TO BE BORN IS TO DIE: A STUDY OF SPATIO-TEMPORAL IMPOSSIBILITY AND THE APOCALYPSE IN SALMAN RUSHDIE’S THE SATANIC VERSES

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ABSTRACT

In the nearly 25 years since its first publication, critics have labeled Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* postmodern, postcolonial, modern, or any combination of the three (as well as religious, antireligious, and other terms on which I do not focus). I argue for an interpretation of the text as postcolonial modern because such a reading allows one to grasp the workings of sublimity and apocalypse in the novel as understood in the context of a migrant worldview. Specifically, the apocalypse as I define it involves a reaching for or gesture towards the impossible, achieved via the road of a sublimity which distorts time, space, and the world of intertextual relations in order to disorient characters and readers, to upset their senses of the world and therefore to enable them to open themselves toward a re-grasping and a re-inventing of said world—a reorientation, a finding of oneself, a growth of one’s confidence. This reinvention occurs in a spatiotemporal realm in which “realistic” conceptions of space are linguistically questioned and messianic, returning views of time usurp linear temporality, enabling a more accurate description of how various populations learn to construct, describe, and represent the experiences which constitute life.
Introduction: The Satanic Verses and Postcolonial Modernism

The migrant experience, as expressed in postcolonial literature, is marked by chaos and an inability to make sense of the new world in which the migrant finds him or herself. In Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988), a range of spatio-temporal narrative experiments reveals the bewildering nature of ethnic migration in Great Britain specifically, as migrants struggle with ostracism, dislocation, difference, and the often-traumatic aftermath of national and personal histories. This displacement and disorientation occurs in a London where landmarks mutate and oscillate, appear suddenly and then vanish as if they had never existed. It is a London in which people may fall from the sky and in which characters may wake from an uneasy post-fall sleep to discover that they no longer have faces, as Saladin finds when he gazes into Rosa Diamond’s mirror and sees: “that old cherubic face staring out at him once again” (139), a reminder of a time when “he looked like a featureless jellyfish” (139) with no identity and no sense of belonging. He attempts to remind himself of his own reality as immigration police comb the beach searching for him, but he nevertheless fears that “the world did not exist beyond that beach down there…If he weren’t careful, if he rushed matters, he would fall off the edge, into clouds. Things had to be made” (140). Eventually, he does fall into a cloud—the Black Maria cloud of the police van, of the officers who signal “approaching doom” (140)—a realm in which his watch has vanished, all clocks have disappeared, manticores offer him advice, and his only method of escape involves risking and subsequently undergoing a form of death, a retreat into a church in which various renditions of the same person stare back at him, hostile and unforgiving.
Many critics read this novel as exemplary of postmodernism because of story-arcs such as this one, which appears to present readers with an infinite state of flux and play in which people possess blank faces, clocks do not exist, spaces cease to make sense (for instance, when Saladin savages the Argentinian bedsheets on an English bed, as if these two countries had somehow merged into one another), and characters themselves often comment on the nature of their lives as an apparent patchwork or stitched canvas of hybrid elements: infinite, intangible, immeasurable. When confronted by a Saladin who fears her exploitation at the hands of Billy Battuta, Mimi Mamoulian scoffs, “I have read *Finnegans Wake* and am conversant with postmodernist critiques of the West, e.g. that we have here a society capable only of pastiche: a ‘flattened’ world. When I become the voice of a bottle of bubble-bath, I am entering Flatland knowingly” (270). Saladin despairs at these words, realizing, “I am a man…who does not know the score, living in an amoral, survivalist, get-away-with-it world” (271). He feels empty, disillusioned by this knowledge, reaching the pinnacle of his existential frustration when he discovers that Gibreel has lied to a film magazine, claiming that he never boarded the crashed *Bostan*. Railing against Gibreel, who clearly knows “the score,” Saladin resembles, “at last… the very devil whose image he had become” (281). Yet this is also the point at which his forehead swellings—his horns—begin to diminish, making him seem less a devil than before, even at the moment at which he most appears to be one.

Saladin gains back his human form by rejecting false versions of reality and false narratives of the past and asserting the moral desirability of truth over deception. Not long afterward, Mimi and Billy are finally arrested for their financial scams/schemes and Mimi’s declaration of a postmodern world appears foolish—after all, with her arrest, the
‘score’ is settled in favor of honesty and legal justice, thus punishing her for her outlook. Not all behaviors and worldviews are acceptable. Some histories and events do not possess unlimited interpretative space: their effects and outcomes are undeniable, irrefutable. Mimi actually did steal money and Gibreel actually did board the plane. History, whether national or personal, cannot be rewritten either indiscriminately or ignorantly: one must be careful in one’s historical accounts in a way which Mimi is not. Thus, however powerfully postmodern indeterminism appears to factor into the novel, one should never dare to take literally Rushdie’s notorious trickery and wordplay. Though readers have no choice but to assume that Gibreel is a quasi-angel while Saladin turns into a real goat—that some realities are flexible and forever mutable while others cannot change so easily—postmodernism is only one perspective which the novel offers.

Rushdie, for all of his postmodernist feints and allusions, constructs his epic as a specifically modernist portrayal of the dislocation of massive groups of people. This form of modernism functions as what Michael Levenson terms a “social practice” (Modernism 8) rather than a solid, immutable type of aesthetic movement and is applicable to various locations and areas of study. In the Cambridge Companion to Modernism, Levenson writes, “If…social cataclysms left traces on Modernist art, so did that art inform and to an extent form the conception of social life within historical crises” (5). Modernism, Levenson asserts, is a method by which artists make sense of quandaries which are otherwise unsolvable and baffling, without dismissing those quandaries as utterly impenetrable. It is a method which is formulated by its very exposure to crisis, usefully feeding back into this constituent crisis and thus enabling people to better articulate it and to devise solutions to their disorientation. Modernism always surpasses any one meaning
or ideological commitment. It is contextual, dialogical, and contestatory. Levenson explains, “Any encounter with an artwork occurs within a social world, a world vastly larger than a momentary contemplation […]. [Modernism] has offered not one value but a region of commitments” (9). This region of commitments is dedicated, wherever it appears, to exploring both the limits of language and the ranges of expressible human experience. Rushdie’s novel deals with these linguistic and experiential limits by yoking the concept of sublimity to that of the diaspora. Specifically, the sublimity that appears is characteristic of the experience of diaspora in its resistance to words and its challenging of thought. Its un-representable nature ultimately delineates the edges of an apocalypse which enables personal change, growth, and a sense of un-limiting possibility through contact with difference. Arising through this contact, the novel’s aesthetic distortions further develop it and recast English social issues from a more global perspective, represented by Indian migrants. Art in this context only functions to the extent that Rushdie dares the very edge of the abyss and then tips over into its darkness, falling into a world with no alphabet, no dictionary, and very little direct capacity for translation.

Migration and the Problems of Representation

This surreal gesture of a world is one which the UK, with its large ethnic populations, has courted since the mid-20th century. In Europe, guest workers, Indian, and Pakistani immigrants form a significant part of the vast masses of the unwanted. Great Britain in particular has always prided itself upon racial purity and its native British “stock” (Paul). In spite of Britain’s desire to keep out the “blacks,” however, many said “blacks” have found their way to British sea and airports by dint of their status as British
Commonwealth subjects. Paul notes, “over the course of the decade [1950-1960],
colonial immigration to Britain increased incrementally…climbing to 3,000 in 1953;
10,000…in 1954, 42,000 in 1955, [and] 46,000 in 1956” (132). In 1961, the number of
incoming people hit a high of 136,000. For British government officials, such numbers
presented a danger to society—an overwhelming crowd of blacks, ready to drown out
British purity with their supposed habitual laziness and conflict-prone natures (124, 172).
Therefore, the government took measures to limit immigration, including issuing multiple
classes of vouchers, the first two of which often went to whites from countries such as
Canada, the latter of which typically went to darker-skinned migrants such as Indians and
Pakistanis, whose projected wait times could exceed fifty years (172).

Unsurprisingly, then, so-called “black” immigrants to Great Britain faced
challenges the likes of which many of their white counterparts could not imagine.
Jamaicans entering the country encountered hostility and resistance, “[reminding] them
of unfriendliness and unfamiliarity” (Paul 120). Indians and Pakistanis were not welcome
either. Though they could attempt to become British, they would never fit the model for
proper “British stock,” and returning home was not always a desirable option, since
Indian and Pakistani immigrants often considered themselves members of the British
Empire who deserved to experience its center and not merely its peripheries—a center
often unachievable not only for them, but in fact for many others, including long-
naturalized citizens such as Salman Rushdie, a member of India’s Muslim minority
whose parents moved to Karachi before he began attending Cambridge University (The
Rushdie File). As Homi Bhabha has noted in an excerpt from The New Statesman¹,
Rushdie’s magnum opus represents his “painful and problematic encounter with the most

¹ This has been collected in The Rushdie File.
intricate and intimate area of his imaginative life...a life lived precariously on the
cultural and political margins of modern [British] society” (114). In an interview with
*The Observer*, Rushdie admitted, “I’m not who I was supposed to be...I stepped out of
that world, rather like Gibreel. I have had the sense of having frequently to reconstruct
my life” (*Rushdie File* 8). For Rushdie, the past represented a temporal break with the
present, and the man he has become is not a natural, continuous extension of his
personality in boyhood and adolescence. Life is fragmented, fragile. It breaks and
ruptures, and Rushdie appears to recognize this in his own experiences as well as in those
of his characters. He also recognizes Britain’s tendency to catalyze this rupture with its
trademark insistence upon a racial purity which, once delineated, casts too many people
as its antithesis, leading to fear and despair. Rushdie’s novel seeks a solution which may
create a positive line of identity and cultural affiliation, but which is not closed down,
“pure,” or constructed only from certain “stocks.” It finds this solution in global
modernism, which, though, originally crafted by artists of British/European stock,
nevertheless lends itself to a postcolonial context with its explorations of the sublime, the
diaspora, the opening of experience, and the discovery of a self that is certain but
uncertain, knowable yet constantly surprising.

**The Constitution of the Diaspora and Contemporary Critical Approaches to *The
Satanic Verses*: An Overview**

Many critical discussions of *The Satanic Verses* offer readings of the novel as
hybrid, chaotic, discontinuous, intertextual, fragmented, postmodern, modern, or
postcolonial: a sea of theories and opinions. I will align myself with those critics who do
not perceive modernism as contradicting postcolonialism. In *New World Modernisms*, Charles Pollard is concerned with the constant opposition of modernism and postcolonialism to one another. Some critics, Pollard notes, are more comfortable pitting modernism against its descendent than acknowledging its enduring usefulness. But Pollard belongs to a class of critics who see modernism as helpful in the development of frameworks that enable people to usefully describe their experiences of alienation and disjunction—their *postcolonial* experiences. Writing of T.S. Eliot, Pollard notes:

> The complementarity of…modernism tends to get lost in all but the most subtle of contemporary readings […]. Eliot conceives of tradition, not as a struggle between the past and the present, between the community and the individual…but as a collocation of the past and present, of the community and the individual…in a new contingent whole. He knows that these new wholes are only conventions, that they can never be fully grasped from a single perspective, and that they always remain open to change, but he believes that they remain important as the means by which we shape perceptions of reality into meaningful patterns (26).

For Pollard, modernism is a grounding force which develops perceived wholes that may not actually exist, but which nevertheless facilitate human perception and understanding—like a mnemonic device that is simply constructed yet enables people to remember and to grasp structures of great complexity. I will use modernism in this mnemonic sense in my own study to explore how certain experimentally-warped time and spatial constructs lead to the overcoming or challenging of linear time and stable spatial or national identities in Rushdie’s novel, all of which enact an apocalyptic view of
the diaspora through the kind of temporary and contingent wholeness which Pollard describes.

But if modernism offers a method of reaching toward apocalypse through sublimity, so too does postmodernism, which has positioned itself as a rival arbiter of the sublime. In the essay, “What is Postmodernism,” Jean-Francois Lyotard defines the postmodern as an early, “nascent” element or impulse within the modern. He writes, “modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure” (81). The modern, Lyotard insists, is comforting, stable, and ultimately untenable because its aesthetic consistency does “not constitute the real sublime sentiment” (81). The sublime, he asserts, is “that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste…to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable” (81)—in other words, to reach beyond specific aesthetic experiments and focal points into a realm in which utter flux and inconsistency are all that a reader will encounter—utter confusion, but also the sublime in its supposedly “pure” form, devoid of aesthetic snobbery or overdetermination. Yet flux and inconsistency are themselves a form of consistency, closed down and, as David Punter observes, distrusting of newness. He notes, “For the postmodern, the new is always surprising and often catastrophic; the question of interpretation is suspended in favour of a radical admission of incomprehension” (2). Incomprehension becomes itself an “answer” and therefore yet another mode of comprehension, one which, for migrants, creates more problems than it solves.
Postmodernism, while ideal for battering down stability in a context in which a firmly-moored identity and clear affiliation is always already presumed, is not helpful to populations whose identities are inherently unstable—for instance, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians living in Britain, or Turkish guestworkers in Germany, or Allie Cone’s Jewish parents living wherever they will not encounter persecution. More useful than postmodernism for those with a migratory outlook, Melba Cuddy-Keane asserts, is a modernist understanding of the self as a form of “global consciousness” (540). By grasping one’s own identity as always-already related to the identities of others rather than incomprehensible in relationship to others, Cuddy-Keane insists that a “transformative [possibility]” arises (545), one in which “the self is resituated out in the world of global flows” (545-546), or the self “itself” becomes diasporic. From the flux and flow of an apparently postmodern world, one can nevertheless assume a particular identity, an identity that is plural and thus postcolonial, but also not utterly confused or subsumed: a definitive individual identity, and therefore modern in its orientation, flexible and subject to change, yet part of a larger migratory aspect of humanity.

The modern is not senile; it has not yet died, petrified, or become brittle. As Pollard notes of Walcott and Brathwaite’s writing, “Attributes…such as contingency of identity, the emphasis on cultural absence, and making language visible, could fairly be characterized as postmodern, but the general thrust of their work is best described as modernist because it still aspires to create a provisional sense of cultural order or wholeness out of a multiplicity of cultural sources” (39). A kind of “provisional” wholeness appears out of what would otherwise be jumbled, tangled disorder. This “wholeness” does not deny the presence of the sublime, which it will not try to represent,
and neither does it presume to dictate what that sublime might be. Again, one must return to the figuration of modernism as a mnemonic device. The sublime is for modernism an a vehicle to an endpoint, Pollard implies, which is provisional and apocalyptic in character because it stops where the unknown or “cultural absence” begins and ceases to answer the most perplexing of inquiries, only providing a road down which one can travel to reach the answers—if indeed answers there are.

Certainly, the text does not answer Saladin’s question of why his father smiles at death, or readers’ potential questions about what happens to Saladin after he walks away from his home with Zeeny. Saladin himself appears not to require such knowledge, taking comfort from his mere presence at his father’s deathbed and his reunion with Zeeny, drawing strength from the certainty of his love for these two people, no matter where he has been in the past and no matter where he will travel in the future. He enters a small cell of friendships and loves². Though Saladin’s experiences of sublimity are apocalyptic because they are associated with an unknowable ending, with absence and with apparent doubt, they nevertheless open him up to a future of self-confidence and companionship, of understanding and an acceptance of his Indian nationality. This understanding is projected back through a firmer understanding of his past and present circumstances, a new comprehension which arises because of his initial confusion—his early and original position within the diaspora.

