cannot escape the discourse established and imposed on us by the ruling system. The novel implies that the Florentine's

freedom is only an illusion. Changing the discourse of the city has only trapped them further in the struggle to preserve and promote their individuality. Escaping the despotic system of the Pazzis, the Medici, and the Republic of Florence only makes the Florentines end up with the rule of the Medici again. They run from the humiliations of other rulers to a worse fate by the Vatican and then the Medici. Similarly, the people of Sikri cannot escape their ruling system which only has the authority to change the people's coerced silence into a coerced freedom. Rushdie parodies this constructed history of the western individual's freedom for two reasons: first, he wants to subvert the historical constructed notion of the East being the harbinger of violence and despotism through equating it with a similar real yet constructed history of the West. Rushdie believes that what he has constructed about Florence captures part of the truth. He also wants the readers to "think," when they read about Akbar's court and Florence's politics, that "It might have been like this" and not to think, "Oh, he [Rushdie] just made that up" ("Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn" Para 54). The second reason that might urge Rushdie to parody the Renaissance history is to show how his narrative can speak to our twenty first-century's social and political problems. He asks the reader to question our authorities and the individual's freedom in our time.

Yet, Rushdie would never have guaranteed that both cultures are equally dominated by despotic regimes, or equally capable of casting off their chains. We learn that the people of Sikri progress from a complete silence to a coerced freedom while the Florentines acquire a kind of agency to dismantle their rulers several times. But what one can read is that the Florentines' freedom has not allowed them to be happy and self-directed, but instead it leads them to a life of drink, sodomy, and treason. In addition, the Florentines' freedom is only a misguided figment of their imagination which manipulates them to associate themselves with the powerful leader in

order to gain their freedom. This is best noticed in il Machia's observation of the actions of the Florentines:

In general the people of Florence were traitors. It was the people who had betrayed the republic and invited the Medici back... The people were fools for power... such a people did not deserve to be cared for. They did not deserve a republic. Such a people deserved a despot. Perhaps this was what all people were like, everywhere... in general the people deserved their cruel beloved princes... Such a people were to be set aside. They were incapable of love or justice and therefore did not signify. Such a people no longer mattered. They were not primary but secondary. Only despots mattered. The love of the people was fickle and inconstant and to pursue such a love was folly. There was no love. There was only power. (237-238).

What il Machia might imply here is that when the people think that it is part of their freedom to betray an existing government because it is despotic, they end up bringing another despotic regime to rule. Therefore, il Machia learns that these people deserve to be ruled by despotism because they are fooled by the state's power and its call for the individual's freedom. This insight seems more relevant to the reader of the twenty first-century than to any actual or fictional person, western or eastern, living under despotism during the Renaissance.

Another significant theme the novel questions is how the ruler manipulates his citizens to acquire more power in the name of love. This is depicted in il Machia's statement that the ruler's call for the love of the people is "fickle and inconstant"; and if the people "pursue such a love," they will be fooled because "there was no love. There was only power" (237-238). Similarly, the people of Sikri are fooled by Akbar's novelty in changing the city's discourse from coerced silence to controlled freedom: "that was the day on which it became clear that a new kind of king was on the throne, and nothing in the world would remain the same" (30). However, as implied in the novel, Sikri's discourse remains despotic for it deprives the individual the agency to develop fundamental changes in the city's discourse. The novel also shows how Akbar relies on

the metanarrative of his tradition in order to sustain order and coherence in Sikri. The novel parodies the individual's belief in metanarrative because it reveals an intolerant subject, assures differences, and constructs binary oppositions between "us" and "them." This assumption I investigate is manifested in the novel through Akbar's analysis of the western culture and how the Florentines act against their rulers. When he heard how the Florentines burned the Pazzi conspirators, he tells the Mogor dell'Amore that "what begins with pendant traitors... will be a treacherous tale" (132). Akbar agrees with il Machia that the people of Florence are traitors because "they were fools for power" (237). And since the Florentines follow a powerful leader and betray the previous one they were supporting, they deserve, from il Machia's and Akbar's point of view, to be ruled by a despotic regime. Nevertheless, Akbar's people are not traitors but Akbar believes that his people still deserve to be ruled by despotic authority in order to preserve the state's peace and its legitimate authority. These stories Akbar hears about the analogous culture make the emperor believe that his laws and discourse are legitimate especially when he, later, assures the Mogor dell'Amore that,

