

Grotesque Chronotopes in *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*: Crossing the  
Threshold Between Horror and Madness

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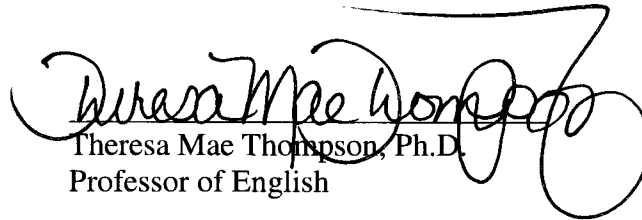
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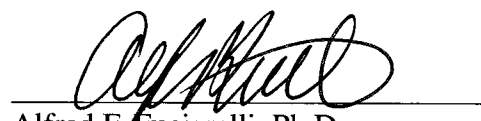


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## ABSTRACT

Salman Rushdie's novels, *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, use grotesque chronotopes in the form of roads, thresholds, and the mind to illustrate the highly politicized and problematic nature of the post-colonial migrant's hybridity and rootless existence. Grotesque chronotopes, or time-spaces, are where horror and fear surface, facilitating the post-colonial individual's removal from the political-imperial center, and his or her death. This thesis uses theories provided by Mikhail Bakhtin, Wolfgang Kayser, Sigmund Freud, Anne McClintock, and Laura Mulvey, all of which provide critical foundations on the grotesque, psychology, and objectification, showing that grotesque chronotopes reveal the negative visual and psychological effects political upheaval and cultural dislocation have on the post-colonial subject's body and mind. The longer the post-colonial subject spends within, or interacting with, the political or imperial center, the more severe the implications of the grotesque; horror, fear, madness, and death are the ultimate, inescapable results.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Born in Bombay, India, in 1947, Salman Rushdie is tied to the ideas of nation, identity, migration, and dislocation as a child of India's partition and subsequent independence. In that year, India violently split into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan; much of Rushdie's family fled to Pakistan while his immediate family remained in Bombay. At the age of seven, Rushdie left Bombay for England where he began his formal education, eventually studying at King's College in Cambridge. Although he returned to Pakistan for a brief period of time in order to work in television, he soon returned to England, only visiting India and Pakistan for short periods of time. Eventually, he became a British citizen.

In his non-fiction collection, *Step Across This Line*, Rushdie discusses his migrant background. He reveals in "A Dream of Glorious Return" that after he left for school in England as a child "my father, without telling me, suddenly sold Windsor Villa, our family home in Bombay. The day I heard this, I felt an abyss open beneath my feet . . . since then my characters have frequently flown west from India, but in novel after novel their author's imagination has returned to it" (180, my ellipses). Rushdie's father caused his son's displacement by selling the family home. By becoming a writer, as Jaina C. Sanga points out, Rushdie "made his house in his writing" since writing provides the author with a space to call his own in the face of displacement where he can return home

(17). In *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Saleem, Saladin, and Gibreel likewise return to what they leave behind as migrants.

Rushdie's fame and success blossomed with the publication of his Booker Prize winning *Midnight's Children* and with it, a wealth of scholarship also bloomed, though the mode of discourse remains largely traditional. An example of this thread of discussion is Neil ten Kortenaar's *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children*. In his text, Kortenaar keeps to a discussion that focuses on the expected topics within postcolonial and cultural theory: history, hybridity, nation, and state. When turning to the notion of politics, one cannot escape the inevitable sensationalism that now surrounds Rushdie's name after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Ruvani Ranasinha devotes an entire essay on the political ramifications from publishing *The Satanic Verses*, deliberating on the infamous fatwa placed on Rushdie by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. The Ayatollah's fatwa called for Rushdie's death in retaliation for what such Islamic leaders perceived as blasphemy in the text's portrayal of the prophet Mohammed. With the fatwa, discussions regarding freedom of speech and expression, and that of censorship, were brought to the forefront of political inquiry. Unfortunately, the controversy cannot be shaken from *The Satanic Verses* or from Rushdie's name to this day.

Can Rushdie and his texts ever be legitimately critiqued outside of his and their political history? Catherine Cundy is one scholar to point out the disservice committed when critics focus heavily on the fatwa in relation to *The Satanic Verses*. She argues that focusing on the fatwa is a “tragedy” since the text has become “a byword for trouble”

(65). Moreover, Cundy's assertions that “the text has all but lost its ability to be judged as an artistic enterprise rather than a cultural and political crisis” ring all too true, as critical texts consistently begin or supplement any discussion about the author or his texts with a deliberation on the fatwa. Further, by focusing on the fatwa, we risk undermining the textual autonomy and legitimacy post-colonial writers have so often fought for, and still fight for. Michael Gorra, while also devoting an appendix in *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* to discussing the fatwa, is nevertheless optimistic about the possibility of Rushdie escaping his political black cloud. Gorra cites that it will, however, be years before Rushdie can separate himself from the controversy—if he ever can (150). Thus, the nature of Rushdie scholarship shifts, as more recent scholarship abandons lengthy discussions of political sensationalism in favor of new and diverse approaches in the realm of language and aesthetics.

Emblematic of this shift in scholarship is Philip Holden and his article “The 'Postcolonial Gothic:' Absent Histories, Present Contexts.” Holden discusses postcolonial literature in relation to the rising interest in the Gothic and its presence within postcolonial literature—termed the postcolonial Gothic. He explains that the postcolonial Gothic revives the enlightenment idea of the Gothic to disclose the anxieties inherent in attitudes toward empire (353). Holden builds on discussions offered by Andrew Smith's and William Hughes' text *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*. Smith and Hughes argue that the prevalent use of what is monstrous and ghostly facilitates the politics of difference which portrays “Orientalist imaginings” or prejudices that further exposes “sources of violence in the colonial encounter” (Holden 354; Smith and Hughes

4). While ghosts and the monstrous traditionally surface as the embodiments of what a given culture or figure has repressed, the Gothic thus reflects the “anxieties concerning social and political change, and as *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* will show, the alienation inherent in the hybrid migrant's experience.

Elsa Sacksick is also representative of the shift in postcolonial Gothic scholarship, yet she specifically focuses on how Rushdie fits into this new lens. In her article “Ghosting in the Novels of Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie,” Sacksick examines and reinterprets existing readings of the grotesque and how the grotesque represents the traumatic and complicated notion of hybridity and dislocation suffered by the post-colonial figure. Sacksick looks at both *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, novels she believes express the negativity of hybridity and migration (404). In *Midnight's Children*, Sacksick points out that Saleem turns into a ghost while at the same time he is haunted by ghosts. In *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin suffers the same predicament; both characters find themselves questioning their invisibility and the cultural liminality that transforms them into bodies of horror (404-6). Sacksick also argues the ghosts are “emblematic of [the] postcolonial” because like the hybrid, they exist at the exact “intersection of past and present” and “provoke the encounter of two worlds” by their mere presence (406-7). Rushdie's characters become bodies of horror, a transformation that is “an unavoidable condition” for the hybrid/migrant. Last, the horror Sacksick identifies relies on traditional concepts of Gothic haunting and is only a stepping-stone for a more contemporary envisioning of horror and fear, however, since *why* these images occur is closely connected to *where* they occur.