Vijay Mishra, in *Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, identifies the diaspora as a temporally redemptive movement. He asserts that when a desirable future is projected onto the present rather than the past, thus privileging the now, time is “turned back against itself in order that alternative readings, alternative histories may be released”

² Michael Levenson indicates that many modernist poets and writers did the same (6).
Oftentimes, migrants do not, Mishra suggests, consider their present circumstances, for the past, with its dangling turnip of cultural unity, is too compelling, and the future, with its promises of a return to an Edenic state, is too distracting to be of much help. Saladin, however, discovers and unleashes alternative readings of his own past, becoming a man of whom his father can be proud, a man who is faithful to his Indian girlfriend instead of desiring the emotionally distant and cloistered Pamela—a man who joins the liberal/liberated Bombay Human Chain and finds within himself discontinuities which he can finally, with great relief, accept and approve, though they initially make him uncomfortable. Views of time as unstable and malleable, able to be changed or redeemed, necessarily make migrant communities nervous. What they want most of all, Mishra notes, is stability, continuity, and firm identity, a “wish to cling to ‘millenarian’ narratives of self-empowerment in which only the untranslated can recapture a lost harmony” (223). Such a desire for “untranslated-ness,” when denied, drives people and ethnic groups to the edge of a conceptual precipice: even if a leader commands the act, nobody wants to be the first to jump off, to abandon unified and homogenous notions of identity. In the beginning of his narrative, Saladin believes that stability, safety on the correct side of the cliff, is what he wants as well: a teleological journey from Indian brat to well-bred Englishman, no kinks and no distractions along the way. However, Mishra asserts that Rushdie’s representation of a spatiotemporal discontinuity which is continuously reclaimable, though kinky and strange, is more effective than straightforward continuity (if less immediately desirable) for the purposes of enabling immigrants to understand the conditions in which they live. After all, they are always and forever translated, their identities constructed as if from a dream (or a
nightmare), never pure or singular. Eventually, Mishra notes, Saladin realizes this one truth: “It is…Saladin who is reborn and who accepts the need for change” (225). In the process, he learns to stop living a lie that denies the strangeness, brokenness, asymmetry, and intertextuality of existence and instead attempts to craft all of these realities into a new coherence.

The Verses is deeply intertextual in its desire to push beyond the boundaries of a single work and to incorporate many works into its own body, to make discontinuity and its attendant novelty its very substance even as it seeks out some form of stability. Gayatri Spivak writes that, “once you have finished the phantasmagoric book, the global slowly settles into the peculiar locale of migrancy” (84). What this location of migrancy is, Spivak believes, can only be discovered when a migrant turns away from the dream of finding agency in one nation (94), instead accepting the notion that one never belongs to a singular nation or group, uncomplicatedly—and even if one does, one must still critique that odd space, which appears to be de-centered even when it is not (84). Also, and more concretely, the location of migrancy is not only discovered via a particular method, but is a substantial notion in its own right, plural and conjoined. Spivak writes, “Literature is transactional. The point is not the correct description of a book, but the construction of readerships” (87). The most important aspect of a novel, Spivak asserts, is its ability to build readerships and enable its readers to learn. Sometimes, this process of learning enters strange terrain where people must explore cultural transactions and intertextual conjunctions at the points at which they cease to make sense, fail altogether, or require new terminology.

3 “Incorporation” here does not imply assimilation, or conformism to particular standards.
Simon Gikandi similarly attempts to construct a theory of the migrant experience which is locally but globally contextualized through aporias and absences. He describes England as a place of “unclarified beginnings” (205) and emphasizes the gaps present in Rushdie’s narratives, some of which derive from the tautologies inevitable in Rushdie’s work. Gikandi does not believe that Rushdie can ever escape “the very normativities—nation and empire—that [he] seeks to negate” (208). Specifically, he notes that, “While the novel seems to destabilize such properties as modern temporality, the space of the nation, and the foundational moments of culture, its power of critique….also seems to be dependent on such categories” (209-210). Though Rushdie subverts and attacks colonialism, satirizing English fears concerning black immigrants and metamorphosing his characters into awkward shapes, this very attack of colonialism stems from a direct acknowledgement of its power. Rushdie, according to Gikandi, grapples vigorously with his antagonizing force. Gikandi writes, “the whole momentum of the novel, at least until its moment of closure, is toward the transcendence of such categories [as empire, nation, etc]” (210). While Gikandi insists that Rushdie cannot actually transcend them, he does note that the “aporic moments and narrative ellipses” (214) in Rushdie’s novel draw close to doing so. Rushdie gestures towards an Other, a so-called third option, a difference which Gikandi terms “this moment of retour” (223), or a revisiting of the past which causes characters to understand it differently and to overcome the detrimental effects of categories in their own lives: whether the categories of Indian boor versus English gentleman, ungrateful son versus antagonistic father, or loyal true-love versus distant, unattainable beauty. All of these categories must be refuted. But then, at the point at
which they are about to be refuted, the narrative itself must end, thus preempting refutation.

**Apocalypse and Postcolonial Modernism in SV**

Gikandi poses the significance of the retour and its consequent gaps in terms of a framework which might be described as apocalyptic in its inability to definitively end. The sublime, or from Gikandi’s perspective, its gaps and aporias, gestures toward the apocalypse, which is what lies unrevealed within the sublime and must be revisited, “retoured” in order for a more complete, though never complete-able, sense of understanding to occur. The modernist critic William Franke defines apocalypse as an concept which constitutes a “radical openness to what is other than all that can be represented” (25). He elaborates, “The unrepresentable source of making, alias poiesis, from which all representations poetically emerge, cannot itself be represented as such, but it can always, volcanically, act up and manifest itself anew…[it is a] world-shattering, world-renewing event” (25). Volcanic rupture involves a repetitive act of temptation, “abid[ing] beyond the reach of rhetoric, its other face, the dark side of its luminous truth” (39). Reaching for a shattering and impossible truth, narrative poesis ends at the point where the unrepresentable meets representation, creating a spark of hopeful anticipation, moving forward by hearkening back in a way which renews the present rather than imposing the past upon it by attempting repeatedly to make the unrepresentable attainable. Narrative poesis, with its apocalyptic source/origin, seeks to renew understanding and thus to create it anew.
According to this (necessarily fuzzy) definition of apocalypse, Rushdie constantly evokes the unknown through the known, eventually pushing the known into the territory of the unknown. By taking the known realm of diaspora and pushing it to its logical conclusion\(^4\), he takes it beyond its theorized borders into an ineffable, disorientated realm which none of his characters—or Rushdie himself—can verbalize, despite their familiarity with some of the very aspects of the realm which disorients them. Saladin, for instance, is familiar with police abuse of lower-class immigrants, but has never imagined that such abuse could happen to him. Gibreel knows that London is a historical and quasi-magical city because of its ancient nature and accompanying ghosts, but he never expected it to literally shift and change beneath his feet. Apocalypse and sublimity appear within every gap in *The Verses* and are the non-representable forms towards which all of Rushdie’s attempts at categorical transcendence strive as well as the forms which bizarre mutations and events assume.

In the process of asking what is possible in narrative through the negation of language itself, Rushdie expands the boundaries of narrative possibility, opening up the postcolonial novel as a form of philosophical and existential critique which achieves its purpose by revealing what it cannot ultimately reveal in the guise of the sublime. William Franke expresses a belief in the sublime as revelatory power, as a power towards which language can only move without reaching: “Just what [the]…beyond of language is cannot be said…In faith, we can repeat and thus, in some sense, enact or enable the apocalyptic revelation that we cannot objectively know…This is to open ourselves to the poetic process as a formative making and re-making—but also a deformation and an unmaking” (205). For Franke, sublime revelation is an *opening* experience, an

\(^4\) Essentially, the apocalypse yanks the diaspora into itself.
encouraging and potentially life-saving process which can allow dialogue and relationships between communities to attain new heights of strength. It is expressed poetically, through artistic forms and the knowledge they transmit: not through theory alone, but through an aesthetic practice which encases ethnic migration and therefore infects itself with it, spreading its migratory power of “modernist incompletion” (Levenson 271) through everything it touches. It is an art formation—or deformation/distortion -- made a vector for the significance of art, migration, and community, an opening up of art itself which refuses to classify or to limit what counts as migrant experience or great literature.

Reed Way Dasenbrock writes on Derek Walcott, but Walcott’s situation is similar to Rushdie’s in that the former views modernist aesthetic techniques as useful to his own postcolonial projects rather than opposed to them: for him no contradiction exists between them, only correlation and correspondence. Dasenbrock declares, “I think Walcott thinks Homer and Dante are great writers…Walcott in turn aspires to write masterpieces and aspires to be a great writer […]. There are no post-colonial writers worth reading who do not have exactly the same commitment to hierarchy…as the now-demonized modernists” (120). Walcott recognizes kindred spirits in the form of the modernists, Dasenbrock notes, and wants to be like them; he understands the electricity running between pieces of great writing and wants to become a part of the current. While critics with an antipathy towards modernism might worry that Walcott has been hijacked—that his desires and aspirations have been overdetermined and hegemonically guided by the West⁵—Dasenbrock asserts that this is clearly not the case, as Walcott uses modernist epic techniques and allusions to guide his character Achille to the shores of

⁵ See also Elleke Boehmer, Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial 1890-1920, pages 21-22.
Africa and between different Carribbean islands. Modernism is for Walcott a starting point—his muse points in a direction not like Pound or Eliot’s, no matter how much the latter two men have inspired him.

Rushdie’s predicament is similar—an educated British man teaching in the United States. How, some people might ask, could he possibly maintain a “postcolonial” viewpoint in the midst of the unashamedly colonial structures present in an Ivy League university? Of course, if one has to ask this question, then one has seriously underestimated Rushdie’s imaginative power. Artistic technique is only ever a beginning marker, not an endpoint. It is mere technique, employed in whichever direction its guiding mind chooses, and not a totalizing force. As Andreas Huyssen notes, a focus upon the aesthetic qualities of a work no longer possesses the negative connotations it might once have had, since aestheticism is now more democratically applied in Western culture and has always taken on various forms in other cultures. Huyssen writes, “it is simply retrograde to claim that any concern with aesthetic form is inherently elitist” (368). Preoccupation with the aesthetic as a kind of all-encompassing snobbery is over—postmodernists debated this in the latter part of the 20th-century, but this is now the 21st century, where sprawling ancient epics play on Indian television and scholars read pulp South American literature as avant-garde (Huyssen). The world of which Huyssen writes (as of 2002), is one in which high art and low art are not oppositional energies but rather borrow from each other, sometimes indiscriminately and at other times with great purpose. That Rushdie borrows from modernist epic tradition—like Joyce’s Ulysses—and that he distorts time and space—also like Ulysses, The Waste Land, the Cantos, and Djuna Barnes’ Nightwood—no longer implies that he allows these earlier artists’ missions
to supersede his own. He has his own purposes—namely, to reveal the experiences of ethnic migration-- and he shows audiences what these experiences entail by stretching art and narrative to their breaking points, to their utter limits, beyond which they may collapse into the nothingness of infinity--and in the process, he reveals the resolute strength of stretched narrative time and space, which through their own proliferations of confusion create another form of sense.

Ultimately, *The Satanic Verses* is well-equipped to grapple with, to synthesize and conjoin the elements of migrant life through its very use of migratory sublimity conjoined with the aesthetic deformation of space and time. It demonstrates that cultural foundations are more difficult, changeable, and contextual than previously imagined, “rais[ing] wide-ranging questions about the nature of identity in a mobile, multiple, interconnected world” (Gane 25). These are questions that ultimately will never be resolved so long as certain concepts and realms remain un-representable to the artistic, human imagination. But they will always be worth asking.

**Chapter One: Diaspora and the Distortion of Space**

My opening chapter focuses on specific experimental modes and techniques used in the novel. These spatial techniques form a conceptual triangle with linguistic and temporal forms of representation and operate paractactically with and between one another to disorient, to confuse, and therefore to create a new logic of spatial formation in the novel. This logic depends upon sublimity, which provides a pathway toward an apocalypse that resists representation and categorization and because of this resistance, offers an ideal method for diasporic populations to express themselves. After all, they
cannot be easily categorized or characterized. Particularly useful for the study of the
diaspora is Mirza Saeed, one of Gibreel’s dream-figures, who lingers in a state of
displacement and disorientation while his wife and the rest of his village reach a
conceptual Paradise via the Arabian Sea. However, he eventually moves into a condition
which his fellow villager Ayesha calls “openness,” a state that prohibits him from typing
or caricaturing himself (eg; as Muslim, Indian, agnostic, atheist) and which thus allows
him to accept the possibilities inherent in what he would earlier have dismissed as
impossible miracles—in other words, to put sublimity to the work of relocating himself in
the midst of massive dislocation and migration.

Chapter Two: The Distortion of Time

The second chapter focuses on linguistic play and its gestures toward the apocalypse in
terms of iterative (elongated) and metaphoric (condensed) time. Iterative time, associated
with Saladin, pushes against and therefore expands narrative space by appearing to slow
it temporally, enabling Saladin to accrue possibility to himself and to reengage with his
past as he returns to the present in renewed form. He acts as his own messiah, achieving
his own messianic redemption within the time of life itself, though it is a redemption the
consequences of which cannot be portrayed within the space of narrative, and are
therefore apocalyptic in nature. The metaphoric time associated with Gibreel is not so
possibility-laden and causes him to kill himself. Yet with his death, he enters an
apocalypse both annihilating and promising, one which in turn influences Saladin’s
decision to abandon the home of his childhood and move on with his personal narrative,
wherever that might lead. In both instances, the linguistic presence of
messianic/apocalyptic time sparks a “posting” of modernity that leads toward a mongrel future, one which can never be totalized or exhausted.

**Chapter Three: Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is one of the most obvious features of *The Satanic Verses* and also one of its most slippery ones. Rushdie easily cites hundreds of different authors, but the three I will study in conjunction with the *Verses* are John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and *The Arabian Nights*. These works do not dictate Rushdie’s. Rather, they inform his thematics and characters and enable his readers to think more clearly about the impossibility of purity and singularity, as all origins are always-already contaminated by various peoples and cultures. Ultimately, this chapter provides a practical look at the effects of spatial and temporal distortion, as well as the advantages of a viewpoint which challenge the reader to question, to overcome, to look backward and forward through the perspectives of different writers and times and to view literary history as a holistic but incomplete text, “detonating the historical lore” (Gilroy) in order to talk with the dead.

**Conclusion and Further Implications**

Rushdie’s novel can only concretely express present and historical truth, while the apocalypse represents a form of futurity which has always and never been realized, though it does have a presence, one which is ghostly because it needs another object to cast its own shadow. Thus a person can know it, but only through something else. Since all I can do is study that something else, rather than the thing itself, I will probe the
former’s workings to make as much of the apocalypse’s phantom presence visible as possible while also exposing how this presence impacts the migrant’s words and experiences, or his/her attempts to represent him/herself to others, both those ideas/expressions which are sayable and those which are not. This will possess further implications for postcolonial diaspora theory and its attendant literature in their endless quest to examine the means by which migrant peoples attempt to describe and represent the experiences which constitute their lives
Chapter One: Travels in Paratactic Space: Spatial Distortions, the Sublime, and the Apocalyptic in *The Satanic Verses*

Taking the first step towards an accurate representation of migrant experiences requires an understanding of space and place. In the *Satanic Verses*, multiple spatial distortion techniques appear and are often difficult to separate from one another. Thus, segmenting them into typologies is a risky business. Critic Vijay Mishra notes that “fixed forms” (24) often fail to describe their intended targets. However, typologies are still at least somewhat useful: one must set them up, explicate them, take a look at how they relate to one another and to larger thematic points and then bleed them, allowing them to blur together. Especially helpful to an analysis and understanding of spatial typologies is Susan Stanford Friedman’s syntactical construct of parataxis, which she defines as: “the juxtaposition of things without providing connectives” (*Definitional Excursions* 494), ultimately enabling one to read between the lines of juxtaposed terms and dredge up definitions from the spaces in-between in a movement of “BangClash,” or “definitional contestation” (509). Some types of spatial distortion may appear contradictory, but all of them are both separate and intimately connected, pushing and worrying at one another, attempting to reach a politics of transfiguration in which “words, even words stretched by melisma and supplemented or mutated by the screams which still index the conspicuous power of the slave sublime, will never be enough to communicate…unsayable claims to truth” (Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* 37). Parataxis effectively enables one to avoid binaries or dualities\(^6\) by thinking about how all the spaces within the novel cooperate to create a larger apocalyptic mode of diasporic space, which in its turn unsettles temporality.