Our kingdom has laws in place to guide it, and officials worthy of trust, and a system of taxation that raises enough money without making people unhappier than is prudent. When there are enemies to defeat, we will defeat them. In short, in that field we have the answers we require. (140)

It is worth mentioning here that Akbar's usage of the pronoun "we" refers only to himself as the legitimate ruler who constructs Sikri's discourse. The people of Sikri, as we can tell from Akbar's statement, obey passively the state's discourse because they have been taught that this discourse "[has] the answers [they] require" (140). However, one of the noticeable and known characteristics of any despotic regime is that it serves the values of a certain social strata, most importantly the authority. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator tells the reader that the

common people of Sikri are the first to suffer from the retreat of the Lake of life. This lake is the one that is keeping the city alive but after its retreat, Sikri is dying. The narrator tells us how the emperor asks the people to evacuate the city and move to another place, Agra or Lahore. Yet, who is actually moving with the emperor are his family, courts men, the nobles, and the military:

But for peasants there was no place in this, the last caravan to leave the caravanserai. For the peasants there was what there always would be: nothing. They would scatter into the immensity of Hindustan and their survival would be their own business. *Yet they do not rise up and slaughter us, the emperor thought. They accept their paltry fate. How can that be? How can it be? They see us abandon them, and they serve us well. This, too, is a mystery.* (345-346).

The common people who are not involved in the court or in decision making are the victims of the regime. This realization, it seems, is directed towards the reader of our contemporary time to revise not only the historical and political conditions of the past but also of the present.

As mentioned earlier, this novel is an important example of historiographic metafiction. After analyzing the reference to the historical past and the political conditions of the Renaissance and how this novel parodies some themes that were privileged during the Renaissance, I would like to move further to address how the novel incorporates the plot structure and themes of genres such as the picaresque, epic romance, and storytelling in order to make the reader revise and question the narrative of history. Historiographic metafiction deploys intertextuality to “thematically” and formally strengthen the message of the text (Hutcheon 5). When a work of fiction relies on intertextuality to give or strengthen the meaning of the text, this calls attention to the fictionality of the narrative and it calls our attention to our understanding of the reality. The postmodern text that foregrounds intertextuality has a political purpose as Hutcheon suggests (5); and it does so through the strategy of parody which does not denote “ridiculing imitation” (26). Instead, it denotes “repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at

the very heart of similarity”²⁹(26). Therefore, one can realize that the constructed histories and the constructed narratives of previous texts create a new text that might contain different connotations in order to address the reader of our time.

Therefore, in order to appreciate historiographic metafiction, this requires an awareness of the important intertexts in a postmodern work. In this sense *The Enchantress of Florence* is a historiographic metafiction because the reader is aware of the reference to preceding texts and genres. It is an intertextual text that uses the plot structures and characterization techniques of different fictions, yet uses parody and irony to challenge those very techniques. Parodying other genres in the novel is seen by Rushdie as a productive form of intertextuality that “[help] to create... a kind of artistic echo of what the story is trying to do, which is to bring together different parts of the world” (“Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn” para 81). In other words, for Rushdie, this parody of different genres doesn’t devalue the past techniques or characterizations but highlights a change in the point of view of these texts as the author sees them. The novel shows that several clearly distinguishable predecessor texts are integrated into the novel. For example Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* (1972) and Bharati Mukherjee’s *Holder of the World* (1993) portray the same themes *The Enchantress of Florence* presents. Similar to Calvino’s Polo and Mukherjee’s Hannah, the Mogor dell’Amore travels from the West to the East where he visits the Mughal Empire. It is significant to mention that the “picaresque novel starts in the middle of the 16th century” in Spain with the publication of *Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (*The New Werner* 372). The picaresque novel at that period, along with other literature, “is eminently