A contemporary interpretation of postcolonial horror is discussed in terms of the grotesque, and critics John Clement Ball and J.M.Q. Davies discuss the nature of the grotesque in both *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. Ball explores the satirical grotesque, focusing on how it illustrates the body's relation to cultural and political events. Ball states that *Midnight's Children* uses horrific images of the body to question cultural and national histories (65). The violence and decay Saleem's body suffers reflects India's social-political climate. Saleem's body often leaks blood and other fluids, which symbolize the “draining out of hope” for India as the nation suffers one setback after another (73). Further, the leaks illustrate the “final literalization of the intermingling of realms and transgressions of boundaries that as metaphor—as idea—proves enabling, but that as material bodily fact manifests itself increasingly as failure or deconstruction” (77). While Ball proves that the deconstruction of the body equals the deconstruction of culture, identity, and home, he admits to the possible renewing effects of the grotesque in Rushdie as well. Ultimately, Ball privileges neither interpretation and shows the ambivalent nature of the grotesque in Rushdie's texts; however, he questions such ambivalence and suggests the grotesque in *Midnight's Children* is negative, establishing Saleem as victim.

Conversely, Davies illustrates that the “bodily grotesque” in *The Satanic Verses* is negative and is a “generally hybrid” text that “argues single-mindedly for cultural pluralism” (30-1). Additionally, Davies sees the grotesque as expressive of the cultural tensions reflected in Saladin's and Gibreel's identities; their conjoined state at the moment of their fall from the sky in the novel's beginning is grotesque and marks their split from

their motherland (31). Further, Davies sees haunting within the text as evidence of unfinished business and the characters' "ghoulish clinging to the past," which he supports with Gibreel's resulting suicide after his and Alleluia Cone's failures (35). Finally, Davies concludes with the idea that the text expresses the alienation often experienced by migrants; migrants are unable to orient themselves within their new territory, nor are they able to completely reconnect to their homeland.

The vein of scholarship Ball and Davies represents regarding the grotesque is built upon the seminal works *Rabelais and His World* and *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* by Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser respectively. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin offers an in-depth exploration of the grotesque. He establishes the grotesque as an expression of excess, ambivalence, and hyperbolism regarding past and present realities, sparking displeasure while at the same time constructing the gruesome as comic satire (305). He argues that such images express not just ambivalence, but a dichotomy between the "reality" that the image is supposed to represent and the image that is *actually* represented, invoking displeasure through the image's impossible and improbable nature (305). The grotesque image further establishes a site for mockery, which is used to dispel the tension created by the grotesque, opening up the given image to its satirical interpretation.

Mockery allows the grotesque image to interrogate and dismantle something in the world that "should not exist" or something that creates tension, fear, and discomfort for the character experiencing the grotesque (Bakhtin 306). Thus, the grotesque establishes a visible limit between the body and the world that should be erased, leading

to the fusion of one element with another, and with surrounding objects (310). To illustrate his point, Bakhtin recalls the literature of G. Schneegans, who satirizes Napoleon's nose. Schneegans twists Napoleon's nose into an extreme, exaggerated image of both an animal and phallic nature (315-16). Distorting Napoleon's nose, not only dispels the tension associated with the historical idea of Napoleon as a military figure, but it also establishes the bodily protrusion as a representation of "all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines," which links other bodies and the outside world itself (316-17). Yet, Bakhtin's positive interpretation of grotesque satire posits that the grotesque image ultimately conveys regeneration and rebirth. This is not the result in *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, as this thesis will prove. Instead, Rushdie's texts present a negative grotesque, where the given image invites feelings of fear, regret, and alienation that are destructive, feelings which ultimately establish the post-colonial figure as the objectified body.

Kayser's interpretation of the grotesque in *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* follows the notion that the grotesque represents not only the absurd, horrific, and the demonic, but that it also illustrates chaos, what is horrible, ridiculous, and that which divides the world from the self (16-7, 53). Kayser also argues that the grotesque can only be experienced in the act of reception, or something one experiences and is therefore a visual indication of mental responses (180). However, *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* show that the grotesque can also be produced. Rushdie's novels specifically reinforce Kayser's assertion that the grotesque conveys one's mental responses since Saladin and Gibreel continuously contend with the grotesque as they

attempt to overcome the negativity of migration and loss of identity that adversely effects their mental health. Finally, Kayser notes that madness is a basic (and for Rushdie's novels, the ultimate) experience and manifestation of the grotesque (184). As the result of realizing that one cannot situate himself or herself within the world, madness emerges as the expression of one's fear and estrangement from the world.

The final step in interpreting the way the grotesque functions in Rushdie's work is understanding *where* these images and experiences appear. Bakhtin's essays in *The Dialogic Imagination* are often applied to Rushdie's texts, but scholars largely focus only on Bakhtin's views regarding language and form in literature. What is little-applied, if it is applied at all, is his concept of the chronotope, to which he devotes an entire chapter: "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." This chapter focuses on the way literature forms itself within "time-space," or the connection of time and space into a "concrete whole" within a literary work where "time thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible [and where] space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history" (84). Hence, chronotopes provide a space that is inherently political as the space holds all political time and history within a single space. Within this space, individuals and circumstances are influenced, shaped, and transformed. The chronotope usually takes the form of a road, a threshold (mirror, doorway), a point or line for the character to traverse. Road chronotopes offer an avenue where social and historical distances connect and collapse, and it is where events "find their denouement;" the road is thus the course of life and history (244). On the other hand, thresholds are concentrated with emotion as spaces of crises where falls, resurrections, and decisions

occur, and where lives are changed (248). As this thesis proves, when thresholds are mirrors, camera lenses, or the crossing point between dreams and wakefulness, the fantasy each is supposed to reveal represents the “chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in life” Bakhtin discusses (248, original italics). Therefore, within and along the chronotope time and space combine and intersect, and it is at this intersection where narrative events and the characters' lives are affected by change and transformation.

One of the few scholars to apply Bakhtin's chronotope specifically to Rushdie is Pnina Werbner in her essay “Allegories of Sacred Imperfection: Magic, Hermeneutics, and Passion in *The Satanic Verses*.” She argues that *The Satanic Verses* is caught between two distinct cultures: the “high” cultural tastes of the Western intelligentsia, and the masses of Muslim society (56). After suggesting that the text can be interpreted as an act of violence by the former onto the latter, she examines the chronotope within the text. She posits that Rushdie's chronotopes exist along the paths between past and present India, England, Mecca, and Medina. Within these spaces exist four counter-selves divided between Saladin/Salman, Gibreel/Baal, Hind/Thatcher/Imam/Ayesha, and the Prophet; each pair of counter-selves exists at one of the four geographical points (62). The figures represent, for example, attempts to restore Britain to imperial glory (Thatcher), to reverse history by returning to the Zoroastrian calendar (Ayesha), and the pre-Mohammed land of Jahilia, represented by Hind (60). Last, Werbner examines how each pair of chronotopes represents past and present space, and that the actions committed across the past and present mirror each other, having negative and destructive

results. In the end, Werbner argues that the text's time-space reveals that the Prophet is a nearly perfect man, and that Muslims have probable cause to praise *The Satanic Verses*.