\(^6\) Sometimes it is helpful to think of this word as representing “duel-alities” or dueling realities.
The diaspora demands a multiplicity of spatial narration-types because it is fundamentally a condition of flux, disruption, and in-betweenness, all of which characterize the modern technological world and therefore make absolute, formal categorization untenable. This diasporic world involves population-spread and takes on several different forms, from exile and isolation to at least partial integration into a resident community, which is in turn affected and transformed by incoming groups, receiving their members by plane, train, and boat and attempting to reject/accept them by vote or appeals to the public at large. No community remains stable or singular once the diaspora touches it—and it has touched the overwhelming majority of places, nearly every part of the world. The world both affects and is affected by diasporic populations in a reciprocal equation, resulting sometimes in violence and cultural war but also in enhanced discussion between groups which would not normally meet. As a condition of non-locality and transitionality, the diaspora frightens, confuses, but also frees those who experience it as well as those who live with said experienced parties—and no matter how much is written about its effects, it is only ever an experience, insufficiently expressed through words and from within spaces (internal as well as external) which are as-yet-unconquered. It is a sublime idea, beautiful and strange, distorted like a quantum string, humming back and forth between its typological components, attempting to achieve the impossible by pushing language and subsequently thought to their limits.\(^7\)

\(^7\) The critics on whom I plan to focus in this chapter primarily address the diaspora from a modernist angle. They attempt to describe the world in terms of the integration and synthesis of ideas, though without ignoring fragmentary/chaotic tendencies. Undoubtedly the world is a fragmented, chaotic entity, yet to describe it as such rejects the very definition of description. As critic William Franke notes, the irony of humankind’s quest for the infinite is that “it proves more often than not to be too much for human logic to deal with. The experience of the absolute seems logically to demand a corresponding absoluteness in its expression, but really it can be served only by the exact opposite” (88). The absolute can only be explored in “the most indirect and tentative...interpretatively open, forms of expression” (88). Thus, instead of meeting fragmentation with fragmentation, one must tackle it in non-fragmentary ways...
In *The Satanic Verses* six specific spatial typologies exist. The first of these is crunched/collapsed/constricted, which inhibits characters’ abilities to live freely by restricting them to small, tightly controlled, and/or circular spaces. The second distortion is expanded space, a typology which involves accelerated or increased levels of movement, usually to escape unwanted situations. The third typology is distorted/destroyed space, which involves exactly what its name suggests: the destruction of space, enabling new spaces to form. These new spaces often begin as transitional (the fourth type) or nowhere-spaces, and sometimes remain fluid and flexible, expanding characters’ abilities to move and to make important decisions in their lives. The fifth typology is superimposed space, which occurs when one location is overlaid onto another one, distorting and disorienting both, and the final typology is transcended space, which exists beyond all known types of space and is indescribable within this world. Each of these six spatial typologies links up to at least one of the temporal typologies I have classified in the novel; they all serve to highlight/exemplify one another, all of them ultimately moving toward the concept of transcended space, which is the spatial partner or component (*not* the equivalent) of messianic time, the time of return/redemption or return/annihilation.

Let us start with crunched/collapsed/constricted space. This typology is evident throughout the *Verses*; for instance, when Saladin and Gibreel are trapped on the hijacked airplane, when Saladin is stuck in the Shaandaar Café with Bangladeshi not-my-people, and throughout “Eillowen Deeowen,” when Gibreel finds himself trapped in a house with the nostalgically horny old dame Rosa Diamond. This latter example is perhaps the best

(eg; through typing); the same holds true for in-betweenness, incoherence, etc. Yet at the same time, one must acknowledge that logic cannot explain everything.
one; throughout “Ellowen Deeowen,” poor Gibreel, “passionate as always for newness” (135) paces sleeplessly in Diamond’s house. Rushdie writes, “Gibreel’s eye had been caught by Rosa Diamond. He looked at her, and could not look away” (6). Rosa herself feels that “repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity” (134). The particular event she likes to repeat is her youthful love affair with Martin de la Cruz, the Argentinian “viper” who died tragically, leaving her bereft. She chooses Gibreel, the dark-skinned Other, as his substitute—like Martin, he is romantic, foreign, desirable. A “creature of cracks and absences” (134), Diamond longs for the Other, pulls it into herself, envisioning both Cruz and Gibreel as stand-ins for William the Conqueror—the Foreign whom the Imperial Center wants to incorporate into her own English-incarnating body as a glue which will hold her together. Fittingly, the drama plays out upon the Hastings beach. Gibreel discovers that, unwanted and unbidden, he replays ancient history, ad infinitum—and like William the Conqueror, he feels ancient, exhausted by the end of it all. At the “conclusion” of the Diamond episode, he returns to her, and she asks him, “‘How can you like me?...I am so much older than you’” (161). Though Gibreel ultimately moves forward through space, returning to London with the A-Z guide in his pocket, his narrative in this part of the novel is nevertheless one of restraint, entrapment, and enfeeblement. Like Odysseus with the witch Circe, Gibreel cannot find within himself the power to deny Diamond, at least not until death takes her. Rather, he withers sleepless and restless under her power, reliving the ancient woman’s past, memories, and loves while denying himself the agency to push beyond the cyclical, repetitive farce which she has created for him.
Saladin Chamcha is at this point in the novel no better off. While Gibreel languishes frenetically in Hastings, Saladin remains trapped under police “care,” sick with pneumonia and pegged as a monster, since his body has adopted goatish characteristics. This bodily entrapment is another crucial aspect of spatial constriction: that it is not only an imprisonment within an external location, such as a room, a house, or a mental institution, but also an ensnarement within the internal spaces of the body: for Saladin, an incarceration within a body labeled as demonic, and for Gibreel, an internment within a body labeled as angelic. The men’s metamorphoses force them to confront themselves; in particular their romantic desires, their pasts, and their ambitions. For Saladin, who claims to have overcome his past, his goatish incarnation leads to despair but also compels him to acknowledge that one can never erase one’s past completely. Instead, Saladin must work within his memories and his present reconstructions of himself to discover where he must go and what he might achieve in the future, exploding and destroying his old conceptions of his past to create a new future from the ruins.

But for Gibreel, who conscientiously ignores his past and treats each new day as an erasure of the previous one, the angelic transformation leads to total collapse: to an almost literal tearing apart, like Saleem Sinai in Midnight’s Children. On the subway train, after leaving Diamond’s home, Gibreel imagines that his troubles are over: “He had had a lucky escape from death…and now, restored to himself, could expect the threads of his old life—that is, his old new life, the new life he had planned before the er interruption—to be picked up again” (196). But then Mr. Maslama (mis)recognizes him and he flees the train, only to run straight into Rekha Merchant. The one-time Bombay
dabbawalla has a penchant for running, but the one space which he can never escape is himself, the self which closes in upon him whenever he longs for an exit. William Franke, a critic of religious/eschatological apocalypse as it occurs in modernist literature, notes that several kinds of apocalypse exist. I have identified two of them, and will focus on apocalypse-as-renewal and the “dark messianic.” Gibreel falls into a self-absorption in line with the latter. Franke writes, “[The] acknowledgement [of the Other] entails a choice to live in relation to the Other that is not actually revealed, rather than to consume oneself totally in the apocalypse of self…its absolute disintegration into self-annihilation” (3). However, Gibreel prefers to stay locked within himself, half-believing that he truly is the Angel of the Recitation in a universe without a God—in a universe where he is the God. His is a universe of infinite constriction, infinite limitation—the known God, the self as God, and thus a truly boring, deadening realm.

The second type of spatial distortion in The Satanic Verses is expanded space. Gibreel’s running tendency—running to increase his options, to achieve newness in his life, and to escape his notion of the self as God—presents a good example of it. This type of space tends to be supplementary, appearing in conjunction with other distortions of space, rather than primary, but it can occur on its own. For instance, when Saladin Chamcha walks towards Pamela’s house, about to demand that she allow him to live there again, an “evil-looking piggy-eyed lout” points a pretend remote control at him and hollers, “‘Fast forward!'” (416), a call that reveals both the child’s boredom as well as his dissatisfaction with society and adults. Later on, in the same section of the novel (“The Angel Azareel”), Saladin sits in front of his television flicking through the channels, feeling distinctly lethargic in spite of his new range of possibilities. What can he watch?
Anything, any way he wishes to—he can flick through the channels endlessly, as he prefers, or he can remain faithful to one or two stations. Expanded space and its temporal corollary, accelerated time, enable the growth of new options and new choices. However, they also contribute to a collective sense of ennui and a desire for less: for instance, when Saladin sees the chimera-tree on television, “he was given this one gift. It was enough. He switched off the set” (420). Spatial expansion leads to fatigue, exhaustion, boredom, and excrescence; it offers people too many choices too quickly, causing dissatisfaction and disaffection, even when they receive something beneficial (the chimera tree-gift). It also causes a stretched, strung-out feeling and is harmful to characters’ motivations, ambitions, and mental health, as when Gibreel spins through so many extra-reality dream-realms that he finally loses his sanity, dissolving into severe schizophrenia.

The third spatial typology in the novel is destroyed/distorted space. It appears in “The Angel Azraeel,” as Gibreel walks down London streets, “trying to understand the will of God” (472) while he experiences multiple narratives simultaneously: the Jahilia narrative, the pilgrimage to the Arabian Sea, and the aftermath of his relationship with Allie Cone. He thinks of the Dutch who settled London in the time of William III and remembers, “Not all migrants are powerless…They impose their needs on their new earth, bringing their own coherence to the new-found land, imagining it afresh. But look out, the city warns. Incoherence, too, must have its day” (473). William III, after all, broke his neck in the city he thought was his own. For Gibreel and Saladin in this section of the novel, London becomes increasingly incoherent and recalcitrant as well. Though Gibreel imagines himself to be the city’s fire-bringer as he blows his trumpet, one cannot tell from the narrative where the fire comes from or whose responsibility it is. Police
spokesman Stephen Kinch blames arsonists; Rushdie’s omniscient narrator blames a group of men following Pamela Chamcha in a van. Most likely the fire results from mob unrest and not from the blowing of Gibreel’s ostensibly end-of-the-world-signaling trumpet, thus leaving the latter in a painfully ambiguous position in which he assumes he has power, but actually does not.

Saladin’s experience in “The Angel Azareel” is also painful—literally so, as he is trapped within a burning Shaandaar Café while suffering a heart attack, and facing Gibreel’s mixture of anger and apathy, all at once. Possibilities disappear; black hole imagery abounds. When Gibreel enters the café to face his enemy, “the universe shrinks to [a] solitary and irresistible point” (479). Saladin “has a constricted chest” (481). He cannot escape, since “the landing is on fire; the flames reach in sheets from floor to ceiling. No possibility of advance” (481). The destruction of space here resembles the Big Crunch of physics theory, in which the universe possesses too much mass to continue expanding infinitely and thus folds back in upon itself, crushing all objects, including stars and planets, together into a molten lava of annihilation. What is left after the Big Crunch occurs is unknown, though some people imagine that it will create a single point of infinite density and pressure and thus lead to another Big Bang. Contraction, then expansion: in the Shaandaar Café, Gibreel and Saladin’s choices constrict until escape seems impossible. But already Saladin has done the Forgivable Thing—he has run into the Café, searching for his friends, risking his own life to do so. Gibreel could have left him to die, but he has followed him into disaster. Space constricts, the café collapses, its beams on fire—but Gibreel carries Saladin away from the wreckage, thus expanding the possibilities for life once more.
Destroyed space is fluid, changeable, expandable space. Sometimes, as in the novel’s beginning, when the plane explodes in mid-air, destroyed space even becomes no space, in-between, or transitional space. This is what modernist critic Stephen Kern calls “negative positive space” (76), or the empty space within/around an art work that also serves as part of the work itself and can contribute positively to it. Negative positive space appears when the boy Saladin imagines himself to be a sperm inside the phallus of an airplane, waiting to be conceived (41). It is the uncertain yet potentially productive space which Saladin inhabits in his goat metamorphosis, as a man who insists upon his British citizenship even though he looks more like a creature from Animal Farm.

Gibreel’s shifting London subways are also transitional, transitory spaces, external manifestations of the diaspora of which both men are a part, since neither man is a respectable British citizen and neither is content with a life spent solely within the borders of India. Transitional spaces, unlike constricted spaces, are zones in which anything can happen, zones of possibility, multiverses in which all choices can be made and in which one can choose between different manifestations of the same basic reality. They are the in-betweenness of parataxis made readable, obvious. Transitional spaces are living, kinetic locales, like the sky above London in which personal objects, traumas, and lives hang while simultaneously plummeting towards the ground without touching it. 

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8 Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, in their introduction to the volume Geomodernisms, call the “desire for another geography of global relations” (7), or a less restrictive geography, a desire for “unkilling worldness” (7)—a sense of the world without limitation.

9 See Paul Gilroy and his Postcolonial Melancholia’s Middle Passage transportation discussion. While the land stands relatively still, Gilroy’s ships (like Rushdie’s plummeters), “[are] the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world [are] joined. They [are] mobile elements that [stand] for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they [connect]...They [are] something more [than their trade objectives]” (16-17). Ships are fluid objects riding upon the fluid tides of the ocean; they are not as glamorous as the cities and towns they service or connect, but they are more flexible and offer their
change and grow more flexible in both their physical manifestations and their psychological outlooks.

Gibreel pushes transitional space one step further, beyond uncertainty and into a state in which he clearly overwrites one country onto another one, both juxtaposing and superimposing locales to create an imagined, physically hybridized England. Ian Baucom notes that the inhabitants of a place eventually change that place, molding it after their own imaginations and mental images. He writes, “Newness…enters the world not as an utter beginning or the manifestation of some pure element never seen before, but as a novel conjoining of what already exists” (212). In fact, as Baucom details some of the more egregious examples of the politician Enoch Powell’s racism, he points out that part of Powell’s problem with “blacks” is that they alter their surroundings too readily, too well, too thoroughly. Gibreel is one of these “blacks,” ready to “occupy” and “despoil” (23) the land in which he has arrived—only for Gibreel, the changes which he plans to inflict upon London are not an “occupation” of the city by aliens and not a “despoiling” either—an imposition of negative, gluttonous too-muchness— but rather a civic improvement, excess in place of lack. Gibreel thinks that London/England’s greatest deficiency is its climate, which he believes encourages moral vacuity/indefiniteness, boring social behavior, and widespread melancholia. Thus he advocates a “culture of excess” (366): an increasing of the island nation’s temperature which will lead to “increased moral definition…development of vivid and expansive patterns of behavior among the populace, higher-quality popular music” (365). By overlaying Bombay’s climate onto London’s, Gibreel hopes to create a new land that will be more desirable passengers more opportunities for change/self-discovery than the stable, practically immutable social conditions on land.
both for its inhabitants and for himself: this overwritten land (Londay or Bomdon) is a physical manifestation of parataxis in that it is the in-between state, or the unknown, that occurs when Gibreel thrusts two known quantities together. Two knowns do not have to create another known: London plus Bombay does not need to represent an easily understood quantity. In her article “Cultural Parataxis,” Susan Stanford Friedman implies that space can accumulate the weight of time in terms of cultural and value judgments: “By space, I do not mean to suggest a site of static emptiness…but rather space as the location of multiple cultural constructions and historical overdeterminations” (37).

