

Representations of Migrant and Nation in Selected Works of
Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie

Caroline Victoria Herbert

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit
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Abstract

This thesis explores the representations of, and the relationship between, the migrant and the nation in selected works of the Bombay-born novelists Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. I explore each writer's engagement with contemporary debates surrounding the material, political, social and imaginative consequences of the crisis in secularism in India during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and consider how this engagement is informed by their migrant positions beyond India's borders. A primary concern is the way in which Mistry's and Rushdie's representations of the nation, and of migrant and diasporic subjects, intersects with the representation of Bombay in their work.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first two chapters concentrate on Mistry's fiction, the remaining three on Rushdie's work. Published between 1988 and 2002, the central novels examined are situated within debates regarding the founding principles of the Indian nation, and notions of Indianness, the rise of communalism in general and Hindu nationalism in particular, and the renaming of Bombay as Mumbai. My readings foreground the necessity of a close understanding of the historical and political transformations taking place within Bombay and India during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, but also during the 1950s and 1960s. I argue that Mistry's and Rushdie's work is informed by a deepening anxiety over these socio-political transformations, and over how reconfigurations of Indianness increasingly position minority communities, and migrant and diasporic subjects, outside of definitions of national identity.

This anxiety extends into the negotiation of their own migrant positions. My reading of the differing representations of the migrant in Mistry's and Rushdie's work engages with ideas of accountability, political responsibility, and with notions of cosmopolitanism. In doing so, I question familiar assumptions regarding the migrant condition as one of predominantly empowering political agency. I argue that, while both authors emphasise the importance of the migrant sustaining a critical engagement with India's politics, they also foreground the anxious difficulties of doing so. This difficulty informs Mistry's and Rushdie's divergent negotiation of their own position as migrant writers, and I examine how their fiction is marked by an anxiety over the adequacy of writing as a mode of political engagement with the crisis in secularism and the parochialisation of Bombay, and as a means of negotiating the politics of migrancy.

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Introduction

Returning to Bombay in 1998, after an absence of twenty-one years, the journalist Suketu Mehta traced the city's history through its various names:

It was called Heptanesia – the city of seven islands – by Ptolemy in AD 150. The Portuguese called it Bom Bahia, Buon Bahia, or Bombaim – Portuguese for 'good bay'. In 1538 they also called it Boa-Vida, the island of good life, because of its beautiful groves, its game, and its abundance of food. Another story around its name concerns the Sultan Kutb-ud-din, Mubarak Shah I, who ruled over the islands in the fourteenth century, demolished temples, and became a demon: Mumba Rakshasa. Other Hindu names for these islands were Manbai, Mambai, Mambe, Mumbadevi, Bumbai, and now Mumbai. It is a city of multiple aliases, like gangsters and whores. Waves of rulers have owned this clump of islands: the Hindu fisherfolk, the Muslim kings, the Portuguese, the British, the Parsi and Gujarati businessmen, the *sheths* (joined by Sindhis, Mawaris and Punjabis later), and now, finally, the natives again, the Maharashtrians.¹

Resisting attempts by the Shiv Sena to impose a singular, homogeneous and exclusive identity on the city through a rhetoric of Maharashtrian nativism, Mehta characterises Bombay as a 'city of multiple aliases', a space whose identity is a palimpsest constituted by a layering of the legacies of immigration and colonisation. In his account, the city's cosmopolitan, international identity – the legacy of European and Mughal imperialism, as well as Parsi immigration – is interwoven with a pan-Indian identity, the result of migrations into Bombay from other regions within India.

The subtext of Mehta's account is the official renaming of Bombay as Mumbai by the Shiv Sena-led state government in 1995, and his narration of the hybrid cosmopolitanism of Bombay is underwritten by an insidious movement away from such plurality towards the imposition of a singular identity onto the city; Bombay develops, in his narrative, from the diverse multiplicity of Heptanesia – 'the city of seven islands' – into the singular Mumbai. Against the movement towards fixity underlying the signifier 'Mumbai', Mehta uses the litany of names attached to the city to suggest the very instability of its identity; even within individual languages themselves the city is given a variety of names. Mehta's account resists the homogenisation of the urban space by revealing it as a perennially contested terrain, whose identity is constantly shifting even as different groups vie for control over it.

In representing Maharashtrian identity as just one more layer of the continually evolving surface of Bombay's palimpsestic nature, Mehta contests claims that the

¹ Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (London: Review, 2004), p. 13.

Maharashtrian-Marathi identity represents the authentic cultural and linguistic identity of the city, that the origins of the city lie with ‘the natives’. Mehta maintains that ‘[i]t is nonsense to say that Mumbai was the original name’, claiming instead that:

Bombay was created by the Portuguese and the British from a cluster of malarial islands, and to them should go the baptismal rights. The Gujaratis and Maharashtrians always called it Mumbai, when speaking Gujarati or Marathi, and Bombay when speaking English. There was no need to choose. In 1995, the Sena demanded that we choose, in all our languages, Mumbai. This is how the *ghatis* took revenge on us. They renamed everything after their politicians, and finally they renamed even the city. If they couldn’t afford to live on our roads, they could at least occupy the road signs.²

While Mehta’s privileging of European imperialism and settlement over indigenous communities is perhaps contentious, his chief concern is to emphasise the cultural and linguistic plurality which is suppressed by the renaming, a process which, he remarks, was one ‘not just of decolonisation but de-Islamisation’ and Hinduisation.³ However, by remarking that ‘[t]his is how the *ghatis* took revenge on us’, Mehta acknowledges the socio-economic differences that also lie beneath the rise of the Shiv Sena in the 1980s and 1990s. Translating the term *ghati* as ‘literally, the people from the *ghats*, or hills’, Mehta notes its use by the wealthy as a term ‘generically, for “servant”’ and, more specifically, for the Maharashtrian servant.⁴ Acknowledging his own privileged location within Bombay, as part of ‘the world of the rich and the named’ of Nepean Sea Road, Mehta offers a further reading of the city’s name change as a reclamation of the urban space by an emerging ‘Maharashtrian underclass’ from its cosmopolitan elite, part of a movement stretching back into the 1960s and 1970s.⁵ Commenting that ‘[w]e lived in Bombay and never had much to do with Mumbai’,⁶ Mehta demonstrates how, in the 1980s and 1990s, the city was being remapped not only in terms of religion and culture, but also in terms of class, and he highlights how the urban space is internally divided between different communities and constituencies.

Mehta’s travelogue is an examination of Bombay in the late 1990s, but it also comprises a renegotiation of his own position as a migrant in relation to the city of his childhood, and therefore speaks to the primary concerns of this thesis. This thesis explores the representations

² Mehta, pp. 120-21.

³ *ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 52.

of, and the relationship between, the migrant and the nation in selected works of the Bombay-born novelists Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. I examine the ways in which Mistry and Rushdie problematise, contest and resist hegemonic and exclusionary representations of nation in their fiction by re-imagining the national and urban space from the position of marginalised and minority communities. In doing so, I explore each writer's engagement with contemporary debates surrounding the crisis in secularism during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and consider how this engagement is informed by their migrant positions beyond India's borders. A primary concern is the ways in which Mistry's and Rushdie's representation of the nation, and of migrant and diasporic subjects, intersects with the representation of Bombay in their work.

Mehta's absence from Bombay, stretching from 1977 to 1998, covers a key period in the history of both the city and the nation; he left in the year that the Emergency ended and returned at a time when the Hindu nationalist movement had made significant political gains, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP – 'The India People's Party') having formed its second coalition government in 1998. The transformations taking place within Bombay during this period constitute the primary context for the novels examined in this thesis, and Mehta's account gestures towards a number of central concerns: the city and nation as contested terrains, caught between discourses of inclusive pluralism, secularism and cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and discourses of majoritarianism, exclusivity, and nativism on the other; the rise of Hindu nationalism and the increasing Hinduisation and communalisation of public space; the attempt to impose upon city and nation an exclusive, homogenised and singular identity which represses their heterogeneous histories and communities of religion, ethnicity, class and culture.

The pairing of Mistry and Rushdie is fruitful because of their comparable biographical histories and their similar textual concerns. Mistry and Rushdie were born in Bombay within five years of each other, in 1952 and 1947 respectively, and lived within minority communities within the city before emigrating West. Mistry grew up within Bombay's Parsi community, moving to Canada in 1975; Rushdie was born into the city's Muslim community, leaving at the age of thirteen to attend Rugby School in England, where he settled until emigrating to the United States in 2000. Such a cursory glance at the two writers' biographies elides the differences in their experiences within and beyond India's borders, and in their changing

relationships with their homeland after their migration. For example, Mistry's position within Bombay's Parsi community places him in an already diasporic location, even before his migration to Canada. Meanwhile, Rushdie's family left Bombay for Pakistan in 1967, and the declaration of the *fatwa* in 1989 transformed his position in relation to India into one of exile rather than migrancy. It will therefore be important to remember, in the course of this thesis, that while Mistry and Rushdie both occupy migrant positions beyond India's borders, their experiences of migrancy and their relationships with India converge and diverge in significant and exciting ways.

The authors share a number of textual concerns, although, once more, there are important points of convergence and divergence in their treatment of those concerns. The fiction of both writers is marked by the experience of occupying culturally marginal, non-Hindu positions within India and by the experience of migration away from India and into minority positions elsewhere. In their fiction, Mistry and Rushdie are concerned with constructions of nation, with who is recognised as belonging to the nation and who is excluded from representations of national identity. In exploring such notions of belonging, these two writers set their fiction against key historical moments in which definitions of nation and national identity are being contested, renegotiated and reconfigured.

There has, as yet, been no extended study juxtaposing the fiction of Mistry and Rushdie, although there are a number of book-length studies of each individual author.⁷ Mistry has been cited by Deepika Bahri as a 'highly canonical postcolonial' writer,⁸ and hailed by Peter Morey as 'one of the most important contemporary writers of postcolonial literature'.⁹ Nevertheless, despite being situated 'within the mainstream',¹⁰ Mistry has thus far received modest critical attention with, to date, two book-length studies and one volume of uneven essays dedicated to his fiction, alongside a number of article-length studies.¹¹ By contrast, Rushdie has been

⁷ Deepika Bahri's *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) places Mistry and Rushdie alongside Arundhati Roy.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹ Peter Morey, *Rohinton Mistry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 4.

¹⁰ Bahri, p. 26.

¹¹ Nilufer E. Bharucha, *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces* (Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003); Morey, *Rohinton Mistry*; J. Dodiya, ed., *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies* (New Delhi: Prestige, 1998).

described as, alternately, ‘the high priest of diasporic post-coloniality’¹² and the ‘poster child (and therefore sometimes the favored whipping boy) for a certain formulaic postcolonialism’;¹³ since the publication of *Midnight’s Children* in 1981, he has attained iconic status within the field of postcolonial literature in general, and Indian migrant writing in particular. In the light of his position as a paradigmatic postcolonial migrant writer, a position consolidated by his centrality to Homi Bhabha’s theorisations in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Rushdie has received a substantial amount of critical attention, from Timothy Brennan’s 1989 study to more recent work by Roger Y. Clark and Jaina C. Sanga.¹⁴ The particularity of my interventions into Mistry and Rushdie studies lies in my juxtaposition of the two writers, my concern with representations of Bombay in their fiction, and my interest in problematising prevailing assumptions regarding representations of migrant and diasporic subjects.

Given his pre-eminent position in Indian migrant literature it is unsurprising that, as Graham Huggan remarks, ‘few Indian novels in English to appear on the scene since the 1980s have escaped comparison with Rushdie’s or have not had their work measured, at times invidiously, against the yardstick of Rushdie’s success’.¹⁵ Reviews of Mistry’s novels often invoke Rushdie, constructing the pair as, alternately, stylistic opposites, complementary narrators of India’s postcolonial progress, or as foils to each other’s shortcomings. Peter Kemp, for example, opposes Mistry’s ‘dying city’, a ‘nightmarishly dangerous metropolis, [which] damages its inhabitants’, to Rushdie’s Bombay, ‘fizzing with vitality generated by lively ethnic and cultural intermingling’.¹⁶ Meanwhile, John Updike remarks that ‘[w]hereas Salman Rushdie’s celebrated *Midnight’s Children* gave us Bombay with a headlong, fantastic, word-twirling magic realism, Rohinton Mistry [...] presents the same diverse, congested metropolis

¹² Ania Loomba, ‘“Local-manufacture made-in-India Othello fellows’: Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-colonial Shakespeares’, in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. by Ania Loomba & Martin Orkin (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 143-63 (p. 153).

¹³ Bahri, p. 159.

¹⁴ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of Nation* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989); Roger Y. Clark, *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie’s Other Worlds* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); Jaina C. Sanga, *Salman Rushdie’s Postcolonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization* (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 73.

¹⁶ Peter Kemp, ‘Lost in a Sea of Troubles’, *Sunday Times*, 14 April 2002. <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/>> [accessed 25 March 2006] (para. 1 of 7).

with a realism that, if too wry to be called sober, might be termed Tolstoyan'.¹⁷ As this thesis progresses, such distinctions will be problematised, as Rushdie's celebrations of Bombay, and of migrancy, are revealed as being marked by anxieties which resonate with Mistry's less enthusiastic portrayals of the city and its diasporic inhabitants.

Updike's review highlights the different formal approaches employed by Mistry and Rushdie, and the centrality of such differences to current comparisons of their fiction. Morey notes that Mistry has 'sometimes been interpreted as a traditional writer, reanimating the nineteenth-century novel'.¹⁸ Laura Moss similarly comments that celebrations of Mistry's "'compassionate" realism' imply that his 'use of the form rescues the (European) novel from the uncomfortable possibility of being overtaken – threatened, even – by magic realism' such as that used by Rushdie.¹⁹ In contrast to the emphasis placed on Mistry's social realism, critics tend to foreground Rushdie's narrative departures from realism; a substantial amount of criticism has therefore discussed his use of metafictional and 'magic realist' modes of narration.²⁰ However, as Morey asserts, the unnuanced emphasis on Mistry's social, or documentary, realism – in contrast to Rushdie's 'linguistic pyrotechnics'²¹ – fails to account for the 'generic hybridity' of his work, or for the self-consciously metafictional moments in his novels.²² Thus, as Morey makes clear, 'the distinction between Mistry and Rushdie, and the traditions they are said to embody, need not be as watertight or mutually exclusive as it may at first appear'.²³

In juxtaposing Mistry with Rushdie, I do not wish to reiterate the ways in which his work has previously been positioned within a Rushdian frame of reference; it is for this reason

¹⁷ John Updike, 'Home Care', *New Yorker*, 30 September 2002, p. 140.

¹⁸ Morey, p. 14.

¹⁹ Laura Moss, 'Can Rohinton Mistry's Realism Rescue the Novel?', in *Postcolonializing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 157-65 (p. 157).

²⁰ See, for example, Nancy E. Batty, 'The Art of Suspense: Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-)Nights', *ARIEL*, 18:3 (1987), 49-65; Marc C. Connor, 'Midnight's Children and the Apocalypse of Form', *Critique*, 38:4 (1997), 289-99; Jean-Pierre Durix, 'Magic Realism in *Midnight's Children*', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 8:1 (1985), 57-63; Wendy B. Faris, 'Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction', in *Magic Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 163-189; Brian Finney, 'Demonizing Discourse in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', *ARIEL*, 29:3 (1998), 67-93; Patricia Merivale, 'Saleem Fathered by Oskar: *Midnight's Children*, Magic Realism, and *The Tin Drum*', in Zamora & Faris, eds., pp. 329-45; Laura Moss, "'Forget those damnfool realists!": Salman Rushdie's Self-Parody as the Magic Realist's "Last Sigh"', *ARIEL*, 29:4 (1998), 121-39.

²¹ Morey, p. 5.

²² *ibid.*, p. 24.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 161.

that I begin with Mistry's fiction – not to privilege his work over Rushdie's but, rather, to avoid reading his fiction through and against Rushdie's ostensibly more familiar conceptualisations of the migrant and the nation. Similarly, while I will not minimise or ignore the importance of the formal differences between the two writers, I will move beyond this more established territory of comparison; doing so, I suggest, opens up a space for a more productive exploration of the significant overlaps in their fiction. I demonstrate how placing Rushdie's work alongside Mistry's more sceptical approach enables new readings of the former's representations of the migrant, the Indian nation, and Bombay in particular, which problematise both prevailing understandings of his writing and his own articulations of such concepts in his non-fiction.

The key terms of migrant and nation in the title of this thesis invoke Homi Bhabha's influential theorisations of the nation, nationalist representations, and the relationship between the nation and the postcolonial migrant. Indeed, Bhabha's writing is often animated by readings of Rushdie's fiction, to which he responds by suggesting that 'the truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision'.²⁴ Bhabha's conceptualisations of the nation and the migrant are by now almost over-familiar. However, criticism in this field must necessarily tackle Bhabha's work, and I will therefore spend a little time setting out his key interventions. I do so over the next few pages, not in order to endorse his theories, or necessarily to set them up as central to – or as a framework for – my explorations of Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction. Rather, I do so to outline prevalent understandings of postcolonial migrancy and the diasporic space which I attempt to move beyond and problematise in my readings of Mistry and Rushdie. In particular, my approach proceeds with a scepticism towards more celebratory representations of the migrant/diasporic space that have arisen in the light of Bhabha's work.

On one level, Bhabha's theorisation of the 'nation as narration'²⁵ appears to offer a useful starting point from which to examine Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction. Their novels engage with and critique hegemonic narratives of the Indian nation from the perspective of culturally displaced – although not necessarily socio-economically marginalised, disenfranchised or

²⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Locations of Culture', in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-18 (p. 5).

²⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture*, pp. 139-70 (p. 142).

subaltern – subjects, while arguably attempting to formulate what Bhabha terms ‘[c]ounter-narratives of the nation’.²⁶ Bhabha maintains that such ‘counter-narratives’ emerge from ‘the demography of the new internationalism’, which he formulates through a problematically wide-ranging list of radically different experiences: ‘the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees’.²⁷ Locating these diverse identities and experiences within the interstitial space of the ‘beyond’,²⁸ Bhabha idealises and generalises the border as a transformative space in which ‘new signs of identity’²⁹ disturb ‘[t]he very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or “organic” ethnic communities’.³⁰

Bhabha positions the emergence of these counter-narratives within his theorisation of nationalist discourses as characterised by the ‘conceptual ambivalence’³¹ of a double narrative movement, which splits the nation ‘between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative’.³² Bhabha claims that this ambivalence within nationalist discourses enables counter-narratives to emerge from the margins of the nation and, in turn, to reveal the ‘cultural liminality *within the nation*’. Thus, in a now familiar conceptualisation, he argues that, in the split between the pedagogical and performative, ‘[w]e are confronted with the nation split within itself’ as it ‘becomes a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference’.³³

Mistry’s and Rushdie’s fiction can certainly be read through the lens provided by Bhabha’s theorisation of the nation. Their fiction often works to resist exclusivist nationalist discourses by writing the nation from the perspective of subjects marginalised by essentialist

²⁶ Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation’, p. 149.

²⁷ Bhabha, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³¹ Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation’, p. 146.

³² *ibid.*, p. 145.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 148.

narratives of India, such as those promoted by Hindu nationalism, bourgeois capitalism, or authoritarian governments. Similarly, it is tempting to situate the pair's work straightforwardly within Bhabha's contention that the counter-narratives emerging from the migrant/diasporic space reveal the 'ambivalence of the "nation" as a narrative strategy',³⁴ by 'evok[ing] and eras[ing] its totalizing boundaries' and by 'disturb[ing] those ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities'.³⁵ However, while the notion of the nation as 'internally marked by the discourse of minorities' and by 'heterogeneous histories' undoubtedly speaks to Mistry's and Rushdie's representation of the Indian nation as characterised by cultural diversity and difference, I contend that the apparent conflict that Bhabha establishes between the migrant/diasporic space and essentialising nationalist discourses is profoundly unsettled within the authors' fiction. Furthermore, Mistry and Rushdie are, I argue, often sceptical of representations, such as those proposed by Bhabha, which emphasise the interstitial, hybrid identity of the migrant or diasporic subject as offering a predominantly 'empowering condition' of disruptive agency,³⁶ or as being almost always progressive and democratising.

Thus, while recognising the importance of Bhabha's work, rather than comfortably situate Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction within his conceptualisations, my readings will question what have by now become familiar assumptions regarding the relationship between the migrant and the nation. In particular, the allegedly progressive and enabling aspects of the migrant and diasporic space will be problematised, as will the positioning of the migrant or diasporic subject automatically in subversive conflict with the nation. My discussion of Mistry's *Family Matters* (2002) in Chapter Two, for example, shows how members of Bombay's Parsi diaspora appropriate an essentialising discourse of identity even as they attempt to resist an exclusionary Hindu nationalist ideology. My exploration of *The Satanic Verses* (1988) in Chapter Three, meanwhile, demonstrates how Rushdie implicates cosmopolitan and migrant figures, such as the

³⁴ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 140.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation', in *The Location of Culture*, pp. 212-35 (p. 227).

Canadian-Sikh terrorists, within parochial forms of nationalism, unsettling his own representation in his non-fiction of the migrant as a democratic anti-nationalist.

A central problem with Bhabha's assertion that '[b]eing in the "beyond" [...] is to inhabit an intervening space'³⁷ is that the location of the 'beyond' is left unspecified and largely abstract. This interstitial space is given more material and geographical specificity by Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, who situates his theorisation of diasporic subjectivity between 'the politics of "imaginary geographies"' and the particular locations of India and the United States.³⁸ Although critical of the potentially ahistorical perspective offered by theories of 'metropolitan ambivalence'³⁹ – a criticism to which I will return – Radhakrishnan draws upon Bhabha's conceptualisations to similarly promote the interstitial 'space of the hyphen'⁴⁰ occupied by the diaspora as a potentially enabling, intervening space, in which 'metropolitan contemporaneity can be interrogated and transformed'.⁴¹ However, Radhakrishnan is primarily concerned with the responsibilities inherent in the occupation of this space, in which "'Home" [...] becomes a mode of interpretive in-betweenness, [...] a form of accountability to more than one location'.⁴²

I argue that Mistry and Rushdie engage with this notion of accountability, of necessary political and intellectual engagement with the homeland in their fiction, although they do so to different extents and in different ways. While less overt in his negotiation of what Radhakrishnan terms the 'politics of proximity' and the 'politics of distance',⁴³ Mistry is nevertheless centrally concerned with the relationship between the migrant and the politics of the homeland, and between the diasporic subject and his/her land of residence, a concern which has implications for his own position as a migrant writer; his fiction often depicts migrant and diasporic figures whose anxious attempts to distance and detach themselves from everyday local and national politics are revealed as both impossible and irresponsible. Rushdie more explicitly and self-consciously engages with his own position as a migrant, and as a migrant writer. My

³⁷ Bhabha, 'Introduction', p. 7.

³⁸ R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. xiv.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. xxiv.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. xxiv.

⁴² *ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 209.

explorations of his fiction demonstrate the ways in which his negotiation of the intervening 'space of the hyphen' has become increasingly anxious and ambivalent, and actually problematises profoundly the theoretical frameworks often used to account for his work.

While less critical than writers such as Aijaz Ahmad or Bhabha's theories of 'metropolitan ambivalence',⁴⁴ Radhakrishnan does claim that aestheticized celebrations of migrant and diasporic positions are often 'completely at odds with the actual experience of difference as undergone by diasporic peoples' and potentially create 'a virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities'.⁴⁵ Radhakrishnan therefore argues for the 'agential politicization of ambivalence'⁴⁶ through a closer engagement with the 'historical specificity' of the diasporic location.⁴⁷ Bhabha has frequently been criticised for 'register[ing] the experience [of migrancy] as one of unmitigated pleasure' by subordinating the material conditions of migrancy and diaspora⁴⁸ to the 'poetics of relocation and reinscription'.⁴⁹ Against such criticism, it is important to recognise the moments where Bhabha does acknowledge the profound 'perplexity of living in the liminal spaces',⁵⁰ alongside the anxiety and 'disorientation' of living 'in the "beyond"'.⁵¹ Furthermore, as Robert Young notes, situating Bhabha's work within its Indian intellectual, academic and political contexts often moderates the apparent 'abstractness' of his theories.⁵²

Nevertheless, despite claims to describe the 'relation of art to social reality',⁵³ in Bhabha's theorisation of the subversive possibilities of the diasporic space, politics is, as Bart Moore-Gilbert observes, 'almost obsessively figured in (or reduced to) terms of discursive transactions'; this tendency potentially elides 'material contexts and negotiations of [...] power'.⁵⁴ Thus, according to Ahmad, whose criticisms of metropolitan theorists such as Bhabha

⁴⁴ Radhakrishnan, p. xxiv.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. xxiv.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. xv.

⁴⁸ Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 70.

⁴⁹ Bhabha, 'Newness', p. 225.

⁵⁰ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 162.

⁵¹ Bhabha, 'Introduction', p. 1.

⁵² Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 350.

⁵³ Bhabha, 'Introduction', p. 12.

⁵⁴ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London & New York: Verso, 1997), pp. 138-39.

extend into his reading of Rushdie's work, migrancy is presented as an 'ontological condition' detached from history and politics.⁵⁵ As I have noted, the celebratory 'ontological' slant of Bhabha's theorisations is perhaps less emphatic than Ahmad implies. Nonetheless, Ahmad's criticism of detached, metropolitan theorisations informs my scepticism towards such constructions of the migrant/diasporic space, and my readings of Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction consider how vectors of history, politics, and class difference intersect with experiences, and aestheticisations, of migrancy. In examining Mistry's fiction, for example, I consider his sensitivity to tensions between those able to migrate, and those unable or unwilling to do so, as a result of social and economic circumstance. In his novels, migrant and diasporic experiences are deeply contingent upon economic, political, class and cultural affiliations. Similarly, while drawing upon Ahmad's work, my discussion of Rushdie's fiction shows how the emphasis placed, by Ahmad and others, on his celebrations of migrancy elides the ways in which Rushdie continually, and anxiously, problematises his own position as a middle-class cosmopolitan migrant in relation to the various national and subnational constituencies he attempts to represent.

It is with the criticism of prevailing theorisations of migrancy in mind, and the emphasis placed by this criticism on the importance of historical specificity, that I situate my readings of Mistry and Rushdie within a close understanding of the historical and socio-political contexts with which their novels engage. Nayantara Sahgal has questioned the capacity of migrant novelists to write insightfully about the Indian nation, its history and politics:

They are not affected by the raw winds assailing India or – which is more crucial – by the texture of daily life. They are not encumbered by the nitty gritty of carving out a continuity from difficult, sometimes unpredictable circumstances, with gaining an inch of breathing space at a time in the on-going process of building a nation that has only in recent times become a nation. They live in circumstances so materially and psychologically removed from those of their countrymen on the subcontinent as to give them almost nothing in common – least of all an identity – connected with hailing from the same piece of territory on a map. They are reacting to the pressures and concerns of an environment that is not Indian, and are fashioning identities of choice not of history.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ahmad (1992), p. 127.

⁵⁶ Nayantara Sahgal, 'Some Thoughts on the Puzzle of Identity', in *Points of View: A Personal Response to Life, Literature and Politics* (New Delhi: Prestige, 1997), pp. 80-92 (p. 85).

Sahgal's contention that the migrant's distance gives him/her 'almost nothing in common' with their 'countrymen' is complicated by both the biography and fiction of Mistry and Rushdie, who, even as they 'hail from the same piece of territory' of Bombay, were part of different minority communities within a predominantly Hindu nation. Mistry's Parsi identity, as I have suggested, placed him within a diasporic location even before his migration to Canada. Rushdie's childhood position within Bombay's minority Muslim population, meanwhile, locates his Indian identity within a community increasingly constructed as 'other' to the nation.

However, each writer's location within minority communities intersects with and is complicated by a privileged socio-economic position which further destabilises Sahgal's uncharacteristically simplistic view of the migrant's distance from 'the texture of daily life'. As Homi Bhabha (himself a Bombay-born Parsi) explains, the Parsis are a 'privileged minority' within Bombay, and constitute a generally well-educated, professionally employed and relatively economically secure group.⁵⁷ However, flourishing under British rule, but remaining detached from the composite national identity being forged by the nationalist movement, Parsis experience, according to Bhabha, the anxiety of 'not being authentically Indian'.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, while Rushdie grew up within an affluent and well-educated Muslim urban elite, his family were directly affected by Partition, and 'were defined and shaped by the frontier' between India and Pakistan.⁵⁹ Complicating notions of 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness', Mistry's and Rushdie's locations within India before their migration reveal the nation as internally marked by ethno-religious and cultural differences, which intersect with socio-economic and political differences.

Sahgal's resistance to the possibilities offered by migrant writing evokes a number of more general criticisms of the figure of the cosmopolitan, criticisms which inform my exploration of the politics of migrancy in this thesis. As Elleke Boehmer's overview of 'postcolonial migrant literature' makes clear, there is a common slippage in postcolonial criticism between the cosmopolitan and the migrant, and the prevailing assumption is often that

⁵⁷ Homi Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial Critic: Homi Bhabha Interviewed by David Bennett and Terry Collits', in *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism, and Culture*, ed. by Patrick Colm Hogan & Lalita Pandit (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1995), pp. 237-53 (p. 245).

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Salman Rushdie, 'India's Fiftieth Anniversary', in *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 159-64 (p. 161).

in discussing the figure of the migrant we are, in fact, referring to the figure of the cosmopolitan.⁶⁰ This is particularly the case in criticism of Rushdie's fiction, but also, more recently, of Mistry's; thus, Bahri characterises the two authors' work as 'loosely typifying a genre [...] [of] cosmopolitan writing'.⁶¹ As Edward Said insists, however, experiences of migrancy and cosmopolitanism do not necessarily coincide,⁶² and my readings of Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction are informed by each writer's self-conscious negotiation of the overlapping of, and important differences between, the figures of the cosmopolitan and the migrant.

According to Bruce Robbins, the cosmopolitan tends to be criticised for enjoying a 'privileged and irresponsible detachment' from local and national affiliations.⁶³ Often represented as indulging in a 'luxuriously free-floating view from above',⁶⁴ the cosmopolitan occupies, in prevailing understandings, 'uncommitted, and detached positions'.⁶⁵ These criticisms of the *cosmopolitan* resonate with Sahgal's problematisation of the *migrant* writer's position beyond India's borders, while similarly chiming with Ahmad's assessment of metropolitan theorists and migrant writers. However, as Robbins makes clear, and as Mistry's work suggests, cosmopolitanism does not necessarily accompany 'physical travel' but can ensue from 'thoughts and feelings entertained while one stays at home';⁶⁶ one can be cosmopolitan without occupying a migrant identity position. Similarly, and as my discussion of Rushdie's work makes clear, the act of migration does not necessarily enable a 'luxuriously free-floating' cosmopolitan perspective. Cosmopolitan and migrant identities are not, therefore, interchangeable or equivalent.

Nevertheless, notions of cosmopolitanism are fruitful to a discussion of the politics of migrancy in Mistry's and Rushdie's work, and Rushdie's writing in particular is regularly characterised by an understanding of the migrant *as a cosmopolitan*. Mistry is often more

⁶⁰ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 239. See, in particular, pp. 233-43.

⁶¹ Bahri, p. 2.

⁶² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 403.

⁶³ Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah & Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 1-19 (p. 4).

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Rob Wilson, 'A New Cosmopolitanism Is In the Air: Some Dialectical Twists and Turns', in Cheah & Robbins, eds., pp. 351-61 (p. 352).

⁶⁶ Robbins, p. 4.

interested in the Parsi diasporic subject's relationship with India than in the potentially privileged migrant beyond India's borders. His negotiation of the politics of migrancy, however, engages with issues raised by critiques of cosmopolitanism, even as he represents migrant – rather than cosmopolitan – figures. In particular, his fiction is often concerned with the migrant and diasporic subject's potential detachment from local affiliations, and his disengagement from national history and politics. Rather than mobilising the migrant or diasporic space as one of intervention, Mistry's characters often problematically retreat from renegotiations of national identity taking place in the public domain, and often move towards problematically 'uncommitted, and detached' positions. Furthermore, as his fiction shows, members of diasporic communities *within* the nation may actually inhabit spaces more politically and culturally removed from the 'nitty gritty' processes of nation-building than those occupied by migrants beyond the nation's borders.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Although I recognise the importance of the Canadian cultural context for Mistry's work, this thesis is primarily concerned with his engagement with contemporary Indian socio-historical and political contexts. In order to maintain a close engagement with the material realities of India's postcolonial history and politics, I therefore focus on the negotiation of the relationship between the migrant and the *Indian* homeland in his fiction. Indeed, as I suggest in Chapter Two, in contrast to Mistry's detailed examination of the 'nitty gritty' texture of daily life within Bombay, Canada often appears as an abstract space within his work and he has yet to engage at length with his land of residence in his fiction. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which Mistry's location within Canada impacts upon his fiction and readings of it. As Ranu Samantrai observes, while Mistry's work is 'claimed by Indians as Indian fiction and by Parsis as Parsi fiction', it has also 'been acknowledged as legitimately Canadian by no less authority than the committee that grants the Governor General's Awards'. The simultaneous Canadianness and Indianness of his fiction, Samantrai continues, 'suggests a breakdown and overlap of nations such that it is unclear where India ends and Canada begins. Far from coherent, self-enclosed facts of nature, nations and cultures (which themselves fail to coincide) are revealed as interpenetrating, not distinct from each other but made by, and making, each other' (Ranu Samantrai, *States of Belonging: Pluralism, Migrancy, Literature*, *Essays in Canadian Writing*, 57 (1995), 33-50 (p. 34)). As Samantrai makes clear, Mistry's collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) can be read productively in the light of this 'breakdown and overlap' of nations, as it moves between Bombay and Toronto, India and Canada. Similarly, his short story 'Swimming Lessons' offers a significant representation of the relationship between the Indian migrant and Canada and, moreover, the relationship between the Indian migrant *writer* and Canada. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the ways in which Mistry establishes an implicit dialogue between his critiques of discourses of Indian secularism and Canadian multiculturalism. As I suggest in Chapter Two, Mistry's scepticism towards the successes of Indian secularism intersects with a suspicion of idealisations of Canadian multiculturalism as offering a national paradigm of multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious 'unity in diversity'. Similarly, Mistry's work appears to question the commitment of both the Indian and the Canadian governments to the adequate implementation of national policies of secularism and multiculturalism, respectively, as well as to whether such policies offer minority communities the protection and equality they promise. Mistry's suggestion, for example, that he 'prefer[s] Multiculturalism to the direct racism of the Melting Pot because [he]'d rather be alive and face the subtle discrimination' reveals an ambivalence towards the discourse of multiculturalism, and gestures towards an anxiety over the discrepancy between the rhetoric of multiculturalism and the realities of daily life in Canada (Geoff Hancock, 'An Interview with Rohinton Mistry', *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 65 (1989), 143-50 (p. 145)). In a similar vein, Mistry's short story, 'Squatter', offers a critical representation of the 'Multicultural Department' which is, according to Nariman, 'supposed to ensure that ethnic cultures are able to flourish, so that Canadian society will

While Mistry is primarily concerned with migrant and diasporic identities – rather than with overtly cosmopolitan figures – Rushdie engages more explicitly with notions of cosmopolitanism. Indeed, as I suggest in Chapter Three, migrant and cosmopolitan identities frequently overlap in significant ways in his work. In both Rushdie’s fiction and non-fiction, the migrant is often, although not exclusively, a cosmopolitan figure, an aspect central to Ahmad’s criticism of his representation of migrancy. Thus, in Rushdie’s writing, unlike Mistry’s, the migrant is often a *cosmopolitan migrant* and, in his fiction, Rushdie self-consciously explores the apparent distance of this cosmopolitan migrant from the ‘nitty gritty’ of national life. However, like Mistry, Rushdie also explores the potential detachment of the socio-economically privileged – often cosmopolitan – *national* subject from the ‘texture of daily life’. In the light of his non-fictional conceptualisations of migrancy, which are situated within a framework of cosmopolitan aesthetics and liberal humanism, my examination of Rushdie’s work problematises the opposition he sets up between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and between cosmopolitanism and illiberalism. Presenting a more nuanced reading of both the cosmopolitan and the migrant – as well as the cosmopolitan migrant – in Rushdie’s fiction, and reading his novels against the grain of his own non-fiction, I identify the ways in which he shows cosmopolitanism intersecting with, and being implicated within, hegemonic and illiberal forms of nationalism.

consist of a mosaic of cultures’. ‘If you ask me,’ Nariman declares, ‘mosaic and melting pot are both nonsense, and ethnic is a polite way of saying bloody foreigner’ (Rohinton Mistry, ‘Squatter’, in *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992[1987]), pp. 145-169 (p. 160)). For explorations of Mistry’s fiction in relation to the Canadian context, see: Rocío G. Davis, ‘Paradigms of Postcolonial and Immigrant Doubleness: Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag*’, in Rocío G. Davis & Rosalia Baena, eds., *Tricks with a Glass: Writing Ethnicity in Canada* (Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 71-92; John Eustace, ‘Deregulating the Evacuated Body: Rohinton Mistry’s “Squatter”’, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 28:1 (2003), 26-42; Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, ‘Interrogating Multiculturalism: Double Diaspora, Nation, and Re-Narration in Rohinton Mistry’s Canadian Tales’, *Canadian Literature*, 181 (2004), 27-41; Maria Rosa Giordani, ‘Language as Identity in Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*’, in Isabella Maria Zoppi, ed., *Routes of the Roots: Geography and Literature in the English Speaking Countries* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1998), pp. 459-66; Claudio Gorlier, ‘Canadindia: Reality and Memory in Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag*’, *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 30:2 (2002), 11-16; Ajay Heble, ‘“A Foreign Presence in the Stall”: Towards a Poetics of Cultural Hybridity in Rohinton Mistry’s Migration Stories’, *Canadian Literature*, 137 (1992), 51-61; Samantrai; and Michael Thorpe, ‘Canadian “Globalism”: Conflicts and Contradictions’, in Wolfgang Zach & Ken L. Goodwin, eds., *Nationalism vs Internationalism: (Inter)National Dimensions of Literatures in English* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg – Verlag, 1996), pp. 293-98. For a discussion of Canadian multiculturalism, see: Smaro Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2000); Chelva Kanaganayakam, ‘Cool Dots and a Hybrid Scarborough: Multiculturalism as Canadian Myth’, in Moss, ed., pp. 140-48; and Victor Ramraj, ‘Answering the Answers, Asking More Questions’, in Moss, ed., pp. 312-324.

As my readings of Mistry's and Rushdie's work suggest, by problematising the relationship between the migrant and nation, the cosmopolitan and the nation, and between the national subject and the nation's history and politics, both authors reveal how, to borrow from Radhakrishnan, 'categories of "inside" and "outside" are in a state of interchangeability',⁶⁸ as '[k]nowing the identity of one's country cannot be reduced to a mere matter of residence'.⁶⁹ As their fiction demonstrates, 'neither distance nor proximity guarantees truth or alienation'.⁷⁰ In doing so, I contend, Mistry and Rushdie reveal an anxiety regarding their own privileged, and potentially politically distanced, positions as migrant writers beyond India's borders.

It is with the importance of the cultural, religious, socio-economic and political differences within the nation, and with the 'texture of daily life' in mind, that I turn next to a close engagement with the historical and socio-political contexts within which the texts explored are produced and with which they interact. Published between 1988 and 2002, the five central novels examined will be situated within contemporary debates in the 1980s and 1990s regarding the founding principles of the Indian nation, and notions of Indianness. During these decades, according to Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, India's 'founding myths' of socialist secularism and, to a lesser extent, federalism and democracy, 'start[ed] to be called into question'.⁷¹ Identifying a 'fundamental debate in Indian political and intellectual life during the 1980s and 1990s about the crisis of secularism',⁷² Sunil Khilnani similarly observes that, '[b]y the 1990s, definitions of Indianness were in fierce contest' as competing nationalisms vied for control over the state and the national imagination.⁷³

Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction during these decades is informed by and contributes to such debates. Examining the material and imaginative consequences for India's minority or marginalised communities, as well as for their own positions beyond India's borders, of attempts to redefine Indianness, Mistry and Rushdie engage with a number of key moments in India's post-Independence history. The 1975-7 Emergency constitutes a crucial episode for both

⁶⁸ Radhakrishnan, p. xxiv.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. xxvi.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 209.

⁷¹ Stuart Corbridge & John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 92.

⁷² Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999 [1997]), p. 189.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 152.

writers, while the rise of Hindu nationalism and communalism during the 1980s and 1990s is another central concern. More specifically, events explored include: the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, and the anti-Sikh violence which followed; the agitation surrounding, and final destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, and the ensuing nation-wide riots; the Bombay bombings of 1993; the renaming of Bombay as Mumbai in 1995. However, the fiction examined moves beyond these moments, to consider the aftermath of Independence and Partition, and the impact of events in the 1950s and 60s, such as the language movements and the partition of Bombay. In engaging with the social and cultural impact of such moments, Mistry and Rushdie demonstrate how, in Ahmad's terms, "'nation" [...] is a *process*, which is made and remade, a thousand times over, and, more than a process, "nation" is a *terrain of struggle*'.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Mistry and Rushdie explore the renegotiation of the Nehruvian vision of a socialist secular nation as it is played out in Bombay. By representing the impact of moments of national trauma within the city space, both writers map Bombay as a further terrain of struggle within the nation, a space similarly marked by internal differences and cultural liminalities.

As my examination of Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction progresses, it will be occupied by what Khilnani terms the 'crisis in secularism', and it is therefore worth briefly outlining a working definition of secularism as it is understood here. The Nehruvian vision of India as a socialist secular nation was based on 'the conviction that it was a composite nation, born of a civilisation which over centuries had drawn from and assimilated the many religious and cultural traditions present on the subcontinent'.⁷⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* (1946), in many ways a manifesto for this vision, emphasises India's 'cultural synthesis and fusion' and its 'astonishing inclusive capacity',⁷⁶ and it is here that Nehru formulated the central ideal of India's 'unity in [...] diversity'.⁷⁷ In contrast to Bhabha's model of nationalist representation, in which "'imagined communities" are given essentialist identities',⁷⁸ Nehru's vision of India

⁷⁴ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), p. 145.

⁷⁵ Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 189.

⁷⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1946]), p. 73.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷⁸ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 149.

idealistically, and perhaps naively, aimed to show, according to Khilnani, ‘no trace of a desire for purification or hardening of boundaries’.⁷⁹ Instead, anti-colonial Indian nationalism proposed an understanding of the nation as constituted by overlapping cultures and ‘interconnected differences’.⁸⁰

As Rustom Bharucha explains, this secular vision, translated into the relationship between the nation-state and religion, has been understood as, on the one hand, neutral ‘impartiality to religion’ and, on the other, an ‘equal respect for all religions’; that is, as neutrality towards, or equal treatment of, all religions.⁸¹ Following Bharucha’s reading of secularism as, ‘in its most ideal formulation, [...] a respect for differences cutting across class, caste, community, and gender’,⁸² language and religion, and in the light of the constitutional endorsement of such equal respect, I argue that it is this notion of the equal respect and equal treatment of India’s diverse religious and cultural practices that underpins Mistry’s and Rushdie’s understanding of India. As will become clear, Mistry and Rushdie are at times both supportive and sceptical of the Nehruvian vision of nation, and are also increasingly critical of the nation-state’s apparent reluctance, at moments of internal conflict, to endorse positively or actively protect minority or marginalised class, caste and religious communities.

As Khilnani suggests, ‘[w]ithin two decades of Nehru’s death in 1964, India’s layered, plural, political self-definition was in serious difficulties’,⁸³ and it is within the crisis in the ideal of socialist secularism in particular that the texts studied are located. The Nehruvian vision of nation has been increasingly criticised by ‘anti-secularist’ commentators, such as Partha Chatterjee, T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy, who, while vehemently opposing the communalisation of Indian identity, are sceptical of the adequacy of secularism as a response to Hindu majoritarianism.⁸⁴ In a different vein, autonomist movements during the 1980s, such as the Khalistan movement in the Punjab and separatist movements in Kashmir, challenged (and

⁷⁹ Khilnani, p. 168.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁸¹ Rustom Bharucha, *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 15.

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸³ Khilnani, p. 179.

⁸⁴ See the essays collected in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. by Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), particularly: Partha Chatterjee, ‘Secularism and Tolerance’, pp. 345-79; T. N. Madan, ‘Secularism in Its Place’, pp. 297-320; and Ashis Nandy, ‘The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance’, pp. 321-44.

continue to challenge) the idea of an inclusive nation. The rise of Hindu nationalism, meanwhile, enabled by the weakening of Congress, has provided a substantial challenge to the Nehruvian legacy, both in its attempts to redefine Indianness in exclusively Hindu terms and in its appropriation of the language of secularism itself with which to confront what it terms the ‘pseudo-secularism’ of Congress.⁸⁵ Thus, the 1980s and 1990s saw a conflict between two divergent nationalisms, one offering an inclusive, heterogeneous understanding of India, the other positing an essentialised and exclusive version of Indianness; although, as I will show, within Mistry’s and Rushdie’s work, and during the 1990s, the divergence between these conflicting positions is increasingly complicated.

While Hindu nationalism has been present since at least the 1920s, it was in the 1980s and 1990s that the movement began to gain electoral successes and to dominate the national political agenda. Leading the Hindu majoritarian movement is the *Sangh Parivar*, or ‘Sangh family’, an umbrella organisation which includes the BJP.⁸⁶ The BJP was particularly successful in the 1990s, emerging as the largest single party in the 1996 elections, and between 1998 and 2004 its leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was Prime Minister, residing over a BJP majority coalition. Drawing upon Vinayak D. Savarkar’s 1923 text *Hindutva – Who is Hindu?*, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar promote ‘Hinduness’ as the ‘true’ national faith, culture and identity. Following Savarkar, Indianness, as constructed through ‘Hinduness’, is conceived as resting on ‘geographical unity, racial features and a common culture’.⁸⁷ Set against this three-fold construction of filiative belonging, which I explore in detail in Chapter Two, is the representation of ‘threatening Others’ with ‘extra-territorial loyalties’.⁸⁸ Muslims in particular, but also Christians, Jews and Parsis, are constructed as non-Indian because unable to claim India as their ‘holy land’.⁸⁹ Following Ernest Gellner, Bhabha argues that ‘the very idea of a pure,

⁸⁵ Ian Talbot, *India & Pakistan* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 176.

⁸⁶ The *Sangh Parivar* also includes the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), the Bajrang Dal (VHP Youth Wing), the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. See David Ludden, ‘Introduction. Ayodhya: Window on the World’, in *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed. by David Ludden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 1-23 (pp. 15-16).

⁸⁷ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925-1990s* (London: Hurst & Co., 1996), p. 26.

⁸⁸ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 79.

⁸⁹ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 183.

“ethnically cleansed” national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood’.⁹⁰ The ideology of *Hindutva* similarly aims to homogenise Indian national identity to produce a ‘culturally and ethnically cleaned-up homogenous [*sic*] community with a singular Indian citizenship’; it is, Khilnani claims, a project ‘designed to efface all the signs of non-Hinduness that are in fact so integral to India’.⁹¹

The destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 represented such an attempt to erase the architectural and cultural signs of a non-Hindu presence. Located as the birthplace of Ram, who is represented as a founding national hero, Ayodhya is identified by the *Sangh Parivar* as the most important and sacred site of Hinduism and is positioned at the centre of the campaign to reclaim the Indian nation as a sacred Hindu territory.⁹² Translated into a symbol of the contaminative presence of the non-Hindu other, and the violation of the Indian (Hindu) nation, demolition of the sixteenth-century mosque was represented as crucial to the purification of the nation.⁹³ The nation-wide riots which followed its destruction by Hindu militants were amongst the worst seen since Partition, and have been read by many as symptomatic of a deep crisis in India’s national identity, and as a potentially disastrous turning away from, and betrayal of, the Nehruvian legacy of secularism. Corbridge and Harriss remark that the ‘destruction of the Babri Masjid was more than just an assault on a mosque, important though that was: it was also an attack upon the secular principles of the Indian state’.⁹⁴ The destruction of the mosque therefore highlights the material consequences of essentialising nationalist representations, as imaginative and ideological constructions of the nation are translated into concrete actions affecting everyday life. It is this interplay between the cognitive and ideological constructions of the nation and the material realities of everyday life which informs my readings of literary texts in this thesis. While the destruction of the Babri Masjid provides the direct context for Mistry’s *Family Matters* and Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh*

⁹⁰ Bhabha, ‘Introduction’, p. 5. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 2.

⁹¹ Khilnani, p. 188-89.

⁹² Jaffrelot, p. 401.

⁹³ Hansen (1999), p. 175.

⁹⁴ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 190.

(1995), the agitation leading up to and following the destruction of the mosque, and the ideological manoeuvres these events symbolised, cast their shadow over all the texts studied.

Bombay was particularly badly affected by the violence which followed events in Ayodhya. The riots in December 1992 and January 1993, and the bombings in March 1993 were, Kalpana Sharma explains, ‘considered a watershed in Bombay’s contemporary history because they symbolized, in some way, the demise of the city’s “cosmopolitanism”’.⁹⁵ Bombay provides the central fulcrum upon which my exploration of the representation of migrant and nation in Mistry’s and Rushdie’s fiction pivots. According to Khilnani, the subcontinent’s cities are ‘dramatic scenes of Indian democracy: places where the idea of India is being disputed and defined anew’.⁹⁶ The Nehruvian vision of India informs both Mistry’s and Rushdie’s fictional conceptualisations of Bombay, and their anxieties over the city’s transformation in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The intersection between Nehru’s emphasis on India’s urban future⁹⁷ and his vision of India’s inclusive multicultural identity anticipates these two writers’ understandings of their city of birth. Nehru cites ‘the crowd – the mass of the Indian people, in their infinite diversity and yet their amazing unity’ as a key to understanding India’s secular identity,⁹⁸ and both Mistry and Rushdie map Bombay through such a crowd. However, in their novels, the ‘crowd’ offers both inclusion and exclusion, and is often both welcoming and threatening. Bombay represents a city caught between an ‘uneasy blend of parochial politics and cosmopolitanism’,⁹⁹ and in Mistry’s and Rushdie’s fiction it is both a space of social transformation and cosmopolitan hybridity, and of violent exclusions and inequities.

By focussing on the representation of Bombay, my thesis is situated within a growing body of historical, sociological, and literary work concerning the city’s post-Independence progress. Such work includes the companion collections examining Bombay’s political, social, economic and intellectual development, *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (1995) and *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (1995), edited by Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner, alongside the related collection, *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition* (2003), edited by Sujata

⁹⁵ Kalpana Sharma, ‘Chronicle of a Riot Foretold’, in Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 268-86 (p. 269).

⁹⁶ Khilnani, p. 109.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

⁹⁸ Nehru, p. 35.

⁹⁹ Khilnani, p. 11.

Patel and Jim Masselos; the socio-anthropological work on the city by Thomas Blom Hansen, and recent work by Arjun Appadurai;¹⁰⁰ and Suketu Mehta's recent memoir/travelogue with which I began. While representations of Bombay are invoked in current studies of Mistry and Rushdie, and inform a number of article-length examinations of Rushdie's work in particular,¹⁰¹ there has as yet been no sustained study on either author's work which positions Bombay as its central axis.

Sujata Patel observes that, '[i]n both popular and academic literature Bombay is typically characterized as India's most modern city'.¹⁰² As Khilnani notes, in the immediate post-Independence period, this paradigmatic position in the popular national imaginary extended into Hindi cinema, in which Bombay 'stood for a certain idea of India [...] a nationalist vision that was recognizably Nehru's own'.¹⁰³ This position as a paradigm of India's cultural diversity stems from Bombay's long history as a space of national and international trade and commerce. Through such trade Bombay has achieved a 'unique mix of linguistic, regional, religious and caste communities', a diversity produced by, and producing, the city's 'openness to influences from all corners of India and, in fact, the whole world'.¹⁰⁴ Thus, Bombay often figures in popular and academic, literary and visual texts as 'a metaphor of India's diversity'.¹⁰⁵

However, Bombay's 'reputation of cosmopolitanism, tolerance and effective local government',¹⁰⁶ was increasingly called into question during the 1970s, 80s and 90s. As this

¹⁰⁰ Hansen, *The Saffron Wave* (2001) and *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai', *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), 627-651.

¹⁰¹ For example, Carmen Concilio, 'The City as Text(ure): Bombay in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*', in Elsa Linguanti & Viktoria Tchernichova, eds., *The Great Work of Making Real: Salman Rushdie's The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2003), pp. 129-49; Roshan G. Shahani, 'Polyphonous Voices in the City: Bombay's Indian-English Fiction', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 May 1995, 1250-1254; Rachel Trousdale, "'City of Mongrel Joy": Bombay and the Shiv Sena in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 39:2 (2004), 95-110; Rashmi Varma, 'Provincializing the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai', *Social Text*, 22:4 (2004), 65-89.

¹⁰² Sujata Patel, 'Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism', in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, ed. by Sujata Patel & Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-30 (p. 3)

¹⁰³ Khilnani, p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ Alice Thorner, 'Bombay: Diversity and Exchange', in Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. xiii-xxxv (p. xxxiv).

¹⁰⁵ Hansen (2001), p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner, 'Preface' to Patel & Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Metaphor*, pp. ix-xii. (p. ix).

thesis traces those decades through Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction, an important issue will be the city's transformation from Bombay to Mumbai, a renaming which reflected a shift in the imaginative cartography of the city which was accompanied by real and material changes for its inhabitants. Hansen claims that '[m]ost people in the city will agree today that it is no longer the same city as it used to be, that Mumbai is not like Bombay'.¹⁰⁷ The city was officially renamed Mumbai in 1995 by the state government, headed by a coalition between the regional Shiv Sena party and the nationalist BJP. While the renaming 'resonated with broader and nationalist concerns with decolonization',¹⁰⁸ it also signalled, for Amit Chaudhuri, 'a new phase in the city's history and self-definition'.¹⁰⁹ As Chaudhuri explains, '[w]hile Bombay invoked the world of the colonial and the British-influenced, liberal, post-colonial middle class, "Mumbai" signifies the Post-Modern, contradictory city in which xenophobia, globalisation, extreme right-wing politics and capitalism come together.'¹¹⁰

As I have noted, the renaming was part of the Shiv Sena's campaign to redefine Bombay as a space belonging exclusively to Marathi-speaking Maharashtrians, a campaign extending back to the 1960 bifurcation of the old state of Bombay into the two linguistically defined states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.¹¹¹ Formed in 1966 with the aim of creating 'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians', the Shiv Sena initially focussed on protesting against the presence of South Indian migrants within the city who, it alleged, were stealing jobs from the indigenous Maharashtrian population.¹¹² However, the location of the 'other' in Shiv Sena discourse shifted, from South Indians to Communists, to the city elite and, later, Muslims.¹¹³ The Shiv Sena's sub-national anti-migrant, anti-Muslim discourse strongly parallels that of the Hindu nationalist movement, deploying a 'sons-of-the-soil' rhetoric which privileges linguistic and cultural filiations as signifiers of belonging, and constructs Marathi-speaking Maharashtrians as the true inheritors of the city. Furthermore, the Sena's 'avowed

¹⁰⁷ Hansen (2001), p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Amit Chaudhuri, 'Light, Colour and Real Estate', *Review of Love and Longing in Bombay*, *London Review of Books*, 21 May 1998. pp. 16-18 (p. 16).

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Politics in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 40.

¹¹² Hansen (2001), p. 46.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

Maharashtrianism has always coexisted with a strong Hindu nationalist undercurrent',¹¹⁴ a coexistence consolidated in 1984 when the Shiv Sena established a political alliance with the BJP and combined its Marathi-chauvinism with the exclusivist politics of *Hindutva*. Sujata Patel remarks that, as a consequence, in Bombay 'class, community, and language had become connected through a new agenda and a new project, now labelled Hindutva'.¹¹⁵ Allying its sub-nationalist concerns with nationalist aspirations, the Shiv Sena aimed to redefine Bombay as Hindu-Marathi space, thereby endangering the city's famed open cosmopolitan secularism.

In the light of this intersection between national and subnational interests, it is important to acknowledge the significant slippage between city and nation at work within Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction. While I examine the relationship between the nation and the migrant in their work, I demonstrate that this is figured predominantly through an engagement with the relationship between Bombay and the migrant. It is therefore worth stating that the version of India presented in Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction, although firmly situated within India's founding myths, is decisively shaped by their specifically Bombayite perspective. In their writing, Bombay figures as both synecdochal for the Indian nation, and as unique within that nation. The city is set at a slight angle to the nation, both exceptional to India and exceptionally Indian, representative of, and distinct from, the rest of the national space. It is therefore important to remember that the novels examined are about India, but are about a particular version of India and a particular space within India. Similarly, the Bombay of their fiction is both a real and an imagined location, a city both of lived experience and of nostalgic remembrance informed by its paradigmatic position within the Indian national imaginary. As such, Bombay is, in Mistry's and Rushdie's work, caught between the writers' close engagement with the city's contemporary political realities and its status as a textual construct.

Furthermore, mention should be made of the naming of the city in the chapters that follow. While the city was renamed in 1995 as Mumbai, both Mistry and Rushdie continue to name it Bombay in their work. Chaudhuri remarks that '[a]lthough Bombay and Mumbai are the same city in reality, they are probably two different cities of the mind, or at any rate the names

¹¹⁴ Jayant Lele, 'Saffronization of the Shiv Sena: The Political Economy of City, State and Nation', in Patel & Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Metaphor*, pp. 185-212 (p. 192).

¹¹⁵ Sujata Patel. 'Bombay and Mumbai', p. 5.

signify two phases in its history'.¹¹⁶ As Chaudhuri notes, and as Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction suggests, these 'two different cities' are not discrete socio-historical or imagined locations, but are spaces which overlap and co-exist in significant ways. However, rather than proceed by signifying the city through what Sheldon Pollock et al. term the 'brutal forward slash' of Bombay/Mumbai,¹¹⁷ and in the light of Mistry's and Rushdie's insistence on naming the city Bombay, I will also call it Bombay here. As will become clear, Mistry and Rushdie are often resolutely remembering and representing Bombay, not Mumbai – even as they negotiate the transition between these two cities – and present themselves as Bombayites rather than Mumbaikars; in the process, they resist and contest the violently exclusionary constructions of the urban space at work in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, while also signalling their distance from contemporary experiences of the city.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each examining an individual novel, although other fiction and non-fiction by the authors will be encountered. The first two chapters concentrate on Mistry's fiction, the remaining three on Rushdie's writing. Between them, Mistry and Rushdie are the authors of a substantial body of work. Mistry has published three novels and one collection of short stories; Rushdie is the author of nine novels, a collection of short stories, two collections of non-fiction, a travelogue, two stage adaptations, and has co-edited a collection of Indian writing. In a study of this nature it is impossible to deal adequately and in detail with all of these texts. I therefore focus on novels whose representations of the relationship between the migrant or diasporic subject and the nation are situated specifically, or predominantly, in Bombay.

My examination of Mistry's work focuses primarily on *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). Mistry's first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), gestures towards a number of concerns of this thesis: the position of the Parsi diaspora in Bombay; discourses of secularism and multiculturalism; the notion of political detachment from local and national issues; the role of the artist in negotiating myths of nation. However, many of these issues are developed in *Family Matters*, published eleven years later. I therefore concentrate on *A Fine*

¹¹⁶ Chaudhuri, p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Sheldon Pollock et al., 'Cosmopolitanisms', *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), 577-89 (p. 586).

Balance and *Family Matters* because they act in many ways as companion texts; while they approach questions of national identity and belonging from different perspectives, they offer alternative, but nevertheless complementary, representations of Bombay in the late 1970s, early 1980s, and 1990s. *A Fine Balance* situates its representation of an unnamed, yet identifiably Bombayite, city, within an almost epic sweep of Indian history and geography, and draws together members of different cultural and socio-economic constituencies. *Family Matters*, meanwhile, offers a more intimate portrait of a single Parsi family; in doing so, however, it bears witness to the impact political upheavals in the public domain have upon the dynamics of the diasporic family unit.

My examination of Mistry's fiction is framed by what Radhakrishnan terms 'accountability', and by the tensions between the migrant's geographical distance from India and his continuing political responsibility towards that nation. Chapter One situates *A Fine Balance* as a migrant text, which offers both a migrant representation of India and a critical representation of the migrant. I consider how Mistry's negotiation of the politics of migrancy intersects with his representation of the city as a space marked by social, economic, religious and cultural difference. Exploring his engagement with the mapping of the 'real-imagined' spaces of the city, I further examine Mistry's ambivalent critique of the material, as well as imagined, possibilities offered by the Nehruvian legacy of socialist secularism in 1970s India.

Family Matters reveals Mistry's continued anxiety regarding India's secular inclusivity and Bombay's open cosmopolitanism. With this anxiety in mind, Chapter Two extends my exploration of the relationship between the migrant and nation into that between the diasporic subject and the nation. Focussing on issues of home and belonging, I examine hegemonic and exclusionary constructions of 'home', as it is imagined by nationalist discourses and by diasporic subjects. I demonstrate how diasporic subjects appropriate nationalist discourses of ethnic purity as a mode of defence against and resistance to the construction of their identities as illegitimate in the public domain. In so doing, I question familiar representations of the diasporic space as a progressive space in which essentialising constructions of identity are disturbed and disrupted.

The chapters dealing with Rushdie's work concentrate on *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), although I draw upon his non-fictional writing in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) and *Step Across This Line* (2002), and upon his 1983 novel, *Shame*. While I spend time exploring *Midnight's Children* (1981) in Chapter Three, the absence of a chapter-length examination of the novel necessitates explanation in a study concerned with representations of the Indian nation. As I have noted, *Midnight's Children* has played a substantial role in establishing Rushdie as a paradigmatic postcolonial writer. A considerable body of criticism therefore surrounds the text, and discussions of Rushdie's representation of India and of the relationship between the migrant and nation in his later work are often positioned within a framework provided by *Midnight's Children*, and by the essays which accompany it in *Imaginary Homelands*. Such a move, I suggest, often restricts discussion of Rushdie's later fiction. In positioning his later novels outside of such a framework, I make room for the exploration of a different trajectory within his work, enabling a more complex reading which moves beyond the critical orthodoxy which has been created in the wake of *Midnight's Children* and, to a lesser extent, *Shame*. Moreover, this strategy also allows his fiction to be read against the grain of his own conceptualisations of the relationship between the migrant and the nation in his non-fiction.

While *The Satanic Verses* has similarly received a substantial amount of attention, criticism has tended to focus on Rushdie's engagement with the politics of 1980s London. I shift this focus in Chapter Three, by situating the novel within its 1980s Indian contexts and by examining Rushdie's engagement with myths of Bombay's hybridity and cosmopolitanism. Paying attention to the representation of Bombay and India in *The Satanic Verses*, I demonstrate, enables a more complex discussion of Rushdie's self-conscious critique of the cosmopolitan migrant. By exploring the migrations taking places *within* city spaces and between different communities and class locations, and by considering the representation of different cosmopolitan figures within the novel, I argue that Rushdie complicates received assumptions regarding the cosmopolitan as necessarily detached from local politics, and as opposed to illiberal forms of nationalist representation.

There are important interconnections between *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and between the 1981 novel and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Chapter Four therefore begins with an examination of the representation of the 1950s language riots and the 1975-7 Emergency in *Midnight's Children* as key moments in the decline of secularism and the rise of the Shiv Sena. My discussion of *The Moor's Last Sigh* engages with these historical moments, and focuses on Rushdie's engagement with Hindu nationalism and the Shiv Sena, their mobilisation of a rhetoric of martial masculinity, and their appropriation of discourses of secularism and cosmopolitanism. Continuing my exploration of the socio-economic geography of the city begun in Chapter Three, I consider how Rushdie maps Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as caught between competing discourses of the 'Proper' and 'Improper'.

My discussion of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in Chapter Five is particularly concerned with the changing relationship between the narrator and Bombay in Rushdie's work, and argues that this relationship differs significantly in this novel to previous texts. By examining the narrator's apparent 'under-attachment' to national history and Bombay, I consider how Rushdie renegotiates the relationship between the migrant and the nation, as well as his own imaginative relationship with his city of birth, in the light of the social transformations taking place within it.

Suketu Mehta describes Bombay as 'a city with an identity crisis'.¹¹⁸ The representations of the migrant and nation presented by the novels I examine are situated within and engage critically with this identity crisis, offering different perspectives on the material, ideological and imaginative transformations taking place within Bombay and India during the past five decades. As Mistry and Rushdie explore these transformations, they reflect upon how Bombay's ambivalent contemporary identity, caught between parochial politics and open cosmopolitanism, impacts upon the relationship between migrant and diasporic subjects and the Indian nation. In the process, the authors offer readings of the city as at once a dynamic space of interconnected difference, a site of resistance to exclusionary representations of the nation, and a space in which such representations increasingly suppress more inclusive constructions of

¹¹⁸ Suketu Mehta, 'Mumbai', in *India: The Golden Jubilee*, special issue, *Granta*, 57, ed. by Ian Jack (1997), 97-126 (p. 98).

national identity. If, as Khilnani suggests, the subcontinent's cities offer crucial spaces in which ideas of India are contested, renegotiated and redefined, then Mistry and Rushdie similarly depict Bombay as a terrain of struggle upon which notions of Indianness are refigured and reimagined. Both writers continually emphasise the important contributions made by migrant and diasporic subjects, as well as by culturally and socio-economically marginalised communities, to understandings of Indianness; by doing so, their work resists the exclusion of such identities from narrow and essentialist representations of national identity. As I will demonstrate, however, Mistry's and Rushdie's work is at the same time marked by a deepening anxiety over how reconfigurations of Indianness increasingly position such minority communities, and migrant and diasporic subjects, outside of definitions of national identity, an anxiety which extends into the negotiation of their own migrant positions beyond India's borders.

Chapter One
Double Duty: Migrant and Nation in A Fine Balance

Introduction

In his commentary on India's postcolonial history, Shashi Tharoor claims that 'the Emergency became the defining experience of [his] political consciousness':¹

For many Indians of my generation, the Emergency was the seminal event of their political maturation. I went to the United States on a graduate fellowship soon after it was declared, and found myself traveling an even longer route to political awareness.²

Having initially 'found [him]self arguing [...] that [he] was precisely the sort of Indian who was least entitled to object to the Emergency', which 'was working for the betterment of the vast, toiling multitudes for whom such [fundamental] rights meant little',³ Tharoor describes how,

[m]y roommate [...] brought me daily the wire service copy about the latest atrocities – the slum demolitions, the bulldozings of homes and livelihoods, the compulsory sterilization schemes and the arbitrary quotas assigned to them, the arrests and beatings, the torture in jail of young student activists. [...] Most of the real victims of the Emergency were among the poorest classes of Indians – the ones who, I came to realize, most needed the protections of democracy.⁴

Tharoor's remarks bring into view a number of key concerns of this chapter. His account of his politicisation during the 1975-7 Emergency suggests the importance of the migrant's continued political engagement with India, despite his geographical distance from it. As he insists, Indian migrants 'had to belong, we had to care, we had to be involved', even as they appear to 'escap[e] from [their] responsibility to do anything about' the political changes taking place within India.⁵ Tharoor's 'political maturation' is informed by a recognition that, in the 1970s, the principles upon which independent India had been founded were being problematised and challenged; as he concisely writes, 'Nehru's daughter betrayed her father's legacy'.⁶ Thus, Tharoor notes the discrepancy between the nation-state's rhetoric of democracy and the material realities experienced by the poorer classes that such rhetoric claims to protect. The Emergency, he implies, both revealed and exacerbated this discrepancy, and is therefore positioned as a key turning point in the history of postcolonial India.

¹ Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), p. 36.

² *ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³ *ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 36.

Tharoor allows us to think about the politics of migrancy, and by situating the relationship between the migrant and nation within the Emergency in particular, and the more general crisis of the Nehruvian legacy of socialist secularism during the 1970s, he draws together three central concerns of my exploration of Rohinton Mistry's fiction in this chapter. Having migrated in 1975, Mistry occupies a comparable position to Tharoor in relation to India and, more specifically, the events surrounding the Emergency. Mistry's writing, furthermore, is similarly concerned with the politics of migrancy and with the tension between the migrant's geographical distance from India and his continuing political responsibility towards that nation. This tension is central to my examination of Mistry's second novel, *A Fine Balance*, and its representations of the migrant, the city, and the nation. Published in 1996, *A Fine Balance* followed Mistry's collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), and his first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991). As Peter Morey notes, *A Fine Balance* 'reveals Mistry's expanding field of vision', extending his focus on Bombay's small Parsi community in those earlier works into an examination 'of the fate of the wider Indian community'.⁷ While this chapter focuses on *A Fine Balance*, it will be necessary to draw briefly upon *Tales from Firozsha Baag* and *Such a Long Journey* in order to read more effectively Mistry's negotiation of the relationship between the migrant and the nation, and his representation of Bombay during the Emergency. Published a year before the fiftieth anniversary of India's Independence, but depicting the decades immediately following Independence, *A Fine Balance* offers an ambivalent portrait of India's progression towards what Aijaz Ahmad terms the 'utopic horizon' offered by anti-colonial, specifically Nehruvian, nationalism: 'planned and independent economic development, a balance between market exchange and social regulation, popular sovereignty, universal suffrage, the promise of social justice for the oppressed castes, classes, and other subaltern strata, [...] and secular equality in a multi-denominational society'.⁸

A Fine Balance encompasses a broad sweep of history, from the years leading up to Independence and Partition to the riots that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. The main action is set against the worst excesses of the twenty-two month Emergency of 1975-7

⁷ Peter Morey, *Rohinton Mistry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 95.

⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), p. 184.

and, as Savita Goel remarks ‘every atrocity known to have been committed during the Emergency occurs to one or other of Mistry’s characters’.⁹ The novel centres on four characters from different social, cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds, who form a small community that attempts to escape the ideological and material violence of the nation-state. The pivotal location, the flat, is provided by the Parsi widow Dina Dalal who, in an attempt to retain financial independence, employs two tailors to sew for an export company, and offers lodgings to a student. The tailors, Omprakash and Ishvar Darji, have travelled to the city both to find work and avoid rural caste prejudice which has seen their family brutally murdered for transgressing traditional social and occupational hierarchies. Dina’s paying guest, the young Parsi Maneck Kohlah, meanwhile, reluctantly leaves his mountain home to pursue his education and develop a career ‘in an industry that would grow with the nation’s prosperity’.¹⁰

Mistry most clearly documents the violent policies of the Emergency through the experiences of Om and Ishvar. During their time in the city, Om’s and Ishvar’s slum is demolished and, having become pavement-dwellers, they are rounded up and transported to a public irrigation project. Their return to their village to arrange Om’s marriage leads to a horrifying intersection of nation-state violence and upper-caste prejudice. Having already been sterilised as part of the Emergency’s ‘family planning’ project, Om is castrated in punishment for his open resistance to, and transgression of, caste hierarchies; Ishvar is left with both legs amputated after his sterilisation wounds turn septic. The novel’s closing scenes highlight the disjuncture between the tentative optimism of the characters as they pursue economic independence and upliftment and the reality of their circumstances: Dina has returned to her brother Nusswan’s home, Om and Ishvar are reduced to begging, and Maneck commits suicide.

While this synopsis obscures the narrative complexity of the novel, it does highlight the ways in which Mistry offers a depiction of India bearing witness to the nation’s cultural and social diversity, drawing together geographical locations from across the subcontinent – the city, the village, the mountains – and portraying characters from a variety of religious and class

⁹ Savita Goel, ‘A Literary Voyage to India: Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*’, in *India: Fifty Years After Independence*, ed. by Kathleen Firth & Felicity Hand (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1998), pp. 70-77 (p. 75).

¹⁰ Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), p. 221. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

communities. Furthermore, the summary indicates the novel's central concern for the material impact of the ideological rhetoric of the Emergency, particularly Indira Gandhi's slogan of 'garibi hatao', or 'war on [abolish] poverty'.¹¹ The State of Internal Emergency was declared on 25 June 1975, in the context of increasing opposition to the Congress government, rising civil disobedience, and, crucially, the Allahabad High Court ruling on 12 June, which found Indira Gandhi guilty of malpractice during the 1971 election campaign. There immediately followed both the suspension of the constitution and the fundamental rights enshrined within it and moves to prevent 'anti-national' activities; members of the opposition were arrested, the media censored and the courts closed.¹²

Indira Gandhi's justification for the Emergency was twofold: firstly, it was 'necessary to re-establish stability, peace and order and to safeguard democracy and national unity' against both external and internal threats;¹³ secondly, through the introduction of a twenty-point economic plan, the Emergency would reinvigorate industrial production and investment, and improve the flagging economy.¹⁴ As Katherine Frank notes, '[f]rom the start the Emergency was touted as a programme of national regeneration. [...] India would be reborn'.¹⁵ Mrs Gandhi's twenty-point programme was paired with her son Sanjay's five-point plan, which aimed to increase adult literacy, abolish bride dowry, end the caste system, 'beautify' the environment, and introduce family planning measures.¹⁶ As P. N. Dhar suggests, Sanjay pursued 'most relentlessly' the family planning and slum clearance programmes.¹⁷ The violent and uneven implementation of these policies, and the contradictions between the government's propaganda and the lived experience of the Emergency, forms the central axis upon which *A Fine Balance* turns. As Frank observes, and Mistry's text makes clear, 'the most numerous victims of the Emergency were [...] the poor whom [Mrs Gandhi] claimed the Emergency was intended to help and protect'; furthermore it was 'the urban and rural poor – menial labourers, beggars, the

¹¹ Stuart Corbridge & John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 86.

¹² For an account of the lead-up to, and impact of, the Emergency, see Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 371-414.

¹³ Frank, p. 381.

¹⁴ B. M., '21-Point [sic] Programme', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 July 1975, p. 992.

¹⁵ Frank, p. 390.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁷ P. N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the 'Emergency', and Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 266.

homeless and peasant farmers – who suffered most grievously under the [...] slum clearance and sterilization programmes'.¹⁸

As I will demonstrate, Mistry engages not only with the material realities of the Emergency, but also with the implications of the episode for India's founding principles of socialism and secularism. As Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss explain, '[f]or Nehru, the *raison d'être* of government in modern India, independent India, was to liberate the minds and bodies of ordinary Indians by purposeful acts of economic and social transformation'.¹⁹ The Emergency signalled a crisis in the Nehruvian ideal of a socialist secular nation which, according to Aijaz Ahmad, had been in evident decline throughout the 1970s.²⁰ Indira Gandhi's oppressive and violent 'war on poverty', with its forced sterilisations and slum clearances, represented an ideological betrayal of her father's vision of an inclusive and accommodating nation which would secure social justice for all its citizens.²¹ It also highlighted the failure of that vision to 'transform India into either the socialist, industrial society of Nehru's [...] dreams, or into a dynamic capitalist society' and 'to provide for the basic, minimum needs of most of its people'.²² As Tharoor's analysis indicates, the victims of the Emergency were those whom the Nehruvian vision of nation sought to uplift and protect. Furthermore, by situating the novel's Epilogue within the anti-Sikh violence which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard in 1984, Mistry further suggests the Emergency as a significant turning point in the Nehruvian vision of a secular nation; the Epilogue implies a continuity between the Emergency and the increasing communalisation of public life during the 1980s. *A Fine Balance* is therefore informed by, and engages with, the retreat of the 'utopic horizon' of Independence and with contemporary debates in the 1990s surrounding the legacy of the Nehruvian ideals of socialist secularism.

¹⁸ Frank, p. 401.

¹⁹ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 20.

²⁰ Ahmad (2000), p. 180.

²¹ See Corbridge & Harriss, p. 20.

²² Paul Brass, 'The Strong State and the Fear of Disorder', in *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, ed. by Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava, & Balveer Arora (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 60-88 (p. 74).

Criticism of the novel has tended to focus on three key areas: Mistry's engagement with Indian history and, more specifically, the Emergency;²³ the representation of the body and the impact of the local and national power structures upon it;²⁴ and the representation of socially and culturally marginalised communities.²⁵ This chapter draws upon these issues in its examination of Mistry's representation of the migrant, the city and the nation. Remembering Tharoor's insistence that the migrant remains committed to Indian politics, and avoids 'dislocated detachment',²⁶ Section One situates the novel within a politics of migrancy and considers Mistry's engagement with the potentially irresponsible detachment of the cosmopolitan migrant. I argue that Mistry's exploration of the politics of migrancy and cosmopolitanism within his work has implications both for the negotiation of his own position as a migrant writer and for his representation of India in his 1996 novel. Section Two explores Mistry's representation of urban space and his concern with the mapping of the 'real-imagined' spaces of the city.²⁷ The final section examines Mistry's engagement with inclusive discourses of nation, and considers his ambivalent critique of the material, as well as imagined, possibilities offered by the Nehruvian legacy of socialist secularism in 1970s India.

'Dishonourably postnational': The Politics of Migrancy

Timothy Brennan observes that the figure of the cosmopolitan often suffers the 'taint of being dishonorably postnational'.²⁸ In this section, I mobilise this notion to consider Mistry's engagement with the politics of migrancy in *A Fine Balance*. As April Carter notes, the idea of cosmopolitanism can be traced back to the Greek and Roman Stoics and, in its development

²³ See, for example, Vinita Dhondiyal Bhatnagar, "'And everything ends badly': A Reading of *A Fine Balance*", in *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry*, ed. by Jaydipsingh Dodiya (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1998), pp. 102-9; Goel; B. Indira, 'Designer Quilt: A Study of *A Fine Balance*', in Dodiya, ed., pp. 110-18; Peter Morey, *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Pramod K. Nayar, 'The Text of Cruelty: Power and Violence in *A Fine Balance*', in Dodiya, ed., pp. 119-26; Nila Shah, 'Novel as History: A Study of *Such A Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*', in Dodiya, pp. 96-101.

²⁴ Morey (2004); Peter Morey, 'Terrible Beautification: Body Politics in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*', in *Unhinging Hinglish: The Languages and Politics of Fiction in English from the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. by Nanette Hale & Tabish Khair (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001), pp. 75-87.

²⁵ Nilufer E. Bharucha, *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces* (Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat, 2003); Goel; Morey (2004).

²⁶ Tharoor, pp. 2-3.

²⁷ James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), p. 11.

²⁸ Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 1.

from the classical period to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and into contemporary debates, the notion has accrued a number of different connotations.²⁹ The mobility of the cosmopolitan across national borders has led theorists to extend the relationship of the migrant to the homeland into the membership of a postnational global community, characterised by ‘detachment from the bonds, commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives’.³⁰ The understanding of cosmopolitanism as ‘a choice of life style, involving frequent travelling and a refusal to be fully associated with one particular country’ results in ‘the more negative connotations [...] such as rootlessness and lack of commitment’.³¹ Thus, according to Amanda Anderson, cosmopolitanism is often understood as ‘depend[ing] on a mobility that is the luxury of social, economic, or cultural privilege’.³² In this light, as Bruce Robbins explains, a central critique of cosmopolitanism ‘is the assumption that to pass outside the borders of one’s nation, whether by physical travel or merely by thoughts and feelings entertained while one stays at home, is to wallow in a privileged and irresponsible detachment’.³³

Such ‘irresponsible detachment’ informs perceptions of cosmopolitanism as ‘dishonourably postnational’. As I observed in my Introduction, there is, in postcolonial criticism, a common slippage between the migrant and the cosmopolitan. Elleke Boehmer, for example, discusses ‘migrant postcolonial literature’ through the lens provided by ‘cosmopolitan’ writers, such as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and Derek Walcott.³⁴ As her emphasis on their ‘status as *privileged* migrants’ makes clear, however, it is necessary to recognise that experiences of migrancy and cosmopolitanism do not necessarily coincide, but are often marked by ‘class, political, and educational’ differences.³⁵ It is with these important differences in mind that I read Mistry’s representation of the migrant as often overlapping, but not fully coinciding with experiences of cosmopolitanism. Mistry’s migrant figures cannot be

²⁹ April Carter, *The Political Theory of Global Citizenship* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-2.

³⁰ Bruce Robbins, ‘Introduction Part 1: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms’, in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah & Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 1-19 (p. 1).

³¹ Carter, p. 49.

³² Amanda Anderson, ‘Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity’, in Cheah & Robbins, eds., pp. 265-89 (p. 268).