Definitively, this thesis builds upon the seminal theories offered by Bakhtin and Kayser, as well as the interpretations given by Ball, Davies, and Werbner, to argue that Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* provide excellent examples of how the grotesque and the chronotope merge into what I define as “grotesque chronotopes.” Grotesque chronotopes interrogate the horrifying implications of living without a homeland (or living in multiple homelands) while the post-colonial figure also battles the notion of irreconcilable dislocation and hybrid identity. Grotesque chronotopes in both *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* are not only negative, but they emerge to mock and objectify the post-colonial figure, putting him or her on display as a spectacle. Additionally, grotesque chronotopes illustrate the post-colonial body's relation to cultural and political upheaval, However, Rushdie's texts also show that the grotesque is visible proof the effects of such turmoil have on the post-colonial body. Thus, the grotesque chronotope reveals the absurdity and illegitimacy of the post-colonial other.

To illustrate the theoretical vein this thesis aims to establish, the first and second chapters are divided into singularly focused analyses of *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* respectively. Chapter 1 discusses how *Midnight's Children* creates a grotesque chronotope in the form of an individual who performs all the same functions expected of the road chronotope's use of time-space. The road chronotope is a traditional time-space used in the ancient romance and is where most of a narrative's action takes

place. Most often, the road chronotope allows not only social and historical distance to connect, but it allows the male lead to travel and overcome obstacles in order to achieve his goal (Bakhtin 243-5, Montgomery 15). Saleem performs the same role as the road, though the text reveals that he is a map, a representation of a road. Nevertheless, his body is crossed by others and it suffers the results of these crossings. Last, by using the post-colonial figure's (Saleem's) body as the site upon which national and political narratives are carried out, and as the site where the grotesque emerges—the text thus makes Saleem the objectified other. Moreover, Saleem, specifically his mind, serves as the threshold through which all time, past and present, permeates and crosses. Within his mind, the grotesque emerges with horrific imagery that reveals Saleem's futile struggle against displacement. Finally, as the social-historical climate of India deteriorates, Saleem as chronotope—as time-space—crumbles.

Chapter 2 focuses on *The Satanic Verses* and explains how the threshold chronotope is expressed as a grotesque chronotope. Similar to the road as it is illustrated in *Midnight's Children*, the events in *The Satanic Verses* are caused by migration. However, it is the threshold in the text that initiates change. The threshold is first expressed by Saladin's and Gibreel's violent expulsion from the hijacked plane, and subsequently opens the door for more thresholds to appear. As the threshold signals transformation, Saladin's and Gibreel's transformations are thus expressed through the struggles both men endure in trying to come to terms with their new identities and lives. The threshold also distorts whatever crosses it and, again, represents a point of crisis or change in the characters' lives (Bakhtin 248, Montgomery 21). *The Satanic Verses*

expresses such distortion through the mirror, the camera lens, and the crossing from the waking into the dreaming state. Saladin and Gibreel encounter and cross these thresholds, and contend with the grotesque that confronts them on the other side. Saladin must contend with the devilish image he sees in the mirror after being racially demonized by the West. Likewise, Gibreel becomes the distorted image once he begins acting in a stereotypically Indian stage play and his theological movie trilogy. Moreover, Gibreel's trips into his schizophrenic dream world, Jahilia, distort the early days before Mohammed and Islam. Not only is the prophet Mahound distorted, but the religious figures and practices in Gibreel's dreamland become grotesque distortions. The ultimate grotesque result of Saladin's encounter with the grotesque is his removal from English space; he returns to India and reconciles with his father. Saladin's final location as he leaves his father's deathbed is left ambiguous and thus suggests perpetual homelessness. Gibreel's fight with the grotesque, and his continuous oscillation between dreaming and wakefulness, results in violent madness and destruction. With no hope for reconciliation or redemption, Gibreel has one option: death.

## Chapter II

### *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* raises the issues of racial hybridity, identity, and dislocation, and this chapter will discuss these subjects with regards as to how they affect Saleem Sinai as the center of the novel's discourse and principle grotesque chronotope. As the central grotesque chronotope, and as the text's narrator, Saleem is the product of the time-space he occupies and is directly connected to all cultural and historical events. He is the site through which all violence, dislocation, and disconnection surface. This chronotope occupies a time-space of horror: the violence and fears connected to India's independence and its aftermath<sup>1</sup> are chronicled through Saleem. He particularly illustrates Wolfgang Kayser's idea that the grotesque expresses what connects to chaos and “everything that is horrible and ridiculous . . . reinforcing the discrepancy between world and self” (53). As a result, Saleem as chronotope is rendered a grotesque time-space; he becomes a grotesque chronotope.

Saleem and the text's parallel narratives begin with the India's partition and the inevitable violence it sparked. Partition began in the wake of World War II after England's “Quit India” campaign, and after India declared independence from British rule on August 14-15, 1947 (Nabar 122-3). The partition splits India into distinct territories based on religious affiliation. While India remained dominantly Hindu, Pakistan became primarily Muslim; Bengal, Kashmir, and Punjab followed suit, with Sikhs spread out

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<sup>1</sup> The Partition of India after 1947.

over the territories.<sup>2</sup> The war that resulted from the partition was an extremely violent, bloody affair that left thousands of people dead and millions displaced and poor; many families were often split apart across borders (123).

The premise of *Midnight's Children* focuses on India's partition and its aftermath. Saleem Sinai is one of a thousand and one children born on the eve of independence, children dubbed “Midnight Children.” As befits the historical significance of their births, the Midnight Children possess extraordinary supernatural abilities—Saleem's gift is the ability to hear the voices of his fellow Midnight Children. The text begins with adult Saleem urgently attempting to recount the details and circumstances of his life from birth to the present before his already cracking body completely decays. He begins his journey through the past in the text's first section, which takes place in the decades leading up to Partition. His story starts with his grandfather, Doctor Aadam Aziz as he continuously examines Naseem Ghani through a perforated sheet. This doctor-patient dance informs their subsequent courtship and marriage.<sup>3</sup> Last, this section is filled with the uncertainty and emptiness that foreshadows the looming political turmoil of British decolonization and national partition. Traditional India thus gives way to national rebirth and an uncertain future.

The second section covers the years of independence, partition, and the birth of democratic India. Saleem is born at the same moment as India along with a thousand other Midnight Children who are as supernatural as he is. Saleem realizes throughout this

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2 In later years India and surrounding territories would undergo additional partitions. Bengal and Punjab would split into eastern and western territories. Likewise, Pakistan would split into eastern and western territories; West Pakistan became Pakistan, and East Pakistan became Bangladesh (Nabar 123).

3 Naseem later becomes Reverend Mother, who Abdulrazak Gurnah argues is representative of narrow-mindedness (93).

section that he is “special” and that there is a lot of national expectation tied up in his life. Saleem's physical ties to India are evident as he grows in grotesque proportions and as his face becomes a discolored representation—a map—of his nation (MC 264-5). Likewise, he experiences alienation within his nuclear family as they ridicule him and as he suffers the tragedy of a botched circumcision that leaves him impotent, metaphorically reflecting the cut off of all democratic processes. The key moment of this section is Saleem's discovery that he can hear the thousand Midnight Children in his mind. He has the ability to connect the fragments that both partition and independence have caused, which the Midnight Children illustrate. However, by the end of the section, Saleem's attempt at political change and reconnection through his Midnight Children Conference fails and the section ends with the Indo-Pakistani war.