Gibreel’s newly created space is a fullness in time, a construction in which one cultural viewpoint/temporal standpoint imposes itself upon another one, devaluing London’s own culture while at the same time deciding not to destroy it, but rather to improve it. Yet what this improvement is cannot be determined from the novel, as London’s hotter climate is not necessarily the result of Gibreel’s horn-blowing, and seems to foment more disruption, more fighting, rather than reconciliation and real civic change. Though Gibreel can create, even if it is only within his own mind, the unknown, fantastical chimera of Bomdon, he can only guess at or possess hopes for what this new quantity would be like, as nobody ever truly finds out.

The manifestation of the unknown through the known can only ever be a gesture, not a statement or a definition. For instance, in Gibreel’s final serial dream, “The Parting of the Arabian Sea,” Rushdie cannot describe what Mirza Saeed’s pilgrimage across the Arabian Sea might look like, as it occurs in a metaphysical realm somewhere between death (in the form of corpses that wash ashore) and life (Saeed’s revival at the hospital and his later crossing of the sea). The inbetween-ness of parataxis is an experience of
the sublime; it is the inbetweeness of nothingness, of diaspora, of searching, neither life nor death. Lecia Rosenthal, in *Mourning Modernism*, notes that the sublime is literally unthinkable:

In addition to carrying resonances of violence, the aesthetics of sublimity and the writing of trauma share attachments to suffering privations immeasurable, or to experiences that, in their compulsions of force and powers of overwhelming magnitude, threaten to undermine not only the subject’s psychic integrity or physical survival but also the ability to think...the very experience of the (nearly) annihilating encounter” (2).

While the sublime is traditionally viewed in, for example, romantic poetry, as a quality of beauty or as possessing awesome power, Rosenthal observes that the sublime is so amazing, so awe-inspiring—so terrible—that people cannot even consider it without the risk of total mental collapse. Once Saeed “opens” himself to Ayesha’s insistence upon the voyage, he “dies” to this world. The sublime is a force which one cannot represent, but which can rather only be gestured toward, performed, enacted (and partially, at that) through a paratactic movement in which unlike and contradictory ideas/words sit next to one another in a process of illumination—for instance: “walk” and “waters,” “dust” and “sea” (SV 520-21), leading to the last spatial distortion-type: transcended/apocalyptic.

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10 See Slavoj Zizek, *Living in the End Times* 306-310, for a discussion of Lacan’s “barred subject” who has survived its own death, and “the destruction of form” [turning into] “the form acquired by destruction itself” (306)—in other words, destruction itself possesses form as well as function, and when destruction has a form, this implies that death also has a form, as well as the subject who has survived its own death and lives on past the “zero-point” of dialectic, even though this subject may now be another person apart from the person it was before death.

11 Gilroy’s politics of transfiguration holds a similar conception of the sublime, the quest for which involves “struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unpresentable. Its rather different hermeneutic focus pushes towards the mimetic, dramatic, and performative” (38).

12 For convenience, I am grouping the terms “transcendence” and “apocalypse” together. According to my purposes, they are essentially the same: transcended space moves beyond more traditional spatial
space. This is an unthinkable realm which, like that of death, Saeed cannot represent except by travelling there.

Transcended/apocalyptical space is purely sublime space. Rushdie attempts to show readers what such a space might look like, but he can only move so far in this direction before he has to stop writing, because he literally has no more to say, no more he can say. At the end of “The Parting of the Arabian Sea,” the CID men at the hospital attempt to charge Mirza Saeed and company with illegal immigration, but they are so unnerved by what the surviving villagers report that they cannot ultimately bring themselves to do it, as if they realize that the space to which most of the village has “migrated” does not actually exist upon this Earth. When Saeed returns to his village, its central tree catches on fire but he has to turn away because the sight is too much for him to comprehend. As he falls to the ground, Ayesha reappears, her voice resounding loudly in Saeed’s head: “‘Open,’ she screamed. ‘You’ve come this far, now do the rest’” (520). Achieving the sublime—becoming worthy of its vision—takes effort. The CID men are clearly terrified by the reports of parting water, but they also acknowledge that bodies are washing up on the shore; however coordinated the five survivors’ tales are, the officers have seen the morgue and can count these bodies. Yet at the end of his life, Saeed chooses to Open himself: “His body split apart from his adam’s-apple to his groin, so that she could reach deep within him, and now she was open, they all were, and at the moment of their opening the waters parted, and they walked to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea” (521). The parting of Saeed’s mind is as important as that of the physical ocean; without paradigms, but the transcendence is ultimately never complete, and therefore is apocalyptic in nature. It finishes in an unfinished state. Apocalypse is also traditionally conceived of as an ending, but something nevertheless comes after it, generally, as in the genre of “post-apocalyptic” literature. The apocalypse is thus a quasi-ending, but not a complete one, transcending the very idea of finishing/completion.
an openness to the unbelievable, the sublime cannot offer itself to him, he cannot find it, and he cannot accept it, nor it him. Sublime experience must be taken on faith; it cannot be described or represented except by the simple phrase “they walked to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea.” This “simple phrase” contains oddly juxtaposed ideas that would make no sense in ordinary speech. As strange as these notions are, though, Saeed accepts them—even if they may not seem acceptable, Saeed is able to read something acceptable into them, between them—between the juxtaposed parts, he glimpses the paratactic sublime.

Ultimately, transcended space catalyzes other forms of apocalypse and overcoming, including temporal and linguistic. Saeed appears to fade into a nothingness, seeping into the gap that is both the ocean and his mind, and he does not return to any sort of “home,” (his village is destroyed, his wife dead) thus vindicating Ayesha’s pilgrimage and ensuring that he remains “open,” or in a condition of diaspora, rather than retreating back to a state of closure in which his life remains hopeless, circumscribed by doubt. His diasporic position, which is diasporic in the sense of openness, flexibility, enables him to move beyond his initial constriction to a state of expansion, then beyond that into sublimity, and further beyond that into transcendence and an apocalyptic vision. All spatial distortion modes are present in his narrative and all ultimately contribute to the greater movement beyond all people and all things. This last statement is a parataxis in that spatial distortion bleeds away as it moves beyond, appearing by means of its very disappearance, moving through by going between.

Through such paratactic spatial paradox, language itself breaks down and ceases to signify. It disintegrates, erasing itself, the two halves of each paradox appearing to
contradict one other. Yet I would argue that even if a breakdown of language occurs, language also manages to move beyond itself, to become itself diasporic/itinerant, and to approach what William Franke describes as “apocalyptic revelation,” or an “opening [of] the whole world of representation to what forever exceeds representation” (42). Rushdie expresses this “opening” to the unrepresentable through the literal use of the word “open” to refer to what normally cannot be literally opened without causing death: the body. When the body is opened, it is supposed to die. But as outsiders who gather to observe Ayesha’s pilgrimage realize, there is nothing “normal” about this particular opening of bodies to death in the form of ocean-walking: “these visitors were amazed, and retreated with confounded expectations, that is to say with a hole in their pictures of the world that they could not paper over” (502). They cannot verbally express what this hole is. But their opening here nevertheless becomes a life-giving force, communicating to them what Franke would call a “radical alterity” (43), a concept, viewpoint, or worldview, a placement of language, that is other to what a certain person, group of people, or even the whole of humanity, can imagine, an opening that is an entrance to the redemptive linguistic unknown and a between-state within it. The beyond/diasporic dispersal of language is also implied when Rushdie abruptly stops the “Parting” section upon Saeed’s “ascension” to Mecca and continues on to what he actually can represent: Saladin attempting to apply for a visa to India so that he may visit his sick father. Saeed, Rushdie, and readers cannot represent what ultimately happens to Saeed or his village. They can only “open” toward it through a repetition of the word “open” that gathers momentum each time it appears in the text.
During this process of opening, temporality breaks down as much as language, in large part because of its very companionship with the linguistic diaspora. The result of this collapse is a religious state of revelation, a placing of faith in the diasporic apocalypse. Franke notes that apocalyptic revelation requires: “a matter of faith in some irreducible sense that is both poetic and religious. In faith, we can repeat and thus, in some sense, enact or enable the apocalyptic revelation that we cannot objectively know. To do so, we must abandon ourselves to becoming totally transformed…into a new creature” (205). Saeed’s faith gives him the strength to “open”, to cross to Mecca into and through another world by becoming other than himself, by making a choice in favor of hope, transcendence, and the diasporic companionship of other pilgrims, all of whom attempt and become the impossible. Through his spatial redemption, Saeed recovers the joy he experienced in his earthly life, combining it with the joy he takes in the apocalyptic, revelatory, questing Other by entering into Mecca, across the water through which he does not swim, but walks. Rushdie’s writing of this walk “across the bed of the Arabian Sea” pushes Saeed towards the edge of his ability to use language as a descriptor; after this sentence, language fails him utterly. He can open it but he cannot close it. Once he has opened this possibility of an unnatural jaunt across the sea floor, he cannot shut it again: language has become itinerant in that he has taught it to use words such as “walk” in a space in which one would normally swim or boat. Language has been pushed this far. Saeed himself must do the rest, because he goes where language itself cannot, though words such as “walk” are set free to travel in places they have never before touched.
Time and the linguistic diaspora are conjoined, connected, drawing power from one another through their conjunction with space, forming a triangulated set of concepts. A common misconception claims that time possesses more redemptive power than space, but this is clearly not the case. Time does not possess a monopoly on salvation, as spatial distortions can enable characters to overcome similar obstacles and learn to grasp their own personal truths in heretofore impossible language. The idea of temporal salvation is merely easier to imagine than spatial, since most people view “redemption” in the sense of being redeemed from “past” mistakes, as if time could be marked out by a graphite pencil, and every time somebody made a mistake, he could return to the nasty bit of the line, erase it, and retrace his steps by becoming a stronger, better, more honest and understanding individual in the future. What such a naive person would not be able to grasp is that all time is inextricably linked to space (the space of the graphite line; also, the space of his past misdeeds, which he could not simply go back and erase), charting the development, history, and future of space, though not necessarily in that order and not on any linear line. What happens in space also, but differently, happens in time—in fact, the verb “happen” reveals the very temporality and contingency of space, as what occurs in space is temporal by dint of its “occurrence.”

Time happens in space and is therefore molded from spatial elements; indescribable space necessarily contains indescribable time, as a space that exists outside of normal space does not possess any kind of clock or temporal reference to which one can refer. Logically, the outside of space is also the outside of time, a realm which cannot be thought or realized in this world of (more or less) normal space and time and therefore is apocalyptic, tipped over the edge, riddled with holes and gaps. After all, no one can
mark time if there is no place within which or from which to observe it. Time and space, as partnered concepts, describe diverse but equally important aspects of the apocalypse, revealing differently each gap and tear within the spacetime continuum and thus operating paratactically. While apocalyptic space is often conceived of as heavenly or impossible—for instance, the villagers’ trip across the Arabian sea-bed to Mecca—apocalyptic time is frequently imagined as the end of time and/or the return of a new time, in the basic form of Christ’s redemptive Second Coming to Earth, and thus as more realistic. Time will end, people imagine, based upon their organic experiences of death, even if space (materials, rocks, planets) never will end or die in any concrete way. However, when the messianic return finally occurs, it signals a corresponding transcendence of everyday spatial experience (the rock disappears, the Arabian Sea dries), and thus pushes both space and time into a diasporic, fluid, fluctuating existence, ultimately unstable and impossible to represent, but nevertheless useful in its ability to highlight the malleability and transitionality of the times, spaces, and languages in which and with which people live.
Chapter Two: Temporal Distortions and the Rise of Messianic Time

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a concept for the present as the ‘time of the now’ which is shot through with chips of Messianic time (Walter Benjamin, Illuminations 263).

As we have already seen, language is something upon which people rely for the communication of concepts which would otherwise fester and rust, forever unexpressed. But for all its power to form, to bring into being and existence, language possesses great and obvious limitations when confronted with what the human mind cannot properly fathom or describe. For instance, Mirza Saeed’s language fails in the face of the parting Arabian Sea, which is not supposed to part, not so that only some people can see it but not others. Ineffable, weird spaces and the events which occur within said spaces render language useful only up to a point, before imagination must step in to complete the image. Spaces force language to its knees—but then again, so does time. In addition to its illumination of spatial ineffability, Rushdie’s language experiments reveal a strategic deployment of temporality which works within the confines of the novel to hint at ways of conceiving time which may be present in language but not readily available to thought. Together, language and imagination can enable temporal expression in thought so that readers can begin to consider the temporal Other or apocalypse—if not totally, then
nevertheless meaningfully—through the languages of elongation (iteration) and condensation (metaphor).

Both of these forms appear in Rushdie’s novel and hint at the ultimate pliability of time with the deployment of a temporal parataxis which eventually takes the form of messianic time. If spatial parataxis reveals a heretofore hidden realm of sublimity, temporal parataxis unveils a strange “timeline” of messianism, millenarianism, and insistent linearity.13 The most effective way of understanding this “timeline” is to realize that as time moves forward, one can also read backwards into it, deciphering the outline of a new future and present by exploding the possibilities contained within the scrawled notes of the past14—something which Saladin Chamcha, with the help of the novel’s language and rhetorical strategies, is especially well-equipped to do.

As with space, Rushdie’s temporal experiments will benefit from a typological overview. There are seven prevalent time-types featured in The Satanic Verses. The first of these is elongated or iterative time, which is linked to transitional and (positive) expanded space and occurs during the fall down to London. The second of these is condensed time, which is linked to both (negative) expanded space and constricted time and manifests itself during Gibreel’s perambulations around London. Thirdly comes suspended or stopped time, linked to the destruction of space15. The fourth time type is circular/looping,16 which ends on a destructive note with Gibreel Farishta’s decline and

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13 I say “timeline” because time never travels only in a line: it merely appears to.
14 One must remember that reading the future and present out of the past by breaking back into the latter is NOT the same as allowing the past to dictate the present and the future. Baucom’s theory runs the latter risk (see page 28).
15 I will not discuss this in great detail. For more information on this topic, please refer to Slavoj Zizek’s Living in the End Times and Lecia Rosenthal’s Mourning Modernism.
16 I will not discuss this in much detail either, at least not as it appears in the text. I will, however, address continuity in the context of Vijay Mishra, Lecia Rosenthal, and Walter Benjamin’s criticism. For more information, see also Michel Foucault’s The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language.
suicide. After this appears simultaneous time, which occurs when multiple time periods
coexist with one another, overlaying one another, as in superimposed space. Then comes
linear time, which is capable of routing itself through the final time type, messianic time.
Messianic time involves a temporal “return” which nevertheless moves beyond the
space/time of the known world, and is best exemplified through Saladin’s embracing of
his past and his simultaneous apocalyptic move beyond it at the end of the Verses.

Elongated or iterative time dominates the falling scene at the beginning of the
novel and provides readers with the first example of time’s flexibility and instability
within this narrative form. As Gibreel and Saladin hurtle through the sky, their motion
never ceases, but their own perceptions of it sometimes change. For instance, “in the
void” above and below the pair, “there [hang] reclining seats, stereophonic headsets,
drinks trolleys” (4). “Debris of the soul” “floats” along with the plane’s more material
objects (4); seats and memories and “sloughed-off selves” (5) hang in the air as though
waiting for something to happen to them while the men fall. An inward, hovering motion
also occurs inside Gibreel and Saladin as they sing and flap their arms at Saladin’s
command, as if their fall is the very action which suspends everything else around them.