³³ Robbins, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

³⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 233.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 238 (my emphasis).

comfortably situated within discourses of cosmopolitanism and, as critics have suggested, the political insularity of many of his characters needs to be situated within the specific context of Bombay's Parsi diaspora.³⁶ Nevertheless, I contend that Mistry is often concerned with, and works to problematise, the potentially privileged detachment of the migrant in ways that recall critiques of depoliticised cosmopolitanism.

In doing so, I draw upon R. Radhakrishnan's theorisation of migrant and diasporic identities, which emphasises the importance of continued engagement with the homeland, despite geographical distance from it. Radhakrishnan claims that 'the politics of proximity has to negotiate dialectically and critically with the politics of distance',³⁷ explaining that:

As diasporan citizens doing double duty (with accountability both here and there), we need to understand as rigorously as we can the political crises in India, both because they concern us and also because we have a duty to represent India to ourselves and to [the 'host' nation] as truthfully as we can.³⁸

It is within the dynamics of Radhakrishnan's 'double duty' – of accountability to, rather than irresponsible detachment from, the homeland – that I position my exploration of *A Fine Balance* in this section. I argue that Mistry attempts to negotiate the tension between the positions of dishonourable postnationalism and accountable 'double duty'. Situated within this tension, Mistry's representation of migrants reveals an anxiety over his own position as a migrant writer, and much of his work seems to be involved in the desire to avoid becoming 'dishonourably postnational'. At the same time, Mistry emphasises the difficulty of enacting a diasporic 'double duty'. Radhakrishnan offers 'double duty' as an ideal of political engagement, but the duality of the term – the very doubleness of the duty to be performed – suggests that the migrant's enactment of his 'accountability' is potentially always already compromised. Mistry's representation of migrant figures, I suggest, is haunted by this potentially compromised political engagement, and by the difficulties of performing adequately a diasporic 'double duty'.

It will be instructive to begin by exploring Mistry's short story 'Lend Me Your Light', which offers an important intertext to *A Fine Balance*. Structured by the juxtaposition of a politically-detached cosmopolitan migrant and a committed social activist, this story introduces

³⁶ Morey (2004), p. 8.

³⁷ R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 209.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 212.

a useful framework through which to read Maneck's return as a migrant in the Epilogue to the later novel. 'Lend Me Your Light' concerns three characters: Kersi (the narrator), Percy and Jamshed. As adults, Kersi and Jamshed migrate from Bombay to Toronto and New York respectively, while Kersi's brother, Percy, remains in India. Mistry juxtaposes Percy's political and social activism in India with Kersi's guilty distance from Bombay on the one hand, and Jamshed's arrogant detachment from India on the other. The statement that '[t]o sustain an acquaintance does not take very much'³⁹ situates the trio's relationship within the dynamics of an almost Gramscian opposition between the 'disastrous detachment' of the cosmopolitan and the local activist 'who helps to forward the development of national culture through the vigorous and direct expression' of and engagement with national politics.⁴⁰

Jamshed is distanced from the everyday realities of Bombay life even before his migration. As a child, his lunch 'was eaten in the leather-upholstered luxury' (174) of his 'chauffeur-driven, air-conditioned family car' (174), in contrast to the 'crammed and cavernous interior' of the school drillhall (174). That Jamshed has, in the manner of Robbins' privileged cosmopolitan, passed outside of India's borders by 'thoughts and feelings' is signalled by his 'supply line from the western world [which] guaranteed for him a steady diet of foreign clothes, shoes, and records' (175). Disgusted by the '[b]loody corruption' (178) of India, Jamshed declares that '[f]irst chance I get, I'm going abroad' (178), and his disdain for the country's '*ghati* mentality' (181) continues after he migrates. His return visits, meanwhile, are marked by his continued socio-economic privilege and distance from the experiences of the majority of Bombay's inhabitants, made clear by his dining at the 'expensive restaurant' (185) of the Taj Mahal Hotel, 'where only foreign tourists eat on the strength of their U.S. dollars' (185).

While Jamshed enjoys his cosmopolitan distance, Kersi's migrancy is marked by self-conscious anxiety. Mistry locates Kersi within a Parsi Indian expatriate community in Toronto, characterised by the consumption of a cosmopolitan lifestyle similar to Jamshed's. 'These were the virtuosi of transatlantic travel' (182), fully conversant in the luxuries of first-class travel, and distanced from the more restricted travelling possibilities of the '*ghati*' – or 'low class' (183) –

³⁹ Rohinton Mistry, 'Lend Me Your Light', in *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992 [1987]), pp. 173-93 (p. 173). Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁰ Anderson, pp. 270-71.

Indian. Kersi's ambivalence towards this expatriate community is paired with his sense of distance from both his former and new homelands, a displacement which leaves him 'blind and throbbing between two lives' (180), involved fully in neither. Mistry's representation of Kersi resists theorisations of the migrant's interstitial position as an enabling space of potential political intervention. For Kersi, the location he occupies between Bombay and Toronto does not 'provid[e] a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent'.⁴¹ Despite initially believing his migrancy would enable 'a lucidity of thought which [he] would carry back [...] and bring to bear on all of India's problems' (186), Kersi admits to feeling 'the powerlessness that all of us experience who, mistaking weakness for strength, walk away from one thing or another' (181).

To 'walk away' implies not only physical but also political withdrawal. In contrast to Jamshed's complete detachment from India, and Kersi's more ambivalent distance from Bombay, Mistry positions Percy, a social activist heavily involved in local, grassroots politics. Since leaving high school, Percy has worked with 'destitute farmers in a small Maharashtrian village' (177), assisting their resistance to local money-lenders. His activism prompts Kersi to view his own migration in terms that echo criticisms of cosmopolitanism, as he reflects:

There you were, my brother, waging battles against corruption and evil, while I was watching sitcoms on my rented Granada TV. Or attending dinner parties at Parsi homes to listen to chit-chat about airlines and trinkets. (184)

Kersi constructs his Canadian life as passive, temporary, and depoliticised, consisting of 'rented', apolitical television and banal conversations about international travel. In Bombay, Kersi feels similarly 'feeble' (188), merely a 'tourist [...] not committed to life in the combat zone' (188). Mistry emphasises Kersi's sense of the potential irresponsibility of his distance from any political commitment by foregrounding modes of consumption within the story. While Kersi unpacks 'little knick-knacks bought in handicraft places and the Cottage Industries store' (192), Percy formulates ways of enabling poor farmers to buy necessities such as seed.

Placing Kersi between Jamshed and Percy enables Mistry to critique Jamshed's indifference, while also problematising the conflicting positions of the cosmopolitan and the

⁴¹ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139-70 (p. 149).

national. While Jamshed is presented as ‘dishonourably postnational’, through his disdain for lower-class Indian communities and his disregard for the material realities of Bombay life. Kersi is ambivalently located between India and Canada – not quite cosmopolitan, but no longer a committed national; but, while his position is depoliticised, Kersi nevertheless maintains a strong affiliation with India. Furthermore, by infusing Kersi’s narrative with a sense of guilt and anxiety over his detachment, Mistry is concerned with what Radhakrishnan might call accountability. While Kersi is unable to engage fully with ground-level politics in India, he does recognise a continued responsibility towards the nation, despite his geographical distance.

Mistry therefore locates his representation of the migrant within the tension between a ‘dishonourably postnational’ detachment from, and a more accountable critical engagement with, the Indian homeland. Kersi’s unease about his political distance from India, I suggest, has implications for Mistry’s negotiation of his own position, revealing an anxiety regarding the potentially problematic ‘postnational’ location he occupies as a migrant. Mistry’s characterisation of Jamshed indicates that he considers a detached ‘postnational’ position as highly problematic, an evasion of responsibility towards the homeland. It is through his self-conscious representation of Kersi that Mistry stages his own dilemma as a migrant, emphasising the necessity of avoiding irresponsible detachment, but also anxiously foregrounding the difficulties in negotiating a ‘double duty’ and highlighting the migrant’s distance from the grassroots political activism available to the national subject.

This anxiety is central to *A Fine Balance*, in which Mistry frames his own migrant representation of India within a critical representation of the migrant. The dynamics of the relationship between the politically-distanced cosmopolitan migrant and the socially-committed local activist inform my reading of Maneck’s return and subsequent suicide in the Epilogue, events which prompt a reconsideration of his characterisation throughout the novel. Keeping Maneck’s final position as a migrant in mind, while remembering his location within a Parsi diasporic space, I will examine the consequences of his detachment for Mistry’s negotiation of the relationship between the migrant and the Indian homeland and, further, between the migrant writer and the nation.

According to Robert L. Ross, '[t]hat the one member of the foursome best equipped to succeed economically [in the novel] should kill himself is heavy with irony', given the continued attempts by Dina, Ishvar and Om to survive and maintain their small community. Ross reads Maneck's suicide as a potentially political act, a sign of political despair as he 'finally succumbs to what he considers the hypocrisy of his country's government'.⁴² Maneck's dying thought of Avinash's chessmen, which symbolise their owner's committed social activism does imply a connection between his death and national politics. Avinash earlier describes his campaigns in terms of chess, claiming 'I'm playing it all the time. Everything I do is chess' (245). However, Ross's reading of the suicide ignores the ways in which Mistry foregrounds and problematises Maneck's continued detachment from politics throughout the novel. Ross positions Maneck's death, albeit paradoxically, within a politics of engagement; that is, he appears to assume that Maneck is politically engaged before his suicide. As I will demonstrate, Mistry's representation of Maneck, particularly through his juxtaposition with Avinash, complicates such a reading.

Ross's reading elides the immediate context provided by the Epilogue itself, which links Maneck's death to his failure to reconnect with Dina, and, more crucially, the two tailors, on his return to Bombay in 1984. Recognising the two beggars outside Nusswan's house as Om and Ishvar, Maneck is nevertheless unable to speak to the pair. While the tailors attempt to prompt recognition, Maneck's 'words of love and sorrow and hope remained muted' (608). Unable to translate his thoughts into speech, Maneck 'did nothing' (608) before, finally, 'continu[ing] on his way' (608). Framed within this context, Maneck's suicide tragically echoes Kersi's sense of the powerlessness and guilt at 'walking away'. Rather than being positioned as an ironic political act – an active statement of political despair – the suicide instead reflects a continued inability to engage with Indian society.

Mistry foregrounds Maneck's indifference to national politics in the Prologue. Here, Maneck dismisses the newly announced Emergency as 'one more government tamasha' (5). On his return to India in 1984, it becomes apparent that, unlike Kersi in 'Lend Me Your Light', who

⁴² Robert L. Ross. 'Seeking and Maintaining Balance: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction'. *World Literature Today*, 72:2 (1999), 239-44 (p. 243).

has retained some contact with, and knowledge of, India's contemporary history. Maneck is ignorant of the details of national events. This becomes clear during a conversation with a Sikh taxi driver who, incredulous of Maneck's unawareness of the rioting following Indira Gandhi's assassination, asks whether he 'heard about the attack on the Golden Temple' (581). Maneck responds by stating:

'Yes. Things like that are hard to miss,' [...] Where did the fellow think he was returning from, the moon? In the silence that followed, he realized that in fact he knew very little about the years he had been away. He wondered what other tragedies and farces had unfolded in the country while he was supervising the refrigeration of the hot desert air. (581)

Maneck's employment within the air-conditioning industry is significant, emphasising his disconnection from both his Indian homeland and current land of residence, Dubai. On his return to India, Maneck is confronted by '[w]aves of heat [which] ricocheted off the shimmering sun-soaked metal' of the airport buildings (579); the Delhi air is filled with the 'smell of sweat, cigarette smoke, stale perfume' (579). India's heat – represented through images of shimmering and soaking waves, perspiration and evaporating smells – has an intense humidity that contrasts with the dry, sterile heat of Dubai's desert air. By locating him within an arid desert, Mistry underlines Maneck's geographical *and* political distance from India. Maneck later describes his life in Dubai as '[e]mpty ... like a desert' (605). In contrast to the blank space of the desert – emphasised by the ellipsis – the Indian heat is 'packed' with smells, and violently 'buffet[ed] the crowds' (579). The barren emptiness of Dubai suggests that while, in his absence, India has itself been dangerously 'buffeted' by political and social turmoil, and the increasingly heated contestation of national identity – those 'tragedies and farces' of his thoughts – Maneck has failed to engage productively with his homeland. He has been involved in the circular and futile processing of air, rather than examining the social transformations taking place in India.

Radhakrishnan maintains that '[d]iasporan Indians should not use distance as an excuse for ignoring happenings in India',⁴³ but should continue to engage critically with its history and politics. Maneck, however, explains his ignorance by emphasising his geographical distance: 'The problem is, I've been out of the country for eight years' (581). The exercise of air-conditioning itself implies a process of neutralisation, and a cooling of the intensity of the

⁴³ Radhakrishnan, p. 212.

violence in India, that Maneck's distance allows. The apparent insular futility of the process, moreover, indicates Mistry's critical stance towards such detachment, which he represents as deeply problematic in the context of the increasingly violent communalisation of India in the early 1980s. In this light, air-conditioning becomes a metaphor of a process implicitly circumventing human connections, and it figuratively suggests an abstract detachment from concrete, ground-level experiences. Mistry therefore foregrounds Maneck's experience of migrancy as one of problematic political vacancy that irresponsibly evades social commitment to India.

The process of air-conditioning similarly reveals Maneck's detachment from life in Dubai. Moderating the country's specific climate suggests both a failure to engage with the realities of that desert nation and an attempt to neutralise the impact of those realities on his own identity. Thus, Maneck realises that '[t]he people, their customs, the language – it was all as alien to him now as it had been when he had landed there' (585). Maneck's reluctance to participate in life in Dubai is underlined by his pairing with a migrant maidservant, who begs him to help her escape the abuse of her employers (584). 'Uneasy about intervening' (584), Maneck manages only an anonymous telephone call to the Indian consulate. This episode highlights the gender, class and occupational imbalances that intersect with material experiences of migrancy, and works to juxtapose Maneck's more abstract sense of 'exile' (584) with a violently tangible experience of it – the maidservant is 'locked up in her room at night', molested by her employers, and has her passport confiscated (584).

Morey often emphasises notions of 'exile' as central to Mistry's fiction, describing Kersi's fellow expatriates as 'exiles' whose patronising attitudes towards India are 'an inevitable part of the psychology of migration'.⁴⁴ Nilufer E. Bharucha likewise positions Maneck within a discourse of exile.⁴⁵ However, as Edward Said asserts, it is dangerous to conflate the experiences of the 'intellectual exile and the miseries of the displaced person or refugee',⁴⁶ and it is similarly important to recognise Mistry's more nuanced representations of migrancy; the members of the expatriate community in 'Lend Me Your Light', for example, are

⁴⁴ Morey (2004), p. 58.

⁴⁵ Bharucha (2003), p. 156.

⁴⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 403.

explicitly *not* exiles, but are able – if not always willing – to return to Bombay regularly. The Dubai maidservant in *A Fine Balance*, meanwhile, offers an important juxtaposition to Maneck's more economically privileged experiences, and works to situate his intellectualised sense of exile within the wider context of what Said terms 'our century's migrations and mutilated lives'.⁴⁷ While Maneck cannot unproblematically be situated within a cosmopolitan elite position expected to result from a lucrative career in the Gulf – he flies back to India 'in the economy cabin' (579) – he is able to pay twice the regular taxi fare from the airport, and lodges in hotels during his visit to India (580). Thus, while his representation of Maneck risks presenting 'exile' as a 'descriptive label for the existential condition of the immigrant as such',⁴⁸ Mistry does gesture towards radically different, and materially uneven, experiences of migrancy, as well as violently enforced versions of exile. In doing so, Mistry further indicates an ambivalence towards Maneck's 'dishonourably postnational' position. By juxtaposing Maneck's reluctance to become actively involved in the old homeland or the new with experiences of individual or state-sanctioned violence – through the maidservant in Dubai, and Om and Ishvar in Bombay in 1984 – Mistry emphasises his character's potential irresponsibility, and his problematic failure to engage with a diasporic 'double duty'.

Although more acute after his migration, Maneck's sense of alienation from, and lack of interest in, society has been present throughout the novel. Echoing the pairing of Kersi and Percy in 'Lend Me Your Light', Mistry contrasts Maneck with a fellow student, Avinash. A highly committed political campaigner, Avinash is both Chairman of the Student Hostel Committee and the Student Union President (242). Avinash's local activism extends into agitations against the national Emergency, ultimately leading to his suspicious death: he is found on railway track with 'burns on many shameful parts of his body' (499). The contrast between Avinash's activism and Maneck's apathy is highlighted by a conversation that prefigures the one between Maneck and the taxi driver in the Epilogue. Incredulous at his friend's indifference to the Emergency, Avinash asks Maneck: 'Don't you read the newspapers?' (245); Maneck responds by stating that he reads '[o]nly the comics. All the

⁴⁷ Said, p. 403.

⁴⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London & New York: Verso, 1992), p. 86.

political stuff is too boring' (245). Maneck's preference for light-hearted reading materials seems problematic in the context of the serious political and social upheavals of the Emergency. His disregard for politics develops into a frustration at Avinash's involvement in local and national agitation, and Maneck wonders why his friend insists on 'interfering' (242). This indifference goes further: Maneck 'wish[es] [...] that the Principal would ban the bloody Student Union because of the Emergency [...]. Then there would be nothing to distract his friend' (246).

Although the pairing of Maneck and Avinash does not replicate the relationship between the cosmopolitan migrant and national subject structuring 'Lend Me Your Light' – Maneck is not yet a migrant when they befriend each other – it works within a similar dynamic. Anderson notes that cosmopolitanism has been associated with the 'development of a rootless, intellectualized, managerial class',⁴⁹ the kind of class for which Maneck's education prepares him. Moreover, if, as Robbins observes, the cosmopolitan's supposed 'irresponsible detachment' may be prompted by a cognitive withdrawal from the nation even before the act of migration itself,⁵⁰ then Maneck's appreciation for a Nietzschean world-view – indicated by his assertion that "'God is dead," [...] "That's what a German philosopher wrote"' (340) – locates him within a cosmopolitan, intellectual sphere.

The Epilogue invites the reader to reconsider the pair's juxtaposition in light of Maneck's migration. Making his way through a pile of old newspapers at his parents' house, Maneck finds a report relating the suicide of Avinash's three sisters that makes clear the suspicious circumstances surrounding his friend's death (594). Mistry's reintroduction of Avinash here reframes the relationship between the students within the dynamics of migrant and national subjectivities. In this light, I argue, Maneck's light-hearted assertion that 'God is dead' (340), paired with his description of migrant life as '[e]mpty ... like a desert' (605), when placed alongside Avinash's vigorous commitment to local politics, positions their relationship

⁴⁹ Anderson, p. 270.

⁵⁰ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 4.

within a framework in which a 'cosmopolitan identification with the human race serves as the thin, abstract, undesirable antithesis to a red-blooded, politically engaged nationalism'.⁵¹

Mistry once more uses the juxtaposition of heat and refrigeration to frame this antithesis between enthusiastic – 'red-blooded' – local commitment, and impassive – cool – withdrawal from local and national conflicts. Avinash's participation in grassroots politics is exemplified by his intervention into a dispute regarding the presence of meat in a vegetarian meal (242), as he interrupts hysterical attacks against kitchen staff. The emergence of the kitchen workers, '[s]melling of rancid oil and sweat and hot stoves' (241) bears witness to the increasingly heated atmosphere in the canteen itself. Avinash's intervention redirects the fiery protests towards the hostel management and into campaigns for further reform and political progress. While Avinash is eager to engage with such protests, and translate heated debate into socially transformative action, Maneck is associated with a cool detachment and a desire to abandon, rather than participate in, localised conflict. Indeed, Maneck's final withdrawal from the hostel – and from an association with Avinash's activism – is the indirect result of his education in refrigeration and air-conditioning, a connection prefiguring his eventual migration to Dubai. Having been identified as a student of refrigeration technology, Maneck is, at the hands of 'ragging' (240) students, locked in a freezer, before being forced to masturbate (249-50). Leaving him '[n]umb' (250), this episode prompts – understandably – his decision to quit the hostel.

Mistry's representation of Maneck here is more sympathetic, portraying the student as concerned that he may be 'run[ing] away like a coward' (251). Nevertheless, Maneck's decision to leave the hostel after a cruel personal humiliation stands in direct contrast to Avinash's passion for local community activism, and Mistry uses the contrasting temperatures to emphasise the pair's different attitudes towards local and national politics, the one neutrally detached, the other fervently committed. Maneck's education and later employment in refrigeration and air-conditioning therefore marks his problematic cosmopolitan detachment in both literal and figurative ways. As a technology associated with luxury, air-conditioning signals Maneck's increasing distance from the socio-economic experiences of less privileged Indians – such as Om and Ishvar – who struggle to gain access to necessities such as

⁵¹ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 4.

accommodation, food and water. As an empty and futile process of transforming hot air into cold, it symbolises his failure to engage productively with ground-level politics, and also his occupation of a sterile and detached, abstract migrant space. This contrasts with Avinash's specifically localised commitment to social transformation, instigated in the heat of the kitchen and climaxing in the discovery of his dead body covered in suspicious burns (499). Maneck's incarceration in a deathly, freezing 'coffin' (249) intimates Mistry's anxiety regarding his character's position; while Avinash's position is revealed as hazardous, Maneck's neutral withdrawal is also represented as threatening and potentially fatal, and his desire to preserve the status quo rather than engage in social change is suggested as both irresponsible in relation to the wider community, but also dangerous at an individual level.

Mistry's representation of Maneck therefore indicates an anxious ambivalence towards his cool and detached migrant position. However, the eventual death of both Maneck *and* Avinash further implies that the author is reluctant to endorse either position unequivocally, but considers each as having problematic consequences. Maria Rosa Giordani remarks that, 'even if [...] [Mistry's] works deal with India, they have been conceived and written in a Canadian literary environment',⁵² and it is important to consider the consequences of the novel's migrant politics for Mistry's position as a migrant writer. With this in mind, I now consider the implications of the juxtaposition of Maneck and Avinash for Mistry's negotiation of his own migrant identity. I suggest that, by problematising the position of both characters, Mistry situates his migrant identity between the 'dishonourably postnational' position and an engagement with a diasporic 'double duty'. In doing so, Mistry establishes a tension between his representation of the migrant *within* his fiction and his negotiation of his own migrant position *through* his fiction.

Bharucha claims that, as Maneck peruses the old newspapers, he 'becomes Mistry, the diasporic writer, who like his creation also dusts off old cobwebs and catches up with the happenings in India during his absence from it'.⁵³ Although I agree that Maneck's discovery of

⁵² Maria Rosa Giordani, 'Language as Identity in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*', in *Routes of the Roots: Geography and Literature in the English-Speaking Countries*, ed. by Isabella Maria Zoppi (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1998), pp. 459-66 (p. 462).

⁵³ Bharucha (2003), p. 164.

the newspapers brings into view Mistry's concern with national history and politics, I claim that Maneck's response to this historical survey foregrounds a distinction between, rather than equivalence of, the author and his character, particularly in terms of their attitudes towards national history and politics. The newspapers serve a contextual function, summarising the events – the 'tragedies and farces' (581) – that have occurred in Maneck's absence, from 'the period after the post-Emergency elections that the Prime Minister lost' to Mrs Gandhi's 'return to power' in 1980 (593). Maneck, however, becomes 'impatient with the repetitious reportage' (593) of national history. Unable to find 'stimulating reading' (593), and '[f]ed up' (593) with the accounts of abuses during the Emergency and the governmental paralysis which followed, Maneck 'looked for the sports pages' (593). His reaction to the photograph of the three hanged women, moreover, is initially couched within an aesthetic response: the photograph has a 'crystalline stillness' (594), and Maneck feels that 'act [had] acquired the *beauty* of logic and the weight of sensibleness' (594, my emphasis). Maneck is compelled to read the article accompanying the photograph, which draws together details of the Emergency and the personal history of the women, revealing them to be Avinash's sisters. After this revelation, and although the 'article proceeded to comment on the parliamentary committee's inquiry into the Emergency', Maneck, we are told, 'had stopped reading' (594).

I contend that, through this episode, Mistry self-consciously negotiates the politics of writing, as a migrant, about national events from which he has been absent, and reflects upon his representation of India in *A Fine Balance*. In contrast to Maneck's impatience with the details of the Emergency, Mistry's novel mobilises a detailed engagement with the lived experiences of, and abuses enacted during, that period. While Maneck 'skip[s]' through (593) the articles, Mistry continues to include details of events, insisting on the importance of the migrant maintaining a critical awareness of India's history despite his geographical distance from it. In doing so, Mistry emphasises the importance, not only of the migrant engaging with history, but also of understanding migrant identity in relation to history. If Maneck repeatedly decontextualises his identity, locating himself against a background of sterile deserts and abstract, cool air, Mistry – through the newspapers – insists that the migrant be *re*contextualised within a specific historical moment, and be situated within concrete details of national events,

even as he is absent from them. Mistry therefore critiques Maneck's attitude, by suggesting that the migrant resists becoming 'dishonourably postnational'. Instead, Mistry is concerned that the migrant sustains, in Radhakrishnan's terms, a rigorous understanding of India's political crises.

Maneck's reluctance to develop such an understanding is further highlighted by his failure to continue reading the article relating Avinash's death. That he 'stopped reading' demonstrates his unwillingness to engage fully with the personal consequences of national events, while his interpretation of the suicides similarly fails to relate them to Avinash's politically-motivated murder. The juxtaposition of this failure with his aestheticisation of the suicides, and his failure to relate this aesthetic understanding to the historical context, further implies Mistry's anxiety over his own approach to writing national history. The representation of Maneck's reading, which both disconnects individual experiences from their historical context and gestures towards the aesthetic re-presentation of those experiences, emphasises the importance of viewing history as 'emphatically not the backdrop' to the main narratives of the novel.⁵⁴ It also highlights Mistry's delicate negotiation of the historical and imaginative narratives, as he foregrounds the necessity of balancing these two strands effectively in order that the reader remain engaged with both.

While Mistry represents Maneck as a migrant reader, disengaged from national history, he also emphasises Maneck's refusal to maintain a connection with India through the act of writing. Responding to Dina's accusation that 'You didn't write to me from there', Maneck states that 'I didn't write to anyone. It seemed so ... so pointless' (605). Through Maneck's rejection of writing as a productive mode of engagement, Mistry reiterates his own difference from his fictional migrant. In contrast to Maneck, I argue, Mistry mobilises writing as an effective tool of reconnection, a means of engaging with a diasporic 'double duty' and avoiding the problematically apolitical detachment that Maneck embodies. In this light, Maneck's death signals Mistry's critical stance towards his character's depoliticised postnationalism. Thus, while Ross reads Maneck's suicide as a political act against the Emergency, I contend that the death embodies a different politics, demonstrating Mistry's emphatic condemnation of the

⁵⁴ Laura Moss, 'Can Rohinton Mistry's Realism Rescue the Novel?', in *Postcolonializing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 157-65 (p. 162).

model of postnational detachment represented by Maneck. It is, I suggest, such a position that Mistry attempts to resist in his own sustained fictional engagement with India.

Nevertheless, even as he critiques the irresponsibly detached migrant, Mistry neither unequivocally endorses the activism of the national subject, nor presents it as an idealised alternative to the cosmopolitan figure. The newspapers remind us that, while Maneck's suicide results from an evasion of political engagement, Avinash's murder results from his political commitment. As I noted in the Introduction, Nayantara Sahgal has expressed scepticism regarding the ability of the migrant novelist to write about Indian realities because of their distance, 'materially and psychologically', from the 'raw winds assailing India'.⁵⁵ Avinash's murder complicates this privileging of the national subject over the migrant. Resisting the opposition Sahgal constructs between what Robbins terms the 'thin, abstract' cosmopolitan position and a 'red-blooded, politically engaged nationalism',⁵⁶ Mistry suggests that the national subject's political commitment may itself be compromised by its very location within the nation. As Mistry claims of *A Fine Balance*, '[i]t would [...] have been intimidating, even downright dangerous to write about these things in India at the time they were happening'; he continues by asserting that 'the consequences [of doing so] would have been quite terrible. [...] [A]nyone making the least sort of progress would have been severely dealt with probably like Avinash'.⁵⁷

Thus, while Mistry appears to endorse Avinash's activism, in contrast to Maneck's apathy, he nevertheless remains unable to privilege the national subject as the locus of idealised political engagement. Indeed, Avinash's sisters' suicides signal that his political commitment has grave consequences for his personal responsibilities. The death of both Avinash and Maneck implies that neither the 'dishonourably postnational', nor the committed national position, is, in itself, adequate. As a migrant, Mistry is unable to position himself within the space occupied by Avinash; he is, however, anxious to avoid 'wallow[ing] in a privileged and irresponsible

⁵⁵ Nayantara Sahgal, 'Some Thoughts on the Puzzle of Identity', in *Points of View: A Personal Response to Life, Literature and Politics* (New Delhi: Prestige, 1997), pp. 80-92 (p. 85).

⁵⁶ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁵⁷ Robert McLay, 'Rohinton Mistry talks to Robert McLay', *WASAFIRI*, 23 (1996), 16-18, p. 18.

detachment'.⁵⁸ The storytelling lawyer Mr. Valmik tells Maneck that 'to share the story redeems everything' (604), while Mistry elsewhere asserts that 'one can redeem oneself through writing'.⁵⁹ The pairing of Maneck and Avinash suggests that Mistry mobilises his writing as a method of negotiating his diasporic 'double duty', of redeeming himself from a potentially 'dishonourably postnational' position, using writing to engage with both the Indian nation and his distance from it. The death of both the committed national subject and the disengaged migrant, however, reveals an anxiety in this negotiation; the alternative subject positions are, for Mistry, both unavailable and dangerous, indicating that his negotiation of a diasporic 'double duty' is both highly complex but also politically necessary.

The 'city of promise': Mapping the City

Having positioned *A Fine Balance* as a migrant text, I now consider its representations of the city. Morey observes that the novel occupies a 'broader canvas' than Mistry's previous work, moving beyond the focus on Bombay's small Parsi community to incorporate more of India's rural and urban communities.⁶⁰ Mistry asserts that, in *A Fine Balance*, he wanted to recognise that 'seventy five per cent of Indians live in villages and [he] wanted to embrace more of the social reality of India'.⁶¹ Roshan Shahani notes how, in the years surrounding Independence, the rural village was often portrayed as representative of the Indian nation: works such as Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), for example, reaffirm a Gandhian sense of Indian tradition as located in the village.⁶² However, Shahani identifies, in fiction of the 1980s and 1990s, an increasing focus on the city as a space through which to explore the complex plurality of the Indian nation. Shahani cites Mistry and Rushdie, alongside Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, as producing 'important city-centred writing' which asserts that 'the Indian city is as "representative" of India as is the Indian village'.⁶³

⁵⁸ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁵⁹ McLay, p. 18.

⁶⁰ Morey (2004), p. 96.

⁶¹ McLay, p. 18.

⁶² Roshan G. Shahani, 'Polyphonous Voices in the City: Bombay's Indian-English Fiction', in *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture*, ed. by Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 99-112 (pp. 99-100).

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 100.

A Fine Balance represents the movement between the Indian village and the Indian city, emphasising both the radically different spaces they occupy within the nation, as well as the ways in which they intersect and are mutually dependent. While Mistry's depiction of India's rural communities, and of caste violence in particular, forms a substantial part of the novel and informs his representation of the city, in this section I focus on his engagement with the social and spatial geography of 1970s Bombay and on the processes of mapping at work within the city. As John C. Ball observes, '[t]he big city' in *A Fine Balance* performs its 'time-honoured literary role as locus of [...] diverse and contradictory realities'⁶⁴ and while Mistry shows the violent consequences of attempts to impose a systematic cartography on the city, he also portrays the city as a site of heterogeneous and subversive spatial practices. However, as I will demonstrate, Mistry's representation of such spatial practices reveals a scepticism towards their potential to resist and transform the official urban cartography successfully.

Mistry leaves the urban location of his novel unnamed, as an unspecified Indian 'City by the Sea' (13) that 'could have been anywhere' (4); as Morey notes, however, it has 'the topography and many of the characteristics of Bombay'.⁶⁵ The sights Maneck and Om visit, for example, include the Victoria Garden and the Hanging Gardens (415), which are central to Mistry's representation of Bombay in *Tales from Firozsha Baag*.⁶⁶ The emphasis on the city's poverty and its slum-dwellers, meanwhile, further identifies it as Bombay, and the tailors' arrival at the city via a central station with 'ceilings high as the sky and columns reaching up like impossible trees' (153) clearly evokes Bombay's Victoria Terminus station. Contemporary reports of slum clearances and sterilisations during the Emergency, however, tend to focus on Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh,⁶⁷ and both Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1983) locate their depictions of the Emergency in India's capital. Morey contends that, by presenting 'generalised locations' – in the city, mountains and village – Mistry 'bring[s] together on one stage [...] regional patterns of oppression', to offer a

⁶⁴ John C. Ball, 'Taking the Measure of India's Emergency', in *Floating the Borders: New Contexts in Canadian Criticism*, ed. Nurjehan Aziz (TSAR: Toronto, 1999), pp. 234-39 (p. 235).

⁶⁵ Morey (2004), p. 122.

⁶⁶ The Hanging Gardens, for example, are a favourite haunt of Jehangir, in Mistry's short story 'Exercisers', in *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, pp. 197-225.

⁶⁷ See 'Shah Commission's Findings – V: The Wrecking of Delhi', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 June 1978, pp. 1019-1021.

‘palimpsest-like “everyospace” which ‘is Bombay and not-Bombay at the same time’. The novel, he claims, is therefore ‘consciously symbolic rather than historical’.⁶⁸ However, this reading stubbornly universalises the novel’s geographical specificity and pays little attention to the ways in which it is persistently marked by the particular social, economic and political changes taking place in Bombay during the 1970s; the central focus on two tailors, for example, itself situates *A Fine Balance* firmly within the changes affecting Bombay’s textile industry during the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁹

Despite his elision of these specificities, Morey does intimate the ways that Mistry emphasises the textuality of his representation. James Donald offers a conceptualisation of the city as a ‘real-imagined environment’⁷⁰ which informs my readings of Bombay throughout this thesis. Donald claims that understandings of urban space are constituted by the intersection between the city’s ‘thinginess’ – its materiality – and its imagined aspects.⁷¹ He argues that ‘ways of seeing and understanding the city inevitably inform ways of acting on the space of the city, with consequences which then in turn produce a modified city which is again seen, understood and acted on’.⁷² Donald maintains that, not only are ‘the boundaries between reality and imagination [...] fuzzy and porous’, but also, ‘[i]n the development of cities can be discerned a traffic between the two, an economy of symbolic constructs which have material consequences that are manifested in an enduring reality’.⁷³ In emphasising the intersection between the imagined and the material, the noumenal and the phenomenal spaces of the city,⁷⁴ Donald stresses the importance of recognising the historical specificity of the cityscape alongside, and in dialogue with, its textuality. Mistry’s representation of Bombay in *A Fine Balance* situates the city within this interplay between the actual and the imagined. Om describes the city as a ‘story factory [...] a spinning mill’ (383), gesturing towards both the textuality of Mistry’s cityscape and his engagement with the social and material realities of the

⁶⁸ Morey (2004), p. 122.

⁶⁹ See Sujata Patel, ‘Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism’, in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition*, ed. by Sujata Patel & Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-30 (pp. 9-14).

⁷⁰ Donald, p. 11.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 41.

specific location of Bombay, through its textile industry. By positioning the city as a 'real-imagined environment', Mistry figures Bombay, I argue, as synecdochal for the Indian nation, without erasing the particularity of that space in relation to the nation. The space represented is, therefore, distinctly Bombayite, even as it is positioned as a representative Indian city.

Mistry engages with Bombay not only as an imagined space, but also as it has been imagined in popular culture. According to Sujata Patel, Bombay has popularly been characterized as 'the first Indian town to experience economic, technological, and social changes associated with the growth of capitalism in India'.⁷⁵ Bombay's iconic status within popular discourses of Indian modernity both informed, and has been informed by, the city's cinema industry, with films such as *Awara* (1951), *Shree 420* (1955), and *Jagte Raho* (1956) engaging with Nehruvian visions of national industrialisation and postcolonial modernisation. Such films often invoke Bombay as '*swapaner nagari* – a city of dreams'⁷⁶ and, as Khilnani observes, the city is 'portrayed as at once a place of bewilderment and exploitation, and an enticing and necessary destination brimming with opportunities'; it is, he continues, presented as brash and impersonal, but also as offering an 'emancipatory anonymity and the kindness of strangers'.⁷⁷ Films of the 1950s 'dramatized [...] a democratic, outward-looking and secular nationalist sentiment, and affirmed the city as the most likely place to cultivate this'.⁷⁸

Mistry's text is both informed by and problematises understandings of Bombay in popular culture. The ambivalent representation of the city as simultaneously emancipatory and oppressive, and as enabling economic opportunity and exploitation, is central to *A Fine Balance*, and is particularly evident in the relationship between the tailors and the city. For Om and Ishvar, the city offers the opportunity for social and economic advancement denied them in the rural village. Their migration to the city follows a pattern identified by Sandeep Pendse, who observes how, for those who have been tyrannised in the more traditional rural village, the city 'holds out the promise of liberation from traditional oppression – caste, class or ethnic' and

⁷⁵ Patel, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Amrit Gangar, 'Films from the City of Dreams', in Patel & Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Mosaic*, pp. 210-24 (p. 210).

⁷⁷ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999 [1997]). p. 137.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

‘an escape from traditional bonds of community, caste and family’.⁷⁹ Pendse’s definition of urban ‘toilers’ as those who ‘perform all sorts of menial tasks and physical tasks in the city’,⁸⁰ and whose lives are ‘characterized by instability and insecurity’ informs my reading of the tailors, who can be situated within this informal group of urban workers, many of whom are immigrants to the city.⁸¹ Already avoiding caste oppression in the village by living and working with Ashraf in a small town, the pair travel to the city to improve their economic prospects. Reproducing myths of Bombay as a locus of prosperity, Ashraf, Om and Ishvar ‘imagin[e] the new future in the city by the sea, the city that was filled with big buildings, wide, wonderful roads, beautiful gardens, and millions and millions of people working hard and accumulating wealth’ (151). Bombay is, then, initially a ‘city of promise’ for Om and Ishvar (153). However, the novel’s Prologue foregrounds the discrepancy between popular myths of metropolitan affluence and the realities of the urban landscape. Here – after several months in the city – Maneck, Om and Ishvar reject Bombay in favour of their rural and mountain homelands: Maneck ‘hated’ the ‘huge and confusing’ city (7), while Ishvar summarises the city’s failure to satisfy their expectations by asking ‘[w]hat is the use of such a big city? Noise and crowds, no place to live, water scarce, garbage everywhere. Terrible’ (7). Rather than offering the ‘kindness of strangers’,⁸² a notion central to popular ideas of Bombay, the city is aggressively inhospitable, leaving the tailors ‘starved [...] for ordinary kindness’ (8).

Throughout the novel, Mistry represents the tailors as ambivalently poised between popular idealisations of the city and the material realities of daily urban life. Attempting to boost Om’s morale, Ishvar insists ‘[t]here is lots of opportunity in the city, you can make your dreams come true’ (91); Om responds by stating ‘I am sick of the city. Nothing but misery ever since we came. I wish I had died in our village. I wish I had also burned to death like the rest of my family’ (91). This conversation simultaneously undermines and reiterates the city as a space of emancipation and hope. While Om problematises Ishvar’s more idealistic construction of the city as a socio-economic utopia, his reference to the rural caste violence inadvertently

⁷⁹ Sandeep Pendse. ‘Toil, Sweat and the City’, in *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, ed. by Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3-25 (p. 12).

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸² Khilnani, p. 137.

reaffirms Bombay as a space of social progress; the village continues to represent regressive social hierarchies and death, in contrast to the – albeit compromised – possibilities of the city.

Furthermore, while Ishvar declares that his smaller, childhood town is a ‘home’ (518) in which he can relax, in contrast to the city where ‘every time [he] go[es] out anywhere, [he] feel[s] a little scared’ (518), the tailors fail to dispel myths of Bombay’s prosperity. Recounting their experiences, the pair ‘soften the details of their trials’ (518), unwilling to unsettle Ashraf’s belief that the ‘city has been good to [them]’ (516). Ishvar later claims that ‘[t]here is no chance of coming back [to the village]. We have very good jobs in the city. The future there is bright’ (527). Mistry situates his depiction of Bombay within this ambivalence regarding the socio-economic possibilities offered by the city and the realities of living within it. His representation of the city as marked divisions of class and occupation, which themselves intersect with localised and state-sanctioned violence, reveals idealisations of Bombay as a space of emancipation as deeply compromised. Nevertheless, Mistry does recognise the continuing appeal of the city as a potentially positive alternative to ‘traditional rural identities’ and hierarchies.⁸³ Moreover, Om and Ishvar suffer their most serious injuries in the village, where civic violence – in the form of state-enforced sterilisations – intersects with localised feudal and caste oppression. This further indicates Mistry’s sustained privileging of the city as a space of possibility and progressive social transformation, even as he emphasises such possibilities as both radically problematised and unevenly experienced.

Dhar claims that ‘[t]he first impact of the Emergency was in the urban areas’,⁸⁴ but highlights that impact as unequally experienced by different class communities. While Dhar explains that ‘people mostly of the middle class’ were ‘impressed by the immediate gains of the Emergency’, as strikes and protests were eradicated and commodity prices stabilised,⁸⁵ Frank notes that ‘[t]he throngs of beggars on the streets of Delhi disappeared’.⁸⁶ Both Dhar and Frank gesture towards the remapping of urban space enacted during the Emergency, as the ‘war on poverty’ and ‘urban improvement’ programmes endeavoured to reconfigure cities as

⁸³ Pendse, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Dhar, p. 264.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Frank, p. 382.

prosperous, industrious – and implicitly middle-class – spaces.⁸⁷ As Frank explains, in Old Delhi, ‘tens of thousands of [working-class and poor] people [...] would be “relocated” to vacant land [...] on the outskirts of the city’.⁸⁸ Harini Narayanan observes a similar enactment of the ‘war on poverty’ in Bombay through enforced slum demolition and ‘relocation options’, processes executed alongside the implementation, during the Emergency, of a legislative Act designed to ‘alleviat[e] poverty through equitable land redistribution’.⁸⁹

Mistry engages with the reconstruction of the city’s social and spatial geography during the Emergency and, in particular, with attempts by authorities to control and contain the activities of working-class, poor and homeless communities. Michel de Certeau’s analysis of urban space offers a useful vocabulary for considering the representation of the city in *A Fine Balance*. De Certeau juxtaposes two understandings of the city: the official ‘Concept-city’, which is strategically rationalised into ‘a finite number of stable, isolatable’ spaces,⁹⁰ and the ‘metaphorical’ city, produced by the movements of the ‘ordinary practitioners of the city’.⁹¹ The Concept-city represents a ‘place’, understood as a ‘distinct location’ and ‘indication of stability’, in which ‘the law of the “proper” rules’.⁹² Below the panoptic gaze of the ‘proper’ city exists the ‘proliferating illegitimacy’⁹³ of the lived city, a ‘space [...] composed of intersections of mobile elements’ that has ‘none of the univocity or stability of a “proper” place’.⁹⁴ This city is characterised by mobility, internal migrations, and transgressive interminglings, which disrupt ‘the accepted framework, the imposed order’ of the Concept-city.⁹⁵

I will return to the notions of the ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ city in my explorations of Rushdie’s work, but would here like to note de Certeau’s assertion that ‘proper names’ function to ‘make habitable or believable the place that they clothe with a word’.⁹⁶ In his exploration of the renaming of Bombay, Thomas Blom Hansen similarly argues that the ‘question of naming

⁸⁷ See Frank, pp. 402-3.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 402.

⁸⁹ Harini Narayanan, ‘In Search of Shelter: The Politics of the Implementation of the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act 1976 in Greater Mumbai’, in Patel & Masselos, eds., pp. 183-206 (p. 185).

⁹⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 94.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 96.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 107.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 105.

revolves [...] around the question of which space, and whose, should the name fix and territorialise as its object; which, and whose, history should it refer to and demarcate'.⁹⁷ In this light, and given the context of the novel's production, Mistry's decision not to name the city in *A Fine Balance* accrues further significance. Published in 1996, the year after Bombay became Mumbai, the novel was written against the backdrop of increasing pressure from the Shiv Sena and BJP coalition, as well as from socialist campaigners, to rename the city. If a 'proper name' signifies the stable ownership of a space by a specific community, then Mistry's refusal to name his city resists official discourses that identify it as the Hindu-Marathi, global capitalist space of Mumbai. By not naming the city as Bombay, however, Mistry acknowledges contemporary tensions over the city's identity and highlights the naming – and, therefore, ownership – of that space as a deeply contested issue.

In positioning the Concept-city as a construct which ignores, or misunderstands, the lived experience of urban space, de Certeau risks establishing an opposition between the two understandings of the city, the one offering order and stability, the other proliferating chaos. However, by representing the Concept-city as continually disrupted by the challenging mobility of 'ordinary practitioners' de Certeau unsettles such an opposition, and maintains the possibility of resistance;⁹⁸ the 'urban "text"' is re-written, he asserts, by an alternative grammar of spontaneous migrations which reveal the city as 'impossible to administer'.⁹⁹ Thus, the narratives of everyday spatial practices render the city as unmappable: '[w]hat the map cuts up, the story cuts across'.¹⁰⁰ Yet, even as he foregrounds such resistance, de Certeau asserts that spatial practices, as resistant *tactics*, 'can only use, manipulate, and divert' the official 'role of spaces'.¹⁰¹ Spatial practices therefore transgress the official map 'without any illusion that it will change any time soon',¹⁰² and offer a means of 'making do' rather than a strategy of transformation.¹⁰³ Despite offering a potentially schematic reading of the city, de Certeau provides a useful framework through which to consider Mistry's examination of the intersection

⁹⁷ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 3.

⁹⁸ de Certeau, p. 93.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 93. 95.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 26.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 29.

between authoritarian understandings of Bombay during the Emergency and the transgressive practices of its poorer communities. However, I argue that Mistry complicates de Certeau's emphasis on both the possibility of resistance and the 'pleasure' of 'making do'.¹⁰⁴

The bustling Iranian Vishram Vegetarian Hotel is central to Mistry's ambivalent representation of the city as a space of multicultural, intercommunal and class interaction, and of potential conflict and contestation. As a site of hospitality, '[t]here were no secrets' at the Vishram, 'everything was out in the open' (77):

The cook in one corner of the restaurant was working within a circle of pots and pans. They could see their tea simmering in an open kettle. Three roaring stoves sent clouds of greasy smoke to the ceiling. Flames licked the black bottom of a huge karai full of boiling oil, bubbling dangerously and ready for frying. A drop of sweat from the cook's shining brow fell into the oil; it spat viciously. (275)

The kitchen offers an image of the city itself, the 'clouds of greasy smoke' invoking an industrial landscape, calling to mind the textile mills that once dominated Bombay's skyline. This vision of the city is precariously positioned between being open and welcoming on the one hand, and dangerously inhospitable on the other. The chaos of the kitchen suggests an environment teeming with difference, unmappable through distinct spaces as smells, sounds, sights and flavours intermingle and spill into each other like the sweat from the cook's brow. Similarly, the restaurant's 'air was alive with hearty cooking' and Maneck 'had only to stick out his tongue to sample the menu' (275). The openness of the Vishram provides an apparently ideal context for relationships between Maneck, Om and Ishvar to develop, and for the middle-class Parsi and his two toiling, *dalit* friends to share their experiences. In this light, the Vishram embodies the city as a site of secular social interaction which resists compartmentalisation in favour of a dynamic and shared space. Indeed, the centrality of an *Iranian* café to Mistry's depiction of Bombay foregrounds his engagement with the city as an accumulative multicultural and cosmopolitan space, while also serving as a reminder of the multi-layered Parsi and migrant lens through which he views Bombay.

Hansen claims that the 'narrative of an ideal Bombay is a historical fantasy that conceals the fact that Bombay always was fundamentally divided by class, caste and religion'; 'urban violence, state repression, and corruption', he asserts, 'were always part of the city's

¹⁰⁴ de Certeau, p. 18.

life'.¹⁰⁵ Mistry similarly indicates that the Vishram's cultural openness and interaction is compromised by the presence of more inhospitable elements. The simmering tea, roaring stoves, boiling and bubbling oil, and the menacing flames all serve to reveal the city as hostile and dangerous. As Om declares at the restaurant, '[t]his expensive city will [...] eat us alive, for sure' (77). In this light, the 'circle of pots and pans' surrounding the cook become obstructions to interaction, while the image of oil spitting viciously suggests the increasingly violent urban context within which the Vishram is located. By framing the Vishram's hospitality within a grammar of predatory hostility, Mistry resists idealisations of Bombay as a munificent and accommodating multicultural city. Such idealisations, Mistry shows, are, from their inception, undermined both by dangerous tensions between communities – the oil spitting at the drop of sweat – and by uneven access to sustenance, as the flames and oil place the food being prepared firmly out of reach.

Om's comment therefore gains significance, highlighting the discrepancy between his experience of the city and Maneck's. Maneck can afford to 'waste his parents' payment for boarding and lodging' (275) by supplementing his diet at the Vishram, a luxury confirmed by his effortless sampling of the menu by merely 'stick[ing] out his tongue' (275). Om and Ishvar, meanwhile, dine there of necessity and find this means of subsistence expensive and, therefore, precarious; as Om's statement indicates, eating at the Vishram threatens the tailors' economic survival and bears witness to little of the pleasure experienced by Maneck. Mistry thereby reveals how enjoyment of the city's hospitality is contingent upon class and economics, and is not equally available to all inhabitants. Further, while Mistry emphasises the interaction between classes through the Vishram's chaotic openness, he demonstrates that such interaction does not itself transform experiences of the city, which, Pendse notes, remain 'class specific'.¹⁰⁶

Mistry therefore foregrounds the discrepancies between different socio-economic experiences of the city in terms of direct access to sustenance, Maneck's more privileged enjoyment of food, and his easy access to accommodation, contrasting to Om's continued search for adequate nourishment and housing. This focus continues in Mistry's engagement

¹⁰⁵ Hansen, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Pendse, p. 4.

with the material consequences of the ideological remapping of the city's social and spatial geography during the Emergency, which are again configured through depictions of unequal access to basic amenities, food and housing. As Pendse observes, '[s]patial planning has [...] a socio-political aspect', facilitating political control and the maintenance of law and order, whilst enabling toilers to be 'kept effectively away from the lives and realities of the middle classes'.¹⁰⁷ Pendse comments that Bombay, 'in the sense of its elite and middle classes, considers the toilers to be unnecessary invaders [...], burdens that endanger the city'.¹⁰⁸ During the Emergency, through the proclaimed 'war on poverty' and policies of 'urban renewal',¹⁰⁹ the authorities attempted to remap cities, removing poor and overcrowded slums in an effort to bring urban spaces in line with the vision of a modern, industrious nation.¹¹⁰ In the novel, Nusswan articulates a pro-Emergency ideology that aims to 'eliminat[e]' (372) poor and toiling communities from the city's social and spatial cartography. Nusswan rejects the validity of the informal, ad hoc economy of the street, typified by transactions between toilers such as Om and Ishvar and the beggar, Shankar, but also fails to acknowledge how such transactions intersect with, and indeed sustain, the global capitalist economy from which he profits. He dismisses Bombay's pavement dwellers as 'lazy, ignorant' (372) people who, rather than contributing to the economy, 'giv[e] industry a bad name' (372), thereby marginalising the central role played by the tailors in producing clothes for export to New York (74).

The marginalisation of toilers from understandings of the city's economic landscape is reflected in the spatial mapping of the city. Pendse explains that '[t]oilers are relegated to the periphery of existence in the city, both literally and figuratively; actually and ideologically'.¹¹¹ Mistry highlights this social and material marginalisation through the location of Om's and Ishvar's slum, situated beyond the '[l]ast stop' of the bus route (161). As the tailors apply for a ration card, the discrepancies between the city's official cartography and the material realities of its occupation become clear, and Mistry juxtaposes two understandings of Bombay that echo de Certeau's theorisation of the Concept- and lived cities. In doing so, he exposes the disruption of

¹⁰⁷ Pendse, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁹ Frank, p. 396.

¹¹⁰ Krishna Raj, 'Accent on Production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 July 1975. pp. 983-84 (p. 983).

¹¹¹ Pendse, p. 9.

the official map by everyday spatial practices, but also problematises the narrative of resistance found in de Certeau's work, by demonstrating the material consequences of 'not [being] defined or identified' by hegemonic discourses.¹¹²

Receiving the tailors' application for a ration card, the Rations Officer asks, '[w]hat's this rubbish?':

'It's the place where we live,' said Ishvar. He had entered the name of the road that led to their row of shacks on the north side. The space for building name, flat number, and street number had been left blank.

'And where exactly is your house?'

They offered additional information: the closest intersection, the streets east and west of the slum, the train station, names of neighbourhood cinemas, the big hospital, the popular sweetmeat shop, a fish market.

'Stop, enough,' said the Rations Officer, covering his ears. 'I don't need to hear all this nonsense.' He pulled out a city directory, flipped a few pages, and studied a map. 'Just as I thought. Your house is in a *jhopadpatti*, right?'

'It's a roof – for the time being.'

'A *jhopadpatti* is not an address. The law says ration cards can only be issued to people with real addresses.'

'Our house is real,' pleaded Ishvar. 'You can come can see it.'

'My seeing it is irrelevant. The law is what matters. And in the eyes of the law, your *jhopdi* doesn't count.' (176-77)

Mistry presents a conflict between two understandings of the 'real' Bombay, the one offering a theoretical conception, the other a concrete experience of the 'real' urban space. The Officer's attitude is firmly situated within an inflexible, official version of the city, whose cartography is documented through directories and maps in order that legitimate identities and practices can be recognised. Om and Ishvar, meanwhile, operate within a more complex understanding of the city, formulated through the experience of space as a practiced place. Their shack is situated within the everyday uses of the local environment: the station, cinemas, popular shops, the hospital, other slum dwellings. Their narration of their address bears witness to the rewriting of the highly textual and legalistic, official version of the city by localised spatial practices which, Mistry suggests, leave the city unmappable: the *jhopadpatti* has no street or building number and cannot, therefore, be recorded.

Crucially, however, while Mistry emphasises how the official map is contested by the *jhopadpatti*'s existence, he stops short of situating the tailors within a discourse of resistance, emphasising instead the material consequences of the authorities' refusal to recognise the slum

¹¹² de Certeau, p. 29.

as 'real'. The officer's rejection of the *jhopadpatti* as a 'real address' results in the denial of a ration card which offers both 'validation' and a 'viable existence',¹¹³ acting as a legal recognition of citizenship and enabling access to necessities such as rice and wheat at protected prices (398). Similarly, the authority's failure to acknowledge the *jhopadpatti* as a legitimate residence – recognised by the panoptic 'eyes of the law' – not only reinforces the tailors' social exclusion, but leaves them without access to basic amenities, such as water, sanitation, electricity and garbage disposal.¹¹⁴ Mistry consequently makes clear that, while the spatial practices of the urban poor disrupt official conceptualisations of Bombay, they do not offer a successful strategy of resistance or effect a material revision in the theoretical and physical mapping of the city. Such a failure has serious consequences for the slum-dwellers, restricting access to basic facilities, food, healthcare and secure accommodation. In this light, Mistry resists de Certeau's more abstract theorisations, which celebrate the enjoyment of 'get[ting] along in a network of already established forces and representations'.¹¹⁵ Instead, Mistry represents the concrete difficulties of surviving – of 'making do' – within a system which fails to recognise the basic needs of the city's 'ordinary' inhabitants. There is little pleasure evident in the tailors' struggle to find accommodation and affordable food, and their transgressive use of urban space is less a resistant tactic than a necessary method of survival.

Mistry is therefore sceptical of positioning the slum within a discourse of resistance, but also problematises the notion that '[p]eople have to make do with what they have' in order to resist and manipulate the imposed system.¹¹⁶ Consigned to creating and occupying illegitimate homes, the city's 'ordinary practitioners', such as Om and Ishvar, are denied the security, protection and basic amenities that their inscription on the official map would offer. The failure to be 'defined or identified' by the authorities, when specifically located historically or geographically, has, Mistry suggests, consequences for basic survival which decisively problematise de Certeau's theorisation. The difficulties faced by the tailors in 'making do' exposes the national government's failure to deliver the upliftment of the poor which was a

¹¹³ Bharucha (2003), p. 155.

¹¹⁴ Pendse, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ de Certeau, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

declared aim of the Emergency. The authorities' rejection of the legitimacy of the tailors' identities, meanwhile, challenges the government's commitment, in the 1970s, to the Constitutional pledge to 'secure [...] a living wage [...] [and] ensur[e] a decent standard of life' for India's citizens.¹¹⁷ Rather than representing the 'enjoyment' of transgressing and manipulating the imposed order, Mistry maintains the necessity of being recognised by the nation-state. Failure to be 'defined or identified' on the official map, he demonstrates, complicates and endangers the everyday project of 'making do' for those subjects the nation-state has explicitly pledged to help 'get along'.

The unofficial status of the slum itself leaves its inhabitants vulnerable to local civic violence, and enables policies of slum clearance and city 'beautification' that, although in place before the Emergency, are intensified during it. As Rajaram explains, '[i]f shacks are illegal, they can remove them' (295). However, Mistry's portrayal of slum clearances suggests that representations of *jhoadpattis* as chaotic, illegitimate spaces ignores the importance of the communities they house, while further misremembering the city as having formerly been structured around 'neat and elegant urban spaces'.¹¹⁸ Attempts to reconstruct the land as '[e]mpty and clean, the way it was before all these illegal structures were built' (297-98) belie the 'cracked earth' (163) which had been 'sitting useless' before the settlements were built upon it (163). The bulldozers, meanwhile, 'transformed the familiar field with its carefully ordered community into an alien place' (296), causing confusion amongst the inhabitants and disrupting the unofficial cartography of the *jhoadpatti*. The ideology of 'beautification', and its violent physical enactment, therefore ignores the material need for housing in these formerly disused spaces, while further mobilising a predatory nostalgia for a spatially ordered and clean city which elides its long-established social reputation for open hospitality.

Mistry therefore demonstrates how attempts to maintain an official version of the city as modern and prosperous, by clearing slums and removing pavement-dwellers from public spaces, compromise popular myths of Bombay as an inclusive space of hope and promise. While pavement dwellers reoccupy streets from which 'life had been sucked away by the Emergency'

¹¹⁷ Article 43, Indian Constitution, quoted in Corbridge & Harriss, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ Hansen, p. 4.

(351), laying claim to and creating a 'new topography' of urban space (311), their presence is not framed as a direct or effective challenge to the nation-state. The continued use of doorways for accommodation, which subverts Sergeant Kesar's declaration that '[s]leeping in any non-sleeping place is illegal' (325), does highlight a disjuncture between the nation-state's mapping of urban space and the material uses of it, demonstrating that the city is continually 'reinscribed by the particularities of its occupation and use'.¹¹⁹ However, even as he shows that, despite the regulation of space by disciplinary powers, 'urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded',¹²⁰ Mistry remains sceptical of such re-emergence as an effective strategy of resistance. 'Everyone', we are told, 'was on the lookout for the police and ready to run' (351), and the pavement-dwellers transform streets into homes and doorways into beds out of necessity rather than as a tactic of resistance, and remain fearful of the consequences of so doing.

Shankar's funeral offers an important representation of spatial practices as disturbing, without necessarily transforming, exclusionary conceptualisations of urban space. Comprised largely of Shankar's fellow beggars, the funeral procession subverts the attempts to 'beautify' the city by removing the poor, and the disjuncture between 'proper' and 'improper' uses of the urban space is made clear by the initial police response. Moving at an 'unorthodox pace' (506), the 'funeral march was annoying the traffic constables, who felt the tempo was all wrong. "Keep Moving" was their one credo in life, and they had a phobia about anything in slow motion' (505). The difficulty the police have in both recognising the legitimacy of the parade, and in speeding up its progress, highlights the incommensurable difference between the official discourse of the Emergency and the lived realities of urban subalterns. While the authorities emphasise the elimination of poverty through economic policy, the continued presence of the poor belies the efficacy of such moves; attempts physically to remove the poor from the centre are similarly revealed as ineffectual by the 'assembly of crippled, blinded, armless, legless, diseased, and faceless individuals on pavement' (503).

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), p. 109.

¹²⁰ de Certeau, p. 95.

The procession therefore subverts both the temporal and spatial rationalisation of the city by the authorities, highlighting the inadequacies of its discursive and material strategies of ‘beautification’. However, Mistry does not celebrate such subversion as either enabling or transformative for the subaltern figures involved. The procession marks a death, undermining any reading of it as a positive re-assertion of the legitimacy of poor and urban subaltern identities, or as ‘an inversion of established procedure’.¹²¹ Shankar’s death itself indicates the potentially violent consequences of transgressing the ‘accepted framework’ of the city’s social and spatial cartography. Shankar attracts attention after arguing with Rajaram over a haircut, ‘forgetting the cardinal rule of all good almsmen: beggars could be seen, and also heard, but not too loudly – especially not on non-begging matters’ (496). This ‘rule’ implies a reluctant tolerance of the poor, without an accompanying recognition of the legitimacy of their identities. Shankar disturbs this ‘rule’: his vociferous assertion of individuality – in his desire for hair (496) – makes his presence evident in ways that exceed the city crowd’s level of tolerance. Similarly, the funeral procession ‘attracted an audience’ who ‘think it’s a circus’ (503). Reflecting Shankar’s transgression of hegemonic assumptions regarding appropriate modes of behaviour, the procession unsettles normative responses to the poor. No donations are made to the beggars because, as Beggarmaster explains, “[p]ity can only be shown in small doses. When so many beggars are in one place, the public goes like this” – he put his fists to his eyes, like binoculars. “It’s a freak show” (503). This statement suggests that, while asserting the continued presence of the beggars, the procession reiterates, rather than subverts, the distance between the city’s poor and its wealthier inhabitants.

Dina’s and Maneck’s presence complicates this distance, as does the ‘official entourage’ (507) provided by the police as an apology for initially assaulting the funeral cortege. At first glance, this entourage appears to indicate the official legitimisation of the beggars’ march. Indeed, Nusswan reflects that it ‘[m]ust be a fairly important person [...] to have a police escort’ (507). However, while the police escort implies official recognition of the beggars as legitimate citizens, such recognition is conditional upon conformity with the ideology of the nation-state. The procession is initially understood as a ‘political statement’:

¹²¹ Morey (2004), p. 119.

[A] mock funeral [...] which would most definitely have contravened Emergency regulations. Suspicion had been aroused, in particular, by the assembly of so many beggars [...]. 'They were mistaken for political activists in fancy dress – troublemakers indulging in street theatre, portraying government figures as crooks and criminals embarked on begging the nation. You know the sort of thing.' (506)

Mistry's self-conscious insertion of an allegorical reading of the procession is significant for a number of reasons. As a metafictional commentary on his own narrative techniques, the reading of the march as an allegory of the 'beggaring of the nation' asserts the politics of Mistry's novel, which similarly critiques the Indian government's proclaimed commitment to alleviating poverty by 'creating social prosperity and ensuring its equitable distribution'.¹²² Indeed, Mistry's commentary, I argue, suggests that his critique of the nation-state extends beyond the abuses of the poor during the Emergency and into the 1996 context of the novel itself.

As Patel explains, while the city's importance within the global economy has increased, 'the basic conditions of work and living environment have not changed for many of Bombay's citizens'.¹²³ Corbridge and Harriss similarly note that 'the reforms of the 1990s have worked to the advantage of India's business and financial [...] elites [...] and have not yet empowered the majority of Indians', reflecting instead a tendency to 'view the poor as responsible for their own fates, and as a drag on the rest'.¹²⁴ Within Bombay, meanwhile, in the year before the novel's publication, the Shiv Sena's election campaign for the State Legislative Assembly directly echoed Indira Gandhi's Emergency policies. Marked by 'a distinct upper-middle-class view of the [...] vast expanses of slum[s]', the Shiv Sena canvassed support through 'promises of ridding Bombay of its overcrowdedness'¹²⁵ and resolving what Bal Thackeray termed 'the major problem of dirt'.¹²⁶ I therefore contend that Mistry's self-conscious assertion of the procession as a political statement, and his criticism of the government's attitude towards poverty in the late 1970s, implicitly extends into a critique of the contemporary nation-state. By foregrounding a reading of the funeral as critically engaged with its political context, I suggest, Mistry insists that his novel be situated within its own historical moment and be read as a similarly political act.

¹²² Tharoor, p. 29.

¹²³ Patel, p. 20.

¹²⁴ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 121.

¹²⁵ Hansen, p. 207.

¹²⁶ Bal Thackeray, quoted in Hansen, p. 208.

Crucially, however, that the beggars are *mistaken* for political activists implies both an anxiety over the efficacy of this project and a further scepticism about possibilities of resistance. Notably, it is only *after* this mistake has been rectified, and the march's non-resistant identity reaffirmed, that the police provide support. The recognition of legitimacy offered by the police presence is consequently contingent upon compliance with authorised understandings of the city and nation. Subversive political activism, it is clear, would not receive such official protection, and the escort works to neutralise, rather than legitimise, the resistant qualities of the march. Moreover, the police presence – as the temporary 'mistake' suggests – works to reappropriate any subversion into the framework of authorised understandings of the city. The officer's claim that '[w]e'll soon have everyone marching shipshape to the cremation grounds' (507) indicates a reassertion of official order. By permitting – to borrow de Certeau's term¹²⁷ – the march to proceed, and by appropriating it back into the discourse of the nation-state, the police retain control over spatial practices. In this light, Morey's reading of the procession as offering a carnivalesque 'moment of [...] ritualised decrowning [...] when figures of authority are stripped of their power and ridiculed' seems wide of the mark.¹²⁸ While Dina and Maneck are able to mock Nusswan's anxiety about the march, the movements of the beggars themselves do not represent a strategy of resistance. The police officer's desire that everyone begin 'marching shipshape' suggests that any resistance denoted by the march is temporary at best, and will not effect substantial or permanent social transformation; control over urban spatial practices is retained by the nation-state.

By framing his scepticism towards the resistant possibilities of the march within a metafictional reflection on his own narrative, Mistry reveals an anxiety about the efficacy of writing itself as a political act. As I have shown, the exploration of the politics of migrancy within *A Fine Balance* implies what I have suggested as Mistry's mobilisation of writing as a method of political engagement with India. Significantly, the funeral procession invokes Avinash's death, indirectly through the notion of political activism, and directly through Maneck's 'thoughts [which] were of the other [Avinash's] cremation' (508). In this light, the

¹²⁷ de Certeau, p. 95.

¹²⁸ Morey (2004), p. 120.

failure of the march to represent a successful mode of political activism perhaps has consequences for Mistry's negotiation of his diasporic 'double duty' through writing. That the misreading of the march as political theatre is both quickly dismissed and neutralised perhaps reflects Mistry's concern that his own engagement with politics through literature similarly fails to offer a strategy of effective resistance to hegemonic conceptualisations of the city and nation. In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry attempts to forge allegiances between the cosmopolitan migrant and the urban poor, both through the relationship between Maneck and the tailors and in his own examination of the impact of the Emergency on poor and working-class communities. In doing so, he engages with communities often marginalised in what Deepika Bahri terms 'mainstream' Indian fiction in English.¹²⁹ However, the intersection between Avinash's death as the result of his political activism and the failed political activism of the march highlights a tension between material and artistic political engagement, while suggesting that Mistry is apprehensive about the adequacy of either forms of activism as effective modes of resistance or social transformation. This has important consequences for Mistry's negotiation of his own migrant position through writing. The dismissal of artistic political activism, in the form of the beggars' procession, as a 'mistake' highlights that, even as he mobilises writing as a mode of political engagement, Mistry remains anxious that it does not offer an effective form of political activism or, therefore, an effective means through which to negotiate his diasporic 'double duty'.

A 'tightly knit family of patches': Narrating the Nation

As I have argued, the funeral march forms part of Mistry's critique of the nation-state's commitment, during the 1970s, to the founding principles of independent India, particularly to the 'promise of social and economic justice'.¹³⁰ In this final section, I examine in more detail Mistry's engagement these principles, and with the notion of "nation" as a narrative strategy',¹³¹ through the image of Dina's quilt. According to Morey, the quilt gains an 'almost talismanic significance', representing Mistry's concern for 'the vast pattern of interconnections

¹²⁹ Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003), p. 26.

¹³⁰ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 30.

¹³¹ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 140.

between individuals and communities'.¹³² Universalising the quilt, Morey claims that, by embodying the memories and stories through which the characters forge their identities, the quilt takes on the 'redemptive qualities of a work of art'.¹³³ Nila Shah similarly identifies the quilt as the novel's 'central message', acting as 'eyewitness [to] collective human efforts' and gesturing towards the 'composite picture of a total India' offered by Mistry.¹³⁴ While Morey's reading disconnects the quilt from its specific historical and political context, Shah points to the dialogue between the quilt and discourses of Indian secularism. Despite their attention to the image, neither critic presents a detailed examination of the quilt as a metaphor for a Nehruvian vision of socialist secularism. In this section, therefore, I consider Mistry's critical engagement with the Nehruvian vision of India, and its weakening legacy in the 1970s.

As T. N. Madan explains, the Constituent Assembly of 1946 offered a specific understanding of the secular Indian state 'as one that is based on respect for all religions or non-discrimination on the ground of religion'.¹³⁵ This conceptualisation drew upon Nehru's vision of Indianness as a 'composite nationality'¹³⁶ which, Khilnani notes, was articulated through 'a logic of accommodation and acceptance' of India's diverse religious, ethnic, social and political communities.¹³⁷ Emphasising India's 'astonishing inclusive capacity',¹³⁸ Nehru 'steered away from the perception of cultures as self-enclosed wholes, hermetic communities of language or belief' and instead 'saw cultures as overlapping forms of activity that had commerce with one another, mutually altering and reshaping each other';¹³⁹ India, in this formulation, 'was a society neither of liberal individuals nor of exclusive communities or nationalities, but of interconnected differences'.¹⁴⁰ This principle of secular inclusivity was paired with a socialist approach

¹³² Peter Morey, *Fictions of India: Narratives of Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 168.

¹³³ *ibid.*, pp. 168, 177.

¹³⁴ Nila Shah, 'A Critical Appraisal of *A Fine Balance*', in Dodiya, ed., pp. 115-18 (p. 116).

¹³⁵ T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 25.

¹³⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 177.

¹³⁷ Khilnani, p. 169.

¹³⁸ Jawarhalal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1946]), p. 73.

¹³⁹ Khilnani, pp. 171-72.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.172.

emphasising ‘economic democracy’;¹⁴¹ according to Corbridge and Harriss, ‘Nehru understood socialism in the broader sense of uplifting the poor’ through a mixed economy.¹⁴² It was through such ‘economic democracy’ that Nehru believed the ‘promise of social justice’ held out at Independence would be achieved.¹⁴³

The ‘utopic horizon’¹⁴⁴ offered by this model weakened during the 1970s, and ‘[o]nly a little more than five years after Nehru’s death the Nehruvian design of modern India seemed to lie in ruins’.¹⁴⁵ Before exploring the quilt as both a symbol and critique of the Nehruvian vision of a socialist secular nation, I wish to place *A Fine Balance* once more in dialogue with Mistry’s previous work, and suggest that the quilt develops an image dominating *Such a Long Journey*.¹⁴⁶ Set during the 1971 war with Pakistan, and within the context of more local communal agitation and the rise of the Shiv Sena, *Such A Long Journey* focuses on a small Parsi community in Bombay. Central to this novel’s examination of discourses of nation, and the relationship between the nation-state and India’s cultural diversity, is the wall separating the Parsi compound from the city beyond. Initially functioning as a fetid urinal, the wall is transformed by a street artist into multireligious shrine, depicting India’s ‘assorted religions and their gods, saints and prophets’ (182). Embodying the artist’s desire to ‘promote tolerance and understanding’ (182), the wall becomes ‘a perfect example for our secular country’ (214). Set against the rise of ‘fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense’ (55) which the novel’s protagonist, Gustad, believes threaten the position of ‘minorities’ (55), the wall reasserts India’s secularism, resisting the parochialisation and communalisation of public life.

While apparently celebrating the multicultural diversity of the nation, however, Mistry uses the wall to critique the nation-state’s commitment to the founding ideals of secular socialism. Initially, the wall seems to sustain an understanding of the nation as culturally and materially accommodating: the wall supports a small shelter for the artist, offering him ‘permanence, [...] roots, [...] [and] something he could call his own’ (184). However, the very

¹⁴¹ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 29.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴³ Ahmad (2000), p. 184.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 67.

¹⁴⁶ Rohinton Mistry, *Such A Long Journey* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991). Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

permanence of the wall is represented ambivalently, threatening ‘the cycle of arrival, creation and obliteration’ previously enjoyed by the artist (184). In contrast to the processual, ‘living and dynamic’ qualities of Nehruvian secularism,¹⁴⁷ the wall’s permanent solidity implies an encroachment of rigidity into understandings of the nation, a negative fixing of difference and limiting of interaction between communities. Indeed, the receding dominance of secularism and socialism during the 1970s was, paradoxically, accompanied by their official ratification in the national Constitution during the Emergency.¹⁴⁸ Mistry’s representation of the permanence of the wall as both reassuring and threatening perhaps signals an ambivalence towards the official endorsement of these principles at a time when the nation-state is failing to uphold those values.

The agitation surrounding the wall’s destruction further suggests that the ideals of secular socialism have failed to deliver the material needs of the nation and, as Bahri claims, the wall ‘suggests the mortifying limits of [...] secularism in the face of unaddressed social needs’.¹⁴⁹ This is indicated not only by the street artist’s shack, which highlights a discrepancy between discourses of accommodation and upliftment and the material realities of Bombay’s poor and homeless, but also by the rioting crowd’s anti-government anger. Outraged by the proposed demolition of ‘our sacred wall’ (327), the *morcha* attacks the municipal authorities for ‘harass[ing] us in our neighbourhood without water supply! Without sewers! With gutters that stink! With bribes that empty our pockets and fill theirs!’ (327). The municipality’s destruction of an icon of secularism is therefore directly related to its failure to deliver basic amenities or economic democracy. Thus, while the demolition of the wall signals the inclusion of the Parsi baag within Bombay’s wider community, it also, I contend, offers a critique of the limited achievement of the founding principles of the nation, highlighting the ways in which these were increasingly problematised during the 1970s.

In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry continues his engagement with discourses of the nation as inclusive and accommodating through the image of the quilt, developing his exploration of the legacy of socialist secularism in the 1970s. If the wall in *Such A Long Journey* presents a potentially static interpretation of secularism, the quilt presents a more dialogic understanding of

¹⁴⁷ Nehru, p. 61.

¹⁴⁸ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 21.

¹⁴⁹ Bahri, p. 139.

community. James Clifford's concept of collage offers a valuable framework through which to examine Mistry's engagement with the ideal of the composite nation. Clifford proposes 'collage' as a method of ethnography which enables 'a way of making space for heterogeneity'.¹⁵⁰ He explains:

The purpose of my collage is not to blur, but rather to juxtapose, distinct forms of evocation and analysis. The method of collage asserts a relationship among heterogeneous elements in a meaningful ensemble. It brings its parts together while sustaining a tension among them [...] challeng[ing] readers to engage with its parts in different ways, while allowing the pieces to interact in larger patterns of interference and complementarity.¹⁵¹

Itself a collage of materials representative of diverse socio-historical, cultural and geographical experiences, the quilt can be positioned productively within Clifford's model of cultural interaction. Clifford's emphasis on the sustained tension between the distinct elements within collage speaks to the community of difference within Dina's flat which is, I argue, formed through the interaction between, rather than the smoothing over of, those differences. Furthermore, as a method of reading and writing informed by discourses of travel and diaspora, Clifford's collage offers a useful framework through which to examine Mistry's representation of the Indian nation from a migrant perspective which, as I have asserted, signals a similar process of '[t]hinking historically' about and with '[f]ull accountability' to both the politics of his homeland and his own distance from it.¹⁵²

The quilt initially represents an individual pursuit, a means by which Dina can use leftover fabric (194). As the novel progresses, the quilt becomes a shared project, reflecting the small community being formed within Dina's flat. As the quilt nears completion, Dina, Ishvar, Om and Maneck read the quilt, moving across the fabric 'chronologically, patch by patch, reconstructing the chain of their mishaps and triumphs' (491):

'Look,' Om pointed, 'look at that – the poplin from our first job.'
 'You remember,' said Dina, pleased. 'And how fast you finished those first dresses. [...]'
 'Hungry stomachs were driving our fingers,' chuckled Ishvar.
 [...]
 'Then came that yellow calico with orange stripes. And what a hard time this young fellow gave me. Fighting and arguing about everything.'

¹⁵⁰ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p. 11.

‘Me? Argue? Never.’

[...]

Ishvar leaned over to indicate a cambric square. ‘See this? Our house was destroyed by the government, the day we started on this cloth. Makes me sad whenever I look at it.’

‘Get me the scissors,’ she joked. ‘I’ll cut it out and throw it away.’

‘No no, Dinabai, let it be, it looks very nice in there.’ His fingers stroked the cambric texture, recapturing the time. ‘Calling one piece sad is meaningless. See, it is connected to a happy piece – sleeping on the verandah [*sic*]. And the next square – chapatis. Then that violet tusser, when we made masala wada and started cooking together. And don’t forget this gorgette patch, where Beggarmaster saved us from the landlord’s goondas.’

He stepped back, pleased with himself, as though he had elucidated an intricate theorem. ‘So that’s the rule to remember, the whole quilt is much more important than any single square.’ (489-90)

Replicating the structure of the novel, the quilt narrates the quartet’s increasingly interconnected lives, charting their growing intimacy and tracing the tailors’ movement into Dina’s home, from their slum-dwelling to the veranda to the kitchen. In doing so, it delineates the quartet’s transformation from mutually suspicious work colleagues, ‘fighting and arguing about everything’, to an interdependent community who share food and accommodation. The reading of the quilt is significant, positioning it as an idealised Nehruvian community of interconnected differences, while simultaneously suggesting the legacies of the Nehruvian ideal as damaged and compromised. The variety of fabrics used emphasises the plurality of socio-cultural subject positions occupied by the four characters, as well as the diverse geographical locations from which they originate. The ‘tightly knit family of patches’ (573) highlights the ways in which the quartet form affiliations which cut across social and cultural communities. On the surface, then, the quilt offers an idealised narrative of the nation as inclusive of diversity and difference.

While the quartet’s reading situates the quilt within a Nehruvian model of the composite nation, it also bears witness to the tension between the idealised representation of India and the realities experienced by the characters within it. Evoking internal tensions between Dina and Om, and external conflicts between Dina and the landlord, the quilt demonstrates how even this small community has been subject to contestation over the access to accommodation and territorial control. The tailors’ ‘hungry stomachs’ and the state-sanctioned destruction of their house, meanwhile, emphasise the discrepancy between the rhetoric of socialist secularism, which promises upliftment of the poor and represents the nation through a logic of cultural, social and material accommodation, and the realities faced by the tailors as

they struggle to find affordable food and housing. In this light, it becomes clear that the inclusive community symbolised by the quilt does not correspond to the contemporary realities of national life, but, rather, represents a community formed in resistance to the nation. The tailors' incorporation into Dina's flat, the quilt's narrative makes clear, is the direct result of the failures of the nation-state, in the late 1970s, to provide and protect the social justice promised at Independence: the 'sad' piece of fabric is 'connected to a happy piece'.

The quilt therefore becomes simultaneously symbolic of the Nehruvian concept of the socialist secular nation and of its failures, representing the possibilities offered by that vision but also critiquing its demise in the 1970s. Crucially, the reading of the quilt is represented as an act of 'recapturing time'. If, as Ahmad claims, the 'utopic horizon' offered by Nehruvian nationalism at Independence was retreating during the 1970s,¹⁵³ then, I contend, Mistry's quilt reiterates the idealism of this ideology and frames it within a sense of nostalgia. The quilt, representative of 'the utopia of secular civility',¹⁵⁴ locates that utopia within the past, suggesting the opportunity for its realization has both passed and been missed. In this light, the community within Dina's flat can perhaps be read as Mistry's own nostalgic attempt to reimagine a 'utopia of secular civility' in the private domain, in resistance to its failure in the public sphere.