The third and final section of *Midnight's Children* follows the partition of Pakistan into further territories and Indira Gandhi's rise to power. Indira Gandhi rises to power as a dictator, causing fear and tension throughout the nation. Her Emergency ends any possibility of a peaceful democratic government as she begins arresting anyone who stands against her rule. While the second section shows a shift into modernity that mirrors Saleem's rise within the Indian Communist scene, this final section shows a subsequent decline in his physical appearance that reflects the fear and decline India suffers under Indira's control through a continuously cracking and decaying body. Saleem aids Pakistan by sniffing out mines and watching for traitors. Although the text ends with the connected deaths of Indira and Saleem, the ending is ambivalent about the

future, unclear if democracy and hope will ever be realized. Continued dislocation is suggested through Saleem's non-biological son, Aadam, who was also switched at birth.

Saleem is the active and central chronotope and he illustrates his position as time-space by recounting the circumstances and historical significance of his birth. He states:

I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time. No that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too . . . on the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clockhands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. . . at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence. (MC 3, my ellipses)

By beginning his narrative this way, Saleem not only fuses his past with his present, but he also fuses his time-space to that of India through the image of joined clock hands. This scene exemplifies the text's temporal hybridity and Saleem's position in the middle of independence-era and present-day India. Saleem is telling his story in the present while the events he recalls are in the past, which is noted when he remarks that “because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history” and that “soothsayers prophesied me” (3). Thus, Saleem and India are connected as the promise surrounding his birth mirrors the promise and anticipation of India's future.

Further, Saleem fuses oral and written modes of constructing narrative, modes of tradition and modernity, which also enable *his* narrative to link the past and present. This occurs when he announces that, through his birth,

I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades there was to be no escape . . . I was left entirely without a say in the matter. I, Saleem Sinai . . . had become heavily embroiled in fate—at the best of times a dangerous sort of involvement. (MC 3, my ellipses)

Indeed there can be no escape for Saleem, because as he notes, “from the moment of my conception, it seems, I have been public property” as everything from newspapers to politicians have written of and legislated his arrival (84). Saleem's handcuffed state shows that chronotopes are political spaces tied to culture, supporting Bakhtin's argument for the chronotope's “simultaneity” of time and space, narrative and history, where one cannot act without the other (Holquist 124). The very imitation of oral storytelling, combined with written narration, further supports Catherine Cundy's notion that the text is a hybrid work (26). As she argues, the text's essence of oral storytelling shows a link between author and cultural heritage, but more than this, the narrative links Saleem with *his* cultural heritage and personal origins—a link that persists throughout the text (27). Through the many digressions, textual “meandering,” and the “metronomic swings through time and space” that connect multiple rifts in cultural, racial, and political continuity, Saleem is fused to time and space (28). However, the link Cundy suggests *is* Saleem; his mind is the time-space where cultural events, both past and present meet, and are recounted, and where transformation occurs. Such occurrences lend themselves, as Michael Holquist explains, to “different societies and periods [that] result in different chronotopes both inside and outside literary texts . . . shap[ing] themselves in some kind of relation to the exterior conditions in which they arise” (112, my ellipses). Therefore, Saleem shapes himself, and is shaped by, the historical and national forces he embodies.

In the chapter “The Perforated Sheet,” Saleem offers an account of his grandfather, Doctor Aadam Aziz, who visits Naseem Ghani for a medical examination. Due to modesty concerns, Aziz is only allowed to examine Naseem through a small hole cut in a sheet, which reveals a very limited portion of Naseem's body at any time. As Mr. Ghani states: “you will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there” (MC 19). This limitation makes it difficult for Aziz to do his job, and so it takes him numerous visits to complete his examination. Aziz's repeated visits lead to a courtship with Naseem and the two are eventually married. It is in this chapter that the connection between Saleem and India is made by his declaration that he is “handcuffed to history.” Just as Saleem's family begins with a perforated sheet, Saleem thus becomes the perforated sheet because national events and voices flow through him in designated pieces.

When Saleem remembers his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, he associates grotesque descriptions with Aziz. Saleem recalls:

Why, when I might have chosen to describe the by-now-constant itch in his nose, do I choose to wallow in excrement? Because this is where Aadam Aziz was, on the afternoon after the signing of his death certificate, when all of a sudden a voice—soft, cowardly, embarrassed this voice of a rhymeless poet—spoke to him from the depths of the large old laundry-chest standing in the corner of the room, giving him a shock so profound that it proved laxative. (MC 54)

The way Saleem describes his grandfather's reactions does not reflect so much on Aziz as on Saleem's thoughts *about* Aziz, his family's patriarch. Such descriptions recall Sigmund Freud's “uncanny” which suggests that horror is the manifestation of past memories

regarding an event or individual that the narrator or subject cannot directly address. In associating his grandfather with this imagery, Saleem draws a parallel between the fact that both he and Aziz are “others.” Aziz is an outsider because he is western-educated man, and Saleem is alien because he is illegitimate and a Hindu in a Muslim family.

Beginning with an instance of what Saleem dubs “All India Radio” in Book Two, the grotesque continues to surface through Saleem and it worsens as he progresses in his stories about his birth and childhood. This occurs when he is a child in the chapter “The Fisherman's Pointing Finger.” The chapter is named after a painting Saleem remembers hanging on a bedroom wall, a painting<sup>4</sup> which depicts a lone fisherman pointing to some unknown point off in the distance. Saleem fills in the missing focal point for the painted fisherman, drawing a line to the *Times of India* where he notes how his birth is being praised across the nation in newspapers (MC 139). This chapter reveals several details about Saleem's life; he and his family live on an estate owned by an Englishman named Methwold. Saleem also recalls the moment he was brought home from the hospital. His infancy is grotesque; his physical size begins growing exponentially and he notes that his nose is “monstrous” and it runs (141). Moreover, an accident occurs during Saleem's circumcision, which unfortunately leaves his penis useless. Last, the chapter raises the earlier issue of Saleem's questionable paternity and it is in this chapter that he finally offers several suggestions—Ahmed, Wee Willie Winkie, and Nadir Khan are possible father-figures (145). Thus, this chapter lays out the element of homelessness and rootlessness that makes Saleem's life difficult.

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4 The painting is one by John Everett Millais called “The Boyhood of Raleigh,” and it was painted in 1870 (Kortenaar 172).

Saleem is indeed an Anglo-Indian, born from a mixed race union (one possible reason why he “others” Aziz). Saleem's memories reveal various male characters he identifies as fathers: Methwold, Ahmed Sinai, Wee Willie Winkie, and Nadir Khan. The actual clues to Saleem's paternity are his blue eyes, which are not evident in the Sinai family. Hence, the text reveals that Saleem's father is probably Methwold, the Englishman who owned the estates his family live on. Ahmed and Amina Sinai are Saleem's adoptive parents, having originally given birth to a boy, Shiva, with whom Saleem was switched at birth by Mary Pereira. Saleem's status as an adopted child is thus the cause of his anxiety regarding displacement and hybridity, and it reveals a double hybridity. Saleem is a double hybrid through his Anglo-Indian race and through his being born a Hindu and raised in a Muslim household not his own. Saleem is thus illegitimate and disconnected. Therefore, Saleem continues to associate Aziz with demonizing imagery, as when he feels Aziz is possessed by “djinns on his breath,” and how they “roared through my father's lips,” as drunken Aziz yells at him with the demons “possessing him completely” (177) Saleem's memory of his father reveals an instance expressing the alienation he feels with his family.