Movement through time appears to slow in accordance with their transformations:
Saladin and Gibreel “[float] down to the Channel like scraps of paper in a breeze” (10).
What begins as an acceleration through the clouds becomes a deceleration which enables
the men to survive. If they had fallen at a uniform, rigid pace, they would have washed up
on the Hastings shore as body parts, not as whole human beings. Still, they do slam into
the water, thus ending their transitional period of sky-inhabitation and forcing them into a
London-bound existence and a rebirth in which the desire to live (particularly Saladin’s)
continues to be inextricably bound up with transmutation. As Saladin’s narrative progresses, he comes to accept his lack of purity and stops attempting to claim the Englishness which he will never possess: he begins to understand that change and hybridity have enabled him to survive thus far. Even before he gains such wisdom, though, his early will to live and his ability to discipline both himself and Gibreel into a slower-plunging movement prefigures his ability to slow down, to deliberate, to reflect, to think before acting, and to command a mixture of personalities in the form of “Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha” (5). He may want to be a straightforward, proper Englishman, but he has always contained within himself other potentialities and possibilities which can rise unbidden and unexpected, because he is able to slow time down enough to see them, thus breaking into the normal “flow” of so-called linear time and recovering it for his own purposes.

Saladin’s ability to break into the flow of linearity primarily manifests itself in the linguistic play associated with his thoughts and actions. During the fall, Rushdie employs an iterative mode of narration in order to expand narrative time, or the space of the narrative, relative to the apparent time of the story itself. As the structuralist critic

17 Narrative time is NOT the same as story time. The time of the story can, as Genette points out, never quite be measured because, “All that we can affirm of such a narrative...section is that it reports everything that was said, either really or fictively....but it does not restore the speed with which those words were pronounced or the possible dead spaces in the conversation. In no way, therefore, can it play the role of temporal indicator; it would play that role only if its indications could serve to measure the ‘narrative duration’ of the differently paced sections” (87). Readers cannot measure the Verses’ elapsed time with a stopwatch; we can only approximate or guess at how long the story would take to unfold, and Rushdie constantly manipulates its unfolding in narrative (if not in so-called real time) by stretching out or condensing sections, imparting a thorough and capacious time-sense to Saladin and a hurried, frenetic, condensed time-sense to Gibreel. Narrative time is always already messed up, stretched and balled like play-dough, manipulated by authors at will. Rushdie takes the experimental potential which Genette notes to its logical extreme, revealing within a story that seems to take place over a period of about two years the ridiculousness of labeling it a two-year epic—thanks to the insertion of the timeless Imam, impossible men falling out of planes, the intrusion of ancient/medieval Arabia, and the portrayal of
Gerard Genette notes, narrative and dialogue “cannot [actually] be slowed down” (95). They can be expanded—more thoroughly described—but cannot avoid contributing to the overall movement of the work. Yet iteration can offer the practical appearance of slowness. For instance, while Saladin and Gibreel fall, they are compared to “scraps of paper floating in a breeze,” invoking a lazy image of slow-moving material that completely contradicts the expected sight and experience of falling individuals. People usually fall quickly, with no great effort other than flailing, but Gibreel and Saladin are not falling like ordinary one-hundred-eighty pound men—their experience is slow and grinding, narratively interminable, imprinting itself upon them in all its facets and causing them (especially Saladin) to pause and reflect upon their predicament.

Also, long lists of objects hurtling/ floating down from the plane, comparisons to the Big Bang (4), oxymoronic word combinations such as “angelicdevilish” (5), and structurally complicated philosophical meditations further retard apparent narrative speed.
and comprehension, prolonging the event of the fall. For instance, as he and Gibreel approach land, Saladin achieves a sudden, revelatory understanding of his situation:

He had no doubt; what had taken him over was the will to live, unadulterated, irresistible, pure….it wanted nothing to do with his pathetic personality, that half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices, it intended to bypass all that, and he found himself surrendering to it, yes, go on, as if he were a bystander in his own mind, in his own body, because it began in the very center of his body, and spread outwards (9).

Saladin’s epiphany unfolds in one single, long sentence which is frequently interrupted by commas, digressions, and oppositional statements. He is a bystander aware of his body’s center (center/periphery), he urges himself onward and engages in conversations with himself (contradictory/inconsistent behavior), and then Rushdie breaks into the drama with quasi-rhetorical questions; for instance, “who has the best tunes?” (10). Convoluted though it is, Saladin’s realization positions him as a reflective man who contains a diverse array of intellectual substances within himself that are highlighted by the fall, slow and careful in his thinking, much like the Marcel Proust given over to iterative experiments in Genette’s portrayal of Remembrances of Things Past. In his yoking together of multiple instances, occurrences, thoughts, and ideas, Saladin engages in a rhetoric that is “inflated, indeed encumbered with digressions of all kinds, retrospections, anticipations…didactic interventions by the narrator” (Genette 111), thereby accumulating all manner of detritus to itself and thus assuring its continued material, substantive, and philosophical survival in all its individual forms. Put another way, Saladin expands his possibilities in life by accumulating material and thought to
himself, augmenting his supply of building-blocks for further growth. His accretion of debris, particularly that of other peoples’ and his own souls and hopes, foreshadows his later recuperation of his previous selves, as well as his decision to retake and recuperate his given name. The substances which accumulate around him are formed of the very material which he will later reabsorb into his Indian identity, rebuilding his identity from them in order to re-imagine himself.

Though Saladin possesses a talent for decelerating and demystifying time, accumulating its events and pushing out against the boundaries of narrative space, Gibreel does not share this ability. Ever since his days as a dabbawalla, Gibreel’s sense of both time and space is negatively, tiresomely expansive and accelerated, much like that of the little boy who yells “Fast forward!” at Saladin. Gibreel runs from place to place, never stopping, wanting to run out of his old life as a Bombay film mogul because of Allie Cone and “the challenge of her, the newness, the fierceness of the two of them together, the inexorability of an impossible thing that was insisting on its right to become” (32). Gibreel desires newness, ever more newness, novelty in an almost grossly capitalistic sense. Late in the novel, when he grows jealous of Allie, he runs out on her as well, straight into his ostensible incarnation as an archangel of the streets. Where Saladin comes to imagine life as an inconstancy, a process (297), Gibreel envisions it as a search for purity, asking himself whether he is supposed to be the “agent of God’s wrath? Or of his love?” (472). Though Gibreel is able to perceive the chameleon nature of London (330-338) as it crumbles and writhes around him, he views himself as stable (if schizoid) while only his surroundings change. London is a moving target which he, the presumably stationary archangel, can alter at will, encouraging its people to engage in holier behavior
and its climate to adopt a more hospitable form. But for all its positive intentions, Gibreel’s pacing, feverish desire to know his external world and to impose a vigilante sense of goodness and purity upon his surroundings possesses more in common with Rosa Diamond’s unproductive circular revisiting of the past and the Imam’s destructive, insomniac state of exile than with Saladin’s attempts to reconcile himself with his past and to (however reluctantly) acknowledge his chimerical heritage, embodied in his man-goat shape.

Instead of acquiring an inward knowledge of the kind which Saladin comes to possess, as the latter considers the nature of his position within the Indian diaspora of alienated Britishness and finds himself literally transformed from goat to devil to man, Gibreel’s sense of accelerated time and consequent desire for accelerated movement burns him out in a nervous, half-narcoleptic, half-insomniac, quickened and taut state. For Gibreel, London is a realm of metaphors and metonyms which condense ideas, making them easier for him to understand. Unlike iteration, which depends upon a recognition of each individual unit that is combined into a larger scene or movement, condensation depends upon what Genette calls a “singulative” narrative. This singulative narrative “would stand for all the others” (116) in a given story, rather than represent each narrative individually, as itself as well as part of a larger whole. While convenient and simple, in Gibreel’s hands this form of narrative often becomes a shorthand involving a reduction of possibility and a multitude of foreclosed options. He sees himself as absolutely an Angel, imagining no other explanation for his feelings or his visions of angelic purity. For instance, in “A City Visible But Unseen,” after Allie breaks up with him, he experiences “that precise moment of his greatest wrath” and “the boundaries of
the earth broke, he heard a noise like the bursting of a dam, and as the spirits of the world of dreams flooded through the breach into the universe of the quotidian, Gibreel Farishta saw God” (328). A metaphor is supposed to be abstract, figurative, but Gibreel believes that he truly looks upon God (who is remarkably similar in appearance to Rushdie himself). Everything abstract which he sees automatically converts itself to literal truth, though notably unconfirmed by others and thus metaphoric in nature to everyone except Gibreel.

As “A City Visible But Unseen” progresses, Gibreel’s literal understanding of his pseudo-divinity grows to encompass the entire city of London itself and all of its inhabitants. His travels around the city follow a specific formula: Gibreel believes he is an angel, represents himself as such to others, and ultimately disillusions both himself and them. For example, when he kisses the “ka” or lost soul “in search of its mislaid body” (333), it very solidly smacks him across the face, though he could have sworn that it was a spirit and not a person. London is the unholy land of “Thamoud” (330) which must be brought back to the light—it is actually, truly a place the likes of Jahilia, with a profusion of prophets and supernatural events, and yet it cannot see Gibreel, though he can see all of it. In spite of Gibreel’s intensity and fervor, only the questionably sane but devout Maslama recognizes him as a superhuman being, and his attempts to change the city’s climate, while partially effective, do not produce the radical

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20 Farishta also reveals a remarkable incapacity to misunderstand textual metaphors as truth, such as when he glances at Allie’s copy of a World War II boys’ magazine, *Toff*. Though he interprets the magazine as the totalizing, final view of how the British comprehended the war, Allie “decided not to mention her father, or to tell Gibreel that one of the *Toff* artists, a virulently anti-Nazi Berlin man named Wolf, had been arrested one day and led away for internment” (327). Allie understands the complexity of British worldviews as expressed in the magazine—she knows that it was only meant as a comforting guide for children and perhaps also as a reassurance to its authors that eventually, someday, the good guys would win—however, Gibreel fails to grasp the fear and anger behind the illustration at which he glances, instead chalking it off to a whole, uncomplicated, us-vs. them, Allies vs. Axis paradigm which is really his own worldview, not Allie’s, Wolf’s, or that of the British.
improvements(transformations) which he anticipated, either within the city or within his own sense of power. Worse, when he attempts to bring the light of divine vision to the people stuck in Embankment rush hour traffic, Whisky Sisodia’s limo strikes him and he is “returned to Allie’s doorstep, badly bruised, with many grazes on his arms and face, and jolted into sanity” (347). Though Gibreel engages in more physical activity throughout the novel than Saladin does, roving London’s streets with the trumpet Maslama gives him and decreeing the city’s tropicalization as well as his own angelic power, this heightened level of movement does not actually lead to any accomplishments or to a greater level of self-understanding—for him, London forever moves, shifts shapes and becomes what only he can see, while relative to this movement he remains still and nobody believes in his claims or his powers. His movements stir London, surprising it with his obtuseness, but they do not move him as he cycles through his angelic repertoire.

Like Walter Benjamin’s “angel of history,” Gibreel Farishta is caught in what Lecia Rosenthal calls “the force of a future toward which he is compelled” (76), a “storm” that might be progress or might be something else, something even more catastrophic. Rosenthal writes, “Perhaps the angel, in his more-than-mortal vantage point, might restore to the past a redemptive and restorative wholeness—if only. If only there were such an angel, if only he could do as he pleased” (76). While the angel of history can see the full scope of the past as it tumbles itself around his feet, the force pushing him forward is also and at the same time pushing him backward: backward, because his back is turned to the future towards which he moves. Thus Gibreel’s archangelic incarnation is deeply ironic in respect to Benjamin’s metaphor—the angel which Benjamin and Rushdie both depict sees more than the average human being but is just as caught up, if not more
so, in the juggernaut of “progress” to whose pace he is *subjected* and is therefore incapable of controlling. It controls him; the angel is a mere pawn, and he moves backwards and forwards simultaneously, thus rendering ridiculous the notions both of “progress” and of acceleration, as well as his desire to “remain, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom an untranslated man” (442). He cannot remain truly un-translated because in the course of his serial dreams Mahound, the Imam, and Ayesha all translate him, mapping his actions and words onto their own as a justification for their behaviors and proclamations. He is translated, used, and psychically possessed every time he falls asleep. He is disbelieved and verbally abused most of the days he is awake. Thus his angelic narrative of improvement and progression towards Paradise is made absurd by the backward-looking dreams in which other people exploit him, dissolving his notion of linear, accelerated, and easily condensable metaphoric time into a mixture of nonsensicality and paradox and revealing the impossibility of linear continuity.\(^\text{21}\)

Ironically, the otherwise perceptive critic Ian Baucom mistakenly endorses Gibreel’s fanatically destructive process as the epitome of diasporic success. While discussing the occurrence of riot in the *Verses*, he calls Gibreel’s tropicalization of London “redemption.” He writes, “The paradox of newness in this text is that the new is...the conjunction of diverse pasts, the overlapping of the histories of the English here

\(^{21}\) Yet the nonsensical results which Gibreel obtains do not deter his efforts to make sense of London; one of his greatest conceits is his belief that he can create “Bomdon,” or a mixture of London and Bombay which is not primarily new in any combinative, transformative sense. It is merely additive, totalizing, and thus provides the illusion of newness rather than the thing itself. Gibreel insists, with his desire to recuperate/reclaim in different form his “lost city” (343), upon rebuilding and reconstructing his past and present, but to do this he rebuilds *upon* them and starts anew *from* them, rather than rebuilding *them* or starting *them* anew. When Gibreel overlays London with his past memories of Bombay, he engages in an easy and relatively simple task, as rebuilding London/his conception of Bombay would require him to demolish the whole structure, or at least change it so radically that its previous form would be unrecognizable beneath and could not totalize the new one. Rebuilding a structure is far more difficult than adding to it an “improved street-life, outrageously colored flowers...spider-monkeys in the oaks” (365), all of which are superficial developments.
and the imperial elsewhere in London’s present. This moment of newness…is more than similar to that moment of redemption embedded in Benjamin’s Messianic time in which the past is collapsed onto and revealed within the now” (212). Baucom misreads the past as an entity mapped onto the present, and claims that the present is overlaid by what happened before it, behind it, away from it, and anterior to it. The past haunts the present, he believes, strewing itself through and imposing itself upon the latter; what Benjamin’s “chips of Messianic time” mean, he implies, is that the past inflicts itself upon the present22. However, Mishra counters that Benjamin’s theory involves “an eventual homecoming…not projected onto the future but introjected into the present, thereby both interrupting it and multiplying it” (213). Benjamin’s chips of messianic time do not, for Mishra, signify a past that monopolizes itself upon the present. Rather, shards of the past float in a now which is always here and always plural and interruptible, thus lending the present a power which Baucom’s interpretation does not offer readers. Mishra adds that when a desirable future is projected onto the present with its “chips”, time is “turned back against itself in order that alternative readings, alternative histories may be released” (213). Complete change is possible, figuratively if not literally. The past varies according to imagination and perception, and if one can re-imagine it through a revision of the present, then one can also rewrite it according to that imagination.23

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22 While Baucom acknowledges that new readings of the past may positively influence the present (215), what he does not acknowledge is that the direction of the reading does not have to be linear and that the past is alterable through the now.