²⁹ Hutcheon disagrees with Jameson in this notion. Jameson who also depicts intertextuality as a postmodern concept, considers it nostalgic and without any political purpose. To Jameson, intertextuality uses pastiche instead of parody since parody judges the original by mocking its style.

national” (*The New Werner* 372). On the other hand, many critics have argued that there is much resemblance in the styles and themes between the picaresque novel and an Arabic literary genre called “Maqamat.”³⁰ The “Maqamat also, as Abu-Haidar implies, endorses national themes depicted in the picaresque hero’s journey from one Islamic city to another (4). *In the Enchantress of Florence*, the Mogor dell’ Amore’s character parodies the adventure of the picaresque hero when it extends the theme from being “eminently national” to a one that is international in order to bridge the gap between ancient historical cultures.

What really interests me is that the novel can be read as a postmodern version of the *Arabian Nights*. Since there is a subversion of coherence fit in with the high degree of intertextuality, the novel parodies the theme of the *Arabian Nights* and the storytelling and uses it to question the (un)reliability of storytelling as a source to generate meaning and knowledge. In the storytelling of the *Arabian Nights*, David Pinault questions which version of the story is reliable. He states that

Students confront a number of complex questions. Which version—or versions—of the work should serve as one’s primary basis of analysis? How does one understand the relationship of the part to the whole, that is, the relationship an individual story to story cycles, or the relation of story cycles to the frame-tale of the overall collection? And finally, how does one approach the issue of how tales found in other story collections, or as independent narratives, or, in the case of pseudohistorical tales, as components of works of history? (Heath review 359).

Since there are different versions of the *Arabian Nights*—the oral and the written versions—it is difficult to point which version is the reliable one. The same dilemma encounters Akbar when he

³⁰ Jareer Abu Haidar defines “Maqama” as the “species of composition originated by or first associated with the name of Badi al-Zaman al-Hamadhani, and subsequently with Hariri” (1). He argues that there is a possible Oriental influence on this type of Western literature because of the Islamic existence in Andalusia.

hears the stories of the Mogor dell' Amore about Florence and Qara Koz. He doesn't know which version of the story about Qara koz to follow: is the story of the Mogor dell' Amore valid enough to allow Akbar to assign this rouge as the legitimate heir of the Mughal Empire? Or is the story of Akbar's mother, which is opposed to what the Mogor dell' Amore recites, the true one? Akbar who has an "unexpected affection" for the stranger is curious to discover which version is the true one. Unlike Scheherazade and Shahryar who know that the former's tales are fictitious, the Mogor dell' Amore, who knows that he might pay his life for what he is telling, believes that his story is the true version and it is not a work of fiction. He, on the other hand, tries to convince Akbar that the stories he is reciting are not fictitious. The use of the storytelling tradition of the *Arabian Nights*³¹ in the novel is not straightforward and it is not strictly parodic. It seems that the use of the parody is to invert the structure of the storytelling found in the *Arabian Nights*. The novel puts into question not only the style of the classic tradition of the storytelling but also its very foundation—that the individual seeks to question the truth and knowledge that is generated from storytelling.