Adding to his double hybridity is the very fact of being raised by a Muslim family when he was born Hindu. Saleem reveals that his family does not always accept him and that he incites loathing from those closest to him. When he tells his family about his abilities to hear the voices of the Midnight Children, Amina exclaims: “Heaven forfend” The child will bring down the roof upon our heads! . . . You black man! Goonda! O Saleem, has your brain gone raw? . . . Are you growing into a madman—a *torturer*?”

(MC 187, my ellipses). After his mother's cries, Saleem's father knocks him across the room, breaking glass that shatters and cuts him. After his ordeal, Saleem's parents forbid him to talk because they think he is insane. Amina reiterates such loathing when she has a dream that predicts Saleem popping out of a washing chest like a spooky Jack-in-the-Box wrapped in sheets, scaring his unsuspecting family members (185). Saleem's family thus suggests his otherness and reaffirms his position as grotesque and loathsome, and he questions his purpose, lamenting that "I entered that swirling universe in which I was doomed, until it was far too late, to be plagued by constant doubts about what I was for" (187). He prefigures his fear of absurdity and the notion that he is indeed doomed.

The most prominent cause of Saleem's continuing alienation and struggle with the grotesque comes as the direct result of his connection to the Midnight Children. His direct connection to the Children solidifies his position as grotesque chronotope. This connection begins during a childhood trip to the circus in "The Fisherman's Pointing Finger." When Saleem recollects his time at the circus, he reveals a defining moment in his life:

But what, after all, can a baby do except swallow all of it and hope to make sense of it later? Patiently, dry-eyed, I imbibed Nehru-letter and Winkie's prophecy; but the deepest impression of all was made on the day when Homi Catrack's idiot daughter sent her thoughts across the circus-ring and into my infant head. (MC 148).

Catrack's daughter, Toxy, opens a flood-gate when she breaks through Saleem's mind. As Saleem recalls at the beginning of the text, he becomes not only "handcuffed to history," but also becomes "a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me, and

guided only by memory” (4). He expresses his position here as the physical time-space, the receptacle for the fragments of India's partition and independence to meet, have a voice, and find meaning.

This moment between Saleem and Toxy makes explicit Saleem's connection to India's cultural and political climate: “about the first days of baby Saleem—already my very own presence is having an effect on history; already Baby Saleem is working changes on the people around him” and the moment Saleem's father's financial assets are frozen, Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated (MC 148, 163). Gandhi's death illuminates the suspicions placed on Indian Muslims during this bloody transition period in the nation's history, as his family worries the authorities will suspect his family. Saleem's link to such political changes recalls earlier in the chapter the Sinai family's realization that the government will have a deep interest in their *Midnight Child*. Jawaharlal Nehru's letter confirms the government's interest in Saleem, stating that “you are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India . . . we will be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, a mirror of our own” (139). As baby Saleem continues to grow in size, the political well-being of his family worsens. With Gandhi's assassination, the Sinai family focuses intently on the news, hoping to hear a Hindu name announced as the culprit (163). While the political climate continues to heat up, Saleem's physical growth expands grotesquely, as he notes: “in the aftermath of my changeling birth, while I enlarged myself at breakneck speed, everything that could possibly go wrong began to do so . . . events piled upon events” (155, my ellipses). Thus, the opening of Saleem's mind

also shows how he functions as a modified version of a road chronotope; he becomes the path across which all personal and national discourse travels.

The focus on infant Saleem continues with an examination of his textualized body, which appears yet again when he recalls the devilish appearance of his head: “I wasn't a beautiful baby . . . my large moon-face was too large; too perfectly round. Something lacking in the region of the chin. Fair skin curved across my features—but birthmarks disfigured it; dark stains spread down my western hairline, a dark patch colored my eastern ear. And my temples: too prominent: bulbous Byzantine domes” (MC 140, my ellipses).<sup>5</sup> Saleem's body becomes a site upon which the violence and discord of national and cultural politics are visualized and enacted, making him an objectified other. He bears the image of white colonialism and Englishness through his pale skin. However, his appearance is marred with what the West sees as the grotesque Indian illustrated by his birthmarks and disfigured facial structure. Loretta Mijares points out that Saleem's struggle reflects the attitudes of independence-era Indian culture toward the Anglo-Indian and the “in-betweeness” experienced within the subcontinent. She states that “the Anglo-Indian story gestured towards, but not told in *Midnight's Children* must in fact be suppressed by Saleem because it debunks the promise of Mary's song” and is the reason for his inclusion of multiple fathers; it is Saleem's attempt at maintaining the myth of his birth and narration (137). Consequently, Saleem's position as both textualized body and chronotope enables him both to be and to produce the grotesque to express fragmentation. As such, his loathsome appearance, as well as his perception of his appearance, speaks to

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5 The bulbous domes Saleem points out regarding his appearance are mirrored by Saladin's similar protrusions in *The Satanic Verses*, which marks Saladin's status as a devil, an illegal immigrant, racial other, and the objectified other.

the ambivalence and rootlessness that makes the post-colonial body's hybridity so problematic. What particularly creates such a problem regarding Saleem's hybridity is his questionable paternity and his possible Anglo-Indian race. Likewise, the *Midnight Children* do not accept him, as their reactions toward his appearance later indicate.

The repercussions of Saleem's alienation with the *Midnight Children* subject him to a continuous barrage of horrific, personal, and national memories. The chapter titled “At the Pioneer Café” in Part Two chronicles the time of India's congressional elections in 1957 and the rise of the Communist party, which grows into the largest political party in India at the time (MC 254). At this time that Saleem realizes:

. . . that my picture of myself was heavily distorted by my own self-consciousness about my appearance; so that the portrait I sent across the thought-waves of the nation, grinning like a Cheshire cat, was about as hideous as a portrait could be, featuring a wondrously enlarged nose . . . it's no wonder that I was often greeted by yelps of mental alarm. I, too, was often similarly frightened by the self-images of my ten-year-old fellows . . . faced with the picture of such grotesque proportions.  
(251, my ellipses)

Santiago Jan-Navarro pays particular attention to what he sees as “coincidences” between Saleem's bodily transformations and India's changing political face. Navarro argues that “all these examples of comic allegorical connections form arbitrary juxtapositions of biographical and historical events, following one another in a carnivalesque chain” (266).<sup>6</sup> However, these juxtapositions are anything but arbitrary. As Peter Brooks asserts in *Body Work*, these images portray the “discursive, textualized body” that is “a site of signification—the place for the inscription of stories—and itself a signifier, a prime agent

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6 Carnavalesque is also theorized by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*. This theory suggests that the carnival uses satire to diffuse tension and to refute commonly held beliefs relating to culture and ideology.

in narrative plot and meaning” (5-6). At this point, Saleem's body is just as connected to India's political climate as it was when he was an infant, with his body having become as distorted and unstable as his nation. Ten-year-old Saleem is the site of signification where the meaning of history is inscribed. His body reflects the short-lived democratic revolution and the coming years of Chinese invasion, the Indo-Pakistani War, and Indira Gandhi's rise to Prime Minister with her subsequent state-of-emergency declaration. Thus, Saleem's mind fully opens to the thousand voices of India's *Midnight Children*, and he becomes a physical map for the voices to travel through, or across (265). The position Saleem now occupies as a map, or a representation of a road, allows the grotesque to permeate his consciousness, distorting his body, memories, and everything he sees and transmits.