Thus, the commentary on the quilt, enacted through a dialogue between the characters, gestures towards a Nehruvian vision of community in which different identities mutually alter and reshape each other. This cultural interaction is paired with the exchange of modes of bodily care. After witnessing Om and Ishvar's method of teeth-cleaning, for example, Maneck and Dina exchange their Kolynos toothpaste for charcoal powder (386); Om follows Maneck's example, and begins to use Cinthol Soap and Lakmé Talcum Powder (388), while Ishvar moderates his early morning retching (387). These changes lead to Dina's sense that the four are '[s]ailing under one flag' (399), their socio-cultural differences mediated by the shared space they inhabit. Dina contemplates how 'the tailors' urine smell that used to flutter like a flag in the air [...] grew unnoticeable' because 'it was the same for everyone. They were all eating the same food, drinking the same water' (399). The image of the quartet as 'sailing under one flag'

¹⁵³ Ahmad (2000), p. 184.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 184-85.

explicitly positions them within discourses of the nation, invoking the Nehruvian ideal of ‘unity in [...] diversity’.¹⁵⁵ Morey claims that *A Fine Balance* both ‘allegorises national experience’ and ‘reaches beyond these configurations’, ‘incorporating but transcending the nation’.¹⁵⁶ Against these more schematic readings, I claim that the flat community represents a more complex engagement with the Indian nation in the 1970s, which neither straightforwardly allegorises the nation nor transcends its specific historical and political concerns. The community ‘sailing’ under a ‘flag’ of inclusive diversity is not quite an allegory of the nation. Rather, through the provision of a space of secular civility and, moreover, of accommodation and sustenance, the flat offers a representation of what Mistry believes the nation *should* be, and should offer, both materially and ideologically.

The position of the quilt as a counter-narrative of nation, which resists and critiques the ideology of the nation-state during the Emergency, is emphasised by Ishvar’s theorem that ‘the whole quilt is much more important than any single square’ (490), and his suggestion that removing undesirable pieces would be inappropriate. In this way, the quilt resists what Gyanendra Pandey identifies as the nation-state’s increasing attempts to ‘homogenise and “normalise” national culture by constructing ‘all that belongs to any minority other than the ruling class [...] not to say, all difference’ as ‘threatening, intrusive, even “foreign”’.¹⁵⁷ Against dominant, state-centred historiographies, which homogenise the contested terrain of the national imaginary, Pandey argues for a method which echoes Clifford’s collage, by attending to the “‘fragments” of Indian society – the smaller religious and caste communities, tribal sections, industrial workers, activist women’s groups’.¹⁵⁸ As my reading suggests, the quilt represents a similar process of narrating national space and national history through the “‘fragments” of Indian society’, those marginalised communities that are placed ‘outside history’ by official discourses.¹⁵⁹ Produced by the interaction between socially-excluded *dalit* Hindus, and culturally marginalised non-Hindu identities, the quilt resists constructions of nation at work within the public domain, which would reject Ishvar’s and Om’s identities and marginalise Dina’s and

¹⁵⁵ Nehru, p. 145.

¹⁵⁶ Morey (2004), pp. 122-23.

¹⁵⁷ Gyanendra Pandey, ‘In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, March 1991, 559-72 (p. 559).

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

Maneck's. The quilt therefore challenges the totalising narrative of nation foregrounded by the nation-state and its dominant classes – such as Mrs Gupta, Nusswan, Dina's landlord and Thakur Dharamsi, representatives of what Pandey calls the 'get-rich-quick, consumerist "middle class" and its rural rich ("rich peasant") allies'.¹⁶⁰

The discrepancy between the nostalgic representation of a utopian socialist secular civility within the private domain of Dina's flat and the collapse of this vision in the public domain is reiterated by Mistry's engagement with the Emergency government's rhetoric of 'beautification'. By juxtaposing two versions of the quilt – the one carefully cultivated to offer an ideal of the nation, the other depicting that ideal as decaying – Mistry foregrounds the divergence between representations of the nation and its contemporary realities. Against the official slogan that 'THE CITY BELONGS TO YOU! KEEP IT BEAUTIFUL!' (303), Mistry presents the city as a rotting quilt:

Splashes of pale moonlight revealed an endless stretch of patchwork shacks, the sordid quiltings of plastic and cardboard and paper and sackcloth, like scabs and blisters creeping in a dermatological nightmare across the rotting body of the metropolis. When the moon was blotted by clouds, the slum disappeared from sight. The stench continued to vouch for its presence. (379)

While the 'city [...] desperately seek[s] beautification' (379), the patchwork of slums interrupts the national policy of 'beautification', the continued stench indicating the failure to remove poverty – either physically or economically – from the city. Crucially, by reinvoking the image of the quilt, Mistry not only critiques the specific policy of 'beautification', but also, more generally, the achievements of a Nehruvian socialist secularism. If the quilt created within Dina's flat symbolises the possibilities of this vision, in which communities share territorial and imaginative space, then the 'sordid quiltings' of the slums point to a less optimistic reading of the Nehruvian legacy. The 'patchwork' of ad hoc housing, which appears to threaten the city's prospects of survival, bears witness to the failures of the Nehruvian ideal to provide for the 'basic, minimum needs' of India's poorest communities.¹⁶¹ The apparent endorsement of the Nehruvian vision found in the private space is therefore placed in tension with its inadequate realisation – if not restriction – in the public domain. Indeed, the community within Dina's flat is

¹⁶⁰ Pandey, p. 559.

¹⁶¹ Brass, p. 74.

explicitly the result of the nation-state's weakening commitment to the ideological, social and economic principles upon which the nation was founded.

In foregrounding the tension between the ideals of socialist secular ideology and their inadequate realisation, Mistry once more reveals a scepticism towards the possibilities of resistance offered by unofficial and counter-narratives of nation. The idealisation of the Nehruvian nation found in the quilt, as offering a space of secular civility, accommodation and sustenance, resists the erosion of those principles without offering an effective strategy for social change within the contemporary nation itself. It does not parallel an improvement in the rotting quilt of the city. It is therefore significant that the quilt remains a private mode of resistance which, once the community has dissolved, becomes a threat to, rather than presenting a strategy of, survival. Thus, the quilt 'had to be locked away now in the wardrobe' (574) when Dina returns to Nusswan's house, no longer offering a viable counter-narrative to his pro-Emergency vision of India.

If the quilt represents a fading utopia, and a failure of the possibilities of resistance to the Emergency to set alongside the death of Avinash, then the final scenes of the novel reiterate this sense of lost possibilities and compromised ideals. Om and Ishvar reappear as beggars, their bodies mutilated by the machinations of caste hierarchies and nation-state violence. '[S]lumped on a low platform' (608), Ishvar sits on the 'patchwork quilt', 'dirty and fraying, folded to the size of a cushion' (608). In the final scene, Ishvar spots that a 'thread had unravelled from the quilt' (614) and the 'piece might have fallen off completely' (614) had it been left unnoticed. This final image, I argue, emphasises Mistry's ambivalence towards the legacy of socialist secularism in India in the late 1970s and early 1980s and, more specifically, towards its failure to offer both material and socio-cultural equality. If, as I have claimed, the quilt embodies an almost idealised metaphor for the Nehruvian vision of national community, then its fraying, soiled, and physically reduced appearance here implies the retreat of the 'utopic horizon' offered by that vision. Indeed, the quilt has become damaged through its relocation from the private to the public sphere, suggesting that the formulation of a resistant and utopian secular civility within the flat is not reflected by, or reflective of, a progression towards those ideals in the nation itself.

Again, it is important to remember the historical context of the Epilogue: the rioting following Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 demonstrated the communal tensions that increasingly dominated public life in the late 1970s and early 1980s, further challenging ideals of inclusive secularism.¹⁶² Ishvar's body, meanwhile, bears painful witness to the failures of the nation-state to deliver Nehru's 'fundamental objective' of solving 'minority problems', 'raising [...] the depressed classes and [...] ending [...] the curse of untouchability'.¹⁶³ Describing his return to Bombay in 1989, Mistry remarks that 'optimism ha[d] evaporated' within the city.¹⁶⁴ While Corbridge and Harriss claim that 'in spite of the experience of the Emergency, [India's] founding myths were not seriously called into question',¹⁶⁵ the final scene of Mistry's novel suggests that these myths have indeed been severely damaged, although Mistry admits that there remains room for 'those amazing moments of hope',¹⁶⁶ and makes space for optimism: the quilt continues to support Ishvar, and its ragged edges will be 'easy to fix' (614); similarly, Dina continues to offer the tailors food and friendship.

The quilt's transformation into a supportive cushion appears, however, to be ironic: the symbol of the very ideals that promised to deliver social justice and equality, and to alleviate poverty, is left to fray under the weight of a body bearing the scars of its failure to do so. Furthermore, despite declaring it 'easy to fix', Mistry does not represent the restitching of the quilt, implying a scepticism towards the prospect of regaining the utopian horizon offered at Independence. In deferring the repairing of the quilt, moreover, Mistry problematises the possibility of resistance to hegemonic narratives of nation, and the close of his novel offers neither a nostalgic return to the Nehruvian vision of nation, nor a re-imagining of the nation beyond this vision. Mistry therefore leaves his representation of India precariously positioned between the further destruction of the nation's founding principles and the restoration of those

¹⁶² According to Jyoti Punwani, the '1984 riots were a turning point for a lot of young Bombayites who had grown up in the 70s believing that their city was truly a microcosm of India, with no place for regional chauvinism'. "'My Area, Your Area": How Riots Changed the City', in Patel & Masselos, eds., pp. 235-64 (p. 242).

¹⁶³ Nehru, p. 361.

¹⁶⁴ Geoff Hancock, 'An Interview with Rohinton Mistry', *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 65 (1989), 143-50 (p. 149).

¹⁶⁵ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 92.

¹⁶⁶ Hancock, p. 149.

ideals, suggesting his own ambivalence regarding the survival of those ideals as independent India approached its fiftieth anniversary.

As this chapter has demonstrated, *A Fine Balance* offers an ambivalent critique of the legacy of Nehruvian socialist secularism, affirming the inclusive possibilities of those principles within the private domain, while demonstrating their failure to deliver social and material transformations in the public domain. Furthermore, I have argued that, by situating this critique within a politics of migrancy, Mistry – like Tharoor, but unlike his own fictional migrants – insists on a sustained involvement in the politics of India. By representing, in *A Fine Balance*, experiences of Indian Independence that have differed significantly from his own, Mistry implicitly emphasises his responsibility to engage with communities often marginalised in Indian fiction in English. At the same time, Mistry frames this insistence within the depiction of a migrant who is unable to translate his allegiance to such communities into a sustained political engagement with India. As my examination of *A Fine Balance* has shown, Mistry recognises a political and imaginative responsibility towards his homeland, despite his geographical distance from it, and is therefore aligned with Tharoor's claim that the migrant 'ha[s] to care, [...] ha[s] to be involved' in the examination and renegotiation of ideas of India.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, as he does so, Mistry demonstrates that such involvement is neither straightforward nor easily achieved. Rather, as his representation of Maneck suggests, the allegiances made between the cosmopolitan migrant and Bombay's urban poor are both fraught with anxieties and difficult to maintain. Thus, even as he advocates the necessity of the migrant performing his 'double duty', Mistry foregrounds the anxious difficulty – which is also his own – of negotiating a sustained engagement with the material realities of the Indian homeland from a geographically distanced location beyond its borders.

¹⁶⁷ Tharoor, p. 3.

Chapter Two
Fictions of Purity, Myths of Home in *Family Matters*

Introduction

In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary Marongoly George contends that ‘homes are not neutral places’ but are ideological imaginings with closed borders maintained through power and fear. In this sense, she claims, notions of ‘home’ and ‘nation’ overlap, as ‘[i]magine a home is as political an act as imagining a nation. Establishing either is a display of hegemonic power’.¹ In making this connection between the ‘home’ and the ‘nation’, George suggests that “‘home’ becomes contested ground in times of political tumult either on the level of power struggles at the national communal stage or at the interpersonal familial level’.² The intersection between, and contested nature of, the nation and the ‘home’, and the nation as home, is central to my examination of Mistry’s third novel, *Family Matters*. Published in 2002, *Family Matters* is set in mid-1990s Bombay, in the context of rising Hindu nationalism and local Marathi chauvinism, and in the aftermath of the violence which followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid by Hindu militants on 6 December 1992.

While *A Fine Balance* (1996) incorporated an almost epic sweep of Indian history and geography, *Family Matters* returns to the close concentration on Parsi domestic life which characterised *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987). The central narrative concerns the difficulties experienced by a Parsi family as they care for Nariman, an ageing patriarch who suffers from Parkinson’s disease and is left bed-bound after breaking his ankle in a fall. Unwilling to care for her stepfather, who she holds responsible for her mother’s death, Coomy engineers Nariman’s move from the large flat the pair share with her brother Jal to the cramped flat occupied by his daughter Roxana, her husband Yezad, and their two sons. In order to prevent Nariman’s return, Coomy destroys the ceiling of her Chateau Felicity flat, a move which eventually leads to her own death. The economic burden of caring for his father-in-law, meanwhile, leads Yezad to gambling, and, in an attempt to gain promotion, into a scheme to persuade his employer to run for local election by engaging actors to impersonate threatening Shiv Sena thugs. Interwoven with these plots are the somnambulant murmurings of Nariman,

¹ Rosemary Marongoly George. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 6.

² *ibid.*, p. 18.

which reveal his youthful relationship with a non-Parsi woman, Lucy, and how his refusal to give up this friendship led, finally, to the death of both Lucy and his wife, Yasmin.

While this summary elides the complexities of the novel, it does gesture towards the ways in which the space of 'home' is unsettled and disrupted in *Family Matters*. Critics have noted that the concept of 'home' conventionally implies a space of stability, security and protection, a welcoming place of belonging.³ According to Avtar Brah, however, 'the issue of home, belonging, and identity is one that is perennially contested' in the diaspora. Indeed, it is 'no longer a settled issue [...] even for those who consider themselves secure in their own sense of belonging'.⁴ As my use of Brah indicates, the following examination of *Family Matters* extends my exploration of the relationship between the migrant and nation in this thesis into that between the diasporic subject and the nation. Brah explains that the term diaspora 'resonate[s] [...] with the meaning of words such as immigrant, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker',⁵ and there is often a problematic slippage between the migrant and the diasporic subject in postcolonial theory and criticism. Brah maintains, however, that while diasporas 'emerge out of migrations',⁶ the term is not a 'substitute' for the varying conditions of migrancy; rather, diaspora 'signals the similarity and difference' of those conditions.⁷ Similarly, by examining Mistry's representation of India's Parsi community, I do not wish to imply an equivalence between the diasporic and migrant identities portrayed in his fiction. However, Mistry represents the Parsi diaspora within India from a migrant perspective beyond that nation's borders and, as I will demonstrate, his representation of a Parsi family in *Family Matters* engages with narratives of migrancy. Moreover, I will argue that this novel develops Mistry's engagement with the dynamics of 'double duty', and is situated within a concern for what Radhakrishnan terms 'accountability [to] both here and there'.⁸ The focus of this engagement shifts in *Family Matters*, from the concentration on the geographically distanced migrant in A

³ See, for example, Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 180; George, p. 1; Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asia Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2; Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991[1983]), p. 8.

⁴ Brah, p. 2.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 197.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 197.

⁸ R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 212.

Fine Balance, to the diasporic subject located within India in the later novel. Nevertheless, Mistry is, in *Family Matters*, again concerned with the responsibility of the ‘diasporan citizen[n]’⁹ to engage critically and actively with India, but also with the responsibility of the nation-state towards the minority diasporic subjects within its borders. These concerns, I argue, have implications for Mistry’s continued negotiation of his own migrant position beyond India’s borders, and his attitude towards his homeland at the turn of the millennium.

Susheila Nasta asserts that ‘home’ is, ‘like migrancy itself [...] a perpetually shifting concept’:

It is both here and there, past and present, local and global, traditional and modern. It may provoke a referential construction of a past lost, but may also be a deliberately invented construct, an imaginary homeland built on the shifting sands of memory.¹⁰

Nasta’s statement bears witness to the different spaces signified by the referent ‘home’, and the ways in which it is often positioned between being the real and the imagined, between being, in Brah’s terms, a ‘mythic place of desire’ and ‘the lived experience of a locality’.¹¹ It is with this ‘multi-placedness’¹² in mind that I explore constructions of the ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ in *Family Matters*. Organising my discussion around notions of naming and filiation, sanctity and purity, I suggest that Mistry exposes and contests hegemonic and exclusionary constructions of ‘home’ at work in both the domestic and public spaces, as they are imagined both by a nationalist discourse and by diasporic subjects. In doing so, I argue, Mistry reveals how such constructions paradoxically endanger the ‘home’ even as they attempt to protect it, highlighting the ambivalent positioning of ‘home’ as ‘simultaneously [...] a place of safety and terror’.¹³ Moreover, by critiquing attempts to escape the ‘lived experience of a locality’ through the reinvention of a ‘mythic place of desire’ elsewhere, Mistry engages with the dynamics of diasporic ‘double duty’. By problematising allegiances ‘to some mythic [homeland] as a way of

⁹ Radhakrishnan, p. 212.

¹⁰ Nasta, p. 244.

¹¹ Brah, p. 192.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 194.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 207.

dealing with the contemporary crises',¹⁴ Mistry emphasises the importance of cultivating an 'active and critical relationship with the cultural politics' of the past and present homelands.¹⁵

The modest critical attention *Family Matters* has received has, to varying degrees, situated the novel within the increasing communalisation of public life during the 1990s. However, while Nilufer E. Bharucha notes the novel's 'post-Babri Masjid' setting, she fails to position the tensions within the Chenoy/Contractor home in active dialogue with the contemporary socio-political context, instead judging 'Mistry's political consciousness and acumen' a poor comparison to Rushdie's examination of 1990s Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995).¹⁶ Peter Morey offers a more careful contextualisation of *Family Matters* within the rise of Hindu nationalism, remarking that the 'moral taint that everywhere affects Bombay life also increasingly makes its presence felt in the lives of Nariman's family'.¹⁷ Morey's central focus nevertheless remains Mistry's representation of the Parsi community, and his concern with ideas of ethics, duty, and morality, as codified in the Parsi maxim of 'good thoughts, good words, good deeds'.¹⁸ Thus, Morey's productive observation that the Parsi community's increasing 'orthodoxy [...] echoes the purist agendas of the very Hindu nationalism that threatens it',¹⁹ does not extend into a more detailed analysis of the interaction between the processes of inclusion and exclusion at work within the family and those within the nation.

My reading of *Family Matters* moves beyond current criticism to demonstrate that 1990s Bombay provides more than simply a 'backdrop of communalist politics and corruption' against which the main action of the novel takes place.²⁰ Rather, I argue that Mistry engages closely and critically with the language of sanctity and purity mobilised by the *Hindutva* movement. In doing so, Mistry both problematises such rhetoric and suggests the failure of liberal secularists to resist the advance of *Hindutva* within the public sphere. *Family Matters* therefore develops the critique of socialist secularism found in both *Such a Long Journey* and *A*

¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, p. 209.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Nilufer E. Bharucha, *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces* (Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat, 2003), pp. 168-69.

¹⁷ Peter Morey, 'Running Repairs: Corruption, Community and Duty in Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 38:2 (2003), 59-75 (p. 64).

¹⁸ *ibid.*, especially pp. 65-74.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 60.

Fine Balance, and examines the continuing crisis of those founding ideals in the 1990s. However, while in Chapter One I argued that *A Fine Balance* offered a tentative 'utopia of secular civility'²¹ in the private domain, in resistance to its failure in the public sphere, *Family Matters* begins with this potential utopia as already compromised and in crisis.

By exploring the intersection between the politics of the family and those of the nation, I potentially propose a reading familiar to postcolonial studies, in which the novel is positioned as offering an extended allegory for the nation. In doing so, however, I do not wish to suggest, following Fredric Jameson, that '*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*'.²² Nevertheless, Mistry appears to invite an allegorical reading of his novel: Mr Kapur's shop becomes a 'mini-Bombay';²³ the book-seller, Vilas, reads and writes letters which narrate 'collectively' an 'ongoing drama of family matters' (136) drawn from across India; Bombay, meanwhile, 'languishes [...] like a patient in intensive care' (154), explicitly connecting the politics of the city and the deteriorating health of Nariman. Through such moments, Mistry invites a readerly approach sensitive to the interconnections between the public and private, the domestic and the national. At the same time, however, and as my reading will suggest, Mistry offers a more sophisticated representation of the intersection between the public and private spheres, which bears witness to tensions within and between different understandings of the city and nation, and between possible readings of the home as representative of domestic, diasporic, urban or national identity politics; his depiction of a Parsi family does not, therefore, articulate a coherent or straightforward allegory for 1990s Bombay or India.

I begin by exploring the dynamics of filiation and affiliation. In Section One, I consider how Mistry challenges essentialising constructions of the home and homeland by representing the family home as a contested space, in which both filiative and affiliative bonds necessarily co-exist. Section Two is organised around images of the sacred, through which the novel and its

²¹ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 184-85.

²² Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65-88 (p. 69, original emphasis). I engage with Jameson's contention, and Aijaz Ahmad's response in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London & New York: Verso, 1992), in detail in my examination of Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) in Chapter Three.

²³ Rohinton Mistry, *Family Matters* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), p. 153. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

historical context are brought into dynamic dialogue. By paying attention to moments of veneration and images of the sacred, I explore Yezad's transformation from a liberal to an orthodox Parsi, and consider Mistry's engagement with, and critique of, myths of the purity and sanctity of the 'homeland' as it is constructed both by nationalist and by diasporic subjects, in the public and the private spheres. Mistry's representation of the Parsi diaspora is informed by his continuing concern with the politics of migrancy. This is particularly evident through the Chenoy's 'immigration story', which is itself implicated within constructions of 'home' as a curative space of sanctuary. In Section Three, I explore Mistry's representation of Canada as a largely abstract, 'mythic place of desire' which is projected as a utopian space of refuge away from the 'lived experience' of 1990s Bombay. I argue, furthermore, that by positioning his own representation of Bombay within the dynamics of failed utopias and lost homelands, Mistry reveals his continued anxiety regarding India's secular inclusivity and its accommodation of non-Hindu minorities. At the same time, by critiquing the projection of idealised homelands, Mistry resists similarly idealising India as a lost utopia.

Family Matters is brought into dialogue with its historical context through notions of the sacred. As I noted in my Introduction, the Babri Masjid, a sixteenth-century mosque which Hindu nationalists claim was built on the birthplace of Ram at Ayodhya (known as the *Ramjanmabhoomi* issue), was central to the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Its destruction in 1992 was part of a campaign to redefine India as a 'sacred territory' belonging exclusively to Hindus.²⁴ During these decades, the Hindu nationalist VHP (World Hindu Council) advocated a movement of national purification, with pilgrimages crossing India to 'liberate' Hindu temples from the previous 'invasions' by Muslim and British imperialists. Ayodhya gained iconic status and was placed, according to Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, at 'the heart of the imaginative geography of Hindu nationalism'.²⁵ The mosque itself was transformed into a national symbol of the threatening presence of the Muslim 'other', a

²⁴ Stuart Corbridge & John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 189.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 188.

'traumatic wound' testifying to the violation of the Indian (Hindu) nation.²⁶ Its destruction was justified 'as the liberation of a Hindi sacred space to unify the Indian nation'.²⁷

The nationwide riots following the destruction of the mosque were among the worst seen since Independence.²⁸ These events, and the increased communal tensions that continue to affect India, have been read by many as symptomatic of a deep crisis in India's national identity, and as a potentially disastrous turning away from the Nehruvian legacy of secularism. According to Sunil Khilnani, 'Ayodhya had become the site of the most piercing assault ever faced by the Indian state, one that shook its basic political identity'.²⁹ Aijaz Ahmad, meanwhile, condemns the destruction of the mosque as a 'fascist assault on the Indian Constitution' itself.³⁰ The Babri Masjid dispute therefore encapsulated the often violent contestation of definitions of Indianness in the 1990s which, Khilnani claims, were marked by increasingly 'exclusivist ideas of India and of political community'.³¹ Thus, while 'Hindu nationalists struggled to capture the state and to purge the nationalist imagination, leaving it homogenous [*sic*], exclusive and Hindu; others fought to escape the Indian state altogether and to create their own, smaller, homogenous [*sic*] and equally exclusive communities'.³²

Khilnani's comments highlight Hindu nationalist attempts to re-imagine India through a rhetoric of religious and cultural exclusivity, but also indicate that such essentialist discourses are appropriated by groups, such as diasporic communities, who feel threatened or excluded by nationalism. Vijay Mishra identifies a similar movement towards what he calls 'diasporic exclusivism' when he suggests that '[u]nder a gaze that threatens their already precarious sense of the "familiar temporariness"' of home, diasporas often 'lose their enlightened ethos and retreat into discourses of ethnic purity that are always the "imaginary" underside of their own

²⁶ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 173.

²⁷ David Ludden, 'Introduction. Ayodhya: A Window on the World', in *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed. by David Ludden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 1-23 (p. 1).

²⁸ Government figures estimate that 600 people were killed in January 1993, while independent estimations are between 2000 and 3000. See Madhu Kishwar, 'Safety is Indivisible: The Warning from Bombay Riots', in *Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 149-97.

²⁹ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999[1997]), p. 151.

³⁰ Ahmad (2000), p. 167.

³¹ Khilnani, p. 152.

³² *ibid.*

constructions of the homeland.’³³ The repetition of exclusionary nationalist discourses by diasporic subjects provides the central dynamic of my examination of *Family Matters*. I am particularly concerned with Mistry’s engagement with Hindu nationalist constructions of the nation as a sacred ‘homeland’, and the appropriation of exclusionary discourses of the sacred in constructions of the private, Parsi diasporic home. Before turning to the novel, then, it is necessary to examine the ideology and rhetoric of Hindu nationalism, paying particular attention to its use of discourses of filiation and affiliation and notions of the sacred.

As David Ludden observes, although the Hindu nationalist movement developed in the 1920s, it was in the late 1980s and 1990s that it gained significant electoral successes and began to ‘permeat[e] Indian politics, media, and popular culture’.³⁴ Corbridge and Harriss explain that these political successes stemmed, in part, from ‘the disintegration of the Congress party at the local level, and the failure of the Congress-(I) under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, to abide by India’s secular principles’.³⁵ *Family Matters* was published at the height of Hindu nationalism’s political dominance, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP – ‘India People’s Party’) leading India’s coalition government from 1998 to 2004. As highlighted in my Introduction, the BJP, as part of the Hindu majoritarian *Sangh Parivar*, mobilises the discourse of *Hindutva*, drawing upon the ‘basic text for nationalist “Hinduness”’, Veer Savarkar’s 1923 work *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?*.³⁶ Following Savarkar, the ideology of *Hindutva*, or cultural nationalism, asserts ‘Hinduness’ as the ‘true’ national faith, culture and identity of India, and holds forth ‘a vision of a strong, culturally homogenous [*sic*] nation’.³⁷

Specifically relevant to my examination of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ in *Family Matters* is *Hindutva*’s redefinition of Indianness around notions of natural filiation, through its ‘sons of the soil’ rhetoric. As Thomas Blom Hansen explains, Savarkar’s conception of *Hindutva* is premised on the ‘definition of a “holy land” [...] which is the geographical location of the

³³ Vijay Mishra, ‘The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora’, *Textual Practice*, 10:3 (1996), 421-47 (p. 426).

³⁴ Ludden, p. 17.

³⁵ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 192.

³⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst & Co, 1993), p. 25.

³⁷ Hansen (1999), p. 77.

sacred shrines and myths of one's religion'.³⁸ Those whose religions have grown 'out of the soil of India' – Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs – are defined as Hindu, or as easily assimilated by Hinduism, by virtue of their apparent capacity to name India as their 'holy land'.³⁹ Aryan/Vedic Hinduism, however, 'remained the real core' of the nation,⁴⁰ and *Hindutva* stresses that 'India is originally the land of the Hindus, and it is the only land that the Hindus can call their own'.⁴¹ Moreover, Savarkar defines a Hindu as a person able to claim natural filiative bonds with India and name it as both their 'fatherland as well as [their] Holyland'.⁴² There is, then, a three-fold filiative relationship with the nation which is, as Ashutosh Varshney points out, territorial (originating within India's borders), genealogical (naming India as 'fatherland'), and religious (naming India as 'holy land').⁴³ By fulfilling all three filiative bonds, Hindus are defined as indigenous within, and therefore as unproblematically belonging to, India.

Set against this discourse of filiative belonging is the representation of India as 'threatened by "foreigners"', by both internal and external 'others'.⁴⁴ Those whose 'holy lands' lie outside India's territorial borders – Christians, Jews, Parsis, Muslims – do not share natural filiative bonds with India; their religions originate elsewhere, and cannot be imagined as Hindu, and therefore as Indian. Claiming the inclusivity of Hindu nationalism, Savarkar insisted that conversion to Hinduism was possible and desirable, if not necessary to claiming an Indian identity. Without such conversion, however, it was impossible that 'a Muslim (or Christian) born in India could be at home in a country that was racially and culturally the land of Hindus'.⁴⁵ Instead, non-Hindu communities are represented as having what Savarkar terms 'extraterritorial loyalties' which, he alleges, undermine their commitment to India.⁴⁶ Their affiliative relationship with India is represented as illegitimate and contaminative; Muslims (and

³⁸ Hansen (1999), p. 78.

³⁹ Savarkar, quoted in Hansen (1999), p. 79. Hansen notes this problematic assimilation of these religions into Hinduism, remarking that '[t]o what extent it made sense to Buddhists or Sikhs to be called Hindus or to have India as a "holy land" seemed of little or no importance to the thrust of the argument, which sought to define Hindus by excluding those from nationhood who actually or potentially could pose a political or cultural threat to Hindu culture' (p. 79).

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 61.

⁴² Savarkar, quoted in Corbridge & Harriss, p. 183.

⁴³ Varshney, quoted in Corbridge & Harriss, p. 183. See also Varshney, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁴ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 180.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴⁶ Savarkar, quoted in Hansen (1999), p. 79.

increasingly Christians) in particular have been constructed as the ‘demonized other’,⁴⁷ and suffered the worst of the 1992-1993 atrocities.

Through this othering, and the denial of the right to name India as homeland (‘fatherland’/‘holy land’), *Hindutva* further undermines the non-Hindu’s sense of citizenship, by suggesting they owe filial duty to a homeland elsewhere. This rhetoric was paired in the BJP’s 1996 and 1998 election manifestos with the proposed introduction of identity cards. Hansen explains that this programme reinforced the projection of India as a singularly Hindu homeland:

The ethnic-majoritarian subtext of these proposals was clear when BJP leaders suggested in 1996 that ID cards would make it possible to differentiate between non-Hindu and Hindu immigrants. Just as Israel is the homeland for Jews all over the world, it was suggested, India should be made the ‘natural’ homeland for Hindus, where any Hindu could freely come and settle. The implication that non-Hindu Indians did not have this ‘natural’ entitlement to citizenship was evident, though unstated.⁴⁸

It is consequently possible to see how the Hindu nationalist definition of Indianness constructs, in order to subsequently reject, a hyphenated national identity. Mishra remarks that the nation-state ‘always privileges the citizen who is not hyphenated’; he continues, however, by claiming that ‘[i]n actual practice the pure, unhyphenated generic category is only applicable to those citizens who signify an unproblematic identity of selves within nations’.⁴⁹ Similarly, within Hindu nationalist definitions of Indianness, while Hindus are Indian (unhyphenated), by virtue of their ‘natural’ filiation, non-Hindus – Muslim-Indian, Christian-Indian, Parsi-Indian – represent a problematic hyphenated identity, a contamination which must be purified.

In this light, the potentially dual status of Ayodhya, its own hyphenated identity as a site sacred to both Hindus and Muslims, was particularly problematic, the very ‘undecidability’ providing a ‘stronger argument for its removal’.⁵⁰ Such duality was presented by Hindu nationalists as an aberration, an impure sign of invasion rather than an indigenous example of the palimpsestic identity of India. The destruction of the mosque therefore represented an attempt by Hindu militants to reclaim both the shrine itself and, by extension, the religious ownership of India. By representing the mosque as exterior to the nation, the Hindu nationalists construct both Muslims and other non-Hindus as not belonging to India. In doing so, they metaphorically remap

⁴⁷ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 180.

⁴⁸ Hansen (1999), p. 220.

⁴⁹ Mishra, pp. 432-33.

⁵⁰ Hansen (1999), p. 175.

the nation as a sacred space belonging exclusively to a single religion and to which, therefore, only a single religion can belong.

Bombay was particularly badly affected by the post-Ayodhya violence, as the Shiv Sena capitalised on the tensions to orchestrate riots and attack Muslim households.⁵¹ Deploying a similar ‘sons of the soil rhetoric’ to the Hindu nationalists, the Shiv Sena aims to recreate Bombay as an exclusively ‘Marathi cultural space’.⁵² Drawing distinctions between ‘pure Maharashtrians and aliens in Bombay’ – Muslims or literate South Indians in particular – the Shiv Sena combines anti-migrant policies and Hindu chauvinism with an insistence upon linguistic filiation as a signifier of belonging.⁵³ As a result of their rise to state government in 1995, and their strategic alliance with the BJP, the Sena’s project of linguistic identification was extended into the renaming of streets, parks, and of Bombay itself. The process of renaming, as an authoritarian attempt to claim exclusive ownership of the city, is highlighted in *Family Matters* by the reference to the obsessive ‘Name Police’ (51), and the significance of names as signifiers of belonging and affiliation is, I will demonstrate, central to the tensions within the family home. The alliance of the subnational interests of the Shiv Sena with the nationalist concerns of the *Hindutva* movement, meanwhile, informs the overlapping of exclusionary discourses of the city and nation in Mistry’s novel, which engages with both a Bombay specific Hindu-Marathi chauvinism and the more general campaign for a Hindu nation. The renaming of Bombay perhaps itself bears witness to this overlap, echoing the more violent destruction of the Babri Masjid by imposing a singular identity over the layers of history that have constituted the city’s identity. Yet, paradoxically the renaming also works to undermine such singularity, creating a hyphenated identity marked by the ‘brutal forward slash’ of Bombay/Mumbai.⁵⁴

Despite this nomenclatural hybridity, the renaming highlighted how, in the 1990s, Bombay’s famous cosmopolitanism, symbolic of the nation’s own hybridity and secularism, was increasingly threatened by narrow sectarian politics. Hansen, however, explains that, while

⁵¹ Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), pp. 322-25. Kishwar identifies one figure which estimates that 215,000 people, mostly Muslim, fled Bombay during the violence of January 1993 (p. 151).

⁵² Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 45.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Sheldon Pollock et al., ‘Cosmopolitanisms’, *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), 577-89 (p. 586).

the renaming signalled a departure from Bombay's reputed 'dynamic, intensely commercial, heterogeneous, chaotic, and yet spontaneously tolerant and open-minded' character, such idealisations had already been undermined.⁵⁵ '[T]he celebration of the city's mythical cosmopolitanism', he writes, 'ha[d] already been questioned years before the renaming', the post-Ayodhya violence indicating the 'emergence of a much uglier, far more violent' city.⁵⁶ In the mid-1990s, then, Bombay's apparently long-established welcoming atmosphere of tolerance and openness to diversity had, like that of the nation, become increasingly problematised as groups vied for control over its identity and sought to homogenise that space, with often violent consequences. The serial bomb blasts in March 1993 – which targeted the Bombay Stock Exchange and other key businesses apparently in response to the largely anti-Muslim post-Ayodhya rioting – further challenged the city's open, multicultural cosmopolitanism.⁵⁷ According to Kalpana Sharma, the events of December 1992 and January and March 1993 'left behind a permanently altered city', deeply divided in terms of religion, culture and economics.⁵⁸ *Family Matters* is haunted by, and engages with, the legacy of the violent struggles for control over the holy site of Ayodhya and attempts to define it, and by extension the Indian nation, as an exclusive site of Hindu veneration. Similarly, the contested nature of Bombay's identity is crucial to Mistry's representation of the small Parsi community, and its attempts to negotiate its position within an environment increasingly hostile to non-Hindu, non-Marathi minorities.

'Partiality': Naming, Filiation and Affiliation

It is against the exclusionary constructions of the national and urban 'homeland' presented by Hindu nationalism and Marathi chauvinism that Mistry represents the Chenoy/Contractor/Vakeel family home, a space marked by tensions between filiative and affiliative relations. As Nariman becomes bed-bound, the question of where he belongs is raised, as he is moved between two homes, a flat in Chateau Felicity and one in Pleasant Villa. In this section, I consider the ways in which Nariman is positioned in-between the homes of his children and is imagined, to varying degrees, as an 'other' to each space. Remembering the

⁵⁵ Hansen (2001), p. 4.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* pp. 4-5.

⁵⁷ Hansen (2001) suggests that the bombings 'became widely assumed' to have been 'the Muslims' answer to militant Hindus' (p. 125).

⁵⁸ Kalpana Sharma, 'Chronicle of a Riot Foretold', in *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, ed. by Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 269-86 (p. 286).

historical context, in which naming works to signify ownership and affiliation, I explore how, through the processes of naming at work within the family, Mistry reveals the home as a contested space, marked by tensions between filiation and affiliation. In doing so, Mistry challenges exclusionary constructions which claim the nation as a homogeneous space in which affiliative bonds are illegitimate. As he does so, however, Mistry further critiques *inclusive* constructions of the familial and national homes. He thereby demonstrates, I contend, an anxiety regarding the failures of liberal secularists to endorse actively inclusive models of the nation in resistance to the communalisation of Indian identity and politics.

My discussion of filiative and affiliative relations borrows Edward Said's definitions of these terms. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Said distinguishes between filiative and affiliative bonds, explaining that 'a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority' while affiliative relationships are 'transpersonal' and belong 'exclusively to culture and society'. Affiliative bonds, in Said's conceptualisation, are systematic and learnt, while filiative bonds are instinctual.⁵⁹ Crucially, Said argues that there is always a movement from filiation to affiliation, and through this movement '[a]ffiliation becomes a form of representing the filiative processes to be found in nature, although affiliation takes *validated* nonbiological and cultural forms'.⁶⁰ It is important to differentiate between Said's theorisation of the movement from filiation to affiliation and the interpretation of these two relations by characters within *Family Matters*. While Said understands affiliative relations to be 'validated' – that is, legitimate – Coomy recognises only the filiative biological relations of family and descent, interpreting non-biological bonds as illegitimate within the family. As a result of her idealisation of filiation, Coomy expresses a desire for a regressive movement away from her affiliative relations, a movement which threatens the stability of the home.

The existence of both filiative and affiliative relations within the family home is highlighted by a new name-plate ordered as the Chenoy's prepare to move to Chateau Felicity with Jal and Nariman, after Coomy's death. It reads:

Mr. & Mrs. Yezad Chenoy

⁵⁹ Said, p. 30.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 23 (my emphasis).

Mr. Jal Contractor
Mr. Nariman Vakeel (441)

This inscription gestures towards the familial harmony that it is hoped will result from the reconstruction of the Chateau Felicity flat as a space ‘large enough to accommodate everyone’ (441). However, the apparent easy accommodation of both filiative and affiliative relations that is found here, alongside the impartiality of the alphabetical listing, elides the contested nature of the family home as it is represented throughout the novel. The official model of inclusivity offered by the plate rewrites, or writes over, the mobilisation of names as both inclusive and exclusive signifiers of belonging by various members of the family.

In his examination of the renaming of Bombay, Hansen outlines the ‘notion of reiterative practices of naming as a creation and fixation of identities, and of the use of names as claims to certain identities, properties, or entitlements’.⁶¹ This understanding of names as signifiers of identity, belonging and entitlement, at work in the public domain, resonates within the familial home and lies beneath the differing attitudes of Coomy, Jal, Roxana and Yezad towards Nariman. Coomy in particular places great emphasis on the difference between her adoptive relationship with Nariman and Roxana’s biological link to him. Thus, she and Jal react to Nariman buying Roxana and Yezad a flat by ‘throwing at him the “flesh and blood” phrase, accusing him of partiality’ (10).

Mistry’s representation of the family home as marked by assertions of filiative and affiliative belonging draws upon contemporary debates surrounding the secular models of the nation and the rise of Hindu nationalism. Coomy’s differing attitudes towards her filiative and affiliative relations, and her privileging of what Said terms ‘genealogical filiation’,⁶² echoes the Hindu nationalist ‘sons of the soil’ rhetoric, as well as the more general privileging of the non-hyphenated citizen by the nation-state identified by Mishra. As I have noted, non-Hindus are represented by Hindu nationalist discourse as having ‘extraterritorial loyalties’ which will ultimately lead to their betrayal of India in favour of a filiative ‘holy land’. Muslims in particular are constructed as a threatening internal enemy because, as Hansen summarises, ‘they never would devote themselves fully to India because they had chosen to have another “holy

⁶¹ Hansen (2001), p. 2.

⁶² Said, p. 166.

land””.⁶³ In a similar way, Coomy frames her accusation of Nariman’s ‘partiality’ (10) towards Roxana within the context of their ‘flesh and blood’ relationship, suggesting that his affiliative connection to his step-children leaves them marginalised as ‘second class’ (7) members of the family, in comparison to his biological daughter.

Nariman, by contrast, longs for the time when difference did not intrude into the family home, ‘when relations were not tainted by “half” or “step” combinations because hyphens were meaningless to them then’ (10). The difference, or ‘partiality’, implied by the presence of the hyphen is compounded by the absence of a shared family name, and Coomy’s already cynical comment that Nariman is a ‘father in name only’ (28) is further destabilised by this difference. While Roxana, before her marriage, shares Nariman’s surname Vakeel, Jal and Coomy – children from her mother’s previous marriage – retain their biological father’s name, Contractor. Their mother, Nariman remembers, had felt that ‘[t]o change it to Vakeel would be like *rewriting history*’ (16), a sentiment to which he passively ‘*acquiesced*’ (16). Nariman, then, is not even a father *in name*, a difference which, as he later reflects, undermines Jal’s and Coomy’s sense of belonging to the ‘new’ family: ‘How had Jal and Coomy felt, as children, having a different name from the rest of the family? Had they resented it? Felt left out?’ (16). The notion of ‘rewriting history’ is central to Mistry’s representation of the family, city and nation in *Family Matters*, although the process is mobilised in different ways and with different consequences throughout the novel. As I will demonstrate, Mistry is often critical of attempts to rewrite personal and national histories in order to invent narratives of continuity and exclusivity. In the context of Nariman’s relationship with Jal and Coomy, however, Mistry is concerned that Nariman’s refusal to rewrite history, by changing their surname, constitutes a failure to endorse the legitimacy of the trio’s affiliative connections.

Initially, Nariman’s failure to change the children’s names enacts a recognition of difference within the family, by acknowledging the co-existence of diverse histories and identities in a manner reminiscent of Nehruvian nationalism’s declaration of ‘unity in diversity’. However, this theoretical enactment of inclusivity – the simile of ‘rewriting history’, we are told, ‘*appealed to [Nariman’s] academic soul*’ (16) – is undermined by the practical need to

⁶³ Hansen (1999), p. 79.

create a community of filiative belonging from a diversity of affiliated identities. In this light, the name change would offer a concrete validation of inclusion. Emphasising the sameness of the community, despite its internal differences, the name change would translate the affiliative bond into a filiative one, performing a filiative function by constructing a nomenclatural continuity between family members that was not originally there. Instead, by remaining Contractors rather than Vakeels, Jal and Coomy are immediately marked as belonging elsewhere, to someone else, while Nariman is similarly figured as an other to their familial community. Identifying this as Nariman's 'first mistake' (16), Mistry suggests that the failure to rewrite history, to publicly validate and legitimise his adoption of Jal and Coomy, undermines any consequent attempts to construct the family as an inclusive community of unproblematic belonging. In fact, Nariman's failure to reframe his affiliative relationship to Coomy enables his step-daughter's later rejection of him through a discourse of filiative exclusivity.

Mistry's representation of Nariman's reluctance to substantiate legally the equality of his children implies an anxiety regarding the official endorsement of inclusive, secular models of nation. Amartya Sen explains that the discourse of secularism is founded upon the 'basic symmetry of treatment' by the nation-state of India's different religious and linguistic communities.⁶⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot, meanwhile, remarks that 'secularism became a legitimate norm of the Indian political system' because it was implicitly 'underpinned by the Fundamental Rights section of the Constitution of 1950, embodied in social legislation and defended by the courts'.⁶⁵ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, such symmetrical treatment was undermined by the increasing communalisation of national politics, and by the failure of the Congress government to uphold the ideology of secularism. As Prime Minister and leader of Congress, Rajiv Gandhi, Corbridge and Harriss note, 'disregarded the secular foundations of the state that had been fought for by his grandfather' by, for example, supporting the Muslim Women Bill on the one hand, and campaigning for election in Ayodhya on the other.⁶⁶ Such opportunistic asymmetrical treatment of religions 'contribut[ed] to a devaluation of the

⁶⁴ Amartya Sen, 'Secularism and Its Discontents', in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. by Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 454-85 (p. 456).

⁶⁵ Jaffrelot, p. 106.

⁶⁶ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 115.

secularist norm',⁶⁷ and enabled claims of nation-state partiality and favouritism to find voice and support.⁶⁸

In this light, Nariman's failure to assert positively the legal equality of his children therefore gains significance, enacting a critique of the nation-state's failure actively to endorse and protect the equality of India's various religious communities. This failure, Mistry implies, has significantly contributed to contemporary conflicts over definitions of Indianness. Moreover, Nariman's age – he celebrates his seventy-ninth birthday in the novel – positions him within the generation agitating for independence, and suggests that the crisis of secular equality stems from the early failure to ratify explicitly these principles within India's founding constitution. Thus, while 'some of Nehru's ideas were so widely shared that it seemed hardly necessary that the Constitution [...] should say that India would be "democratic" or "secular"',⁶⁹ Mistry remains anxious that such assumptions were the 'first mistake', and were, therefore, as idealistic as Nariman's 'academic' belief that family relations were once, and would remain, untainted by differences and hyphens.

Concerned that the failure to officially, and explicitly, reinforce India's inclusive diversity enables the increasing parochialisation of identities within it, Mistry complicates the idealisation of filiative communities as themselves untainted by difference. By emphasising the inevitability of hyphenated identities within the family, Mistry problematises the exclusionary discourses at work in both the domestic and public spheres and exposes the damaging consequences of exclusively legitimising filiative relations. Roxana's filiative links to both Coomy and Nariman are central to this process. By placing her loyalty outside of the Vakeel family, and within the Contractor family, Coomy potentially rejects her filiative bond with Roxana, who responds to Coomy's remark that Nariman 'kill[ed] my mother' (185) by reminding her that 'she was my mother too' (185). Indeed, Coomy's actions result in Roxana herself becoming sensitised to hyphenated familial identities, and as the notion of undifferentiated membership of the family is increasingly contested, she finds the definition of Jal and Coomy as '[h]alf-brother and half-sister' more 'accurate' (115). Roxana's reaction to

⁶⁷ Jaffrelot, p. 330.

⁶⁸ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 116.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 21.

Coomy's privileging of her filiative relations, and her sense of having been othered by it, is to adopt a similar language. The appropriation of exclusionary language as a mode of resistance and defence against marginalisation, foreshadowed in Coomy's own actions is, I will argue in Section Two, central to Mistry's examination of the Parsi diaspora in *Family Matters*.

Roxana's declaration that 'she was my mother too' highlights her own hyphenated status within the family, and this identity is central to Mistry's attempt to disrupt myths of the purity of blood which underline assumptions of the 'home' as a homogeneous space. Said argues that 'filiation from one view is recurrence, but from another [...] it is difference',⁷⁰ suggesting that filiation does not necessarily guarantee homogeneity and continuity. The co-existence of sameness and difference within the filiative community is personified by Roxana, who is positioned in-between the three branches of the family. Filiatively linked to each, Roxana's affiliative connection to Yezad is itself mediated by a mutual filiation to their sons. Roxana's biological link to both Nariman and Coomy, meanwhile, not only destabilises assumptions of the purity of blood, but also complicates Coomy's attempts to construct Nariman as an 'other', as her relationship to him is revealed to involve both affiliative *and* filiative bonds. Roxana therefore problematises Coomy's essentialist reading of familial identities, embodying as she does the fusion of what Said terms 'genealogical filiation' and 'social affiliation',⁷¹ which, Mistry's novel shows, necessarily constitutes the family.

By representing the composition of the family home by hybrid identities, hyphenated fusions of filiative and affiliative relations, Mistry resists hegemonic constructions of nation based on similar assumptions of the homogeneity of 'genealogical filiation', and contests nationalist myths of the purity of blood. *Hindutva*-inspired representations of national identity and citizenship, founded on the primacy of 'common blood' and 'common origin',⁷² are exposed as erroneous, and as disregarding the complexity and heterogeneity of relationships within and to the home. As Yezad later tells Husain, '[y]our blood type can [...] be different from your own brother's' (393). Mistry demonstrates that, in contrast to the construction of affiliation and difference as an aberration, such 'transgressions' of filiation are, in fact,

⁷⁰ Said, p. 116.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 118.

⁷² Savarkar, quoted in Jaffrelot, p. 28.

foundational to the family; it is, rather, the myths of purity themselves that are transgressive of the material realities of community and which are, therefore, damaging to it.

My discussion of names as signifiers of belonging is informed by the renaming of Bombay in 1995. Indeed, John Zavos's joint review of *Family Matters* and Hansen's *Wages of Violence* (2001) highlights the dialogue between Mistry's novel and that event. Mistry, he suggests, 'uses the emergence of Sena and its impact on the city as an echo of the slow disintegration of the Chenoy/Vakeel family'.⁷³ Hansen notes that the renaming was intended to fix the city 'in the history, culture, and language of the Marathi-speakers of western India'.⁷⁴ By allowing the renaming of Bombay as Mumbai in 1995, the national government ratified Shiv Sena's assertions of the Marathi linguistic ownership of the city; non-Marathi speakers and non-Hindu communities were, as I have noted, implicitly excluded from claiming belonging to the metropolis. In this light, Yasmin Contractor's statement that to change Jal and Coomy's names 'would be like rewriting history' (16) gains further significance. The renaming of Bombay, according to Sujata Patel, has been perceived to have 'obliterated historical expressions, experiences, and processes' which constituted the city's identity and 'eras[ed] a multi-ethnic and multilingual cosmopolitanism' that had historically been nurtured within it.⁷⁵ There is, therefore, a tension between Mistry's representation of the rewriting of history in the public and private domains. Within the family home, Mistry suggests that the name-change would offer a progressive inscription of inclusivity by validating the equality of filiative and affiliative relationships; within the city, however, the rewriting of Bombay's identity is regressive, moving away from cultural affiliation in favour of filiative exclusivity. This rewriting, Mistry makes clear, excludes the role played by Parsis in the city's development, negating Inspector Masalavala's claims that 'we Parsis were the ones who built this beautiful city and made it prosper' (404) by resituating Bombay within a Marathi-Hindu narrative.

By depicting contemporary Bombay through the experiences of a Parsi family, Mistry resists the exclusion of that community from narratives of the city, reasserting their continued

⁷³ John Zavos, Book Review of *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* and *Family Matters*, *Contemporary South Asia*, 12:1 (2003), 124-26 (pp. 124-25).

⁷⁴ Hansen (2001), p. 3.

⁷⁵ Sujata Patel, 'Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism', in *Mumbai and Bombay: The City in Transition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-30 (p. 4).

importance to the city's history and identity. However, within the novel, and as he did in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry appears ambivalent regarding the possibilities of resistance to the communalisation of the city and nation. Mistry engages with the city's transformation from Bombay to Mumbai directly, through the demands for the renaming of the Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium, first by actors (under instructions from Yezad), and then real Shiv Sena thugs. Mr Kapur's refusal to change the name, a refusal to rescind his claim to belong to the city despite his migrant status, leads to his death. I will return to Kapur's migrant identity, and his idealisation of Bombay, in the final section of this chapter, but here would like to consider the renaming of the shop itself. Hansen writes that the 'efficacy of a name, and thus an identity, in terms of the fixing or accruing of meaning' depends on its 'constant performance',⁷⁶ echoing Bhabha's argument that a 'coherent national culture' is established by a repetitious 'act of [...] narrative performance'.⁷⁷ Kapur's death highlights that, in order to maintain such coherent narratives of national, and in this case metropolitan, identity, interruptions to that performance must be erased or, in Bhabha's terms, forgotten.⁷⁸

Mistry's depiction of the attack on Mr Kapur, however, itself denies the linguistic and religious purity that the Shiv Sena requires, as Husain recounts the events first in English, then Hindi, while the Parsi Yezad comforts the Muslim peon by explaining '[i]t's the will of Allah' (393). Indeed, Mistry's insistence throughout the novel on the naming of Bombay *as Bombay* rather than Mumbai is an important assertion that the exclusionary politics of the Shiv Sena do not determine the identity of the city as it is imagined by Bombayites both within it, and as they are dispersed across the globe. Nevertheless, Mistry represents such resistance to the Marathi-Hinduisation of the city as limited. After Kapur's death, his wife changes the shop name to 'Shivaji Sports Equipment' (452), a change symbolic of the Hinduisation of the public space effected by the Shiv Sena's rise to state power in the 1990s. This move, indicative of her ignorance of Kapur's passion for the city, reveals a misunderstanding of the significance of the city's name as a socio-political signifier of secular inclusivity. It is, therefore, a betrayal of Kapur's secular sensibilities, and his desire to replicate Bombay's 'social fabric, the spirit of

⁷⁶ Hansen (1999), p. 3.

⁷⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation'. in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139-70 (p. 145).

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 160.

tolerance, acceptance, generosity' (152) within the shop. Recalling Avinash's murder in *A Fine Balance*, Kapur's death suggests that Mistry remains pessimistic regarding the effectiveness of opposition to the authoritarian ideological manoeuvres of local and national governments. The failure of Kapur's secular 'mini-Bombay' (153) emphasises Mistry's continued scepticism towards the possibilities of resistance, as the most vociferous proponent of Bombay's cosmopolitan multiculturalism dies at the hands of Shiv Sena thugs.

I will examine Kapur's failure to resist the Shiv Sena, in Section Three. I return now, however, to the consequences of Nariman's position between the Chateau Felicity and Pleasant Villa flats for Mistry's attitude towards possibilities of resistance. Mistry engages with the problematic failure of resistance to the parochialisation of Bombay's secular identity indirectly, through the contested ownership of the two flats, and Nariman's position as 'other' to each space. Initially owning both flats, Nariman places the Chateau Felicity apartment in Coomy and Jal's names, to prove that he 'did not differentiate between' (83) his children. Just as the renaming of Bombay signals the exclusion of non-Marathi/Hindus from entitlement to claim the city as 'home', Nariman's actions annul his authority over the flat, and his right to call that place 'home'. Thus, despite silently claiming that '[t]his flat is my home' (83), Nariman is excluded from that space by Coomy, who asserts her own authority over it, by declaring that it is 'my house' and that 'Pappa will return when we want him to' (186).

Nariman's loss of authority highlights Mistry's anxiety regarding the inadequacy of secular resistance, both within the city and the nation, to exclusionary discourses of community. Nariman's religious scepticism is crucial. Transgressing Parsi restrictions on relationships with non-Parsis, Nariman shares Yezad's earlier views 'about the silliness of slavishly following conventions and traditions' (456). '[N]ever [having] been one for prayer' (432), Nariman, I argue, represents the ideals of liberal secularism that are under threat in contemporary Bombay, a connection reiterated by Kapur's suggestion that 'this dear, dear city now languishes [...] like a patient in intensive care' (154). Nariman's loss of authority within the family home gestures towards the crisis of secularism as a governing principle within the nation, as Hindu nationalist organisations – whose restrictive interpretations of the notion of 'home' echo those of Coomy and, later, Yezad – are elected to government. Moreover, Nariman's apparently careless

resignation of his legal rights to his home, indicated by his vague acknowledgement that he 'might have signed something' (188), highlights Mistry's concern that advocates of secularism are themselves failing to actively assert authority over the nation.

Mistry again frames this concern within Nariman's failure to legally endorse his affiliative presence within his step-children's home. Having 'put th[e] flat jointly in Jal's name and [Coomy's]' (185), Nariman is left with 'no legal claim to that flat' (188). Nariman's failure to ratify and document his authority are, I suggest, positioned in contrast to the Shiv Sena's programme of renaming Bombay and its cartography, and its authoritarian imposition of a Hindu-Marathi identity onto the city through enforced displays of affiliation, such as the Bombay/Shivaji sports shop sign. The continued absence of legal documentation for Nariman's authority, and his increasing marginalisation from the home, implies Mistry's anxieties regarding the efficacy – if not absence – of political opposition to the Hinduisation of public life. This anxiety overlooks the important grass-roots resistance and political opposition that operates in both the city and the nation.⁷⁹ However, as Jaffrelot makes clear, the Congress Government's withdrawal from its commitment to the twin pillars of socialism and secularism, and its own increasing exploitation of religious identities, 'tended [...] to remove the restraints which the government's promotion of secularism [...] had hitherto imposed' on the Hindu nationalist movement.⁸⁰ Similarly, by showing how Nariman's failure to reaffirm the legitimacy of his claims to belong within Chateau Felicity enables Coomy's rejection of him as an 'other', Mistry highlights his concern that the failure of successive Congress governments to endorse ideals of secular civility has, in fact, enabled the marginalisation of India's founding ideals.

Coomy's refusal to perform her responsibilities towards Nariman, emphasised by her declaration that '[h]e didn't change my diaper or wash my bum, and I don't have to clean his shit' (82), further suggests Mistry's concern that the nation-state's weakening commitment to secularism intersects with a failure to offer material, as well as socio-cultural, equality. As Jaffrelot notes, Nehru's vision of socialist secularism was predicated on the assumption that 'the

⁷⁹ Hansen (2001) observes challenges to the Shiv Sena in Bombay by 'unions, artists, NGOs, self-help groups, religious communities' and, perhaps most significantly, the *Dalit* movement, all of which, he remarks 'provid[e] a strong antidote to Shiv and Hindu nationalism' (p. 233).

⁸⁰ Jaffrelot, p. 336.

majority community had duties towards the minorities'.⁸¹ I therefore contend that Mistry's concern with notions of duty extends beyond what Morey identifies as an interest in a specific 'idea of goodness as understood in Zoroastrianism', or in a more universal, Kantian ethics of moral duty.⁸² While framed by such ethics, I argue that Mistry's examination of duty and responsibility in *Family Matters* is further informed by a perception that the Indian nation-state, in the 1990s, failed in its commitment to protect the material and socio-cultural equality of its minority communities.

Mistry demonstrates the disastrous consequences of this failure through the destruction of the Chateau Felicity flat, as Coomy instructs Jal to hammer the ceiling plaster to simulate damage caused by a burst water tank (169-74). In order to maintain the home as a space available exclusively to her immediate filiative community, and in order to avoid her responsibilities towards Nariman, Coomy endangers the very stability she aims to protect, and reveals the 'violence, terror and difference that is repressed in everyday securing of a home'.⁸³ This violence is reiterated by Coomy's own death under a falling steel girder. Resulting from Coomy's desire to prevent Nariman's return, the episode echoes the death of her mother, Yasmin, as she attempts to exclude Lucy from her family life. Through such violence, Mistry demonstrates that the home offers not only shelter from the threat of 'others', but that it is in fact, paradoxically endangered by those attempting to protect it. Again, the intersection between the public and the private is important, as efforts to create and protect the exclusivity of the city and nation from the threat of its imagined 'other' result in increased internal violence, of which Mr Kapur's death at the hands of the Shiv Sena and Husain's experience of the post-Ayodhya riots are just two examples. Mistry therefore suggests that, while responsibility for the destabilisation of the 'home' is placed on the affiliative 'other', it is, rather, those authoritarian attempts to exclude or remove that 'other' which threaten the security of that space. Mistry therefore disputes the central logic of Hindu nationalism, by demonstrating that exclusionary

⁸¹ Jaffrelot, pp. 103-4.

⁸² Morey (2003), p. 66. See also pp. 67-71.

⁸³ George, p. 27

politics do not offer a viable mode of 'national regeneration' and, rather than guaranteeing the 'survival of the nation', actually lead to its destruction.⁸⁴

Coomy's rejection of Nariman contrasts with Roxana's recognition of her responsibility towards him, despite the resultant practical and economic difficulties. By juxtaposing the different ways in which Nariman is cared for by each daughter, Mistry appears to offer two alternative constructions of 'home': one exclusive and restrictive, the other welcoming, inclusive and nurturing. However, the Pleasant Villa flat is not, as Bharucha claims, positioned as a 'utopian space' in contrast to Chateau Felicity.⁸⁵ Rather, in juxtaposing the two homes, Mistry highlights not only the differences but, more importantly, the similarities between the two spaces and communities, both in the tensions that underlie their daily life, and in the ways in which they respond to Nariman's presence. By doing so, I suggest, Mistry ambivalently positions his representation of India in *Family Matters* between inclusivity and exclusivity.

Mistry's refusal to offer Pleasant Villa as a utopian model of secular civility, despite the accommodation Nariman is offered there, indicates a reluctance to idealise the Nehruvian vision of socialist secularism within *Family Matters*. Such reluctance intimates that Mistry's scepticism towards the material, as well as imagined, possibilities offered by the Nehruvian legacy of socialist secularism has intensified since the publication of *A Fine Balance* six years earlier. For, while *A Fine Balance* offered a tentative utopia of secular civility in the private domain, in resistance to its failure within the nation, Mistry appears unwilling, or unable, in *Family Matters*, to conceive of such a utopic community even within the family home. This unwillingness highlights Mistry's anxiety that inclusive models of the nation have been, in the late 1990s, further compromised and damaged. As he did in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry reveals a concern that such theoretical models of inclusion fail to offer material support for the unconditional provision of accommodation.

Thus, the apparently inclusive Chenoy household is revealed as an anxious space, troubled by money worries, illness, and cramped living conditions. Outside the flat, 'determined neglect' (93) has reduced Pleasant Villa's original grandeur to a state of disrepair, leaving it

⁸⁴ Hansen (1999), p. 83.

⁸⁵ Bharucha, p. 180.

‘with crumbling plaster, perforated water tanks, and broken drain pipes’ (93). This official neglect – caused by failures to revise Bombay’s ‘rent control’ (93) laws – is paired with Jehangir’s sense that ‘[o]ther people’s homes always seemed happier’ (100). The material failure of the nation-state to support the private home in enacting its role as an accommodating and nurturing space is further highlighted by the difficulties faced by the Chenoy family in providing care for Nariman. The rising costs of supporting Nariman on an already over-stretched budget jeopardise the Chenoy family’s own survival, as meals become smaller, and the children become ‘really hungry [...] ask[ing] for more bread’ (191). Yezad’s anxiety over his ability to provide for his family under the extra burden surfaces in ‘quarrels and sarcastic comments’ (193). The nation-state is, however, implicated within the economic difficulty of caring for Nariman. Appalled that Nariman’s medicines are not covered by his pension, Roxana declares that the ‘[g]overnment should be ashamed [...] the amount it pays’ (185). Although the financial difficulties faced by the Chenoy family are not as severe as those faced by the tailors in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry remains concerned that the nation-state is not only failing in its commitment to a Nehruvian model of inclusive secular civility, but also to a socialist provision of basic welfare.

Mistry suggests that the failure of the nation-state to offer economic support for the care and accommodation of Nariman unsettles the Chenoy family’s already precarious social stability. As the financial pressure of providing for Nariman mounts, he is once more identified as an ‘other’ to the home. Repeating Coomy’s construction of Nariman as ‘other’ to her filiative community, Yezad narrows his definition of family to exclude his father-in-law. Flipping through the household budget envelopes, Yezad remembers blaming Roxana’s filiative community for the absence of butter: ‘Dry toast again, thanks to *your* family’ (230, my emphasis). He later claims that the ‘corruption that pollutes this country is right here, in *your* own [Roxana’s] family’ (275, my emphasis), explicitly linking the processes of ‘othering’ occurring within the home to those beyond its walls. Within the public space of the nation, the presence of ‘Muslim others’ in particular is represented by the *Sangh Parivar* as the cause of current violence and disorder in the nation. More specifically, in Bombay, the Shiv Sena pairs its demands for Marathi-Hindu exclusivity with the promise of economic upliftment for Maharashtrians, whose jobs, it claims,

have been ‘stolen’ by South Indian migrants and Muslim communities.⁸⁶ Hansen explains that ‘the most vital condition for Shiv Sena to emerge as a radical sons-of-the-soil movement [...] was the sharp competition over middle-class, white-collar jobs’.⁸⁷ Ahmad similarly contends that, if socialism and secularism ‘were two parts of a single whole’, then the ‘renunciation of even the pretence of “socialist planning”’ endangers ‘its necessary accompaniment, “secularism”’.⁸⁸ Mistry’s depiction of the family home suggests that he shares Ahmad’s anxiety regarding the interconnected failure of the ‘twin pillars of Nehruvian ideology’.⁸⁹ Mistry represents the crisis in the social cohesion of the home as a space of filiation and affiliation, as directly related to the financial problems of providing accommodation and sustenance for all its members. He therefore suggests that the failure of the socialist project has enabled the rise of exclusionary discourses of the nation which, in turn, endanger the secular vision of India.

According to Ahmad, ‘[f]ar from saving us from *Hindutva*, it is precisely the political and economic liberalism of the Indian bourgeoisie and its managing committee, the Indian state, that has brought [India] to this impasse’.⁹⁰ In this light, he claims that, in the late 1990s, India’s ‘minorities [were] safe with neither’ the BJP nor the Congress party.⁹¹ Nariman’s ambivalent location between Chateau Felicity and Pleasant Villa suggests that Mistry would agree. Thus, while he is critical of exclusionary nationalist discourses, Mistry rejects an idealisation of the secular vision of India as providing unconditional accommodation to the nation’s minority communities. By highlighting the overlaps between the two homes, particularly in their construction of Nariman as an ‘other’, Mistry challenges any absolute opposition between Hindu nationalism and socialist secular discourse. In doing so, he locates India as ambivalently poised, like Nariman, between two constructions of the nation, the one exclusive, the other inclusive, constructions which intersect in significant, but disturbing ways. Moreover, Mistry implies that, despite their different socio-cultural understandings of the nation, neither ideology offers a viable approach to providing material stability and security to either India’s majority or minority communities. Furthermore, the representation of Nariman as an itinerant other, able to claim

⁸⁶ Hansen (2001), p. 46.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ Ahmad (2000), p. 229.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 228.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 222.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 223.

only provisional belonging to either home, has implications for Mistry's negotiation of his own migrant position in relation to India. While Mistry's novel highlights his anxiety that, as a non-Hindu, he is increasingly excluded from definitions of Indian identity, Nariman's problematic marginalisation within Pleasant Villa suggests that Mistry is unable to idealise an alternative, inclusive construction of India as a welcoming, accommodating homeland. Nariman's position therefore gestures towards Mistry's own anxiety that he is similarly unable to claim unproblematic belonging to India, whether its political landscape is dominated by exclusionary *or* inclusive understandings of nation.

Fictions of Purity: Diaspora and Nation

Mistry's sense of the failure of the nation-state to endorse and defend an inclusive, socialist secular model of India informs his representation of Yezad's increasing Parsi orthodoxy. Mishra claims that diasporic communities frequently withdraw into 'fictions of purity' when they feel threatened by the majority community within the nation.⁹² He explains that, at such moments, the diaspora 'retreats into its religious texts and draws strength from its priesthood when it finds the discourses of liberalism ineffectual'. In this way, the 'democratic impulse of diasporas [...] has an underside that explodes, under duress, under the imaginary gaze of the Other, into the semantics of exclusivism and separatism'.⁹³ In the previous section I argued that, in response to Coomy's privileging of filiative over affiliative bonds, Roxana and Yezad adopt a similarly exclusionary language; and this process of appropriating discourses of exclusivity as a mode of defence and resistance is repeated in Yezad's reassertion of his Parsi identity. Initially a religious sceptic, Yezad mocks Coomy's piety, shares Nariman's distaste for fanaticism of any kind, and disdains the BJP and the 'hatred of minorities that [the] Shiv Sena has spread for the last thirty years' (30). However, as the novel progresses, Yezad becomes increasingly religious, and in the Epilogue is described by Murad as a 'bigot' (469) who has fallen '[d]eep into the abyss of religion' (479).

Yezad's changing attitude can be read as a kind of 'explosion', to use Mishra's term, into the 'semantics of exclusivism and separatism': as his family home is disturbed by the

⁹² Mishra, p. 423.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 442.

presence of Nariman, and as Bombay is disrupted by increasing communal violence. his sense of belonging in both the private and public spheres is dramatically destabilised. In this section, I explore Mistry's representation of Yezad's religiosity as repeating, or appropriating, the *Hindutva* movement's discourse of sanctity and purity, even as he attempts to protect and reassert his own diasporic identity against it. I argue that Yezad's orthodoxy signals his search for a lost 'homeland', re-imagined as a curative space of refuge from his contemporary experience of marginalisation. Moreover, I contend that, by representing Yezad's reassertion of his Parsi identity as a repetition of exclusionary nationalist discourses, Mistry resists idealisations of the diaspora as necessarily progressive or democratic. While 'disturb[ing] those ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined [national] communities" are given essentialist identities',⁹⁴ Mistry's representation of the Parsi diaspora in *Family Matters* highlights how culturally marginalised minority communities often traffic in similarly essentialist identities.

In doing so, Mistry develops his engagement with the dynamics of diasporic double duty. Radhakrishnan argues that '[d]iasporic subjectivity is necessarily double: acknowledging the imperatives of an earlier "elsewhere" in an active and critical relationship with the cultural politics of one's present home'.⁹⁵ Diasporic identity, he contends, therefore embodies 'a form of accountability to more than one location'.⁹⁶ In this light, I argue that Yezad's religiosity enacts a problematic and irresponsible withdrawal from a critical engagement with the cultural politics of contemporary India. The consequences of Yezad's religiosity, I suggest, highlight Mistry's anxiety regarding the dangerous repercussions of such a withdrawal for both the individual and the nation. Furthermore, as I will argue in the final section of this chapter, Mistry's representation of a failure to engage with the dynamics of diasporic double duty has implications for the negotiation of his own position as a migrant writer.

My discussion of Yezad's diasporic identity is organised around moments of veneration and images of the sacred, through which Mistry engages with Hindu nationalist attempts to 'represent the national space as sacred space'.⁹⁷ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Babri Masjid was, as I have noted, manipulated by Hindu nationalist leaders into a central symbol of

⁹⁴ Bhabha, p. 149.

⁹⁵ Radhakrishnan, p. xiii.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. xiv.

⁹⁷ Hansen (1999), p. 164.

the contaminative presence of non-Hindus in general, and Muslims in particular. Demands for the demolition of the mosque were framed by the supposed need to purify the Hindu nation. As Hansen observes, Hindu nationalist discourse argues that ‘the prerequisite for developing [...] sovereign national modernity is the cultural unity and purity of the Hindu nation’.⁹⁸ Central to the dispute over Ayodhya is the representation of the site as belonging exclusively to Hindus. Again, this involves the construction and legitimation of filiation over affiliation, with Hindu nationalists emphasising Ayodhya as the birthplace of Ram, and therefore the Hindu nation.⁹⁹ By contrast, the construction of the Babri Masjid in the sixteenth century – that is, *after* the Hindu nation is apparently formed – represents Islam’s affiliative bond with India, which is deemed illegitimate. Rather than recognising the site’s dual sacred status, accommodating both the mosque and a Ram *mandir* (temple), or indeed accepting the site as symbolic of the palimpsestic and secular nature of India, Hindu nationalists demanded the destruction of the Babri Masjid. In its place, a Ram *mandir* would be constructed, as a ‘great symbolic purifier of “the Hindu psyche,” which would remove the “eternal blot” of humiliation and prove the existence of a common Hindu national will’.¹⁰⁰ This insistence on the singularly Hindu identity of Ayodhya – and by extension the nation – disregards its historical association with multiple religions.¹⁰¹

The ideological remapping of India as a sacred, Hindu space fuels Yezad’s changing understanding of both his national and familial homes, as he becomes increasingly obsessed with notions of purity and contamination. His movement towards orthodoxy begins as a result of the disruption to his family home, and to his sense of that space as a ‘sanctuary from the brutal city’ (301), by the presence of Nariman. To escape the tensions he perceives as arising from Nariman’s stay, Yezad begins visiting the Wadiaji fire-temple, searching for ‘a mask to filter out the world’s problems’ (298). While he is initially reluctant to enter, and his return to

⁹⁸ Hansen (1999), p. 13.

⁹⁹ According to Corbridge and Harriss, Ram’s mythical triumphant return to Ayodhya is represented by Hindu nationalist discourse as ‘the birth of the Hindu nation’ (p. 184).

¹⁰⁰ Hansen (1999), p. 175.

¹⁰¹ K. N. Panikkar argues that ‘Ayodhya has been the focal point of many religions, with various forms of religious worship flourishing concurrently’, while its ‘development as a major centre for Rama worship is relatively recent’. ‘A Historical Overview’, in *Anatomy of a Confrontation: Ayodhya and the Rise of Communal Politics in India*, ed. by Sarvepalli Gopal (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1991), pp. 22-37 (pp. 25-26).

practising Parsi rituals is gradual, the temple eventually replaces his family home as ‘his sanctuary, in this meaningless world’ (348). Yezad’s desire for a ‘mask to filter out’ the contemporary socio-political upheavals highlights Mistry’s ambivalent positioning of his orthodoxy as offering a mode of resistance to his cultural marginalisation, but also a problematic means of escape from – and, therefore, evasion of – his responsibilities within the family.

Yezad’s appropriation of the notion of the sanctuary, as a sacred place of refuge, shelter and protection resonates with the public discourse of the sanctity of the homeland. His representation of his home as a sacred space threatened by the presence of an imagined, affiliative, ‘other’ – he feels that Nariman and ‘Roxana’s family had stolen his peace and contentment’ (301) – echoes the rhetoric of *Hindutva*. However, his sense of disrupted sanctuary has further implications given his position within an increasingly marginalised minority diaspora. It is important to recognise that the Parsi experience of Hindu nationalism has been less violent than that of the Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities. Nevertheless, Mistry demonstrates that, as a non-Hindu minority, Parsis are similarly marginalised by the *Hindutva* movement’s redefinition of Indianness. In particular, and remembering the importance of acknowledging the ‘manner in which a [diasporic] group comes to be “situated”’,¹⁰² it is significant that the Parsi community arrived in India in the seventh century, seeking refuge from persecution in Iran following its conquest by Islamic Arabians.¹⁰³ As a Parsi, then, Yezad’s historical sense of India as a provider of sanctuary for his diasporic community is disturbed by Hindu nationalist rhetoric, which would emphasise his cultural filiation to Iran over his affiliation to India, despite his community’s long-established presence in Bombay, and its foundational role in the city’s development.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Hindu nationalist discourse, by constructing Parsis as belonging elsewhere, may, paradoxically, work to reinforce the notion of India as a space of sanctuary – that is, as a *provisional* space of refuge – undermining any sense of it as a permanent space of ‘home’.

¹⁰² Brah, p. 182.

¹⁰³ Eckehard Kulke, *The Parsees in India: A Minority as Agent of Social Change* (München: Weltforum-Verlag, 1974), p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ See T. M. Lurhmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 28.

Mistry explicitly positions Yezad's 'fervent embrace of religion' (452) as a resistant response to his marginalisation within both his national and domestic homes. '[N]ever asked [...] to come back' (452) to the reopened Shivaji Sports Equipment Store, Yezad's Parsi identity is excluded from the public space of an increasingly Hinduised Mumbai. His reassertion of his ethno-religious identity within his private home, meanwhile, is 'like a rebuttal, a protest' (453), and is a reaction to 'the entire chain of events, starting with Grandpa's accident and ending with Mr. Kapur's murder' (452). However, as I will argue, Mistry demonstrates that such a 'protest', which directly replicates the rhetoric of *Hindutva* by privileging cultural and religious filiation, fails to offer adequate resistance to the communalisation of the city and nation. Rather, Mistry suggests that, by repeating the Hindu nationalist rhetoric of religious and cultural exclusivity, Yezad further jeopardises, rather than protects, the stability of his home.

Before examining Yezad's withdrawal into religion in detail, it is important to recognise that Mistry does not reject altogether the importance of the sacred within the home. On Nariman's arrival at the Pleasant Villa flat, Mistry presents a tableau in which Jehangir feeds Nariman:

The balcony door framed the scene: nine-year-old happily feeding seventy-nine.

And then it struck [Roxana] like a revelation – of what, she could not say. Hidden by the screen of damp clothes, she watched, clutching Yezad's shirt in her hands. She felt she was witnessing something almost sacred, and her eyes refused to relinquish the precious moment, for she knew instinctively that it would become a memory to cherish, to recall in difficult times when she needed strength. (108)

Roxana's 'revelation' is important for a number of reasons, offering an understanding of the sacred which differs significantly from those appropriated elsewhere in both text and context. Mistry foregrounds an image of the sacred which is non-religious, structured around everyday life, rather than trafficking in religious iconography. By situating the sacred within the practical functions of the home – it is framed by a 'screen of damp clothes' – Mistry presents it as in dialogue with, rather than as detached from, or contaminated by, the material realities of daily life. However, the scene notably offers a vision that is *almost* sacred, implying Mistry's anxiety that the introduction of more rigid conceptions of the sacred into the home is both inappropriate and potentially perilous.

The provisionality of the sacred here further emphasises an understanding of the home as inclusive of difference. Given his dual significance as a potential 'other' to the Chenoy's home, and as a representative of a Nehruvian liberal secularism, Nariman's centrality is crucial. By representing Nariman as integral to, rather than as contaminative of, the sacred, Mistry contests discourses at work in both the public and private domains which construct an 'other' who is threatening to the purity of the 'home'. Similarly, Nariman's centrality implies that Mistry locates, as I will argue Rushdie does, inclusivity and diversity as themselves almost sacred convictions, worthy of reverence and protection. Furthermore, Jehangir is represented as 'relishing the responsibility of his task' (108) of feeding Nariman, foregrounding a socialist ideal of mutual care of and responsibility for the minority other by the majority community. Mistry therefore repositions the sacred here as the material and ideological enactment of the principles of socialist secularism.

As he does so, Mistry also emphasises the disjuncture between this ideal of inclusiveness and the tensions which already mark the Chenoy household, as highlighted by the already anxiously nostalgic tone of Roxana's 'revelation'. Tensely 'clutching Yezad's shirt' – an intimation of the threat he will pose to the inclusive ideals depicted here – Roxana is reluctant to 'relinquish the precious moment'. Roxana immediately translates the vision into a 'memory to cherish', indicating that Mistry locates this ideal of socialist secularism in the past, even before it has been fully realised in the present. In this light, the tone of Roxana's 'revelation' recalls the narrative of the quilt in *A Fine Balance*, which I suggested both reiterates the idealism of the Nehruvian vision of India while framing it within a sense of nostalgia. If the quilt both represents a 'utopia of secular civility'¹⁰⁵ and locates it within the past, then Roxana's 'revelation' similarly implies that the opportunity for its realisation has passed. However, in *A Fine Balance*, I read the community within Dina's flat as offering Mistry's own attempt to re-imagine a socialist secular utopia in the private domain, in resistance to its failure in the public sphere. In *Family Matters*, by contrast, I would argue that Mistry represents the contested space of the family home as offering a different, more cynical, kind of resistance. Rather than mobilising an ideal of secular civility in opposition to the communalisation of public life, Mistry

¹⁰⁵ Ahmad (2000), pp. 184-85.

presents Yezad's appropriation of discourses of religious exclusivism as a mode of resistance to the crisis in secularism. In doing so, Mistry again suggests that the 'utopic horizon'¹⁰⁶ of Independence has further receded since the late 1970s and early 1980s, upon which *A Fine Balance* focuses. Indeed, Roxana's inability to successfully interpret her 'revelation' implies that, in the 1990s, India's founding principles have become increasingly distant, as the 'ideological gravity' of national politics shifts to the right.¹⁰⁷

Mistry engages with this shift in national politics away from the ideals of socialist secularism, and towards more parochial conceptions of India, through Yezad's attempts to recreate the family home as an exclusive sacred space, which increasingly obscure the inclusive secular civility of Roxana's 'revelation'. Crucially, Jehangir's contented enactment of his responsibility towards Nariman contrasts with Yezad's declaration that '[i]t was not his job' (277) to care for his father-in-law. Mistry's representation of Yezad is, throughout the main body of the novel, largely sympathetic, and demonstrates his struggle to both negotiate his responsibilities towards Nariman and maintain a sense of 'peace and contentment' (301). Further, Yezad does offer Nariman unconditional accommodation, indicating that he does not reject his familial obligations. However, his reluctance to help tend to Nariman's physical needs, highlighted in his vehement refusal to touch the urinal, indicates that Mistry situates his renewed religiosity within the dynamics of accountability and responsibility. Thus, Mistry implies that, as an attempt to escape the disruption of his home, Yezad's orthodoxy simultaneously represents a problematic evasion of responsibilities within it.