23 The past does not always move in an arrow towards the present; it can move towards the present from the future, otherwise conceived as something that has not yet happened and which cannot be described, and which is therefore apocalyptic in nature. One can therefore effectively discard the “timeline” in which Baucom still believes, and shoot it through it with shards of Benjaminian time that open it up and disrupt it.
Though Gibreel fails to embrace a messianic vision of temporality, Saladin eventually does. Towards the conclusion of “A Wonderful Lamp,” messianism builds into and between the linear and circular narratives of Saladin’s progression from father-adoring boyhood to independent manhood and ends with a window gazing scene that is simultaneously linear “progressive” and apocalyptic in its gesturing towards the novel’s post-conclusion state, when heretofore unimaginable possibilities burst forth from within Saladin and he turns away from his lifelong capitulation to Englishness to adopt a belief in difference-from-Englishness. The section begins with Saladin’s return voyage to Bombay. On this trip into both his future and his past, Saladin must board an airplane named Gulistan (Paradise) a name eerily familiar to that of the hijacked Bostan, thus forcing himself to reoccupy the pain and fear of kidnapping, explosion, victimhood, and death. At first, he does not want to do this. Balking at the sight of the plane, Saladin prevents other passengers from boarding, and while they look upon him as a coward, Whisky Sisodia approaches him, saying cheerfully, “I used to chichi chicken out also….But now I’ve got the titrick. I fafa flap my hands during tatake-off and the plane always mama makes it into the isk isk isky” (526). Though he intends to make Saladin feel better, Sisodia inadvertently reminds him of Gibreel’s arm-flapping on the way down to England and becomes himself an echo of the incident, flapping his arms on the way up into the air rather than on the way down. Yet the nervous Chamcha manages to survive his flight into the past, in spite of his irreverent, Bostan-echoing seat partner, reliving and reoccupying his fear, doing things over or twice, but this time with the intention of breaking into the time-continuum in order to see his father again before his death—recovering the relationship before he loses his chance forever and feeling “capable of an
uncomplicated reaction. Simply, overwhelmingly, it was imperative that he reach Bombay before Changez left it for good” (525). When he arrives at his childhood home, he finds that the cancer has left his father a humble man, also uncomplicated, ready to accept Saladin for who he currently is instead of browbeating him or otherwise verbally abusing him.

Barriers had grown between the two men over the years; suddenly they have all dissolved. Saladin feels “hourly closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative…Salahuddins—which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices, but which had apparently continued to exist, perhaps in the parallel universes of quantum theory” (538). Certainly, Changez treats these selves as though they continue to exist, not wanting to talk about his and Saladin’s long estrangement but instead acknowledging that the Saladin who visits him is not the same angry Saladin who left him. He looks proudly on his son, who also discovers within his father someone worth looking up to. As the critic Rachel Trousdale notes, Saladin—now Salahuddin, the name he was given at birth but which he had rejected during his London years for sounding too foreign—draws strength from “internal pluralism” (130), or an understanding of self which “[leads] to lesser certainty, as the ‘real’ self is revealed as one of many possible, nondefinitive selves […]. When Chamcha stops peeling off the past, alternative presents become available; he loses his single-minded English self…but gains a set of varied Indian selves” (Trousdale 131). Diving into his troublesome past in order to disrupt it and reclaim it for his own—not his stubborn father’s, not Zeeny’s, not Gibreel’s, but his---Saladin opens up a conference call or communication between all the selves he has ever been and is, “bleeding the wound” of trauma (2) as Rosenthal calls it, “[deepening] the
sustaining cut, to experience again and anew a fantasy of the raw edges of splitting, breaking, and disfiguration” (2). Saladin splits himself open, much as Mirza Saeed does when Ayesha urges him to “split apart from his adam’s-apple to his groin” (521), moving beyond the absolutist representation of one self into a realm in which the space of self is slashed and cut, changing his name to reveal his newfound understanding of his expanded, apocalyptic actual and linguistic self.

The rewriting of Saladin’s selves necessitates a confrontation with his beginning which parallels but is far different from his actual beginning. Saladin acknowledges, “Childhood was over, and the view from this window was no more than an old and sentimental echo. To the devil with it! Let the bulldozers come. If the old refused to die, the new could not be born” (561). Then he moves out of the pages of Rushdie’s representations, turning from the view to which he has returned. His return to India results in both linear movement and a non-representable, non-linear movement in which the future remains un-catalogued and unknown, causing linear predictability to break down and messianic time to occupy its place. Messianic time can only be described in terms of “introjection” (Mishra) or “chips” (Benjamin). Its description is incomplete—it is what Franke calls a “revelation” (52), or “pure potency devoid of all positive content of representations of the object” (52). Franke’s object is religious in nature; mine is narrative, but they are both glimpsed aporetically through and between spaces, defined in

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24 Saladin’s mixture of impure, half-discarded selves is expressed on a continuum: it is not merely a collection of selves all existing in the same space or at the same intersection of the space-time continuum, but rather it is spread out through time and comprises selves into which Saladin can dive. He is newly capable of collapsing the difference between the spaces and times of his so-called different selves/personas and opening up towards the inexpressible “after” of the novel’s end, in which his future seems more pliable and perhaps more promising than it was before. He can occupy whichever self he desires, anytime he desires it, making even selves labeled as temporally past or indeterminate now available to him and accessing prior versions of himself through the re-adoptions of his old name.
large part by their peripheries, by what they are not rather than by what they are. One can wish Saladin luck in his future, though one shall never know said future. It is not over but is beyond the knowable, as he has, temporally, much like Mirza Saeed spatially, come to occupy an apocalyptic realm.

In its refusal to end conclusively, *The Satanic Verses* enters a dialogue with the “post,” joining a movement/trend that Rosenthal says is typical of “late modernity.” The desire to “post,” as Rosenthal explains it, represents a need for the end, for fulfillment—for, most of all, the attempt of an exhaustion of exhaustion itself, without ever reaching the endpoint of this attempt (which is total, final exhaustion). She writes, “To be exhausted is to experience the finitude of resources and, at the same time, in that experience, not to succumb to finishing, or to transcend the limit, but rather to exist between the longing for ending and the nonarrival of the end” (114). Rushdie’s character Saladin, in his refusal to conclusively end his experiences with the end of the novel, embraces the “post” in its most positive sense by living a life that is post-suffering, post-English, post-colonial, and post-racist—a life of energy derived from the renewing apocalypse of the post. However, the post can also and even simultaneously be an experience of negativity if it emphasizes completion, as in “an exhaustive account or the making-present of a void” (Rosenthal 114). Gibreel appears to engage at least partially in this destructive form of self-posting by brandishing a gun at Saladin; the latter thinks, “how the universe had shrunk! The true djinns of old had the power to open the gates of the Infinite…how banal, in comparison, was this modern spook…this feeble slave of a twentieth-century lamp” (560). Recognizing the void that is Gibreel’s gun—its power to kill and to annihilate, however poor an imitation it is of the infinite—Saladin sits
passively in his chair, doubting that he possesses the power to expand his options in the face of the “armed man” (560).

Yet as he limits options by threatening violence, Gibreel also expands them through his deployment of word-muddles which break off in mid-sentence, never concluding, failing to exhaust despite all attempts at exhaustion. He tells Saladin about his illness, admitting, “Always one part of me is standing outside screaming no please don’t no but it does no good you see when the sickness comes” (558). He does not end sentences, and Rushdie places odd spaces between words to highlight the aporetic, unfinished quality of what Gibreel speaks. In “posting” language by moving beyond correct English grammar into a more creative synthesis of word-thoughts, Gibreel nevertheless does not exhaust it because he never reaches the end of language’s uses and never finishes the thoughts which he tries to express. Rather, his words—his re-invention of Saladin’s Satanic Verses—lie in between meaning, becoming potentiality. The novel’s narrator chooses to interpret them as a gesture toward freedom, though this freedom is, in Gibreel’s case, only attained through death itself.

Saladin sees in the repetition of his Verses a reflection of his guilt in Gibreel’s downfall, but once Gibreel dies he refuses to wallow forever in this guilt. “In spite of all his wrongdoing,” he thinks at the novel’s conclusion, as Zeeny tugs at his shoulder, “he was getting another chance…There it simply was, taking his elbow in its hand” (561). To Saladin, Zeeny Vakil embodies good fortune itself, an abstract concept mutating into a person. Thus the novel’s final gestures toward the exhaustion characteristic of the post, whether of language, action, or thought, never quite exhaust themselves but instead rest within a diasporic realm in which the “post” is never completed but is recuperated as
literal re-embodiment and a second chance. Salahuddin Chamchawalla becomes Saladin Chamcha, who then returns to his given name, Salahuddin, as he grows comfortable with a more fluid and less insistently British identity. His father’s name, Changez, parallels the English word “change”; Zeeny Vakil’s last name resembles the English “vacillate;” she herself becomes, in Saladin’s eyes, identified with the idea of “good fortune.” Finally, Gibreel embraces his namesake, the Angel Gabriel, who announces the salvation-granting birth of Jesus, and in turn evokes a sense of Christhood, sacrificing his life for the sins of Saladin. If Rosenthal is correct in her assertion that the “post” is a fundamental aspect of late modernity, then Rushdie’s desire to play with the post in the form of words, names, actions, and physical/psychological mutations crafts it into a positive force, resulting in a modernity that is itself a diaspora and a constant migration as well as a messianic redemption from its colonial past into a mongrel future.

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25 This recuperation occurs in part through a linguistic refusal to totalize meaning, or to root it in a particular structure of words or phrases. Meanings and words possess no homeland—they are diasporic in their embracing of the in-between.
Chapter Three: The Intertext, or an Application of Spatial and Temporal Diasporas in *The Satanic Verses*

Verily the works and words of those gone before us have become instances and examples to men of our modern day, that folk may view what admonishing chances befell other folk and may therefrom take warning; and that they may peruse the annals of antique peoples and all that hath betided them...Praise, therefore, be to Him who hath made the histories of the Past an admonition unto the Present! (The Arabian Nights, *Burton edition*, 3).

In *The Satanic Verses*, the mongrel future initiated by a messianic temporal movement also creates a literary diaspora in which works are given opportunities to revive themselves in new contexts. So few people, ideas, and books ever belong to one place. Nowhere is this truer than in literature, where borrowings from other languages and contexts flavor each story, refreshing it and making it different from or other to its original form and content. The Verses encompass all manner of cultural, scientific, national, religious, and literary references, borrowing from the fields of physics, biology, Biblical and Koranic study, literature, history, philosophy, language, linguistics, math,

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26 Another take on intertextuality appears in Wai Chee Dimock’s “Genre as World System.” Here Dimock explores how the metaphor of the fractal relates to literary history, paying particular attention to the ways in which close studies of small objects reveal their largeness, and careful glances at large objects reveal their areas of smallness/detail. Ultimately, literary genres as such are an artificial category, according to Dimock’s view: literature is not so much a matter of rules as it is of kinship relations, which are “a remote spectrum of affinities, interesting when seen in conjunction, but not themselves organically linked” (86). In particular, the form of literature best suited to kinship formation, Dimock asserts, is the epic, one “genre” to which Rushdie’s novel belongs: “The epic...is a kind of linguistic sponge. Springing up at contact zones, it is also super-responsive to its environment, picking up...words that come its way, but not necessarily dissolving them” (93). While my chapter is not focused on fractals, I feel that I should acknowledge Dimock’s work as yet another important perspective on intertextuality—an idea which appears itself to be intertextual and recursively fractal in nature.
art, literary theory, and popular culture, just to name a few examples. The sources and writers Rushdie’s novel cites represent many nationalities and continents: American (Herman Melville), Russian (Vladimir Nabokov), Irish (James Joyce), South American (Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez), British (Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, John Milton) and various others, including Asian/Middle Eastern writers, thinkers, and theorists, the references to whom some Western readers will probably not recognize (eg; Rabindranath Tagore). All of these sources are people with whom Rushdie dialogues throughout his work, writing within as well as working to expand the contexts which they represent. Simon Gikandi notes, “clearly recognizable references are written into the narrative so that the figure of the author—his experience of migrancy and his reading of the Western canon…is an unmistakable presence…From the reference to Defoe [to]….the constant deployment of Kafka-esque metaphors…Rushdie seems to insist on the essentially intertextual nature of the postcolonial text” (210). Obviously, Gikandi’s and my catalogue of influences is a Western-biased one that does not adequately take into account the Eastern sources and inspirations behind Rushdie’s work. However, the Western sources alone, as Gikandi indicates, are numerous and possess a vital presence in the novel, shaping its themes and ideas and informing its nuances while at the same time existing in a liminal zone in which they have been revised outside of their original contexts. They are the global modernist incarnations of a spatiotemporal diaspora, pushed into a literary diaspora which does not simply reflect or replicate other diasporas but which calls upon the shadows of texts such as Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, James Joyce’s

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27 Silence does not mean unimportance. I do not feel that I possess the background knowledge necessary to tackle Rushdie’s Asian sources and thus will only focus on some Western ones that I think will be important and helpful. An interesting essay—or many essays—could potentially be written on Rushdie’s Indian resources, references, and allusions.
Ulysses, and The Arabian Nights to reassert themselves, to rewrite and be rewritten, to link themselves together in a new synthesis.

This process occurs through the Verses’ adoption of some of the forms and conceits of such ‘original’ texts, twisting them to illuminate Rushdie’s writing rather than to serve only as static pillars or models for him. Thus, the works to which Rushdie alludes begin to change as well as be changed, to learn and grow like living objects as well as contribute to the meanings and theoretical constructs of Rushdie’s work. Rushdie did, after all, choose these particular texts because they are invaluable to an interpretation of the postcolonial diaspora via its marginal figures, its always already-contaminated characters whose alterity is often viewed as sin by people who privilege purity and oneness. There is no oneness, however, and the mere suggestion of such is a lie, especially in the case of ‘British’ identity, a notion with which all of Rushdie’s chosen texts dialogue and which they all eventually refute.

Existence is always already disfigured by mixture and entanglement. No text or its origin is ever pure, as no human being is ever pure or untouched. Every book, poem, and play ever written derived from a source of inspiration, whether written, narrated orally, or related as a true story, much as every person has relatives. The crisis of literary identity is not just similar to the crisis of self which Saladin Chamcha and many other people experience—it is that crisis of self, emerging first and foremost from a crisis of national identity. England likes to pretend that it has no progenitors, no parents; the high point of this illusion appeared during the worldwide rule of the British Empire. Englishness is itself a hybrid, mutated, and diasporic creation, possessing no solid definition and no indisputable core essence, qualities which have arisen from its very
position as a world-encompassing force. Yet Paul Gilroy notes that instead of learning to live with the aftereffects of its colonial achievements—to acknowledge its diffuseness--Britain consoles its postcolonial anguish with the cooling salve of racial essentialism and treats migrants as foreigners with no legitimate connection to the West. Gilroy writes, “the infrahuman political body of the immigrant…comes to represent all the discomforting ambiguities of the empire’s painful and shameful [past]” (100). Because immigrants to Great Britain remind the British of their lost, pure empire and represent, in fact, this lost empire of collapsing modernity, they become magnets for racial hostility and signposts of postcolonial despair. They are demonic figures like Saladin Chamcha, who always expects British rationality and reasonableness to triumph over irrationality and prejudice and is forever disappointed, eventually evolving away from the land of his persecuting demons. For all the people who cannot believe that the British lost their Empire, the sight of an Indian or a Pakistani— the apparition that is Saladin Chamcha—reminds them that the bad news is all true: the Empire is gone, and its peoples are in London hoping for recognition as British, when they were only ever intended to be second-class citizens in the first place, human trophies convincing the British of their racial supremacy over the rest of the species. Because the English have always defined themselves against their colonial reflections, when their mirror is taken away, they no longer know who they are.

The first of Rushdie’s source texts, which in its own time grappled heretically with Britishness and alterity, is John Milton’s Paradise Lost. In this text, Satan at first assumes the appearance of a hero, defiantly defining himself against the mirror of God, assuming the role of both colonist (in his desire to conquer Heaven and Earth) and
colonized (quailing under the wrath of an omnipotent God). He devises two primary modes of self-invention, the first of which involves an assertion of total, near-omnipotent mental control. Though Satan was cast out from Heaven and is still psychically entangled with it, he prefers to believe that he is entirely in command of his own mind and his own circumstances, independent and free. He tells the other fallen angels, attempting to bolster their confidence (as well as his own):

Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heav’n of hell, a hell of heav’n (I. 251-255).