Additionally suggesting the grotesque regarding the *Midnight Children*'s powers and the circumstances of their births comes when Saleem notes: “what made the event noteworthy . . . was the nature of these children, every one of whom was, through some freak of biology . . . endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous” (MC 224, my ellipses). The *Midnight Children*, described as products of some freakish biological mutation, mark something that has gone wrong, or will soon go wrong in the nation. Even worse, many of the *Midnight Children* begin to die: “a number of these children failed to survive. Malnutrition, disease and the misfortunes of everyday life had accounted for no less than four hundred and twenty of them . . . can it be, then, that the missing infants were eliminated because they had turned out to be somehow inadequate?” (225, my ellipses). Their freakish nature is a grotesque

physical manifestation of the fear and uncertainty surrounding a divided and unstable nation, and its equally divided citizens. The children are disembodied voices, bodiless, and dispersed, and are therefore grotesque beings themselves. The children's fragmentation reflects the geographical division of the Indian continent after Partition, and the nation's continuous cultural and political division. Gillian Gane supports this notion of diversity among the *Midnight Children*, suggesting that the body of voices, constantly whitewashed, is linguistically diverse and encompasses the cultural differences of their regions (576). As one of the *Midnight Children*, Saleem is one piece of a large cracked and fragmented national body that is divided because of political, cultural, and religious division, and is a physically partitioned body.

Saleem's efforts to tell his story are an attempt to piece together the entirety of his familial history. As John Clement Ball notes, Saleem's narrative goal is to collect the “multiplicitous reality of the Indian subcontinent that he claims to contain within him and to reflect metaphorically through his life” (65). His efforts are futile. Saleem's history is so fragmented that it is impossible to connect every aspect of it and so the grotesque emerges in his thoughts and written descriptions to express his fears of absurdity and failure. He points out his fears as he begins his story when he proclaims: “I must work fast . . . if I am to end up meaning—yes, meaning—something” (MC 4, my ellipses). He possesses such a great need to garner some meaning for why his origins have come about the way they have, so he spends his lifetime constructing a family tree that only ends up causing him bodily trauma. An example of this is illustrated when Padma walks away from Saleem while he is still writing his biography. When Padma is absent Saleem fears

he has lost his one source of validation and stability. He feels he has lost the possibility of finding meaning. The increased visibility of his cracking and decaying body is evidence of his loss. Saleem affirms his feelings when he laments: “Then now there is hunger. But of a different kind: not, now, the then-hunger of being denied my dinner, *but that of having lost my cook*” (190, my italics). Moreover, his efforts in reconstructing a family tree, according to Mijares, works against him. She states: “Saleem works to exclude them from his metaphorical narrative of Indian history” and represents the “eventual collapse of his effort to give his story meaning” (135, 138). He explains that “Padma, and the cracks spreading all over me, radiating like a spider's web from my navel . . . rereading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology” (Rushdie 189, my ellipses). Saleem's narrative is now beginning to unravel and the cracks spreading over his body reveal that time is running out for him and the moment of his death is approaching.

Saleem's physical decay begins once he enters the hospital, losing a finger. The loss represented here references his dream for connectedness with the Midnight Children. When he notes that his political party, his chance for meaning and for connection between space and time, “never became what I most wanted it to be; we never operated in the first, most significant of the 'modes of connection'” (MC 273). Saleem realizes that he will not be able to fulfill the desire for connection with his generation, and his desire to make the displaced mass of Midnight Children, whole or coherent. The grotesque nature of Saleem's predicament once again ties him to cultural and political events. His finger, bleeding profusely, becomes “a fountain: red liquid spurts out to the rhythm of my heart-beat. Never knew a finger held so much blood. Pretty . . . Nurse is putting a great

wad of cotton wool over the stump. Filling up like red candy-floss” (268, my ellipses). Saleem's severed finger and blood loss precedes the invasion of India by the Chinese, an event that Saleem connects to the subsequent deterioration of his Midnight Children Conference (or MCC) (291).

The MCC<sup>7</sup> Saleem assembles is an attempt at cohesion, connection, and stability. However, as the Chinese begin invading India, Saleem realizes: “whenever novelty wears off, boredom, and then dissension, must inevitably ensue. Or (to put it another way) when a finger is mutilated, and the fountains of blood flow out, all manner of vileness become possible . . . whether or not the cracks in the Conference were the (active-metaphorical) result of my finger-loss, they were certainly widening” (MC 291). Saleem notes that the children are also changing, and the changes are ones he does not like. Thus, the deterioration of Saleem and the Conference suggest yet another moment of cultural and political decay. Saleem's bloody finger points to the “sterilization of the midnight children as 'the draining out of hope;’” it is a direct nod to the violence that will mar the subcontinent at the hands of the Chinese, and also Indira Gandhi's rise as Prime Minister and her son's bizarre sterilization program (Ball 72).<sup>8</sup> Neil ten Kortenaar further supports this assertion about Saleem's bleeding finger by pointing out that “all these meanings presume that blood is shared, so that blood spilled by some is the same as that flowing through the veins of others who have not suffered direct violence” (36). Hence, Saleem's blood is the nation's blood.

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7 The Midnight Children Conference is a Communist political party Saleem establishes in order to take part in India's political system. The Conference is also a chance for him to connect to the Midnight Children in person.

8 The sterilization program was implemented by Indira Gandhi's son, Sanjay, as an attempt at population control. Men were issued vasectomies, and women were also sterilized. The majority of victims of this forced sterilization were the poor, falling in line with his subsequent removal of the slums (Lal par 3).

As *Midnight's Children* draws to a close, Saleem's family dies one by one and their homes are subsequently destroyed. Saleem's history is slowly being erased in the process and the future for himself and India appears bleak. Finally, Saleem crumbles into hundreds of millions of “voiceless” pieces after deciding he must now write about his future (MC 532-33). There is a hint of Saleem's transience into a ghost-like state as he begins to fade into nothingness and as he is also visited by the ghosts of his relatives:

I swear I see the cracks in my hands, cracks along my hairline and between my toes, why do I not bleed? Am I already so emptied desiccated pickled? Am I already the mummy of myself? The ghost of Reverend Mother appeared to me, staring down through the hole in a perforated cloud, waiting for my death . . . I, floating outside my body, looked down on the foreshortened image of myself. (531-32, my ellipses)

Monsters and ghosts at the end suggest his final grotesque body with Saleem crumbling into ashes. While floating above his body, Saleem remains in a further state of in-betweenness; he now exists between the worlds of the waking and the dead. He laments that “they will trample me underfoot . . . it is the privilege and the curse of the midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times” (533). Saleem finally crumbles and his ashes disperse across India. This raises a final question for the grotesque chronotope: does the connection between Saleem and his nation continue? Yes. Saleem remains connected to his nation. When he declares that the future multitudes will “trample me underfoot,” he alludes to the lingering connection he will have with India (533). Saleem also leaves behind, Aadam, who he states is “my son who is not my son,” and who will carry his father's legacy of having illegitimate sons for generations that are doomed to be “sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace” (533).