In the Epilogue, after the family have moved to Chateau Felicity, Yezad installs a 'prayer area' (449), at the centre of which is a 'holy cabinet' (451). This cabinet contains 'pictures of Zarathustra and the Udvada fire-temple, [...] photographs of the ancient remnants of the Persian Empire, the ruins at Persepolis, palaces, fire altars, and royal tombs' (450), alongside 'prayer books' and a 'collection of additional holy items' (450). Crucially, '[t]his is the same glass-fronted cabinet' that Coomy and Jal had filled with the 'sacred icons' (26) of their childhood – toys, silver cups, school prizes, watches and pens – and which the Chenoy

¹⁰⁶ Ahmad (2000), p. 184.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 283.

family had derisively named the 'shrine' (26). The early description of this cabinet is filled with religious overtones: it is 'venerated' (26) by Jal and Coomy and, according to Yezad, '[a]ll that was missing in this ritual' of display 'was incense, flowers, and the chanting of prayers' (26). According to Morey, 'Yezad's new use of the cabinet merely perpetuates the same inclination' as Coomy's – that is, to 'cling on to the things of the past'.¹⁰⁸ I argue, however, that Yezad's appropriation of the shrine is more complex, symbolising the ways in which his orthodoxy repeats discourses of religious and cultural exclusivity dominating the national political agenda.

William Safran's examination of the diasporic 'homeland myth' offers a productive framework through which to consider Yezad's nostalgic Parsi orthodoxy. Safran contends that the 'diasporic consciousness and the exploitation of the homeland myth' often operate as 'a defense mechanism against slights committed by the host country against the minority'.¹⁰⁹ As one possible response to 'a feeling of otherness, of alienation, or of a lack of hospitality on the part of the host society',¹¹⁰ Safran claims, the homeland myth becomes 'a largely eschatological concept: it is used to make life more tolerable by holding out a utopia – or *eutopia* – that stands in contrast to the perceived *dystopia* in which actual life is lived'.¹¹¹ Following Safran, I do not wish to suggest that, in Yezad's case, the homeland myth functions as 'prepar[ation] for the actual departure for the homeland'.¹¹² Rather, drawing upon Brah's assertion that diaspora encompasses 'a homing desire which is not the same thing as a desire for a "homeland"',¹¹³ I read Yezad's increasing interest in the Parsi religion, culture and history, manifested in the contents of his cabinet, as constructing a utopian homeland, represented by religion and located in the past, in resistance to contemporary social and cultural upheavals. However, I suggest that by positioning Yezad's religiosity as a method of 'filter[ing] out' (298) what Safran terms 'actual life', Mistry conveys his scepticism regarding religious orthodoxy as a progressive or appropriate mode of resistance.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Morey, *Rohinton Mistry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 146.

¹⁰⁹ William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transcultural Studies*, 1 (1991), 83-99 (p. 94).

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 96.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Brah, p. 180.

The grammar of religion, Mistry suggests, offers a means of escape from contemporary material difficulties, and from the perception of the home as an increasingly dystopian space of 'squalor' (301) and sickness. However, Mistry is concerned that the idealised privileging of an 'earlier "elsewhere"'¹¹⁴ enables a problematic withdrawal from current material realities. Such withdrawal, Mistry suggests, not only fails to effect any material transformation of contemporary difficulties, but also irresponsibly jeopardises the already fragile stability of the present home. Thus, attempts to recreate a past utopia repeat, rather than resist effectively, the 'lack of hospitality' of the nation towards diasporic subjects. Yezad's stringent protection of the prayer space surrounding his 'holy cabinet', for example, echoes Coomy's earlier defence of the 'shrine'. Just as she slaps Murad for playing with a toy monkey (27), Yezad's insistence on a boundary of fifteen feet around his cabinet leads to a confrontation with Murad, who is considered 'unclean' after a haircut (451). By framing the introduction of the sacred into the home within the context of increasing violence, Mistry conveys a concern that attempts to protect the imagined purity of the home are in fact damaging to it, undermining its conventional role as a space of security, and revealing it to be, in Brah's terms, 'simultaneously [...] a place of safety and terror'.¹¹⁵

By highlighting the tensions which arise from Yezad's religiosity, Mistry problematises the mobilisation of the 'homeland myth' as an appropriate 'defence mechanism'. He suggests that, by withdrawing into an idealised Parsi identity, and failing to 'negotiate dialectically and critically'¹¹⁶ between his reclaimed homeland and India's contemporary crises, Yezad actually colludes with the communalisation of Indian identity. This becomes particularly clear in the dispute over Anjali, a girl with whom Murad becomes involved. Anjali's Hindu name, and her Maharashtrian identity, are crucial, implying her unproblematic belonging to the city as it is increasingly dominated by the Shiv Sena's Hindu-Marathi chauvinism. As such, Yezad's objection to her gains significance beyond the 'repeat of the parental estrangement of the earlier generation',¹¹⁷ although, as I will discuss, this is important. Identifying her as a 'parjaat girl' (468), an outsider to his Parsi community, Yezad directly replicates the exclusionary language

¹¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, p. xiii.

¹¹⁵ Brah, p. 207.

¹¹⁶ Radhakrishnan, p. 209.

¹¹⁷ Morey (2004), p. 140.

of the Shiv Sena, who would reject his own claims to belong in Bombay. By positioning Yezad's insistence on purity in direct relation to that of the Shiv Sena, Mistry demonstrates how, in resisting certain xenophobic nationalist discourses, minority subjects may retreat into similarly 'racist fictions of purity'.¹¹⁸ Moreover, in doing so, Mistry questions received assumptions regarding the 'democratic impulse' of the diaspora.¹¹⁹ While Homi Bhabha contends that '[m]inority discourse [...] contests genealogies of "origin" that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority',¹²⁰ Mistry exposes how diasporas often mobilise similar discourses of purity, homogeneous filiation, and cultural supremacy, as mechanisms of defence against essentialising nationalisms.

Thus, if in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry problematises idealisations of migrancy as enabling political intervention, then in *Family Matters* he complicates theorisations of the diasporic space as progressive and democratic. Although Yezad's diasporic consciousness is situated in resistance to nationalist discourses, he is not represented as subverting *Hindutva*'s semantics of exclusivism. In this way, Mistry profoundly challenges the opposition between the diaspora and the nation established within Bhabha's work. As in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry generates a tension between his representation of the diaspora *within* his fiction and his negotiation of his own migrant identity *through* his fiction. Critical of both Yezad's diasporic reassertions of cultural supremacy and those of Hindu nationalism, Mistry mobilises writing to contest the essentialising discourses of Parsi orthodoxy and *Hindutva* by demonstrating how they jeopardise the very identities and spaces they claim to protect. However, that this novel is increasingly dominated by such essentialising constructions suggests that Mistry remains sceptical of the possibilities offered by 'minority discourse' as an effective mode of resistance. As I will argue in the final section of this chapter, Mistry is increasingly anxious, in *Family Matters*, that writing no longer offers an adequate strategy for the negotiation of the migrant's continued 'accountability' to India.

While engaging with *Hindutva*, Mistry also draws upon specific contemporary debates over Parsi identity and, as Morey observes, Yezad's orthodoxy is informed by the central

¹¹⁸ Mishra, p. 423.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 442.

¹²⁰ Bhabha, p. 157.

duality of 'purity' and 'pollution' in the Parsi religion.¹²¹ As Jamsheed K. Choksy explains, non-Parsis are regarded by orthodox Parsis 'as unclean and capable of polluting' the community and its 'religious sanctuaries';¹²² intermarriage is therefore forbidden. Intermarriage is a particularly heavily contested contemporary issue, as the community faces numerical decline due to an ageing population, low marriage rates, low fertility and birth rates, and high patterns of emigration. As Tanya M. Lurhmann observes, much of the discussion centres on a desire to protect the purity of the Parsi 'race', and there are striking similarities between the language of Parsi orthodoxy and the rhetoric of *Hindutva*. Lurhmann, for example, summarises the orthodox Parsi position as 'fervently assert[ing] the religious (and economic) power of racial purity',¹²³ assertions which parallel *Hindutva*'s emphasis on racial homogeneity and the notion of a pure 'common blood'.¹²⁴

Influenced by his membership of the League of Orthodox Parsis, Yezad states that 'we are a pure Persian race [...] and mixed marriages will destroy that' (469). While earlier in the novel, a more liberal Yezad declares that the prohibition of intermarriage is a 'law of bigotry' (40), his attitude in the Epilogue echoes closely that of Nariman's father, who believed that '*the purity of this unique and ancient Persian community [...] was being compromised*' (126) by intermarriage. Yezad's rejection of Anjali as a 'parjaat girl' therefore directly repeats issues raised by Nariman's forbidden relationship with Lucy Braganza. Nariman's parents label Lucy, a Catholic Goan, a '*ferangi woman*' (14) – a foreigner. In a similar move, Nariman's father calls Lucy a '*whore*' (259), whose presence has transformed his home into a '*raanwada*' (259). Although dismayed at Nariman's '*filthy behaviour*' (259), Mr Vakeel figures the non-Parsi Lucy as a direct threat to his community, in a similar way to Yezad's construction of Anjali later. Furthermore, Mr Vakeel's transferral of his anxieties over the '*immorality that's destroying the Parsi community*' (259) onto an identity constructed as other to it, foreshadows not only Yezad's objections to Anjali, but also, implicitly, Coomy's rejection of Nariman.

¹²¹ Morey (2004), p. 145.

¹²² Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil*, foreword by Richard N. Frye (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), p. xvi.

¹²³ Lurhmann, p. 147.

¹²⁴ Savarkar, quoted in Jaffrelot, p. 28.

While repeating earlier discourses of purity, Yezad also rewrites his personal history and cultural identity. His increasing identification of Parsis as Persian, rather than Indian, reappropriates the exclusive definition of Indianness expounded by Hindu nationalists, and translates a negative sign of 'otherness' into a positive assertion of cultural identity. Radhakrishnan suggests the diasporic myth of return acts as 'a cure, or remedy' for the present 'alienation from one's true being, history, and heritage'.¹²⁵ Brah, meanwhile, conceptualises the 'diaspora space' as a location in which 'tradition is itself continually reinvented even as it may be hailed as originating from the mists of time'.¹²⁶ Yezad's repositioning of his Parsi faith as a curative sanctuary is similarly predicated upon the reinvention of a continuity with a past from which he feels alienated. As Mr Kapur shows him photographs of his childhood home, Yezad remarks that 'in these pictures you've shown me my loss' (220). The photographs prompt a nostalgia for his family home that Yezad has not previously felt:

How dear were the memories now, of his childhood home. The place had not been much in his mind; by the time the family had left for good the building was so run down [...] they were glad to see that last of it. And yet, it must have had a hold on him all along. (222)

Here, Yezad rearranges his memories, creating in retrospect a continuity between the present and the idealised past that did not originally exist. Thus, he suppresses the 'years of fights and quarrels' (44) which prompted his separation from his family in order to invent a sustained connection to his filial community.

Yezad's fictionalisation of sustained filiative connections is paired with his reinterpretation of Parsi religion as itself symbolic of his filiative community. Yezad reads the continuously burning fire within the temple – the 'same fire his parents had gazed upon, and his grandparents, and great-grandparents' (332) – as a sign of filiative and generational continuity which both elides his estrangement from his parents and sisters, and offers a reassertion of his filiative belonging to Bombay, in resistance to the Hinduisation of the city. If *Hindutva* defines the 'homeland' as the 'geographical location of the sacred shrines and myths of one's religion',¹²⁷ then the fire-temple highlights the presence of Parsi shrines *within* India.

¹²⁵ Radhakrishnan, p. 53.

¹²⁶ Brah, p. 208.

¹²⁷ Hansen (1999), p. 78.

Yet, Yezad's claims to belonging to the city are couched within a nostalgia for the past, rather than the present, suggesting that Bombay itself has become an imaginary 'homeland' distanced from the contemporary space of Mumbai. Mistry therefore positions Yezad's uncritical nostalgia for a pure, Parsi identity, as a withdrawal from, rather than an active and critical engagement with, the contemporary transformation of the city from a cosmopolitan, secular Bombay to a parochialised, Hindu-Marathi Mumbai. Such a withdrawal, Mistry contends, represents a problematic evasion of diasporic 'double duty', as Yezad fails to draw together, in 'an active and critical relationship',¹²⁸ the cultural politics of his diasporic identity and his national identity. By disconnecting these overlapping identities, and privileging his Parsi identity, Yezad fails to enact an effective strategy of resistance or social transformation. Rather, Mistry suggests that Yezad's reluctance to negotiate critically the relationship between his diasporic and national identities actually colludes with the communalisation of Indian identity.

This becomes clear in Yezad's increasing fictionalisation of his Parsi religion as incommensurable with the nation's other religious communities. After the Chenoy's join him in Chateau Felicity, Jal finds a 'stack of holy pictures' portraying 'Sai Baba, Virgin Mary, a Crucifixion, Haji Malang, several Zarathustras, Our Lady of Fatima, [and] Buddha' (472). Jal explains that, when he was a child, 'it was usual for most Parsis to keep tokens of every religion' (472). Mistry uses these icons of India's religious diversity to highlight Yezad's mobilisation of a fiction of Parsi purity, but also to symbolise the retreat of discourses of secularism within the public domain and Yezad's own rejection of the relevance of such discourses to his diasporic identity. Preferring the sombre portraits of 'the elders and achievers of the [Parsi] community' (473) to the icons of Indian secularism, Yezad rejects the 'non-Zarathusti images' (478), on the grounds that 'in a Zarathusti home, they interfere with the vibrations of Avesta prayers' (478). Echoing campaigns to remove non-Hindu shrines from the territory of the nation, Yezad similarly represents symbols of non-Parsi religions as interruptive to his home.

Yezad's rejection of these symbols offers a crucial framework through which to read the Epilogue, which, I suggest, further reveals Mistry's anxiety regarding the endurance of a

¹²⁸ Radhakrishnan. p. xiii.

Nehruvian vision of secular India during the 1990s. Critics have found the Epilogue to *Family Matters* problematic. While Adam Mars-Jones reads it as ‘more a U-turn than a coda [...] more like a recantation than a rounding-off’,¹²⁹ Bharucha, in a reductive dismissal of the section, claims that ‘Nariman’s tragic history is now being reiterated [...] in an almost farcical manner’.¹³⁰ I agree with Mars-Jones that, by shifting temporal setting and narrative voice – the section is narrated by Jehangir, five years after the main action – Mistry does risk detaching the Epilogue from the rest of the novel. However, I argue that these shifts offer a crucial *development*, rather than recantation, of a number of his concerns in the preceding narrative. Indeed, the Epilogue functions in a similar way to that of *A Fine Balance*, which Mistry uses to reiterate the crisis in Nehruvian ideals of socialist secularism, and to suggest that those ideals have been irrevocably damaged in the years between the Emergency and Indira Gandhi’s assassination. In the Epilogue to *Family Matters*, Mistry similarly suggests that Yezad’s attitudes have become deeply ingrained in the intervening years, and that the supposed ‘democratic impulse’ of his diasporic identity has been irrevocably obscured by the ‘semantics of exclusivism and separatism’.

Jehangir states that Yezad ‘makes me feel that my real father is gone, replaced by this non-stop-praying stranger’ (487), implying that Yezad’s transformation is irreversible, but also indicating that discourses of purity and sanctity now dominate his once secular home. Moreover, while, throughout the novel, Yezad is represented as interacting with the city beyond the flat, and more specifically with other religions – Mr Kapur and Vilas are Hindus, Husain a Muslim – in the Epilogue he has withdrawn into his family home, whose ethno-religious exclusivity he fiercely asserts and protects. Mistry thus implies that attitudes beyond the home, within Bombay and the nation, have become similarly entrenched.

The temporal location of the Epilogue is therefore important. The main events of the novel take place in 1996, the year the Shiv Sena state government moved to ‘shut down the Srikrishna Commission’ (148) which investigated the post-Ayodhya riots in Bombay. In the years between the main action of the novel and the Epilogue, then, the BJP-led coalition had

¹²⁹ Adam Mars-Jones, ‘It’s All a Bit of a Mystery’, *Observer*, 21 April 2001 <<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,687698,00.html>>, [accessed 1 October 2003] (para. 13-14 of 14).

¹³⁰ Bharucha, p. 194.

been in government for three years, and in Bombay, according to Amitava Kumar, ‘an ideology of purity, of religion and region, ha[d] taken strong hold’.¹³¹ Jal’s casual suggestion at the start of the novel that ‘[m]aybe the BJP and Shiv Sena coalition will improve things [...] We should give them a chance’ (30) has therefore been tested by the time of the Epilogue, with apparently disastrous consequences for non-Hindu communities.¹³²

According to Ahmad, the BJP’s electoral success demonstrated that ‘liberal/Left intellectuals’, a group to which he admits to belonging, ‘have been a bit too sanguine about what we took to be the chances of *Hindutva* prevailing’.¹³³ Jal’s early suggestion that the Hindu Right be ‘give[n] [...] a chance’ suggests that Mistry is similarly critical of the failures of liberal secularists to resist the rise of *Hindutva*. Yezad’s religiosity therefore not only echoes Mr Vakeel’s exclusionary politics but, I contend, also constitutes an important critique of liberal secular politicians and intellectuals. More than a repetition of Mr Vakeel’s exclusionary politics, Yezad’s orthodoxy reiterates Nariman’s earlier failure to resist his father’s politics by agreeing to an arranged Parsi marriage to Yasmin, instead of marrying the Catholic, Lucy. In this light, the religious icons gain further significance, because, as Jal explains, ‘Pappa took them down after Mamma and Lucy died’ (472). Mistry therefore suggests that Nariman’s earlier reluctance to endorse actively his inclusive ideals – by retaining the icons and changing Jal and Coomy’s surnames – enables discourses of filiative exclusivity eventually to dominate the home.

The impact of the removal of the religious images from the private space of the family home is magnified when they are further excluded from public space, pushed outside the bounds of the city, and of the nation. Having decided against hanging up the icons, Yezad states that ‘they should be disposed of properly’, and explains that ‘[w]e’ll make a packet of the pictures [...] and offer it to the sea, to Avan Yazat, for safekeeping’ (478). Jehangir describes the offering at Chowpatty beach:

We walked till we reached the firm wet sand and the shimmering water. A mild foamy surf teased our feet. The tide was going out, the waves were spent. And the gulls were loud, wondering if we’d brought anything edible.

My father touched the packet to his forehead and asked me to do the same. Then he tossed it into the sea, into the protecting arms of Avan Yazat.

¹³¹ Amitava Kumar, *Bombay, London, New York* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), p. 56.

¹³² The BJP first formed a coalition government in 1996, but this lasted only thirteen days. In 1998, the BJP-led coalition government ruled for thirteen months, and was re-elected in 1999.

¹³³ Ahmad (2000), p. 214.

We sat on the sand for a while, looking out to the horizon, where the sun was slowly slipping into the water. (478)

This ceremony offers a vivid representation of the demise of secularism in the late 1990s, and highlights Mistry's anxieties regarding the survival of the Nehruvian vision of India as that decade draws to a close. While the Epilogue to *A Fine Balance* represents India's secularism as precariously positioned between further destruction and potential restoration, Mistry is less equivocal in the Epilogue to *Family Matters*. Here, he represents the secular as being tossed into the sea, ejected from the territory of the nation. Jehangir's description of the ceremony further evokes a sense of endings, as 'the tide was going out, the waves were spent', and the sun is setting on the horizon. Crucially, it is a diasporic subject, who was once a secular liberal, who 'tosses' secularism beyond the nation's boundaries, rather than a Hindu nationalist. Having already 'given up on a saviour' (31) to resist the Shiv Sena's 'hatred of minorities' (30), Yezad finally rejects secularism itself as a mode of defence against his own cultural marginalisation. Furthermore, Mistry represents the sun as 'slowly *slipping* into the water', suggesting that the failures of secular liberals to actively resist the communalisation of national politics has allowed exclusionary discourses of both the nation and its minority communities to emerge. Six years after the publication of *A Fine Balance*, then, Mistry is less ambivalent in his critique of the 'utopic horizon' held out at Independence, suggesting that secularism has not only been brought into crisis by the rise of *Hindutva* during the 1990s, but has been effectively discarded as a national ideal.

Lost Homelands: Migrancy and Myths of Secularism

Having explored Mistry's representation of the diasporic subject, I turn, in this final section, to consider his engagement with the politics of migrancy. Mistry's examination of the dynamics of migrancy in *Family Matters* moves in two directions: the first engages with the desire to leave Bombay; the second focuses upon a migrant to that city. As Noah Richler observes, '*Family Matters* is not a South Asian book merely written in Canada', but directly confronts Canada for the first time since Mistry's short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag*.¹³⁴

While Yezad's religiosity represents a desire for a lost homeland in reaction to the current social

¹³⁴ Noah Richler, 'Not Much Ado About Giller: Where Was the Usual Fuss Over This Year's Short List?', *Saturday National Post* (Canada), 17 October 2002. 'Arts and Life', p. 1.

and political upheavals in Bombay, it is also motivated by the loss of a projected homeland, Canada. Prior to the central events of the novel, Yezad has applied and been rejected for immigration to Canada. Echoing Safran's notion of the 'homeland' as a utopia, Mishra argues that the 'fantasy structure of the homeland appears as the imaginary haven' to a diasporic community which feels threatened.¹³⁵ While Mishra refers to the myth of return, the notion of the 'fantasy structure of the homeland' is useful in exploring Mistry's representation of the Chenoy's idealisation of Canada as a space of multiculturalism and plurality, in contrast to the narrow parochial politics dominating contemporary Bombay. As I argue, however, Canada's rejection of the Chenoy's leads them to reinvent that projected utopia and its multiculturalism, a move which both informs and is informed by the failure of secularism in India. While Mistry's inclusion of the Chenoy's 'immigration story' (240) highlights his continued concern with the politics of migrancy, the intersecting failures of Canadian multiculturalism and Indian secularism extend his engagement with notions of diasporic 'double duty'. Mistry's characterisation of Mr Kapur offers a critical representation of a migrant who fails to negotiate his responsibility towards India's contemporary politics. Although he is a migrant *to* Bombay, Kapur's failure to pursue his political aspirations, I contend, has implications for Mistry's anxious negotiation of his own position as a migrant writer.

To explore Mistry's ambivalent representation of Canada as an 'imaginary haven', I return to notions of the sacred. Ideas of ritual and sanctuary, paired with patterns of myth and reinvention, are central to the 'immigration story' (240), which concerns Yezad's application for citizenship. The 'package of letters' (240), 'forms, photocopies, news clippings' (246) relating to the application acts as a collection of venerated relics, symbolising the refuge offered by Canada as a real location, but also as an imaginative structure used to 'extend Daddy's good mood for as long as possible' (240). The 'immigration story' has, over the course of its repeated telling, developed 'two parts: dream and reality' (240), suggesting Canada's ambivalent location between being 'a mythic place of desire' and a 'lived experience of a locality'.¹³⁶ The textuality of Canada's representation highlights this positioning, and emphasises the Chenoy's

¹³⁵ Mishra, p. 442.

¹³⁶ Brah, p. 192.

understanding of Canada as constituted, not by lived experiences, but by letters, novels and history books. In this respect, Mistry explicitly situates Canada in relation to Yezad's Parsism, which is similarly informed by religious and historical documents. Thus, while Canada is a real geographical location, it is fictionalised as an imaginary homeland. Yezad's geographically inaccurate claim that the family could have been 'living happily [...] in Toronto, breathing pure Rocky Mountain air' (275) demonstrates Canada's largely abstract character against the specific historical and geographical location of Bombay. It is, according to Yezad, a 'land of milk and honey' (131). By representing Canada as offering a 'fantasy [...] new life in a new land' (131), Mistry positions it as a utopian space away from the 'lived experience' of Bombay.

Again, the notion of the homeland as a pure, uncontaminated space is central: Canada's 'clean cities, [and] clean air' (131) will replace 'the noxious fumes of th[e] dying city' of Bombay (275). However, accompanying this purity is the 'generosity of the Canadian dream [which] makes room for everyone, for a multitude of languages and cultures and peoples' (241). This 'homeland' therefore differs from others constructed within the text; rather than being structured by exclusivity and homogeneity, the idealisation of Canada emphasises cultural plurality. The mythologisation of the 'munificence of Canada's multicultural policy' (241), which proves its 'willingness to define and redefine itself continually, on the basis of inclusion' (241), signals the intersection between the fantasy of Canada and the contemporary experience of Bombay. Canada's multiculturalism, I suggest, initially presents a utopian alternative to the failure of India's secularism, offering the ideals of hospitality, cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism that are increasingly problematised within contemporary Bombay, as it is redefined by the parochial politics of Hindu and Maharashtrian majoritarianism.

The perceived failure of the Canadian nation-state to translate the 'myth of multiculturalism'¹³⁷ into reality, by granting the Chenoy's citizenship, offers an important critique of that 'government's affirmed commitment to multiculturalism as an integral part of Canadian values'.¹³⁸ However, I argue that, while Mistry engages with contemporary debates surrounding

¹³⁷ Chelva Kanaganayakam, 'Cool Dots and a Hybrid Scarborough: Multiculturalism as Canadian Myth', in *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature*, ed. by Laura Moss (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003), pp. 140-48 (p. 145).

¹³⁸ Laura Moss, 'Is Canada Postcolonial?: Introducing the Question', in Moss, ed., pp. 1-23 (p. 13).

the multiculturalism of his land of residence, he does so in order to further his critique of Indian secularism. In arguing this, I do not wish to collapse Canadian multiculturalism and Indian secularism which, as Victor J. Ramraj observes, offer different, historically situated approaches to polycultural national identity.¹³⁹ However, I contend that the loss of the projected Canadian 'homeland' is reflected by and reflective of the loss of Bombay, as an embodiment of India's secular ideals. In response to the failure of his application for citizenship, Yezad denounces the 'Canadian paradigm'¹⁴⁰ of multiculturalism, a move which is echoed by his later rejection of Indian secularism. Deconstructing the 'dream' of immigration by narrating the 'reality' of his own experience, Yezad asserts that the immigration officer's 'bigoted ideas' (245), alongside examples of internal 'racism and xenophobia' (245), reveal 'Canadian ideals of multiculturalism' to be 'a gigantic hoax' (245). Problematising visions of Canada as accommodating of cultural diversity, Mistry suggests that even nations which officially endorse inclusive multiculturalism themselves operate practices of exclusion, and 'are not about inclusions and wide open arms as much as they are about places carved out of closed doors, closed borders and screening apparatuses'.¹⁴¹

Yezad's long-term response, meanwhile, collapses the distinction between Canada, as a 'mythic place of desire', and his 'lived experience' of India's failing secular principles. Yezad judges that there is '[n]ot much difference between there and here' (132); 'instead of high- and low-caste fighting', Canada has 'racism and police shootings; separatists in Kashmir, separatists in Quebec' (132). '[W]hy', asks Yezad, 'migrate from the frying pan into the fire?' (132). In this light, I suggest, the overlapping of Canadian and Indian experiences of separatism and internal conflict explicitly positions the failure of a mythologised Canadian multiculturalism as a reflection of, and as informed by, Yezad's material experiences of the decline of secularism.

Mistry juxtaposes Yezad's failed emigration from Bombay, and his perception of that city's failed secularism, with the representation of Mr Kapur, a migrant to Bombay who simultaneously celebrates, and mourns the passing of, the city's secular cosmopolitanism as it is transformed into Mumbai. According to Christopher de Bellaigue, 'Mumbai was born' on 6

¹³⁹ Victor J. Ramraj, 'Answering the Answers, Asking More Questions', in Moss, ed., pp. 312-17 (p. 315).

¹⁴⁰ Kanaganayakam, p. 140.

¹⁴¹ George, p. 18.

December 1992, the day the Masjid was attacked by Hindu militants.¹⁴² In an image that resonates with the centrality of notions of the sacred to Mistry's novel, Bellaigue asserts that Bombay has become 'an ugly, disturbing shrine city called Mumbai'.¹⁴³ Bellaigue's use of the image of a shrine conveys his view that the fluidity of Bombay's secular cosmopolitanism has been replaced by a static, singular representation of the city as a sacred homeland, available only to Maharashtrians and Hindus. Hansen similarly observes that many Bombayites lamented 'the loss of the old name' which was associated with 'the older experience of Bombay, the dreams of Bombay as a metaphor of India's diversity, the imaginings of modernity'.¹⁴⁴

Mistry's representation of Mr Kapur is informed by Bombay's weakened position as a metaphor for the Nehruvian vision of India, but also with the failure of liberal secular politicians to endorse and protect that vision. Furthermore, Kapur develops Mistry's engagement with the politics of migrancy and his negotiation of the dynamics of 'double duty'. Kapur's identity is constituted by a complex overlapping of geographical and cognitive migrations. At six months old, Kapur migrated to Bombay from the Punjab, fleeing the violent aftermath of Partition. His identity as both a Hindu and migrant to the city is significant given the Hindu majoritarianism dominating the nation, and Marathi chauvinism at work in the city. As a Hindu, he is unproblematically identified as belonging to India. Conversely, as a migrant to Bombay, his sense of belonging is contested, because 'Bombayites from non-Maharashtrian background [*sic*] who refuse the Shiv Sena [...] are objects of hate [who] must go out of the city'.¹⁴⁵

Kapur's liminal sense of belonging, which locates him between being a 'stranger' and a 'Bombay brother' (337), is further complicated by what I identify as his additional, cognitive position between Bombay and Mumbai. Kapur's 'yearning for his family's past in Punjab, lost to him forever' (146) is translated into a 'lament for the city [he] felt was slowly dying' (145). Mistry therefore, I suggest, locates Kapur as a migrant caught between an 'earlier "elsewhere"'¹⁴⁶ of cosmopolitan, secular Bombay, and his contemporary experience of the

¹⁴² Christopher de Bellaigue, 'Bombay at War', in *India: A Mosaic*, ed. by Robert B. Silvers & Barbara Epstein (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), pp. 33-52 (p. 36).

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁴ Hansen (2001), p.1.

¹⁴⁵ Gérard Heuzé, 'Cultural Populism: The Appeal of the Shiv Sena', in Patel & Thorner, eds., pp. 213-47 (pp. 234-35).

¹⁴⁶ Radhakrishnan, p. xiii.

violently parochial Mumbai. By positioning Kapur as a migrant from the conflicting ideological spaces of Bombay to Mumbai, Mistry re-situates his examination of the dynamics of ‘double duty’ within a critical engagement with the politics of the city, a repositioning which has important consequences for the negotiation of his own relationship to the city. In ‘Lend Me Your Light’ and *A Fine Balance*, Mistry juxtaposes a politically-distanced migrant and a socially-committed local activist to stage his anxious negotiation of the tension between ‘dishonourable postnationalism’ and accountable ‘double duty’. In *Family Matters*, Mistry consolidates these two positions into his characterisation of Kapur, who both is and is not a migrant, and explicitly represents the migrant as caught within, and as necessarily negotiating the tension between, being politically active and irresponsibly detached from Bombay’s contemporary politics.

Initially, Kapur is politically informed about, and passionately interested in, the city’s past and present identity, ‘bury[ing] himself [not] only in the city’s past’, but also ‘in the complicated morass of contemporary politics’ (148). Angered by the newly-elected Shiv Sena municipal government’s decision to dissolve the Srikrishna Commission,¹⁴⁷ Kapur resolves to ‘run in the next municipal election’ (151). Determined to ‘act before it’s too late’ (154) and revive an understanding of Bombay as ‘an enigma of cosmopolitanism’ (154), Kapur’s commitment to resisting the Shiv Sena’s parochial politics is explicitly framed within notions of duty. While Yezad – concerned about his job in the shop – suggests that Kapur should ‘let nothing interfere with [his] duty’ towards his father’s legacy (152), Kapur prefers to ‘define [his] duty’ (152) in terms of defending his ‘beloved Bombay’ (151). His decision to campaign for public office is paired with his transformation of his shop into a secular ‘mini-Bombay’ (153) which will celebrate ‘all festivals’ (153) of the city’s religious communities. Kapur’s commitment to such political activism, however, is short-lived, his wife persuading him that it would be ‘too dangerous’ (287) to oppose the Shiv Sena, and that he should put ‘[f]amily service before public service’ (294).

Kapur’s retreat from politics, I suggest, has a double significance, representing both a problematic failure of liberal, left-wing politicians to resist effectively the rise of the Hindu

¹⁴⁷ See Hansen (2001), pp. 132-47.

Right, and of the migrant to engage productively and actively with those politics. Mistry again frames Kapur's depoliticisation within notions of duty and responsibility; Kapur states that:

Even if I become a municipal councillor, fight the good fight, what do I have at the end? The satisfaction of knowing I've done my duty. As far as Bombay is concerned, nothing changes. Nobody can turn back the clock. (294)

While Kapur acknowledges his accountability to Bombay, Mistry highlights the tension between the shopkeeper's recognition of his responsibility towards the city and his abandonment of that responsibility. Mistry implies that Kapur's refusal to 'fight the good fight' constitutes a problematic failure to couple his ideological resistance to the Shiv Sena, and his idealisation of Bombay's cosmopolitanism within his shop, with concrete actions in the public sphere. However, by positing political activism as a means of gaining personal satisfaction, rather than as effecting substantial social transformation, Mistry indicates his scepticism towards the possibilities offered by either grass-roots or state-level resistance.

By framing this scepticism within Kapur's migrant identity, meanwhile, Mistry conveys an anxiety regarding the negotiation of his own continued responsibility towards the politics of Bombay. Kapur's assertion that 'nothing changes', whether the individual has 'done [their] duty' or not, may suggest Mistry's concern that his own attempts to engage with his diasporic 'double duty', through writing, are themselves potentially inadequate. Mistry therefore problematises Radhakrishnan's optimistic conviction that, by understanding and representing 'the political crises in India', the migrant productively contributes to debates surrounding the 'crisis of secular nationalism in India'.¹⁴⁸ In *Family Matters*, I contend, Mistry is concerned that his attempts to represent India's contemporary socio-political crises are, in themselves, an insufficient contribution to secular resistance within the nation.

Mistry's critique of Kapur's rhetorical – rather than concrete – attempts to engage with the city, becomes more apparent in Kapur's retreat into the performance of nostalgic eulogies to Bombay. After deciding against campaigning for election, Kapur claims that there is '[n]othing left now except to talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs. Let us sit upon these chairs and tell sad stories of the death of cities' (295). Although Kapur ostensibly becomes more involved with Bombay by, for example, commuting by train, these efforts continue to idealise the city's

¹⁴⁸ Radhakrishnan, p. 212.

cosmopolitan past, rather than examine its contemporary material realities. Thus, he idealises the inclusive ‘miracle of a man being scooped up by passengers who were themselves hanging outside the train’ (337), without acknowledging that the overcrowded train corresponds to Bombay’s problematic over-population. Instead of critically engaging with the material difficulties faced by his fellow Bombayites, Kapur decides to ‘buy his clothes not in air-conditioned department stores but at the pavement shops’ (338), in a superficial effort to share, rather than attempt to improve, the contemporary realities of Bombay’s less wealthy inhabitants.

That Kapur’s alternate laments for, and nostalgic celebrations of, Bombay’s cosmopolitan character offer an inadequate mode of resistance to the Shiv Sena’s redefinition of the city as Mumbai is demonstrated by his assertion that the city’s true character is ‘like Hinduism’ (351). Kapur’s extended eulogy on the city’s ‘welcoming’ (351) secularism is ostensibly a declaration of his opposition to exclusionary redefinitions of both Bombay and his own religion by ‘the fundamentalist, mosque-destroying fanatics’ (351). I suggest, however, that it further gestures towards Mistry’s anxieties regarding both the failures of the liberal secular left to resist the increasing dominance of the Hindu Right, and also regarding his own engagement with the city’s contemporary politics. Kapur declares that, like ‘the real Hinduism that has nurtured this country for thousands of years, welcoming all creeds and beliefs and dogmas and theologies, making them feel at home’,

Bombay makes room for everybody. Migrants, businessmen, perverts, politicians, holy men, gamblers, beggars, wherever they come from, whatever caste or class, the city welcomes them and turns them into Bombayites. So who am I to say these people belong here and those don’t? Janata Party okay, Shiv Sena not okay, secular good, communal bad, BJP unacceptable, Congress lesser of evils?

No, it’s not up to us [...] How dare I dispute her *Zeitgeist*? If this is Bombay’s Age of Chaos, how can I demand a Golden Age of Harmony? (351)

As Morey notes, Kapur’s ‘outlook here seems *too* relativistic’, allowing space for the Shiv Sena and BJP, ‘forces that deny and seek to repress the very difference he cherishes’.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, Kapur’s privileging of Hinduism as a framework for the city’s identity echoes many of the assertions made by Hindu nationalists. By constructing Hinduism as having ‘nurtured’ the nation, Kapur implicitly constructs and privileges a filiative bond between that religion and India, positioning Hinduism as coterminous with – if not preceding – the birth of the Indian

¹⁴⁹ Morey (2004). p. 143.

nation. In doing so, he echoes the *Sangh Parivar*'s claims that Hinduism represents the 'natural matrix of the true Indian nation'.¹⁵⁰ In this light, Mistry offers Kapur's rhetoric as more than 'quiet[ism]', to use Morey's term.¹⁵¹ More than a failure to resist his opponents, Mistry suggests that Kapur's characterisation of Bombay actually colludes with the Hinduisation of the city.

Furthermore, Kapur's assertion that 'it's not up to us' to affirm secularism or condemn communalism develops Mistry's critique of left-wing secular politicians, as represented by the 'lesser of evils', Congress. Echoing Nariman's failure to endorse his secular principles, Kapur's reluctance to translate his proclaimed ideological secularism into concrete actions indicates, I argue, Mistry's continued concern that the political rhetoric of secularism is not being actively reinforced by liberal politicians at the local and national level. Moreover, through Kapur's language, Mistry highlights the ways in which Hindu nationalist rhetoric has infiltrated political discourse in general. According to Corbridge and Harriss, Congress-(I), 'by its actions and inactions, effectively connived in the "communalization" of Indian politics'.¹⁵² In pairing Kapur's celebration of Bombay with his privileging of Hinduism, Mistry similarly demonstrates that self-proclaimed proponents of secularism themselves increasingly mobilise an idiom of communalism, and that the semantics of *Hindutva* both dominate the nationalist political agenda and are, more disturbingly, increasingly appropriated by professed opponents of *Hindutva*.

While Mistry mobilises Kapur's eulogy to a utopian, inclusive Bombay to critique the failures of national politicians to resist effectively the dominance of *Hindutva* and the Shiv Sena, Kapur's elegiac lamentations for the 'shining city by the sea' (296) have implications for Mistry's position as a migrant writer. I suggest that Kapur's withdrawal from political action, and into more nostalgic and celebratory rhetoric, develops Mistry's attitude towards writing as a method of negotiating his diasporic 'double duty'. Yezad's response to Kapur's celebration of the city is important here. After listening to another of Kapur's many attempts to idealise the 'organic whole that is Bombay' (336), in preference to a more rigorous engagement with its contemporary material realities, Yezad reflects that Kapur 'was too far gone into the realm of fantasy. The realm of his rhetoric. Which he truly believed, and which, in the end, would

¹⁵⁰ Hansen (1999), p. 10.

¹⁵¹ Morey (2004), p. 144.

¹⁵² Corbridge & Harriss, p. 114.

accomplish nothing' (336). Yezad's scepticism towards Kapur's 'rhetoric', I contend, gestures towards Mistry's own concern regarding the adequacy of writing as an effective mode of political opposition. If Kapur's rhetoric 'accomplish[es] nothing' because it is distanced from the material realities of Bombay, then Mistry suggests that his mobilisation of writing in order to negotiate his own 'double duty' is problematised by his continued distance from the city.

As I have demonstrated, both in this chapter and in my discussion of *A Fine Balance*, Mistry attempts to avoid similarly retreating into the 'realm of fantasy' in his fictional engagement with India. Examining critically the contemporary cultural politics of India, Mistry's fiction is informed by, and engages with, debates surrounding the legacy of the Nehruvian vision of nation and definitions of Indianness. In *Family Matters*, by showing how the invention of utopian homelands located in the past endangers the stability of the present home, Mistry critiques exclusionary and essentialising constructions of identity, as it is imagined both by nationalist and by diasporic subjects. As he does so, Mistry highlights his profound concern that the Nehruvian vision of a socialist secular nation has retreated from the political agenda in the late 1990s. Moreover, Mistry appears reluctant, in *Family Matters*, to idealise that vision itself. Rather than offer a utopian model of secular civility in this novel, Mistry foregrounds the socialist secular ideal as always already marked by tensions. I therefore contend that Mistry positions his novel between the two alternatives presented by Kapur. Mistry's fiction asserts the necessity of 'disputing the *Zeitgeist*' of contemporary India, but makes clear that such resistance must be enacted through a rigorous engagement with the material realities of that nation, and not through an uncritical demand for a return to a 'Golden Age of Harmony'. In doing so, and while he sustains a profound anxiety regarding the efficacy of writing as an adequate mode of resistance, Mistry continues to assert the rights and responsibilities of the migrant in contesting the communalisation of Indian identity at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter Three
'Plugging into the town': Cosmopolitanism and *The Satanic Verses*

Introduction

'How far did they fly?', asks the narrator of *The Satanic Verses* (1988), as thirteen-year-old Salahuddin Chamchawalla travels from Bombay to London.¹ The ambivalent response to this question emphasises the simultaneous distance and the proximity of these cities, the intimate inter-relationship between Saladin's two homelands. They travelled 'from Indianness to Englishness, an immeasurable distance. Or, not very far at all, because they rose from one great city, fell to another. The distance between cities is always small' (41). This statement reveals many of the central concerns of the novel and my discussion in this chapter: notions of Indianness and Englishness, as they are constructed by exclusionary nationalist discourses; the migrant imagination, as it moves between national spaces, problematising the apparent distance between them; and the symbiotic representation of London and Bombay as both emblematic of these national identities and as the site of their contestation.

The passage highlights Salman Rushdie's attempts to conceptualise, in both his fiction and non-fiction, the migrant's position within and between his various homelands, while also emphasising his engagement with the contemporary politics of those locations. If Rohinton Mistry's work is, to date, 'still more concerned with the lives of those children of the old world'² – that is, with Indians, specifically those within the Parsi diaspora, who have remained in India – then Rushdie is increasingly interested in the 'new world [...] to which [he] came',³ and the interaction and dialogue between his multiple homelands of India, Pakistan, Britain and, more recently, the United States. Rushdie engages with issues already examined in Mistry's work: nationalism and exclusionary constructions of national identity; migrant and diasporic identity; notions of home and belonging. Rushdie's fiction also explores similar historical moments in which definitions of nation and nationalism are renegotiated: Indian Independence and Partition, the Emergency, the rise of Hindu nationalism, and the increasing communalisation of public life in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

¹ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 41. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

² Geoff Hancock, 'An Interview with Rohinton Mistry', *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 65 (1989), 143-50 (p. 144).

³ Peter Kadziz, 'Salman Speaks', *Boston Phoenix*, 6-13 May 2003, <http://bostonphoenix.com/archive/books/99/05/06/SALMAN_RUSHDIE.html> [accessed 8 April 2003] (para. 22 of 45).

As I observed in the Introduction, however, while Mistry and Rushdie explore the same historical contexts, they diverge in their formal attitudes towards the representation of history, and their narrative strategies lead to important differences in their treatment of similar moments. Furthermore, Mistry's engagement with Canada is latent, while his negotiation of the politics of migrancy and critiques of India's contemporary and historical socio-political experiences are often implicit rather than overt. Rushdie, by contrast, explicitly confronts his 'new' homelands, self-consciously theorising questions of nation, national and migrant identity to develop a 'politico-aesthetics' of migrancy.⁴ Meanwhile, Rushdie often places the relationship between the migrant and Bombay at the centre of his work in a way that Mistry does not. Nevertheless, despite the differences between their fiction at the level of the sentence, I argue that there are important overlaps in their representations of the migrant, the city and the nation. My examination of Rushdie's work demonstrates that the more exuberant representations of migrant identity found in his fiction are, like Mistry's, complicated by a concern for notions of accountability and political responsibility, and by a self-conscious anxiety regarding the distance of the cosmopolitan migrant from the material realities of contemporary Bombay. Similarly, while ostensibly more celebratory in his depictions of that city, Rushdie is increasingly anxious over the crisis in Bombay's cosmopolitan, secular identity. As I will show, Rushdie is more explicitly concerned than Mistry with his own relationship to that crisis, and with his own position as a migrant writer, and often constructs his representations of India around the relationship between the migrant artist and Bombay. The intersection between the politics of migrancy and the politics of aesthetics will therefore be important to my examination of Rushdie's fiction in the next three chapters.

As this thesis turns to Rushdie's work, it enters more familiar territory in postcolonial scholarship. His fictional and non-fictional work has attained canonical status within the fields of postcolonial literature in general, and Indian and British South Asian literature in particular.⁵ Susheila Nasta remarks that Rushdie's 'self-conscious construction of the migrant as metaphor' – his formulation of a "'migrant' aesthetic' – has been 'taken up in recent years as a kind of

⁴ Revathi Krishnaswamy, 'Mythologies of Migrancy: Postcolonialism, Postmodernism and the Politics of (Dis)location', *ARIEL*, 26:1 (1995), 125-46 (p. 135).

⁵ See, for example, James Procter, *Dwelling Places: Postwar Black British Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 7, 185.

manifesto' by critics keen to 'fetishize Rushdie as the contemporary postcolonial writer *par excellence*'.⁶ Central to this position is Rushdie's fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*, with which I begin my examination of his work. Published in 1988, and identified by Simon Gikandi as 'the paradigmatic text of postcolonialism',⁷ *The Satanic Verses* perhaps represents the quintessential text on the nation and the migrant, articulating the anxieties of nations and nationalisms, diasporic communities, and experiences of migrancy.

Described by Rushdie as 'a migrant's-eye view of the world [...] written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition',⁸ the novel resists easy plot summary. The central narrative concerns the experiences of two migrants, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, as they negotiate their changing identities as they move between India and England, Bombay and London. After falling from an exploding aeroplane and landing on the English coast, the pair are famously metamorphosed: Saladin becomes a devilish physicalisation of British racist fears of the non-white immigrant 'other', while Gibreel transforms into a waking version of the Archangel Gibreel, a role he performs in his nightmarish dreams. Cast into the South Asian diasporic community of Brickhall, Saladin is forced to renegotiate his understandings of both his own migrant identity and notions of Englishness and Indianness. Interwoven with this narrative are Gibreel's increasingly schizophrenic fantasies and dreams, through which the geographical and temporal locations of the novel shift between the historical founding of Islam in the seventh-century Arabian desert and the pilgrimage across the subcontinent to Mecca led by the butterfly-clad Ayesha in the twentieth century.

Such a brief summary inadequately represents the novel's wide-ranging complexity and its multi-layered, polyphonic narrative, which moves between postmodern 'magic realism' and the more conventionally realist mode of its ending, and between historical and allegorical narratives. However, it does gesture towards the novel's central preoccupations and its ceaseless movement between multiple temporal and geographical locations. As Nasta suggests, there has

⁶ Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 137.

⁷ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing and Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 208.

⁸ Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* (London: Granta, 1991), pp. 393-414 (p. 394).

developed an identifiable critical orthodoxy concerning Rushdie's work, specifically *The Satanic Verses*. It is therefore necessary to outline the critical debate surrounding the novel in order to identify points of critical consensus and the key areas with which I engage. In particular, I explore Rushdie's engagement with notions of cosmopolitanism as they intersect with his representations of the nation and the migrant, as well as Bombay and London. As Bruce Robbins suggests, 'cosmopolitanisms are now plural and particular',⁹ and, rather than investing in a singular, transcendental, understanding of the cosmopolitan, Rushdie is interested in cosmopolitanisms in the plural. In this light, I consider Rushdie's engagement with three specific notions of cosmopolitanism: parochial, engaged and endangered cosmopolitanisms.

As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, a 'mere reading' of *The Satanic Verses* 'as if nothing has happened since late 1988' is impossible,¹⁰ and inevitably much of the critical discourse surrounding the novel is concerned with issues raised by the opposition to it by Muslim communities in Britain, India, Pakistan and elsewhere, and the subsequent proclamation of the *fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini on 14 February 1989.¹¹ Much of the ensuing debate over the novel centred around issues of blasphemy, notions of the sacred and the profane, but also questions of freedom of speech and censorship, and alleged oppositions between liberal secularism and religious fundamentalism, 'Western' modernity and 'Eastern' tradition. The political ramifications of the 'Rushdie Affair' have been dealt with extensively elsewhere, and will therefore not be rehearsed here.¹² However, a major issue emerging from the affair was the

⁹ Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', in Pheng Cheah & Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 1-19 (p. 2).

¹⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 217, 219.

¹¹ In the months preceding the declaration of the *fatwa*, the novel was banned in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, Qatar and South Africa. In Bombay, anti-Rushdie riots led to ten deaths and many injuries, while in Bradford Muslims burned copies of the novel to demonstrate their offence at and opposition to its publication. See the articles collected in Lisa Appignanesi & Sara Maitland, eds., *The Rushdie File* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989), especially pp. 56-193. Those opposing the novel cited as blasphemous Rushdie's depiction of the prophet Mohammed, his casting of doubt on the moment of revelation in the 'satanic verses' episode itself, and his representation by association of the prophet's twelve wives in the brothel scenes. For a summary of the allegations of blasphemy, and of the specific sections of the text cited, see Amin Malak, 'Reading the Crisis: The Polemics of Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses"', *ARIEL*, 20:4 (1989), 176-86. As Procter notes, events in Bradford should not be read exclusively as a protest against *The Satanic Verses*, but recognised as part of, and catalyst to 'local and pre-existing cross-cultural tensions' (p. 168).

¹² See the documents compiled in Appignanesi & Maitland, eds. See also Don F. Miller, ed., *Beyond the Rushdie Affair*, special issue of *Third Text*, 11 (1990); and Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990). For an account of Muslim perspectives

problematic position of the cosmopolitan intellectual and Rushdie's own class location in relation to the communities he claims to represent within the novel. For, as both Timothy Brennan and James Procter have noted, class resentment and a resistance to being represented by a cosmopolitan intellectual were crucial components of the protests.¹³

Perhaps the most consistent reading of Rushdie's work concerns his celebrations of migrancy and his apparent privileging of the cosmopolitan intellectual. In 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie theorises the migrant imagination, recognising the pain and dislocation involved in migration, but emphasising the potential gains resulting from movements across national and cultural borders. While the 'Indian writer who writes from outside India' is 'obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost', Rushdie insists that the 'broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed'.¹⁴ The migrant's perspective, Rushdie claims, is fragmentary and partial, but also plural; the migrant's 'stereoscopic vision',¹⁵ he contends, enables an understanding of the 'provisional nature of all truths, all certainties' and the incomplete nature of all representations that is perhaps unavailable to the individual who has remained *in situ*.¹⁶ Many of the formulations of migrancy offered here and elsewhere within *Imaginary Homelands* are explored, expanded and, I argue, at times unexpectedly problematised within Rushdie's fiction.

Rushdie's emphasis on the positive possibilities of migrancy and the privileging of the migrant intellectual and a cosmopolitan aesthetic in both 'Imaginary Homelands' and in his fiction have been increasingly criticised for failing to differentiate between experiences contingent upon class, gender, and economic background, and as presenting the 'condition of migrancy as essentially transcendental'.¹⁷ Foremost among such critics is Aijaz Ahmad, whose examination of *Shame* claims that Rushdie 'submerges the class question and speaks of

on the affair, see Shabbir Akhtar, *Be Careful With Muhammad!: The Salman Rushdie Affair* (London: Bellew Publishing, 1989); and M. M. Ahsan & A. R. Kidwai, eds., *Sacrilege Verses Civility: Muslim Perspectives on 'The Satanic Verses'*, 2nd edn (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1993[1991]).

¹³ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of Nation* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989), p. 145; Procter, p. 162. See also Pnina Werbner, 'Allegories of Sacred Imperfection: Magic, Hermeneutics, and Passion in *The Satanic Verses*', *Current Anthropology*, 37, Supplement (1996), 55-86. Werbner notes that 'the clash could be construed as a class struggle between the popular aesthetic appreciation of a Muslim working class [...] and the aristocratic tastes of a Western cultural elite' (p. 56).

¹⁴ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 9-21 (pp. 10-11).

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ Gikandi, p. 195.

migrancy as an ontological condition'.¹⁸ Critical of his focus on metropolitan and cosmopolitan experiences, Ahmad suggests that Rushdie universalises the condition of migrancy, stripping it of both its 'tragic edge' and political groundings.¹⁹ This argument is echoed by Revathi Krishnaswamy, amongst others, who contends that Rushdie's mythology of migrancy, by privileging a 'de-territorialized postcolonial consciousness' free from the 'pain of multiple dislocation', minimises differences of class, gender, race and nation to suggest that the migrant transcends such political collectivities.²⁰ Michael Gorra similarly criticizes Rushdie's emphasis on the fluidity and plurality of migrant identity, echoing Ahmad and Krishnaswamy in finding problematic the apparent ease and painlessness of migrancy presented in the author's work. While, unlike Ahmad, Gorra recognises the tensions Rushdie self-consciously inscribes into his representations of cosmopolitan migrants, he argues that the writer's conceptualisation of migrancy remains unavailable to 'ordinary people' and is 'best suited for those most able to live with a sense of uncertainty and improvisation – for the gifted and the well-off, those for whom shuttling between London and Bombay is the literal not the figurative truth'.²¹

However, as Elleke Boehmer asserts, '[i]t is not necessarily the case [...] that the cosmopolitan should be apolitical',²² and I will read against the grain of these criticisms to complicate the easy advocacy of cosmopolitanism often assumed as central to Rushdie's work. I argue that, while his central focus is undoubtedly the middle-class cosmopolitan migrant, Rushdie does engage with issues of class difference and the problematic distance of the cosmopolitan intellectual from the everyday experiences of migrant communities. Spivak claims that Rushdie 'militates against privileging the migrant or the exilic voice narrowly conceived, even as he fails in that very effort', suggesting that *The Satanic Verses* is marked by a tension between the metropole as 'the eternal site of the migrant's desire' and a 'persistent critique of metropolitan migrancy, [Rushdie's] own slot in the scheme of things'.²³ The tension Spivak identifies informs this chapter, in which I explore Rushdie's self-conscious critique of the figure

¹⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London & New York: Verso, 1992), p. 13.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 129.

²⁰ Krishnaswamy, p. 139.

²¹ Michael Gorra, *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 172.

²² Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 240.

²³ Spivak, p. 222.

of the cosmopolitan migrant by examining the migrations taking place *within* the city spaces, between different communities and class locations.

Although Peter Kalliney and Gillian Gane explore issues of class migration in *The Satanic Verses*, both focus upon Rushdie's engagement with 'London's geography of social class'.²⁴ I extend their discussions to consider how Saladin's experiences of London's class dynamics are informed by and inform his changing understandings of contemporary Bombay. Little attention has been paid to Saladin's growing consciousness of class difference in Bombay; and if, as Kalliney claims, Saladin's migrations to and within London are crucial to his perception of his Indianness, then, I argue, these migrations also inform his changing perceptions of Bombay. Furthermore, I suggest that, rather than privileging a transcendental cosmopolitanism, the novel in fact moves towards the politicisation of the cosmopolitan migrant.

While criticism often positions *The Satanic Verses* within its British context, there has been little extended discussion of its exploration of Indian politics of the 1980s, or the dialogue Rushdie sets up between the Indian and British contexts.²⁵ Brennan asserts that '[a]s much as *Midnight's Children* this is a book about India', but does little to contextualise the novel within its Indian socio-political setting.²⁶ Sara Suleri, meanwhile, locates the novel's exploration of contemporary India within Gibreel's dream narrative of the beginnings of Islam, which, she argues, are 'so allegorical of contemporary subcontinental history as to cease to be allegorical'.²⁷ Spivak similarly recognises 'Rushdie's resolute effort to represent contemporary India', citing the depiction of 'contemporary rural India' in the Ayesha sections, for example, as central to the novel's politics.²⁸ Echoing Suleri, Spivak emphasises the Islamic cultural focus of

²⁴ Peter Kalliney, 'Globalization, Postcoloniality, and the Problem of Literary Studies in *The Satanic Verses*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 48:1 (2002), 50-82 (p. 65); Gillian Gane, 'Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in *The Satanic Verses*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 48:1 (2002), 18-49.

²⁵ Exceptions include Srinivas Aravamudan, who explores the 'inside joke[s]' the novel contains for the Indian reader (for example, the number 420). "'Being God's Postman is No Fun, Yaar": Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. by M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 188-208 (p. 190).

²⁶ Brennan (1989), p. 153.

²⁷ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 194.

²⁸ Spivak, pp. 221-22.

the Indian world Rushdie represents, citing this as an important engagement with the rise of communalism and Hindu nationalism during the 1980s.²⁹

My discussion engages with this context, but differs from Suleri and Spivak by concentrating on Rushdie's representations of contemporary metropolitan India. As Rukmini Nair and Rimli Battacharya remark, Rushdie 'question[s] the cosmopolitanism in both metropolises' of *The Satanic Verses*.³⁰ According to Rashmi Varma, one of the few critics to explore closely Rushdie's engagement with contemporary Bombay, *The Satanic Verses* 'narrates the transformation of Bombay's history from universalism to particularism'.³¹ Examining the novel alongside its cinematic intertext, *Shri 420* (1955), Varma argues that Rushdie 'mourns' the 'erosion of th[e] earlier promise of global socialism and secular nationalism' offered at Independence.³² Drawing upon Varma's positioning of the novel within the 'provincialization' of the city,³³ and upon what Arjun Appadurai terms the 'decosmopolitanizing of Bombay',³⁴ I explore Bombay's 'endangered cosmopolitanism'. In doing so, I move away from Varma's suggestion that Rushdie interrogates 'the politics of remembering different pasts of the city', which locates Bombay's cosmopolitanism within an irretrievable past.³⁵ Rather, by mobilising the notion of 'endangered cosmopolitanism', I emphasise Rushdie's engagement with an urban cosmopolitanism in crisis and at a moment of transition, under threat but not yet destroyed.

I borrow this term from Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, who argue that '[s]tudying the multitudes and fates of pavement dwellers in Bombay/Mumbai, a city crowded with empty buildings, would enable us to grasp a new kind of endangered cosmopolitanism already coded in the recent rectification of names signaled by that brutal forward slash'.³⁶ The concept of 'endangered cosmopolitanism' points to the threat

²⁹ Spivak, pp. 222-23.

³⁰ Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Rimli Battacharya, 'Salman Rushdie: The Migrant in the Metropolis', *Social Text*, 11 (1990), 17-30 (p. 25).

³¹ Rashmi Varma, 'Provincializing the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai', *Social Text*, 22:4 (2004), 65-89 (p. 75).

³² *ibid.*, p. 73.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁴ Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai', *Public Culture* 12:3 (2000), 627-51 (p. 649).

³⁵ Varma, p. 73.

³⁶ Sheldon Pollock et al., 'Cosmopolitanisms', *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), 577-89 (p. 586).

that Hindu nationalist and Marathi chauvinism pose to the plural, secular character of Bombay, and highlights how issues of class and economics are implicated within debates over urban cosmopolitanism. The slippage here between cosmopolitanism and secularism resonates with Rushdie's own characterisations of Bombay and India, and the understanding of cosmopolitanism as secularism in the Indian urban context informs the following discussion. Furthermore, the suggestion that cosmopolitanism is 'threatened by the work of purification'³⁷ is crucial to Rushdie's representation of metropolises endangered by rhetorics of exclusivity: London by racist constructions of Englishness by a neoimperialist nationalism; Bombay by rising Hindu nationalism and communalism; Jahilia by the '[o]ne, one, one' of Islam (102).

While this chapter focuses primarily on the representation of Bombay and London in *The Satanic Verses*, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the representation of Jahilia to Rushdie's engagement with endangered cosmopolitanisms. As well as being a centre of pilgrimage, Jahilia is initially portrayed as a 'city of businessmen' (95), a centre of international trade and commerce, through which the 'produce of the world' travels (103). Merchants from across the globe, and from different religious and cultural backgrounds travel to Jahilia; in addition to the 'Jewish, Monophysite, [and] Nabataean' merchants, who 'buy and sell pieces of silver and gold', '[t]here is linen from Egypt and silk from China; from Basra, arms and grain' and '[t]here are slaves for sale, Nubian, Anatolian, Aethiop' (96). Thus, Jahilia is characterised as a 'global city' to be read alongside and in conjunction with London and Bombay.³⁸

In this light, Rushdie's representation of the parochialisation of Jahilia informs and intersects with his engagement with notions of endangered cosmopolitanism in Bombay in particular. The city's 'old, shifting, provisional quality' (359) is increasingly threatened by the religious dispute between Mahound and Hind, a conflict which is suggestive of the increasing communalisation of Bombay during the 1980s. As Suleri argues, '[i]n rereading the mythic confrontation between the desires for Allah and Al-Lat, Rushdie constructs an elaborate figure for the uneasy intimacies that proliferate among subcontinental Muslim and Hindu

³⁷ Pollock et al., p. 588.

³⁸ I borrow the term 'global city' from Saskia Sassen, 'Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization', in *Globalization*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 260-78.

epistemologies', as a 'polytheistic culture regards monotheistic, both aware that they are historically doomed to test to the limits the other's apprehension of alterity'.³⁹ The Jahilia episodes therefore, Suleri suggests, 'serv[e] as a proleptic figure for the seductions of cultural difference that obtain in the Indian subcontinent, and cannot be simply read as a somewhat naïve questioning of the integrity of [...] Islamic ideas'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the religious tensions within Jahilia impact upon the city's previously open cosmopolitanism and its position as a centre of international trade, commerce and cultural celebration. 'The fairs of Jahilia, these days', we are told, 'were pitiful to behold' (360) in the aftermath of Mahound and Hind's confrontation, while the city itself becomes increasingly 'prosaic [...], quotidian and [...] poor' (359). However, while, as Suleri indicates, the Jahilia episodes can be brought into productive dialogue with the representation of Bombay in *The Satanic Verses* through this decline in cosmopolitan multiplicity, I wish to focus on Rushdie's more explicit engagement with the contemporary urban contexts between which Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta migrate, namely London and, more particularly, Bombay. I do so not in order to minimise the importance of Jahilia to an understanding of *The Satanic Verses* but, rather, to maintain my central focus upon the relationship between the migrant and the material, social and political realities of contemporary Bombay.

Parochial Cosmopolitanisms

Rushdie foregrounds cosmopolitanism as an ideal and an aesthetic in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), situating his model of migrancy firmly within an international intellectual sphere. His frequent use of lists to indicate an international intellectual and artistic heritage creates a connection between his constructions of migrancy and notions of cosmopolitanism, implying a symbiotic relationship between the two conditions. In 'Imaginary Homelands', he writes that 'one of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant [is] to be able to choose his parents', and he cites a literary heritage that includes 'Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville.

³⁹ Suleri, pp. 200-1.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 201. Indeed, by evoking New Delhi in his representation of Jahilia, through the city's 'concentric' (94) topography, Rushdie further establishes a relationship between the seventh-century desert city and contemporary India.

Machado de Assis'.⁴¹ Extending this idea in an essay on Günter Grass, Rushdie uses literature to create a sense of global citizenship and international travel, writing that a 'book is a kind of passport', which gives the reader – a 'would-be migran[t]' – 'permission to travel'. Again, the selection of writers that gave him 'the permits [he] needed' invokes an intellectual internationalism that, alongside Günter Grass, includes Sergei Eisenstein, Ted Hughes, Jorge Luis Borges, Laurence Sterne, and Eugène Ionesco.⁴²

These lists, which position the experience of migrancy within a cosmopolitan aesthetic milieu, are echoed in *The Satanic Verses* by Saladin's list of favourite movies, a 'conventional cosmopolitan' (439) selection including '*Potemkin, Kane, Otto e Mezzo, The Seven Samurai, Alphaville, El Angel Exterminator*' (439). The absence of any Indian works in either Rushdie's choice of literary influences or Saladin's list of films suggests a transcendence of, or refusal to be confined by, national culture, and a desire to be identified with an internationalism that contrasts with Gibreel's 'aggressively low-brow' and more nationalistic choices of '*Mother India, Mr India, Shree Charsawbees*' (440).⁴³ However, this opposition between the cosmopolitan and the national(ist) cannot be as easily maintained as Gane implies in her reading of Saladin's and Gibreel's lists as 'cosmopolitan and highbrow' on the one hand, and 'definitively Indian' on the other.⁴⁴ The song Gibreel sings as he falls from the plane, taken from *Shri 420*, indicates an understanding of Indianness already inscribed by international travel and global capital. Gibreel sings that his 'shoes are Japanese', his 'trousers English' and his hat Russian, while his 'heart's Indian for all that' (5). Varma contends that the song 'announces an arrival into cosmopolitanism and attendant anxieties about national identity and belonging'.⁴⁵ Mishra similarly argues that the song, in its original context, demonstrates the impact of the global on the local, as the 'Indian picaro [...] declares his local inscription even as he is commodified by the global'.⁴⁶ Complicating any distinction between the cosmopolitan and the

⁴¹ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 21.

⁴² Salman Rushdie, 'Günter Grass', *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 273-81 (p. 276).

⁴³ Nasta discusses the problematic absence of British Asian or Indian migrant writers in Rushdie's declared influences, which, while attempting to place Asian immigration 'within a broader context, a time frame and cultural range', threatens to flatten out or 'universaliz[e] [...] the heterogeneity of the Asian diaspora' (p. 140).

⁴⁴ Gane, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Varma, p. 65.

⁴⁶ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), p. 108.

national, Gibreel's international attire, imported from various imperial centres, is both resisted by his assertion of his Indianness (his heart remains Indian), and also becomes part of that identity.

Brennan observes that the term 'cosmopolitan' has often been used interchangeably with 'intellectual',⁴⁷ and Rushdie similarly relies on high-brow aesthetics to create a sense of belonging that transcends national boundaries. This is paired with the primacy of the imagination as a location of belonging: 'The migrant intellect roots itself in itself, in its own capacity for imagining and reimagining the world'.⁴⁸ The emphasis on the imagination and aesthetics, and upon the migrant's ability to *choose* his space of imagined belonging, has led, as I have noted, to criticisms that Rushdie privileges a version of migrancy predicated on the experience of an elite, educated class. The understanding of migrancy as enabling a sense of universal belonging – of cosmopolitanism – implied in Rushdie's choice of an international literary heritage is criticised by Ahmad, who finds problematic the rehearsal of the 'pleasures of [...] unbelonging' as a '*utopia*, so that belonging *nowhere* is nevertheless construed as the perennial pleasure of belonging everywhere'.⁴⁹ Similarly, Rushdie's utopia of universal belonging is accompanied by a belief that migrancy enables the individual to 'speak properly and concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal';⁵⁰ again, Ahmad finds this privileging of the migrant over the indigenous imagination problematic and criticizes the 'idea of the migrant having a superior understanding'.⁵¹

Ahmad's criticisms evoke more general criticisms of cosmopolitanism. As Bruce Robbins observes, 'the word *cosmopolitan* immediately evokes the image of a privileged person: someone who can claim to be a "citizen of the world" by virtue of independent means, expensive tastes, and globe-trotting life-style'.⁵² Cosmopolitanism is thus often 'invoked as a figure for rootless and mobile, avowedly universal, uncommitted, and detached positions'. A more positive reading positions cosmopolitanism as 'prefigur[ing] some "world citizen" at once

⁴⁷ Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 18.

⁴⁸ Rushdie, 'Günter Grass', p. 280.

⁴⁹ Ahmad (1992), p. 157.

⁵⁰ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 12.

⁵¹ Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race & Class*, 36:3 (1995), 1-20 (p. 13).

⁵² Bruce Robbins, 'Comparative Cosmopolitanisms', in Cheah & Robbins. eds., pp. 246-64 (p. 248)

more enlightened and mobile, all but freed from particularized prejudices, fixed ties, narrow local/national boundaries'.⁵³ Rushdie's construction of migrancy in his non-fiction seems to concur with the idealism of this second, more favourable interpretation of cosmopolitanism. However, I argue that Rushdie subtly complicates these more utopian non-fictional representations of migrancy in his novels, depicting conflicted and conflicting versions of cosmopolitanism that reveal the capacity for the cosmopolitan to be affected by 'particularized prejudices'. Hence, the familiar Ahmadian argument, exclusively highlighting Rushdie's idealisations of migrancy, becomes difficult to sustain in light of Rushdie's representation of cosmopolitanisms implicated within parochial nationalisms and regressive acts of illiberalism.

Crucial to Rushdie's construction of the migrant is the apparent opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Following a Kantian formulation, in which cosmopolitanism 'seem[s] to offer a clear-cut contrast to nationalism',⁵⁴ Rushdie asserts that '[t]o be a migrant is, perhaps, to be the only species of human being free of the shackles of nationalism (to say nothing of its ugly sister, patriotism)'.⁵⁵ His proposition that '[o]ne might almost say that migration ought to be essential training for all would-be democrats'⁵⁶ assumes a conventional association between cosmopolitanism and democracy, implied by its perceived links with humanitarianism, a 'liberal belief in basic human rights', an 'awareness of cultural diversity, respect for other cultures and a desire for peaceful coexistence'.⁵⁷ However, as Robbins remarks, 'there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it'.⁵⁸ Many critics leave unquestioned the opposition Rushdie sets up between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Krishnaswamy contends that in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie 'divides the postcolonial into two basic identities: the migrant and the national'.⁵⁹ Yet, as I have indicated, this division may be more equivocal than Krishnaswamy implies. A closer reading of Rushdie's proposal of migration as a form of democratic training reveals a more provisional and nuanced understanding that undermines the implicit utopianism

⁵³ Rob Wilson, 'A New Cosmopolitanism Is In The Air: Some Dialectical Twists and Turns', in Cheah & Robbins, eds., pp. 351-61 (p. 353).

⁵⁴ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁵⁵ Salman Rushdie, 'The Location of *Brazil*', *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 118-25 (p. 124).

⁵⁶ Rushdie, 'Günter Grass', p. 280.

⁵⁷ April Carter, *The Political Theory of Global Citizenship* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 2.

⁵⁸ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁵⁹ Krishnaswamy, p. 138.

of the statement. The phrase ‘might almost’, alongside the conditional prefix ‘would-be’, implies a reluctant awareness that cosmopolitanism may not guarantee liberal democratic principles, and unsettles any easy opposition between cosmopolitan and national subjectivities.

An understanding of the ambivalent relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, as well as a critical engagement with the notion of cosmopolitanism itself, is already present in Rushdie’s 1983 novel, *Shame*. Here, as Gorra observes, Rushdie poses the ‘charge of cosmopolitanism’⁶⁰ with interjections that challenge the authenticity of the narrator, accusing him of being a ‘*Trespasser! Outsider!*’ with ‘*no right to this subject!*’.⁶¹ Responding to these accusations, Rushdie both acknowledges the migrant’s distance from what Ahmad terms the ‘dailiness of lives lived under oppression’⁶² – ‘I know: nobody ever arrested me’ (28) – while also questioning the assumption of inauthenticity that excludes the migrant from discussions of national politics and history: ‘is history’, he asks, ‘to be considered the property of the participants solely?’ (28). While this is a crucial moment in Rushdie’s conceptualisation of migrancy – and specifically of the position of the migrant writer – I wish to focus on an aspect of Rushdie’s engagement with cosmopolitanism in *Shame* which Gorra does not explore: the representation of Pakistan as a nation ‘thought up’ (87) by cosmopolitan intellectuals. I argue that this representation reveals a much more critical engagement with the migrant imagination, problematising a reading of Rushdian cosmopolitanism as a ‘defense against the provincialism of sectarian politics’.⁶³

Patrick French traces the conceptualisation of ‘Pakistan’ to a ‘variety of locations’ – in both the Indian subcontinent and in England – and to intellectuals, many of whom were based in London: British MP John Bright; the Punjabi barrister, Urdu poet, Islamic scholar and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal; and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. French locates a ‘defining step’ in the conception of Pakistan ‘on the upper deck of a London bus’, where the Cambridge-educated Choudhry Rahmat Ali considered the names ‘Pakstan’ and ‘Pakastan’, before finally ‘settling’

⁶⁰ Gorra, p. 131.

⁶¹ Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p. 28. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

⁶² Ahmad (1992), p. 139.

⁶³ Gorra, p. 141.

on 'Pakistan'.⁶⁴ With the educated, metropolitan sensibilities of these men in mind, Rushdie writes, in *Shame*, that 'the term "Pakistan"' was 'an acronym [...] originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals' (87). Rushdie represents Pakistan as the product of a cosmopolitan, metropolitan intellectualism, while the very concept of 'Pakistan' is described as a 'returning migrant', a 'word born in exile which then went East' and which, like the migrant of Rushdie's non-fiction, was 'borne-across or trans-lated' (87).

The suggestion that Pakistan's origins lie with an elite cosmopolitan intellectualism reveals Rushdie's ambivalence towards the association of that identity with liberal democratic ideals. Migrants, he writes, 'build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist' (87). As Krishnaswamy remarks, the migrant imagination here becomes an 'imperializing consciousness imposing itself upon the world'.⁶⁵ However, Krishnaswamy does not explore the intersection between this 'imperializing consciousness' and Rushdie's narration of the conceptualisation of Pakistan. The migrant's authoritarian attempt to impose a 'vision on the world' is replicated in the creation of Pakistan, which is similarly 'imposed [...] on history' (87). Furthermore, the rewriting of history necessary to establish that nation involves 'forming a palimpsest' (87), obscuring centuries of Indian history. This process is again 'commandeered' by 'immigrants, the *mohajirs*' in the 'imported tongues' of Urdu and English (87).⁶⁶

Rather than privileging a celebratory model of cosmopolitanism in opposition to, or distanced from, oppressive nationalisms, Rushdie suggests their interconnection, drawing a line of descent from Pakistan's conception by cosmopolitan intellectuals to the autocratic and despotic government of its recent history. Moreover, the 'peeling, fragmenting palimpsest' of Pakistan, a nation 'increasingly at war with itself' (87), is described as 'a failure of the dreaming mind' (87). Pakistan, therefore, in both its inception and its recent history, implicitly represents a failure of the migrant imagination and of the cosmopolitan ideals of liberalism and democracy.

⁶⁴ Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (London: Flamingo, 1998), p. 88.

⁶⁵ Krishnaswamy, p. 137.

⁶⁶ It is important to recognise the often productive – and necessary – movement of anti-colonial nationalists outside of India. As Robert Young suggests in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 'anti-colonialism was [often] a diasporic production, a revolutionary mixture of the indigenous and the cosmopolitan' (p. 2). He also highlights the 'important links made between Indian and Irish nationalists, conducted largely through contacts in London, New York and South Africa' from the 1860s onwards (p. 313).

By highlighting the relationship between the birth of a nation and the migrant imagination, Rushdie not only problematises any opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, but also demonstrates how cosmopolitanism itself may be implicated within hegemonic nationalisms. In so doing, he exposes a tension between his fictional and non-fictional constructions of migrancy, his novel complicating the utopianism of his essays.

In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie both develops his exploration of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism and offers a new angle, relocating it within a metropolitan context to problematise further any identification of the cosmopolitan as 'progressive', 'anti-essentialist' and 'transcend[ing] the seemingly exhausted nation-state model'.⁶⁷ Against such identifications, and through the hijacking of Flight A I-420 and Gibreel's tropicalisation of London, Rushdie represents what could be described as perverse, or parochial, cosmopolitanisms expressed through illiberal actions. The hijacking of Flight A I-420 represents a pivotal incident in my reading of *The Satanic Verses*, both complicating an ideal of cosmopolitanism and gesturing towards the novel's socio-political context. The Sikh identity of the hijackers points towards the politics of 1980s India, to which I return in the final section of this chapter. However, in what follows, I focus on the identity of the terrorists *as migrants*.

Given the double significance of the scene, as a key link between text and context and as a catalyst for the events of the novel, it is surprising that little attention is paid to the terrorists and, in particular, to their cosmopolitan identity. Tavleen, the group leader, speaks 'with a Canadian accent' (78) and is therefore identified as a member of the Sikh diaspora within Canada. However, she is also characterised by a 'faint oceanic voice' (81) and, in Saladin's premonition, by a voice 'whose depth and melody made it sound like an ocean heard from a long way away' (74). Although initially connected to a particular nation, Tavleen's association with a distant ocean, alongside her decision to make her political demands in the air, deterritorialises her identity, suggesting a free-floating mobility across, or transcendence of, national boundaries. Tavleen's fellow terrorists, meanwhile, 'were here to be on television' and 'behave[d] the way they have seen hijackers behaving on the movies and on TV' (78). They aim

⁶⁷ Steven Vertovec & Robin Cohen, 'Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism', in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, ed. by Steven Vertovec & Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22 (p. 4).

to become, through imitation, part of an international circulation of images in the news and media, and their characterisation as ‘actors’ and ‘stars’ with ‘stage-names’ (78) gestures towards the cosmopolitan media world inhabited by their fellow travellers Gibreel and Saladin.

Just as the hijackers’ violent demands for ‘[a]n independent homeland’ (78) complicate their cosmopolitanism, so Rushdie’s fictional representations of migrancy complicate his non-fictional theorisations. Here, as in *Shame*, cosmopolitanism is implicated within the demand for a new nation, a desire for, rather than a rejection or transcendence of, the ‘booming words, *land, belonging, home*’ (4). Cosmopolitanism is revealed as potentially having a parochial vision, and, indeed, the marks of cosmopolitanism – air travel, diasporic identity and cross-border mobility, international traffic in news images – have become tools with which a nationalist demand is made. As James Clifford asserts, ‘[c]osmopolitan competences, the arts of crossing, translation, and hybridity do not inevitably lead in “progressive” (generally democratic and socialist) directions’;⁶⁸ rather, as both Mistry and Rushdie demonstrate, they may lead to illiberal authoritarianism.

A similar form of what I call parochial cosmopolitanism informs Gibreel’s tropicalisation of the English weather. By parochial cosmopolitanism, I refer to a cosmopolitanism that intersects with, rather than being positioned in opposition to, the particularized prejudices of ‘reactionary nationalism’.⁶⁹ Moreover, the term indicates the mobilisation of cosmopolitan identity in order to promote an ‘[e]xclusive localism’⁷⁰ or ‘regional particularism’,⁷¹ rather than the transcendence of those local identities. Placed alongside the parochial cosmopolitanism of the hijackers, Gibreel’s transformation of London’s climate becomes, as John McLeod claims, ‘difficult to read [...] as a wholly progressive act’.⁷² Bhabha argues that Gibreel represents the return to the metropolis of England’s repressed

⁶⁸ James Clifford, ‘Mixed Feelings’, in Cheah & Robbins, eds., pp. 362-70 (p. 368).

⁶⁹ Craig Calhoun, ‘The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism’, in Vortovec & Cohen, eds., pp. 86-109 (p. 103).

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁷¹ Pheng Cheah, ‘Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical – Today’, in Cheah & Robbins, eds., pp. 20-41 (p. 22).

⁷² John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 151.

history, the 'avenging migrant' who has 'come to change the history of the nation'.⁷³ Bhabha celebrates Gibreel's transformation of the climate as a re-mapping of the metropolis as a space in which 'emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out'.⁷⁴ It is, Bhabha maintains, an emphatically positive and empowering transformative event for the migrant, both politically and imaginatively.