Other significant intertextual works the novel refers to are colonial and anti-colonial texts. Edward Said argues that the Orient, represented in Orientalist texts, is but "a textual construct" (53). The coming argument will reveal how the novel parodies the image of the Oriental and the Occidental circulated in anti-orientalist texts through constructing an image of the Oriental that equates him with the western intellectual one. Rushdie is interested in

³¹ This is not the first time Rushdie uses the style of the classic tradition of the *Arabian Nights* in his fiction. However, his use of this classic tradition found for example in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* generates a long fable for children. Moreover, as W. J. Weatherby argues, the style and themes that connect the *Arabian Nights* with *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* are reminders of Rushdie's "boyhood" and of "the grim reality he was living through" during the fatwa (qtd in Coppola 229).

questioning the legitimacy and validation of knowledge/truth/discourse, which is constructed based on cultural, historical, and sociological backgrounds. Constructed knowledge controls people's way of thinking. For instance, in the novel, the reader depicts some of the established stereotypes the "Asiatic" believes about the West as being "colonial," "manipulative," and "dominant," especially when the people of Sikri question the motives of the Mogor dell'Amore in Sikri. Some predict that he is here on a mission to "weaken the people's moral fiber and to erode the moral authority of the One True God" (198); others questions Akbar's willingness to accept the Mogor dell'Amore as not only his uncle but also as a legitimate powerful heir of the Mughal empire at a time Akbar "did not trust his sons" (57). The queen mother, similarly, "thought [the Mogor dell'Amore] an agent of the infidel West, sent to confuse and weaken their holy kingdom" (200). Yet, Akbar, at the very beginning, is the only one who refutes these anti-colonial notions, accepts the Mogor dell'Amore's presence in moments as his son, and respects his potentials:

He is a homeless man looking for a place in the world... How hungry for love he must be! ... He is a stranger wherever he goes. Existing only through the power of his own will... There is a light in him that was almost extinguished when we met him, but it grows stronger by the day in our company... What we know is that he has crossed the world to leave one story behind and to tell another... He wants to step into the tale he is telling and begin a new life inside it...and ... [he] never did anybody any real damage. (200-201)

This gesture on Akbar's behalf can be seen as resisting the grand narrative the colonized has constructed about the colonizer.

One effect of Rushdie's research of the history of Akbar and the Islamic Mughal Empire is Rushdie's drawing from the colonial discourse he seems to parody in the novel. As it is known, the colonial discourse establishes its theories and representations of the colonized

through allowing the powerful (the West) to speak of and about the less powerful or the marginal. One example that appears in the novel which follows this pattern is Rushdie's allowance of the Mogor dell'Amore to speak for and about Princess Qara Koz's history and her marriage to Argalia. My point is that the Mogor dell'Amore's statements about Qara Koz refers mainly to major stereotypes of the oriental woman royal such as that of Cleopatra's "powers of enchantment, oblivion to the world's affairs, and overwhelming sexual desire" (Kabbani 20) which Qara Koz represents. On the other hand, Rushdie also deviates from the colonial discourse's norm by bringing in an important postcolonial theme: allowing the Oriental, represented in Akbar's character, to speak for himself and to represent his tradition and history apart from the ideological interference or the hegemony of the West. In other words, Rushdie manages to move who is traditionally defined as the "Other" from the margin to the center and allows this centralized other to present himself, comment on, and analyze the discourse of the West. The novel introduces the reader to the bloody oppressive history of the Mughal Empire and allows Akbar to introduce the reader to his palaces, wives and children, his city and people, the city's discourse, his monologues and private practices, and his comments on Florence. Drawing from some major themes of colonial and postcolonial discourses, Rushdie, from my point of view, builds up a new productive discourse that endorses power but this power is in favor for both cultures. In other words, instead of allowing power to be solidified within this central other (which is an important theme in postcolonialism) or within the West (which is a central theme in Colonial tradition), Rushdie attempts to make both cultures equated in endorsing power. I come to see this shift in Rushdie's thought as a positive moderation. It suggests that the reader should question the narrative of colonial as well as postcolonial discourses in order to offer some answers to the most pressing problems between cultures in our time.