Boldly Satan declares the sovereignty of the mind: in spite of his punishment, he swears that Hell and Heaven are merely external locations, and that the only location which truly matters to him is internal: the mind and its thoughts. Though he lives in Hell, he decides that it is scarcely different from Heaven. His own mind creates the difference, and if it refuses such a difference, then God’s power over him is lost. Satan is therefore diasporic in his belief that home can be an idea or a mental state, not a physical place: that home is anywhere he perceives it to be, and not necessarily the location in which he was created and initially came to power. Lucifer, brightest of the angels but now highest of the demons, asserts that even after he and his brethren have been kicked out of Heaven, they have not had the angelhood kicked out of them, and that in order for the latter to happen, God must kill them, for nothing else He can do would ever cause them to surrender their selfhood, their so-called true essences.
In addition to his insistence upon the power of the mind, Satan also values a wandering, exilic consciousness. While his fellow devils sit in Hell, many of them afraid to leave, Satan ventures out from Hell to explore his new surroundings, to reveal that he is “Not in despair…not lost/In loss itself” (I. 525-526). He stands upon the edge of Chaos and gazes forth into its depths:

Into this wild Abyss,

The womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave,

Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,

But all these in their pregnant causes mixed

Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,

Unless th’ Almighty Maker them ordain

His dark materials to create more worlds,

Into this wild Abyss the wary Fiend

Stood on the brink of Hell and looked a while (II. 910-18).

The place on which Satan gazes is hybrid, impure, a realm of potentiality beyond Hell and not yet Heaven, or Earth, or Limbo, or anything at all. It is both nothing and everything, and even God may borrow from it “dark materials,” revealing His own fundamental inability to retain/contain pure, divine substance. The material from which Hell and Earth are created is Heavenly, and vice versa, and Satan experiences both fear and empowerment upon surveying the land he must cross, recognizing that it is in fact hybrid. However, he believes that his desire to wander across it may lead him (so he imagines) back to a Heavenward path, in which he and his fallen angels may take Heaven by force, directing God to submit to their will. This is, of course, a goal which Satan will
never achieve, as it depends upon an erroneous insistence upon purity and a belief in the ultimate reclamation of the past. But it is nevertheless important to him and appears attainable so long as he can make his way across Chaos unscathed (he cannot).

Satan’s subscription to his two self-invention philosophies enables him to exert undeniable power over the narrative, becoming the hero of the first several books, and to successfully pervert mankind, causing it to fall. However, his strategies do possess limits, and these are the very limits which eventually collapse his power and send him back to Hell. Though he believes in total mental sovereignty, he fails to recognize that such sovereignty is impossible, as locations necessarily impact their every individual inhabitant. One can never remain entirely unaffected by one’s home or place of residence. If Satan were, then he would not even need to make his speech on the independence of the mind. His declaration of mental sovereignty necessarily stems from his subconscious doubt of its power. He needs to make it visible to himself in the midst of his and the other demons’ pain and to proclaim that what God does to him will never alter his character or his essence. Yet his claims of purity stem from his very impurity. He is, after all, crafted from God’s “dark materials.” God then evicts him from Heaven, separating him from the environment which made him appear beautiful. Like a person deprived of sunlight, he becomes progressively uglier and increasingly metamorphic in nature, finally disfiguring himself by adopting a serpent body. At the end of the epic, he is unmistakably demonic, no longer possible to confuse with the angels. Thus, despite his claims that he is unchangeable, he changes. His attempts at seeking purity all fail, as no such quality ever existed, and certainly not in him, who denies around every turn the reality that he has no true essence and that the path through Heaven never lies through the
hybridity of the fall. For those who have lost access to it, Heaven is a myth, cobbled together and reassembled from memory, a realm to which, like a mother’s womb, there is no going back.

In his refusal to accept change, Satan resembles Rushdie’s Gibreel, whose wanderings and attempts at retaining purity all fail, resulting in schizophrenia. However, another of SV’s Satanic analogues is a good deal more successful. Though Saladin Chamcha literally transforms into a devilish figure, he experiences redemption because he recognizes and accepts the inevitability of change, and is able to move out from Eden\(^\text{28}\). White English may view him as the Devil, but he learns to see himself as human. He grows wise upon experiencing England, Bombay, and his personal hell in close succession to one another, wiser than ever he was as a naive Indian trying to become British. Knowledge gives way to mutation in his case, which in turn provides him with freedom. Then said freedom feeds back into the loop to create more mutations, which in turn produce more knowledge, a state with which Saladin becomes comfortable by the novel’s end. Knowledge-mutation-freedom here presents itself as a seemingly endless chain which is nevertheless punctuated by gaps and holes, aporias that cannot be filled in because even though these three categories feed into one another, they do not generate predictable results or always continue logically from one another. Instead, they split, tear and change, like DNA strands or evolutionary processes, or Chamcha/Chamchawalla himself as he morphs from Indian to Englishman to Lucifer back to Englishman, and finally back to the position of an Indian who struggles to possess, as Zeeny urges him to, “‘an adult acquaintance with this place [Bombay]’” (555). For Zeeny, Saladin’s recovery resembles a new adolescence, one in which he must come to accept his home instead of

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\(^{28}\) Saladin could also be considered an analogue of Adam as well as Satan.
railing against it like a teenager, while at the same time acknowledging the lessons he has learned abroad. She wants his mutation to be a positive source of renewal, a progressive form of the backwards gaze, not a Miltonic, teleological progression (or utter regression) from beauty to snake-hood. Though *Paradise Lost* originally belonged to a theological, English Reformation context, its thematics can stretch in unpredictable and surprising ways to fit a modern and postcolonial worldview, because of the text’s emphasis on knowledge, travelling, and on effective self-invention modes as well as their limits—limits which lead to personal and sometimes general disaster when transgressed.

Rushdie’s allusions to Joyce further extend the critical discussion of identity-ambiguity by placing it in direct dialogue with a people who are often conflated, but nevertheless separated, from the English: the Irish. Writing around the time of the Easter uprisings, Joyce focuses on the condition of the wandering exilic ‘Irish,’ on the experiences of ‘Irish’ subjects who do not identify either with their ‘own’ nationality or with that of the English, who, as Whisky Sissodia notes, have conveniently shunted all of their major epoch-defining achievements overseas so that they do not have to take responsibility for any of them. He claims, “‘The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don’t know what it means’” (353). British history is not relegated to British territory, but rather has extended into everybody else’s territories and therefore become everybody else’s problem. The British may have meddled everywhere, but they rarely, if ever, seem capable of cleaning up their own mess, especially in the case of the Irish, who live close enough to Great Britain to bomb it (the IRA in the 1960s) but apparently not close enough for the British to publicly acknowledge their guilt in the matter. In James Joyce’s fiction, true to form, the Irish
characters are the ones who spend the most time considering their unwanted British legacy.

Allusions to *Ulysses* in *SV* often evoke racial tension and characters’ uncertainty/discomfort with their places in the diaspora. For instance, when Pamela Chamcha sees her goat-husband standing in her house, she shrieks, “‘I am the widow Chamcha whose spouse is beastly dead’” (194), directly echoing Stephen Dedalus’s ‘friend’ Buck Mulligan, who makes this comment upon hearing of Mrs. Dedalus’ death. Buck’s ‘beastly’ implies the animalistic, prosaic nature of death, but Pamela Chamcha inverts it by implying that her husband is no longer human—is dead because he is, in fact, ‘beastly.’ Thus a rift of a distinctly racial kind appears between husband and wife: Pamela is still human, but Saladin is a mere ‘beast,’ not even worthy of the label ‘alive.’ He is dead to her because he is a goat. She can only acknowledge him, grudgingly, at that, when Jumpy allows him to move back into his wife’s home.

In its original context, ‘beastly dead’ was also fairly insulting. Stephen dislikes Mulligan for his crass comment about the death of his mother (to liver cancer), though Mulligan justifies himself by claiming that, as a medical student, he sees so many dead bodies that they are little more than meat to him (7). Mulligan’s justification, however, cannot erase his implicit sense of superiority over the person he calls ‘Kinch. The nickname means, according to Joyce scholar Don Gifford, “*kinchin*, or child….or ‘in imitation of the cutting sound of a knife’” (13). Mulligan sees Stephen as a boy still, or as a chunk of meat making an odd noise as it is cut, and Mulligan himself does the cutting, with his jokes and attempts at making fun of Dedalus, as well as his repetitive efforts to convince him to pay back his debts and to behave in a more intelligibly British way. He
implores Stephen to behave as British, not Irish, and specifically encourages him to adopt a Britishness characterized by shallow social pursuits and inflammatory teasing. But he offers Stephen no potential reward or rationale for adopting this behavior, aside from a cessation of psychological torment and social ostracism.

While Joyce and Rushdie privilege cultural combination and acknowledge that identity is created from outside as well as from within, Buck Mulligan does not appear to understand this process, sure that Stephen’s pain derives from his internal stubbornness and not from his outward circumstances. For Mulligan, Britishness is its own reward. He sucks up to the British wherever they appear, all the while imagining that he chooses to admire them and not that they have pressured him much in the same way that he is pressuring Stephen. He denies his own Irish heritage and also tries to remove from Stephen his by policing the body of Irishness, the Irish identity, and trying to tell Stephen what kind of man he should become, without understanding how the British (“the Engenglish”) have already circumscribed his own selfhood, crafting him into their own narrow vision of the jocular, difficult-to-take-seriously Irish medical student. In fact, Whisky Sisodia’s description of the British—his stuttering malapropism of “Engenglish”—implies narrowness, as the root “Engen” derives from the German word “eng,” or narrow. Also, Sisodia’s humorous “dodo don’t know” conjures images of the dodo, a large extinct bird evocative of British languor and behind-the-times thinking. Interestingly, when Mulligan’s behavior is routed through Sisodia’s linguistic constructions, it positions him as a man every bit as “narrow” and “dodoish” as the so-called “real” English themselves.
Rushdie further builds upon Mulligan’s unlikeable, sycophantic personality in his own novel by naming his jowly, constantly sweating police inspector after him. His name is Stephen Kinch, but he does not resemble Dedalus so much as Mulligan. He is described as:

A father, a man who likes his pint… He refers to organized crime, political agitators, bomb-factories, drugs. ‘We understand some of these kids may feel they have grievances but we will not and cannot be the whipping boys of society.’ Emboldened by the lights… he goes further. These kids don’t know how lucky they are, he suggests (470).

The inspector’s words and overall behavior resonate with Mulligan’s “boldness” (8) in the face of Stephen’s anger: “I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom. It’s a beastly thing and nothing else… You wouldn’t kneel down to pray for your mother on her deathbed when she asked you. Why? Because you have the cursed jesuit strain in you, only it’s injected the wrong way” (7).

Both versions of Mulligan turn discussions of grief and responsibility into harangues on the fault of the immigrants/Dedalus-figures to whom they speak, criticizing their listeners for a lack of gratitude or for contradictory reactions to a mother’s demise. From his evolution as an English-sympathizer and popular man-around-town in Joyce to a police inspector and racist authority figure in Rushdie, Mulligan assumes an ever more ominous character, while in both texts his listeners and victims are positioned as ever-more inclusive variations on Dedalus.

In the process, Rushdie extends the condition of intellectual exile to non-Western subjects. Anyone can now be Stephen Dedalus, not just white Christian men, including
Saladin himself, whose preoccupations with religion and his own position as an English subject possess many commonalities with Stephen’s own brand of intellectual thought. Both men are tired of fatherly circumscription, though Stephen’s father possesses less power over him than does Chamcha’s. Both ask questions of their surroundings, determined not to take for granted the notion that they should belong to a particular place. While Stephen’s questions lead him to a brief sojourn in France and then land him back in Ireland, more miserable than before, Saladin’s lead him to adopt a Mulligan-esque embracing of English culture, which overturns itself after the plane crash, forcing him into a more cosmopolitan understanding of Britishness. Soon, he begins to view it not as a location of privilege the way he had once imagined it to be, but as both marginal, with its incorporation of migrant cultures, and not-marginal, imbued with prejudice towards those who, according to the dominant culture, overreach themselves by flying too close to the sun. Eventually, Saladin’s narrative positions him as a more dynamic version of Stephen Dedalus. Unlike the original Joyce character, the British/Other dichotomy ceases by the novel’s end to define Saladin, who walks out of his childhood home and therefore abandons Britishness, with all its baggage and demands. Dedalus himself, though he encounters Leopold Bloom, does not appear to abandon his meditations on alienation during the course of *Ulysses*.

If *Ulysses* references enable the *The Satanic Verses* to build upon earlier narratives by opening up the diasporic space to include non-Irish, non-British, non-Protestant, and non-Catholic subjects—as well as subjects whose own projects surpass that of Stephen Dedalus’s-- then *Arabian Nights* references enable these subjects to grow comfortable with their positions in the diaspora instead of feeling like wanderers without
the security of a home. *The Arabian Nights* is an excellent example of intertextuality and confidently inhabits the diaspora through what writer A.S. Byatt terms its dialogue of story: “Collections of tales talk to each other and borrow from each other, motifs glide from culture to culture, century to century” (xvi). The tales do not fizzle, prolonging both themselves and the life of their teller (Scheherazade) through an engagement with infinity, a propagation through excitement, suspense, humor, and tales-within-tales. Also, the infinity extends backward as well as forward, since the Night’s ostensible origins lie in other, anterior tales. The introductory section, “King Shahryar and His Brother” describes Scheherazade as a student of history: “She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments” (Burton edition 14). The Nights, from its heroine’s perspective, consists of a long line of stories of which it is merely one of the latter versions. It is not by any means an original, but rather a conscious compilation. The work’s actual history also reveals that the Nights has preserved, through various transmutations, its constitutive Indian, Persian, and Arabic sources, as well as inviting new traditions into its collection--for instance, Western storytelling modes, which first appeared in French translator Antoine Galland’s redaction of the tales.

Though Galland initially wished to remain faithful to the original story-grouping, his readers were eager for more stories than this collection included, so he decided to incorporate oral tales he had heard from a friend, the Syrian monk Hanna (Larzul 17-18). These oral narratives offered him “more room for creation” (17) than did already-written, fully published versions of the collection in Turkish. As he transcribed and embellished upon Hanna’s stories, Galland created for himself a viable place within the canon of
Arabian Nights-associated literature. Already inclusive in its nature, the collection made of him a Scheherazade figure who further developed its potential and responded to its impulses by creating for it a new context: a Western translation, adaptation, and expansion which would achieve the pinnacle of its popularity with Richard Burton’s 19th-century translation of A Thousand and One Nights.

Rushdie’s novel adopts from these versions of The Arabian Nights a specifically Western invention: Changez’s heirloom lamp. Though the ‘original’ Nights featured neither Aladdin nor genies, The Satanic Verses alludes to both, echoing Saladin’s desire for a Western identity which can be routed through his unfortunately Eastern birth. The magic lamp of wishes and promises consumes much of Saladin’s attention in childhood, when Changez withholds it from him. Later, when Changez feels that Saladin has earned his inheritance, he bequeaths the object to him, and Saladin rubs it, bringing forth Zeeny (ostensibly) but also experiencing what might be considered a betrayal when Gibreel rubs it and his gun leaps up into his hand (560). The lamp, like the stories to which it was added, answers whomever calls upon it. It is not Saladin or Changez’ exclusive possession, as anyone can be summoned by it or extract desired objects/people from it. Nobody can own it, much as nobody can meaningfully own the story collection from which it originated. It is not an owned, additive, or definitive entity. Rather, it grows and changes with each new perspective of its holder.