Against Bhabha's reading, I argue that Gibreel's attempt to 'change' history by transforming the weather echoes the migrant's desire to 'impose his or her vision on the world' described in *Shame* (87). In this light, Gibreel's desire for 'clarity, at all costs clarity' (353) becomes less an attempt to reveal the 'ambivalence of cultural difference' than an effort to reinforce such distinctions. In Bhabha's thinking, Rushdie invokes in the English weather 'the most changeable and immanent signs of national difference', a sign immediately troubled by 'its daemonic double [...] the tropical chaos that was deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilising mission'.⁷⁵ However, as McLeod demonstrates, 'Gibreel wants order and definition, not chaos and translation',⁷⁶ and his desire to impose an 'increased moral definition' (354) onto London via the weather represents a similar 'civilising mission' to 'redeem this city' (322) and its perceived cultural deficiencies. Gibreel is frustrated by the 'most slippery' nature of the city (354), which refuses to 'submit to the dominion of the cartographers' (327) by being organised 'from A to Z' (322), and which resists being 'approach[ed] [...] in [a] systematic manner' (327). In response to the 'England-induced ambiguities' (353) of London, its 'moral fuzziness', Gibreel aims to rescue the 'stark, imperative oppositions' that were 'drowned beneath the endless drizzle of greys' (354), by imposing Indian weather and culture onto the English metropolis (354). His action consequently repeats, rather than resists, the original desire for a distinct opposition between the metropolis and its colonies.

Gibreel's actions therefore represent a form of parochial cosmopolitanism, and his attempt to 'change the history of the nation' by imposing one cultural identity over another resembles the authoritarian rewriting of history involved in the creation of Pakistan in *Shame*.

⁷³ Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139-70 (pp. 169-70).

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 169.

⁷⁶ McLeod, p. 152.

Furthermore, while Bhabha reads Gibreel's return, 'at once schizoid and subversive',⁷⁷ as empowering, his distressing experience of schizophrenia and his final suicide renders deeply problematic any reading of Rushdie's representation of migrancy in *The Satanic Verses* as exclusively celebratory. In this light, as Gikandi comments, 'Gibreel cannot be the agent of any positive knowledge about the postcolonial condition,'⁷⁸ but perhaps represents a *disempowering* and destructive experience of migrancy. Thus, in both the hijackers and Gibreel, Rushdie problematises the privileging of the progressive and creative potential of migrancy emphasised in his non-fiction. In these episodes, he demonstrates that the cosmopolitan ideals of liberalism and democracy may actually be compromised by cosmopolitanism itself and that, far from being incompatible and mutually exclusive, a cosmopolitan identity may coincide with the performance of regressive acts of illiberalism.

Engaged Cosmopolitanism: Travelling the City

In this section, I explore Rushdie's self-conscious critique of the figure of the cosmopolitan migrant by focussing on Saladin Chamcha's movements within and between the metropolitan spaces of *The Satanic Verses*. As I have observed, while critics have considered Saladin's position as a postcolonial migrant in the metropolitan centre, and his movement from 'Indianness to Englishness,' few address his movements *within* the city spaces, between different communities and class locations. Similarly, little attention has been paid to the dialogue between Saladin's experiences in the two metropolises, and the ways in which his changing understanding of Bombay both frames and is framed by his movements within London. With this in mind, I explore Saladin's migrations within and between London and Bombay to consider how his experiences and growing consciousness of the class dynamics and contemporary politics at work in each city interact with and inform each other. Remembering Spivak's identification of the tension between Rushdie's celebration of metropolitan migrancy and his 'persistent critique' of that position,⁷⁹ I suggest that these movements reveal an attempt to move away from a representation of the cosmopolitan as transient, transcendent and detached, towards one emphasising the necessity of participation in the local community.

⁷⁷ Bhabha, p. 168.

⁷⁸ Gikandi, p. 222.

⁷⁹ Spivak, p. 222.

I began this chapter with the narrator's assertion that '[t]he distance between cities is always small' (41). The narrator suggests that 'a villager, travelling a hundred miles to town, traverses emptier, darker, more terrifying space' (41) than a migrant moving between international cities. Similarly, Rushdie claims that, because of 'the international and increasingly homogeneous nature of metropolitan culture, the journey from [...] rural America to New York is a more extreme act of migration than a move from, say, Bombay'.⁸⁰ Such statements, by problematising the distance between international cities, emphasise the close inter-relationship between the London and Bombay. Moreover, by highlighting the proximity of the two locations, Rushdie reveals that migration is not necessarily commensurate with literal travel across national borders, but is also contingent upon movement across an imaginative terrain complicated by socio-economic and cultural positionings.

Saladin's migration is, Gikandi notes, both cartographic and psychological.⁸¹ Crucially, his migration from 'Indianness to Englishness' – his 'mutation' from 'Salahuddin Chamchawala into Saladin Chamcha' (37) – does not coincide with his flight to London, but actually precedes it, beginning 'in old Bombay, long before he got close enough to hear the lions of Trafalgar roar' (37). In Bombay, Saladin sets his migration in motion by traversing an imaginative cartography, 'dream[ing] of flying out of his bedroom window to discover that there, below him, was – not Bombay – but Proper London itself' (38). Saladin's 'departure' from Bombay therefore predates the moment he 'boarded a Douglas D C-8 and journeyed into the west' (40) and, as I argue, the process of migration continues beyond his 'arrival' in London. Indeed, the very moment of 'arrival' itself is both problematised and deferred as the novel progresses.

As Kalliney observes, Saladin 'makes claims of nationality and belonging by emulating a class position', and his vision of England is largely 'a class story',⁸² a bourgeois 'picture postcard' (175) of an Englishness represented by 'Cricket, the Houses of Parliament, the Queen' (175). Meanwhile, 'Proper London' (38) is imagined from above, with only its monuments visible: 'Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower' (38). Saladin's marriage to Pamela embodies his elitist vision of Englishness, the 'aristocratic bellow of [her] voice' (50) inscribing

⁸⁰ Rushdie, 'Günter Grass', p. 278.

⁸¹ Gikandi, p. 212.

⁸² Kalliney, pp. 56, 69.

her class position which is central to her role as 'bloody Britannia' (175) in Saladin's construction of a 'dream-England' (180). However, although Kalliney argues that Saladin's 'Indianness' is a condition of the 'class dynamics of London', he does not examine in any detail the ways in which such class assumptions are already visible *before* Saladin's migration.⁸³ As I will show, any discussion of London's 'politics' and 'geography of social class',⁸⁴ and of Saladin's bourgeois cosmopolitan identity, should be brought into dialogue with his experience of the class dynamics of Bombay. It is therefore important to note that, while Saladin's early desire 'to escape' (37) Bombay is predicated upon a conventional colonial opposition between the English metropole as a space of 'poise and moderation' and the colony as one of 'confusion and superabundance' (37), it also reveals a number of class assumptions about Bombay itself. Frustrated by 'that Bombay of [...] transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers', Saladin is also 'fed up of textile factories and local trains' (37). By contrast, England is 'full of the crisp promises of pounds sterling', and offers an escape, via class and capital, from the 'vulgarity' of Bombay (37). Saladin's perception of Bombay exposes an elitist desire for detachment from the 'vulgar', vernacular life of the city, from what Ahmad might term the 'dailiness of lives' lived by the popular classes.⁸⁵

As I observed in Chapter One, and as Robbins explains, a central critique of cosmopolitanism concerns its association with 'privileged and irresponsible detachment':

What is assumed is in fact a chain of successive detachments: from true feeling, hence from the responsibility that engages a whole person, not a sometime spectator; from responsibility, hence from the constituency to which one would be responsible; from constituency, hence from political action.⁸⁶

Critics such as Gorra and Ahmad emphasise Rushdie's celebrations of metropolitan migrancy in order to stress his failure to address such problematic detachment of the cosmopolitan.⁸⁷ However, I suggest that Rushdie is in fact both conscious and critical of the potential irresponsibility represented by such distancing. Indeed, I argue that Saladin's migrations within and between London and Bombay represent an attempt to negotiate a movement from the

⁸³ Kalliney, p. 68.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁸⁵ Ahmad, (1992), p. 139.

⁸⁶ Robbins, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁸⁷ See Gorra, p. 172; Ahmad (1992), pp. 127-28.

position of disengaged 'sometime spectator' to one of political involvement in 'constituency', although, as will be seen, the extent to which this negotiation is successful remains ambivalent.

Rushdie's recognition of the problematic distance of the cosmopolitan from the everyday reality of urban life is voiced by Zeeny Vakil, a central figure in the politicisation of Saladin in Bombay. Driving through the city on a return visit, Saladin feels 'lost' (55), unable to recognise the '[b]lack streets' (55) through which they travel. In response, Zeeny attacks Saladin's previously geographically and socially isolated position in Bombay:

'You're lost,' she accused him. 'What do you know about Bombay? Your own city, only it never was. To you, it's a dream of childhood. Growing up on Scandal Point is like living on the moon. No bustees there, no sirree, only servants' quarters. Did Shiv Sena elements come there to make communal trouble? Were your neighbours starving in the textile strike? Did Datta Samant stage a rally in front of your bungalows? How old were you when you met a trade unionist? How old the first time you got on a local train instead of a car with a driver? That wasn't Bombay, darling, excuse me. That was Wonderland, Peristan, Never-Never, Oz.' (55)

Zeeny's criticism of Saladin's disorientation – which Nair and Bhattacharya read as a 'scathing indictment of the earlier representation of Bombay provided by the narrator' of *Midnight's Children*⁸⁸ – is significant for a number of reasons. Her criticism places Saladin firmly within a privileged bourgeois location, both socially and geographically distanced from the material and political realities of Bombay. Saladin's father, Changez, is a man of 'wealth and public standing' (36), who was not only a 'leading light of the nationalist movement' (36) but also runs 'the country's largest manufacturer of agricultural sprays and fluids and artificial dung' (36). As a result of this economically and socially privileged position, Saladin has had little contact with the rising communalism, the suppression of workers' rights, and the increasing poverty affecting Bombay – as indicated by the presence of 'bustees', or slums.

Zeeny emphasises the necessity of Saladin revising his understanding of Bombay, which is based on a childhood nostalgia for a mythological metropolis; as she later tells him, he 'need[s] to start plugging into the town' (536) and engaging with its contemporary political and social realities. As I argue in the final section of this chapter, this is a process in which *The Satanic Verses* is itself involved, as it problematises an idealisation of Bombay as a centre of liberal cosmopolitanism and hybridity. Zeeny's statement crucially emphasises how Saladin's

⁸⁸ Nair & Bhattacharya, p. 25.

experience of metropolitan life is already marked by privilege and distance before his migration to London. It therefore offers a useful frame through which to read his movements within that city, but also, as I will show, initiates his changing understanding of Bombay itself. If Saladin's migrations within London and Bombay are part of a process of politicisation, a process towards recognising what is 'really real' (175) and revising his understandings of each city and nation, then this process begins in Bombay, immediately after Zeeny's critical remarks.

In a 'crowded dhaba' (56), Saladin witnesses a heated political debate whose subject ranges from India's relationship with America to Assam (56).⁸⁹ The effect of this debate, which moves from politics and economics to human rights abuses, is Saladin's realisation that 'his blood no longer contained the immunizing agents that would have enabled him to suffer India's reality' (57), a recognition that his distance from national politics is problematic and is complicated by his relationship with the politically active Zeeny. Rather than become involved with these politics, though, Saladin at this point prefers to leave his detachment intact by returning to England: 'There was a return ticket to London in his wallet, and he was going to use it' (58). The process of politicisation that has begun here, however – the 'crack[ing]' of Saladin's shell (57) – continues upon his return to London, where he discovers he is similarly no longer 'immune' to that city's 'reality'. The class position occupied by Saladin in Bombay is crucial to his initial experiences of London. By exploring his migrations through the spatial and social geography of London, we can trace his changing understanding of the city and his own position within it. These movements reveal the moment of arrival as itself deferred, repeated, or translated into a series of arrivals, each of which contributes to a critique of the figure of the cosmopolitan as privileged, transcendent and detached from community and politics, and each of which informs his final return to Bombay.

Saladin's initial arrival in London, aged thirteen, repeats his bourgeois class position in Bombay: he is 'installed in a hotel' overlooking Hyde Park (41) before attending an elite public school to become 'a goodandproper Englishman' (43). His experience of the city itself is

⁸⁹ In 1983, thousands of Bengali immigrants and their families were killed by members of the Assamese movement, while Bodo tribesmen attacked those entering their territory, during state assembly elections in Assam. Katherine Frank cites the 'worst atrocity' as having taken place in the Bengali refugee town of Nellie, in which 5000 men, women and children were murdered. This horrific event is undoubtedly the 'massacre of innocents' referred to in the 'dhaba' debate (56). *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 467.

restricted by his father's demand that he 'pay all the bills' (42), and 'in later years he would remember nothing of his first fortnight in his beloved Ellowen Deeowen except pounds shillings pence' (42). Saladin's focus on the economic considerations of his arrival in London prevents his understanding of the city shifting from the mythologised childhood 'Ellowen Deeowen' into a material understanding of the social and cultural relations at work within it. The moment of arrival is deferred as he realises that 'one could live in the world and also not live in it' (42), a statement echoing Zeeny's remark that Bombay is Saladin's 'own city, only it never was' (55).

While Rushdie fantastically dramatises the familiar moment of the immigrant's arrival at Dover in the opening of the novel, as Saladin and Gibreel fall from an exploding plane to land on an English beach (3-10), I am interested in the layering of moments of departure and arrival as Saladin travels across London. I argue that Saladin's passage into the 'city visible but unseen' (241) in the Bangladeshi community of Brickhall constitutes a significant transitional moment in the process of arrival and departure at work within the novel. Confronted with the material and social realities of immigrant life, Saladin's experiences in Brickhall are crucial to his growing understanding of London. However, alongside this progress towards a social and political 'arrival' in London – which remains to an extent incomplete – the politicisation begun in Brickhall is also central to his departure from England and return to Bombay.

Before his 'arrival' in Brickhall, Saladin's reading of his violently 'imperfect welcome' (398) by the immigration officers in the Black Maria highlights the ways in which he moves across the city via locations marked by hierarchies of class, as well as of racial, identifications. Saladin's initial attitude is that '[s]uch degradations might be all very well for riff-raff from villages in Sylhet or the bicycle-repair shops of Gujranwala, but he was cut from different cloth!' and had 'gone to some lengths to become – a sophisticated man!' (159). Kalliney rightly identifies Saladin's metamorphosis in the Black Maria as a key catalyst in his movement 'down the social ladder', suggesting that it transforms 'the once-wealthy voice actor into an impoverished immigrant'.⁹⁰ However, this transformation is far from as complete or as smooth as Kalliney implies. While Saladin indeed moves through various class locations, his position as an 'impoverished immigrant' is limited; he does, after all, have sufficient bank accounts to get

⁹⁰ Kalliney, p. 57.

‘unblock[ed]’ (407), a ‘lawyer accountant agent’ (406) to help to reinstate his legal and economic existence, and a substantial property in Notting Hill to ‘reoccupy’ (409). These are far from the accoutrements of an ‘impoverished immigrant’.

Nevertheless, his transformation does enable contact with less privileged experiences of migrancy, while also initiating his involvement – albeit a relatively passive involvement – in an insurrection against the state, in the form of the escape from the Detention Centre (171). Furthermore, Saladin’s conversation with the manticore in the Centre reveals Rushdie’s self-conscious awareness of the distance between the experiences of a socio-economically privileged cosmopolitan and many less well-placed migrants. Saladin finds it ‘hard to believe’ (168) that the mutated bodies surrounding him are the result of the ‘power of description’ (168) held by racist institutions and apparatus of state, asserting that ‘I’ve lived here for many years and it never happened before’ (168). His disbelief is met by the ‘narrow, distrustful eyes’ (168) of the manticore, who asks: ‘How could that be? – Maybe you’re an informer? – Yes, that’s it, a spy?’ (168). Saladin’s claims, and the manticore’s anxious response, suggest a complication of the cosmopolitan’s relationship with the migrant community in general, one which Rushdie acknowledges more directly in his essay ‘Imaginary Homelands’. While recognising that ‘to be fair, England has done alright by me’, Rushdie remarks that,

I can’t escape the view that my relatively easy ride is not the result of the dream-England’s famous sense of tolerance and fair play, but of my social class, my freak fair skin and my ‘English’ English accent. Take away any of these, and the story would have been very different.⁹¹

The disjunction between Saladin’s own previous experiences of England and those of other migrants in the Detention Centre, alongside Rushdie’s statement, suggests a crucial awareness of the intersection of migrancy and class, and of how the privileged, educated, metropolitan cosmopolitan’s experience may differ substantially from the less socially and economically privileged members of the immigrant community.

Rushdie’s recognition of the dislocation between the experiences of the cosmopolitan and the less privileged migrant problematises his own assertion that *The Satanic Verses* was an attempt to ‘give voice and fictional flesh to the immigrant culture of which *I am myself a*

⁹¹ Rushdie, ‘Imaginary Homelands’, p. 18.

member'.⁹² Krishnaswamy fails to recognise such awareness in her reading of Rushdie's work. Although Krishnaswamy's assertion that Rushdie's work risks at various points 'de-materializ[ing] the migrant into an abstract idea' has a certain validity,⁹³ it is also important to explore moments where Rushdie both acknowledges and complicates such a reading, and recognise that the 'abstract' in his work is often grounded in an understanding of the 'material'.

Crucially, the 'great escape' (170) from the Detention Centre sees Saladin travel 'east east east' (171), in a direction that speaks not only to his migrations within London, but also frames these movements within his return to Bombay. Furthermore, Saladin 'tak[es] the low roads to London town' (171) perhaps indicating a shift in his class position: he is no longer the 'free-floating' cosmopolitan shuttling between international locations, viewing the city from above, but is travelling at ground level, through streets which resemble the 'back streets' (55) he was unable to recognise in Bombay.

Saladin's movement eastwards, from Notting Hill to Brickhall, is a crucial migration, marking his entry into a politicised community which fervently resists official narratives of Englishness. The move has further significance given the specific identities of the locations of Notting Hill and Brickhall themselves, and the spaces Saladin inhabits within these locations. In his reading of the 'spatial configurations' of the novel, Gikandi argues that Saladin's mansion in Notting Hill 'appears [...] to be a mark of his arrival,' while also being 'situated in a locality that has become, since the "riots" of 1959 [*sic*], the site of the innumerable ways in which immigrants have "contaminated" and "criminalized" English culture'.⁹⁴ The placement of Saladin within a Notting Hill of radicalised anti-racist revisions of Englishness is complicated by the identity of that locale in the late 1980s, and Saladin's position in relation to it. Sukhev Sandhu points out that during the 1980s, the housing boom meant that 'London saw a much-heralded rise in luxury developments', and an accompanying '[g]entrification led to moneyed

⁹² Salman Rushdie, 'Choice Between Light and Dark', *Observer*, 22 January 1989, repr. in Appignanesi & Maitland, eds., pp. 74-76 (p. 75, my emphasis).

⁹³ Krishnaswamy, p. 132.

⁹⁴ Gikandi, p. 215. For an account of the riots which spread from Notting Hill across London in 1958, see Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London & Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), pp. 378-81.

professionals moving into previously unfashionable areas such as Clapham and Notting Hill'.⁹⁵ While the area remained a contested site throughout the 1980s, specifically during the 1987 Carnival,⁹⁶ I argue that the Notting Hill Saladin inhabits is this more fashionable, gentrified space, rather than the resistant, political site of immigrant arrival of Gikandi's reading.

Indeed, Saladin's location within the gentrifying bourgeois elite itself detaches him from any involvement in the radical urban politics symbolised by Notting Hill. Not only does he own a large 'five-storey mansion' (59), but his 'den' within it signals a detachment from the material realities of urban life. His 'den' is 'a large loft-space with skylights and windows looking down on an expanse of communal gardens dotted with comfortable trees, oak, larch, even the last of the elms, a survivor of the plague years' (173). The quiet, 'comfortable' pastoral scene, with its 'expanse' of green and wooded gardens, is far removed from the urban realities that surround Saladin. Tinged with nostalgia for a past England – and an Englishness – located in the countryside, his view bears no trace of the violent racial politics that have marked Notting Hill, or of the predominantly Caribbean immigrant community settled there. Furthermore, Saladin is distanced from the anonymous community implied by the 'communal' gardens, 'looking down' on, rather than participating in, his immediate surroundings.

Saladin's pastoral view of Notting Hill is accompanied by his envy for Hal Valance's 'Highgate mansion' (269), an imitation grand country house with '[r]osewood panelling, a terrace with stone urns, [and] a view down a wooded hill' (269). As Anna Marie Smith explains, many Thatcherite policies 'had the effect of radically re-shaping class identifications' and of creating an 'amorphous "middle class"'.⁹⁷ Hal, a mouthpiece for the neoimperial, capitalist and individualist principles of Thatcherism, voices this attempt to 'invent a whole goddamn new middle class' (270) made up of '[p]eople without background, without history' (270). Saladin's desire to emulate Hal's lifestyle reflects an aspiration to become part of this class. However, the necessity of being 'without background, without history' leads to Saladin de-racialising his own identity and, just as the racial demography of Notting Hill is obscured from his view, his

⁹⁵ Sukhdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 240.

⁹⁶ Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 60.

⁹⁷ Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 46.

involvement in the highly successful *The Aliens Show* depends upon his assertion that 'I've never felt I belonged to a race' (267).

Saladin's arrival in Brickhall, which coincides with his dismissal from *The Aliens Show* for being 'too damn racial' (265), problematises this claim to bourgeois unbelonging. Ahmad critiques Rushdie's emphasis on such cosmopolitan 'unbelonging', which implies that 'one could simply float, effortlessly, through a supermarket of packaged and commodified cultures, ready to be consumed'.⁹⁸ Saladin's experiences in Brickhall complicate this representation of cosmopolitanism, suggesting both the necessity and the anxious difficulty of the cosmopolitan's involvement in ground-level politics. Rather than 'floating' through the various locations in London, Saladin gradually descends to the ground, falling from the air to move through attic spaces until he eventually, problematically, arrives at the community meeting in Brickhall.

Helping Saladin seek refuge at the Shaandaar Café, Jumpy Joshi declares that 'what you believe depends on what you've seen, – not only what is visible, but what you are prepared to look in the face' (252). Placed at the centre of the Bangladeshi community of Brickhall, the Shaandaar is a crucial location in Saladin's politicisation, offering a space that further problematises his cosmopolitan detachment. Here, Saladin is confronted with the economic and social realities of migrant life in 1980s London, while also having to negotiate between the various 'not-England[s]' (132) he has experienced within the city, and his problematic distance from and relation to 'his people' (257). The fictionalised nature of Brickhall is important to a discussion of the cosmopolitan migrant's distance from the material realities of immigrant experience. Brickhall represents an amalgamation of two areas of predominantly South Asian settlement in London – Brick Lane and Southall – and Saladin's movement from the real space of Notting Hill to the imagined location of Brickhall is significant. I argue that Rushdie's fictionalisation of the urban space occupied by the immigrant community represents a tacit acknowledgement of his own distance from the community to whom he attempts to 'give voice and fictional flesh'. While Rushdie was, in the early 1980s, politically engaged with the socio-economic difficulties faced by London's South Asian communities in Brick Lane, Southall, and

⁹⁸ Ahmad (1992), p. 128.

Camden,⁹⁹ his fictionalisation of these spaces in *The Satanic Verses* suggests his awareness that his own privileged position limits his access to the everyday experiences of these communities. Nevertheless, I contend that Brickhall is, in fact, more ‘real’ than Notting Hill, and Saladin’s perspective on this location bears witness to the racial demography and socio-political tensions of the community in a way that his view over Notting Hill does not.

Saladin’s accommodation at the Shaandaar contrasts with his Notting Hill home, and both within and outside the property he must confront the social and economic effects of Thatcherite discourse. Inside the Shaandaar, the cramped, crowded conditions in which immigrant families dependent on public housing allowances are forced to live stand in marked contrast to Saladin’s luxuriously spacious Notting Hill mansion. On his return to Notting Hill, Saladin can occupy ‘the den, and the rooms on the ground floor below, including the spare bathroom’, and therefore ‘be quite independent’ (403) from Pamela and Jumpy. This isolation is unavailable to him in the Shaandaar, where each time he emerges from his room he glimpses – or is glimpsed by – ‘maybe thirty temporary human beings, with little hope of being declared permanent’ (264), who are squeezed five into a room. Saladin is forced to confront ‘[t]he real world’ (264) of the less socio-economically privileged immigrant, physically unable to distance himself from the difficulties of dwelling in the city.

Similarly, the view of London afforded by Saladin’s small ‘attic room’ (253) at the Shaandaar contrasts directly with that offered by his Notting Hill den. Here, the calm, green pastoral scene is replaced by the more resolutely urban ‘turf’ (284) of ‘the Street’ (283), a highly contested space which is ‘without a blade of grass’ (284). Unlike the ahistorical, timeless quality of the Notting Hill gardens, unpeopled and anonymous, ‘the Street’ of Brickhall is a ‘mythological battleground’ (283), mapped by the experiences of its various ‘characters’ (283): the Sikh man literally silenced by a racial attack; the Bangladeshi ‘accountant type’ who obsessively restages scenes from his homeland (284); the murdered Ulysses E. Lee (284) and Jatinder Singh Mehta (285). The mythology of an Englishness located in a peaceful pastoral landscape, from which all traces of non-white immigrant communities have been erased, is

⁹⁹ See, for example, ‘An Unimportant Fire’, in which Rushdie attacks the poor housing conditions – the ‘slum housing’ and ‘[d]eath-traps’ – that black and Asian families are placed in by the local council. *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 139-42 (p. 139).

replaced by an alternative, vernacular mythology, an urban '*Mahavilayet*' (283), which bears witness to the presence of immigrant communities and the violent racist attacks against them.

As Kathryn Hume observes, Mishal mirrors Zeeny in her role as a 'model for politics and multiculturalism', and is crucial to Saladin's growing political awareness and changing understandings of the city.¹⁰⁰ Just as Zeeny remaps Bombay for Saladin, drawing attention to its social, economic and political cartography, so Mishal engages in a similar process in London, outlining the ways in which 'Thatcherism has its effect' (284). In the *Shaandaar*, the change in Saladin's literal view of London accompanies his renegotiation of real and imagined visions of the city, as 'one alien England' (270) complicates another, and as he is forced to revise his understanding of London to include 'that undercity whose existence he has so long denied' (412). Furthermore, Mishal's presence at the meeting to discuss the arrest of Dr. Uhuru Simba draws Saladin to the Brickhall Friends Meeting House. Foreshadowing his involvement in a public demonstration on his later return to Bombay, Saladin's presence is a significant moment in Rushdie's representation of the politicisation of the cosmopolitan. Drawn down from the attic spaces he has occupied throughout his life in London, Saladin's entry into the 'undercity' represents another moment of arrival, as he not only acknowledges the existence of, but also moves within, Brickhall's immigrant community.

Nevertheless, the episode reveals a tension between the cosmopolitan and that community that Rushdie is both conscious of and unable to resolve fully. McLeod argues that Rushdie's own 'dislocated relationship with London's diaspora community can be glimpsed' at the meeting in Saladin's scepticism towards the attempts to mobilise popular resistance to the racism of the nation-state; that this scepticism is 'not effectively challenged' is, McLeod suggests, highly problematic.¹⁰¹ While I agree that Saladin's cynicism reveals a disjunction between the elite cosmopolitan individual and the immigrant community, I contend that it is one that Rushdie both recognises and indeed foregrounds and problematises in his depiction of Saladin, particularly before the meeting itself. Preparing to leave for the meeting, Saladin appears 'wearing a smart brown suit, a camel coat with a silk collar, and a rather natty brown

¹⁰⁰ Kathryn Hume, 'Taking a Stand while Lacking a Center: Rushdie's Postmodern Politics', *Philological Quarterly*, 74 (1995), 209-30 (p. 220).

¹⁰¹ McLeod, p. 154.

homburg hat' (412). Pamela's reaction highlights how Saladin's expensive attire identifies his class difference from the majority of those attending the meeting: "'Where are you off to?'" [...] "'Bloody Ascot?'" (412). At the meeting itself, Saladin is given 'an amused once-over' by a 'young black woman' (413). Thus, while James Procter contends that Rushdie's work carries a 'critical blind spot in which the class connotations of such [...] writings and the locations from which they speak from go unseen',¹⁰² I argue that Rushdie in fact draws attention to the class location of the cosmopolitan, to 'his own slot in the scheme of things'.¹⁰³ Through Saladin's dress, Rushdie exposes the socio-economic distance of the privileged cosmopolitan from the experiences of the majority within the immigrant and diasporic community. In the process, he problematises his own relationship to that community and his claims to be member of it. The figure of the cosmopolitan does not sit comfortably in this meeting organising political protest and social action, but remains problematically distanced from it.

However, this distance is paired with Saladin's increased awareness of the difficulties faced by the Brickhall community, and complicated by his engagement with and response to the political debate surrounding him. In a bodily reaction explicitly echoing the 'irregular palpitations' (57) he suffers during the political discussion in Bombay – a physical manifestation of his deteriorating 'immun[ity]' to India's 'reality' (57) – Saladin experiences a 'blurring [...] double vision', while 'his heart got in on the act, bababoom, boomba, dababoom' (416). The implication is that the process of politicisation begun in India has continued in England and, while this process remains incomplete, Saladin is similarly rendered unable to sustain his previous detachment and distance from the social and material realities of the local community; his immunity to 'what was really real' (175) in England has similarly been 'cracked' (57).

Significantly, while remaining uncomfortable in the 'underworld' (418) of Brickhall, Saladin is similarly unable to return to his privileged intellectual life in Notting Hill. Before the meeting, Saladin 'made a conscious effort to resume his old life of delicate sensibilities', attending 'concerts and art galleries and plays' (407) in order to reclaim the aestheticism and intellectualism that defined his former life. However, his 'responses were rather dull' (407) and

¹⁰² Procter, p. 185.

¹⁰³ Spivak, p. 222.

his intellectual and aesthetic pursuits fail to affect him as they once had; after the meeting he is forced to recognise that ‘the change in him was irreversible’ (418). Unable to re-establish his distance from the immigrant community of Brickhall, and yet uncomfortable within it, Saladin cannot successfully negotiate between his belief that this community is not ‘*his people*’ (257), and that he is not their ‘kind’ (253), and his growing sense of affiliation to them. Consequently, he is left in-between the spaces of aesthetic cosmopolitanism and political activism, a position Brennan identifies as characteristic of the cosmopolitan.¹⁰⁴ By representing Saladin as caught between these two spaces, Rushdie acknowledges his own incommensurable position in relation to Britain’s immigrant community, a tension self-consciously maintained throughout his work.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps as an attempt to resolve this tension, and to find a space in which the cosmopolitan might become politically involved in a constituency, rather than a distanced ‘sometime spectator’, Rushdie returns Saladin to Bombay in the closing stages of the novel. Critics have found this return particularly problematic, sensing a retreat from the politics of London. As Gikandi summarises, if a central concern of the novel is the importance of ‘question[ing] modern and colonial notions of identity, including the ideals of home and return, why does it end with a kind of begrudging affirmation of such ideals?’; in this light, the last section ‘seems to undermine the whole ideological thrust of Rushdie’s project’.¹⁰⁶ Kalliney more forcefully asserts that Saladin’s return both represents a ‘willful [*sic*] disengagement from the realities of social life for Britain’s immigrant communities’ and shows him ‘escap[ing] from, rather than attend[ing] to, the production of localized inequality’.¹⁰⁷

Saladin’s withdrawal from the politics of 1980s London *is* problematic, and Kalliney is right to observe that Saladin ‘has the luxury to flee Brickhall’, unlike many of its inhabitants.¹⁰⁸ However, a reading of the last section as an escape from social realities is only possible if Rushdie’s representation of contemporary Indian politics is ignored, and if the Bombay to which Saladin returns – and more importantly his understanding of it – is read as a static space that has

¹⁰⁴ Brennan (1989), p. x.

¹⁰⁵ Nasta comments that Rushdie’s ‘literary voice [...] could never be closely identified – whatever his personal sense of political affiliation – with the black and Asian communities in Southall or Brixton – nor indeed did he want it to’ (p. 148).

¹⁰⁶ Gikandi, p. 223.

¹⁰⁷ Kalliney, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 75.

remained unchanged in his absence. Similarly, Gikandi's suggestion that Saladin is seen 'occupying defunct spaces' on his return¹⁰⁹ fails to account for the radical alteration in Saladin's understanding of Bombay, which is prompted by his experiences in London, as well as the fact that Saladin does not return to occupy a familiar space, but rather begins a journey to a new place that remains undefined and located in the future.

As with the scenes in Notting Hill and Brickhall, the politics of Saladin's return can be explored productively through the view from his window. After his father's death, and Gibreel's suicide, Saladin 'stood at the window of his childhood and looked out at the Arabian Sea' (546):

The moon was almost full; moonlight, stretching from the rocks of Scandal Point out to the far horizon, created the illusion of a silver pathway, like a parting in the water's shining hair, like a road to miraculous lands. He shook his head; could no longer believe in fairy-tales. 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. (546-47)

The vista draws together a number of themes central to the novel, perhaps the most significant of which is that of pilgrimages to mythologised, 'miraculous' homelands – England, India, Mecca. Furthermore, the view westwards towards Mecca and England gestures towards the dialogue between London and Bombay that underlies Saladin's changing understanding of India and his relation to it; the window, which once offered him a route of imaginative 'escape' from Bombay to 'Proper London' (38), becomes a frame through which this revised understanding can be read. This moment of arrival – Saladin's apparently permanent return to Bombay – is, however, complicated, becoming a transitional moment of arrival *and* departure, representing a part of, rather than a conclusion to, the process of politicisation he has undergone throughout the novel.

As he looks out, Saladin's changing perception of each city becomes clear, as he builds upon his experiences in England to acknowledge that his previous idealisation of London and revulsion of Bombay was based on illusions, and that he 'could no longer believe in fairy-tales'. Drawing on Zeeny's criticisms of his distanced relationship with Bombay, facing away from, rather than looking towards its material and social realities, Saladin here begins to recognise the need to turn away from visions of London and Bombay as 'dream[s] of childhood' (55). Instead of engaging with a nostalgic mythologising of those cities, and repeating his childhood dreams

¹⁰⁹ Gikandi, p. 223.

of 'flying out' above imagined cities (38), Saladin understands the necessity of avoiding the 'rootless limbo' (541) of cosmopolitan detachment, and of following Zeeny's advice to 'try and make an adult acquaintance' with Bombay, '[t]he actually existing place', 'not some childhood memory that makes you both nostalgic and sick' (541).

Saladin's return to Bombay thus offers a continuation of the movement from a desire for imagined cities to an engagement with real cities enacted within London, a process begun in the 'crowded dhaba' of Bombay itself. Kalliney's suggestion that Saladin is 'disengaging' from social realities elides the importance of the politics of Bombay with which Saladin becomes involved upon his return. It is therefore crucial to recognise that the Bombay to which Saladin returns is not that of his father, isolated at Scandal Point, but is Zeeny's 'place' (547), and she insists the pair 'get the hell out of' Changez's property (547). In contrast to his Scandal Point home, Zeeny's 'place' is a highly politicised space, where 'public demonstrations were essential' (537) to resist communalism, and where detachment from the social realities of urban life is impossible. Indeed, Changez's house will be demolished to make way for new property developments, and the Bombay of Saladin's childhood will soon literally no longer exist.

To emphasise Saladin's growing awareness of these realities, and the more politicised nature of the space into which he moves, Rushdie frames his return with the collection of newspaper reports he reads on his flight back to India. These reports highlight how the 'news of ethnic violence saturates the city' and nation in the 1980s,¹¹⁰ offering reports of a 'massacre of Muslims' in north India alongside the violent response of 'Islamic fundamentalists' to negotiations over Kashmir (518). Crucially, Saladin 'couldn't be bothered' (518) with the reports concerning the political elite, and the accusations of governmental corruption; instead, he is drawn to the 'fuzzy photograph, on an inside page' of the newspaper (518) depicting the Meerut massacre.¹¹¹ Rushdie uses the photograph to highlight both the political context to which Saladin returns and his changing attitude towards that context, as he becomes more concerned with the

¹¹⁰ Varma, p. 76.

¹¹¹ This image directly invokes the aftermath of the Ayesha pilgrimage, enacting a re-reading of the pilgrimage explicitly in terms of communal violence, the dead Muslim bodies being translated into victims of religious hatred. After the Ayesha Haj has marched into the water, 'drowned bodies [...] float[ed] to shore' (505). The bodies in the massacre, which had been 'dumped in the water', are similarly depicted as 'indistinct, bloated shapes floating down-river in large numbers' (518).

'dailiness of lives lived under oppression'¹¹² than with the national elite, and begins to engage with the socio-political difficulties of everyday life in India. Furthermore, Saladin begins to make connections between the events reported and the political arguments of Zeeny and her friends, reading the newspapers in the light of Bhupen Gandhi's assertion that experiences of oppression differ according to class and culture: 'while many Indians are undoubtedly oppressed', Bhupen argues, 'I don't think any of *us* are entitled to lay claim to such a glamorous position' (518). That Saladin recalls this statement at this point suggests his growing political consciousness, as well as his increasing awareness of his own privileged position within India.

I examine the novel's engagement with the rise of communalism in 1980s India in the final section of this chapter, but here wish to remain focussed on Saladin's changing response to this political context. The process of politicisation begun in the crowded dhaba and continued in the London Detention Centre where Saladin passively took part in an insurrection against state oppression, develops further in Bombay as he becomes actively involved in a CPI(M) (Communist Party of India – Marxist) demonstration (541). This demonstration 'in support of "national integration"' (537) is a protest against communal violence in general, and against the Shiv Sena municipal government in Bombay in particular. Thus, far from escaping political engagement and returning to a static Bombay which has remained a 'Wonderland, Peristan, Never-Never, Oz' (55), Saladin is plunged further into political activity, as his new understanding of the social and class dynamics of London is brought into dialogue with his changing understanding of Bombay, and as his previously detached, cosmopolitan position is problematised and politicised in each space. As he 'turn[s] away from the view' (547) offered by the 'window of his childhood' (546), Saladin turns away from a position as a detached cosmopolitan, a 'sometime spectator' of the urban and national politics surrounding him.

Once more, however, the moment of arrival is deferred and, rather than representing Saladin's politicisation as complete or radical, Rushdie offers his movement away from the window as another potential beginning; indeed, after the demonstration is planned, Saladin is left 'somewhat bemused at the rapidity with which, once again, his life had begun to change' (538). Furthermore, Zeeny's 'place' (547), towards which Saladin moves, is a space as yet unmapped

¹¹² Ahmad (1992), p. 139.

and unlocated, suspended in the future. By leaving this location undetermined, Rushdie gestures towards, without fully defining, a cosmopolitanism invested in the vernacular life of Bombay, suggesting that such an engaged cosmopolitanism will involve a continual negotiation of Saladin's position in relation to the politics of the city and nation.

Endangered Cosmopolitanism

'Battle lines are being drawn up in India today', Zeeny's friend Swatilekha declares, while discussing the increasing communalisation of public life in India. 'Secular versus religious,' she continues, 'the light verses the dark. Better you choose which side you are on' (537). In the previous sections, I have explored Rushdie's engagement with different models of individual cosmopolitanism, through the notions of parochial and engaged cosmopolitanism. In this final section, I examine Rushdie's negotiation of cosmopolitanism in relation to Bombay and India. As I have noted, criticism has tended to privilege Rushdie's engagement with the politics of 1980s Britain in *The Satanic Verses*. While this context is crucial to any reading of the novel, Rushdie represents 'at least two nations on the verge of crisis'¹¹³ and, as Varma contends, narrates the 'unravelling' of the Nehruvian project in 1980s Bombay.¹¹⁴ In this section, I join Varma by shifting the focus from London and Britain to consider Rushdie's engagement with the politics of 1980s India, and to explore the notion of 'endangered cosmopolitanism'.

As I have noted, there is often a slippage between notions of cosmopolitanism and secularism in Rushdie's characterisations of Bombay and India. The city, in his work, is marked both by national and international trade, migration and imperialism, and by a multicultural heterogeneity that is a model for the nation's secular principles. Similarly, remarking on Bombay's status as 'one of India's most cosmopolitan cities', Mary Fainsod Katzenstein claims that '[b]y Bombay usage, the epithet denotes less the "bright" lights of the city than its rich ethnic diversity'.¹¹⁵ In this light, an understanding of cosmopolitanism as secularism in the metropolitan context informs the following discussion. Like Mistry, Rushdie is concerned with

¹¹³ Suleri, p. 195.

¹¹⁴ Varma, p. 66.

¹¹⁵ Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Politics in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 40.

what Khilnani terms the ‘crisis of secularism’ during the 1980s and 1990s, as the Nehruvian vision of nation was increasingly challenged by intercommunal tensions and violence.¹¹⁶ To explore Rushdie’s engagement with this crisis in *The Satanic Verses*, I turn first to an essay written a year before the novel’s publication. ‘The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987’ narrates Rushdie’s return to India on the fortieth anniversary of Independence. Attempting to ‘look at the state of the Indian nation that was, like [him], entering its fifth decade’, Rushdie offers a reappraisal of the ‘romantically optimistic’ image of India presented in *Midnight’s Children*, providing a useful frame through which to consider *The Satanic Verses*.¹¹⁷ Indeed, it is worth remembering that Gibreel and Saladin are both approaching their fortieth birthdays, and could therefore themselves be described as India’s – and Rushdie’s – ‘citizen-twins’.¹¹⁸

A central concern of ‘The Riddle of Midnight’ is the threat posed by communalism to the very existence of (the idea of) India. Rushdie charts a number of key events of the 1980s which provide important contexts for my discussion of ‘endangered cosmopolitanism’ and secularism in *The Satanic Verses*: the rise of Hindu nationalism and the targeting of the Babri Masjid by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad; the intensification of Sikh nationalism following the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar and the subsequent assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984; the rise of Shiv Sena to power in Bombay. I will therefore spend some time examining these events before returning to *The Satanic Verses* itself.

In ‘The Riddle of Midnight’, Rushdie notes how, in the mid-1980s, ‘[a]ll over India – Meerut, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bombay – tension between Hindus and Muslims was rising’,¹¹⁹ and directly relates this tension to the dispute over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Although I have already outlined the centrality of the Babri Masjid to the Hindu nationalist campaign to redefine India as a sacred Hindu territory, it is important to note two developments in the 1980s which

¹¹⁶ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999[1997]), p. 179.

¹¹⁷ Salman Rushdie, ‘The Riddle of Midnight: India, August, 1987’, in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 26-33 (pp. 26, 33).

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 26. Steven Walker places the age of Saladin and Gibreel at the centre of his reading of *The Satanic Verses* as a ‘masterful evocation of a male midlife crisis in magical realist symbolic terms’, in ‘Magical Archetypes: Midlife Miracles in *The Satanic Verses*’, in *Magic Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 347-69. (p. 348). However, his argument that forty represents a ‘symbolic age’ (p. 352) fails to acknowledge the wider political ramifications and symbolism of the age beyond a personal ‘cultural confusion and stage-of-life disorientation’ (p. 352).

¹¹⁹ Rushdie, ‘The Riddle of Midnight’, p. 29.

were crucial to the movement towards its final destruction: the reopening of the site itself, and the VHP's *Ekamata yatra* campaign. As Rushdie observes, the site of the Babri Masjid 'has been disputed territory ever since independence'.¹²⁰ However, in 1985, the site, which had been closed since 1947, was reopened to Hindu worship, after the VHP successfully filed a writ petition to the Supreme Court.¹²¹ Rushdie positions this decision as a key turning point, stating that 'in every outbreak of communal violence [in north India] the Babri Masjid is cited as a primary cause'.¹²² The VHP's targeting of the Babri Masjid was paired with the launch of the *Ekamata yatra* campaign in 1982-1983. As a 'bid to dominate the public space with symbolic manifestations of religious community', the series of pilgrimages that crossed the nation were, according to Hansen, an attempt to 'symbolize the congruity between the national and the sacred [Hindu] geography' of India. As such, they had a 'clear anti-Muslim undercurrent'.¹²³

The VHP's *Ekamata yatra* campaign provides an important intertext for the Ayesha pilgrimage in *The Satanic Verses*. As Suleri demonstrates, the episode is central to Rushdie's attempt to 'rewrit[e] the fiction of Muslim nationhood in India' in the novel.¹²⁴ It is therefore a significant point of intersection between the text and the 'specificities of Rushdie's cultural context', 'the paradoxical grafting of Islam onto the Indian subcontinent, and the minority of this religion in relation to Hinduism'.¹²⁵ While Suleri rightly contends that the 'gendering of religion remains the burden of the Ayesha episode',¹²⁶ I argue that, through the pilgrimage, Rushdie further rewrites Muslim nationhood by appropriating and complicating the symbols and techniques used by Hindu nationalists in their attempts to remap India's cultural geography as an exclusively Hindu space.

As the Ayesha pilgrimage traverses the country, it draws crowds of observers: 'journalists, local politicians' (488), businessmen, foreign tourists, and 'nostalgic Gandhians' (488). In the process, the pilgrimage is commercialised and nationalised, dominating public discourse and being appropriated by various groups in their constructions of national identity:

¹²⁰ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 27.

¹²¹ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 150.

¹²² Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 27.

¹²³ Hansen (1999), p. 154.

¹²⁴ Suleri, p. 198.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 200.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 198.

Certain religious extremist groupings had issued statements denouncing the 'Ayesha Haj' as an attempt to 'hijack' public attention and to 'incite communal sentiment'. Leaflets were being distributed [...] in which it was claimed that 'Padyatra, or foot-pilgrimage, is an ancient, pre-Islamic tradition of national culture, not imported property of Mughal immigrants.' Also: 'Purloining of this tradition by so-called Ayesha Bibiji is flagrant and deliberate inflammation of already sensitive situation.' (488)

Situating the procession within the context of communal tensions, Rushdie translates the dispute over the sacred territory of India into a debate over the cultural/religious ownership of the form of pilgrimage itself. Declaring *padyatra* as 'an ancient, pre-Islamic tradition of national culture', the implicitly Hindu chauvinist leaflets claim, by extension, pre-Islamic traditions – that is, Hindu traditions – as national culture. Asserting and then privileging indigeneity as authenticity, the leaflets represent the Muslim pilgrims as 'Mughal immigrants' whose belated arrival in India precludes their involvement in the evolution of 'national culture'. The leaflets further construct the pilgrims as 'other' to the nation by rejecting the Muslim Haj as a legitimate form of worship within the Indian context, representing it as incongruous and disruptive. Thus, the Haj is first read as a politicised attempt to 'hijack' public attention, and then as an illegitimate appropriation of a 'national [Hindu] tradition' to which the pilgrims do not have access. Each reading places the procession within a framework of Hindu hegemony in which India is a sacred space whose cartography may only be legitimately traversed by Hindu pilgrims. However, by fusing together different forms of, or motivations for, pilgrimage – from Gandhi's salt march, to the Haj and the *yatra* – Rushdie suggests the hybridity of the form itself and, by extension, of the territory across which it travels. Furthermore, if the Hindu nationalist *yatra* campaign was part of a process of 'claiming the public space and ultimately the imagined national space for the Hindu community'¹²⁷ to the exclusion of non-Hindus, then Rushdie perhaps uses the Ayesha pilgrimage to reassert the legitimacy of Muslim identity within India by reinscribing the national space as part of a sacred Islamic geography, a constituent part of the territory travelled on the Haj to Mecca.

In 'The Riddle of Midnight', Rushdie argues that, as 'India is increasingly defined as Hindu India [...] Sikh and Muslim fundamentalism grows ever fiercer and entrenched in

¹²⁷ Hansen (1999), p. 154.

response'.¹²⁸ The rise in Sikh fundamentalism, Rushdie contends, is a particularly anxious consequence of the Hinduisation of national politics and an indication of the depth of the crisis in secularism. He writes that 'many members of Indian minority groups started out as devotees of the old, secular definition of India, and there were no Indians as patriotic as the Sikhs', going on to suggest that '[u]ntil 1984, you could say that the Sikhs were *the* Indian nationalists'.¹²⁹ In this light, the explosion of Flight A I-420 by Sikh terrorists that propels the novel into action gains a crucial significance often ignored in readings of *The Satanic Verses*, directly situating the text within an Indian context from its very opening. As I suggested earlier, the episode represents a double crisis in notions of cosmopolitanism, representing both parochial cosmopolitanism in the individual migrant, and a crisis in the cosmopolitanism of the nation.

As Amitava Kumar observes, the episode is based on the explosion of Air India Flight A I-182 in 1985 as it travelled between Toronto and Bombay, an act of terrorism carried out by Canadian Sikhs apparently avenging the assault on the Golden Temple in Amritsar.¹³⁰ Ian Talbot contends that the 'Indian state faced its greatest post-independence crisis' in the emergence of a 'militant Sikh ethno-nationalism in the Punjab'.¹³¹ Autonomist demands, which had existed since at least the 1974 Anandpur Sahib Resolution, developed in the 1980s into a movement for a sovereign Sikh state of Khalistan, and between 1981 and 1984 leaders organised a series of 'mass civil-disobedience campaigns' against the Indian government.¹³² The assault on the Golden Temple by the Indian Army in June 1984 was ordered by Indira Gandhi to force out the militant Sikh preacher Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who, from within the Temple, presided over a violent – largely anti-Hindu – campaign across the Punjab.¹³³ The immediate result of 'Operation Bluestar' was, in Rajiv Kapur's concise summary, 'a resurgence in terrorist activity, the assassination of the Indian prime minister, and an outbreak of brutal communal

¹²⁸ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 33.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹³⁰ Amitava Kumar, *Bombay: London, New York* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 229-30. See also Rajiv Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1987), p. 241.

¹³¹ Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan* (London & New York: Arnold, 2000), p. 265.

¹³² Kapur, p. xi.

¹³³ See Frank, pp. 455-56.

violence against Sikhs'.¹³⁴ In the longer term, Sikh separatism and support for the Khalistan movement, both within India and in the diaspora, intensified.

The crisis in the Punjab was partly a result of Indira Gandhi's and Congress's growing willingness to manipulate religion as an electoral tool, practising a shifting accommodation of communal forces in what Hansen terms a 'clumsy communal arithmetic'.¹³⁵ Thus, Mushirul Hasan argues that, in the 1980s, 'the secular consensus, an imprimatur of the Nehru era, was all but discarded' as the Congress leadership became 'eager to accommodate revivalist and obscurantist tendencies in order to isolate and deflect the emergence of alternative political forces [...] in various parts of the country'.¹³⁶ The tendency of Congress towards 'pragmatic communalism',¹³⁷ continued beyond Indira Gandhi's assassination and into the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi between 1984 and 1989, a period which also saw the rise of the BJP. According to Hansen, the Congress strategy between 1985 and 1986 – during which the Babri Masjid was reopened – was 'aimed at heightening communal tension, while hoping to reap the electoral benefits of the ensuing insecurity among Hindus as well as minority communities'.¹³⁸

Rushdie draws his exploration of mid-1980s India in 'The Riddle of Midnight' to a close by returning to his birthplace, Bombay, which had, since 1985, been under municipal control of the Shiv Sena. Rushdie suggests that, if 'Rajiv's Congress-I [was] trying to ride [the] tiger' of Hindu nationalism, then in Bombay 'the tiger [was] actually in power'.¹³⁹ As a consequence, the 1980s saw the increasing 'communalization [...] of Bombay's political landscape' as the Shiv Sena pursued an emphatically anti-Muslim strategy and as, in response, Muslim revivalist and conservative organisations – such as the Jamaat-i-Islam and the Tabligh

¹³⁴ Kapur, p. xii.

¹³⁵ Hansen (1999), p. 148. Indira Gandhi had initially patronised Bhindranwale, in order to split Sikh support for the Akali Dal party. Talbot argues that it 'undoubtedly suited Mrs Gandhi's purposes to emphasise the religious element in the Punjab autonomist movement'; by 'building up the Sikh threat and then taking tough action against it', Mrs Gandhi attempted to deflect support from the BJP in the region, and thus gain the Hindu vote (p. 268).

¹³⁶ Mushirul Hasan, 'The Changing Position of Muslims and the Political Future of Secularism in India', in *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*, ed. by T. V. Sathymurthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 200-28 (p. 217).

¹³⁷ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), p. 215.

¹³⁸ Hansen (1999), p. 150.

¹³⁹ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 31.

Jamaat – gained support.¹⁴⁰ The anxiety and frustration felt among Bombay's Muslims, as a result of the Shiv Sena's political success and their own increasing social and economic marginalisation, were important factors in the response to the verdict in the Shah Bano case in 1985.¹⁴¹ Conservative Muslim groups organised protests against the verdict, which they perceived as a contravention of Muslim Personal Law, while right-wing Hindu groups used the case as an example of the Congress government's willingness to 'pander' to India's Muslim minority;¹⁴² others used the case to strengthen their argument for a Uniform Civil Code. In 1986, the government yielded to pressure and introduced the Muslim Woman's (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Act which annulled the Shah Bano verdict to appease conservative Muslim groups. In Hansen's view, the 'size and spontaneity of the mass rallies' – some of the largest of which were held in Bombay – 'indicated that frustration and a sense of insecurity had been fermenting for a long time among Indian Muslims, especially in the major cities'. Just as the protests in Bradford against the publication of *The Satanic Verses* were part of pre-existing tensions and frustrations, the agitation against the Shah Bano verdict 'provided an escape valve' for the accumulated frustration of Bombay's Muslim community.¹⁴³

Against this context, Rushdie reasserts his vision of India, which he frames within the context of his identity as a Bombay Muslim:

I come from Bombay, and from a Muslim family, too. 'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed. To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and a crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once. But the India of the communalists is none of these things.¹⁴⁴

Positioning Bombay as representative of India, Rushdie suggests that the cosmopolitan, secular nature of the city is endangered by the rise in Hindu nationalist and Marathi chauvinism that accompanied the Shiv Sena's rise to power. Given the ways in which the opening of *The*

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 79.

¹⁴¹ The case involved the Supreme Court's decision to award alimony to an elderly Muslim divorcee. For details of the case and its socio-political ramifications, see Shahida Lateef, *Muslim Women in India, Political and Private Realities: 1890s-1980s* (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1990), pp. 192-201. Spivak cites the Shah Bano case in her reading of *The Satanic Verses*, suggesting a continuity between the Indian government's censoring of Rushdie's novel and its censoring of Shah Bano's 'agency' by 'the script of religion and gendering' (Spivak, p. 231).

¹⁴² Hansen (1999), pp. 159, 196.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁴⁴ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 32.

Satanic Verses gestures towards the growing communalisation of Indian identity, it is surprising that the majority of critics fail to acknowledge the importance of this context to the novel in general and, more specifically, to the representation of Gibreel Farishta. In what follows, I will therefore consider in detail Rushdie's representation of the crisis in secularism. While he brings his novel into dialogue with its Indian context in number of ways, I will focus on three characters intimately connected with Bombay and, by extension, the nation: Changez Chamchawala, Zeeny Vakil, and Gibreel Farishta. As Varma suggests, during the 1980s, '[c]osmopolitanism of all stripes was threatened by the rapid foreclosure of alternatives to the right-wing agenda' of the Shiv Sena. In 'an atmosphere of escalating violence', she continues, 'even artistic resistance to this project [...] was not permissible'.¹⁴⁵ Varma privileges film as a locus for such 'artistic resistance'. I move beyond a focus on film alone to consider how, through Changez, Zeeny and Gibreel, Rushdie uses the arts – cinema, but also writing and painting – to explore the crisis in secularism and the notion of endangered cosmopolitanism.

Earlier, I suggested that Changez's status as a man of 'wealth and public standing' (36) contributes to Saladin's detachment from the vernacular life of Bombay. Nevertheless, with his urban, industrial sensibilities, Changez is also located within a Nehruvian vision of India; he was a 'leading light of the nationalist movement' (36), a position connecting him with the secular ideology promoted by Congress during the agitation for Independence. This former position within the nationalist movement frames his changing attitudes towards secularism, which can be productively read in the light of the growing communalisation of national politics.

The movement of national politics away from a focus on pluralism and towards the narrow, parochial politics of communalism is reflected by Changez's mutating handwriting. Changez's letters to Saladin contain increasingly vehement accusations of his betrayal of India; responding to Saladin's decision to 'settle down in London and look for work as an actor' (47), Changez writes: 'do you not feel you owe anything to anyone? To your own country?' (47). This invective is gradually accompanied by a theological bent, the 'theme of demons and possession' (48) returning repeatedly; the religious overtones that begin to permeate the content of the letters is reflected by the mutating style of the writing itself, which 'chang[es] from the

¹⁴⁵ Varma, p. 77.

florid confidence that had made it instantly identifiable and becom[es] narrower, undecorated, purified' (48).

The writing moves away from a style signifying a confident individualism towards one in which Changez's individuality is subsumed into a narrow, implicitly homogeneous, identity, a shift Saladin connects to his father's new religiosity:

His father's transformation disconcerted Saladin, even at such a great distance. His parents had been Muslims in the lackadaisical, light manner of Bombayites; Changez Chamchawala had seemed far more godlike to his infant son than any Allah. That this father, this profane deity (albeit now discredited), had dropped to his knees in his old age and started bowing towards Mecca was hard for his godless son to accept. (48)

Echoing Rushdie's construction of the Bombay-Muslim identity in 'The Riddle of Midnight', Saladin's discomfort at Changez's renewed faith reveals a wider anxiety over the changing character of Bombay itself. Rushdie represents Changez's movement towards religiosity and purity as a movement away from a liberal, heterogeneous 'Bombayite' identity. Indeed, Rushdie presents Changez's religiosity as a paradoxical form of blasphemy, a betrayal of both the confident secularism of Bombay itself and of his 'godless son'.

Furthermore, Changez withdraws from 'a world unsafe for a man of true religious faith' (48). Rushdie's use of the term 'true religious faith' is ambiguous. Placed in contrast to Changez's religiosity, it perhaps refers to what Suleri terms 'Islamic secularism',¹⁴⁶ but also, I suggest, to the ideology of secularism itself. Sharing Mistry's concerns regarding the communalisation of public life, Rushdie implies that, as the public discourse of the city and nation becomes dominated by the politics of communalism and discourses of purity, liberal religiosity and the ideology of secularism become difficult to sustain; similarly, Bombay's 'lackadaisical' cosmopolitan hybridity is revealed as increasingly endangered by the Shiv Sena's rhetoric of religious and regional exclusivity.¹⁴⁷

However, Changez's retreat into religiosity, symbolised by the visual mutation and purification of his handwriting, is incomplete, and is set against his extensive art collection. This

¹⁴⁶ Suleri, p. 190.

¹⁴⁷ Again, this movement towards religious fixity within contemporary Bombay can be positioned in productive dialogue with the representation of Jahilia in the 'Mahound' and 'Return to Jahilia' sections of the novel. Jahilia is initially characterised by 'inconstancy' and by a 'quintessence of unsettlement, shifting, treachery, lack-of-form' (93). The city, however, becomes 'hardened into stagnation' (360) and loses 'its old shifting, provisional quality of mirage' (359) as Mahound's 'power encircle[s]' the city (359) and as Hind's 'ferocity' and 'unflinching resolve' (361) simultaneously increase.

collection, which ‘provided eloquent proof of [...] the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic tradition’ (70), is central both to Rushdie’s valorisation of a secular vision of India in *The Satanic Verses* and to his representation of that vision as endangered in the contemporary socio-political context. Moreover, the viewing of the collection draws together two advocates of Indian secularism, from two different generations: Changez and Zeeny. By bringing them together Rushdie suggests that, as the Nehruvian vision of secularism established by Changez’s generation fades, a new approach, actively resisting communalism and protecting secularism is necessary; in the conversation between the pair there is a sense in which the secular project is ‘handed over’ from Changez’s generation to Zeeny’s.

As Hume claims, Zeeny represents a ‘model for politics and multiculturalism’, acting as a mouthpiece for Rushdie’s own conviction in secularism.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, if, as I have argued, it is to Zeeny’s Bombay that Saladin returns, then it is important to explore the vision of the city and nation that Zeeny represents, and the ways in which it is both celebrated and also revealed as endangered. Zeeny’s close association with a cosmopolitan, secular ideal of the city is made explicit by Saladin who, while in London, thinks of her ‘on that other planet, Bombay, at the far rim of the galaxy: Zeeny, eclecticism, hybridity’ (288). These key terms inform Zeeny’s controversial book on art, *The Only Good Indian*, which contests the ‘confining myth of authenticity’ espoused by ‘Hindu fundamentalism’ (52). In an emphatically Saidian argument, Zeeny uses art to resist homogenising discourses of national identity. Instead, she proposes an ‘ethic of historically validated eclecticism’ (52), asserting that ‘the entire national culture [was] based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest’ (52).¹⁴⁹

Rushdie translates Zeeny’s thesis on national hybridity into a visual representation of secularism through the centrepiece of Changez’s collection, the sixteenth-century Mughal *Hamza-nama* cloths. Rushdie’s use of the *Hamza-nama* is significant for a number of reasons. Commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in approximately 1562, the *Hamza-nama* – a series of fourteen volumes of illustrated manuscripts – narrates the adventures of Amir Hamza,

¹⁴⁸ Hume, p. 220.

¹⁴⁹ In *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), Edward Said argues that ‘the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings’ (p. 261).

the uncle of the Prophet Muhammed, as he sought to convert the world to Islam.¹⁵⁰ The narrative content of the cloths clearly speaks to Rushdie's concern in *The Satanic Verses* with the evolution of Islam. Indeed, by focusing on cloths depicting a 'romance about the conquests of the Prophet Muhammed's uncle',¹⁵¹ Rushdie explicitly connects his representation of contemporary Bombay to that of Jahilia in the seventh century; the crisis in secularism in 1980s Bombay is foreshadowed and framed by the crisis in cosmopolitan pluralism and religious conflict that characterises the transformation of Jahilia from a polytheistic into a monotheistic city.

However, while the narrative content of the cloths is important, the production history of the *Hamza-nama* is crucial to Rushdie's examination of the crisis of secularism in 1980s India. Produced by an atelier of 'Hindu and Indian Muslim painters', whose 'provincial styles were being sublimated' by Persian painting traditions,¹⁵² the *Hamza-nama* bears witness to 'the creation of a unified [...] artistic style from th[e] combination' of traditions 'from both local and distant centers of production'.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the artistic and cultural 'synthesis'¹⁵⁴ found in the *Hamza-nama* parallels Akbar's attempt to 'proclaim a new religious system' which would 'reconcile various of the beliefs he had explored' within India.¹⁵⁵ Although this system would reflect Akbar's imperialist ambitions by positioning him as the 'ultimate authority',¹⁵⁶ it nevertheless privileged both Islamic and Hindu religious and literary traditions in an intellectually inclusive synthesis that, I argue, appeals to Rushdie's vision of Indian, and Islamic, secularism.

Rushdie foregrounds the cultural and artistic synthesis of the cloths' production to offer an understanding of India as constituted by a diversity of national and international identities:

The Mughals had brought artists from every part of India to work on the paintings; individual identity was submerged to create a many-headed, many-brushed Overartist who, literally, *was* Indian painting. One hand would draw the mosaic floors, a second the figures, a third would paint the Chinese-looking cloudy skies. On the backs of the

¹⁵⁰ Milo Cleveland Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, The New Cambridge History of India, 4 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), I:3, p. 26.

¹⁵¹ Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 2 Vols (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), I, p. 17.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁵³ Beach, p. 31.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

cloths were the stories that accompanied the scenes. The pictures would be shown like a movie: held up while someone read out the hero's tale. In the *Hamza-nama* you could see the Persian miniature fusing with Kannada and Karalan painting styles, you could see Hindu and Muslim philosophy forming their characteristically late-Mughal synthesis. (70)

Rushdie's description of the cloths creates a sense of a secular, pan-Indian identity, including different religions and ethnicities, as well as different regional – and international – identities, in the creation of an 'Overartist'. Framed within a syncretic Mughal tradition, Rushdie uses the work to offer a visual representation of Islamic secularism and of Islamic traditions as interacting with, rather than as separate to, India's other cultures, to form a composite national culture. Similarly, the 'Overartist' – 'many-headed' and multi-limbed – invokes popular representations of Hindu gods, adding to the Hindu-Muslim synthesis at the centre of this piece.

It is important to note, however, that within this synthesis, difference is still discernible, each culture remaining distinct even as they fuse. The cloths therefore offer a visual representation of Nehru's dictum of 'unity in diversity', and Rushdie's 'Overartist' echoes Nehru's understanding of the 'personality of India', founded upon the idea that, '[t]hough outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness'.¹⁵⁷ Invoking Nehru's reading of the nation, the cloths also map the precise parameters of the secular cosmopolitanism at the centre of Rushdie's own vision of India. Rushdie's positioning of the cloths within both their original historical context and the contemporary context of 1980s India is therefore important to his engagement with the crisis of secularism and the notion of endangered cosmopolitanism.

The significance of the syncretism and hybridity of the *Hamza-nama* goes beyond its *representation* of secularism. By focussing on sixteenth-century cloths commissioned by Akbar, Rushdie locates his representation of a multi-regional, multi-religious Indian identity within contemporary debates surrounding the Babri Masjid, itself built in that century by Akbar's grandfather, Babur. By placing the Mughals at the centre of the creation of a pan-Indian identity, Rushdie undermines Hindu nationalist representations of Muslims as an invading

¹⁵⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Discovery of India*, Centenary edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1946]), p. 59.

Mughal other threatening the ‘continuing historical cohesion’ of Indian culture.¹⁵⁸ Resisting constructions of Muslims as exterior to Indian national culture – a representation underpinning the leaflets protesting against the Ayesha pilgrimage – Rushdie represents them as pioneers in the creation of a national culture, essential to the evolution of a multicultural Indian identity.

If the *Hamza-nama* embodies Rushdie’s ideal of secular cosmopolitanism, it also represents that ideal as deeply endangered; the cultural hybridity demonstrated by the cloths is gradually disintegrating, and their condition is not ‘A-1’ (70). Linda York Leach explains that the original cloths ‘were an obvious target for iconoclasts’ and ‘[m]any scenes had been systematically defaced by religious fanatics’ in the centuries after their production.¹⁵⁹ Rushdie rewrites this iconoclasm as less a systematic attack on religion as such, but rather as a careless neglect of the secular syncretism promoted by the cloths: the government has declined Changez’s offer of the ‘whole collection free gratis’ (70), showing no interest in ‘hous[ing] it properly’ (70). The deterioration of the cloths indicates that Rushdie shares Mistry’s anxiety regarding the government’s failure to endorse secular models of nation positively. Through this indifference towards preserving the *Hamza-nama*, Rushdie critiques the Congress government’s ‘fail[ure] to support the “myth of secularism”’ during the 1980s,¹⁶⁰ as it neglected active resistance to the encroachment of communalism on the one hand, and opportunistically manipulated religious sentiment in election campaigns on the other.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the government’s refusal to protect art bearing witness to what Zeeny might term the historically validated position of Muslims within India points towards the ‘soft saffron’ politics of the Congress government, and its increasing accommodation of Hindu nationalist sentiment.¹⁶² The implication is that the nation, like the cloths themselves, is in danger of fragmenting and disintegrating as public discourse shifts from a focus on secularism to a focus on separatism and communalism; a significant part of the responsibility for this, Rushdie infers, lies with the Congress government itself.

¹⁵⁸ Hansen (1999), p. 178.

¹⁵⁹ Leach, p. 112.

¹⁶⁰ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 114.

¹⁶¹ See Corbridge & Harriss, pp. 114-18.

¹⁶² Ahmad (2000), p. 216.

Significantly, the *Hamza-nama* cloths are situated within a performative tradition, and ‘would be shown like a movie’ (70). I will keep these gradually disintegrating images of secularism in mind as I turn to Gibreel Farishta’s centrality to Rushdie’s engagement with the politics of 1980s India. Gibreel is regularly read as crucial to Rushdie’s exploration of migrancy. Pivotal to Bhabha’s reading of the novel, Gibreel represents an ‘avenging migrant’, ‘marginaliz[ing] and singulariz[ing] the totality of [the] national culture’ of England.¹⁶³ Similarly, for Ian Baucom, Gibreel’s tropicalisation of London is a redemptive act that both ‘erases [...] boundaries and collapses the distinction between the here and the elsewhere’ and ‘reveal[s] a new way of being English’.¹⁶⁴ I have already problematised such optimistic readings, in the light of the potentially illiberal and authoritarian implications of his tropicalisation of London. In what follows, I shift the familiar framework within which Gibreel is often read, and consider him within his Indian context. By privileging Gibreel’s position as a migrant in London, and by largely ignoring his representation before he leaves his homeland, critics often miss the way that Rushdie carefully situates him within India and the ways in which he can be productively read in relation to Indianness rather than Englishness, and in relation to national rather than migrant identity.¹⁶⁵ I therefore focus on Gibreel’s position within Indian cinema, and the representation of his near death and subsequent disappearance from Bombay.¹⁶⁶ Varma offers a compelling reading of the cinematic intertext of *The Satanic Verses*, arguing that ‘*Shri 420* is as real as Bombay gets, an idea that [Rushdie] embraces by offering a narrative that produces Bombay as cinema’.¹⁶⁷ While I draw upon Varma’s understanding of the provincialisation of Bombay, I approach Rushdie’s use of the cinematic from a different angle,

¹⁶³ Bhabha, pp. 168-69.

¹⁶⁴ Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 212.

¹⁶⁵ I have highlighted the exclusive focus on England/London of critics such as Baucom, Bhabha, Brennan (1989), Gane, Gikandi, Kalliney, McLeod, Nasta, and Procter; see also: Martin Corner, ‘Beyond Revisions: Rushdie, Newness and the End of Authenticity’, in *The Revision of Englishness*, ed. by David Rogers & John McLeod (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 154-67; Brian Finney draws parallels between the novel’s engagement with Thatcherism and Islam in ‘Demonizing Discourse in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*’, *ARIEL*, 29:3 (1998), 67-93; Yasmine Gooneratne concentrates on the immigrant’s experiences after leaving India in ‘Images of Indian Exile in Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* and Ruth Pravar Jhabvala’s *Three Continents*’, in *Literature and Exile*, ed. by David Bevan (Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 7-21.

¹⁶⁶ For an exploration of Rushdie’s use of cinematic language and techniques in the narratological framework of *The Satanic Verses*, see Nicholas. D. Rombes, ‘*The Satanic Verses* as a Cinematic Narrative’, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 21:1 (1993), 47-53.

¹⁶⁷ Varma, p. 74.

and consider Gibreel's acting career – rather than the filmic intertext for his characterisation – in relation to the Bombay's 'endangered cosmopolitanism'.

Mishra asserts that Bombay, or Bollywood, cinema is close to being an 'all-India cinema',¹⁶⁸ while Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel claim that it is 'the national cinema of India'.¹⁶⁹ By positioning Gibreel as 'the biggest star in the history of the Indian movies' (11), Rushdie closely identifies Gibreel with both Bombay itself and India as a whole. Similarly, by closely modelling him on the actor Amitabh Bachchan, who dominated Bollywood from 1973 to 1990, Rushdie associates Gibreel with 'arguably, the last of the pan-Indian film heroes'.¹⁷⁰ However, unlike Bachchan, who rose to fame performing the anti-heroic angry young man, Gibreel achieves his pan-Indian identity by playing the lead role in 'theological movies' (24), and it is through these performances that his significance in relation to the nation can be read. Rushdie presents Gibreel's career as a performance of India's secularism: 'Gibreel had spent the greater part of his unique career incarnating, with absolute conviction, the countless deities of the subcontinent' (16). In a similar way to the 'Overartist' behind the *Hamza-nama* cloths, Gibreel represents a paradigm of secularism. A Muslim performing predominantly Hindu myths and deities – he appears as Krishna, Hanuman, Ganesh, and Gautama – Gibreel 'succeeded in crossing religious boundaries without giving offence' (16), becoming the very incarnation of India's diversity. The 'absolute conviction' with which Gibreel performs these roles, alongside the public's enthusiasm for his performances, suggests a national commitment to the ideology of secularism which he symbolises. His reputation as the embodiment of a secular ideal extends beyond India, and Gibreel is hailed by John Maslama in London as 'a rainbow coalition of the celestial; a walking United Nations of gods!' (192). He is, Rushdie remarks, 'a figure of inter-

¹⁶⁸ Mishra, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindu Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 8-9.

¹⁷⁰ Mishra, p. 127. Rushdie's characterisation of Gibreel is informed by Bachchan's biography in a number of ways: his dominant position within Bombay Cinema; the on-set accident he suffers and his subsequent mysterious illness; his affair with the actress Rehka, which is translated in *The Satanic Verses* into an affair with the business woman also named Rekha. Rushdie combines Bachchan's biography with conventional plots from Bollywood films, most notably that of the 'rags-to-riches' theme: Gibreel rises from his poor childhood as a slum-dweller to become India's most popular film star, inhabiting an expensive penthouse in Malabar Hills (13). For an exploration of Bachchan's life, see Mishra, pp. 127-56.

religious tolerance, playing Hindu gods without causing offence, in spite of his Muslim origins'.¹⁷¹

Suleri problematises this characterisation by reading Gibreel as a 'brilliant synecdoche of religious warfare', interpreting the nation's response to his disappearance as a mourning of the 'obliteration of both religions [Hinduism and Islam]' in India.¹⁷² I agree that Rushdie's representation of Gibreel is more complicated than he seems to allow. However, I argue that, rather than representing the obliteration of specific religions in India, Gibreel's disappearance has important implications for Rushdie's engagement with the crisis in India's secular cosmopolitanism more generally. For if, as Rushdie asserts, Gibreel is the embodiment of the nation's secularism, then his crisis of faith and his two 'deaths' – the first during his illness, the second after his disappearance – gain wider significance.

Gibreel's mysterious illness after an accident on set directly echoes the near fatal septicaemia suffered by Bachchan in 1982. Mishra remarks that 'nothing in Indian film history [...] had the same impact on the Indian nation' as Bachchan's illness,¹⁷³ and describes the 'dramatic scenes [that] were [...] performed' throughout India, from the pilgrimages to Bombay's Breach Candy hospital where Bachchan was treated, to the temples, mosques, churches, and *gurudvārās* full of anxious fans offering prayers for his recovery.¹⁷⁴ In *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel's illness is greeted by a similar nationwide concern:

A mood of apprehension settled over the nation, because if God had unleashed such an act of retribution against his most celebrated incarnation, what did he have in store for the rest of the country? If Gibreel died, could India be far behind? In the mosques and the temples of the nation, packed congregations prayed, not only for the life of the dying actor, but for the future, for themselves. (29)

Rushdie reframes the public response to Bachchan's illness, already an inter-religious event, within the context of Gibreel's performance of India's secularism, and presents the public concern for Gibreel as a self-reflexive anxiety over the nation's own future. As Gibreel's condition deteriorates, the ideal of religious diversity he symbolises is similarly placed under threat, and the crisis of his health embodies a wider crisis in India's secular identity. Rushdie

¹⁷¹ Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', p. 404.

¹⁷² Suleri, p. 201.

¹⁷³ Mishra, p. 142.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 144.

emphasises the political implications of Gibreel's illness through the visits of the Prime Minister and '[h]er son the airline pilot' (28). Although these are direct references to those received by Bachchan, Rushdie uses the connection to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to heighten the political ramifications of Gibreel's illness and its significance for the survival of Nehruvian secularism.

The connection made between Gibreel's destiny and that of the nation continues into his recovery. While India 'celebrate[d] its own deliverance as well as his', marking his recovery with a 'national holiday', it soon 'became clear that he had changed, and to a startling degree, because he had lost his faith' (29). Paradoxically, this loss of faith, in which Gibreel expresses his new atheism by eating the 'pig's trotters of secularism' (29), is also a retreat from such secularism. Gibreel withdraws from his performance of religious diversity and, indeed, from India itself. His loss of faith might therefore represent a withdrawal akin to Changez's from 'true religious faith' (48). While the pair ostensibly move in opposite directions, Changez towards religion and Gibreel away from it, the 'faith' from which both men are distanced is represented as secular or, indeed, as secularism. Thus, Gibreel's atheism translates into a substitution of religious pluralism by a schizophrenic obsession with the foundation of Islam which structures much of the book.

Changez's withdrawal from 'true religious faith' is prefigured by Gibreel's disappearance from Bombay, which is represented as 'the death of God. Or something very like it' (16). If Gibreel represents, in his on-screen performances, a paradigm of secularism and inter-religious dialogue, then I suggest that the decaying images of him after his departure from Bombay reflect the decline of those ideals, in a similar way to the disintegrating *Hamza-nama* cloths. Repeating his physical deterioration during his illness, after his disappearance images of Gibreel's 'face began to rot' (15). In Bombay, 'mammoth cardboard effigies [...] were seen to decay and list' (16), while '[h]is portraits on the covers of movie magazines acquired the pallor of death, a nullity about the eye, a hollowness', until they eventually 'simply faded off the printed page' (16). On screen, Gibreel's 'supposedly immortal physiognomy began to putrefy, blister and bleach', until 'malfunctioning projectors burned his celluloid memory away' (16).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Significantly, the putrefaction of Gibreel's image – as well as of the *Hamza-nama* cloths themselves – is echoed in the conflict over Jahilia's religious and cultural identity, and its movement from polytheism

Given that Gibreel's had once been 'the most acceptable, and instantly recognizable face' (16-17) of an apparently pantheistic, pan-Indian 'Supreme' being (17) – a pseudo-divine icon of secularism or, in Rushdie's words, 'a secular equivalent of angelic half-divinity'¹⁷⁶ – then the erosion of his image has important implications for the religious diversity it symbolises. Just as the deterioration of the *Hamza-nama* cloths implied that the pan-Indian, inter-religious identity depicted on them is fading in the public domain, so Gibreel's decomposing image reflects the change in Bombay's political landscape, as the city's secular cosmopolitan identity is increasingly endangered by Hindu and Marathi majoritarianism.

The socio-political implications of Gibreel's decline are further reflected by his brief and unsuccessful attempt at a 'comeback' (513). His first films, cinematic versions of his dreams dealing with Islamic history, faith and culture – *The Parting of the Arabian Sea* and *Mahound* – 'hit every imaginable religious reef, and sunk without trace' (513). He follows these with a critical 'modern-dress remake of the Ramayana story' (539), which depicts Rama and Sita as 'corrupt and evil instead of pure and free from sin' (539). The failure of these projects reveals that the cinematic form, mirroring the public life of Bombay, has itself become increasingly communalised. Talbot contends that the rise of Shiv Sena in the 1980s 'inevitably impacted upon the Bombay cinema', resulting in difficulty for Muslim actors in securing roles.¹⁷⁷ Mishra further observes the 'limited space occupied by Muslim culture and history in the popular film', despite a number of its important stars and production teams being Muslims themselves.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, while Mishra highlights the 'cultural syncretism' central to the production of Bollywood films, he suggests that such hybridity works in tandem with an

to monotheism. Like Gibreel, Abu Simbel is positioned as an embodiment of cultural pluralism and hybridity. Suspicious of Mahound's 'terrifying singularity' (102), Simbel is 'always divided, always two or three or fifteen' (102). As Jahilia is transformed from a plural, cosmopolitan city into a 'prosaic place, quotidian' (359) – and, arguably, parochial – Simbel is rendered increasingly powerless. Thus, 'Hind and not Simbel came to be thought of by Jahilians as the embodiment of the city, its living avatar, because they found in her physical unchangingness and in the unflinching resolve of her proclamations a description of themselves far more palatable than the picture they saw in the mirror of Simbel's crumbling face' (360). If Gibreel's decomposing image indicates the ways in which Bombay's secular cosmopolitanism is increasingly endangered by Hindu-Marathi majoritarianism and rising communalism, then Simbel's 'crumbling face' perhaps offers a comparable symbol of the decline in Jahilia's cosmopolitan, multicultural plurality and for the city's cultural 'deca[y]' (360).

¹⁷⁶ Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', p. 397.

¹⁷⁷ Talbot, p. 190.

¹⁷⁸ Mishra, p. 217.

‘implicit directive to work within the formal determinants of Hindu culture’.¹⁷⁹ In this light, the failure of Gibreel’s later projects reflects the marginalisation of Muslim culture and history in both the cultural and the political spheres. It is therefore significant that, while Gibreel’s early films represented an ideal of secularism, the subject matter and pantheon portrayed was predominantly Hindu (Krishna, Hanuman and Ganesh), and Gibreel ‘descended from the heavens’ only on ‘infrequent occasions’ to perform a rare Muslim role, such as the ‘Grand Mughal’ (16). The apparently egalitarian secularism of the early films is underwritten, then, by an inequality which reveals how, even in this apparently more pluralist period, the film industry privileges Hindu mythology and culture over Muslim and other non-Hindu cultures.