### Chapter III

#### *THE SATANIC VERSES*

As the twentieth century's most arguably controversial text (by an equally infamous writer), *The Satanic Verses* rests on a vast foundation of social and critical discourse thanks in part to the ever-looming fatwa placed on Rushdie's head by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. The fatwa, or death warrant, was issued in retaliation for what the Ayatollah, Iran's head of religious affairs, saw as blatant heresy and blasphemy against Islam and the prophet Mohammed. Rushdie's highly politicized fame from publishing *The Satanic Verses* and the resulting fatwa comes at a price—it is difficult to begin any discussion of the novel without having to mention the lingering controversy. Unfortunately, its status as a cultural and political pariah eclipses the artistic and dialogic intricacies of its narrative. The novel is more than a critique of Islamic religious fundamentalism or an example of why debates over freedom of expression rage on. Like *Midnight's Children*, it interrogates the complex, problematic, and often nightmarish position of the post-colonial hybrid/migrant. The text follows television stars Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta as they migrate from India to England, embarking on a journey that begins with them falling from a hijacked plane—falling like a pair of conjoined twins to England. As a boy, Saladin dreamed of becoming a proper Englishman, begging his father to send him to a British boarding school. When Saladin finally attends such a school, he eventually earns his stripes with his schoolmates by

suffering through a plate of kippers, eating them bones and all. From this moment, Saladin sets his mind to abandoning his life in India, after which he starts down a path that leads him to a life-long struggle with hybridity represented by the conjoined image above.

On the other hand, Gibreel is the most famous actor in India. He is the model of the successful Indian man; it seems as if the entire subcontinent marches to his tune. Gibreel refuses to wash himself of his Indian identity and thus struggles against the pervading idea of Englishness. When the hijacked plane violently explodes, and as he and Saladin plummet toward England, their conflicts begin. Gibreel finds himself taking on the image of an archangel while Saladin takes the form of a devil. As the embodiments of the grotesque, the two men try to forge identities and lives within England's racially inhospitable social-political climate. Like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, who is unable to find meaning for himself and is unable to fully understand the miraculous circumstances of his birth, Gibreel, fails come to terms with his changed life. Gibreel goes insane and kills himself. Saladin, conversely, finds what can arguably be considered as redemption and reconnection with India through reconciliation with his father. Yet, he is removed from England to India, refuting such a possibility.

As migrants, Saladin's and Gibreel's lives are assaulted by horror due to the nightmarish experiences of being displaced. Their horrors are also due to living as social and racial "others." The effects of displacement are often negative. As Søren Frank states:

it is a matter of planting the self in several places . . . illustrated through the fate of two protagonists . . . one who ends up accepting his chimeric identity of multiple roots and therefore surviving, and [the other] . . . who fails to accept his identity's plural nature and to root himself in reality and therefore ends his life tragically. (142, my ellipses)

Saladin and Gibreel's struggle for identity and reality, as Frank argues, is expressed in *The Satanic Verses'* prevalent chronotope: the threshold. Thresholds are illustrated in the text by mirrors, the camera lens, and the crossing between the waking and dreaming worlds. Mirrors, specifically, exist between reality and fantasy. They expose “truths” about Saladin's and Gibreel's identities and circumstances. Additionally, Saladin and Gibreel continuously cross thresholds, which facilitate their encounters with the grotesque. The grotesque, then, emerges as a result of Saladin's and Gibreel's realization that what they see or encounter is distorted. Thus, *The Satanic Verses* focuses on how migration complicates the already daunting task of constructing one's self and claiming (or searching for) a homeland. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem fails to transcend national and historical uncertainty, which causes his fragmentation and death. Likewise, in *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin and Gibreel also struggle against the impossible task of reconstructing their identities. They further suffer when they come into contact with thresholds, or their points of crises. Saladin is left perpetually homeless, and Gibreel (like Saleem) dies.

Saladin and Gibreel's struggles begin when they leave India on a plane headed for England. A small group of terrorists hijack the plane and eventually blow it up. The resulting explosion sends Saladin and Gibreel plummeting to England in a grotesque tangle of their arms and legs, connected like a pair of conjoined twins. They appear as

hybrid cloud creatures pressed in upon them, gigantic flowers with human breasts dangling from fleshy stalks, winged cats, centaurs, and Chamcha in his semi-consciousness was seized by the notion that he, too, had acquired the quality of cloudiness, becoming metamorphic, hybrid, as if he were growing into the person whose head nestled now between his legs and whose legs were wrapped around his long, patrician neck. (SV 7)

Saladin and Gibreel are not only mirrors of each other, but their fall illustrates that transformation occurs when the postcolonial body comes into contact with empire.

J.M.Q. Davies compares the scene between Saladin and Gibreel to that of “Alice's tumble down the rabbit hole—in the migrant context, death of the old self, exile, psychic and cultural division and rebirth into a strange new world” (31). What transforms, and what dies, is Saladin's identity and the delusional ideal image of England he has always believed. Thus, as Davies points out, the strange new world is the “real” England that always existed for immigrants. Saladin's fall awakens him to the violence and racism that awaits the “other.” As Andrew Teverson argues, Saladin “has internalized the racism of a dominant white culture to such a degree that he attempts a 'hallucinatory whitening’” where he finally sees an England that is “‘visible' for those who are prepared to look for it, but remains largely 'unseen' by the willfully blind citizens of the modern metropolis” (146-7). Moreover, by entangling Saladin and Gibreel physically and metaphorically, the text shows how they internalize the racism of the empire and facilitate their fates.

Like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, Saladin's “hallucinatory whitening,” which is the root cause of his fragile identity, crumbles as he sits sleeping on his return flight to India from England. Saladin remembers:

with a delicate shudder of horror . . . he had fallen into a torpid sleep . . . and [had] been visited in a dream by a bizarre stranger, a man with glass skin, who . . . begged Saladin to help him, to release him from the prison of his skin. Chamcha picked up a stone and began to batter the glass. At once a latticework of blood oozed up through the cracked surface of the stranger's body, and when Chamcha tried to pick off the broken shards the other began to scream, because chunks of flesh were coming away with the glass. (SV 34, my ellipses)

In his dream, Saladin is seen chipping away at himself, and this becomes fully evident once the stewardess wakes him. The glass and skin he peels away reveal his unstable English facade; the identity he always believed to be his “real” self is being revealed as fantasy. After he has peeled away the skin and glass, his face is replaced by the Indian version of himself he has spurned and struggled to repress since boyhood. Saladin also notices his voice and dialect drastically change from the refined and “proper” dialect of London to the less-preferable, more ethnically pronounced “Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade” (34). In this transformation the grotesque emerges linked to the first chronotope in the novel: the crossing between the waking and dreaming worlds. As Saladin begins his journey, as he moves farther and farther from his origins, the more grotesque and repulsive he becomes. Everything he denies and represses increasingly reemerges in the grotesque.