However, other questions haunt me when reading about colonial discourse, especially when I am an eastern woman and know crucial characteristics of my culture: why do critics, like Said and Kabbani, who argue against colonial discourse, see it as manipulative, mythological, and far away from the truth? What if these mythological- western style- constructions were true? Why would the oriental subject not see it as a way to look at its own flaws and upon the occidental colonizer's better discourse and try to borrow or adopt the latter's discourse for the sake of obtaining knowledge/power? The essential thing here is to see clearly, to face clearly what might be the disillusioned truth, and to answer this fundamental question: Are the Orientals different from how they are described in colonial texts? Relying on Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* I answer this question as no. And I say that there is a great similarity between the established characteristic of the Oriental in colonial discourse and the Oriental represented in *The Enchantress of Florence*. In this sense, I think that Rushdie has in mind the contemporary third world reader who will not find it difficult to associate Sikri's orientalist discourse with that of their culture. It seems that Rushdie asks those readers in particular to question their social and political problems in order to institute social change.

Moreover, Rushdie's call for finding answers to the problems of our times happens when Rushdie examines and re-describes the world in so many frames: postmodern cosmopolitanism is one of them. Kwame Anthony Appiah, who is described by Stanford University as "our postmodern Socrates" (McPherson paragraph 1) believes cosmopolitanism to be rooted in the cultures in which "anywhere you travel in the world ... you can find ceremonies ... rooted in centuries-old traditions. [At the-same time] you will also find everywhere ... many intimate connections with places far away: Washington, Moscow, Mexico City, Beijing" (Appiah paragraph 3). Appiah's rooted cosmopolitanism manifested in ceremonies is not the only

celebrated or shared image in “centuries-old tradition.” Since one of the prevalent discourses during the 16th-century in the East and the West is colonialism, therefore, wherever the traveler goes, he will find similarities between different cultures, societies, and states that refer to the culture’s experience of and about colonialism. This rooted cosmopolitanism can be read in the novel through Akbar’s infatuation and affinity with Florence and its people:

The emperor felt like the Caliph of Baghdad Harun al-Rashid walking round his city at night to learn how his citizens lived. But Akbar’s cloak was cut from the cloths of time and space and these people were not his. Why, then, did he feel so strong a sense of kinship with the denizens of these braying lanes? Why did he understand their unspeakable European tongue as if it were his own? (140)

Of course the answers to these questions lie in the words of the Mogor dell’Amore that “the curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike” (135). The question that haunts me here is why the Mogor dell’Amore refers to the similarities found in the human race as a “curse”? The importance of rooted cosmopolitanism lies in its call for acknowledging similar identities and doctrines among different cultures; but the problem Appiah observes is that people in diverse cultures feel “of a pressure in the modern world toward uniformity” (paragraph 5). This fear of “uniformity” and the preference of difference can be solved through acknowledging the distinguished difference between different cultures, and attempt to develop a better productive discourse through benefiting from the distinguished difference in the discourse of the other. Based on that, the different cultures in the novel, Florence and Sikri, share many characteristics (colonial and despotic discourse) and since the Mogor dell’Amore is reciting the history of Florence almost more than half a century before Sikri’s, this significant call of the rooted cosmopolitanism in the novel is directed to the reader of our time.

The last thing I want to illustrate here is that most historiographic metafiction reminds readers that they are reading a work of fiction because of the shift in narrative voice, inscribing techniques and characterizations of other genres, reciting a fabulous story after another, and blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction which Rushdie deploys here. Rushdie, in fact, states that he wants his reader to think that this novel is “an interesting shaggy dog story about 400 years ago” (Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn” para 30). Yet, the existence of an extensive bibliography at the end of the novel allows the reader to realize that there is a blending between the real histories with Rushdie’s fictional narrative. Rushdie’s goal, it seems, is to challenge the reader and asks him to question the validity of the historical truth:

I knew that people would assume that some of the most amazing things in it were things that I made up. For me, writing this novel revealed once again the old truism about truth being stranger than fiction; I think actually almost all the stuff that people will think is outrageous magic realism is actually in the history books, and the stuff that people think, ‘Oh, that’s probably true,’ is the stuff that I’ve made up. But I wanted people almost to feel that it was a story that I had discovered, you know, that I’d read some book, discovered the tale, and retold it. I wanted it to feel like a previously existing story that I was simply retelling for your benefit. (“Salman Rushdie Spins a Yarn” para 37)

I think Rushdie succeeds in making the reader relate to this text as a work of fiction not only because of the blending between the real and fiction in the novel but also because the reader is used to this type of style in postmodern fiction. In addition, I think that Rushdie succeeds in bridging the gap between the histories of the Renaissance West and East and shows how both cultures were/are not different or binary opposites. In this sense, this novel is a historiographic metafiction which directs its readers to question the historical and political problems as well as the fictional intertexts the novel generates in order to relate it to the historical and political problems of our time.

Conclusion

After Reading Rushdie's works published after the third millennium, it may be stated that he is a postmodern writer by virtue of his distinct treatment of aspects of postmodern culture and ideology. The primary goal of this dissertation has been to declare that Salman Rushdie's recent fiction has lost the postcolonial essence that many scholars found in his works published in 1980s and 1990s. Throughout my dissertation, I have marked how Rushdie associates a postmodern framework in his works published after the third millennium. This shift can be read as a symptom of acquiring common qualities with other western authors that set him in motion with the ideology of the West, especially that of America. Rushdie, I come to see, does this purposefully because he is affected by the contemporary social, economic, and political conditions and attempts to give a critique of how the world is perceived now. Although reconstructing the history of India peppered Rushdie's works published during the 1980s and 1990s, his recent fictions dismiss the historical representation of India and replace it with other significant themes that is related to postmodernism. In addition, the postmodern framework of Rushdie's novels analyzed in this study might have a thematic purpose as being a "cultural logic of late capitalism." No doubt Rushdie is a highly self-conscious writer who took and still takes strong stand-points on critical issues that concern both the East and the West. However, although—on the surface—his works published after 2000, such as *Fury*, seem to hold criticism for the American politics and culture, the writer, I believe, "is complicit to what he lampoons" (Kumar 32). For example, Rushdie, after becoming an American citizen, reveals his new affiliation to America:

My self-description as an American is a spatial identity; constructed from the external territory, it has nothing to do with my *whatness*, my essence or *being* as a person, until the larger dominant culture readjusts itself to accommodate my presence. For the time, it

is a contractual domicile arrangement: in exchange for my willingness to accept the subject-hood of the sovereign nation called the United States of America, I am 'subjectified,' branded with a territorial marker of citizenship that, like a stamped emblem on the back of the visitor's palm in an entertainment park, allows me access to certain privileged areas of political, social, and economic life. Yet the territorial persona, as a mask of my identity, cannot fully represent the subject/object of my person, the material body and the psychic being. (qtd in Samanta 175)

Rushdie admits his "American-ness" and the privileges this new identity allow him to access.

Even though this new identity cannot change his "essence" as an Indian, still his American-ness is reflected in his recent fiction. Additionally, there are several interviews where Rushdie uses the first pronoun "we" when he refers to some political or social incidents in America. For instance, in an interview about multiculturalism, Rushdie states that the people in the East are directed and manipulated by their authorities while "We in the West" always look for "alternative voices" in order to find the truth (Stipoon). Thus, since Rushdie's works in general are historically and politically engaged, his recent works analyzed in this study reveal the author's experimentation with forms and techniques of postmodernism, one of them being the reconstruction of history.