Furthermore, George Miranda expects Gibreel’s Ramayana film to cause controversy, commenting that it ‘[l]ooks like he’s trying deliberately to set up a final confrontation with religious sectarians’ (539). While it was previously acceptable for Gibreel to perform Hindu myths, his desire to represent the Ramayana in a less favourable light is dangerous in a nation increasingly dominated by the discourse of *Hindutva*, particularly given the privileging of the Ramayana as a foundational text in constructions of the Hindu nation.¹⁸⁰ The result of such a confrontation, according to George, is that ‘he’ll be broken to bits’ (539). This threat of proliferation is a prophecy fulfilled not by Hindu fundamentalists, but by Gibreel’s final suicide, an act which raises once again the question of whether ‘[i]f Gibreel died, could India be far behind?’ (29). Bhupen Gandhi gives a concise answer: ‘An actor from a minority playing roles from many religions and being accepted. If he has fallen out of favour, it’s a bad sign’ (540).

Rushdie emphasises this point by focussing, in the closing stages of the novel, on the escalation of communalism across India, surveying recent history through the newspaper and magazine reports Saladin reads: ‘Communalism, sectarian tension, was omnipresent: as if the gods were going to war. In the eternal struggle between the world’s beauty and its cruelty, cruelty was gaining ground by the day’ (518). Nevertheless, despite this survey of the contemporary communal tensions, Rushdie is not prepared to relinquish completely his vision of secularism, and maintains the possibility of the survival of his particular idea of India.

¹⁷⁹ Mishra, p. 63.

¹⁸⁰ Hansen (1999), p. 174.

through the presence of resistance. Thus, the anti-Shiv Sena demonstration Zeeny organises, which is expected to receive ‘every type of harassment, from police obstructionism to out-and-out assaults’ (537), passes successfully, with only a ‘few minor skirmishes’ (541). While *The Satanic Verses* represents India as increasingly dominated by the politics of communalism, it also continues to offer the possibility that such forces can be overcome, although Zeeny’s emphasis on the necessity of demonstrations against communalism and hegemonic nationalism suggests that this possibility must be actively sought, rather than passively assumed.

‘Secularism, for India’, Rushdie maintains, ‘is not simply a point of view; it is a question of survival’,¹⁸¹ and his attitude towards such survival, and the possibility of India’s proliferation into religious sectarianism, can be gauged by once more turning to ‘The Riddle of Midnight’. This essay reveals Rushdie’s profound and persistent investment in the Nehruvian vision of a secular nation, despite his paradoxical recognition that such a vision has become deeply endangered by the traumas of rising communalism. While Rushdie concedes that ‘the linkage between Hindu fundamentalism and the idea of the nation shows no sign of weakening’, he goes on to dismiss the idea of the ‘Balkanization of India’ – its disintegration into religious and ethnic separatism – by quoting a fellow Bombayite who asserts, ‘[w]e don’t need glue [...]. India isn’t going to fall apart’.¹⁸²

This sustained belief in the persistence and strength of what, in 1997, he calls the ‘India-idea’¹⁸³ exposes a deeply nationalist strain in Rushdie’s writing, for he insists on the necessity of both celebrating India’s secularism and resisting the threats to that founding principle. Indeed, Rushdie’s reluctance, if not refusal, to conceptualise the failure of the secular project – and therefore the ‘India-idea’ itself – is suggested by his statement that ‘[i]f what Indians call “communalism” [...] were to be allowed to take control of the polity, the results would be too horrifying to imagine’.¹⁸⁴ The difficulty Rushdie faces in the late 1980s in negotiating between his conflicting understandings of the Indian nation, caught between an almost obstinate utopian vision of inter-religious tolerance, pluralism and diversity, and a

¹⁸¹ Rushdie, ‘In Good Faith’, p. 404.

¹⁸² Rushdie, ‘The Riddle of Midnight’, p. 33.

¹⁸³ Salman Rushdie, ‘India’s Fiftieth Anniversary’, in *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 159-64 (p. 164).

¹⁸⁴ Rushdie, ‘In Good Faith’, p. 404.

mournful recognition of the historical evidence of the weakening of the secular project, is revealed in the closing scene of *The Satanic Verses*. As I have demonstrated, the novel's ending is unresolved, and the Bombay to which Saladin returns remains unmapped and unlocated; Zeeny's space of hybridity, pluralism, and resistance to religious sectarianism and exclusionary nationalisms, has yet to be achieved and is left suspended in the future. The ambiguity of this ending reflects Rushdie's own uncertainty about the future of the 'idea of India' itself, and his difficulty in maintaining optimism in the context of India's violent contemporary realities. While in 'The Riddle of Midnight', he stresses the 'resilience' of India, 'its survival in spite of everything', and maintains that 'the old functioning anarchy will, somehow or other, keep on functioning', he is unable to conceptualise this survival confidently, ending with the precarious statement: 'But don't ask me how'.¹⁸⁵

Rushdie's ambivalent positioning of Bombay and India, caught between cosmopolitan secularism and parochial religious chauvinism reflects and intersects with his ambivalent representation of individual cosmopolitanisms. As my examination of *The Satanic Verses* has shown, while critical of parochial cosmopolitanisms that are implicated within illiberal or reactionary nationalisms, Rushdie does not invest in a transcendent cosmopolitanism. Rather, like Mistry, he insists that the cosmopolitan migrant should become engaged with local politics, and with what Craig Calhoun might call 'active citizenship'.¹⁸⁶ But, whereas Mistry represents migrants who are, finally, unable or unwilling to engage with the material realities of 1970s and 1980s Bombay, Rushdie does begin to attempt to formulate what such 'active citizenship' might look like, through Saladin's relationship with Zeeny. Nevertheless, he does not offer a model of engaged cosmopolitanism, but rather gestures towards its possibilities. As we shall see, Rushdie's difficulty in positioning himself – as a cosmopolitan writer and a Bombayite – in relation to India, becomes more acute, and his negotiation of his position more anxious, as he explores the politics of Bombay in the 1990s. In the late 1980s, meanwhile, Rushdie's difficulty in negotiating this position is perhaps reflected by his inability to conceptualise the survival of secularism itself, implied by his plea for the reader not to 'ask [...] how' this will occur. This

¹⁸⁵ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 33.

¹⁸⁶ Calhoun, p. 95.

plea both indicates his anxieties over the renegotiation of ideas of India in the late 1980s, but also over his own position in relation to those ideas, and his own sense of how, as a cosmopolitan, he might remain engaged with the politics of his Indian homeland.

Chapter Four

'Not Proper but Improper Bombay': From Bombay to Mumbai in *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Introduction

In their historical overview of Bombay's evolution, Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrota explain that 'Bombay was never conceived or built in a single image'.¹ Rather, Bombay comprises 'parallel cities' which 'have now coalesced into a singular but multi-faceted entity'. Thus, 'the city's image comprises of [*sic*] strange yet familiar juxtapositions – a roadside Hindu shrine abuts St. Thomas' Cathedral, chimney stacks are dwarfed by skyscrapers, fishing villages and slums nestle at the foot of luxury apartments'.² Foregrounding the cultural, religious, social and economic diversity of the city, Dwivedi and Mehrota understand Bombay as a space in which 'many ideas and interests' jostle together to become 'united [...] in a single space'.³ At the same time, while the diverse communities 'coalesced into a singular but multi-faceted entity', the 'strange yet familiar juxtapositions' of Bombay's 'parallel cities' bear witness to the sustained tensions between different socio-economic and cultural communities in the 1990s. It is therefore surprising that, despite being published in 1995 – the year of the city's name-change – Dwivedi and Mehrota make little reference to the political and social transformations which lay beneath the translation of the city's identity from Bombay to Mumbai. While their detailed examination of the city's economic, social and architectural evolution emphasises notions of the '*pukka*' and the '*kutcha*'⁴ – the legitimate and illegitimate – they do not relate Bombay's changing spatial cartography to what Arjun Appadurai calls its 'decosmopolitaniz[ation]' in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵ The poverty 'nestl[ing] at the foot of luxury' is not, in their account, brought into dialogue with the rise of the Shiv Sena or its violently parochial politics.

Negotiating a similar juxtaposition of the '*pukka*' and the '*kutcha*', or what he terms the 'official city and [the] unofficial', Suketu Mehta connects the socio-economic discrepancies between poverty and luxury to the city's renaming as Mumbai.⁶ As I noted in the Introduction,

¹ Sharada Dwivedi & Rahul Mehrota, *Bombay: The Cities Within* (Bombay: India Book House, 1995), p. 9.

² *ibid.*, p. 309.

³ *ibid.*, pp. 9, 309.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 311.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai'. *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), 627-51 (p. 649).

⁶ Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (London: Review, 2004), p. 120.

Mehta positions the city's renaming within the emergence of a 'Maharashtrian underclass' which 'had gained political power, strength, and a desperate confidence' in the light of the Shiv Sena's political success. '[A]dvancing closer and closer' to his secular, bourgeois 'world', the 'other Bombay', he claims, 'now sneaks in' to remap the city in terms of religion and culture, but also class.⁷ The notion of parallel 'pukka' and 'kutcha' cities informs my exploration of *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) in this chapter, in which I examine Rushdie's representation of Bombay as a contested terrain caught in the simultaneous conflict between and intersection of discourses of secularism, Hindu-Marathi chauvinism, and global capitalism. The relationship between social class and the rewriting of Bombay's cultural identity emphasised by Mehta, alongside the movement of the city between 'singular' and 'multi-faceted' understandings of its cultural cartography, are crucial to Rushdie's engagement with the continuing crisis of secularism in the 1990s and his concern that an 'other Bombay' is 'sneak[ing] in' to destroy his vision of the city and nation.

Published in 1995, *The Moor's Last Sigh* was Rushdie's first substantial novel since *The Satanic Verses* (1988), although in the intervening years he produced an allegorical children's novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), the collection of non-fiction, *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), and *East, West* (1994), a collection of short stories.⁸ While *The Moor's Last Sigh* bears the traces of Rushdie's experiences during the *fatwa* years – most notably in the narrator's incarceration and exile – the novel more significantly maps his changing attitudes towards Bombay, as well as his continued examination of the legacy of the Nehruvian vision of India, and the changing position of minority communities within it. There are, therefore, important thematic continuities, as well as narrative echoes, between *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and the later novel develops a number of the anxieties regarding the survival of secularism that are important to the earlier text. If, in 1987, Rushdie was anxious that India was in danger of disintegrating into competing discourses of fundamentalism and separatism, then on the fiftieth anniversary of Independence ten years later he remained apprehensive. Mourning the 'battering administered by history' to the idea of India, he writes:

⁷ Mehta, p. 53.

⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (London: Granta, 1990), *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), *East, West* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

If, in August 1947, many Indians had idealistic hopes of a great new beginning, then August 1997 is suffused by the sense of an ending. Another age is ending: the first age, one might say, of the history of post-colonial India. It has not been the promised golden age of freedom. The prevailing mood is one of disenchantment.⁹

Nevertheless, despite a ‘convincing list of reasons for this disenchantment’, Rushdie retains – as he did in 1987 – a sustained conviction in the ‘strength of the India-idea’;¹⁰ he therefore insists on the celebration of the ‘India-idea’ as perhaps ‘the most innovative national philosophy to have emerged in the post-colonial period’.¹¹

However, there is once more a tension between Rushdie’s fiction and his non-fiction. Published two years before India’s fiftieth anniversary, and two years after the post-Ayodhya rioting and bombings, *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is marked by an ambivalence towards the ‘India-idea’ which is indicative of its production between these moments of national celebration and national mourning. Rushdie translates the ‘prevailing mood of disenchantment’ into a representation both of the failure of, and a nostalgia for, the ‘idealistic hopes’ of Independence. As Rudolf Beck asserts, the novel is a ‘melancholy and elegiac good-bye to the diversity of Nehru’s India, the India Rushdie himself has always considered as “his” India’;¹² it is also, I argue, a critique of that very vision of the nation.

The Moor’s Last Sigh combines a complex architecture of plot with a vast historical and geographical reach stretching from the ejection of Muslims from Spain in the fifteenth century, and the colonisation of Bombay and Goa by the Portuguese in the sixteenth, to the series of bombs which exploded across Bombay in 1993. Narrated by Moraes Zogoiby – the ‘Moor’ – during his imprisonment in Spain by his mother’s ex-lover and artistic rival, Vasco Miranda, the novel tells the history of postcolonial Bombay and India through the lives of the Da Gama-Zogoiby family. Ageing at double speed, and born with a deformed right hand, Moraes is, as John Clement Ball notes, ‘a metaphor for post-Independence India (both in terms of population

⁹ Salman Rushdie, ‘India’s Fiftieth Anniversary’, in *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 159-64 (p. 160).

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 164, 160.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 164.

¹² Rudolf Beck, ‘“The Rediscovery of India”: Palimpsest, Multiplicity and Melodrama in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*’, in *New Worlds: Discovering and Constructing the Unknown in Anglophone Literature*, ed. by Martin Kuester, Gabriele Christ & Rudolf Beck (Munich: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 2000), pp. 17-33 (p. 23).

and development), and specifically Bombay'.¹³ Stretching from 1957 to 1993, Moraes' life covers a number of key moments in both Bombay's and India's postcolonial history: the language riots, and the subsequent partition of Bombay in the late 1950s and early 1960s; the wars with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1971; the 1975-77 Emergency; the Bombay textile strike of 1982-83; Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984; the rise of Rajiv Gandhi to Prime Ministerial position, and his subsequent assassination in 1991; the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, and the ensuing violence, including the 1993 blasts.

Moraes narrates history from within a marginal minority community. A 'real Bombay mix',¹⁴ he is the product of generations of miscegenation, the son of the Catholic Aurora Da Gama, a descendant of Portuguese spice traders, and Abraham Zogoiby, a Cochin Jew who claims descent from the illegitimate child of Boabdil, the last Moorish king of Granada. Thus, Moraes' identity bears witness to migrations into and within India, his parents having migrated from Kerala to Bombay in 1945 (119). The central plot follows Moraes as he moves between the secular, intellectual and aesthetic world of his mother, the volatile, empty, postmodern hybridity of Uma Sarasvati, the violent *dada* culture of the Mumbai Axis, and the global capitalist world of his father. Moraes' movement between these alternative spaces is traced in Aurora's art, in which he becomes a symbol for India. Aurora's art therefore provides the centrepiece of Rushdie's exploration of the contest between, and intersection of, three myths of the nation and the city – the secular, the Hindu nationalist, and the global capitalist. Similarly, through Aurora's art, Rushdie self-consciously examines the difficulty of adequately representing the nation, both politically and imaginatively, as well as the relationship between aesthetics and politics itself.

As this summary demonstrates, there are a number of important representations of migrant identity in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, culminating in Moraes' own final migration to Spain. Keeping Moraes' final migration from India in mind, the central focus of this chapter will be Rushdie's representation of the changing identities of the city and the nation. Remembering my discussion of endangered cosmopolitanism in the previous chapter, I explore Rushdie's engagement with, and critique of, the competing discourses of secularism and Hindu nationalism

¹³ John Clement Ball, 'Acid in the Nation's Bloodstream: Satire, Violence, and the Indian Body Politic in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *International Fiction Review*, 27:1/2 (2000), 37-47 (p. 40).

¹⁴ Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 104. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

as they developed in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly within Bombay. I begin by examining the continuities between Rushdie's representation of the decline of secularism and rise of the Shiv Sena in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. I then move on to discuss in more detail the representation of the rise of a localised Hindu nationalism in the later novel, through Raman Fielding and the Mumbai Axis. An exploration of Rushdie's representation of the MA necessitates a discussion of gender and, more specifically, the way in which Hindu nationalism traffics both in myths of a feminised Mother India and in discourses of martial masculinity. I also consider Rushdie's representation of Fielding as appropriating and manipulating rhetorics of cosmopolitanism and secularism. In the final section, I explore Rushdie's engagement with the socio-economic cartography of the city, and its transition from 'Proper' to 'Improper' Bombay.

The Moor's Last Sigh and Midnight's Children

While *The Moor's Last Sigh* continues the critique of cosmopolitanism that is central to *The Satanic Verses*, it is involved in a significant dialogue with *Midnight's Children* (1981). As Stephen Baker remarks, 'Rushdie seems to be trying to construct some sort of a continuum from *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*'.¹⁵ A number of characters and events from the earlier two novels reappear in the third, most notably Saleem's son Adam, and Zeeny Vakil, who returns as the curator of the Zogoiby Bequest. Such self-referential intertextuality leads Laura Moss to comment that '[i]t seems that in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie has consumed his own work, regurgitated it, and created a new story from fragments of the old'.¹⁶ Criticism has often focused on Rushdie's revision of the 'absurdly, romantically optimistic' ending of *Midnight's Children*, published fourteen years earlier.¹⁷ Ball asserts that, put simply, '*The Moor's Last Sigh* brings *Midnight's Children*'s politics up to date' by moving beyond the Emergency of 1975-77 and into the 'ideological crises' of the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁸ A result of such 'updating', according to Deepika Bahri, is that Rushdie's 'treatment of hybridity and polyglossia takes a new turn' and 'evinces a far more complicated stance toward

¹⁵ Stephen Baker, "'You Must Remember This": Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 35:1 (2000), 43-54 (p. 51).

¹⁶ Laura Moss, "'Forget those damnfool realists!": Salman Rushdie's Self-Parody as the Magic Realist's "Last Sigh"', *ARIEL*, 29:4 (1998), 121-39 (p. 137).

¹⁷ Salman Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987', in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 26-33 (p. 33).

¹⁸ Ball, p. 39.

hybridity'.¹⁹ Bahri identifies a shift away from the 'insistence on the culturally hybrid nation' in *Midnight's Children* towards a more circumspect examination of the 'hazards of indeterminacy'.²⁰ Moss, meanwhile, contends that the later novel offers a critique and a parody of *Midnight's Children*, both of the 'naïve optimism' of its content and of the form of magic realism itself. Aadam – now Adam – is central to this process, as a figure in whom 'Saleem's metaphorical hope for the future of India is truncated'; at the level of form, Rushdie 'questions the efficacy of magic realism' as a mode of resistance to corruption and fundamentalism.²¹

These critics tend to highlight the continuities between the novels in order, paradoxically, to suggest the *discontinuity* between their visions of India, with the optimistic utopianism of the first novel apparently being replaced by the darker representation of India found in the second. While I agree that the 1995 novel takes a more critical stance in relation to hybridity and secularism, it is important to recognise that the anxieties over the survival of the secular vision of India which dominate *The Moor's Last Sigh* are already present in *Midnight's Children*; as Tim Parnell notes, 'Saleem's narrative of modern India is hardly an unqualified celebration'.²² I therefore begin by exploring Rushdie's representation, in *Midnight's Children*, of two events which constitute key moments in the movement of both Bombay and India away from a Nehruvian ideal of secular, cosmopolitan multi-ethnicity: firstly, the 1950s language riots and the partition of the State of Bombay in 1960; secondly, the 1975-7 Emergency.

The language riots which spread across Bombay in the mid-1950s, and the partition of Bombay which followed, provide an important context for my reading of *The Moor's Last Sigh* for two reasons. Firstly, they are significant to Bombay's movement from multi-ethnic cosmopolitanism towards the Hindu-Marathi parochialism promoted by the Shiv Sena; secondly, and in the light of this shift, they provide the context for Moraes' birth in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, in 1957.²³ As Thomas Blom Hansen explains, in response to Nehru's announcement in 1956 that

¹⁹ Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 179.

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

²¹ Moss, pp. 126, 129.

²² Tim Parnell, 'Salman Rushdie: From Colonial Politics to Postmodern Poetics', in *Writing India, 1957-1990: The Literature of British India*, ed. by Bart Moore-Gilbert (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 236-62 (p. 255).

²³ Moraes' date of birth has multiple significances: 1957 was the centenary of the Indian rebellion, or 'Mutiny'; 1957 also saw the election of India's first Communist state government in Kerala, an event

Bombay was to be granted status as a Union Territory, a 'Battle for Bombay' erupted.²⁴ Nehru's proposal was intended to resist pressure from the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS – the United Maharashtra Party) for Bombay's inclusion within a monolingual Marathi state of Maharashtra, a move unpopular with both the city's economic and political elite, as well as its non-Marathi-speaking communities. However, violent protests and demonstrations followed Nehru's announcement and, over the next three years, the SMS formed a united alliance with other non-Congress parties and made significant electoral gains, most notably in 1957, when it won a majority in the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

The movement for a monolingual state won the 'Battle for Bombay', and in 1960 the old Bombay State was divided between Gujarat and the newly created state of Maharashtra, into which the city itself was incorporated. While the SMS had largely disintegrated by 1960, its significance, and that of Bombay's inclusion within Maharashtra, lay in its promotion of a Marathi chauvinist narrative of the city. As Hansen notes, the Samyukta movement reimagined Bombay as 'a Marathi cultural space'.²⁵ Furthermore, according to Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, those in favour of Bombay's inclusion within Maharashtra 'argued that Maharashtrian castes had been the true natives of Bombay', thereby excluding all non-Maharashtrian, non-Hindu identities from the imaginative cartography of the city.²⁶ The regionalist/linguistic construction of Bombay was paired with a pro-Hindu, anti-Muslim rhetoric, as supporters 'rallied around a single narrative of the emergence of a Marathi-speaking people [...] not to be subdued by Muslim invaders'.²⁷ Crucially, by 'boost[ing] the political status of Maharashtrians', the division of the Bombay State laid the foundations for the rise of the Shiv Sena. The 'new political status', Katzenstein explains, 'released expectations about the prospective position of the Maharashtrian community in Bombay to which the Shiv Sena's emergence can be traced', as it sought to

directly relevant to Rushdie's representation of that state in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The film *Mother India* was also released in 1957.

²⁴ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 42.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁶ Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Politics in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 46.

²⁷ Hansen (2001), p. 43.

address and realise these expectations.²⁸ In this light, Appadurai contends that '[i]n retrospect, 1956 marks a moment when Bombay became Mumbai'.²⁹

The centrality of the partition of Bombay to the emergence of the Shiv Sena provides a useful frame through which to read Rushdie's characterisation of Shiva in *Midnight's Children*. While Shiva's significance can be read in a number of ways, Rachel Trousdale's suggestion that he represents the rise of the Shiv Sena, and that as Saleem's adversary he 'embodi[es] [...] a whole rival view of India and Bombay: that of Hindu nationalism', informs my discussion.³⁰ However, Trousdale's convincing argument that Shiva's rise is a direct result of his exclusion from the idealistic, socialist secular Midnight Children's Conference focuses on Shiva's appearance during, and in the immediate lead up to, the Emergency. Before turning to the representation of the Emergency, I will argue that Rushdie locates the rise of Shiva, and the creeping communalisation of Bombay, earlier than this, in the 1950s.

Saleem asserts that, in 1955, '[l]anguage divided us', as the linguistic reorganisation of India's states was proposed.³¹ Saleem's narration of the Samyukta movement in Bombay is, inevitably, mediated by his own involvement in it. Having crashed his way into a language march on a bicycle in 1957, Saleem describes how he 'became responsible for triggering off the violence which ended with the partition of Bombay' (192) by giving the SMS their leading chant:

Soo ché ? Saru ché!
Danda lé ké maru ché!

How are you? – I am well! – I'll take a stick and thrash you to hell! (191)

Rushdie uses Saleem's rhyme to reveal the violence involved in partitioning Bombay, but also the cultural and class differences which lay beneath the language movement itself. The Samyukta's 'successful campaign portrayed Maharashtrians [...] with their purer and

²⁸ Katzenstein, p. 40.

²⁹ Appadurai, p. 629.

³⁰ Rachel Trousdale, "'City of Mongrel Joy': Bombay and the Shiv Sena in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*", *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 39:2 (2004), 95-110 (p. 104). Shiva's name, for example, is a reference to the Hindu God of creation and destruction; alternative readings might emphasise that his re-entry into Saleem's life is 'synchronous with India's arrival [...] at the nuclear age' (406-7), suggest his presence as a personification of Sanjay Gandhi's Congress Youth organisation, or read him as a representation of a Freudian 'return of the repressed'.

³¹ Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage, 1995[1981]), p. 189. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

uncontaminated Hindu culture as pitted against Bombay's urbanized, Westernized, decadent urban elite and politicians'.³² As a member of this westernised elite, Saleem is regarded with hostility by the marchers, who call him a 'little princeling', and exclaim that 'a little laad-sahib comes down to join us from the big rich hill!' (191). Saleem's confession that his 'Gujarati was as bad as [his] Marathi' (191) similarly discloses his distance from the marchers both in terms of class and culture. His privileged socio-economic position, signified by his location in the wealthy Methwold Estate on Warden Hill, contrasts with the working-class identities of the marchers: 'many of them were shopkeepers on hartal; many were striking textile-workers [...] but on our hillock, we knew nothing about their jobs' (189).

Saleem's position within Bombay's urban elite is paired with his marginal Muslim identity. While highlighting his privileged position in relation to them, then, the marchers' identification of Saleem as a 'young nawab' (191) also points towards the exclusion of his Muslim identity from the Samyukta movement's conception of the city. Paradoxically, Saleem's very presence amongst the marchers disrupts both their linguistic demands and their vision of Bombay. His Muslim identity interrupts their culturally exclusive version of the city; meanwhile, their difficulty in naming him, and the necessity of naming him multiply, in different languages, indicates the impossibility of constructing and containing Bombayite identities within linguistically and culturally exclusive boundaries.

The Samyukta's victory in the 1957 state elections is followed by 'turmoil in Bombay' (223), as the 'Central Government continued to shilly-shally about the future' of the city (223). The elections coincide with Saleem's first telepathic meeting with Shiva, and Rushdie therefore positions 1957 as a key moment in the emergence of opposition to Saleem's secular, cosmopolitan vision of the city. Shiva is revealed as having played 'a minor role' (222) in these elections, after being recruited to intimidate voters and falsify results (222). The violence which follows the election is paired with the 'continuing wave of whore-murders' Shiva perpetrates with his 'giant, preternaturally powerful knees' (224). The elections, then, represent the moment at which Shiva – and therefore the politics of the Shiv Sena – emerge both at the street and at the

³² Hansen (2001), p. 42.

state levels. Shiva's involvement in the elections, meanwhile, gestures towards the gradual legitimization of his violent assertion of Hindu-Marathi identity that haunts the rest of the novel.

In Saleem's first meeting with his 'alter ego' (221), Rushdie highlights the socio-economic differences that inform Hindu-Marathi chauvinism. Responding to Saleem's desire 'for a *purpose*' (220), Shiva attacks him as a "[r]ich kid' [...] '[who] don't know one damn thing! What *purpose*, man? What thing in the whole sister-sleeping world got *reason*, yara? For what reason you're rich and I'm poor?' (220). Shiva's accusations not only reveal the disparity between experiences of Independence, which vary according to socio-economic and class identity, but also highlight the failure of the secular nationalist elite to address those differences adequately. It is such a failure that, as Trousdale points out, leads to Shiva's/the Shiv Sena's increasing urban power and appeal.³³ I will explore this failure of the socialist secular ideal in more detail as I discuss *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

While the partition of Bombay represents a key moment in the decline of the city's cosmopolitanism, marking the emergence of Hindu-Marathi chauvinism, the Emergency fifteen years later signals a crucial moment in the crisis of secularism within the city and the nation as a whole. My discussion of *A Fine Balance* demonstrated that the Emergency signalled a crisis in the Nehruvian ideals of socialist secularism. Similarly, I argued that, through the Epilogue, Mistry implies a continuity between the Emergency and the increasing communalisation of public life during the 1980s. Rushdie shares these concerns, and in both *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* similarly identifies a direct causal relationship between the Emergency and the rise of Hindu nationalism, while stating elsewhere that 'it was during the Emergency that the lid flew off the Pandora's box of communal discord'.³⁴

As Sujala Singh asserts, in *Midnight's Children*, the Emergency 'extinguish[es] the hopes of the midnight hour' of Independence.³⁵ As the Emergency is declared, Saleem senses that 'something was ending, something was being born' (419); what is ending is the idealism of the Nehruvian era, and what is being born is a 'new India' (419), as yet undefined, but

³³ Trousdale, pp. 102-4.

³⁴ Salman Rushdie, 'Introduction', *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 1-6 (p. 3).

³⁵ Sujala Singh, 'Secularist Faith in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', *New Formations*, 41:3, (2000), 159-72 (p. 170).

represented by Aadam. The Emergency involved ‘the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight’ (427) and, therefore, of the idealised multi-ethnic, multi-religious society they symbolise, which cuts across region, religion, caste and class. The destruction of this ideal by the government, however, is tempered by Saleem’s admission that the ‘Conference had [...] been disbanded years ago’ (427). Nevertheless, by foreclosing the possibility of the reunification and reproduction of the Conference, the Emergency consolidates the decline of the socialist secular ideals it embodied and precludes the possibility of a return to a Nehruvian vision of the nation.

Furthermore, the Emergency represents a consolidation of Shiva’s position, and his legitimisation and appropriation by the national government. According to Saleem, ‘the Emergency offered Shiva-of-the-knees the chance of grabbing some power’ (410), and his opportunistic support of Indira Gandhi’s government parallels the alliance formed between the Shiv Sena and Congress between 1974 and 1978.³⁶ As Trousdale suggests, Shiva’s reappearance the year before the Emergency ‘marks the country’s turn [...] away from Saleem’s secular, inclusive ideal and towards a far more militaristic and aggressive definition of “India”’.³⁷ Embodying ‘the legitimized violence of war’ (407), Shiva has by now attained an elevated social status, as well as a ‘national status as a war hero’ (411). In its alliance with Shiva, the national government is represented as legitimising his communalised, masculinised, Hindu nationalist identity, alongside his violence both towards the slum-dwellers in particular and the nation’s socialist secular principles in general. This, for Rushdie, constitutes a fundamental failure of the Congress government, in the mid-1970s, to protect the principles upon which India was founded.

Rushdie’s representation of the Emergency in *Midnight’s Children* has further significance to a reading of *The Moor’s Last Sigh* as the moment of Aadam’s birth. Moss suggests that Rushdie parodies his optimism in *Midnight’s Children* through the ‘apocalyptic incorporation’ of Adam in the second novel, in which he fails to fulfil the hope placed in him by Saleem.³⁸ I argue, however, that such hope is already – to use Moss’s term – truncated in *Midnight’s Children*. While Aadam is a ‘synthesis’ (425) of his two fathers, he is already

³⁶ See Hansen (2001), pp. 66-67.

³⁷ Trousdale, p. 102. As Trousdale points out, Aadam’s birth also coincides with India’s first nuclear test.

³⁸ Moss, p. 126.

distanced from Saleem, of whom he was 'in many respects the exact opposite' (425). Born 'at the precise moment of India's arrival at Emergency' (419), Aadam is the child, not only of Shiva, Parvati and Saleem, but also of that period of authoritarian rule itself. While he represents the 'birth of the new India' (419), it is an India which will be permanently scarred by the experience of the Emergency. He is 'the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again' (420). Furthermore, as Timothy Brennan points out, the elephant-headed god Ganesh, with whom Aadam is associated, symbolises 'at once a promise for the future and an end of the line'; Aadam embodies, in this light, 'the beginning of the end' of the optimism of Independence.³⁹ The hope placed in Aadam is, then, already ambivalent, and the 'new India' he represents, although left undefined at the close of the novel, is damaged even at its conception. The Emergency therefore represents, in *Midnight's Children*, a watershed in the nation's postcolonial progress, a moment at which the idealised nationalist vision of India as inclusive and secular is damaged by the increasingly legitimised rise of communalism. Rushdie is, then, already questioning his own optimism in India's post-Independence development within *Midnight's Children*, and this critique of the fortunes of Nehruvian secularism becomes both more overt and more incisive in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

The Moor's Last Sigh, the Emergency, and *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig*

I turn now to *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and begin by exploring Aurora Zogoiby's painting *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig* and the competing discourses which surround it. Aurora's art is central to Rushdie's examination of secular and pluralist myths of nation. According to Alexandra W. Schultheis, her 'artistic vision charts historical change and offers the most inclusive view of modern India' while also 'document[ing] the decline of India's idealistic pluralism'.⁴⁰ Bahri similarly claims that Aurora 'serves as the conduit' for Rushdie's views on 'the relation of art to a hybrid Indian culture and the challenges of representing it in its varieties and in the context of changing national politics'.⁴¹ While Aurora's 'Mother India' and 'Mooristan' paintings have received some attention, *The Kissing* – which sits outside the series

³⁹ Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989), p. 110.

⁴⁰ Alexandra W. Schultheis, 'Postcolonial Lack and Aesthetic Promise in *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 47:4 (2001), 569-95 (pp. 576-77).

⁴¹ Bahri, p. 181.

of 'Moor paintings' – remains largely neglected in criticism on the novel.⁴² *The Kissing* is, however, important, both in terms of what it represents and, moreover, in terms of how it is read.

The historical location of the painting's production and exhibition is significant given my discussion of *Midnight's Children*. Completed in 1960, the year of the partition of Bombay, *The Kissing* is re-exhibited during the Emergency in 1975. Rushdie therefore uses the painting to synchronise the two historical moments and suggest their interconnection, particularly in terms of their social and political outcomes. As in *Midnight's Children*, this is represented by the emergence and strengthening of the politics of the Shiv Sena. The painting provides the moment of Raman Fielding's arrival in the narrative, and Moraes insists on 'set[ting] down the full saga of *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig* because the entry of Fielding into our lives was a moment of some significance' (233). The painting consequently becomes central to – and is increasingly buried beneath a palimpsest of – competing discourses of Indianness.

The discussion of the piece itself occupies an important textual space, providing a pivotal moment in Aurora's understanding of the postcolonial nation. The 'saga' (233) is positioned between her conceptualisation of 'Mooristan' (226) in the early 'Moor pictures', which 'attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation' (227), and the first work in the "high period" of the Moor series', which provides a darker, less celebratory vision of India and expresses her 'fears for the nation' (236). Rushdie therefore uses *The Kissing*, or rather the debate surrounding it, to suggest, as he does in *Midnight's Children*, that the Emergency was a crucial turning point in the demise of the Nehruvian vision of a secular nation. Saleem's sense that 'something was ending, something was being born' (419) is echoed by Moraes' assertion that he 'had begun to come unstuck. We all had. After the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were

⁴² Brief exceptions are: Jill Didur, 'Secularism Beyond the East/West Divide: Literary Reading, Ethics, and *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Textual Practice*, 18:4 (2004), 541-62 (pp. 541-42); and Dohra Ahmad, "'This fundo stuff really is something new": Fundamentalism and Hybridity in *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 18:1 (2005), 1-20 (pp. 12-13). For an exploration of the 'Mother India' and 'Mooristan' paintings, see Beck, pp. 20-29; Paul A. Cantor, 'Tales of the Alhambra: Rushdie's Use of Spanish History in *The Moor's Last Sigh*', *Studies in the Novel*, 29:3 (1997), 323-41; David Myers, 'A Postmodernist Apocalypse or The Tragedy of Secular Art? Approaching Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* as *Lectura-Locura*', *World Literature Written in English*, 36:2 (1997), 33-46 (pp. 36-39).

Christian Jews' (235). The Emergency is explicitly positioned as a pivotal moment at which India's 'unity in diversity' begins to unravel, as identities are communalised.

To examine the significance of *The Kissing*, I focus upon the gender dynamics of the piece to explore what Purshottam Agarwal terms the 'semiotics of sexuality' which structure Hindu nationalism.⁴³ As Moraes explains, *The Kissing* is 'based on an actual incident' (228) that occurred during a cricket match between India and Australia, at Bombay's Brabourne Stadium in 1960.⁴⁴ When the highly popular Indian cricketer Abbas Ali Baig reached his second half-century of the match, 'a pretty young woman ran out from the usually rather staid and upper-crust North Stand and kissed the batsman on the cheek' (228). Inspired by the 'gasp-provoking, scandalous kiss, a kiss between beautiful strangers' (228), Aurora produces a painting 'in which the "real" shy peck, done for a dare, was transformed into a full-scale Western-movie clinch' (228). The importance of *The Kissing* lies in its status as a 'state-of-India painting' (229) which is 'much reproduced in the national press' (228). Moraes describes the painting in detail:

In Aurora's picture, the Brabourne stadium in its excitement had closed in around the two smoochers [...] and in the audience were pop-eyed movie stars – a few of whom really had been present – and slavering politicians and coolly observant scientists and industrialists slapping their thighs and making dirty jokes. Even the cartoonist R. K. Laxman's celebrated Common Man [...] was perched in the East Stand bleachers, looking shocked in his goofy, unworldly way. So it had become a state-of-India painting, a snapshot of cricket's arrival at the heart of the national consciousness. (229)

Aurora politicises the kiss, transforming it into an event of national significance by filling the stadium with representatives of India's cultural, scientific, industrial, and political elite, alongside Laxman's iconic cartoon figure, the 'Common Man'. In doing so, Aurora offers not only a 'snapshot of cricket's arrival at the heart of the national consciousness', but also, it is implied, the arrival of a 'national consciousness' itself. What exactly the 'state-of-India' and its 'national consciousness' might, or should, be, become increasingly contested issues.

The female spectator is central to the debate. As Schultheis indicates, a central concern of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is the way in which nationalist discourses traffic in gendered

⁴³ Purshottam Agarwal, 'Savarkar, Surat and Draupadi: Legitimising Rape as a Political Weapon', in *Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences*, ed. by Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1995), pp. 29-57 (p. 35).

⁴⁴ For a brief account of events, see 'Lip Service', *Statesman* (India), 7 March 2005, pp. 3-4.

constructions of nation.⁴⁵ Indeed, as in *Shame* (1983), Rushdie appears to demand that his novel be read through the prism of its gender politics, Moraes remarking that '[t]he women are now moving to the centre of my little stage. [...] [T]hey, not the men, were the true protagonists in the [nationalist] struggle' (33).⁴⁶ While less explicit in its engagement with gendered constructions of nation than the many images of 'Mother India' in the novel, *The Kissing* similarly explores how women are often positioned as 'focus and symbol in ideological discourses' of nation.⁴⁷ The controversy surrounding the painting lies largely in the various readings of the female spectator, whose body becomes, to borrow Spivak's term, an 'ideological battleground'⁴⁸ upon which the 'state-of-India' is contested. In her exploration of *sati*, Spivak argues that '[b]etween the patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution, it is the place of free will or agency of the sexed subject as female that is successfully effaced'.⁴⁹ Spivak is examining a different historical and cultural context, and the woman of *The Kissing* is not what she might call a "'true" subaltern',⁵⁰ running out from the 'upper-crust North Stand' (228). Nevertheless, the woman's agency is similarly effaced as her actions are appropriated by competing discourses of feminist secular resistance and patriarchal Hindu nationalism. It is therefore significant that the woman remains unnamed, an omission enabling each discourse to elide her individuality and endow her with symbolic value.

While Rushdie foregrounds the effacement of the woman's individual identity and agency, he similarly contributes to this erasure by omitting her name and appropriating her body for his own ideological purposes, using her actions to critique Hindu nationalist discourse. While Baig is also given symbolic status, as a Muslim male, the inclusion of his name in each reading – and within Rushdie's narrative – preserves his individual identity, even as his body is differently appropriated. The woman's identity, however – and it is perhaps important to

⁴⁵ Schultheis, pp. 570-71.

⁴⁶ The narrator of *Shame* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983) claims that the women have 'marched in from the peripheries [...] to demand the[ir] inclusion' in the narrative (p. 173).

⁴⁷ Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Introduction', *Woman-Nation-State*, ed. by Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 1-15 (p. 7).

⁴⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 235.

⁴⁹ Spivak, p. 235.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 308.

remember that this is a fictionalisation of an actual incident – remains hidden, disappearing beneath the ideological contest Rushdie narrates, and beneath his own narration of that contest.

The Kissing initially meets with disapproval for its scandalous portrayal of ‘the moist licentiousness [...] of that interminable kiss’ (228). It is given a more empowering interpretation as ‘a generational cry of sexual revolt’ (229), the young woman’s march onto the cricket pitch becoming a public assertion of female sexuality. Furthermore, entering the all-male arena of the pitch, the woman asserts her active participation in – indeed her creation of – a moment in the nation’s history. Thus, a ‘liberal art critic’ (229) celebrates *The Kissing* as ‘the call of Youth for Freedom, an act of defiance under the very noses of the Status Quo’ (229), reading it as both an assertion of a radical sexual politics and an act of resistance to the Emergency.

Set against this celebratory reading are Raman Fielding’s attacks on the painting, on Abbas Ali Baig himself, and on Aurora Zogoiby. Fielding is the founding leader of ‘Mumbai’s Axis’ (230), the Bombay-based Hindu nationalist, Marathi chauvinist party, and Rushdie uses Fielding and the MA to critique and parody the Shiv Sena and its leader Bal Thackeray. In direct contrast to the ‘liberal’ reading of *The Kissing*, Fielding translates its politics of resistance and sexual liberation into a politics of communalism, which itself centres upon issues of gender. It is a familiar contention that nationalist discourses gender the nation, producing an ‘eroticized nationalism’,⁵¹ and that fundamentalist and nationalist movements are ‘deeply heteropatriarchal in suggesting the control and regulation of women’s sexuality as the panacea’ for the community’s perceived contemporary oppression.⁵² A similar construction of women’s bodies as ‘guardians of culture’⁵³ structures *Hindutva*’s ‘semiotics of sexuality’, in which female ‘sexuality becomes an arena for th[e] very contest’ between competing visions of nation, embodied in different stereotypes of masculinity.⁵⁴ *Hindutva*, Agarwal explains, stereotypes the

⁵¹ The editors of *Nationalisms and Sexualities* contend that ‘[w]henver the power of the nation is invoked [...] we are more likely than not to find it couched as a *love of country*: an eroticized nationalism’. Andrew Parker et al., ‘Introduction’, in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. by Andrew Parker et al. (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-18 (p. 1). Such ‘eroticised nationalism’ is paired with ‘the depiction of the homeland as a female body whose violation by foreigners requires its citizens and allies to rush to her defense’ (p. 6).

⁵² M. Jacqui Alexander & Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Genealogies, Legacies, Movements’, in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. by M. Jacqui Alexander & Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York & London: Routledge, 1997), pp. xiii-xlii (p. xxv).

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. xxiii.

⁵⁴ Agarwal, p. 30.

‘Muslim as a voluptuously lustful rapist’ in contrast to the ‘passive, docile, hopelessly virtuous, nay impotent, Hindu’,⁵⁵ and ‘portray[s] Muslim rape of Hindu women as a symbol not only of Muslimness, but of the Muslims’ wider victimisation of the Hindu community’.⁵⁶

Rushdie combines the dynamics of ‘eroticised nationalism’ with *Hindutva*’s ‘semiotics of sexuality’ in Fielding’s response to *The Kissing*. His first attack, in 1960, is directed against Baig, accusing him ‘of having deliberately thrown away his wicket against Pakistan because he was a Muslim’ (229-30). Emphasising Baig’s religious identity in order to insinuate his extraterritorial loyalty to Pakistan, Fielding portrays the Muslim male as the threatening ‘other’ to India’s national interests. He consolidates this image by opposing it to that of the patriotic Hindu woman, describing Baig as the ‘fellow who has the nerve to kiss our patriotic Hindu girls’ (230), the proprietorial ‘our’ implying that the nation itself is Hindu. Fifteen years later, and bolstered by his intervening political successes, Fielding is more explicit; reinterpreting the kiss as a rape, he makes the incendiary claim that *The Kissing* is ‘a pornographic representation of a sexual assault by a Muslim “sportsman” on an innocent Hindu maiden’ (232). Fielding’s attacks reinterpret the sexual politics of *The Kissing* to strengthen his communalisation of the piece, shifting the focus away from a representation of female agency towards one of female vulnerability. Fielding desexualises the woman, representing her as an innocent ‘girl’ and ‘maiden’, transforming her from active participant to passive victim and effacing her individual agency by rendering her a symbol of the (endangered) Hindu nation. He then eroticises Baig and reverses his originally passive role, representing him in stereotypical terms as the aggressively lustful Muslim ‘other’. By reversing the original dynamics of the image, Fielding re-presents the kiss as an attack on the feminised body of the (Hindu) nation. The ‘state-of-India’ depicted in the piece is, in this reading, one of a nation threatened by, and in need of protection from, the violently lascivious Muslim ‘other’.

As critics have shown, a specific focus of Rushdie’s exploration of gendered constructions of nation is the myth of ‘Mother India’.⁵⁷ ‘Motherness’, Moraes asserts, ‘is a big idea in India, maybe our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land’ (137), and Rushdie

⁵⁵ Agarwal, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁶ Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 41.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Schultheis, pp. 580-85; Beck, pp. 20-22.

interrogates this myth of the feminised nation in a number of ways.⁵⁸ In contrast to the proliferating myths of 'Mother India', however, Moraes claims that '[n]obody ever made a movie called *Father India*' (168), an assertion that leads him to identify an image of the 'National Father' in the 'dada of all dada's' (168), the character of Mogambo in the film 'Mr India'. While the introduction of Bombay's *dada* culture hints at Moraes' later involvement in Abraham's global capitalist underworld, it also points to the violent culture of the Mumbai Axis. Madalena Gonzales argues that, as the novel develops, 'the balance of power is shifted from masculine to feminine', as Rushdie 'reconstructs an a-gendered fictional world'.⁵⁹ While I find the possibility of an 'a-gendered fictional world' itself problematic, I further contend that Rushdie's introduction of *dada* culture here gestures towards Moraes' retreat from the aesthetic, secular world of his mother and into the competing – yet inextricably linked – masculinised worlds of Abraham's Zogoiby-Da Gama Axis and Fielding's Mumbai Axis.

In his depiction of the MA, Rushdie shows how the representations of the nation as a violated female body both enable and legitimate the formation of what might be described as a 'passionate brotherhood',⁶⁰ a cadre of militant Hindu men organised to defend the nation against the threatening 'macho Muslim male'.⁶¹ In this light, I will shift the focus from Rushdie's engagement with the gendering of the nation as woman, to examine his representation of the *Hindutva* movement's performances of masculinity. According to Parker et al., 'nationalism favors a distinctly homosocial form of male bonding'.⁶² Similarly, *Hindutva*'s 'semiotics of sexuality' are structured by what Ahmad terms a 'fascist masculinism', in which anti-Muslim violence becomes symbolic of a 'regained Hindu virility'.⁶³ The notion of a 'virile fraternity'⁶⁴ resonates with the organisation of the Shiv Sena, and its exploitation of Bombay's emerging

⁵⁸ Aurora's first mural, painted under 'house arrest' (59), is a reinterpretation of Nehru's concept of 'Bharat Mata' in *The Discovery of India* (1946), as well as of Abanindranath Tagore's nationalist painting of 'Bharat Mata' (1905). Later, Aurora meets Nargis, the actress who played the eponymous heroine of the 1957 film *Mother India* (137-8), while Uma Sarasvati reworks the image in her sculpture. *Alterations in/Reclamations of the Essence of Motherhood in the Post-Secularist Epoch* (261-62).

⁵⁹ Madalena Gonzalez, 'The Moor's Last Sigh (Salman Rushdie); Marginal Alternatives, the Reconstruction of Identity through the Carnival of Indetermination', in *Subverting Masculinity: Hegemonic and Alternative Versions of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Russell West & Frank Lay (Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 128-43 (p. 129).

⁶⁰ Parker et al., p. 6.

⁶¹ Talbot, p. 193.

⁶² Parker et al., p. 4.

⁶³ Ahmad (2000), p. 170.

⁶⁴ Parker et al., p. 6.

dada culture in the 1980s and 1990s. As Hansen explains, *dadaism* – literally ‘protection by elder brother’ – is ‘a style of political and social power and protection which evokes images of a masculine, virile, assertive – and violent – local strongman’ who protects his family in general, and women in particular.⁶⁵ The Shiv Sena pair Bombay’s *dada* culture with a discourse of masculinity that has been central to Hindu nationalist rhetoric since the emergence of the RSS in 1925. Hansen describes how ‘[r]ecuperation of masculinity is a common, deep-running theme in Hindu nationalist discourses and organizations’, while ‘the overcoming of emasculation’ is central to ‘the quest for *national strength and national self-confidence*’.⁶⁶ The necessity for the reassertion of Hindu masculinity is therefore two-fold. Firstly, such recuperation is set against the perceived emasculation of Hindu men by the presence of the aggressive Muslim ‘other’. Secondly, the construction of a vulnerable, feminised nation works to legitimate the creation of a ‘modern, masculinised Hindu culture’ capable of defending her.⁶⁷

It is important to distinguish between the image of ‘Mother India’ promoted by the secularist Aurora and that endorsed by the Mumbai Axis, to establish which vision of nation Fielding aims to protect. Aurora’s early interpretation of the myth directly echoes Nehru’s concept of Bharat Mata as an ‘ancient palimpsest’ upon which ‘no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously’.⁶⁸ Bharat Mata here embodies the principle of unity in diversity, accommodating and synthesising the various cultures that have settled within India.⁶⁹ As Beck notes, Nehru’s vision of Bharat Mata and the palimpsest are central organising motifs of *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, and are particularly important to Aurora’s first artwork, which represents ‘Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion’

⁶⁵ Thomas Blom Hansen, ‘Recuperating Masculinity: Hindu Nationalism, Violence and the Exorcism of the Muslim “Other”’, *Critique of Anthropology*, 16:2 (1996), 137-72 (p. 158).

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁷ Hansen (1996), p. 141. As Tanika Sarkar explains, the Hindu Right has worked to mobilise women in the movement for a Hindu *rashtra*, through, for example, the formation of the *Rashtrasevika Samiti* (women’s wing of the RSS) as early as 1936. However, Sarkar argues that such involvement has ‘not le[d] to a significant broadening of the RSS [i.e., Hindu nationalist] ideology as a whole’ (p.184), and there remains ‘a crucial absence of women at the heart of effective action’ (p. 211). *Hindutva* therefore fails to critique, and is structured by, a ‘conservative patriarchalism’ (p. 211). Sarkar, ‘Heroic Women. Mother Goddesses: Family and Organisation in Hindutva Politics’, in Sarkar & Butalia, eds., pp. 181-215.

⁶⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989[1946]), p. 59.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

(60).⁷⁰ This piece represents the multiple layers of India's ancient and modern history and its different religious and ethnic communities, conceptualising India as – in a characteristically Rushdian formulation – a 'dense crowd [...] without boundaries' (59). 'Mother India' is, in this piece, plural, hybrid and secular, constantly in motion and ever-evolving.

Against this representation of 'Mother India', from which, crucially, 'God was absent' (60), I would like to set Uma's postmodern sculpture, *Alterations in/Reclamations of the Essence of Motherhood in the Post-Secularist Epoch*. Few critics examine this piece despite its clear engagement with Aurora's vision of a secular 'Mother India'. The exhibiting of the sculpture significantly coincides with the revelation of Uma's 'strong religious faith' (262) and her identity as a 'devotee of Lord Ram' (262), and therefore provides important clues as to the version of 'Mother India' preferred by Fielding. Soon after its exhibition we learn that Uma is from Maharashtra, 'the other half of the divided self of the former Bombay State' (265), information which offers a further connection between the artist and the politics of the MA. The piece itself is, in many ways, the aesthetic and conceptual opposite of Aurora's work, offering an 'opposing mod[e] of expression'.⁷¹ In contrast to Aurora's complex and multifaceted representation of 'Mother India', teeming and continually evolving, Uma's sculpture is deceptively simple, comprising 'a group of seven roughly spherical, metre-high stone pieces with a small hollow scooped out at the top and filled with richly coloured powders – scarlet, ultramarine, saffron, emerald, purple, orange, gold' (261). While at first glance the piece epitomises, as Dohra Ahmad notes, 'a purified, unitary, and essentialist [art] form',⁷² it is, nevertheless, a complex and potentially contradictory piece which can be read in a number of ways. It at once offers a simple, essentialised vision of 'Mother India' – an '*Essence of Motherhood*' – and gestures towards a more complicated, multifaceted understanding of this image in the inclusion of the differently coloured powders. However, the piece attempts to reclaim the image of 'Mother India' from secularists, in what is proclaimed as a '*Post-Secularist Epoch*'. Indeed, that Uma's artistic fortunes rise as Aurora's fall implies that her artistic statement of the death of secularism may, in Rushdie's view, hold some truth.

⁷⁰ Beck, pp. 18-24.

⁷¹ D. Ahmad, p. 7.

⁷² *ibid.*

With the age of secularism proclaimed as over, it is worth examining the gesture towards pluralism made in the piece, which shifts away from a Nehruvian understanding of India's 'unity in diversity' towards one of cultural separation and exclusivity. While the powders might symbolise the inclusion of different faiths and cultures within the 'Essence of Motherhood', they fill the 'small hollow[s] scooped out' of each sphere, suggesting an emptying out of the significance of the diversity they ostensibly represent. Furthermore, in contrast to Aurora's unbroken 'sweeping black line that transformed itself constantly' (59), Uma's sculpture offers seven distinct and detached spheres which are static – they are stone – and, at least at the level of physical form, do not interact. The palimpsestic pluralism of Aurora's image, foregrounding the layering of, and interaction between, India's different cultures and histories, gives way to a representation which leaves little space for intercultural hybridity.

In condensing the multitude of Aurora's 'Mother India' into a series of exclusive essences, which bear little trace of India's historical intercultural hybridity, Uma presents a reading of 'Mother India' which offers what Ahmad might describe as a 'patently postmodernist way of debunking *all* efforts to speak of origins, collectivities, determinate historical projects'.⁷³ Indeed, Ahmad's statement could be applied to Uma herself, whose 'ability to take on radically different personae in the company of different people' (265-66) meant that '[i]t was possible that she no longer had a clear sense of an "authentic" identity that was independent of these performances' (266). The difficulty of reading Uma's sculpture therefore lies in its performance of a version of secularism which is, I contend, hollowed out like the spheres themselves, emptied of all conviction in the principle itself. While her work gestures towards diversity, it stops short of promoting the hybridity and intercultural dialogue which are for Rushdie central to India's identity, and this ambivalence leaves the sculpture potentially, and dangerously, open to appropriation by both secularists *and* the Hindu Right. Critics celebrate the fact that Uma is 'driven by' her faith (262) and, while she declares Fielding a 'goonda' (262), her reverence for Ram implies that her sculpture would be well-received by the MA. It is, therefore, the essentialised and exclusivist vision of 'Mother India' offered by Uma that Hindu nationalists aim to protect, rather than the plural, Janus-faced image represented in Aurora's work.

⁷³ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London & New York: Verso, 1992), p. 38.

Fielding appropriates the nationalist image of 'Mother India' for his own subnational concerns, translating Bharat Mata into a local 'mother-goddess of Bombay' (230) similarly in need of purification and protection. To offer such protection, Fielding structures the MA around a cult of masculinity which idealises virility and violence. As Moraes discovers, Fielding encourages the performance of an aggressive, violent masculinity, aspiring towards the formation of what Hansen elsewhere terms a 'martial brotherhood'.⁷⁴ Gonzales observes that 'masculinity is shown to be fatally compromised' in Moraes, whose deformed hand and prematurely ageing body challenge norms of male physical identity.⁷⁵ The MA offers Moraes the opportunity to transform his identity from one of 'manhood's simulacrum' (192), and his membership enables a '*fall into [...] manhood*' (296). On arriving at the MA headquarters Moraes is asked to prove his strength by hitting Lambajan, and his recruitment is marked by his adoption of a new identity emphasising his physical capability: 'Henceforth I would be my fist; would be a Hammer, not a Moor' (295). Rather than symbolising a damaged masculinity, within the MA Moraes' deformity becomes the very embodiment of his hyper-masculinity. Ironically then, given his non-Hindu identity, Moraes embodies the Hindu nationalist aim of recuperating masculinity in an aggressive, martial form, a paradox to which I return in the next section.

In exploring the MA's martial masculinity, Rushdie suggests the homoerotic aspects of the men's training as 'true Mahratta warrior[s]' (293). Fielding institutes 'a sort of macho, impromptu mini-Olympiad', in which the MA 'Youth Wingers' compete in 'arm-wrestling and mat-wrestling, push-up contests' and 'boxing bouts' (300). Such performances of machismo are underwritten by the homoeroticism of the Olympiad:

Lubricated by beer and rum, the assembled company would arrive at a point of sweaty, brawling, raucous, and finally exhausted nakedness. At these moments Fielding seemed truly happy. Shedding his flower-patterned lungi he would loll among his cadres, itching, scratching, belching, farting, slapping buttocks and patting thighs. 'Now nobody can stand against us!' he would bellow as he passed out in a state of Dionysiac bliss. 'Bloody hell! Now we are one.' (300)

The MA's violent public assertions of a martial masculinity – the beatings of the textile strikers (306) and rape of female workers (308) – are paralleled by a different performance of masculinity in its private quarters. Foregrounding the homoerotic aspects of the MA's

⁷⁴ Hansen (1996), p. 138.

⁷⁵ Gonzales, p. 134.

performance of masculinity, Rushdie suggests that the public affirmation of an 'eroticised nationalism' – the love of the nation as woman – intersects with an eroticised form of male bonding that structures the nationalist movement itself.

Furthermore, Rushdie emphasises that the MA's homosociality necessitates both the marginalisation of women and a displacement of (hetero-)sexuality. In my discussion of *The Kissing*, I observed how Fielding's transformation of the woman into a symbol of the nation actually marginalises her from participation in the nation's history. Similarly, women 'were peripheral' (299) to the MA; Fielding 'preferred male company' (300), while members of the organisation suppress their desire for women. Although haunted by dreams of Uma (309), Moraes asserts that he had 'grown uninterested in the love of women' (311). Sammy Hazaré falls in love with Nadia Wadia, only to reveal his inability to express this love; in her presence he 'turned puce, and made a distant gargling noise' (312-13). While '[t]here were women' (299), and while Fielding 'wanted to possess Nadia' in particular (311), his is a desire for her symbolic value as Miss Bombay, Miss India, and Miss World – a modern day 'Mother India' – rather than her individual identity. By emphasising the centrality of male homosocial bonds to the MA, and by highlighting the marginalisation of (the desire for) women, Rushdie implies that the 'virile pleasures of comradeship' (305) offered by the movement indicate how dynamics of 'eroticised nationalism' are reflected within the structure of the nationalist movement.

Rushdie's deployment of homosociality and homoeroticism to parody the MA may be problematic. His use of homoeroticism to undermine the MA's constructions of masculinity suggests an understanding of masculinity situated within a hegemonic model of heterosexuality which fails to recognise homosexuality as a legitimate male identity. The employment of homoeroticism to indicate Fielding's desire for sameness, meanwhile, is potentially problematic if we consider the dynamics of this association in reverse. That is, if Rushdie parodies and rejects the politics of sameness espoused by Fielding then, by doing so through a discourse of homoeroticism, it might be argued that he similarly rejects the legitimacy of homoerotic desire itself. Nevertheless, any reading of Rushdie's potential homophobia should be tempered by his representation of Aires Da Gama. While critical of Aires' pro-British politics, Rushdie carefully separates this from his homosexuality. Moraes declares that '[t]here is much about him I do not

care for; but in the image of his queenliness, where many [...] would see degradation, I see his courage, his capacity, yes, for glory' (14). Rushdie's representation of Aires suggests that it is not homosexuality by which he is troubled; indeed, Rushdie represents the MA through *homosociality* rather than *homosexuality*, without depicting any slippage between them. In this light, it becomes clear that it is the *repression* of sexuality – any sexuality – and of difference that concerns Rushdie. His criticism is not directed towards homosexuality, but towards the imposition of homosociality as a 'mechanism of exclusion'⁷⁶ which marginalises women and necessitates the repression of difference.

Significantly, while Rushdie critiques the homosociality and hyper-masculinity of the MA, he also attempts to understand the attractions of the fraternity it offers. Moraes describes his membership through notions of belonging, declaring that the violent performance of masculinity allows him to 'f[i]nd [his] own way home' (305) and offers him 'the feeling of normality, of being *nothing special*, the sense of being among kindred spirits, among people-like-me, that is the defining quality of home' (305). Nevertheless, this sense of belonging, while predicated upon Moraes' physical exceptionality, relies upon – and indeed necessitates – the transcendence of his ethnic difference: he 'would be a Hammer, *not a Moor*' (295, my emphasis). Moraes' sense of belonging is, therefore, largely ironic; as Ball notes, by joining the MA, Moraes 'becomes an agent of the very forces that would deny him – as individual and as national principle'.⁷⁷ Moraes' acceptance into the Hindu chauvinist group is founded upon a repression, not only of his sexuality, but also of his Jewish-Christian identity. Non-Hindu identities are accommodated and assimilated only if they repress their difference from a Hindu norm and perform violent expressions of loyalty to the Hindu nation.

Such a recognition of the crucial, if problematic, sense of belonging offered by the MA's fraternity of sameness leaves Rushdie unable to disregard the group's importance, despite his revulsion at its politics. Moraes' membership therefore further reveals Rushdie's anxieties regarding Hindu nationalism's growing constituency and increasing dominance. Such anxiety

⁷⁶ I borrow this term from Jacob Press, 'Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: *Daniel Deronda*, *Altneuland*, and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism', in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 300-29 (p. 323).

⁷⁷ Ball, p. 45.

can be detected in Moraes' response to his membership of the MA. Despite confessing to enjoying the violence (305-6), Moraes remains subconsciously uneasy with his work; alongside 'dreams [that] were infernos', he often 'found [him]self vomiting without apparent cause' (309). In the MA, then, Moraes experiences an unusual kind of homesickness, a sickness with – or at – his sense of belonging within, as well as his own legitimisation of, the group. Remembering that his membership is a direct result of his rejection by Aurora and Abraham, and that '[he] had rejected the old, for it had rejected [him]' (300), Moraes' anxiety perhaps reflects Rushdie's own uneasy recognition that Fielding's exclusionary politics are increasingly appealing as an alternative to Nehruvian socialist secularism, in large part because of the material and political failures of those ideals.

Raman Fielding and the Failure(s) of Secularism

Moraes' membership of the MA, despite his non-Hindu, non-Marathi identity, reveals a contradiction at the centre of the organisation; while Fielding aims to create '*Hindu-stan*: the country of Hindus' (295), his movement relies on members of the non-Hindu minorities he so detests. Alongside the Jewish-Christian, south Indian migrant Moraes, the Axis includes Sammy Hazaré, a Christian Maharashtrian who 'had joined up [...] for regionalist, rather than religious reasons' (312). In this section, I explore further the complexities of Rushdie's representation of Fielding and the MA, particularly the apparent contradictions between Fielding's public Hindu chauvinism and his private 'secular' tastes. Remembering my discussion of endangered and parochial cosmopolitanisms in Chapter Three, I argue that Fielding represents both the *failure of* secularism and, paradoxically, a form of *failed* secularism, that is, a secularism gone wrong. To do so, I return to *The Kissing*, to suggest that, like Mistry, Rushdie represents the rise of Hindu nationalism as, in part, a result of the failure of secularists to defend effectively the principles of pluralism and hybridity. Mistry examines this failure by shifting the focus away from politicians and national leaders and towards a close engagement with its impact on the individual and the family unit. Rushdie, by contrast, pairs a similar concern with the family with a more explicit and extended engagement with, and critique of, the political elite, political leaders and organisations. In doing so, he offers a very different examination of the discourses of secularism and Hindu nationalism than Mistry.

As I have shown, Fielding communalises *The Kissing*, emphasising the religious identities of Baig and the woman. As the controversy over the piece develops, Aurora's ethno-religious identity becomes the focus of attention, and 'she found herself being described – by MA voices, but not only by them – as a “Christian artist”, even [...] as “that Christian female married to a Jew”' (234). Significantly, it is 'not only' Fielding who emphasises Aurora's ethno-religious identity, suggesting that the communalist discourse promoted by him has begun to encroach upon, and become an accepted part of, the national political agenda. Despite the increasing pressure placed on her by the press, social commentators, and art critics, Aurora is reluctant to justify *The Kissing* or defend her identity *as Indian*; Moraes explains 'her ennui at having endlessly to defend it', 'make moral statements', and 'counter accusations of social irresponsibility' (234). Indeed, Aurora resents the attempt to 'make artists socially accountable', claiming that in her artistic creativity 'there had been only (“only”!) play' (234). Moraes' incredulity at the claim that 'only' play lies beneath Aurora's art suggests that Rushdie would agree with Rustom Bharucha's statement that '[t]he amnesia of “being secular”, without feeling any obligation to define its guiding principles and limits, is an ontology that we can no longer afford'.⁷⁸ In this light, Aurora's awareness that 'a lifetime of work and action and affinity and opposition, could be washed away' (234) implies that the historical dominance of a secularist ideology is no longer in itself an adequate defence of those principles. As Achin Vanaik explains, the collapse of the 'old Nehruvian consensus' (of socialism, democracy, secularism) 'owes more to the failure to adequately implement these principles than to recent doubts entertained about the value and feasibility of the principles themselves'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Aurora's attitude reveals not a failure of secularism itself, but rather a failure to pursue, implement and protect that principle. Rushdie suggests that, in the face of rising communalism, the problem is not that secularism is failing the nation, but that the nation *has not been secular enough*.

Aurora responds to Fielding's 1975 attack on *The Kissing* by withdrawing it from exhibition. This withdrawal gains significance if *The Kissing* is understood as a representation of secularism, the embrace of a Hindu and Muslim taking centre stage in this 'state-of-India'

⁷⁸ Rustom Bharucha, *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 2.

⁷⁹ Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization* (London & New York: Verso, 1997), p. 301.

piece. The concession Aurora makes to Fielding therefore becomes a critical failure on the part of a leading secularist to resist the politics of the MA. Although Aurora ‘had averted a crisis’ (233), the withdrawal of *The Kissing* is ‘not a victory. It was a defeat’ (233). While the ‘threat of violence receded a little [...] the work was obliged to remain concealed’ (233) and, therefore, ‘[a] principle had been eroded’ (233). Aurora’s accommodation of Fielding’s demands is identified as the beginning of a steady erosion of secular resistance to communal politics. By positioning this ‘defeat’ within the context of the Emergency, Rushdie contends, as he did in *Midnight’s Children*, that this period constituted a key moment in the decline of India’s founding secular principles. According to Ahmad, it ‘was during the Emergency that the bankruptcy of the Congress model came fully into view’, a demise which ‘coincided with the first major opportunity for RSS to gain political respectability and start building its own kind of hegemony out of the wreckage of the Congress model’.⁸⁰ Rushdie’s representation of Aurora’s failure suggests he agrees. While he acknowledges that the Emergency alone is not responsible for the continuing communalisation of Indian identity – ‘[t]here would be many further such erosions’ (233) – this period is identified as an incisive, if not foundational, moment when the principle of secularism is unalterably damaged. Aurora’s decision to enter into a dialogue with, and offer concessions to, Fielding’s Hindu nationalism explicitly connects the emergence and strengthening of such communal politics in the 1970s and 1980s with the willingness of secular politicians – such as Indira Gandhi and Congress – to compromise India’s secular principles.⁸¹

Rushdie’s representation of the failure of secularists to defend adequately and actively that founding Nehruvian principle is mirrored by his depiction of Fielding as embodying a failed secularism, as well as a form of parochial cosmopolitanism. Once more, Rushdie reveals a scepticism towards understandings of cosmopolitanism as necessarily ‘relentlessly positive’ or ‘free from provincial prejudices’.⁸² In *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, this more ambivalent attitude towards cosmopolitanism is accompanied by a recognition that the ‘well-established and unquestioning tradition of seeing secularism as a good and solid political virtue’ may itself be

⁸⁰ Ahmad (2000), p. 181.

⁸¹ Vanaik highlights the willingness of Congress, particularly under Indira Gandhi, to cede ground to the Hindu Right and play the ‘Hindu card’, accusing the party of effectively ‘pursu[ing] a [...] “pale saffron”’ position (p. 302).

⁸² Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 19.

problematic.⁸³ It is therefore significant that Fielding explicitly positions himself within a cosmopolitan, intellectual heritage:

He had started telling visiting foreign journalists that his father had been an educated, cultured, literary man, an internationalist, who had taken the name of 'Fielding' as a genuflection to the author of *Tom Jones*. 'You call me narrow and parochial,' he reproached the journalists. 'Bigot and prude, you have also called. But from my childhood time, intellectual horizons were broad and free. They were – let me so put it – *picaresque*'. (232)

Fielding 'rewrite[s] his father's life-story' (232) for the benefit of the international media, erasing his localised 'street-wise Bombay ragamuffin' (230) identity in favour of a more international and high-brow persona. Perhaps surprisingly, Fielding prefers to be associated with canonical English literature rather than with the popular Bombay cricket culture which arguably would connect him more closely to the lives of the 'Common Man' (294) that he claims to represent. Crucially, Fielding's statement combines both cosmopolitanism – he is a 'cultured' 'internationalist' – *and* parochialism – he is a 'bigot and prude', a narrow nativist politician. As in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie depicts an intersection between cosmopolitanism and parochialism; far from incompatible with such politics, cosmopolitanism is once more implicated within illiberal and authoritarian politics.

Fielding's name parodies Bal Thackeray's own literary name and, as Trousdale claims, by placing English literature and cricket at the centre of Fielding's identity, Rushdie implies the Western roots of the Shiv Sena's nationalist rhetoric, even as it rejects such hybridity in its constructions of Bombay and India.⁸⁴ There is, I suggest, another level of intertextuality at work in Fielding's name which refers not only to *Tom Jones*, but also to Forster's *A Passage to India*. In *Midnight's Children* Rushdie alludes to Forster's anglophile Dr Aziz in his characterisation of the Europe-educated Doctor Aadam Aziz, suggesting a point of connection between their similarly problematic positions as anglicised 'mimic men',⁸⁵ and pointing towards the 'emergence of a visible Indian resistance' to British rule during, and in the aftermath of, Aziz's

⁸³ Amartya Sen, 'Secularism and Its Discontents', in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. by Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 454-85 (p. 456).

⁸⁴ Trousdale, pp. 104-5.

⁸⁵ I borrow this term from Homi Bhabha, who identifies a 'line of descent of the mimic man' which includes Forster. 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92 (p. 87).

trial in Forster's novel.⁸⁶ However, it is the Anglo-Indian Mr Fielding who provides the intertextual point of reference for Rushdie's Hindu chauvinist in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and his allusion to *A Passage to India* is significant for a number of reasons.

The assault of Adela Quested in Forster's novel clearly constitutes a significant point of reference for *The Kissing* episode in Rushdie's text. Here, as in *A Passage to India*, the female body becomes the site upon which various understandings of India are contested. As Benita Parry notes, Adela represents, for the Anglo-Indians, 'the victim of the infamous lust of Indian men'.⁸⁷ More significantly, given my discussion of *The Kissing*, it is the Muslim Indian Aziz who embodies this 'infamous lust'. In each novel, an accusation of rape is directed against a Muslim male in order to construct a hierarchy of ethno-religious identities – Christian Anglo-Indians/Hindu Indians as superior to Muslim Indians – and to represent the nation as a vulnerable, endangered female. Rushdie uses the dynamics of Forster's novel, in which ambiguous events are read, re-read and mis-read to suit different ideological constructions of India, to structure his own engagement with the contest over Indian identity taking place in the late-twentieth century.⁸⁸

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the intertextual dialogue between *A Passage to India* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* is Forster's engagement with Muslim India, and with the emergence both of an anti-colonial nationalism and of separate Muslim and Hindu nationalisms. The 'assault' of Adela is a crucial turning point in Aziz's attitudes towards both the British presence in India and his understanding of his own Indian identity, which ultimately leads to his anti-colonial nationalist assertion that 'India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort!'.⁸⁹ In Rushdie's novel, the 'rape' of a Hindu woman similarly represents a key moment in the emergence of a nationalist movement. Here, however, it is a nationalism which rejects the secular, anti-colonialism Aziz espouses towards the close of *A Passage to India*, as well as the

⁸⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 242.

⁸⁷ Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 165.

⁸⁸ The 'circulation of homoerotic affect' in *A Passage to India*, and its various 'stagings of homosociality' (Parry, pp. 165, 172) perhaps further inform Rushdie's characterisation of Fielding's nationalism. For a reading of the homoeroticism of *A Passage to India*, see Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 132-48.

⁸⁹ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Penguin, 2000[1924]), p. 315.

Muslim identity he represents and which is so central to Forster's India.⁹⁰ Said's reading of *A Passage to India* suggests that Forster's novel prefigures not only the partition of India in 1947, but also the increasing communalisation of public life after Independence. Said argues that Aziz is 'half of Forster's ploy for dealing with India in a British novel by dividing it into two parts, one Islamic, the other Hindu', in the 'Mosque' and 'Temple' sections.⁹¹ Said's reading invokes the division of British India at Independence, and Rushdie's allusion to both *A Passage* in particular, and English culture in general – through cricket and literature – seeks to establish a connection between Partition and India's contemporary experience of communalism.

Given the centrality of the relationship between Aziz and Fielding to Forster's novel, Rushdie's translation of Fielding from a liberal imperialist Englishman into a violent Hindu chauvinist is ironic. While in *A Passage to India*, Fielding continually attempts to 'connect' with the Muslim Indian Aziz, in *The Moor's Last Sigh* Fielding rejects Muslim identity as a valid form of Indianness. The relationship between the two Fieldings is not, however, one of simple opposition. The failure of the Fielding-Aziz friendship is, in many ways, the result of Fielding's failed liberalism and his inadequate efforts to sustain a political and personal commitment to Aziz, against his affiliation to the British colonial system. Immediately after the trial collapses, Fielding abandons Aziz and returns, albeit reluctantly, to Adela and, finally, to England. Rushdie translates this failure of liberalism into a failure of secularism, suggesting that Raman Fielding's rise to prominence is the result of the retreat of secular principles. If Forster's Fielding represents a failure of liberal imperialism, then, I suggest, Rushdie's Fielding represents a failure of liberal secularism.

While Fielding's political successes represent a failure of secularism, he also embodies a form of perverse cosmopolitanism, and a secularism gone wrong. As Moraes claims, he is '[a]n intricate fellow, indeed' (299), whose personal tastes reveal a number of apparent contradictions. Fielding expounds standard anti-Muslim/anti-minority Hindu nationalist rhetoric in his diatribes against the 'dangerous [...] threat' (295) minorities pose to the Hindu Rashtra.

⁹⁰ Aziz declares: 'India shall be a nation! [...] Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one!' (Forster, p. 315). Said argues that 'Forster emphasizes the Muslims, compared with whom the Hindus (including Godbole) are peripheral' and that 'Forster is slightly nearer Islam than Hinduism in *A Passage to India*' (Said, p. 244).

⁹¹ Said, p. 244.

Adopting the novel's central motif of the palimpsest, Fielding 'spoke of a golden age "before the invasions" when good Hindu men and women could roam free' (299), and calls for the reclamation of the 'true nation [...] beneath the layers of alien empires' (299). However, alongside this conventional Hindu chauvinist rhetoric, Fielding sustains an apparently secular set of cultural preferences. He is impressed by Moraes' multicultural cooking talents, which include 'Anglo-Indian mulligatawny, South Indian meat with coconut milk, Mughlai kormas, Kashmiri shirmal, reshmi kebabs; Goan fish, Hyderabad brinjal, dum rice, Bombay club-style, all' (296). In a further contradiction between Fielding's public avowal of *Hindutva* and his private secular tastes, the leader enjoys the very non-Hindu practice of meat-eating. Thus, 'Bombay's meat-eating Parsis, Christians and Muslims – for whom, in so many other ways, he had nothing but contempt – were often applauded by him for their non-veg cuisine' (297). Furthermore, despite his own anti-Muslim invective, Fielding berates his men for 'belittl[ing] the culture of Indian Islam', silencing them by 'sing[ing] ghazals', 'recit[ing] Urdu poetry', and telling 'the glories of Fatehpur Sikri' and the Taj Mahal (299).

By revealing the ostensibly multicultural attitudes that sit alongside Fielding's Hindu chauvinism, Rushdie problematises what Jill Didur calls the 'naturalized view of secularism as progressive'.⁹² As Didur notes, with reference to his representation of the Ganpati festival, Rushdie is interested in 'the way that secular discourse has been co-opted by the Hindu Right'.⁹³ While Bharucha dismisses the 'obvious dichotomies that underlie Rushdie's vision' as 'attempts [...] to present a clear-cut opposition to communalism',⁹⁴ I would argue that he in fact shares Bharucha's concern that the task 'is not simply to set up secularism against communalism or fundamentalism', but to 'break this dichotomy as far as possible'.⁹⁵ By representing the intersection between, rather than the opposition of, Hindu nationalism and secular discourse in his characterisation of Fielding, Rushdie demonstrates that a rhetoric of secularism may not in itself necessarily be the paradigm of tolerance it is often assumed to be.

Indeed, Rushdie's representation of Fielding suggests that secularism may itself be implicated within hegemonic and exclusionary constructions of nation. Undermining the

⁹² Didur, p. 543.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 552.

⁹⁴ Bharucha, p. 4.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

dichotomy between secularism and Hindu chauvinism, Rushdie engages with the problematic appropriation of discourses of secularism by the *Hindutva* movement, which claims Hinduism as the 'true secularism' in contrast to the 'pseudo-secularism' expounded by Congress.⁹⁶ According to Ratna Kapur and Brenda Cossman, '[t]hrough the adoption and manipulation of a particular understanding of secularism' the Hindu Right is 'redefining the concept of secularism beyond recognition'.⁹⁷ Vanaik similarly observes that, rather than directly attack the principles of democracy and secularism, the Hindu Right 'redefine[s] democracy as majoritarianism and secularism as tolerance, in order to present itself as more truly secular and democratic'. He explains that the 'notion of secularism as tolerance is thus appropriated by the Hindu Right and then used to justify the construction of a Hindu *rashtra*, since Hinduism is widely considered (not only by the Right) as the most tolerant of religions'.⁹⁸ The understanding of secularism appropriated and promoted by the Hindu Right is, therefore, one which 'operates to reinforce the norms of the Hindu community'.⁹⁹ Furthermore, claiming secularism as the equal treatment of all religions allows the Hindu Right to contest policies providing specifically for the rights of non-Hindu minorities. These are presented as attempts to appease or give preferential treatment to minorities at the expense of the Hindu majority. Kapur and Cossman contend that, beneath *Hindutva*'s 'discourse of secularism and equality' lies 'a thinly veiled attack on the legitimacy of minority rights'.¹⁰⁰ In this light, '[n]ot only is any special protection for the rights of religious and ethnic minorities explicitly rejected', but also, by appealing to what Rushdie attacks as 'Majority, that mighty elephant' (87), Hindu nationalists aim to 'establish majority norms as the ostensibly neutral norms against which all others are judged'.¹⁰¹ Thus, India becomes a Hindu nation in which non-Hindu minorities are (merely) tolerated by the Hindu majority. Such an understanding of secularism, which establishes a hierarchy between majority and minority

⁹⁶ Stuart Corbridge & John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 193.

⁹⁷ Ratna Kapur & Brenda Cossman, 'Communalising Gender, Engendering Community: Women, Legal Discourse and the Saffron Agenda', in Sarkar & Butalia, eds., pp. 82-120 (p. 89).

⁹⁸ Vanaik, p. 188-89. For a discussion of the assumption of Hinduism's 'mystique of tolerance', see Vanaik, pp. 145-49.

⁹⁹ Kapur & Cossman, p. 90.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

communities (while also problematically homogenising each community) falls far short of Nehru's vision of religious tolerance and cultural plurality.