Once Saladin understands that his lamp resists personal ownership, he realizes that instead of opening up new stories and new narratives, the lamp under Gibreel’s control threatens to close down both men’s lives with its echoes of “Aladdin’s” less promising lines: “‘What is your wish? I am the slave of him who holds the lamp’” (560).
The lamp represents increased opportunity but also thralldom (with its reference to slavery), depending upon the intentions of its current receptacle. As Saladin notices when Gibreel first begins to tell him of the murders: “Gibreel had closed his eyes, put his fingertips together and embarked upon his story,—which was also the end of many stories” (558). One story to end all others—this is what Gibreel desires, and he places inside the lamp the gun which more concretely has the potential to end all tales, though he ultimately ends only his own rather than Saladin’s. After Gibreel’s suicide, Saladin abandons the lamp—at least, readers never see another allusion to it—and embarks upon an ending to the novel that begins new stories instead of concluding old ones by adding to them the dangerous climax, the suicidal conclusion. In his usage and subsequent forfeiture of the lamp, Saladin demonstrates an understanding of intertextuality that demands rewritings rather than mere additions of “The End.” He knows when to lay aside his old, baggage-ridden material heirloom and extract the possibility which the lamp, as well as its literary predecessor, represents. He builds upon what it has given him in the past—Zeeny, his father’s renewed love—and works to create his own life from these two gift-materials, acknowledging the lamp as a starting point but moving beyond it to author other representations of himself which Rushdie cannot ultimately delineate.

Though Rushdie’s text is single-authored, it hints at the presence of hundreds of other authors who materialize as faint shadows in the background but who nevertheless push the text beyond its singularly-written façade, enabling it, like Saladin, to write itself to a point beyond its influences, a point at which it contributes to them as much as they contribute to it. Many emerge from one, and diversity stems from apparent unity, thus signaling the playful corollary of the possibilities envisioned by the Nights, with its many
voices contributing to the one voice of Scheherazade, who in turn reflects the many, deconstructing singularity until it reveals itself as a plurality. Though one person may write, everyone else whom this one person has ever read or with whom he has ever spoken also writes and speaks along with them. When this is the case—and it certainly is in *The Satanic Verses* as well as in most other postcolonial and even ‘colonial’ texts—the ghosts of old storytellers receive an amazing opportunity to revise their work from beyond the grave. Older works reopen themselves, shifting context through their participation in something different from or other to their original productions and publications.

Gilroy notes the explosive power of this revisionary process, which empowers both literature and the diasporic individuals who are attracted to it, who read it because they want to learn more about their own experiences and feelings of alienation. The literary diaspora’s constituent texts also initiate teachable moments for people who are relatively secure in their lives and who do generally feel as though they belong to one time or place. These moments jar said comfortable readers and make them feel distinctly guilty or confused. Gilroy explains that such moments in these texts can blast away racism and provincialism, teaching people how to live in or with the global diaspora by reading from it. He writes, “We can opt to reproduce the obligations of racial observance…Or there is a second and far more difficult and rewarding alternative…we [can] try to break its spell and to detonate the historic lore that brings the virtual realities of ‘race’ to such dismal and destructive life” (32). The idea of historic detonation is very similar to Mishra’s notion of introjection, enabling populations to reclaim literatures which may once have excluded them, as the “lore” is often written as well as spoken or
acted. Detonation of the “historic lore” represents an act of recuperation and healing rather than one of destruction. It is a process of racial recovery through literature, enabling Indians, for instance, to appropriate Western literature while Westerners find themselves similarly engaged with Eastern literature, not as an inferior entity, but rather as an invigorating and revitalizing one.

_The Satanic Verses_ is in a unique position to show how this process of cross-borrowing and pollination works, as its writer is ethnically an Indian Muslim, but also one who identifies largely with the Western world and has consistently taught at American universities with relatively privileged students. He is in a position to experiment with literature so that West and East blur, without being accused of exoticizing or utterly condemning either party, and his ability to write for 20th-21st century audiences does not stunt his propensity to borrow from the past. Rather, he writes texts forward as well as backward, for familiar as well as unfamiliar or far-removed audiences, opening them up to other writers and new situations, and preventing anybody from ever reading them the same way twice. In the process, not just _The Verses_, but every book and writer mentioned within it, reproduce themselves, much as Scheherazade’s tales, in the conclusion to the collection, enact their own propagation, a future ruler liking them so much that he “bade the folk copy them and dispread them over all lands and climes; wherefore their report was bruited abroad and the people named them _The marvels and wonders of the Thousand Nights and A Night_” (Burton 729). Nothing ever finishes; also, no singularity of person, place, or vision expresses itself in the _SV_, as it values a spreading collectivity of vision over individual genius. Rushdie teaches readers about the world’s interconnectedness through his use of intertextuality, which places
together voices and people from various continents and many millennia, revealing that geniuses do not exist de facto but in fact depend upon all the other writers who informed their work in order for their own artistic and intellectual expression to matter or make sense, to appear contextually and therefore to collate into an international body of work. A book or another work of literature is only fragmented or cursory in nature when it appears alone. Together, literature holographically empowers itself and each of its constituent voices, enabling stronger understandings across genres as well as institutions, countries and cultures as well as cities and towns. Of these voices, some will necessarily be more important than others, much as certain textual, cultural, and character references will always matter more to any given story than various others. The intertext is, like spatial and temporal distortion, a mere gesture, and it is always already incomplete, truncated, inaccessible, like Milton’s original context, or Joyce’s, or even the very notion of the human self, muddied by the tides of narrative experience which treks on from generation to generation and is ultimately untraceable to any one identity, person, or family—British, Indian, or otherwise. It is a backwards detonation, an attempt at the reclamation and assertion of a global world. But it is an attempt which, in Rushdie’s case, is equal parts powerful and successful.
Conclusion: Here Do We Go From Where?

Reading *The Satanic Verses* from the perspective of apocalypse, contamination, transformation, mutation, impurity, and space-time distortions results in an almost quantum-physical view of the text. The different forms of experimentation present in the book swirl around one another, refusing to resolve into a shape straightforward and graspable. Whatever someone comes away with after reading the *Verses*, it is hardly singular, fitting into various categories of knowledge (ie; cultural, literary, philosophical, postcolonial, modern). That the text’s publication resulted in controversy, high emotion, murder, chaos, and exile is unfortunate but also reveals that it is the kind of book which sparks visions and sets people together in discussion. One would hope that eventually, the book’s more strident detractors\(^\text{29}\) will agree to peace rather than contribute to further conflict.

The lessons learned from *The Satanic Verses* are multifarious and not simply related to the controversy surrounding its publication, as its textual body is readily applicable to other texts. These include not only source texts, such as *Paradise Lost* or *Ulysses*, but also books which have been published after the *Verses* came into print. Two of these latter works are Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). A quick look at both novels reveals overarching thematic similarities that reveal their kinship to the *Verses*, though only a more thorough study would reveal whether or not the spatio-temporal experiments of these later books match the depth of those present in Rushdie’s work. For the moment, a brief exploration of place/location, contamination/impurity, and the theme of judgment in

\(^{29}\) Many of the book’s worst detractors haven’t actually read it. For more information on where they developed their opinions of the novel, see Aamir Mufti’s essay “Reading the Rushdie Affair.”
these texts will serve as a sufficient jumping-point to a method of teaching them in conjunction with *The Verses*.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, place/location assumes a powerful and powerfully confusing role, one of mixture and impurity, much as does the changeable England which Saladin and Gibreel experience. Sai, the judge, and the cook all live in a Scottish-constructed home, whose builder’s “true spirit had called to him, then, informed him that it, too, was wild and brave, and refused to be denied the right to adventure” (13). But as Desai notes soon afterward, “the price for such romance had been high and paid for by others” (13). Now the descendents of these others, broken-backed laborers as well as wealthier Indians, inhabit the Scottish/British home, located near the border with Nepal and often harassed by the Gorkha National Liberation Front boys, its dwellers unsure of their position within the fractured landscape in which they find themselves. Sai and Gyan’s romance is riddled with the effects of such confusion. While Sai identifies with what she perceives as a worldly/British perspective, Gyan wants to prove his manhood by participating in the Gorkha movement. Eventually, his grandmother decisively thwarts his claims to adulthood by locking him in his bedroom and, when his friends arrive to pick him up, telling them that he has terrible diarrhea and cannot possibly attend the march. Though the past has, until this point in the novel, saturated its border location with meaning, informing Sai and Gyan’s relationship and influencing the nationalist/economic struggles of the region, it cannot ultimately determine the future. In spite of the violence and starvation surrounding him, as well as the constant signs of Sai’s privilege, towards the end of the novel Gyan agrees to search for her uncle’s missing dog, abandoning his previous desire for violent masculinity, and Biju, though robbed down to his skin, returns
home proudly wearing only a woman’s frilly nightgown. A generation of young Indians here manages to take its past humiliations and uncertainties and twist them around, crafting them into a badge of honor, however embarrassing they originally were.

This propensity for adaptation is a quality not shared by the earlier generation of Indians in Desai’s tale, particularly Sai’s uncle, the judge. Though his task is to judge cases and enact justice, more often than not the judge finds that it is he himself who has been brought to judgment, usually in his own mind. Like Saladin, he attempted in his youth to become a purely British man, but unlike Rushdie’s character, he never expected to become a British citizen—he always intended to return to India as a member of its upper class—and he never adopts a transgressive perspective on his heritage. When Saladin has a bowel movement as a goat, it spills out over the floor and he experiences a temporary disgust at his animalistic mutation (which only occurs this once and never again), but Jemubhai’s disgust is of a more deep-rooted, permanent nature:

Mid-morning he rose from his books, went to the lavatory for the daily trial of his digestion…As he heard others shuffling outside….he stuck a finger up the hole and excavated within, allowed a backed up load of scropulated goat pellets to rattle down loudly. Had they heard him outside? He tried to catch them before they bulleted the water. His finger emerged covered in excrement and blood, and he washed his hands repeatedly, but the smell persisted, faintly trailing him through his studies (121).

The judge’s constipation is constant, daily, and redolent of his shame and self-revulsion. Obsessively, compulsively, he washes his hands, showers after sleep, creates a strict, severe study schedule for himself, and never loses his Indian accent because he never
speaks. He cannot even talk in the first-person. He is self-detached, a creature of the third-person, too disgusted by his nature and personality to admit of any possible self-worth. His only true love in life is Mutt the dog, on whom he places all the affection he could never offer anyone else, least of all himself—as if he sees himself as a cur and therefore loves the dog as a form of poetic justice.

Shame and disgust do not factor quite as heavily in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as they do in *The Inheritance of Loss*, but Hamid is just as interested as Desai in the confusions/distortions inherent in place and in transitions between one place and another and one time and another. For instance, Changez experiences massive disorientation in the wake of 9/11, when his nationality suddenly evokes constant fear and suspicion and people implicitly ask of him how he can pretend to be American when he is really Pakistani. For him, the question is not so simple: he feels out of place in both worlds, guilty that he lives in luxury while his parents and brother take bucket-baths and worried about the mental condition of his fading New Yorker girlfriend, Erica: “I was not certain where I belonged—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither—and for this reason, when she [Erica] reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her” (168). Changez feels as ghostly and lost as Erica has been since the death of her first boyfriend, Chris. Changez’s only solution to her apocalyptic despair is to imagine that he is Chris, and to tell her when they are making love: “pretend I am him.’ I do not know why I said it; I felt overcome and it seemed, suddenly, a possible way forward” (119). Yet his efforts do not prevent Erica from disappearing to commit suicide by the novel’s end—to vanish into nowhere, off a cliff, as though her entire existence were a dream in Changez’s mind.
He himself adopts a more constructive attitude, returning, like Saladin, to his homeland of Pakistan to be with his family and to teach business classes to college students, as well as to organize protests against the United States’ global corruption. Whether or not he is actually engaged in terrorist activities Hamid never makes clear. The only “fundamentals” Changez identifies are high corporate profit-margins and an attitude of total(izing), selfish American efficiency. He does appear, by the end of the book, to seem more comfortable with his mixture of American/Pakistani cultural heritages. However, this comfort primarily arises from the fact that he has come to value his Pakistani background over his disillusioned American one, which now has a primarily utilitarian purpose, presenting a way for him to successfully battle the enemy through his knowledge of its collective mind.

For Changez’ distrust of the United States, a distrust matching the U.S. government’s suspicions of him, his listener condemns him, judging him a terrorist. Changez protests, “It seems to me that you have ceased to listen to my chatter; perhaps you are convinced that I am an inveterate liar” (208). Judgment here leads not so much to shame and disgust, as in Inheritance, but rather to an unbridgeable gulf of silence and misunderstanding between cultures. The novel ends with the American listener drawing a gun on Changez, as if the latter’s book-length explanation of his character and motivations were not enough to erase his perceived terrorist taint. A focus on “fundamentals” leads the American man to an act of judgment which precludes any more complicated kind of discussion or reconciliation, as well as any type of plural cultural mixture. Cultures are not reconcilable, not for this mysterious, never-identified person. Ultimately, Hamid’s novel implies, before the East can speak with any kind of success,
whether through epic, love-story, confession, or some other mode entirely, the West must first learn to listen—however surprising the words are which it hears, and however much it might not like them. But just because one does not like what one hears does not mean that one should draw that “glint of metal…from the holder of business cards” (209). Violence forecloses all possibilities, shuts down all options, and prevents time and space from becoming anything more than the markers of yet another needless death, another Judgment sending its victims straight down to Hell to play the role of Satan.

_The Inheritance of Loss_ and _The Reluctant Fundamentalist_ are, as even this cursory examination reveals, rather different from _The Satanic Verses_ in their perspectives and takes on the postcolonial modernist dilemma of diasporic existence. _Inheritance_ mainly focuses on the diaspora as a source of—but also solution to—shame and strife in its “home” location of India rather than in Britain. _Fundamentalist_ insists that characters who hover in the diaspora will, unless one party (American) relents and actually pays attention to the other one (Pakistani), eventually resolve into the dichotomy of Pakistani versus American. But both texts do possess the potential for a diasporic examination pushed to towards as deep a level as that of the _Verses_, though the return for neither of the former texts will be the same. An apocalyptic take on the diaspora, when applied to different texts, will produce as many viewpoints as there are texts themselves. Though we may never obtain a good look at what the apocalypse precisely is, by chasing it through its diasporic filament via modernist aesthetic techniques we may grow ever closer to the answer, without touching it, without being answered in return, like scientists colliding atoms without knowing when, or if, the antimatter will appear. As always, the pursuit is more intriguing than the destination, and with a respectable number of
postcolonial books being published every year, the destination is still far from view—still evolving and growing ever more distant, with each new novel that appears and each novel perspective that becomes available.
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CURRICULUM VITAE

Education, Masters Degree in English: Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC (May 2012)
Thesis Title: “To Be Born Is to Die: A Study of Spatio-Temporal Impossibility and the Apocalypse in Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses”

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Teaching Experience:
Graduate Assistant, Wake Forest University Writing Center (August 2010-May 2012)
- Consulted with students about paper-writing concerns such as the construction of a convincing thesis statement, structural and organizational problems, and outlining/brainstorming
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Teaching Assistant, Department of English Wake Forest University, August 2011-December 2011
- Led 165-level (freshman and sophomore) seminar classes on medieval literature/medieval-based films
- Worked individually with students to improve the clarity of their ideas and to encourage their independence as writers
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- Graded papers informally, then consulted with professor on differences between my marks and hers

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- Assisted a writing professor with freshman composition course
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