Furthermore, his books could play a significant role in shaping the reader's awareness and understanding of a postmodern culture. For example, freedom of speech and the issue of human rights are illusory concepts and the media, consumerism, and art productions are all means to confine the postmodern individual with capitalism. In addition, Rushdie's recent novels urge the reader to revise some established historical narratives in order to give a better understanding of our contemporary time. Therefore, each chapter of my dissertation tackles one theme found in postmodern fiction and addressed by famous postmodern writers. I want to remind the reader that my project doesn't compare Rushdie's works with the works of other famous postmodern writers because my main goal was to mainly focus on Rushdie's writing and

his ideology after he moved to America and to connect his recent works with postmodernism. On the other hand, as a researcher from the Middle East, where Rushdie's works are not highly welcomed yet not quite criticized, and where postmodernism is still not importantly tackled as a separate course in most English departments in Jordan, I took it upon myself to present to my colleagues and students with what I have learned about Rushdie and postmodernism.

Thus, although Rushdie's fiction is associated with postcolonial literature, I argued in the introduction that some postmodern ideologies are found in two early significant texts of Rushdie—*The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* has a significant effect on Rushdie (the reason why Khomeini issued a sentence death on the author) and the relationship between the West and the East (the novel added to the clash between both cultures). I argued that this novel affected Rushdie's reputation as a writer although it was the one that made his name known worldwide. Some scholars, such as Keith Booker and Mark Edmundson, see this work as a postmodern although the debate over considering Rushdie's works postcolonial or postmodern is still there. I also refers to a crucial theme depicted in *Midnight's Children* which reveal the willingness of some Indians, like the dwellers of Methwold's State, to accept the English social habits of drinking, reading, and other foreign life habits. I argue that the middle-class Indian's acceptance of the western life style can be seen as a way to legitimize western imperialism. If Rushdie's works published in the 1980s and 1990s are peppered with representations about Indian history, his recent novels published after the third millennium captures India and its history in the background while foregrounding more important themes that are related to our contemporary time.

The first chapter analyzes Rushdie's novel *The Ground Beneath her Feet*. The theory of alternate history is the main focus of this chapter because Rushdie's approach of history goes in

line with the postmodern reading of history. Postmodernism asks the writer and the reader to reconstruct an alternate history of the past in order to give an understanding of the contemporary political incidents. My investigation of the alternate history of rock music shares with postmodernism its concerns about resistance which is eliminated by the hegemony of late capitalism manifested in cultural production, and the postmodern loss of historical sense which is also complicit with western hegemony. While the first chapter starts with the Indian's willingness and their attempt to erase their local history, *Fury* takes us from England to America while Bombay only appear in the childhood memories of Malek Solanka: these memories of the East are unpleasant. The protagonist, although he hates the artificiality and sophistication of the American life, asks America to "devour him" which suggests his complicity with what he hates. Although Solanka tries hard through his book, his doll production, and his puppets to practice some sort of resistance against the hegemony of the cultural production, he ends up allying with and supporting the hegemonic regime he might condemn. The novel also answers the question why *Fury* is to be of interest to the reader interested in postmodernism. The answer is possibly due to the postmodern strong elements of the political ambivalent dimension of a postmodern city. The state and the individual are mobilized by cultural artifacts, such as media and the press, and the question of simulation and the hyperreal in the modern world. Moreover, Rushdie is concerned with the zeitgeist of postmodernism which typifies and influences art, fashion, and politics and suggests that these modes of productions, which are the creation of the West, are sources to sustain the western hegemony. The third chapter tackles *Shalimar the Clown* which is a literary production of a fragmented intellectual who is affected by the productions of late capitalism: the media, the city, and other art productions. The novel introduces us to the discourse of terrorism and analyzes it based on the media's rhetoric as well as the arguments of

some pundits who oppose the media's projection. The novel introduces us to Shalimar and Ophuls whom I will argue are representations of the postmodern fragmented self and of the postmodern antihero created by the conditions of late capitalism or, to be more specific, the American hegemony. The other minor part of this chapter will give a critique of the postmodern city (Los Angeles) and its inhabitants and how they are shaped by the logic of late capitalism. This plethora of arguments will reveal how the novel, as a postmodern art production, reflects the postmodern legacy of late capitalism and doesn't attempt to subvert it. This lead us to the fourth chapter which analyzes Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* through referring to Renaissance Florence and the Mughal Empire. I argue that this novel is a historiographic metafiction that undermines established historical narratives of the East and the West. The novel, additionally, shows both cultures as similar in their political, economic, and social conditions. Rushdie parodies other texts and genres in an attempt to give a different connotation to precedent texts. This parody is significant in the sense that its connotation asks the readers to question the historical past in order to understand what they mean for us today.