While Fielding has apparently secular personal tastes, such private secularism is not translated into a public recognition of the importance of minority non-Hindu cultures within the defining framework of the nation-state. That is, while Fielding privately acknowledges the value of non-Hindu cultures, and even enjoys them, he does not recognise them *as Indian*, or as constituent parts of Indian identity. Fielding's approach to non-Hindu minorities within the public domain becomes clear in his response to Aurora's retrospective exhibition in 1979. Here, Fielding frames his attack on Aurora and on non-Hindu Indians within a discourse of secularism as tolerance of, rather than equality between, different religions:

'Let everyone see today what-what we do for minorities,' he said loudly. 'Is it a Hindu who is given this honour? Is it one of our great Hindu artists? No matter. In India every community must have its place, its leisure activity – art et cetera – all. Christians, Parsis, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, Mughals. We accept this. This too is part of ideology of Ram Rajya, rule of Lord Ram. Only when other communities are usurping our Hindu places, when minority seeks to dictate to majority, then we say that the small must accept to bend and move before the big. In the case of art also this applies. (260)

Fielding's statement poses as secularism, while simultaneously constructing India as a Hindu nation which tolerates non-Hindu communities. Tolerance is presented as an innate characteristic of Hinduism, a 'part of the ideology of Ram Rajya'. Such toleration is severely restricted, however. As in his attacks on *The Kissing*, Fielding addresses an implicitly Hindu audience, whose cultural ownership of the spaces in which non-Hindu communities are accommodated is emphasised by the repeated use of pronouns which work to exclude non-Hindus from the imagined national community. Meanwhile, the artistic and cultural traditions of those non-Hindu communities are trivialised and dismissed as 'leisure activity', in relation to an implicitly superior Hindu cultural heritage. This denigration of non-Hindu culture further highlights that, while Fielding concedes that 'every community must have its place', this 'place' is notably *not* at the institutional level of the nation-state. Non-Hindu communities must, in Fielding's version of secularism, assimilate into the Hindu *rashtra* and, in turn, relinquish their right to challenge or resist the superior and dominant Hindu culture. Secularism, in Fielding's understanding, means hegemonic majoritarian rule, in which non-Hindu communities will be tolerated, but not openly welcomed into, or, indeed, recognised as part of, the Indian nation.

Rushdie's representation of Fielding therefore explores the 'very real theoretical possibility that secularization and religious toleration may sometimes work at cross-purposes'.¹⁰² As in *The Satanic Verses*, where Rushdie complicates the utopian representation of cosmopolitanism in his non-fiction by revealing its implication within parochial nationalisms, in *The Moor's Last Sigh* he suggests that secularism may be complicit in the rise of, or be open to appropriation by, intolerant and exclusivist nationalist movements. Indeed, through Fielding, Rushdie shows that secular tastes and even an admiration of other religions are not necessarily incompatible with fundamentalist and exclusionary nationalisms. Once more, there is a tension between his fiction and non-fiction in which Rushdie claims the principle of secularism as 'a question of survival' for the Indian nation.¹⁰³ In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie anxiously recognises that this principle, while holding the potential to defend the nation against the forces of communalism, is also open to abuse by those very forces.

'Not Proper, but Improper Bombay': from Bombay to Mumbai

This final section explores Rushdie's representation of Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Moraes' arrival at the MA headquarters, and his subsequent reunion with his father, are part of Rushdie's engagement with Bombay's geography of class, and with the different socio-economic experiences of the city. According to Appadurai, the 'decades of th[e] gradual ethnicizing of India's most cosmopolitan city (roughly the 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s) were also the decades when Bombay became a site of crucial changes in trade, finance, and industrial manufacture'.¹⁰⁴ As Bahri claims, Rushdie is concerned with the intersection between India's experience of increasing 'economic and cultural globalization' and the rise of Hindu nationalism.¹⁰⁵ The 'more than circumstantial link' between the 'decosmopolitanizing of Bombay' and the deindustrialization of the city¹⁰⁶ lies beneath the intersection between Fielding's desired Hindu chauvinist 'Ram Rajya' (260) and Abraham's capitalist, hyper-technologised 'RAM Rajya' (343). By highlighting the similarities between the violently illicit techniques used by Fielding's MA and Abraham's Da Gama-Zogoiby C-50 Corporation, as well

¹⁰² Partha Chatterjee, 'Secularism and Tolerance', in Bhargava, ed., pp. 345-79 (p. 348).

¹⁰³ Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 393-414 (p. 404).

¹⁰⁴ Appadurai, p. 630.

¹⁰⁵ Bahri, p. 184.

¹⁰⁶ Appadurai, pp. 630, 649.

as their direct connection in terms of personnel (Sammy Hazaré and Moraes), Rushdie underlines how ‘globalization, deindustrialization, and ethno-urbanism have become linked forces in Bombay’.¹⁰⁷

In his account of 1990s Bombay, Mehta argues that the post-Ayodhya riots ‘were a milestone in the psychic life of the city, because its different worlds came together with an explosion. The monster came out of the slums’.¹⁰⁸ In this section, I probe Bombay’s geography of class, and the distance between the bourgeois secular nationalism of ‘Bombay’ and the Maharashtrian ‘underclass’ of ‘Mumbai’, as they figure within *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Remembering Mehta’s remark that ‘[w]e lived in Bombay and never had much to do with Mumbai’,¹⁰⁹ I explore Moraes’ movements within the city. As in *The Satanic Verses*, these movements across Bombay’s cognitive, social and material cartography inform a changing understanding of the city and its contemporary politics. Indeed, Saladin’s experiences within London provide a crucial intertext for Moraes’ movements in Bombay. Furthermore, in the light of Moraes’ eventual departure from Bombay, I consider the significance of the novel’s multiple endings for Rushdie’s own changing understandings of his ‘lost city’.¹¹⁰ For, if in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie continually defers the moment of arrival, in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* he defers the moment of leave-taking, delaying his departure from the idealisations of Bombay’s cosmopolitan and secular identity.

Before exploring Moraes’ movements, it is important to consider Bombay’s position in relation to the rest of India in this novel. Sunil Khilnani states that ‘Bombay in the years after 1947 was an exception within India as a whole, an island unto itself’.¹¹¹ In *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, perhaps more than in any other text studied in this thesis, Bombay is positioned as exceptional to, but also as paradoxically representative of, the Indian nation. Thus, Moraes exclaims that ‘[t]hose who hated India, those who sought to ruin it, would need to ruin Bombay’ (351). The relationship between the city and the nation, however, transforms as the novel

¹⁰⁷ Appadurai, p. 650.

¹⁰⁸ Mehta, p. 53.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹⁰ Salman Rushdie, ‘Imaginary Homelands’, in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 9-21 (p. 9).

¹¹¹ Khilnani, p. 136.

progresses, as Bombay is forced to confront its own Indianness in the aftermath of the 1992-93 violence.

Bombay's difference from the rest of India is indicated by the tensions between citizens of the nation's capital and of Bombay in the 1950s:

Between Delhi-folk and Bombay types there has always been a measure of mutual contempt (I am speaking, of course, of the bourgeoisie); Bombay-wallahs have tended to dismiss Delhiites as the fawning lackeys of power, as greasy-pole-climbers and placemen, while the capital's citizens have sneered at the superficiality, the bitchiness, the cosmopolitan 'Westoxification' of my home-town's business babus and lacquered, high-gloss femmes. (178)

Rushdie characterises the cities as competing to be representative of post-Independence India, and as offering competing visions of the nation. Delhi, as India's official capital and the centre of political power, is represented as inward-looking and sycophantic; Bombay, as India's 'commercial and cultural capital',¹¹² its *capitalist* centre, is represented as outward-looking, positioning India within a global context. In its 'cosmopolitan "Westoxification"', Bombay looks beyond India's borders, and indeed away from India, to cultivate a modern – 'lacquered, high-gloss' – sense of Indianness.

Crucially, Bombay is simultaneously *exceptional to* India and, paradoxically, *exceptionally* Indian, liminally positioned – geographically and culturally – between India and the European 'West'. While Bombay was 'from the moment of its creation: the bastard child of a Portuguese-English wedding', it is also 'the most Indian of Indian cities' (350). Echoing Saladin's ironic suggestion in *The Satanic Verses* that 'the world's made up of Indies, East, West, North',¹¹³ Moraes asserts that '[e]verything north of Bombay was North India, everything south of it was the South. To the east lay India's East and to the west, the world's West' (350). Once more inserting Bombay within a global context, Rushdie positions the city as a mediating space between India and the rest of the world, both central to and separate from the Indian nation. Bombay's liminal position between the Indian and un-Indian continues in Moraes suggestion that, while '[i]n Bombay all Indias met and merged', it is also a space in which 'all-

¹¹² Khilnani, p.136.

¹¹³ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 54. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

India met what-was-was-not-India' (350). In a familiar Rushdian formulation, Bombay is characterised as a city of excess, a space which is both excessively Indian and *un*-Indian.

The terms 'all-India' and 'what-was-not-India' gesture towards the tension within Bombay between an idealised all-inclusive, secular cosmopolitanism and a Marathi-Hindu parochialism. If, as Mehta suggests, the post-Ayodhya riots and bombings forced the 'different worlds' of Bombay and Mumbai to confront each other, then in Rushdie's narrative they also prompted Bombay to confront its own Indianness. While claiming that communal violence 'never happened' (350) in Bombay, Moraes immediately concedes that 'never is too absolute a word. Bombay was not inoculated against the rest of the country' (350). Maintaining Bombay's exceptionality, however, and with another backward glance at *The Satanic Verses*, Moraes asserts that 'on the way to Bombay the rivers of blood were usually diluted [...] so that by the time they reached the city's streets the disfigurements were relatively slight' (350). But, as Ball notes, in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri Masjid, '[e]ven "Bombayness" is not powerful enough to overwhelm negating energies',¹¹⁴ and the city is unable to resist the communal violence sweeping across India. Thus, the 'corrosive acid of the spirit, that adversarial intensity which poured into the nation's bloodstream when the Babri Masjid fell' was 'on this occasion too concentrated, and even the great city's powers of dilution could not weaken it enough' (351). Bombay's exceptionality is problematised as the city is revealed as sharing the 'nation's bloodstream'. The failure to 'dilute' the nation's communal violence is translated into an indication of the city's Indianness, as well as of the seriousness and intensity of that violence. In this light, Rushdie's understanding of Indianness appears to have altered, no longer signifying 'the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance' that it did a decade earlier.¹¹⁵ Instead, Indianness is linked to negative ideas of exclusive nationhood, and has begun to embody the polluting 'corrosive acid' of communalism itself. Indianness has therefore become threatening to Bombayness, and the nation endangers the city's cosmopolitan secularism. Thus, there is a distinction between Bombayness and Indianness that was not

¹¹⁴ Ball, p. 46.

¹¹⁵ Salman Rushdie, 'The Assassination of Indira Gandhi', in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 41-46 (p. 44). This essay was originally written in 1984, 11 years before the publication of *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

present in Rushdie's earlier work, in which Bombayness provided an idealised model for Indianness.

It is therefore possible to discern a retreat in Rushdie's fiction, away from the rest of India, and into Bombay as the last remaining stronghold of a Nehruvian vision of the nation, as well as a distancing of Bombayite from Indian identity. In *Midnight's Children*, while Bombay is central to the representation of India, there is an attempt to map a nation – and indeed a subcontinent – beyond that city; the Midnight Children's Conference famously attempts to create a pan-Indian national identity, while Saleem's narration moves beyond Bombay and into Kashmir, Delhi, Agra, Calcutta, and across the border into the Sunderbans of Bangladesh and Karachi in Pakistan. In contrast, the majority of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is resolutely situated within Bombay and, while it begins in Kerala, this location is, as Ania Loomba remarks, 'described in terms that are remarkably similar to [Rushdie's] "hybrid" Bombay, with whom he seems more comfortable'.¹¹⁶ This increasing focus on Bombay signals a withdrawal from the rest of the nation which suggests that, for Rushdie, India no longer offers the postcolonial possibilities celebrated in *Midnight's Children*. It represents a retreat, or turning away from India as the embodiment of the Nehruvian vision of socialist secularism. Bombay therefore becomes the last space of resistance to the negative forces of 'god-and-mammon' (351) afflicting India. This position is ironically paired with the growing recognition that Bombay has been one of the cities most affected by India's communal tensions, and is a location where the 'tiger [has] actually [been in] power'.¹¹⁷ As it becomes clear that Bombayness has similarly been infected by those forces of 'god-and-mammon', and the distinction between Bombayness and Indianness can no longer be sustained, Rushdie's narration retreats away from Bombay itself, in a series of withdrawals to which I return in my conclusion to this chapter.

Having explored the centrality of Bombay, I turn to Moraes' journey into Bombay Central. The phrase 'rivers of blood' explicitly invokes Rushdie's representation of London in *The Satanic Verses*. Implying potential similarities – although certainly not an equivalence – between interracial tensions in 1980s London and intercommunal tensions in 1990s Bombay,

¹¹⁶ Ania Loomba, "'Local-manufacture made-in-India Othello fellows": Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-colonial Shakespeares', in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. by Ania Loomba & Martin Orkin (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 143-63 (p. 153).

¹¹⁷ Rushdie, 'The Riddle of Midnight', p. 31.

Rushdie's self-referential allusion gestures towards an extended intertextual relationship between his novels which informs Moraes' migrations within Bombay. For if, in *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin's migrations within and between London and Bombay were part of both a psychological and cartographic movement between Indianness and Englishness, in *The Moor's Last Sigh* Moraes similarly moves between different kinds of Indianness in general, and Bombayness in particular. As Beck observes, Rushdie 'send[s] Moraes on a journey of discovery that brings him face to face with a "new" India of whose existence he had not had even the faintest knowledge'.¹¹⁸ Saladin's migrations offer a framework through which to read Moraes' movements, and there are important similarities between the pair. Like Saladin, Moraes is a member of Bombay's elite bourgeoisie; his mother, like Changez, was a leading figure within the anti-colonial struggle, 'the great beauty at the heart of the nationalist movement' (116). As such, Moraes occupies a similarly socio-economically privileged location, detached from the material realities faced by the majority of Bombay's inhabitants; he acknowledges that 'on Malabar Hill the Emergency was as invisible as the illegal skyscrapers and disenfranchised poor' (234). Furthermore, while it is one of the 'better off areas' of the city, Malabar Hill is also 'fairly mixed in terms of [the] communities' that live there and consequently denotes some 'modicum of tolerance' between its Muslim, Hindu and Parsi inhabitants.¹¹⁹ Moraes' movement outside of this location is therefore significant both in terms of class difference and in terms of understandings of Bombay's secularism.

Moraes admits that '[t]he children of the rich are raised by the poor' (193). Accompanying his ayah, Miss Jaya Hé, on her shopping trips enables Moraes to travel beyond the privileged world of Malabar Hill. Describing these journeys into the city, Moraes offers an exuberant mapping of Bombay:

[I]t was with Miss Jaya that I rode the B.E.S.T. trams and buses, and while she disapproved of their overcrowding I was secretly rejoicing in all that compacted humanity, in being pushed so tightly together that privacy ceased to exist and the boundaries of your self began to dissolve [...]. And it was with Miss Jaya that I ventured into the fabulous turbulence of Crawford Market [...] I penetrated the rum dens of Dhobi Talao and ventured into the chawls, the tenements, of Byculla (where she took me to visit her poor – I should say her *poorer* – relations, who, with yet-more-

¹¹⁸ Beck, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Kalpana Sharma, 'Chronicle of a Riot Foretold', in Sujata Patel & Alice Thorner, eds., *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 268-86 (p. 269).

impoverishing offers of cold drinks and cakes treated her arrival like the visit of a queen), and it was with her that I ate watermelon at Apollo Bunder and chaat on the seafront at Worli, and with all these places and their loud inhabitants, with all these commodities and comestibles and their insistent vendors, with my exhaustible Bombay of excess, I fell deeply and for ever in love, even while Miss Jaya was enjoying herself by giving full vent to her outsized capacity for derision, [...] firing out judgements from which she would permit no appeal: 'Too costly!' (Chickens.) 'Too disgusting!' (Dark rum.) 'Too slummy!' (Chawl.) 'Too dry!' (Watermelon.) 'Too hot!' (Chaat.) And always, on our return home, she turned to me with a glittering, resentful look and spat out, 'You, baba: too lucky! Thank your lucky stars.' (193)

I have quoted this section at length because it offers a crucial representation of Bombay, particularly in terms of different socio-economic experiences of the city. Central is a childlike and potentially sentimental revelling in an 'exhaustible Bombay of excess'. Moraes emphasises the sensorial stimulation offered by the city's abundant sights, sounds and smells, which he voraciously consumes. Similarly, he sentimentalises the overcrowding – a significant element of Rushdie's celebrations of the city – as symbolic of Bombay's 'compacted humanity', its multiplicity and, by implication, its multiculturalism.

Moraes' mapping of Bombay bears witness to important material differences within the city. The shopping trip offers Moraes an adventure into unknown spaces and he describes it in terms of an expedition: 'I ventured', 'I penetrated'. In contrast to this almost touristic enjoyment of the city, and his consumption of the commodities on offer, Miss Jaya's experience is very different, involving the performance of necessary everyday tasks such as purchasing provisions. Moraes' enjoyment further contrasts with Miss Jaya's 'poorer' relations, whose attempts to provide the food and drink he consumes in abundance elsewhere serves only to emphasise and increase their poverty. In this light, Moraes' assertion that Miss Jaya '*liked to wander* the city in order to disapprove of it' (193, my emphasis) elides not only the material necessity which underlies her 'wandering', but also the very real targets of her derision, most notably that food is 'too costly'. The 'Bombay of excess' Miss Jaya experiences is therefore characterised by an excess of difficulties and inconveniences, rather than of pleasures. Her bitter statement that Moraes is 'too lucky' because he is able to retreat from these over-crowded, economically deprived spaces emphasises these differences. He does not have to engage with the material realities of everyday life in the city because, ultimately, he can withdraw from them to a space in which the cost of living, the 'excess' of everyday Bombay, is not prohibitive.

I do not wish to discount the importance of the joyous celebration of Bombay at work here, or the possibility that Miss Jaya *does* relish haggling with the city's vendors. Similarly, it is worth remembering that Rushdie is representing Moraes' childhood experiences, and any self-awareness of his privileged position would be surprising. Nevertheless, Rushdie uses this moment to highlight the impact that socio-economic difference has on experiences of the city, implicitly acknowledging how his own distance from everyday experiences of Bombay might itself impact on his representations of that city. It is, perhaps, Moraes' privileged socio-economic location which makes his whole-hearted 'love' for Bombay possible, and Rushdie recognises that this has implications for his own celebrations of the city.

Miss Jaya's husband, Lambajan, continues Moraes' introduction to the city beyond *Elephanta*, to spaces mapped by class and by different understandings of Bombay's cosmopolitan and secular heritage. In an explicit echo of *The Satanic Verses*, Lambajan becomes Moraes' 'personal cut-price Virgil, leading [him] down to Hell – to the [...] through-looking-glass evil twin of [his] own and golden city: not Proper, but Improper Bombay' (126). In a further backward glance to the earlier novel, in which Saladin travels into an 'otherworld' or 'undercity' (412) which conflicts with his Anglophile idealisations of London, Moraes' movement into 'Improper Bombay' is framed by the novel's dominant metaphor of the palimpsest; Moraes discovers that '[t]he city itself, perhaps the whole country, was a palimpsest, Under World beneath Over World' (184).

De Certeau's notion of the Concept-city is useful in unpacking the competing discourses of the 'Proper' and 'Improper' in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, although Rushdie's representation of Bombay does not fit de Certeau's theorisation in any schematic way. The Concept-city, rationalised by official discourse at a distance from the 'ordinary practitioners of the city [who] live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins', chimes with Rushdie's metaphor of the palimpsest.¹²⁰ As I explained in Chapter One, de Certeau's officially mapped Concept-city is a 'place' in which 'the law of the "proper" rules'.¹²¹ Beneath this official understanding of the city lies a 'metaphorical', lived city, created by plural 'spatial

¹²⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1988[1984]), p. 93.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 117.

practices' and characterised by the 'proliferating illegitimacy' of the spontaneous movements of city dwellers.¹²² As I argued, Mistry's engagement with the material experiences of Bombay's working-class and poor communities in *A Fine Balance* problematises de Certeau's emphasis on the possibilities of resistance offered by ordinary spatial practices to official conceptions of the city. Nevertheless, Mistry's understanding of Bombay, and of the perceived authorised and illegitimate practices within it, remains situated within an understanding of the imposed 'proper' as a univocal, stable place, in contrast to the proliferating heterogeneity of the 'improper' 'lived city'. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie mobilises a different understanding of the 'proper' and 'improper' to engage with the ideological and imaginative, as well as the material, consequences of the transformation of the city from Bombay to Mumbai.

Crucial to this engagement is the conflict over, and oscillation between, different understandings of what is 'proper' and 'improper', or 'illegitimate', within the city. For Moraes, 'Proper' Bombay signifies a 'city of mixed-up, mongrel joy' (376), a space marked by a multicultural polyvocality in line with de Certeau's lived city 'space'; 'Improper' Bombay indicates the city as imagined by the Mumbai Axis, a space exclusively available to Hindu-Marathi identities. In its celebration of fluid hybridity, Moraes' 'Proper' city is very different from de Certeau's univocal and compartmentalised Concept-city. However, Moraes' understanding of how the city functions, and his sense of the proper (inclusive) and improper (exclusive), is analogous, although not equivalent, to de Certeau's vision of the Concept-city. The understanding of Bombay as secular and cosmopolitan dominates both the early sections of the novel and Rushdie's work in general. It therefore arguably represents, within Rushdie's writing, an authorised and legitimised understanding of the city's postcolonial identity that is comparable to the officially sanctioned position of the Concept-city. Aurora's early dominance, and her close identification with the city as 'Aurora Bombayalis' (123), assumes the authority of the bourgeois, socialist secular elite she represents over how the city is imagined. The sense of the 'Proper' as 'mixed-up' therefore acts as an authorised version, a stable 'Over World' beneath which illegitimate versions of the city exist. This authorised, 'proper' version of the city, however, is revealed as eliding the material and cultural tensions experienced by its

¹²² de Certeau, p. 96.

'ordinary practitioners'. Just as the spatial practices of the city dwellers disrupt the authorised surface of de Certeau's Concept-city, so an 'improper' version of Bombay increasingly interrupts Moraes' (and Rushdie's) vision of Proper Bombay.

Authority over the city's identity, and over its "proper" rules, shifts as the novel progresses, away from the secular and towards a previously repressed, Hindu-Marathi chauvinist politics. As I will demonstrate, this shift coincides with Moraes' movement into the 'Improper' Bombay Central, a subterranean 'Hell' occupied by many of the 'ordinary practitioners of the city' who exist 'below the thresholds' of Moraes' secular bourgeois field of 'visibility'. Here, he is confronted by a different understanding of the 'Proper', one which is as authoritarian, homogenising and exclusionary as de Certeau's Concept-city. This conflict between 'Proper' and 'Improper' Bombay is indicated by the changing name of the city. As I noted in Chapter One, de Certeau claims that the Concept-city acts 'like a proper name', strategically 'conceiving and constructing space' in order to rationalise and homogenise it.¹²³ In this light, the proper names of 'Bombay' and 'Mumbai' signify a shift in who holds power over the conceptualisation of the city, as well as who is able (legitimately) to inhabit that space. As Moraes moves from Aurora's Bombay to Fielding's Mumbai, then, he travels between different conceptualisations of the city, between different understandings of the 'Proper'.

His movement from the 'Proper' Bombay of Malabar Hill and towards the 'Improper' Bombay Central follows a pattern established in *The Satanic Verses*. After rejection by a city idealised as accommodating of difference, Moraes is arrested and placed in jail, a space reminiscent of the Detention Centre in the earlier novel. From here, Moraes travels into an unrecognisable urban space in which both his privileged class position and his idealisation of the city is interrogated and problematised. After an 'education' in the city's socio-economic realities, and an introduction to a grassroots political activism very different to that experienced by Saladin, Moraes returns to his family home, his attitude towards and understanding of which has been irrecoverably altered. This summary elides the complexities of Saladin's and Moraes' migrations, but does indicate the important echoes between the two novels. With this in mind, I

¹²³ de Certeau, p. 94.

explore Moraes' incarceration in Central Bombay and his entry into the Mumbai Axis in order to consider Rushdie's engagement with class difference within Bombay.

After his rejection by Aurora, and by a Bombay idealised as secular and cosmopolitan, Moraes is arrested for his involvement in Abraham's narcotics smuggling racket. As in *The Satanic Verses*, where Saladin's incarceration in the Detention Centre provides a crucial turning point in his understandings of London, Moraes' internment in Bombay Central lock-up is a key moment at which his privileged class position, alongside his idealisations of Bombay, are challenged. 'This was not just a jail', Moraes comments, 'it was an education' (287). There are key similarities between Saladin's and Moraes' imprisonments, most notably each character's disorientation within, and ignorance of, the sites of their incarceration. Despite having already travelled into 'those Bombay Central alleyways that have no name' (196) with Lambajan in order to engage in illicit street-boxing, Moraes fails to recognise Bombay Central jail, describing how '[i]n a street I had never heard of I stood in manacles before a building I had never seen' (285). Bombay Central occupies a contrasting geography of class in relation to Malabar Hill, resulting in Moraes' ignorance of it. Appadurai explains that, while the 'posh areas of Malabar Hill' are occupied by 'the apartment buildings of the rich and upper middle class',¹²⁴ Central Bombay comprises *chawls* originally built for mill workers and, as such, is composed of 'solidly working-class neighbourhoods'.¹²⁵ As a centre of manufacturing, Central Bombay has borne the brunt of the city's economic movement away from industry and towards the financial, legal, and service sectors.¹²⁶ It therefore represents a very different space from the affluent location previously occupied by Moraes, and his presence within it highlights the disparity of experiences of Bombay's postcolonial development.¹²⁷

This disparity becomes clear inside the jail, as Moraes asks: "What is this place?" [...] "I never came across it in my life" (287). The Warder's response is telling:

'You laad-sahibs,' [...] 'You live in the city and know nothing of its secrets, of its heart. To you it is invisible, but now you have been made to see. You are in Bombay Central lock-up. It is the stomach, the intestine of the city.' (287)

¹²⁴ Appadurai, p. 637.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 640.

¹²⁶ See Appadurai, pp. 640-41.

¹²⁷ Although it is important to note that the division between rich and poor is not geographically discrete; even in the wealthier areas of Bombay, pavements are occupied by the poor. See Appadurai, p. 637.

The Warder's statement is a sinister echo of Zeeny's inquiry of Saladin as to '[w]hat do you know about Bombay? Your own city, only it never was' (55). The Warder reveals Moraes' knowledge of Bombay as circumscribed by his bourgeois class location, which has enabled his ignorance of this more violent, dirty, and economically deprived, cityscape. Within it, Moraes is confronted with the '[h]unger, exhaustion, cruelty and despair' (287) regularly experienced by many of the city's less-privileged inhabitants, as well as the very real physical dangers of disease and illness that often accompany poverty: 'dysentery [...]. Malaria, cholera, TB, typhoid' (287-88).

The jail itself is occupied by 'hybrid monsters', 'men with [...] the heads of beasts and poisonous snakes for tongues' (286) who evoke the 'monsters' (171) of *The Satanic Verses'* Detention Centre (167-69). Furthermore, Moraes has a recurring dream which explicitly echoes Saladin's dream of 'a man with glass skin' (33), and Glass Bertha's skin (169). In *The Satanic Verses*, Bertha's skin, alongside the hybrid 'monsters' (171), symbolise the 'power of description' (168) held by the racist ideology of the Thatcher government. In jail, Moraes 'felt that [his] skin was [...] coming away from [his] body' (288) in a similar embodiment of the power of description held by the anti-secular authorities within Bombay Central; he felt he 'was becoming nobody, nothing; or rather, I was becoming what had been made of me. I was what the Warder saw' (288). Moraes' previously hegemonic position within one of Bombay's dominant families – both in terms of its secular, anti-colonial nationalist and capitalist histories – is transformed; he becomes, in Bombay Central, an insignificant Bombayite, an irrelevance.

This indicates a change in prevailing understandings of the city. Moraes' insignificance suggests that Bombay's socialist secular bourgeoisie have become similarly irrelevant to, or are no longer hegemonic within, contemporary negotiations of the city's identity. The jail therefore acts, I suggest, as Moraes' point of departure from a 'Proper' Bombay of cosmopolitan secularism and entrance into an 'Improper' Bombay which, it becomes clear, is 'Mumbai'. The jail signals a shift in authority over the city's identity and over constructions of what (or who) is 'Proper' and legitimate within it. As he moves further into 'Improper' Bombay, identities such as Moraes' – liberal, bourgeois, secularist, non-Hindu – are increasingly constructed as illegitimate although, as I have shown, Moraes' membership of the MA prevents any easy

opposition between the 'Proper' and 'Improper', the legitimate and illegitimate. The continuity between Bombay Central lock-up and the MA headquarters is therefore important. Here, Moraes 'understood that [he] had never really left the phantasmal city, that other Bombay-Central or Central-Bombay' (301), indicating that Fielding's Mumbai is not only a continuation of, but is central to, the 'Improper' city into which Moraes has travelled. At the MA headquarters, the transition from Bombay to Mumbai is consolidated, Fielding's slogan of '*Beautiful Mumbai, Marathi Mumbai*' (293) asserting the city's 'proper name' as one now marked by Hindu-Marathi identity.

Within the Axis, Moraes is confronted not only with this anti-migrant, Hindu-Marathi chauvinism, but also with the consequences of the material failures of the socialist secular project. According to Judith M. Brown, both Nehru and Gandhi were convinced that political independence 'must be seen to bring real change in the lives of ordinary people, particularly the most disadvantaged'.¹²⁸ Moraes' ignorance of Lambajan's religious identity and socio-economic circumstances suggests that Rushdie shares Mistry's concern regarding the failure of the socialist secular vision to deliver many of its goals. Despite Lambajan's long employment at *Elephanta*, Moraes confesses to knowing little about his servant, least of all his Hindu and Maharashtrian identity. Moraes only 'half-remembered' these details, 'shamefully' admitting that 'I had known nothing of importance about him, nor made it my business to know' (293). This failure, on the part of a member of the secular elite, to engage with the details of working-class Maharashtrian lives is central to the MA's political successes in general, and Lambajan's membership in particular. Ahmad forcefully argues that, as a consequence of successive governments' failure to address the material difficulties faced by India's urban proletariat, 'entire communities and neighbourhoods become shifting but fertile grounds for crime gangs and fascist mobilizations'.¹²⁹ Lambajan's MA membership is framed within this context. Fielding announces that 'Mother Indira herself [...] care[s] nothing for Common Man' (294), while his organisation offers practical help and delivers basic needs – Fielding claims to 'have looked after' Lambajan's 'people' by 'getting kiddies educated and solving health and hygiene

¹²⁸ Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 223.

¹²⁹ Ahmad (2000), p. 156.

problems since many years' (294). The failure of the socialist secular project to deliver such needs enables Fielding's exploitation of Bombay's 'underclass' in his pursuit of a Ram Rajya, establishing a relationship of patronage and obligation between the MA and those it helps.

Furthermore, Fielding represents his Hindu-Marathi chauvinist movement as a class, as well as cultural, revolution, pitting himself in opposition to the bourgeois secular identities of Malabar Hill, despite his earlier self-identification as an intellectual cosmopolitan. He announces that '[o]ne day [...] Malabar Hill will burn and Ram Rajya will come' (293). However, Rushdie again resists constructing the conflict over Bombay's identity in terms of a dichotomy between Hindu nationalists and secularists, or between a Maharashtrian underclass and a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. As Bahri argues, Rushdie depicts Bombay's demise as due to 'religion but not only religion, class but not only class, masculinism but not only gender conflicts, colonialism but not only colonialism, global capitalism but not only that'.¹³⁰ While he attacks the 'godless Hill types' for 'drink[ing] whisky-soda and talk[ing] democracy' (293), Fielding similarly courts 'the toffs on Malabar Hill' (298). Importantly, Rushdie depicts these 'toffs' as returning the favour, a 'steady stream of visitors' from the 'super-desirable super-high-rise Himalayas of the Hill' (298) making their way to Fielding. Thus, Rushdie problematises the initial opposition between the 'Proper' Bombay of Malabar Hill and the 'Improper' Mumbai of Fielding, suggesting instead their interconnection and interdependence.

The intersection between the interests of the MA and of Bombay's capitalist bourgeoisie is underlined by Moraes' simultaneous employment by both Abraham and Fielding, but also by his violent work for the MA. In a perverse reversal of Saladin's politicisation, which gradually draws him into a grassroots political activism which resists exclusionary constructions of the nation, Moraes becomes involved in an underground movement to prevent such activism. His actions, which include clearing the 'great textile mill strike' and pursuing 'union-wallah-dross, activist scruff and Communist scum' (306), would seem to benefit Bombay's industrial leaders more immediately than the movement for a Ram Rajya. For example, they enable the emergence of a 'sparkling, up-to-date powerloom industry' which does little to improve the circumstances of many of Bombay's working class: 'At the end of the strike there were sixty

¹³⁰ Bahri, p. 190.

thousand fewer jobs in the mills' (307). As such, Moraes' violence highlights the 'convergence of global capitalism and the rise of the Hindu Right'¹³¹ and the 'relatively hidden agenda of Hindutva which is directed against socialism'.¹³² Rushdie therefore problematises the Shiv Sena's claims to represent a Maharashtrian underclass, as well as any opposition between Bombay's capitalist bourgeoisie and its *dada* culture. Rather, he suggests that, while the two groups may pursue different goals, their means of achieving their vision of Bombay are similar and overlapping.

Saladin's progression from disengaged, cosmopolitan spectator to active participant in Bombay's politics is therefore echoed in *The Moor's Last Sigh* in a violently ominous way. While his MA work enables Moraes to 'g[e]t to know large new sections of the city' (306), his engagement with those spaces differs radically from Saladin's re-engagement with Bombay. Moraes' politicisation takes a darker turn, and his involvement in a perverted form of grassroots activism is a distortion of the politicised cosmopolitanism towards which Saladin moves. Instead of resisting the communalisation of Bombay, Moraes' active engagement with its socio-economic inequalities results in the silencing of political protest and works towards the repression of the city's multiculturalism.

It is therefore worth noting a key difference between Saladin's and Moraes' journeys through Bombay: the absence of Zeeny Vakil as both a cartographic and socio-political guide in the latter novel, which has significant implications for modes of active resistance to the communalisation of public life. According to Baker, Zeeny reappears in *The Moor's Last Sigh* 'as the voice of a vigilant multiculturalism'.¹³³ I contend, however, that she has undergone a subtle transformation since *The Satanic Verses* which problematises Baker's optimistic characterisation. The active engagement with Bombay's socio-politics evident in the earlier novel appears to be absent from the later text. Zeeny remains a 'brilliant young art theorist' (329) and her role as curator of the Zogoiby Bequest certainly identifies her as a proponent of secularism. However, in *The Satanic Verses*, in addition being an art critic, Zeeny organises public demonstrations, and works at the Breach Candy Hospital and with Bombay's homeless

¹³¹ Bharucha, p. 161.

¹³² Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sunit Sarkar, & Sambuddha Sen, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993), p. 71.

¹³³ Baker, p. 51.

(52). While in the later novel she remains an outspoken critic of Hindu nationalism, there is little evidence of her active involvement in a movement of resistance to Fielding's increasingly hegemonic politics. Rather, her focus on art alone suggests a withdrawal into aesthetics which is problematic in the context of the *Hindutva* movement's political successes. Rushdie again suggests the problematic failure of secularist intellectuals to pursue and protect actively this foundational principle, further implying that the 'clever leftish' (337) aesthetic and intellectual celebration of secularism is itself no longer an adequate response to the rise of communalism.

This failure has implications for Rushdie's own position, which arguably parallels the 'clever, leftish' secular intellectualism of Zeeny and, I suggest, lies beneath the multiple endings of the novel, which probe the relationship between – and possibilities of – aesthetics, politics, and resistance. Early in the novel, Moraes declares that it is 'meet to sing of endings; of what was, and may be no longer' (4), and the novel acts as a lament for Bombay, '[a] last sigh for a lost world, a tear for its passing' (4). With this in mind, I will consider the novel's three endings, which offer different visions of Bombay's, and India's, future. Critics have inevitably tended to focus on the novel's final Spanish ending, located in the 'Elsewhere' of Andalusia, in order to gauge Rushdie's attitude towards the survival of India's secular ideals in the post-Ayodhya era. This ending repeats and reinforces the oscillation between hope and despair already evident in the two preceding Bombay endings of the text. Central is the depiction of the Alhambra as an enduring '*monument to a lost possibility*' (433) of multicultural hybridity, an aesthetic embodiment of the 'syncretic coexistence' that is threatening within Bombay and India.¹³⁴ Critics have particularly focused on the way Rushdie defers closure by gesturing both to the past and the future. As Bahri comments, by turning to the past in order to re-imagine a golden age from which to 'excavate an imperfect and unrealized possibility', the novel ends 'with the vision of a potential lost through time and through its own insufficient realization – a might-have-been-utopia'.¹³⁵

I agree that Rushdie's representation of the Alhambra mourns the lost promise of the Nehruvian socialist secularist vision, while also revealing that vision as always already

¹³⁴ Bahri, p. 195.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

compromised. I would also argue, however, that Rushdie maintains the possibility that this project may yet be revived. The Alhambra is represented as a '*monument to a lost possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen*' (433), suggesting simultaneously the failure, but also the paradoxical endurance, of the secular hybridity its architecture encapsulates. While the Alhambra '*vanish[es] in the twilight*' (433), and even as Moraes sheds a tear for its passing, Rushdie sustains '*hope*' for '*a better time*' (434). As Didur remarks, even as he represents the retreat of cosmopolitan secularism, Rushdie '*does not abandon the possibility of fashioning an ethical response to the effects of religious fundamentalism and transnational capitalism within a secular register*'.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, he is unable to begin to fashion such a response, or to locate the negotiation of such possibility within India's borders. His confidence in the 'India-idea' is at this point ambivalent, positioned between a discourse of lost possibilities and a vague insistence on the as yet untheorised possibilities for the future.

This ambivalence is already evident in the novel's Bombay endings which precede Moraes' arrival in Spain, and which similarly engage with the difficulties of formulating aesthetic responses to India's contemporary socio-political realities. The first of these endings is overtly pessimistic, signalling the death of a secular, cosmopolitan Bombay as it is destroyed by a series of explosions. Importantly, Zeeny – a representative and guardian of aesthetic and intellectual secularism – dies in the blasts. In *The Satanic Verses*, Zeeny embodied the 'eclecticism, hybridity' (288) of Bombay and, significantly, '[t]he optimism of those ideas' (288); her death at the climax of *The Moor's Last Sigh* therefore signals Rushdie's changing attitude towards both the survival of his idea of India and the role of aesthetics in conceptualising and representing that idea. If 'the old, founding myth of the nation [had already] faded' (351), then the bombings obliterate its remains. In the process, Bombay's exceptionality is also destroyed. While '[t]he city [he] knew was dying' (374), Moraes also admits that '[i]t was no longer [his] Bombay, no longer special, no longer the city of mixed-up, mongrel joy' (376). Moraes' response is to withdraw and look 'to Elsewhere' (376) for a space which can fulfil his desire for a 'promised land' (376) of, presumably, multicultural cosmopolitanism. This

¹³⁶ Didur, p. 551.

withdrawal from India suggests that, in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie perhaps offers the 'leavetaking' and 'last words on the East' (28) that was the declared aim of *Shame*.

In this light, Ahmad's criticism that, in *Shame*, Rushdie is 'little [...] able to conceive of a real possibility of regenerative projects' is relevant to *The Moor's Last Sigh*.¹³⁷ While Rushdie highlights the failures of the intellectual elite to defend secularism effectively, the absence of any viable resistance to communalism within his novel is itself problematic. Ahmad has recently argued that '[t]he virulence of the communalist offensive should not be allowed [...] to obscure the fact that the factors and forces that are ranged against [*sic*] *Hindutva* in India today are formidable – commanding, among other things, an absolute numerical majority'.¹³⁸ Rushdie's unwillingness to represent such resistance is perhaps indicative of his continued distance from the material realities of Bombay, both in terms of his privileged socio-economic, cosmopolitan identity, and his (at this point officially enforced) geographical distance from the city. It may also result from a third detachment, a continuing reluctance to endorse material political resistance movements in his writing, and an unwillingness to conceive of a political project beyond the aesthetic. While he exposes the failures of the 'clever, leftish' intellectual elite to defend secularism, he remains unable to represent an alternative mode of resistance to Hindu nationalism. Indeed, the failure of an aesthetic intellectualism to successfully defend this important political principle is itself deeply problematic for a writer who has declared that 'description is itself a political act' and that 'redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it'.¹³⁹ Having insisted on aesthetics as a foundational form of politics, the acknowledgement of the failure of such aesthetics – the failure of the power of description to change material reality – signals a crisis in Rushdie's own perception of the role of the artist.

Madalena Gonzales claims that Rushdie negotiates a post-*fatwa* 'crisis of confidence in fiction' in *The Moor's Last Sigh* by a reaffirmation of 'the idea of art as a force for change'.¹⁴⁰ It is my contention, however, that the novel moves in the opposite direction, revealing Rushdie's increasing anxiety regarding the relationship between aesthetics and politics. This anxiety is

¹³⁷ Ahmad, (1992), p. 149.

¹³⁸ Ahmad (2000), p. 194.

¹³⁹ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', pp. 13, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Madelena Gonzales, *Fiction After the Fatwa: Salman Rushdie and the Charm of Catastrophe* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005), p. 9, 109.

particularly evident in the destruction of Aurora's artistic legacy, the Zogoiby Bequest, by the 'fireball' that also kills Zeeny. Throughout *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie uses Aurora's art to explore the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and to negotiate the problems of adequately representing a nation and its history. The destruction of Aurora's legacy indicates an important change in Rushdie's perception of the role of aesthetics. During the Independence movement, Aurora not only uses art to trace anti-colonial resistance, but also places aesthetics at the centre of that movement. During the Quit India strikes, Aurora sketches the strikers, from the 'idling workers', 'silent factories', and protesting sailors, to the 'lathi-charging policemen' and English officers (130). These 'Chipkali' (131) sketches, which were 'clearly subversive, clearly pro-strike and therefore a challenge to British authority' (131), both represent the resistance movement and situate the artist within that movement.

That this political aesthetic is paired with political activism becomes clear in Aurora's response to Congress's decision to end the strikes. Although she returns to the dockyard without her sketch book, her continued alliance with the oppositional stance of the strikers signals a key role for the artist within material resistance activities. Recognising that 'the Congress were acting like chamchas' (133), Aurora returns to the naval base to express her solidarity with the workers. This move affirms her desire to participate in the anti-colonial movement at the grassroots level, but also highlights her distance from the workers with whom she allies herself; she acknowledges that 'she would look like a rich bitch in a fancy car – as, perhaps, the enemy' (133). Her in-between status highlights the liminal position of the political artist, caught between grassroots resistance and bourgeois intellectualism. Such liminality recalls Saladin's presence at the Brickhall meeting, where he was positioned simultaneously as part of and as marginal to the local community. Aurora's ambivalent position does not, however, prevent her from insisting on her commitment to the movement. In reply to a striker's request that she '[t]ell [her] Congress friends they let us down', Aurora resolutely asserts her activism by stating: 'I will' (134). Aurora's aesthetic and active response to the strikes sits in stark contrast to Moraes' violent response to the 1980s textile strikes where, rather than become involved in resistance, Moraes silences it. This difference suggests a shift in Rushdie's perception of the role of the

artist within resistance movements; in the 1980s there appears to be no central role for the artist to represent and participate in a popular protest movement, as Aurora does in the 1940s.

The destruction of Aurora's artwork by fire is significant given the connections between *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Satanic Verses*. As I noted in Chapter Three, rejecting Rushdie's representation of Islam in *The Satanic Verses*, members of Bradford's Muslim community burnt copies of the novel to demonstrate their offence. In the light of this rejection, or misunderstanding, of aesthetics as a legitimate or appropriate form of oppositional politics,¹⁴¹ Rushdie's representation of a crisis in the relationship between aesthetics and politics in *The Moor's Last Sigh* becomes more personal, and his despair more palpable. If, for Rushdie, art represents a powerful form of political resistance, then the rejection of his attempt to challenge British racism in *The Satanic Verses*, by members of the very communities he sought to represent, has arguably set in motion a crisis of belief in the possibilities of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. This crisis, I contend, casts its shadow over *The Moor's Last Sigh*, particularly in the closing stages of the novel.

In the light of this crisis, the novel's second Bombay ending significantly gestures towards, while falling short of proposing, alternative modes of resistance and regeneration. Bharucha claims that 'the secular battle is no longer being fought exclusively by the cosmopolitan, westernized intellectual élite whom Rushdie presents as almost the sole fighters for the cause'; instead, 'new emergent secular identities [...] are coming from very different class and caste constituencies, which lie totally outside of Rushdie's insufficiently acknowledged affinities' with the 'liberal élite'.¹⁴² I have already argued that Rushdie *does* acknowledge such affinities, recognising his problematic distance from less privileged experiences of India's postcolonial progress. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie undercuts the destruction of Bombay by asserting that 'the end of *a* world is not the end of *the* world' (376, my emphasis). This suggests that, despite his difficulty in conceptualising an aesthetic of oppositional politics, he recognises the possibility of resistance, and that such resistance may emerge from locations very different from his own liberal, bourgeois, intellectual position.

¹⁴¹ See Brennan (1989), p. 145; Pnina Werbner, 'Allegories of Sacred Imperfection; Magic, Hermeneutics, and Passion in *The Satanic Verses*', *Current Anthropology*, 37, Supplement (February, 1996), 55-86 (p. 56).

¹⁴² Bharucha, p. 4.

This recognition becomes clearer in the novel's second ending, sandwiched between Moraes' withdrawal from Bombay and his arrival in Spain. After the bombings, and with the scars from Sammy Hazaré's knife still showing, Nadia Wadia defiantly declares that '[t]he city will survive. New towers will rise. Better days will come. [...] [T]he future beckons' (377). Nadia is a key figure in Rushdie's representation of Bombay. Simultaneously Miss Bombay, Miss India and Miss World (311), she embodies Bombay's central position within and between India's national and global aspirations, becoming 'an emblem of the nation' (314). Importantly, Nadia's 'refusal to be possessed by Mainduck' becomes 'for a certain kind of Bombayite, a symbol of a greater resistance', offering 'proof of the survival of another, freer Bombay' (344). Her defiance after the bombings suggests a continuation of this resistance, while also showing Rushdie once more unwilling to relinquish his vision of Bombay.

As the statement that 'the end of *a* world is not the end of *the* world' suggests, however, the Bombay that will survive differs from Rushdie's 'lost city', and Nadia exemplifies this difference in a number of ways. Nadia is representative of the 'very different class and caste constituencies' from which Bharucha contends India's new identities will emerge. While she is a member of Bombay's Parsi community, she does not conform to some of that community's more exclusionary traditions, agreeing to marry the Catholic-Jew Moraes in a move which identifies her, albeit unwittingly, as a secular and modernising figure. Moreover, her status as a former beauty queen and her spoken English suggests that she is not a member of the 'cosmopolitan, westernized intellectual élite' with which Rushdie is affiliated:

I was asking myself, Nadia Wadia, is it the end for you? Is it curtains? And for some time I thought, achha, yes, it's all over, khalaas. But then I was asking myself, Nadia Wadia, what you talking, men? At twenty-three to say that whole of life is funtoosh? What pagalpan, what nonsense, Nadia Wadia! (376-77)

Her speech is peppered with untranslated Indian words, while her sentence structures follow the pattern of a vernacular local dialect evident in both Parsi Dilly Hormuz's and Raman Fielding's speech (achha, men, funtoosh). While Rushdie's writing is characterised by a similar linguistic hybridity, Nadia's dialect highlights her 'local rather than global context',¹⁴³ and her position within a vernacular understanding of the city which differs from Rushdie's intellectual outlook.

¹⁴³ Schultheis, p. 593.

Furthermore, Nadia's vision of Bombay's survival is mapped through the 'new towers' of global capitalism. Of a younger generation than both Moraes and Rushdie, Nadia expresses little of their nostalgia for 'Proper' Bombay. While Nadia rejects Fielding's advances, she accepts Abraham's offers, benefiting from his wealth to become 'the face of Siodicorp' (345). Her defiance after the bombings therefore locates the city's survival within a trajectory established by Abraham, one whose cosmopolitanism is based not on the city's secular and multicultural identity, but on its position within a global market of commerce and capitalism. The 'scars across her face', meanwhile, 'were still livid, the permanence of the disfiguration all too evident' (376), highlighting the ways in which Bombay has been irrecoverably altered by the post-Ayodhya violence. While the city will be rebuilt, its future will continue to be marked by exclusionary communal politics, and by widely divergent experiences of global capitalism. Nadia's face therefore bears witness to the permanent damage done to the Nehruvian nationalist project in the 1990s, and to Rushdie's own vision of Bombay and India.

The representation of Nadia, then, highlights Rushdie's ambivalent attitude towards Bombay's survival in the late 1990s. That Rushdie positions Nadia as the sole voice of hope and resistance within Bombay implies that, although he is unable to envision the forms that resistance to communalism will take, he is aware that such resistance will emerge and is emerging from sites radically different to those occupied by cosmopolitan intellectuals such as Zeeny and himself. As such, Moraes' withdrawal from Bombay, and his lament that '[i]t was no longer my Bombay' (376) is also perhaps Rushdie's own admission that Bombay no longer belongs to him, that he no longer feels he has the right or, more importantly, has the desire, to claim Bombay as his own. That is, Rushdie seems to be reluctantly confessing that he is no longer well-positioned, or perhaps willing, to conceptualise or represent how Bombay will be imagined in the post-Ayodhya era.

Thus, the multiple endings of *The Moor's Last Sigh* demonstrate Rushdie's shifting attitude towards not only Bombay and India, but also to his own role in representing them. As this chapter has demonstrated, if, in 1991, Rushdie felt that 'the importance of the secular ideal

[...] has simply been assumed, in a rather unexamined way',¹⁴⁴ then *The Moor's Last Sigh* offers a detailed critique of that founding principle and its decline in the 1990s. In tracing the transition of the city from Bombay to Mumbai, Rushdie confronts both the failures of cosmopolitan secularism and of his own aesthetic stance, the ambivalence with which the novel ends extending beyond Bombay itself and into his own position as an artist in relation to it. However, as the novel's multiple endings oscillate between hope and despair, and even as they are filled with images of the destruction of art – from the fire engulfing the Zogoiby Bequest, to the destruction of *The Moor's Last Sigh* painting itself – the survival of one particular painting is worth remembering: *The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig*. That this representation of political resistance and secularism should survive suggests that Rushdie, even as he despairs at the failures of the secular project, and the decline of the role of the artist within it, continues to sustain some hope that such projects – both political and aesthetic – may '*awaken, renewed and joyful*' (434) in India's future. Nevertheless, such hope is framed by the future return of mythical figures such as Arthur and Finn MacCool. Rushdie therefore expresses hope, rather than optimism, in the fortunes of secularism within the newly renamed Mumbai. Moreover, this glimpse of hope is voiced by Moraes, now a writer whose '*breaths are numbered*' (432). Thus, while in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie gestured towards the possibilities of the cosmopolitan's engagement with the politics of India, those possibilities appear out of reach at the close of *The Moor's Last Sigh*. While the novel demonstrates Rushdie's continued commitment to a political engagement with Bombay and India, then, his representation of both the secular project and the migrant writer as exhausted indicates his difficulty in sustaining a conviction in the 'strength of the India-idea', but also in continuing to negotiate his own engagement with that idea in his fiction.

¹⁴⁴ Rushdie, 'Introduction', p. 2.

Chapter Five
From Memoirist to Voyeur: *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

Introduction

Rushdie begins his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' by describing a photograph of his family home in Bombay:

An old photograph in a cheap frame hangs on a wall of the room where I work. It's a picture dating from 1946 of a house into which, at the time of its taking, I had not yet been born. The house is rather peculiar – a three-storeyed gabled affair with tiled roofs and round towers in two corners, each wearing a pointy tiled hat. 'The past is a foreign country,' goes the famous opening sentence of L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*, 'they do things differently there.' But the photograph tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.¹

According to Susan Sontag, photographs act as 'images that bear witness to [...] connectedness'.² Rushdie's photograph works in a similar way, acting as a symbolic point of connection between the writer and his homeland, becoming central to his sense of 'being claimed' by his 'lost city', as well as to his own 'urge to reclaim' that city in his writing.³ Symbolically bridging the geographical and temporal distance between the migrant and his lost home, the photograph bears witness to Rushdie's connectedness to India, and provides a focus for his desire to renew that connection through his writing.

Sontag, however, further argues that photographs enact a tension between connection and distance, presence and absence. While 'photography implies instant access to the real [...] the results of this practice of instant access are another way of creating distance', because to '[t]o possess the world in the form of images is [...] to reexperience the unreality and remoteness of the real'.⁴ Similarly, while Rushdie's photograph acts as a point of imaginative connection to Bombay, it simultaneously highlights the spatial and temporal distances between the migrant artist and his 'lost city'.⁵ These distances, and the photograph's centrality to the disparity between Rushdie's memories of India and that country's contemporary realities, become clear on his return to Bombay. Rushdie notes that the photograph 'had naturally been taken in black and white; and my memory [...] had begun to see my childhood in the same way.

¹ Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), pp. 9-21 (p. 9).

² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1977[1971]), p. 8.

³ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', pp. 9-10.

⁴ Sontag, p. 164.

⁵ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 9.

monochromatically'; by contrast, on returning to Bombay, Rushdie's 'other two eyes were assaulted by colours, by the vividness' of the present.⁶ By highlighting the differences between memory and reality, the photograph reiterates Rushdie's temporal and geographical distance from his homeland rather than his intimate connection to it. It is within this anxious movement between intimacy and distance that I locate Rushdie's seventh novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999). Drawing on Sontag's theorisations, which situate photography within tensions between participation and voyeurism, elegy and nostalgia, the past and the present, I argue that *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* similarly attempts to negotiate tensions between connection and detachment, distance and proximity. In doing so, I suggest, the novel offers, through its photographer-narrator, a renegotiation of the relationship between the migrant and his homeland which has been a central concern of Rushdie's work thus far.

As I noted in Chapter Three, Rushdie has declared his work as increasingly 'interested in the world to which [he] came', and in 1999 claimed that 'having spent a great deal of my life trying to understand and write about the world from which I came originally, I find myself turning away from that, feeling that I've done enough, if you like, or enough for the moment'.⁷ *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is marked by this apparent shift in interest, constituting, for Rushdie, '[his] first American novel'.⁸ Nevertheless, as Miriam Pirbhai suggests, while the novel moves Rushdie's work into an explicitly 'global fictional terrain', it simultaneously continues his explorations of postcolonial India.⁹ While keeping this movement between the national and the international in mind, my discussion of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* will focus on Rushdie's continued, if increasingly ambivalent, engagement with the politics of postcolonial India and Bombay, paying particular attention to the complex and problematic position of the novel's migrant narrator in relation to his homeland.

As with *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* encompasses a wide geographical and historical terrain, crossing continents and spanning decades. Opening in Mexico in 1989, the narrative travels in time and space to Bombay in the

⁶ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 9.

⁷ Peter Kadzis, 'Salman Speaks', *Boston Phoenix*, 6-13 May 1999 <http://www.bostonphoenix.com/archive/books/99/05/06/SALMAN_RUSHDIE.html> [accessed 8 April 2003] (para. 22 of 42).

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Miriam Pirbhai, 'The Paradox of Globalization as an "Untotalizable Totality" in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*', *International Fiction Review*, 28:1/2 (2001), 54-66 (p. 54).

1930s, 40s and 50s, before moving to England of the 1960s, and to the United States in the 1970s and 80s. Described by Laura Miller as a ‘rock ‘n’ roll novel’,¹⁰ *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* traces the lives of, and relationships between, three central characters: Ormus Cama, Vina Apsara, and Umeed Merchant, ‘a.k.a. “Rai”’.¹¹ As critics have noted, the novel is structured by, and attempts to update, classical Greek myth.¹² Rushdie recalls that he ‘started out wanting to write [...] a contemporary version of the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice’.¹³ In this myth, Orpheus – ‘the most famous poet and musician who ever lived’ – travels into Hades in order to save his wife, Eurydice.¹⁴ Eurydice is granted a safe return from the underworld on the condition that Orpheus does not look backwards as he guides her to safety with his lyre. His failure to resist this backwards glance leaves Eurydice lost in the underworld for ever.¹⁵

Rushdie transports this classical myth into the twentieth century, combining it with the Hindu myths of Kama and Rati and using it to structure the story of the relationship between Ormus Cama, ‘the greatest popular singer of all’ (89), and the ‘legendary popular singer’ Vina Apsara (3).¹⁶ Staged as a biography of the couple and their musical careers, the narrative follows Ormus’ and Vina’s rise to global rock stardom in the band VTO, and the pair are represented through an accumulation of references to international popular music icons, such as Elvis Presley, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, Freddie Mercury, Kurt Cobain, Madonna, and Tina Turner, as well as to the band U2, who collaborated with Rushdie in setting

¹⁰ Laura Miller, ‘A Touch of Vulgarity’, <<http://salon.com/books/int/1999/04/16/rushdie/print.html>> [accessed 8 April 2003] (para. 2 of 39).

¹¹ Salman Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), p. 5. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

¹² See, for example, Rachel Falconer, ‘Bouncing Down to the Underworld: Classical *Katabasis* in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*’, in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 47:4 (2001), 467-509; Geetha Ganapathy-Dore, ‘An Orphic Journey to the Disorient: Salman Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*’, *World Literature Written in English*, 38:1 (1999), 17-27 (pp. 18-21); Elena Rossi, ‘“Against an amnesiac culture”: Greek and Latin Mythology in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*’, in *The Great Work of Making Real: Salman Rushdie’s The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, ed. by Elsa Linguanti & Viktoria Tchernichova (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2003), pp. 23-41; Viktoria Tchernichova, ‘“The outsidersness of what we’re inside”: Double Vision as Künstlerästhetik in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*’, in Linguanti & Tchernichova, eds., pp. 69-90 (pp. 70-78); Shaul Bassi, ‘Orpheus’s Other Voyage: Myth, Music and Globalisation’, in Linguanti & Tchernichova, eds., pp. 99-114.

¹³ Miller, para. 5.

¹⁴ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, combined edn (London: Penguin, 1992[1960]), p. 111.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁶ Rushdie has used the Orpheus myth in his fiction before. In *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), the myth informs the vignette of Orphia Phillips and Uriah Moseley, a pair of elevator operators at the Angel Underground who ‘descended each day into the bowels of the earth’ (329). The pair fall in love, only for Uriah to betray Orphia and refuse to ascend to ground level, preferring his position underground with another ‘station beauty’ (329).

the novel's 'title track' to music.¹⁷ Through such references, the novel traces the pair's near deification in the 1970s, their attainment of cult status, and their entry into a 'zone of celebrity in which everything except celebrity ceases to signify' (425). In an allusion to the death of Princess Diana – and the international reaction to that death – Vina's cult status is heightened by her death in an earthquake in 1989, the final and climactic tremor in a series of quakes which punctuate the narrative.¹⁸ If, as Rushdie argues, Diana's death highlighted how the 'intensity of our gaze upon celebrity turns the famous into commodities',¹⁹ then *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* similarly engages with the transformation of cultural icons into what Elisabeth Bronfen terms 'object[s] of consumption'.²⁰ The narrator's role as a photographer therefore gains further significance. A childhood friend of Ormus, and in love with (and periodically the lover of) Vina, Rai is marginalised in the couple's public mythology, but is central to their posthumous remembrance and mythologisation, both through his photography and through the text itself, which acts as his public confession of the trio's lives. The novel engages in a critique of different processes of myth creation – of individuals and of nations – and, as James Wood suggests, sets up a dialogue between classical Greek and Indian mythologies and myths of contemporary celebrity.²¹

Rushdie's use of the Orpheus myth gestures towards a number of key concerns of his previous fiction. The notion of an underworld existing beneath, and intersecting with, an overworld, alongside what Rachel Falconer calls the 'descent-into-hell' motif,²² are central to *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). Similarly, the Orpheus myth speaks to Rushdie's continued interest in movements across national borders and across 'the permeable frontier between the world of the imagination and the one we inhabit'.²³ As Falconer notes, the 'Orphic backward glance' is important, not only to the central narrative of the love

¹⁷ See Salman Rushdie, 'U2', in *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 94-98. For suggested models for Ormus and Vina, see Roger Y. Clark, *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 198; Ganapathy-Dore, pp. 18, 23; Bassi, pp. 108, 112-13.

¹⁸ For an exploration of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in relation to the death of Princess Diana, see Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Faultlines: Catastrophe and Celebrity Culture', *European Studies*, 16 (2001), 117-39.

¹⁹ Salman Rushdie, 'Crash: The Death of Princess Diana', in *Step Across This Line*, pp. 109-12 (p. 109).

²⁰ Bronfen, p. 125.

²¹ James Wood, 'An Exile's Sigh for Home', *Guardian*, 18 April 1999, 'Books', p. 28.

²² Falconer, p. 477.

²³ Rushdie, 'U2', p. 96.

between Ormus and Vina, but also to Rai's relationship with India.²⁴ It is, therefore, central to Rushdie's representation of the migrant's relationship with his homeland and offers another mode of deferred departure already explored in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

The notion of the 'Orphic backward glance' has further significance for Rushdie's representation of Bombay, in the first half of the novel, as a city caught between the forward movement of global capital and urban redevelopment and the nostalgic attempts to uncover, and therefore reclaim, its 'golden age' (78). Bombay is described in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* as 'a metropolis of many narratives that converged briefly and then separated for ever' (52), and this informs the intertextual connections that Rushdie sets up between this and earlier novels. Characters converge on the Bombay of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* from *Midnight's Children* (1981), *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*; as Roger Clark notes, Aurora Zogoiby briefly appears, while William Methwold makes a more extensive appearance in episodes which seem to imagine his post-*Midnight's Children* life.²⁵ Homi Catrak and *The Satanic Verses*' 'Whiskey' Sisodia similarly resurface, while the Everest Vilas inhabited by Gibreel Farishta represents, in the later novel, a collection of 'stories [Rai] do[es] not need to tell' (169). However, as I will argue, the Bombay of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and, more importantly, the relationship between the narrator and the city, differs significantly from that of the previous novels.

As was *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is marked by Rushdie's experiences since the declaration of the *fatwa* ten years earlier, most obviously in the novel's opening line, which states that '[o]n St. Valentine's Day, 1989, the last day of her life, the legendary popular singer Vina Apsara woke sobbing from a dream of human sacrifice in which she had been the intended victim' (3). By opening the novel with an explicit reference to the date of the declaration of the *fatwa*, Rushdie both 'dig[s] the reader in the ribs' and, more seriously, acknowledges the impact of the *fatwa* on his writing.²⁶ This impact can be identified in a number of key themes and events within the novel, from Ormus' public confinement within a 'soundproofed glass case' (424), to Rai's eventual exile from India after having been 'driven

²⁴ Falconer, pp. 491-92.

²⁵ Clark, p. 198.

²⁶ Kadzis, para. 33.

out, like a dog' (203). Rushdie's interest in what Bronfen identifies as the relationship between celebrity culture and catastrophe²⁷ can itself be read in the light of his own status as a literary celebrity – and, indeed, cause célèbre – after the imposition of the *fatwa*, a status perhaps confirmed by his brief appearance in the 2001 film adaptation of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*. Indeed, in 1990, Rushdie expressed frustration at how his own identity was increasingly obscured by 'the creation of [a] false self' by both Muslim groups and members of the non-Muslim media.²⁸

As the above summary of the novel's plot and key concerns suggests, critical attention has so far focussed on Rushdie's rewriting of the Orpheus myth, his engagement with the politics of globalisation,²⁹ and his critique of celebrity culture,³⁰ although critics have also explored his preoccupation with alternative and double worlds,³¹ and with the notion of translation.³² My discussion of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* continues my explorations in previous chapters of issues of home and belonging, the nation and the city, and migrant identities. In doing so, I prioritise the sections of the novel that focus specifically on Bombay and India – rather than those set in England and the US – and concentrate in particular upon notions and modes of representation. I do so because it is in these sections, and through issues of representation, that Rushdie's ambivalent negotiation of the relationship between the migrant and the nation can be seen most clearly. In the first section, I consider Rushdie's engagement with history. In previous chapters, I have placed emphasis on the intersection between text and context, and have highlighted Mistry's and Rushdie's close engagement with key moments in India's postcolonial history and politics. This approach is both resisted and challenged in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which differs from *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* in its treatment of history. The creation of alternative versions of history continues the project of

²⁷ Bronfen, pp. 117-39.

²⁸ Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 393-414 (p. 405). For evidence of Rushdie's entrance into celebrity culture, signalled by the establishment of a gossip column in *The Sun* devoted to 'Rushdie on the Raz', see 'Chillin' Out With Midnight's Ageing Children', *Sunday Times*, 25 July 1999, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/>> [accessed 10 January 2005] (11 para.)

²⁹ Pirhbai, pp. 54-66.

³⁰ Bronfen, pp. 117-39.

³¹ Judith Leggatt, 'Other Worlds, Other Selves: Science Fiction in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*', *ARIEL*, 33:1 (2002), 105-25.

³² Florence Cabaret, 'Writing as Translation in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*'. *Commonwealth Essays & Studies*, 24:2 (2002), 47-57.

critiquing national histories and myths of nation; however, through the introduction of historical slippages and inaccuracies, and the simultaneous suggestion and problematisation of allegorical readings, Rushdie self-consciously challenges the reader to engage with his work differently. Remembering my discussion in Chapter Four of the crisis in Rushdie's understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and politics, I explore the novel's apparent 'under-attachment' to historical detail.

According to James Wood, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is 'an exiled author's sigh for Bombay',³³ and the first half of the novel repeats the pattern of deferred departures and acts of leave-taking already explored in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Once more, the moment of cognitive departure is not coterminous with the moment of physical departure. The second and third sections of this chapter explore Rai's problematic relationship with Bombay, and the extent to which he considers himself to belong to the city and the nation, to be 'Bombay *chokra* through and through' (78). In the second section, I consider the tensions within the novel – and within Rai's own family – between different ideas and understandings of Bombay, and between an older, idealised Bombay, and a modern Mumbai marked by global capital. I suggest that these different versions of the city preclude Rai from a sense of unproblematic belonging to his place of birth. As in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie places art at the centre of his explorations of the city and the nation, and the third section focuses on how Rai's photography offers a mode of representing and understanding Bombay which places the narrator in a liminal position, caught between being a 'memoirist' and a 'voyeur' (158). Central concerns throughout this chapter, but particularly in this final section, are the complexity of Rai's narrative position and, intersecting with this, Rushdie's own continuing negotiation of modes of representation and techniques for narrating the nation.

'The under-attached type': History in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

As I have noted, one of the difficulties in approaching *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is its apparent departure from what might be termed a more conventional Rushdian approach to history, in which key moments in Indian national history offer a framework through which to read his fictional narratives. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie creates an alternative

³³ J. Wood, p. 28.

version of world history, in which US President John F. Kennedy avoids assassination by Lee Harvey Oswald (185), only to be killed alongside his brother, President Bobby Kennedy, a decade later (225); the 1975-7 Emergency occurs in 1971 (218); and the Watergate scandal forms the plot of a best-selling 'fantasy-thriller' (280). Meanwhile, popular musicians are mis-named, or have their names transposed or combined with other musical icons: Elvis Presley becomes Jesse Parker, combining the name of Presley's dead twin with that of his manager who, in a similar cross-naming, becomes 'Colonel' Tom Presley (91). Against the fictional reality of the novel is set Ormus' 'other world' (350), in which 'John Kennedy was shot eight years ago [...] Nixon's President[,] East Pakistan seceded from the union [...] And the British aren't in Indochina' (350). In this section, I explore the significance of Rushdie's creation of an alternative world in which '[h]istory was going the wrong way' (38), before examining Rushdie's use of allegory within the novel.

Critics and reviewers have found particularly problematic the way in which Rushdie 'begins to reconfigure historical fact and familiar fictions' to create the fictional reality of the novel.³⁴ While Michael Wood claims that Rushdie's use of historical slippages 'goes well beyond joke and whimsy' by demonstrating the 'difficulty of telling where fiction begins and ends',³⁵ Pankaj Mishra dismisses them as mere 'gimmicks'³⁶ and Peter Kemp names them as part of the novel's 'pointless prankishness'.³⁷ Rushdie explains the reconfiguration of history in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by remarking that:

The book does fracture and reassemble history in a way not unlike what would happen if you broke a mirror and tried to put it back together again. It's about provisionality, about the way in which the ground beneath your feet is not something you can rely on.³⁸

Here, Rushdie situates *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* within the context of his earlier formulations of migrant identity and writing in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991). As I noted in Chapter Three, these formulations have attained their own iconic status within the field of

³⁴ Falconer, p. 483.

³⁵ Michael Wood, 'The Orpheus of MTV', *New York Times*, 18 April 1999, Section 7, p. 7.

³⁶ Pankaj Mishra, 'The Emperor's New Clothes', *New Statesman*, 9 April 1999, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/>> [accessed 10 January 2006] (para. 6 of 26).

³⁷ Peter Kemp, 'Losing the Plot', *Sunday Times*, 4 April 1999, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/executive/>> [accessed 10 January 2006] (para. 7 of 11).

³⁸ Miller, para. 19.

postcolonial literature, and much of the discomfort expressed by critics is perhaps due to the ways in which this novel unsettles the critical ground beneath the feet of Rushdie's readers.

Deepika Bahri more favourably identifies continuities between Rushdie's treatment of history in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and in his previous novels. She positions the 'melodramati[sation of] the discreteness of fact and fiction' through 'gratuitous errata'³⁹ within the project of 'unreliable narration' that Rushdie began in *Midnight's Children*, in which Gandhi dies 'on the wrong date',⁴⁰ and which he continued in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, in which the Second World War begins a month early.⁴¹ I argue, however, that there are important differences between Rushdie's inclusion of such historical 'mistakes' in his earlier novels and his introduction of an alternative version of history in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. For example, Rai situates his narrative of Ormus' double vision within the 'fantastic tales' of classical myth (387), both admitting the 'oddness of [his] tale' (388) and 'insist[ing] that what I tell you is true' (388). It is therefore important to recognise that, while Saleem's errata are cast as mistakes, the products of an inevitably fallible memory, Rai's historical inaccuracies are not presented as examples of unreliable narration; in fact, they are not presented as inaccuracies at all. Rather than disrupting the narrative to engage with what T. N. Dhar terms a 'crisis in historiography',⁴² by highlighting 'false memory' and the distortion of the historical record,⁴³ Rushdie uses Rai's 'errata' to attempt to create a consistent, alternative historical reality.

Significantly, the close relationship between text and historical context is apparently relaxed in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. While earlier Rushdian narrators emphasise their connection to national history, Rai distances himself from any such association. As we have seen, *The Moor's Last Sigh* follows a trajectory of Indian history stretching back from the colonisation of Bombay and Goa by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, through to the post-Ayodhya bombings in 1993. The Zogoiby-da Gama family are closely connected to this history.

³⁹ Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003), p. 161.

⁴⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage, 1995[1981]), p. 166. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

⁴¹ Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 68. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

⁴² T. N. Dhar, *History-Fiction Interface in Indian English Novel: Mulk Raj Anand, Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, O.V. Vijayan* (London: Sangam Books, 1999), p. 162.

⁴³ Salman Rushdie, "Errata": Or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*, in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 22-25 (p. 24).

while both Moraes and his mother are specifically identified with Bombay; Aurora is referred to as 'Aurora Bombayalis' (123), while Moraes declares himself a 'megalopolis' (188), an embodiment of the city's postcolonial prospects and progress. Similarly, in *Midnight's Children*, Saleem is famously 'handcuffed to history' (1) to become the 'mirror' of India's postcolonial development (122). By contrast, the narrator of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* resists such close identification with either India or Bombay; Rai claims that 'I'm not over-attached to history, or Bombay. Me, I'm the under-attached type' (78). I explore Rai's 'under-attachment' to Bombay and the nation in the next section of this chapter, but would first like to consider this apparent 'under-attachment' to history and, more specifically, to political history.

Such disconnection from national history can be traced through Rushdie's use of allegory, which works to create distance between the narrator and the political and social events being narrated. Two inter-related texts concerned with the concept of the national allegory offer a useful framework through which to consider *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*: Fredric Jameson's essay 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' (1986) and Aijaz Ahmad's critique of that essay in *In Theory* (1992). It is not my intention to engage in a detailed examination of Jameson's essay, or with the details of Ahmad's later reply to that text. In what follows, I am less concerned with the tenor of the, by now familiar, debate than with the substance of certain aspects of Ahmad's response regarding the capacity of the 'urban intelligentsia' to connect with and allegorise 'concrete' national experiences. At the same time, both Ahmad *and* Jameson offer a useful vocabulary through which to consider Rushdie's use of allegory which, I contend, unsettles the opposition between the two critics in this debate, by being positioned *between* the desire to allegorise national trauma and the recognition of the impossibility of adequately doing so.

In his essay, Jameson famously claims that '[a]ll third-world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical' and, more specifically, are 'to be read as [...] *national allegories*'.⁴⁴ Ahmad contests this apparent 'suppression' of multiplicity and difference in a number of ways.⁴⁵ In particular, Ahmad identifies a 'constant slippage' in Jameson's handling of the 'analytic categories' of the

⁴⁴ Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65-88 (p. 69, original emphasis).

⁴⁵ Ahmad, p. 95.

'First World' and the 'Third'.⁴⁶ Problematizing the opposition Jameson sets up between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds – having already contested the validity of these two categories themselves – Ahmad maintains the necessity of recognising the dynamic traffic of capital between the two spaces, and what he terms 'the forced transfers of value *from* the colonized/imperialized formations, and the intensification of capitalist relations *within* those formations'.⁴⁷ I do not wish to rehearse the details of Ahmad's critique of Jameson's arguments here, although his problematisation of the opposition between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds, and the notion that the latter is 'suspended outside the modern systems of production (capitalism and socialism)',⁴⁸ are issues that concern Rushdie in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Indeed, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* might be considered as a novel which challenges, perhaps more explicitly than *Midnight's Children* or *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Jameson's categorisation of the 'First' and 'Third' worlds, by enacting in its narrative (which moves between India, England, the United States and Mexico), and its own production (by an Indian-born British citizen, who resides in the United States), what Ahmad highlights as the necessarily continuous traffic between these spaces. I suggest, however, that in challenging Jameson's theorisation of the necessary centrality of national allegory to the postcolonial novel, Ahmad makes an argument for the potential impossibility of allegorisation through a vocabulary of distance and disconnection which is useful to my reading of history in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

Having emphasised that 'capitalism is not merely an externality' for nations of the so-called 'Third World', but that it 'has occurred there as well', Ahmad contends that this is 'especially [the case] among the urban intelligentsia which produces most of the written texts and is itself caught in the world of capitalist commodities'. He continues:

With this bifurcation must have come, at least for some producers of texts, the individuation and personalization of libidinal energies, the loss of access to 'concrete' experience, and the consequent experience of the self as an isolated, alienated entity incapable of real, organic connection with any collectivity. There must be texts, perhaps numerous texts, that are grounded in this desolation, bereft of any capacity for the kind of allegorization and organicity that Jameson demands of them.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ahmad, p. 106.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 107.

As is well known, Ahmad is critical of Rushdie's allegorisation of Pakistan's postcolonial history in *Shame* (1983), and would perhaps resist the inclusion of Rushdie in the 'producers of texts' he indicates above. Nevertheless, Ahmad's assertion that 'the loss of access to "concrete" experience' and the disconnection from 'any collectivity' problematises the writer's capacity to allegorise is relevant to the position of the narrator in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. I will therefore mobilise Ahmad's theorisation of the impossibility of, or incapacity for, allegorisation, in order to examine Rushdie's treatment of history in this novel.

Before turning to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, however, I would like to return to Jameson's text. Notwithstanding Ahmad's criticisms, Jameson's essay offers a vocabulary for allegory which will also be useful to the following discussion, and which might productively be paired with the language of desolation and disconnection of which Ahmad writes. Jameson asserts that 'the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities'. Allegory, he maintains, is complex and polysemous, 'in constant change and transformation at each perpetual present of the text'.⁵⁰ It is the first of these statements which offers the most useful framework for a reading of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in which, I argue, Rushdie fragments allegory, presenting discontinuous, disjointed moments of metaphor in order to problematise the possibility of producing a coherent and consistent national allegory. Such fragmentation, I suggest, is directly related to the narrator's declared 'under-attachment' to, and isolated alienation from, the Indian national collectivity.

In my discussion of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, I identified a crisis in Rushdie's belief in the possibilities of the relationship between politics and aesthetics, and a growing anxiety in his perception of the role of the liberal bourgeois intellectual in addressing the everyday material realities of the city and nation. I claimed that this crisis was central to his ambivalence towards his own position as a migrant writer in relation to India. In this light, I asserted that Moraes' final withdrawal from Bombay perhaps indicates Rushdie's own increasing reluctance to conceptualise that city's future, as well as an anxious recognition that he is perhaps no longer well positioned to do so. This ambivalent self-positioning in relation to the nation is, I noted, perhaps a consequence of his privileged socio-economic position and his reluctance to endorse

⁵⁰ Jameson, p. 73.

material political resistance movements, as well as his continued, officially enforced, geographical distance from India; by the time of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*'s publication in 1999, Rushdie had been unable to return to India for ten years, 'no longer able to set foot in the country that has been [his] primary source of artistic inspiration'.⁵¹

As I observed in Chapter One, following Said, it is important to remember the material differences between the 'performances of the intellectual exile and the miseries of the displaced person or refugee'.⁵² Nevertheless, and keeping this difference in mind, it is worth emphasising at this juncture the transformation of Rushdie's position in relation to his homeland after the declaration of the *fatwa*. In *Shame*, Rushdie describes the migrant as conjoined to his homeland by 'elastic bands'.⁵³ Rushdie pairs the elasticity of the migrant's connection to his homeland with a resistance to the notion of 'roots' (86) which 'are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places' (86). Migrants resist the mythical pairing of gravity and belonging by 'com[ing] unstuck from their native land' (86). As Ahmad observes, the flexibility of Rushdie's own connection to his homeland has been transformed by the *fatwa*; Ahmad remarks that '[t]he writing of *The Satanic Verses* [...] and the fundamentalist fury that was unleashed against him thereafter, has made the non-elasticity of those bonds vivid in a particularly macabre way'.⁵⁴ The *fatwa* thus turned Rushdie's position from one of chosen migrancy 'into a full-scale exile'.⁵⁵ In a sinister reworking of the 'conservative myth' of roots, the *fatwa* prevented Rushdie from enjoying his previous mobility and the freedoms of 'anti-gravity' (86), a metaphorical grounding which gives a further inflection to the title of his 1999 novel.

While I do not wish to over-emphasise a reductively biographical reading of Rushdie's fiction, I would suggest that his continued exile from India transforms what Ahmad terms the 'framing realities' of his writing.⁵⁶ On the tenth anniversary of the declaration of the *fatwa*, Rushdie wrote that:

I am conscious of shifts in my writing. There was always a tug-of-war in me between 'there' and 'here,' the pull of roots and of the road. In that struggle of insiders and

⁵¹ Salman Rushdie, 'A Dream of Glorious Return', in *Step Across This Line*, pp. 180-209 (p. 181).

⁵² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 403.

⁵³ Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p. 28. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ Ahmad, p. 137.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 132.

outsiders, I used to feel simultaneously on both sides. Now I've come down on the side of those who by preference, nature, or circumstance simply do not belong. This unbelonging – I think of it as *disorientation*, loss of the East – is my artistic country now.⁵⁷

Framed by a similar understanding of '[d]isorientation' (176), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, particularly through the complexity of the position of its narrator, bears witness to such a shift and to Rushdie's renegotiation of his writerly position in relation to India. Furthermore, Rushdie creates a significant degree of slippage between his position as an exiled author and Rai's position as an exiled narrator for whom India has become a dangerous, rather than homely and hospitable, space.⁵⁸ Ahmad's conceptualisation of the 'self as an isolated, alienated entity', distanced from a 'connection with any collectivity' is therefore central to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, in which the narrator describes himself as 'under-attached' (78), and in which the three central characters are all orphaned before, or as they reach, adulthood, while further being described as having 'c[o]me loose' from ties of 'family and clan and nation and race' (55). I argue that Rushdie's fragmented use of allegory in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is marked by his continued anxiety over the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and also the desolation of distance of which Ahmad writes. With these points in mind, I will consider two key moments of national trauma at which allegory is both introduced and then problematised: firstly, the Partition riots in 1947 and, secondly, the Emergency in its repositioned temporal location of 1971.

The violence of Cyrus Cama interrupts the narrative at key historical moments, surfacing during Independence and Partition, and after Nehru's death in 1964. His appearance at these points – especially in 1947 – implies an allegorical relationship between the murders he commits and moments of often violent national trauma. In August 1947 'Cyrus Cama had made his own declaration of independence' (134), committing the 'mass murder' of his fellow schoolboys (135). Rai makes the significance of the timing of these murders explicit, remarking that:

⁵⁷ Salman Rushdie, 'February 1999: Ten Years of the Fatwa', in *Step Across This Line*, pp. 265-67 (p. 266).

⁵⁸ Rai declares that '[i]f I'd stayed [in India], it could have cost me my life' (100), later claiming that 'I didn't go of my own free will. [...] I was driven out like a dog. I had to run for my life' (203).

The mass murder [...] was an atrocity that would at any other time have captured the nation's full attention. However, the agony of the Partition massacres and the counterpointing ecstasy of the Independence festivities, coupled with the fact that these murders had taken place not in Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay but in remote Kodaikanal, meant that the deaths were ignored by the national newspapers. (135)

Rushdie offers Cyrus' murderous spree as a metaphor for the violent trauma of Partition, placing the massacre in the context of, and as coincident with, the national rioting. Cyrus' marginalisation by his parents from their family narrative – as well as the marginalisation by the national newspapers of the murders he commits – perhaps itself functions as a metaphor for Partition which forms, according to Sunil Khilnani, an 'unspeakable sadness at the heart of the idea of India'.⁵⁹ Cyrus figures as a similarly unspeakable presence within the Cama family, his murderous tendencies repressed by Lady Spenta, for whom he constitutes 'a subject whose very existence she had never before liked to admit' (192).

However, having posited this allegorical relationship between Cyrus' violence and the Partition riots, Rushdie unsettles such a connection, creating a space between Cyrus' local atrocity and the massacres taking place across the nation. While Cyrus' murders are simultaneous with the Partition massacres, they are distanced from them; they 'lack [...] a communal factor' (136), and occur in remote, rather than urban, locations. While these details may be convincingly read as pointing towards the 'popular experiences of violence [...] that find little place in the historical memory of the state',⁶⁰ I suggest that they also create a distance between the fictional and the historical violence. In contrast to Jameson's assertion that '*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*',⁶¹ Rushdie's representation of Cyrus emphasises the isolated individuality of his actions which coincide with, but are separated from, the experiences of the national collectivity. In this way, Cyrus' violence *almost* mirrors the trauma of Partition, but does not form an adequate and coherent allegory for that trauma.

Rushdie offers a more extended allegory for India's postcolonial political history through the pattern of earthquakes which punctuate the novel. Through the notion of '[g]eology

⁵⁹ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999 [1997]), p. 201.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶¹ Jameson, p. 69 (original emphasis).

as metaphor' (203), Rushdie both presents and problematises allegory as an adequate and appropriate mode of representing national politics. Rai narrates that:

Small earthquakes were recorded in several parts of India during the late 1960s and early 1970s; nothing serious, no loss of life and minimal damage to property, but enough to make us sleep a little less easily in our beds. One shook the Golden Temple in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar in the Punjab, another rattled teeth in the small southern town of Sriperumbudur. A third scared the children of Nellie in Assam. Finally, the picturesque waters of a Kashmiri lake, high Shishnag, that cold mirror in the sky, began to roil and spume. (203)

Rushdie rearranges historical events of the 1980s and 90s, re-locating the 1983 Assam massacre, the 1984 Operation Bluestar, and Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991, to the 1960s and 1970s, using the tremors to point towards significant moments of social and political upheaval. The connection established between socio-political events and geology is, according to Rai, repeated by 'plenty of rishis and mahagurus, and even political columnists and editorial writers, who were prepared – eager! – to link these tremors with the public events of those years' (203).

Having established an allegorical relationship between the earthquakes and the 'public events', Rushdie simultaneously implies the reductive nature of such a connection, in which significant national traumas are condensed into a series of 'small earthquakes', which were 'nothing serious'. Furthermore, Rai's narrative tone is ambivalent in its attitude towards such allegorisation, as it is when, observing the increasing air pollution, he almost dismissively remarks that 'public commentators, *ready as ever to allegorize*, called it a sign of the filth in the national atmosphere' (214, my emphasis). By first offering, and then undermining the appropriateness of such metaphors, Rushdie exposes an anxiety over the efficacy of allegory to adequately represent moments of national trauma. Such ambivalence towards allegory signals a transformation in Rushdie's approach to representing the nation in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, highlighting what Jameson might term a central 'aesthetic dilemma, a crisis of representation'⁶² within this novel.

In this light, Rai's attitude towards allegory indexes an ambivalence towards techniques Rushdie has himself employed in previous novels. Once more, the contrast between Rushdie's various narrators is indicative of the author's renegotiation of modes of representing history and

⁶² Jameson, p. 81.

the nation. While Rushdie presents Saleem as attempting to narrate a coherent – if problematic and continually contested – national allegory, Rai is reluctant to make connections between the details of everyday life and the socio-political history of the nation. Rather than closely identifying the experiences of the private individual with Indian public culture, as Saleem and Moraes do, Rai distances his narration from a close engagement with India's history and politics. Similarly, while in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie draws together the multiple strands of the national history within the family unit to offer continuous and sustained allegories, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* he distances his narrator from such representational techniques. Instead, Rai's narrative offers disjointed and fragmented metaphors for national trauma which do not form part of a coherent narrative of national history. While offering effective metaphors for national traumas, Cyrus' murders, alongside the earthquakes, do not contribute to a continuous and consistent allegorisation of national violence, but rupture the text to offer a fragmented, incomplete representation of India's postcolonial history.

Such reluctance towards offering a coherent allegorisation is symptomatic of Rai's 'under-attachment' to India and its history, his self-declared distance from an organic connection to the national collectivity that Saleem enjoys and constructs for himself. In view of the significant slippage between Rai's position as an exiled narrator and Rushdie's position as an exiled author, I suggest that Rai's 'under-attachment' to national history intersects with – without necessarily being coterminous with – Rushdie's own distance from his homeland which prompts a renegotiation of his fictional methods of representing that space. While *Midnight's Children* was a project of reclamation, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is, according to Rushdie, a project of detachment from India.⁶³ Rai similarly describes his narration as 'the end of [his] connection with a country, [his] country of origin' (203). Rushdie's use of allegory demonstrates the 'semi-detached' status of the novel's narrator (72) and, meta-textually, its author, and their loss of access to 'concrete' experiences within India. The tension between the inclusion of allegorical moments within the text and Rai's incapacity to formulate a coherent national allegory shows his continued attachment to and simultaneous 'alienated disconnection'

⁶³ In 1999, Rushdie admitted that while, until *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Bombay had been central to his work, 'it's [now] done. I think I really have said what I had to say about that city, and I don't want to repeat myself. I don't want to go on and on writing about that world. I think I've done it.' Miller, para. 39.

(229) from India, situating the novel within the tension between intimacy and distance with which I began this chapter.

Rai's dismissive attitude towards political commentators' eagerness to allegorise reveals a further anxiety over the ways in which such an approach works to package moments of national trauma within an aesthetic representation which marginalises the material realities of these episodes. This can perhaps be seen most clearly in M. Henri Hulot's 'famous image "Earthquake 1971"' (218), in which Rushdie offers a self-consciously aestheticised representation of events surrounding the Emergency. In this episode, Rushdie uses an earthquake to indicate – as he did in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* – an interconnection between the Emergency and the rise of communalism in Bombay. Rushdie first uses the 1971 tremor to re-introduce the notion of Bombay's exceptional position in relation to the rest of India, which I discussed in Chapter Four:

My first thought, when I felt the tremor, was that this was an impossibility, a piece of make-believe, a mistake, because we did not have earthquakes in Bombay. In those years when many parts of the country had begun to shake, Bombayites had prided themselves on being quake-free. Good communal relations and good solid ground, we boasted. No fault line under our town. But now Piloo Doodhwala's MA boys were stoking the fires of discord, and the city had begun to shake. (217)

Here, the 'corrosive acid' of communalism which infects Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (351) is translated into the destabilisation of the earth itself. The secular 'solid ground' of cosmopolitan Bombay is unsettled, communal unrest having been 'stok[ed]' by the now explicit combination of Hindu nationalism and global capital, in the form of Piloo Doodhwala's new leadership of the MA. Once more, the rise of communalism problematises Bombay's exceptional position in relation to the nation, providing a reminder of Bombay's Indianness, its connection to the 'many parts of the country [that] had begun to shake'.

However, by synchronising this communal 'earthquake' with the Emergency Rushdie reasserts Bombay's exceptionality. While elsewhere 'the national mood grew sombre and fearful' (218), Bombay remains relatively untouched by the Emergency, as the 'worst excesses [...] occurred elsewhere; in Bombay it was the earthquake that people remembered, the earthquake that gave us the shock that shook our confidence in who we were and how we had chosen to live' (218). This statement is important for a number of reasons. By suggesting that

localised communalism, rather than a national Emergency, has a greater impact on Bombay, Rushdie reiterates the city's position as exceptional to the Indian nation in his work. The earthquake itself, meanwhile, is represented as defamiliarising and disturbing Bombayites' sense of identity. Earlier, Rai describes the Mexican earthquake as a 'hated metamorphosis, [...] a way of life at the moment of its annihilation, its transformation into a golden past that could never wholly be rebuilt' (13). The 1971 earthquake represents a similar annihilation of 'a way of life', as Bombayites are shocked into an anxious reconsideration of their assumed cosmopolitan identities, of 'who we were and how we had chosen to live'.

I will return to explore in more detail the representation of Bombay in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in the next section of this chapter. Here, I would like to examine the photograph Rushdie presents as the defining image of the 1971 earthquake, and suggest that it both constructs a metaphor for the socio-political upheavals, and also offers a critique of that very metaphor. On the day of the earthquake, Rai attends a kite festival, and the kites become a metaphor for the violence on the ground:

All over town terrified kite flyers had let go of their controlling reels. The heavens were full of dying kites, kites nosediving towards the earth, kites being smashed in mid-air by collisions with other kites, kites being torn to shreds by the boiling winds and by the Dionysiac madness of their sudden freedom, that fatal liberty acquired in the midst of catastrophe and then stolen away again, almost at once, by the inexorable gravitational pull of the cracking earth below. Click, went the Leica. The result is the famous 'Earthquake 1971,' in which the tearing mid-air explosion of a single kite tells us everything about the unseen mayhem below. The air becomes a metaphor for the earth. (218-19)

This photograph offers a useful image through which to consider the 'aesthetic dilemma' negotiated by Rushdie in this novel, which is caught between the impulse to allegorise and the notion that allegorisation offers an inadequate representation of the nation. At first reading, the description of the kites presents a powerful metaphor for human violence, effectively intensifying the traumas of communalism and the Emergency; the nosediving, smashed kites, which are 'being torn to shreds by the boiling winds' provide vivid symbols for the violent chaos occurring at ground level. However, despite 'tell[ing] us everything' about that chaos, the photograph of the single kite actually marginalises material experiences of that violence, the 'mayhem below' remaining unseen and unspoken.

Sontag's theorisation of photography draws attention to a crucial tension between involvement in and detachment from the event being photographed which is perhaps revealing here. Sontag contends that, while '[p]hotography has become one of the principal devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation', it is also 'essentially an act of non-intervention'.⁶⁴ This tension is central to my discussion of Rai's narratorial position in the next two sections of this chapter, but also provides a useful means of reading Rushdie's presentation of 'Earthquake 1971' as a metaphor for a violent national trauma. If photography, as a mode of representation, is positioned somewhere between active participation and passive voyeurism, then, I argue, Rushdie's use of allegory here works in a similar way, both intensifying the violence and simultaneously distancing the narrator from the details of the material realities of that violence, reducing a national trauma to a snapshot captured in a rapid 'Click'.

Furthermore, in the light of Rushdie's concern with celebrity and catastrophe in this novel,⁶⁵ and his contention that the famous are 'turn[ed] [...] into commodities',⁶⁶ it is significant that he chooses to represent the Emergency through a photograph which itself becomes 'famous' (218). The photograph commodifies history into an iconic image, translating it into a famous snapshot which is detached from its historical context, despite, I would argue, its title. Translating history into aesthetics, the emphasis is on the 'famous *image*' which refers to, but does not represent, the everyday experience of the Emergency. In this way, Rushdie problematises extended metaphor and allegory as adequate modes of representing national history and national trauma. While his engagement with the relationship between politics and aesthetics, metaphor and material reality, lacks the anxious urgency evident in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, his problematisation of allegory in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – in many ways a critique of his own fictional methods – contributes to, and complicates further, this aesthetic dilemma and crisis of representation.

In view of this crisis, the content of the image gains a further significance, offering a visual representation of the tension between allegory and its national/historical referent and

⁶⁴ Sontag, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁵ Bronfen, pp. 117-39.

⁶⁶ Rushdie, 'Crash', p. 109.

gesturing towards the notion of under-attachment which is central to Rai's narration. Images of disconnection are central to the photograph, which depicts the kites' attainment of a 'sudden freedom' from the earth, their 'flyers [having] let go of their controlling reels' (218). The kites have become detached from their owners, separated from the experience of violence of which they become emblematic. Such detachment inserts a distance between the kites and the violence, problematising their symbolic role. While their aesthetic value increases as they become separated from their flyers, the kites' status as a sufficient allegory for a national trauma is destabilised by this disconnection from what Ahmad terms the "'concrete" experience' of a collectivity; the materiality of the earth is replaced by the insubstantiality of the air.

In suggesting a disjuncture between the social and aesthetic aspects of allegory, the photograph points to Ahmad's claim that allegorisation becomes problematic for the 'isolated, alienated' individual, 'incapable of real, organic connection with any collectivity'. The photograph depicts a *single* kite, apparently isolated from the rest of the colliding kites, and the isolated singularity of this image speaks to Rai's own alienated disconnection from the nation, and from the violence which surrounds him. Enacting the heterogeneity of representation within which Jameson situates allegory, 'Earthquake 1971' offers a metaphor for the transformation of the narrator's and, meta-textually, the author's position in relation to India, and the impact this has on his capacity to allegorise. It is therefore significant that the separation of the kites from the earth is both liberating and highly dangerous, offering a paradoxical image of 'fatal liberty' (218). The kites' 'sudden freedom' (218) enacts the violent severing of the 'elastic bands' connecting the migrant to his homeland, while further symbolising the exiled writer's own loss of access to the material experiences of Bombay, his loss of a connecting thread to ground-level experiences. Furthermore, the image centres around notions of disintegration, suggesting that such disconnection problematises coherent and continuous modes of narration, and offering an image of the technique of fragmented allegory Rushdie formulates within this novel.

'Earthquake 1971' therefore offers an anxious image of under-attachment, ambivalently representing the imaginative possibilities, but also the political problems, of distancing the aesthetic representation of an event from the material experience of it, while highlighting the devastating trauma of having an intimate connection with the homeland severed. As they collide

and disintegrate, become detached from and return to their owners, the kites enact Rushdie's fragmentary and disjointed approach to history through the use of discontinuous moments of allegory, highlighting the ways in which such a 'semi-detached' approach is related to the problematic under-attachment of the exiled narrator. In this light, the image of the kites, ironically given the apparent resistance to allegorisation within the novel, offers a key metaphor for Rushdie's negotiation of modes of representing the nation, and his renegotiation of his own writerly relationship with India.

Between Yesterday and Tomorrow: Etymology, Archaeology and Architecture

'Earthquake 1971' highlights Rushdie's use of photography to foreground the formulation of different modes of representation within *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Similarly, Rai's role as photographer/narrator enables Rushdie to situate his exploration of modes of representation of the nation directly within the context of an exiled narrator. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine more closely the complexity of the narrative position in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Carmen Concilio observes the relevance of both Sontag's and Roland Barthes' theorisations of photography to the novel, particularly through the representation of the photograph as an absent referent for death and through the implied role of the photographer as thief and killer.⁶⁷ In the final section of this chapter, I argue that Rushdie's implicit engagement with Sontag's writing goes beyond these echoes, and that he uses Rai's role as photographer to reflect on the position of the migrant artist, caught in an interstitial location between intimacy with and distance from the homeland. Furthermore, and remembering my discussion of the photograph 'Earthquake 1971', I consider how Rai's role as photographer contributes to Rushdie's explorations of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. However, before turning to Rai's role as a photographer, it is necessary to consider the impact that his parents' divergent understandings of Bombay have on his relationship with the city. These understandings, and his parents' foundational connection to Bombay, work to distance Rai from an intimate attachment to the city and problematise his sense of belonging to that space. In this section, I suggest that, even before he is 'driven out like a dog' (203), Rai's

⁶⁷ Carmen Concilio, "'Worthy of the World": The Narrator/Photographer in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*', in Linguanti & Tchernichova, eds., pp. 117-27 (pp. 124-25).

relationship with the city and nation is marked by a migrant's perspective, and by a sense of displacement and difference which unsettles his claims to being 'Bombay *chokra* through and through' (78).

Rai asserts that 'Bombay belonged too completely to [his] parents' (100), and the notion that Bombay belongs to another, earlier generation contributes to his feelings of marginalisation within the city. I argue that this marginalisation is experienced by Rai through a sense of belatedness, which positions him both as having arrived in the nation after the crucial formulation of its postcolonial identity and, moreover, as having arrived from elsewhere, despite his birth within Bombay. Initially, Rai believes that he had been born into the city's 'golden age' (78). Comparing Bombay to Ancient Rome, he claims that '[w]hen you grow up, as I did, in a great city, during what just happens to be its golden age, you think of it as eternal. Always was there, always will be' (78). Rushdie pairs this 'illusion of permanence' (78) with Rai's recognition that 'Bombay was almost brand-new when [he] knew it' (78). Both Bombay's illusory permanence and its novelty undermine any intimate association between the city and the narrator, and Rai's narration emphasises his isolation both from Bombay's past and its present identities.

Rai's distance from the foundational moments of the city is contrasted to, and compounded by, his parents' 'prominen[ce] in its making' (78). Rai states that, in the decade preceding his 'own coming into the world', Bombay 'had been a gigantic building site; as if it were in a hurry to become, as if it knew it had to provide itself in finished condition by the time I was able to start paying attention to it' (78). In Rai's alternate readings of Bombay, the first claiming its permanence, the second its pre-Independence architectural and cultural development, the city is represented as preceding the narrator's presence. In turn, Rai's birth is constructed as an arrival, a 'coming into' the city which is, crucially, belated. Born into a city which, although still under construction, is already reaching a 'finished condition' (78), Rai feels marginalised from making a substantial contribution to its development; the creation of Bombay's postcolonial identity had 'nothing to do with [him]' (78). The emphasis on Rai's birth as an arrival, meanwhile, undermines his autochthonous relationship with Bombay, problematising his sense of belonging to that space. I contend that this emphasis on Rai's

belated arrival in Bombay, the distance that is inserted between his birth and that of the city, as well as the implicit problematisation of his indigeneity, suggests that his relationship with – and narration of – Bombay is already informed by a ‘migrant’s-eye view of the world’,⁶⁸ even before he emigrates.

In her exploration of *Midnight’s Children*, Deepika Bahri identifies a similar intersection between the migrant perspective and that of the national subject. Bahri identifies *Midnight’s Children* as concerned not only with the fragmented memory of the migrant, but also with the ‘absence of memory’ of the generation born immediately after India’s Independence was won.⁶⁹ Bahri contends that the narrative ‘addresses the collective [...] amnesia’ of a generation for whom ‘the story of the nation and of the nationalist struggle is available not only as historical event and record but as fairy tale, myth, and fable’. She goes on to state that this generation holds a ‘vision not of the nation as an ideal whole but that of a legacy and inheritance of a nation already divided’, through both ‘external political boundaries’ as well as ‘increasingly pernicious internal ones’.⁷⁰ The connection Bahri makes between the fragmented memory of the migrant and the problematic amnesia and damaged idealism of the post-Independence generation is relevant to Rai’s narrative position in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Once more, there are significant continuities and differences between the ways in which Rushdie constructs the relationship between narrator and nation in his novels. Born in the same year as Saleem, Rai is both a migrant narrator and a member of the ‘midnight children’ generation; his narration therefore combines the migrant’s nostalgic memories of the homeland with what Bahri proposes is his generation’s sense of belated arrival, of having been born after the nationalist struggle has, in theory, succeeded – that is, after the nation, like Bombay, reaches a ‘finished condition’.

This belatedness is, however, thematised in different ways in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* than in *Midnight’s Children*. As Bahri contends, Saleem’s narration is infused with a sense of belatedness, but this is not translated into a problematisation of his Indianness. Saleem’s arrival *after* the nationalist struggle has succeeded actually makes possible his synchronicity with the nation. His birth ‘at the precise instant of India’s arrival at independence’ (9) both

⁶⁸ Salman Rushdie, ‘In Good Faith’, p. 394.

⁶⁹ Bahri, p. 162.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 163.

highlights his own arrival after the nation has been fought for and won by the nationalist struggle, but also enables him to construct an intimate connection between himself and the new nation; their arrival at Independence is simultaneous. Saleem's belated arrival does not, therefore, contribute to a problematic sense of belonging to the nation but, in fact, signals his close affiliation to it and, indeed, enables him to lay claim to an extraordinary Indianness.

In contrast, Rai's narration bears witness to a consciousness of his belatedness which is resisted in *Midnight's Children*. Unlike Saleem, Rai underplays his birth in 1947, which must be calculated in retrospect from other dates and birthdays. Marginalising the importance of his birth-date, and its connection to independent India, Rushdie resists representing Rai's life as synchronous with that of the nation. While, in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie constructs an organic connection between narrator and nation, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* refuses such a relationship, foreclosing any reading of Rai as representative of India. Furthermore, rather than sharing a close affiliation with India, Rai is represented as other to Bombay and the nation; the city is his 'rival' (79), and he is 'insanely jealous' of his parents' 'other love' (78). Rather than positioning himself as central to the national narrative, as Saleem attempts to do, Rai continually locates himself on the periphery of the nation. He is, as I argue in the final section of this chapter, represented as a voyeur of, rather than participant in, the life of India and, in contrast to Saleem's role as a 'mirror' of the nation, only '[h]alf of [Rai] is in the picture' (158). This shift in the relationship between narrator and nation, which sees the later narrator not only distanced from, but placed in opposition to, Bombay, points to a change in Rushdie's own sense of connection to his homeland. While *Midnight's Children* embodies the desire of its migrant author to reclaim his homeland, representing a migrant narrative of the nation which enacts a process of reconnection, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* shifts the narrative focus towards the relationship *between* the migrant and the nation, moving in an opposite direction towards disconnection and detachment.

The tension between the past and the future, between Bombay and Mumbai, which marks Rai's narration, locates the city within an identity crisis similar to that mapped in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, in which the urban space is caught between a past of secular cosmopolitanism and a future pairing of parochial Hindu-Marathi chauvinism and global capitalism. Once again,

in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Bombay and, by extension, the nation, is represented as a contested terrain over which different groups vie for control. These tensions, which place Rai in liminal position between the different versions of Bombay offered by his parents, further undermine any notion of Bombay's 'permanence' by highlighting the ways in which the city is, to borrow Bahri's phrase, always 'already divided'.

Despite his narrator's proclaimed under-attachment to history, Rushdie continues to privilege specific dates in the city's and nation's postcolonial history. Rachel Falconer observes that, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, 'Bombay often figures as a prelapsarian paradise' whose 'mythic Golden Age [...] has a historically specific date [...] circa 1956'.⁷¹ I argue that, rather than symbolising the pinnacle of Bombay's Golden Age, 1956 represents the year in which that age was revealed as fragile. Echoing *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Midnight's Children*, 1956 and 1960 are again presented as important years in Bombay's transition from an inclusive, secular space to a more exclusive, capitalist Mumbai. In Chapter Four, I outlined the historical significance of these dates: 1956 saw 'intense rioting' as Gujarati- and Marathi-speaking communities competed for the inclusion of Bombay in new linguistic states;⁷² the old Bombay State was divided in 1960, the city being included in the newly created state of Maharashtra. As I noted, Arjun Appadurai identifies 1956 as 'a moment when Bombay became Mumbai'.⁷³

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, 1956 is important not only for Vina's appearance and for her first encounter with Ormus, but also provides the context for Vivvy's and Ameer's different approaches to Bombay. As Concilio notes, these approaches attempt to move the city in different temporal as well as spatial directions,⁷⁴ re-imagining the city through a vertical axis of representation. The Merchants therefore re-enact a vector familiar within Rushdie's work, which often maps the city via axes of levity and gravity, underworlds and overworlds which are themselves directly related to different modes of understanding and representing the urban space. As with his use of allegory, Rushdie uses the Merchants' approaches to the city to foreground the formulation of those representational modes.

⁷¹ Falconer, p. 473.

⁷² Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai'. *Public Culture*, 12:3, 627-51 (p. 629).

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Carmen Concilio, 'The City as Text(ure): Bombay in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*', in Linguanti & Tchernichova, eds., pp. 129-49 (pp. 139-40).

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Vivvy explores the city's history through his 'beach archaeology' (63), while Ameer maps the city's architectural future. Each approach constructs a different syntax with which to narrate the city's identity which, Rai claims, will eventually 'destro[y] forever the quieter syntax of the old city of Bombay' (154). This older syntax is represented by the hybrid, 'polyglot' (124) language of '*Hug-me*' adopted by Rai and Vina, in which 'a sentence could begin in one language, swoop through a second and even a third and then swing back round to the first' (7). '*Hug-me*', an acronym for 'Hindi Urdu Gujarati Marathi English' (7), embodies the linguistic diversity of the city, the acronym itself symbolising an ideal of inclusion which Rai places at the centre of Bombayite identity. According to him, 'Bombayites like me were people who spoke five languages badly and no language well' (7). That Rai identifies himself as a Bombayite here, as he emphasises the city's inclusive multiculturalism, gestures towards the vision of Bombay to which he is, to borrow Rushdie's own words, 'willing to admit [he] belonged'.⁷⁵ Rai's invocation of a linguistically diverse Bombayite identity has further significance. Resisting calls in the 1950s for Bombay to be re-imagined as a monolingual and ethnically exclusive space, '*Hug-me*' becomes more than a playful 'garbage argot' (7). No one language is privileged over another; nor do they exist as mutually exclusive idioms. Rather, by placing Bombay's various languages in a symbiotic relationship with one another, '*Hug-me*' offers a crucial mode of communication between Bombayites and a foundational syntax upon which Bombayite identity is built. The implication is that separating these constituent languages from one another would prompt the fragmentation of Bombayite identity itself.

Vivvy's archaeological approach reiterates this linguistic hybridity by uncovering the city's identity as a nomenclatural palimpsest. Unlike Rai, whose Bombayite identity is problematic, Vivvy is 'a Bombayite through and through' (59), although his affiliations lie with a city located in the past. Significantly, given the context of the 1950s language riots against which his excavations are set, Vivvy particularly 'liked digging into place names' (60), exploring Bombay's 'urban "etymology"' (61) to discover the linguistic plurality, and multi-cultural hybridity, of the city's cartography (60-61).

⁷⁵ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 10.

Ameer formulates a different language through which to narrate the city and, rather than uncovering the city's palimpsestic identity, aims to add another layer to it by creating a syntax of 'heights' rather than 'unknown depths' (63). While Vivvy digs into Bombay's nomenclatural history, Ameer formulates neologisms which map the city through a vocabulary of 'Beachscrapers' and 'Sandscrapers', 'chowscrapers', 'hillscrapers' and 'Cuffscrapers' (64). Unlike Vivvy's archaeological 'etymology', which highlights Bombay's cultural plurality, Ameer's new lexicon reduces its multiplicity, homogenising its diverse nomenclature by adding the suffix 'scraper'. Similarly, while Vivvy's etymological approach demonstrates the presence of Bombay's cosmopolitan past in its present, Ameer's neologisms work to construct an opposition between its past and its future. Ambivalent towards her linguistic and architectural reinvention of the city, Rai reads Ameer's urban syntax as potentially creating an opposition between multiculturalism and capitalism. Apparently aligning himself with his father's perception that 'the good place had existed [...] and now it was being destroyed' (163), Rai accuses Ameer of 'destroy[ing] what was beautiful for the sake of what was profitable, and [...] renam[ing] these categories "yesterday" and "tomorrow"' (155).

Rai is once more represented as acutely aware of his belatedness, which distances him from negotiations of the nation's contemporary identity. This consciousness is inflected by his retrospective narration of India from its borders. By constructing echoes between Rai's invective against his mother and his anguish at his exile, Rushdie highlights the intersection between Rai's contemporary position outside of Bombay and his childhood sense of displacement within it. Foreshadowing Ameer's repositioning of the city within the categories of 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', Rai declares that '[o]nce, I belonged to the future. The beloved future of my beloved mother [...]. Now, however, I belong to yesterday' (65). In this statement, Rai aligns himself with his mother's vision of the city – a position he later reconsiders, as he views his childhood through his adult, migrant eye. More importantly, by locating Rai within 'yesterday', Rushdie situates his already compromised Indianness in the past, distancing Rai temporally as well as spatially from his homeland, and reiterating his isolation from formulations of the city's present and future identities. Rushdie thus positions Rai as caught between the past and a future (which is itself already located in the past), but never locates his

narrator's identity within the nation's present. In this way, Rai's sense of belonging, both as a child within the nation and as an adult beyond its borders, is displaced and problematised by the continual deferral of a relationship to the present.

While Concilio observes the differences between the Merchants' projects, she fails to note the significant parallels between the two approaches, or the way that each syntax marginalises the city's contemporary material realities. Although Vivvy's etymological archaeology offers a mode of resistance to those efforts to claim exclusive ethno-religious and linguistic ownership of Bombay, they ignore important political changes taking place within the city's present. Echoing, while paradoxically reversing, Rai's *under*-attachment to history, which points to the distance between the narrator and the socio-political events being narrated, Vivvy's *over*-attachment to history, his exclusive interest in Bombay's 'pre-history' (79), leads to a similar detachment from contemporary socio-political upheavals, such as the Navy Strike and Partition (62). Ameer's focus on the city's future similarly marginalises its material realities. Rai's assertion that there is '[n]o room at all' (64) for the skyscrapers highlights the spatial restrictions and housing problems of Bombay, in which housing inequalities are marked by 'shortage, speculation, crowding, and public improvisation'.⁷⁶ Ameer's 'dream of heights' (63), and her later involvement in the 'more immediately lucrative land reclamation schemes' (155) rather than the "'second city" project' (155) elides these material, ground-level experiences, and the need for affordable accommodation rather than expensive penthouses.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Vivvy's enthusiasm for Bombay's architectural history, 'the language of its buildings' (126), complicates any opposition between 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', between cosmopolitan Bombay and global capitalist Mumbai. The planned Art Deco Orpheum theatre stands as Vivvy's 'tribute to the city's golden period' (156) but also as part of Ameer's entrepreneurial approach to architecture, promising to be a 'money-spinning Mecca' (156). The theatre therefore embodies the tensions between Ameer's and Vivvy's versions of Bombay while simultaneously highlighting the ways in which these visions overlap.

⁷⁶ Appadurai, p. 635.

⁷⁷ For an exploration of the ways that urban development marginalises the poor and homeless in Bombay in favour of high-income and commercial groups, see P. K. Das, 'Slums: The Continuing Struggle for Housing', in *Bombay and Mumbai: The City In Transition*, ed. by Sujata Patel & Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005[2003]), pp. 207-34.

Crucially, both Ameer's involvement in the land reclamation schemes and Vivvy's silent complicity in her work are central to Piloo Doodhwala's success in gaining economic, architectural, and ideological control of Bombay. Piloo is a key character in the city's transition from Bombay to Mumbai, but he also represents an important intersection between constructions of the city and the nation, and between Hindu chauvinism and global capitalism. Indeed, developing the connections in *The Moor's Last Sigh* between Abraham's capitalism and Fielding's Hindu nationalism, the successful businessman both is explicitly supported by, and wields control over, the Mumbai Axis (245, 217). Piloo is significant to my discussion for a number of reasons. His appearances in 1956 and 1960 position him as central to the tensions between the different versions of the city I have been discussing. Meanwhile, his Invisible Goats scam both launches Rai's photographic career and simultaneously challenges the efficacy of Rai's photography as an instrument for political change. In the next section, I explore Rai's photographic intervention in national politics which, I suggest, represents the next step in Rushdie's continuing explorations of the relationship between politics and aesthetics in his work. In this section, I wish to focus on Piloo's impact on Rai's understanding of Bombay and of his position within it.

Piloo's appearance in 1956 introduces a third version of Bombay, one which is marked by communal tension and class difference, and which further problematises Rai's sense of belonging to his city of birth by constructing his Muslim identity as illegitimate and marginal. In his first encounter with Rai, Piloo explains to the boy that 'Bombay duck' is a 'phish [which] declined to help Lord Rama to build the bridge to Lanka, for purpose of rescuing Lady Sita' (69-70). Piloo repeats the emphasis placed by the *Hindutva* movement on Ram's return to Ayodhya from Lanka as foundational to the Hindu *rashtra*, using it to locate Bombay within Hinduised national space.⁷⁸ As he does so, Piloo ambivalently characterises Bombay as an irreverent, profane city, while simultaneously constructing it as central to myths of the Hindu nation. Piloo's dismissive assertion that Rai could not know this story because his family are 'converts' (70) alienates Rai's Muslim identity from a sense of belonging to India. Piloo

⁷⁸ Stuart Corbridge & John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 184.

remarks that '[r]eligious conversion, it is like getting on a train. Afterwards, only the train itself is where you are belonging. Not departure platform, not arrival platform. In both these places you are totally despised' (70). Invoking the trains which transported Hindus and Muslims across the India-Pakistan border in the wake of Partition, Piloo undermines both the legitimacy of Islam itself as a religion, and the legitimacy of the presence of Muslims within India. Reformulating the discourse of *Hindutva*, in which Muslims are denied affiliative connections with India, Piloo constructs Muslims as converts who are unable to claim ordinary belonging to the nation.⁷⁹

Indeed, Piloo's discourse goes further, representing Muslims as perennial migrants, exiles who are excluded from legitimate claims to affiliation and belonging in *any* space. By first emphasising Rai's Muslim identity, and then representing it as an exilic identity, Piloo undermines Rai's autochthonous relationship to his place of birth, marginalising him from unproblematically belonging to the city and the nation, even before he has migrated beyond their borders. Moreover, Piloo's rhetoric reiterates Rai's sense of belatedness, the notion of conversion implying an affiliation constructed *after* a faith or, as Piloo's remarks imply, a nation, has been established. The legitimacy of Rai's identity, as a Muslim and an Indian – and as a Muslim-Indian – is undermined by Piloo, compounding his already problematic and 'weakened sense of affiliation' (76) to Bombay and India.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Corbridge & Harriss, p. 183.

⁸⁰ Some critics have expressed concerns over the caricature of Piloo. In *Bombay-London-New York* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), Amitava Kumar finds the representation of Piloo both offensive and satirically ineffective, objecting to the way in which 'provincial origins are here signified in no way other than a failure to speak proper English'. In this light, Kumar suggests that Rushdie seems 'unable to imagine such people as sentient beings with extraordinarily varied life [*sic*]' (p. 75). Pankaj Mishra is more emphatic, remonstrating that 'such witless buffoonery is how the Indian chi-chi class – which serves as "India" in Rushdie's fiction – responds to the unwashed millions staking a claim to political power' (para. 22). I agree that Rushdie does not show the self-conscious sensitivity to socio-economic difference in this novel that is evident in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, although his narrative does acknowledge the class difference underlying Piloo's characterisation. Rai recognises 'the class differences [...] the note of snobbishness in my mother's disdain for Piloo's coarser behaviour and vulgar accent' (70), a self-conscious acknowledgement that could perhaps extend to Rushdie's own attitude towards Piloo. Piloo's public displays of wealth and power further complicate Kumar's and Mishra's readings. His 'magnificentourage' (65) means that Rai's 'poor relations' 'don't look so poor' (67), while Piloo's surname is a self-conscious re-invention aimed at appealing to the lower castes and working classes. Piloo's class is therefore more ambivalent than Kumar or Mishra allow. Rushdie's satire of Laloo Yadav – former chief minister of Bihar and member of a lower caste associated with cowherds – does reveal a problematic elision of the political importance of 'a man from a lower caste [...] now leading a movement against the dominance of the upper castes' (Kumar, p. 75). However, by placing Piloo within Rai's own familial network, and portraying his class and caste status as matters of politically expedient

The transformation of the narrator from a secular, 'irreligio[us]' (70), yet culturally Muslim, Bombayite into an exiled Muslim-Indian is ironic given Rushdie's own position while conceptualising this novel. Without wishing to establish a direct parallel between Rushdie and his narrator, I return to Ahmad's notion of the 'framing realities' of the novel to suggest that Rushdie's own 'metamorphosis from [...] the Salman I know to the "Rushdie" I often barely recognize'⁸¹ has a significant bearing on his representation of an 'alienated[,] disconnect[ed]' (229) narrator. In this light, I argue that Rushdie's transformation in the 1990s, within the international public domain, from a secular Bombayite Muslim into an exiled Indian whose relationship with Islam was a key concern in media representations, intersects with his sense of despair at the changing socio-political landscape of his 'lost city' during the same period. In an interview in 1999, Rushdie remarked that '[Bombay]'s changed. People used to ask me, "What would you do if this thing [the *fatwa*] was lifted?" And I used to say I'd get on the first plane to India. But I guess I don't say that now'.⁸² In the late 1990s, then, Bombay has become a city from which Rushdie is geographically isolated, but it is also, perhaps more importantly, one from which he feels – even should he be able to physically return – he is imaginatively alienated. This cognitive alienation, brought about by the intersection of his personal and public experiences as a writer with his sense of anguish at the social transformation of Bombay, I contend, underpins the narration of India in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* from the perspective of an increasingly marginalised, isolated and alienated narrator who both refuses and is refused a sense of intimate connection to and affiliation with the city and nation of his birth.

Piloo reappears in 1960, 'the year of divisions' (163), as the old Bombay State is divided between the monolinguistic states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. As in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie represents 1960 as a moment when a collective, Bombayite identity fragments:

[W]e Bombayites were informed that our city was now the capital of Maharashtra. Many of us found this hard to take. Collectively, we began to live in a private Bombay that floated a little way out to sea and held itself apart from the rest of the country; while, individually, each of us became our own Bombay. You can't just keep dividing and slicing – India-Pakistan, Maharashtra-Gujarat – without the effects being felt at the level of the family unit. (163-4)

self-representation rather than socio-historical fact, Rushdie offers a more complex satire of Hindu nationalist politicians than Kumar or Mishra acknowledge.

⁸¹ Rushdie, 'A Dream of Glorious Return', p. 204.

⁸² Miller, para. 38.

Rushdie here repeats the formulation of Bombay as exceptional to the rest of India which is central to his work. In the aftermath of the division of old Bombay, however, Rushdie suggests that the city is poised between internal cohesion and traumatic fragmentation. Bombay remains a 'collectively' imagined space distinct from – and suffering a betrayal by – the rest of the nation. At the same time – and remembering the image of the 'fatal liberty' of the kites (218), whose separation from the land was accompanied by a catastrophic 'Dionysiac madness' (218) of collisions and explosions – I would argue that Bombay's separation from the rest of the nation, and Bombayites' separation from each other, is similarly catastrophic. The loss of crucial connections within the city represents a similarly 'fatal liberty', as the symbiotic relationship between individual Bombayites from the diverse communities symbolised by Hume is destroyed, and as relationships within the city's imagined community are severed and understandings of that space disintegrate.

The disruption of this imagined community is represented through a number of key tragedies that take place in Rai's narration of 1960: his parents separate, and 1960 sees the 'loss of their love' (164); meanwhile, Rai's childhood home of Villa Thracia is burned to the ground (168). The 'burned husk' of the Villa 'stood like a memorial to the death of idealism' (171) and consolidates Rushdie's representation of 1960 as the end of Bombay's 'golden age'. Furthermore, Piloo profits from this end, his plans for the city 'mov[ing] a step closer to success' (171). As in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Piloo's successes are enabled by the failures of Bombay's cosmopolitan elite. Ameer's entrepreneurial, capitalist aspirations and, perhaps more importantly, Vivvy's irresponsible gambling and silent opposition to those projects – his failure to engage with the developments of the future in favour of the politics of the past – allow Piloo to co-opt buildings he once considered to be 'philthy blasphemy' (71) into his economic and ideological domination of the city.

Remembering his emphasis on his supposedly lower-caste and working-class roots, and his Hindi accent and Hindu chauvinism, Piloo's victory at the expense of the Merchants' idealised visions of the city highlights the socio-political implications of the transition from Bombay to Mumbai. According to Sujata Patel, this transition saw the 'eras[ure] [of] a multi-ethnic and multilingual cosmopolitanism being nurtured [...] [by] a bourgeois class-based

modernity, substituting it with a populist oriented ethnic and religious identity'.⁸³ That Ameer's attempts to nurture a cosmopolitan, bourgeois modernity are central to the rise of Piloo's populist vision problematises the binary opposition between the two versions of the city, revealing instead the significant overlap and intersection between Bombay and Mumbai. In this light, Rai's parents – and therefore the cosmopolitan, bourgeois elite they represent – are implicated in not only the 'destruction of [Rai's] childhood home' (168), but also the 'death of idealism' (171) which marks the dominance of Pilooism within the city.

'No longer a memoirist but a voyeur': Photography and Narration

My exploration of the competing versions of Bombay at work in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* has revealed the city as a contested space, always already divided by internal tensions between conflicting economic, cultural, and ideological claims of ownership. It is, moreover, a city whose postcolonial identity has been both created *and* destroyed by Rai's parents. Caught between visions of the city which emphasise its past and its future, but which ignore the material realities of its present, and between the nostalgic desire to remember the city's golden age and the necessity of demythologising that age, Rai is forced to formulate a narrative approach to the city which speaks to his own liminal position. In examining the Merchants' visions of the city, I have highlighted the ways in which Rushdie keeps the formulation of modes of representation at the forefront of this novel. I have also shown how these modes of representation intersect in important ways with the cultural changes taking place within the city during the 1950s and 1960s, but also with the context of the novel's publication in the late 1990s. Having explored Rai's marginalisation by these modes of representation, I turn to look more closely at his own mode of narration, to consider Rushdie's renegotiation of the relationship between the migrant narrator and the nation in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

'[P]hotography', Rai states, 'is a kind of digging' (155). Exploring the postcolonial implications of Rushdie's 'meta-artistic discourse of photography and narration'.⁸⁴ Concilio observes that the pairing of photography and archaeology 'embodies a central postcolonial

⁸³ Sujata Patel, 'Bombay and Mumbai: Identities, Politics, and Populism', in Patel & Masselos, eds., pp. 3-30 (p. 4).

⁸⁴ Concilio, 'Worthy', p. 118.

concern'.⁸⁵ Moving beyond Concilio's reading, I argue that Rushdie works towards a much more complex representation of the postcolonial narrator. To do so, I draw once more upon Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan's assertion that, in the migrant's relationship with the homeland, 'the politics of proximity has to negotiate dialectically and critically with the politics of distance'.⁸⁶ Rushdie negotiates the politics of proximity and distance through Rai's photography, which speaks to Rai's position both within Bombay and as a migrant narrator outside of India. As I have noted, Sontag situates photography within a tension between 'connectedness' and detachment.⁸⁷ The following section draws together Sontag's writing on photography and Radhakrishnan's theorisation of migrancy, which emphasise similar tensions between distance and intimacy, the past and the present, participation and passivity. As I have argued, Rushdie shares Mistry's concern that the migrant must negotiate actively his relationship with, and continued political responsibility towards, India, even as he is geographically distanced from it. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie overlaps notions of distance and proximity in Rai's narration of Bombay to offer an increasingly anxious representation of the difficulties of negotiating such responsibility. Moreover, by situating the politics of distance and proximity within the context of a first-person migrant narrator/artist, Rushdie gestures towards his increasingly troubled negotiation of his own relationship with Bombay and India.

Concilio remarks that Rai's photography 'literalis[es]' Darius Cama's theory of 'outsideness' (42).⁸⁸ Speculating as to what happens to 'people who just don't belong' (43), Darius concludes that '[t]he only people who see the whole picture [...] are the ones who step out of the frame' (43). Rai's photography both demonstrates and complicates this theory. While Rai is unable to claim unproblematic belonging to Bombay, he is not represented as having completely 'step[ped] out of the frame'; rather, he is positioned between insideness and outsideness, as highlighted by an early photograph of Vina and Ormus, in which only '[h]alf of [Rai] is in the picture' (158). Marginalised from the public narrative of Vina and Ormus' love.

⁸⁵ Concilio, 'Worthy', p. 120.

⁸⁶ R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 209.

⁸⁷ Sontag, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Concilio, 'Worthy', p. 123.

Rai is similarly positioned on the periphery of narratives of the city and nation. As I have observed, this photograph embodies the shift in the narrative position in this novel, through which Rushdie renegotiates his own imaginative relationship with India. Through this shift, Rushdie revises his previous fictional representations of Bombay and India as experienced places, by representing them as voyeured spaces; that is, as spaces which the narrator observes rather than participates in.

Rai is given his first camera in 1960, indicating that year as pivotal not only to public constructions of the city, but also to Rai's own relationship with his homeland. He describes how the 'destruction of [his] childhood home – a villa, a city – is like the death of a parent: an orphaning' (168). In 1960, as Piloo's vision of the city gains ground, and as Rai's 'possessions, memories and happiness' (168) are destroyed in the Villa Thracia fire and by his parents' separation, his relationship with Bombay itself shifts, and his perceptions of the city are transformed. This shift is made palpable when he receives his birthday present:

[T]hey gave me a camera, a mechanical eye to replace the mind's eye, and after that, much of what I remember is what the camera managed to snatch out of time. No longer a memoirist but a voyeur, I remember photographs. (158)

This statement is significant for a number of reasons. The gift of the camera is framed within a list of Rai's childhood memories, which include 'Navjotes spent guzzling food' (157), 'Holis drenched in colour' (158), and a 'visit to the giant prayer maidan on Big Eid' (158), alongside 'Gold Flake posters, the Royal Barber Shop, the pungent mingled smells of putrefaction and hope' (158). These childhood images, 'burn[ed]' into memories (157), evoke a multireligious city, replete with the sensual pleasures of food and colour, smells and sounds.

The camera marks the transformation of this city of multicultural, multi-ethnic excess, and the moment when Rai declares '[f]orget Mumbai. I remember Bombay' (158). Transforming him from a 'memoirist' into a 'voyeur', the camera signals a rupture in Rai's perceptions of the city. If a memoirist recounts events from a 'privileged vantage point' and narrates 'events and relationships based on personal engagement',⁸⁹ then a voyeur has a more distanced – and potentially illicit – relationship with events. There is, therefore, a distinction, in

⁸⁹ George Egerton, 'The Politics of Memory: Form and Function in the History of Political Memoir from Antiquity to Modernity', in *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. by G. Egerton (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 1-27 (p. 4).

terms of both content and emotional investment, between Rai's childhood memories and his adolescent photographs, and his transformation into a photographer parallels both his marginalisation from the city and his increasing detachment from an intimate, personal engagement with it. The illicit connotations of voyeurism further imply that Rai's presence within the city is illegitimate, disrupting his sense of belonging to that space as he is distanced from its changing identity.

Rai's photography therefore enables Rushdie to establish a relationship between his own changing representational strategies and the social transformations taking place within the city. The shift in Rai's relationship with the city from one of memoirism to one of voyeurism highlights Rushdie's narrative strategy in this text, which differs from his earlier Bombay novels by emphasising the visual, rather than written, modes of representation employed by its narrator. Although Rai, like Moraes and Saleem before him, is writing an autobiographical text, the process of writing itself is not foregrounded to the same extent. While Rai regularly gestures towards his role as writer, claiming that 'I've chosen to write' (21), or that 'I am writing here about the end of something' (203), his statements fail to substantiate the physical process of writing which provides the framework for *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In each of these novels, Rushdie foregrounds the materiality of writing: Moraes works with 'pencil and paper' (421) before leaving his '*story nailed to the landscape*' (433), while Saleem places his 'Anglepoise-lit writing' (38) on 'sheets of paper which smell just a little of turmeric' (24). In *Midnight's Children* in particular, Rushdie situates the process of writing within a material experience of India, the scented pages highlighting the intimate connection between narrator and nation. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, this intimate connection is loosened, Moraes nailing his narrative to a landscape beyond India's borders. This disconnection is figured in a new and revealing way in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, in which Rushdie shifts the narrative relationship to the nation from the written to the visual, from the experienced to the observed, in order to demonstrate the loss of a close affiliation between the narrator and the materiality of the Indian space.

By changing the narrative strategy in this way, and by reducing the emphasis placed on the act of writing, Rushdie constructs a distance between not only his narrator and the nation,

but also between his own writerly position and his homeland, suggesting that this too has been transformed from memoirism to voyeurism. Furthermore, by explicitly connecting this narrative shift to the socio-political transformation of the city itself, from a space which includes Rai's secular Muslim identity to one which refuses and rejects that identity, Rushdie positions his renegotiation of modes of representation within the cultural changes taking place in Bombay. This suggests that, despite his narrator's declared 'under-attachment' to the nation, and in spite of the movement towards disconnection which I have argued marks *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie *does* continue to engage with the politics of Bombay, although, as I will show, he does so with increasing reluctance.

While Sontag asserts that the camera transforms a person 'into something active, a voyeur', she also contends that photography merely offers the 'appearance of participation'.⁹⁰ Against this appearance of participation, Sontag theorises photography as a practice of 'dissociative seeing', in which the 'habit of photographic seeing – of looking at reality as an array of potential photographs – creates estrangement from, rather than union with, nature'.⁹¹ Poised between dissociation and participation, photography creates a mode of seeing which is 'both intense and cool, solicitous and detached'.⁹² In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Persis similarly identifies photography as a mode of dissociation, and as part of the process of Rai's migration; she declares that '[w]alking the city streets with [his] stupid camera', Rai imagines he is 'saying hullo when really it's one long goodbye' (220). In this light, Rai's photography performs a process of both familiarisation with and departure from Bombay. Situated between the solicitous and the detached, Rai's role as photographer seems to offer him a way of gaining intimacy with the city, while simultaneously reiterating his distance from it.

After his parents die, Rai confesses that, '[t]hough th[eir] love [for Bombay] had often oppressed and stifled me, I now wanted it for myself, wanted to have my parents back by loving what they loved and so becoming what they had been' (210). Photography offers him a crucial 'means of gaining an education in their love' (211) and, therefore, in the city itself. Given his earlier identification of his parents as 'Bombayite[s] through and through' (59), photography

⁹⁰ Sontag, p. 10 (my emphasis).

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 99.

offers Rai a means of becoming Bombayite himself, of possessing and inhabiting more convincingly his 'Bombay *chokra*' identity (78). Rai's photographs do not, however, repeat his parents' visions of Bombay, but work to formulate a different understanding of the city. In contrast to his mother's enthusiasm for a future of architectural heights, and his father's interest in the 'surfaces' (80) of the past, Rai 'yearned for life' (80) – for Bombay's present. Preferring the 'ground level' to the 'panoramas of the birth of the city' (80) offered by early photographers, Rai 'yearned for the city streets' (80):

I photographed the workers at the Cuffe Parade development site as they walked with perfect, nonchalant balance along the beam of a crane a hundred feet above ground. I seized for myself the maelstrom of straw baskets at Crawford Market, and took possession too, of the inert figures who were everywhere, sleeping on the hard pillows of the sidewalks, their faces turned towards urinous walls, beneath the lurid movie posters of buxom goddesses with sofa-cushion lips. I photographed political slogans on *art dekho* buildings, and children grinning out through the toe of the giant Old Woman's Shoe. It was easy to be a lazy photographer in Bombay. It was easy to take an interesting picture and almost impossible to take a good one. The city seethed, gathered to stare, turned its back and didn't care. By showing me everything it told me nothing. Wherever I pointed my camera [...] I seemed to glimpse something worth having, but usually it was just something excessive: too colourful, too grotesque, too apt. The city was expressionistic, it screamed at you, but it wore a domino mask. (211)

This passage demonstrates the tensions between photography as a practice of possession and dissociation.⁹³ Photography ostensibly enables Rai to claim ownership of a city which radically differs from that of his parents, allowing him to focus on the contemporary experiences of Bombay's popular classes. Sweeping down from the heights of the Cuffe Parade development, through the graffiti on the sides of buildings to the sleeping pavement dwellers, Rai 'took possession' of the experiences of Bombay's working class and urban poor, seizing hold of a city marked by the 'spatial practices' of everyday life⁹⁴ which were marginalised by Vivvy's 'pre-history' and Ameer's developments.

At the same time, these images of the working class and urban poor, whose experiences of the city differ radically from Rai's own bourgeois experiences, also highlight his difference from the popular classes of the city he attempts to capture, reinforcing his sense of marginalisation and exclusion. The city rejects his photographic eye, 'turn[ing] its back' on him to remain 'obscure' and 'unknowable' (211); the topography travelled by the tiffin carriers

⁹³ Sontag, p. 9.

⁹⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988[1984]), p. 96.

similarly remains a 'mystery' (211). By telling Rai 'nothing', the city positions its narrator as a voyeur, '[g]azing on other people's reality with curiosity' rather than knowledge,⁹⁵ emphasising aesthetic detachment rather than intimate engagement. Thus, while photography offers a means of gaining an education in the city, the city itself resists its appropriation by Rai, drawing a 'domino mask' across its face to exclude him from participating in its everyday life. It is, therefore, not the possession of a camera alone that affects Rai's narrative position; it is also the city, now metamorphosed into a hostile Mumbai, which constructs Rai as a voyeur, reinforcing the intersection Rushdie is creating between his changing narrative strategies and the shifting socio-political terrain of the city.

The difficulty Rai expresses in taking a 'good' photograph offers an important critique of his role in representing Bombay which has significant consequences for Rushdie's own fictional attempts to reclaim the city of his birth. Sontag asserts that the 'aestheticizing tendency of photography' potentially 'neutraliz[es]' the image it presents.⁹⁶ The apparent ease with which Rai aestheticises everyday Bombay life leads him anxiously to recognise the difficulty of adequately representing the city's reality, and the impossibility of taking a 'good' picture. In an extension of his exploration of modes of narrating Bombay through Aurora's art in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie points to the limitations of documentary realism for representing the city's reality, suggesting its incapacity to move beyond voyeuristic engagement with 'the surface [...] trappings of the actual' (80) in order to 'penetrate [...] its bloody flesh and heart' (80). Perhaps more significantly, the city, by resisting Rai's attempts to represent it, denies the legitimacy of his efforts.

In representing the problematic relationship between Rai's photography and the city, Rushdie reveals an anxiety about his own practice of narrating Bombay in his fiction. His representation of a narrator isolated from and by the city of his birth bears witness to his own complicated geographical and imaginative alienation from Bombay. The city's refusal of Rai's photographic gaze, I argue, is informed by Rushdie's own sense of rejection after first *The Satanic Verses* and then, briefly, *The Moor's Last Sigh* were banned, a rejection compounded by

⁹⁵ Sontag, p. 55.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 109.

the refusal to allow filming of *Midnight's Children* to take place in India.⁹⁷ Such rejections construct Rushdie's own artistic practices, his own writerly gaze on the city, as illegitimate modes of representation. This rupture in the author's own artistic relationship with India contributes to his representation of a narrator whose attempts to reclaim the city of his birth as a space which he can legitimately occupy, both physically and cognitively, are refused and rejected by that city. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is therefore marked not only by a sense of the migrant's loss of access to 'concrete' experience of the homeland, and by attempts to regain such access, but also by the rejection by the homeland of the exile's right to claim such access.

Dissatisfied with his realist street photography, Rai pursues a more abstract 'exit photograph[y]' (213), which articulates, to borrow Homi Bhabha's phrase, his 'interstitial perspective' on the city.⁹⁸ Initially, these photographs focus on more absolute exits, such as funeral ceremonies. However, turning to 'more quotidian departures' (213), Rai captures interstitial moments where Bombay's inhabitants are caught in transit between the here and there, the past and the future. Rai photographs travellers in the airport departure lounge, audiences emerging from cinemas, 'the come and go at the doors of great hotels' (213). These images appear to offer Rai an intimacy with a version of Bombay that reflects his own liminal position between re-connection with and detachment from his homeland.

However, while they ostensibly enable Rai to occupy that interstitial space in productive ways, the emphasis remains on modes of departure, and any intimacy he gains is situated within the instances of leaving he observes. Furthermore, while Rai's engagement with interstitial moments helps him develop 'the secret of becoming invisible' (213) which allows him to 'walk right up to' (214) the city's inhabitants and capture their most private moments, such intimacy is immediately compromised. The centrality of Rai's invisibility implies that his access to Bombay's 'flesh and heart' (80) is achieved only through the erasure of his own illegitimate identity, and by his disappearance from the city's narratives. His intimacy with

⁹⁷ India was the first country to ban *The Satanic Verses*, while *The Moor's Last Sigh* was briefly banned in 1995.

⁹⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Locations of Culture', in *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994). pp. 1-18 (p. 3).

Bombay, therefore, is enabled by what might be identified as a cognitive migration from the city space, rather than by his reintegration within it.

Despite this further marginalisation, Rai claims to have achieved an important sense of affiliation with and belonging to the city and the nation, although such belonging is once more ironically framed within a discourse of departure and disaffiliation:

Here's an irony worth a shake of the head or a rueful grin: that the severance of my connection with the country of my birth should come to pass at the point of my deepest intimacy with it, my broadest knowledge, my most genuine feelings of belonging. For [...] my years as photographer had opened my eyes to the old place, and my heart as well. I had started searching for what my parents had seen in it, but soon I began to see it for myself, to make my own portrait, my own selection from the overwhelming abundance that was everywhere on offer. After a period of feeling an odd, alienated disconnection, feeling it as something not chosen but simply *so*, I was seeing my way, through the camera lens, of being a 'proper' Indian. (229)

Previously, as I have shown, despite his claims to being 'Bombay *chokra* through and through' (78) Rai has represented himself as Bombay's 'rival' other (79), and the city as a space 'out there' (79) from which he is disconnected. Rai's photographic voyeurism, which represents a detached observation of, rather than personal engagement with the city also, paradoxically, enables him to move towards an intimacy with, knowledge of, and sense of belonging to Bombay. Highlighting the ways in which 'neither distance nor proximity guarantees truth or alienation',⁹⁹ Rushdie's use of photography as a narrative strategy is here revealed as more complex than was initially indicated by Rai's transition from memoirism to voyeurism. Rushdie indicates that it is not until Rai self-consciously negotiates his position *between* memoirism and voyeurism that he is able to work towards a viable sense of belonging to the nation. By navigating the politics of distance and proximity through his photography, Rai believes he begins to formulate a 'proper Indian' identity with which he feels comfortable. Photography therefore, in Rai's view at least, offers him a means of claiming a sense of legitimate belonging that he has previously resisted and from which he has been excluded.

Crucially, Rushdie represents Rai's new-found sense of national affiliation as 'chosen' rather than as 'something [...] simply *so*', as something learnt rather than instinctive. Even as Rai achieves 'proper' Indianness, Rushdie stops short of allowing his narrator to claim unproblematic indigeneity, suggesting, rather, that his attainment of Indianness has been

⁹⁹ Radhakrishnan, p. 209.

achieved through the occupation of a migrant subject position. In doing so, Rushdie reveals Rai's new-found sense of national belonging as always already compromised and once more emphasises Rai's belatedness in relation to the nation. Rai's achievement of national identity is not coterminous with his birth, problematising any sense of an organic connection between the narrator and his homeland. Furthermore, Rai's final attainment of Indianness coincides with his exile from the nation, suggesting that he arrives at national identity belatedly; that is, after the point at which he can fully occupy and consolidate such a position. Rai's sense of national belonging is, I would claim, therefore represented as incommensurable with his occupation of the national space and actually necessitates his departure from India.

Photography's role in drawing Rai closer to India is undercut by the fact that it was also his 'photographer's craft, that ensured [his] banishment' (229). In this light, I end this chapter by exploring how Rai's position as a photographer develops Rushdie's concern with the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and between the migrant and his homeland. Continuing my interest in the tension between photography as a mode of participation and as 'an act of non-intervention',¹⁰⁰ I argue that Rai's photojournalism, and his attempt to intervene in national politics through his photography, gestures towards Rushdie's own increasingly ambivalent attitude towards the relationship between his own aesthetic practices and the politics of India.

Having established himself as a photojournalist, Rai is commissioned to photograph Pilloo Doodhwala's scam involving 'Non-Existent Goat[s]' (233). By becoming involved in the exposure of this fraud, Rai extends his role beyond that of marginalised voyeur by recasting his photography as a mode of active political intervention. His involvement offers, in many ways, an opportunity to consolidate his new sense of Indianness, as he journeys into the rural parts of the nation that '[c]ity dwellers were constantly told [...] was the "real" India' (238). However, Rai's attempts to actively participate in the political life of the nation and secure his Indianness cause an irrevocable rupture in his relationship with his homeland.

The photographs of Pilloo's Non-Existent Goats are initially a political, if not an aesthetic, success. '[C]onsidered purely from the aesthetic viewpoint', the photographs 'were as

¹⁰⁰ Sontag, p. 11.

dull and uninspired as the First Photo itself' (242); banal images of '*decisive voiding*' (242), the photographs 'were pictures of emptiness' (242). Their questionable aesthetic value is marginalised by their significance as reportage, and '[w]ithin weeks of their publication, a major fraud investigation was in progress' (242) which eventually leads to the arrest and subsequent jailing of Piloo and his associates (242). At first, then, Rai's intervention in national politics has considerable success and launches his career as a serious photojournalist and, later, war photographer. This initial success is limited, however, in ways that further reveal the problematic relationship between aesthetics and politics in Rushdie's work. That the photographs have limited aesthetic value itself undermines the extent to which they embody the role that Rai's art can play in politics. The photographs are neither presented as works of art, nor do they actually represent a subject as such. Instead, they are '[p]hotographs of absences' (242), symbolising a voiding of the aesthetic possibility, rather than the social potential of Rai's work, an emptying out of his attempt to intervene in national politics through photography rather than an affirmation of that attempt.

That Rai is not the author of the photographs, but steals them from the corpse of a dead photographer (243), further distances him from the employment of his artistic practice as a political tool for change. On one level, the photographer's corpse signifies the potentially dangerous consequences of positioning aesthetic modes of representation as tools for political intervention, while also alluding to the death threat facing Rushdie after his own attempts to situate political opposition within fictional modes of writing. However, as Falconer remarks, 'artistic integrity is represented as being sharply at odds with social responsibility' at various points within the novel.¹⁰¹ In this light, Rai's theft of the photographic film from the corpse problematises the ethical stance he takes in opposition to Piloo. Casting him in a similarly fraudulent role to Piloo, whose fortune is founded upon a vast agricultural absence, Rai's claims to artistic integrity *and* social responsibility – his attempt to intervene in politics through photography – are revealed as incompatible. Moreover, that Rai is not the author of the pictures positions him in an intermediary position *between* aesthetics and politics. Presenting him as neither the artist behind the images nor the editor of the newspaper that publishes them, Rushdie

¹⁰¹ Falconer, p. 501.

distances Rai from active participation in both aesthetic production *and* national politics, presenting layers of detachment between his position as photojournalist and the exposé which makes his name.

The success of the intervention is itself limited, problematising the possibilities of any relationship between photography as an aesthetic mode of representation and social and political responsibility. While the exposé leads to the jailing of Piloo, ‘instead of ruining him, it actually made him bigger’ (245); photographs originally intended to reveal Piloo’s corruption enable him to reach a national audience, while ‘[p]rosecuting Piloo began to be described as an act of vengeance by the “English medium” liberal élite against a true man of the masses, a son of the soil’ (245). In a backward glance to the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses*, and his response to that crisis in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Rushdie once more depicts art produced by a member of the liberal, bourgeois elite – which he views as a legitimate and foundational form of oppositional politics – being constructed as illegitimate, and consequently being misrepresented to, and misunderstood and rejected by, ‘the masses’.

The rejection of the photographs as a valuable and appropriate mode of oppositional intervention in national politics once more ruptures Rai’s sense of affiliation and belonging to the nation. While Anita, the editor of the exposé, continues to ‘imagine herself belonging’ (246) to the nation which rejects her work, Rai is unable to reaffirm his sense of belonging within, or commitment to, India. Thus, the final pages of the Indian section of the novel contain a series of ‘farewell[s]’ (248) which echo, without repeating, Moraes’ withdrawal at the close of *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Forced into exile because of his use of photography as a mode of active participation rather than non-intervention, Rai withdraws from any future involvement with India, declaring that ‘I may not comprehend what you are becoming, what perhaps you already are, but I am old enough to say that this new self of yours is an entity I no longer want, or need, to understand’ (249). Reciprocating that nation’s rejection of his aesthetic intervention, Rai rejects his homeland, revoking his intellectual affiliation to the nation and foreclosing the possibility of reconciliation.

The rejection of photography as a mode of representation appropriate and relevant to India’s politics produces an irrevocable rift between narrator and nation which has significant

consequences for Rushdie's understanding of his own position as a politically engaged migrant writer. Rushdie represents his narrator, poised between death or exile, as withdrawing from a close engagement with India's politics, while further confessing to an unwillingness to continue renegotiating his position in relation to his homeland. It is this unwillingness to continue engaging with India, to continue negotiating the politics of distance and the politics of proximity, which marks not only Rai's multilayered sense of detachment throughout his narration of India in the first half of this novel, but also accounts for Rushdie's own withdrawal from an intimate engagement with Bombay in his fiction from this point onwards.

In 1999, introducing the as yet unmade screenplay of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie laments the Indian government's refusal to allow filming to take place in India. 'I felt personally insulted', Rushdie writes; '[t]hat *Midnight's Children* should have been rejected so arbitrarily, with such utter indifference, by the land about which it had been written with all my love and skill, was a terrible blow, from which [...] I have not really recovered'.¹⁰² Emphasising the shift in his relationship with India provoked by this rejection, Rushdie states that 'the rejection of *Midnight's Children* changed something profound in my relationship with the East. Something broke, and I'm not sure it can be mended'.¹⁰³ This desolation at the rejection of his attempts to re-imagine and imaginatively engage with India, I suggest, underpins Rushdie's representation of a narrator unable to consolidate his intimacy with and alienation from Bombay. The fracturing of Rushdie's organic connection with India – at least while writing *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – leaves him, to borrow Ahmad's phrase, bereft of the capacity, and indeed the desire, to bridge the imaginative gap between his exiled position and his homeland. In this light, by representing his narrator as reciprocating India's rejection of his identity and severing connections with the city of his birth, resigning his role as memoirist *and* voyeur, Rushdie implies that he is similarly unable, in his fiction, to resolve the crisis in the relationship between his migrant aesthetics and the politics of the homeland.

As my examination of his fiction in the last three chapters has shown, Rushdie is increasingly anxious regarding the difficulties faced by the migrant and, more specifically, the

¹⁰² Salman Rushdie, 'Introduction', *The Screenplay of Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 1-12 (p. 10).

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

migrant artist, in negotiating his geographical distance from and continued political responsibility towards Bombay. Rai's inability to reconcile his paradoxical intimacy with and detachment from his homeland bears witness to Rushdie's own conflicted sense of alienated connection with Bombay and India. Having insisted on the importance of the cosmopolitan migrant engaging actively with the politics of the homeland in *The Satanic Verses*, the novels I have examined are, I have demonstrated, progressively marked by an anxious scepticism towards the possibilities offered by such engagement. Indicating that he is no longer willing to negotiate the tension between distance and proximity, intimacy with and alienation from his homeland, Rushdie presents, through Rai, a far more emphatic withdrawal from Bombay than in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, stressing that – in contrast to his approach in *Midnight's Children* at the beginning of his literary career – he no longer feels claimed by his 'lost city'.¹⁰⁴ To return to the 'old photograph in a cheap frame' which provided the impulse for writing, Rushdie inverts, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, that central urge to repossess Bombay, suggesting that he no longer feels imaginatively driven by a desire to reclaim his lost home. Rather, in this novel, that space is irretrievably positioned as a 'lost home in a lost city in the mists of a lost time'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Rushdie has returned to an extended engagement with India in his most recent novel, *Shalimar the Clown* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). Significantly, however, India in this novel is represented by Kashmir and, to a less extent, Delhi, but not Bombay.

¹⁰⁵ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 9.

Conclusion

On 11 July 2006 seven bombs simultaneously detonated on trains and stations along Bombay's main suburban railway line. Suspicion for the bombings – which left nearly 200 people dead, and more than 700 injured – has fallen upon Lashkar-e-Toiba, a Kashmiri militant group based in Pakistan, as well as upon radical Islamic groups within India. Reacting to the bombings, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh drew upon the city's pre-eminent position in the nation's popular imagination to declare that 'Mumbai stands tall once again as the symbol of a united India; an inclusive India'.¹ Singh's statement evokes the popular mythologisation of Bombay as an ideal of the Nehruvian nationalist vision of India's 'unity in diversity', a mythologisation that, this thesis has argued, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie both contribute to and critique in their fiction. However, while Singh reiterates Bombay's position as a paradigm of India's secularism, the context of his remarks gestures towards an alternative understanding of the city as having 'spawned ideas of India at sharp variance with Nehru's'.² It is within the ambivalent space between these two understandings of Bombay, the one emphasising its inclusive secularism, the other its violent parochialisation, that I have situated the representations of the migrant and nation in the fiction of Mistry and Rushdie.

According to Suketu Mehta, with whose account of 1990s Bombay I began this thesis, '[c]ities should be examined like countries. Each has a city culture, as countries possess a national culture. There is something peculiarly Bombayite about Bombayites'.³ As I have demonstrated, there is a significant slippage between the city and nation at work within Mistry's and Rushdie's fiction and their engagement with the politics of contemporary India, and the relationship between the migrant and that nation is expressed through a distinctly Bombayite optic. Mistry and Rushdie are involved in a critical examination of the material, political, social and imaginative consequences of the crisis of secularism in India during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. By keeping to the fore the particular material and political transformations taking place within Bombay during those decades, as well as the 1950s and 1960s, it becomes clear that both writers are, more specifically, concerned with the impact of this crisis on the city of their birth.

¹ 'Call This Peace?', *Economist*, 15-21 July 2006, pp. 63-64 (p. 63).

² Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999[1997]), pp. 148-49.

³ Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (London: Review, 2004), p. 15.

Thus, in each writer's work, although perhaps more explicitly in Rushdie's, the city is both synecdochal for the Indian nation and is set at a slight angle to it, representative of the wider crisis in India's secular principles but also offering a distinctive version of that crisis, in the form of localised Hindu-Marathi chauvinism.

Rashmi Varma emphasises the importance of examining the 'political stakes in remembering Bombay's cosmopolitan past – an insistent trope in all critiques of Bombay's decline – and [of] imagin[ing] new realities for the future of this embattled postcolonial city'.⁴ Mistry and Rushdie are engaged in a project of remembering and critiquing popular assumptions regarding Bombay's 'cosmopolitan past', and their work is informed by the frequently utopian representations of Bombay as, in Mistry's phrase, a 'city of promise' or, in Rushdie's words, a 'city of mixed-up, mongrel joy'.⁵ However, as Mehta suggests, '[t]here are many Bombays',⁶ and Mistry and Rushdie present the city as a space in which the possibilities offered by the 'utopic horizon' of Independence⁷ may be most clearly realised, but also most dangerously problematised. While both appear to be deeply invested in the Nehruvian vision of a secular nation, each is concerned that the idealism of Independence has not been translated into the achievement of many of its material and social goals.

In doing so, the writers offer versions of Bombay and India that diverge and converge in exciting and suggestive ways. As I noted in the Introduction, the most immediate – and most commonly observed – difference is in each writer's formal approach to representing India, with Mistry tending towards social realism and Rushdie mobilising 'magic realism'. However, as my examination of their fiction has shown, privileging the contrast in their writing at the level of the sentence elides the more subtle and, I suggest, significant, differences in focus, as well as the important overlaps in their work. Mistry's focus in *A Fine Balance* (1996) on what Michel de

⁴ Rashmi Varma, 'Provincializing the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai', *Social Text*, 22:4 (2004), 65-89 (p. 67).

⁵ Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), p.153; Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 376. Further references to these editions are given in parentheses in the text.

⁶ Mehta, p. 12.

⁷ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), p. 184.

Certeau might term the ‘ordinary practitioners’ of the city⁸ – the working class and poor toilers who contribute to Bombay’s ad hoc street and global capitalist economies – attempts to give a name to those marginalised by discourses of India’s modernity, while also engaging closely with the discrepancy between the nation-state’s rhetoric of socialist secularism and the material experiences of the poorer classes such rhetoric claims to protect. This is particularly clear in Mistry’s insistence on identifying the ‘real name’ (348) of the legless beggar Shankar, but also in the final depiction of Om and Ishvar, whose bodies bear the scars of the nation-state’s failures to enact the inclusive principles enshrined in India’s constitution. The bodies of the city’s poor are figured differently in Rushdie’s fiction, often appearing in the margins as ‘phantoms, [who] move through the city like wraiths’ (212). Although Rushdie similarly attempts to ‘forc[e] into visibility’ (303) the city’s socially, economically and culturally marginalised communities, his fiction centres upon more privileged members of Bombay’s liberal secular elites, to offer a critique of the ideological manoeuvres – and political failures – of that elite, and the impact of such failures upon ways of imagining the city and nation.

Nevertheless, as I have suggested, such differences are not as discrete as is often assumed. Although concerned with the material realities of everyday life in Bombay, Mistry is involved in a close engagement with the language of hegemonic and exclusionary nationalisms, and its impact upon ways of understanding subnational communities such as the family and the city. In doing so, Mistry reveals a concern for the failures of the liberal secular elite actively to protect and pursue socialist secularism in resistance to Hindu nationalism and growing communalism. In depicting characters as traversing the social geography of Bombay, meanwhile, Rushdie expresses his concern that the rise of exclusionary discourses of the city and nation are precisely the result of the failures of the socialist secular elite to translate the ideals, recently evoked by Prime Minister Singh, into material realities. Indeed, like Mistry, Rushdie is concerned that the celebration of the city’s and nation’s secular cosmopolitanism is often predicated upon a privileged socio-economic experience of India’s postcolonial progress.

⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1988[1984]), p. 93.

The representations of contemporary Bombay and India offered by Mistry and Rushdie are crucially informed by, and inform, their negotiation of the politics of migrancy. As I have noted, Mistry's engagement with his position as a migrant is less explicit than Rushdie's. Indeed, perhaps the most significant formal difference between the two authors lies not in their use of different modes of realism, but in their contrasting use of third- and first-person narratives. Mistry's tendency towards third-person narration effects an apparent distancing of his representations of India from his own writerly position beyond the nation's borders. By contrast, Rushdie's regular use of first-person, pseudo-autobiographical narratives explicitly invites us to view his work through the prism of the relationship between the migrant and the nation. By often framing these narratives within the context of the relationship between the migrant artist and the nation, Rushdie further gestures towards his own position as a migrant writer engaged with, but geographically distanced from, the politics of India.

Nevertheless, Mistry is acutely concerned with the politics of migrancy, an aspect often obscured by current readings of his work. Exploring his fiction through a vocabulary of accountability and political responsibility brings into view his negotiation of the relationship between the migrant and nation in his fiction. As I have demonstrated, Mistry insists upon the importance of the migrant's continued political responsibility towards his Indian homeland, despite his geographical distance from it; his fiction is marked by emphatic critiques of migrants who fail even to attempt to negotiate their continued accountability towards India. In Rushdie's work, the representation of migrancy intersects explicitly with notions of cosmopolitanism and, as I have argued, the migrant in his fiction is often – although not exclusively – figured as a *cosmopolitan* migrant. As I have observed, experiences of cosmopolitanism and migrancy do not necessarily coincide and are not equivalent. Nevertheless, as I have shown, in both his fiction and non-fiction, Rushdie frequently positions constructions of migrancy within a cosmopolitan framework, and there is a significant slippage between the two identities. However, while often representing explicitly cosmopolitan migrants whose socio-economic experiences differ radically from the migrants occupying Mistry's fiction, Rushdie similarly emphasises the necessity of sustaining a critical engagement with the politics of India even as one moves beyond its borders.

At the same time, however, both Mistry and Rushdie emphasise that a problematic cosmopolitan perspective – of potentially privileged and irresponsible detachment from local politics – may impact upon the relationship between the individual and the nation even before the physical act of migration itself. A close understanding of the social and political geography of Bombay during the decades following Independence reveals Rushdie's increasing anxiety regarding the cosmopolitan's distance from the material realities of everyday life in the city even before his migration beyond India's borders, and his self-conscious awareness of his own 'Malabar-ness' (304) – his own socio-economic, as well as geographic, distance from what Nayantara Sahgal calls the 'nitty gritty' of national life.⁹ As this thesis has shown, reading Rushdie's writing alongside Mistry's enables us to encounter the more anxious representations of the migrant, the cosmopolitan, and the cosmopolitan migrant in the former author's work, but also prompts us to consider more carefully Mistry's negotiation of his position as a migrant writer within his fiction.

Both Mistry and Rushdie are deeply invested in the necessity of remaining politically engaged with contemporary India. Nevertheless, each writer makes clear that such involvement is neither straightforward, nor easily achieved or maintained. Rather, each author's work is marked by a profound anxiety over the adequacy of writing as a mode of political engagement with – and active resistance to – the crisis in secularism and the parochialisation of Bombay. Further, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the predominant tone of Mistry's and Rushdie's fictional negotiations of the relationship between the migrant and the nation, and the migrant *writer* and the nation, is increasingly one of shared ambivalence, although this ambivalence comes into view in different – and continuously shifting – ways within their novels.

If the complexity of this ambivalence is indicated by the deaths of migrants in Mistry's work, it is perhaps alternatively demonstrated by Rushdie's gradual narration, in the novels studied, of the migrant writer out of Bombay. As this subtle difference intimates, there are important distinctions between Mistry's and Rushdie's attitudes towards, and ambivalence regarding, the sustained possibilities offered by the migrant writer's engagement with India's

⁹ Nayantara Sahgal, 'Some Thoughts on the Puzzle of Identity', in *Points of View: A Personal Response to Life, Literature and Politics* (New Delhi: Prestige, 1997), pp. 80-92 (p. 85).

contemporary politics. Although Mistry's novels represent the relationship between the migrant and the nation as fraught with difficulties, and as characterised by an often paralysing sense of uncertainty, his own writing practices would nonetheless seem to reiterate the importance of the migrant's rights and political responsibilities towards his Indian homeland; they would also appear to demonstrate his ongoing attempts to engage actively with the politics of Bombay, even as he sustains an anxiety over doing so effectively and adequately. Rushdie's ambivalence towards the relationship between the migrant and the nation impacts differently upon the politics of his writing, not least because of his radically divergent experience as a migrant writer. His novels are increasingly marked by a narratorial despondency and a disabling ambivalence which inform both his representational techniques and, moreover, his fictional retreat from Bombay. In this light, although Mistry's novels appear, at first glance, to offer the more pessimistic depiction of what Mehta terms Bombay's 'identity crisis',¹⁰ Rushdie's growing scepticism, in the texts I have examined, towards the possibilities offered by the migrant writer's continued engagement with India is perhaps more acute, reflecting a deepening crisis in – and a growing reluctance to negotiate – his own relationship with his Indian homeland.

While Mistry and Rushdie offer critiques of Bombay's decline and assert the importance of the contributions made by migrant and diasporic subjects to the renegotiation of ideas of India and Indianness, ultimately they do so with an increasing – although differently expressed – uncertainty and ambivalence regarding the efficacy of such interventions. Indicating the necessity of sustaining a close engagement with the contemporary politics of their homeland, despite their geographical distance from it, Mistry and Rushdie simultaneously express an anxiety that those very politics – the decline of secularism, the communalisation of Indian identity, and the parochialisation of Bombay – make such an engagement increasingly difficult and uncomfortable. Sceptical as to whether Mumbai indeed remains the symbol of a united, inclusive India that Bombay perhaps once was, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie

¹⁰ Suketu Mehta, 'Mumbai', in *India: The Golden Jubilee*, special issue, *Granta*, 57 (1997), ed. by Ian Jack, 97-126 (p. 98).

share – despite their divergent methods of representation – a deep anxiety over their role, as migrant writers, in imagining that embattled postcolonial city's future realities.

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