After giving a synopsis of what I have tried to argue in this study, it is time to present to my reader why this study is important. Rushdie, as mentioned in the introduction, has long been categorized as a postcolonial writer although there are many critics like Edmundson, Booker, and Hassumani who suggest a postmodern reading of some of the highly considered postcolonial works like for example *The Satanic Verses* and *Shame*. In addition, in his reading of *Midnight's Children*, Timothy Brennan states that "there is a striking absence of coverage of the anticolonial movement" (qtd. In. Booker 293). I also present my reading of *Midnight's Children* where I find that the middle class Indians in the novel, such as the Sinai family, assimilate the British way of living through accepting and following the British habits of eating, drinking alcohol, reading, as

well as their way of thinking which value the philosophy of the West. Although Rushdie's works published during the 1990s and 1990s are not tackled in this study, the discussion I propose in the introduction about *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* shakes Rushdie's standpoint as a postcolonial writer even in his famous postcolonial texts. His novels published after he moved to New York in 1999 capture a change in the author's ideology, which now more highly values western hegemony, and in his writing style, in which the techniques of postmodernism are clear. Moreover, the main setting that combines the four novels I am discussing in the chapters is America³². In his fiction and non-fiction, Rushdie doesn't deny the power and dominance of America; therefore, it appears that Rushdie tries to balance between his feelings about western hegemony and his admiration of the first world country. Thus, Rushdie's deployment of the discursive strategy of the alternate history and his exploration of the themes of media production, and historiographic metafiction all highlight the hegemony of the West in general and America in particular. Furthermore, the direct fight against the hegemony of the West that is one of the main themes in postcolonial fiction is absent in Rushdie's fiction. What is left is fragmented characters who are still trying to shape their identity like Ormus Cama and Malek Solanka and who, like their creator, accept, with full willingness, "the subject-hood of the sovereign nation called the United States of America" (qtd in Samanta 175). What Rushdie tries to reveal in his fiction is that the individual cannot escape the hegemony of late capitalism yet urges the reader to question the master narrative circulated in the East and the West alike, especially the one underpinned by religion and the politicizing of religion.

³² The Enchantress of Florence is set in Florence and the Mughal Empire. However, America is referred to it in the novel as the New World. And there is a nice and interesting description of the life in the New World but since there is no mentioning to any authoritative regime and established discourse in the New World, a comparison between America, Florence, and Sikri would be banal.

Will this study stop here? No. Reading Rushdie's novels and discovering how his characters are directed and manipulated by the western hegemony yet value it over the locally articulated fanatic religious and cultural habits encourages me to think of other works of other postcolonial writers and find out if there is a desire to accept the sovereignty of the West over the despotic rule in the East. This theme now haunts me because it made me think of what heard from Palestinian workers in 1998 during my visit to the West Bank. I heard my uncle and his friends complaining about the economic situations that affected the West Bank after the Palestinian National authority took hold. They claimed that Palestinian families and workers were living in prosperity when they used to go and work in the territories occupied and ruled by Israel. Thus, culturally speaking, there are people who desires to live under western authority rather than being manipulated by the despotic rule and the corruption of the local government. This is going to be my next project—to look for how the colonized individual accepts his image circulated in colonial texts as well as how this subject desires to be ruled by western hegemony. Rushdie's works would be one of the important texts to support the thesis of my next project.

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