Saladin's appearance begins to reflect English racism once he touches English soil. He and Gibreel find themselves in the company of an elderly country woman, Rosa Diamond, who takes an instant interest in her foreign visitors. While Rosa grows oddly fond of Gibreel, Saladin becomes literally the scapegoat through which Gibreel gains his freedom from immigration authorities. Within minutes “Saladin Chamcha woke up, looked into a mirror framed in blue-and-gold Japonaiserie lacquer, and found that old

cherubic face staring out at him once again; while, at his temples, he observed a brace of fearfully discoloured swellings,<sup>9</sup> indications that he must have suffered” (SV 139). He is in the beginning stages of transforming into a satyr, the most commonly identified form of a devil, and his transformation is blatant once he is captured. In his new form, Saladin reflects the West's internalized opposition to the Eastern “other.” He also reflects the West's objectifying gaze upon the racial and cultural “other.” As Christina Emanuela Descălu explains, this transformation represents the Western imperial gaze, where the West has the “power to contort and disfigure reality” amid a “battle that is taking place . . . [against] exiles who are physically transformed into monsters . . . between the forces of assimilation and othering” (42, my ellipses). Saladin “raised his hands to his forehead, and then he knew that he had woken into the most fearsome of nightmares, a nightmare that had only just begun, because there at his temples, growing longer by the moment, and sharp enough to draw blood, were two new, goaty, unarguable horns” (SV 145). The West thus achieves in this scene what is the inevitable result of its racist, colonialist attitude toward the exile or migrant. The West completely and irreversibly establishes the exile/migrant as the objectified other. Therefore, Saladin's body becomes the site on which the battle between empire and “other” is waged. After Saladin collides with the police, he acquires a pair of cloven hooves and an unnatural amount of goat hair on his body, completing his demonic transformation; he is thus removed from the Rosa Diamond's property.

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9 Saladin's “swellings,” or horns, are noticeably similar to Saleem's in *Midnight's Children*, a mirrored image between the texts.

In Rosa's home, Saladin gazes into her mirror and sees a repulsive, unexpected reflection. The woman's mirror represents another threshold, a doorway between reality and fantasy. The mirror distorts whatever or whoever crosses it. The mirror Saladin stares into distorts his appearance and self-concept so much that he continuously attempts to reassert what he believes to be his “true” identity, yet neither image is real. The text shows that “looking into the mirror at his altered face, Chamcha attempted to remind himself of himself. I am a real man, he told the mirror, with a real history and a planned out future . . . the ideal of beauty, the possibility of exaltation, the mind” (SV 139-10, my ellipses). Saladin searches for the “real” or what he believes to be the absolute truth of his body. His mention of his body in relation to any “ideal of beauty” also reflects the “arabesque,” or the artistic representation of the East as decorative, exotic, and “ordered voluptuousness”—arguably a further objectification (Benjamin 310).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the mirror reflects Saladin's struggle with what Julia Kristeva in her “The True-Real” calls the subject. The subject

falls within a register of a visionary *representation* that must be sutured in order to preserve it from psychosis . . . anything that can be considered external to its order takes on the uncomfortable status, not so much of an *object*, as of an object-spoken-in-a-representing-utterance . . . since the foreclosure of the real and of the Other brings about the fall of the subject of enunciation . . . Being, which has become an *object*, now becomes a *complement*. (219, my ellipses)

Saladin as subject crosses the threshold represented by the mirror. He becomes a grotesque body shaped by racial prejudice. Instead of the well-groomed, well-spoken white male of his fantasy, he sees a grotesque, dirty, horned, and hairy image of English

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<sup>10</sup> The “arabesque” is a form of artistic expression common in Islamic art, yet is later adapted by European artists. Landscapes are usually decorative, and female figures are curvy, sensuous with “serpentine” silhouettes (Benjamin 297, 307). The arabesque is also found in ballet as an expression of physical lines (310).

fantasy (SV 145). Saladin has always believed himself to be an Englishman, doing everything in his power to remain so; he becomes an Indian expatriate and transforms his speech to fit into English society. However, Saladin's mirror reveals what the English see when they look at him, not what he expects they should see. So, what Saladin perceives as “truth” is the “reality” of his Indian identity, and realizing what he really is brings about the grotesque. As Freud might say, Saladin's grotesque is the result of the “uncanny,” the return of everything Saladin has tried to repress and ignore about his identity as the English perceive it. The repressed, everything Saladin has not confronted, then resurfaces, crossing the threshold from subconscious to the conscious, and is represented by haunting, horror, or the grotesque. The return of the repressed often has devastating effects on the subject's psyche, which Saladin's reflection illustrates.

As Saladin transforms into a devil, Gibreel conversely takes on an angelic persona at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses*. As half of the Saladin-Gibreel “twin,” Gibreel represents the darker side of the migrant's troubled psyche. When Gibreel enters England, he begins a downward spiral into insanity. In “Double Crossings: Madness, Sexuality, and Imperialism,” Anne McClintock notes that the hysterical colonial other dates back as far as the Enlightenment notion of the “cult of domesticity,” which favors the docile, desexualized, domestic woman of the house; any rebellious deviation from this perceived “norm” constitutes insanity (11). The nature of such insanity is both biological and mental. It informs the imperialist mindset regarding the mad, irrational native, a figure seen as a racial deviation of normality. Insanity in the racial other arises within the “contact zone” between empire and native; the empire sees the native as something

biologically tainted. Any deviation from the native's place within the zone of empire is rendered as madness. Furthermore McClintock notes that, traditionally, the “*inner* condition” of madness becomes an “*outer* condition” where the body physically expresses the other's madness through repugnant imagery (12-13, my italics). The outward expression of contact between empire and the racial other is seen in Saladin's transformations once he enters England. He changes into a devil immediately upon being designated an alien. Likewise, Gibreel's madness is both an inner and outer condition, but in the reverse. Gibreel's outer madness becomes an inner condition and as he crosses the threshold into his dream world, he finds a distorted, grotesque past world waiting for him.

While Gibreel believes he is the reincarnation of the Archangel Gabriel,<sup>11</sup> Saladin makes another observation about Gibreel's mental deterioration while they are in the hijacked plane. Saladin notes that Gibreel tries everything he can to stay awake, to not cross the threshold between the dreaming and waking worlds where his life as an archangel becomes livable. The longer Gibreel avoids sleep

the more talkative he became, he began to regale the hostages, the hijackers, as well as the dilapidated crew of Flight 420 . . . with his increasingly eccentric reincarnation theories, comparing their sojourn on that airstrip by the oasis . . . telling everybody that they were all dead to the world and in the process of being regenerated. (SV 85, my ellipses)

Gibreel continues to stand on his seat and make his proclamations, much to Saladin's chagrin. As his frustration grows, Saladin remarks to Gibreel that perhaps “your old self is dying and that dream angel of yours is trying to be born into flesh” (86). Saladin's observations point to Gibreel's severed connection between India and his identity; this

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<sup>11</sup> Gabriel is the angel that delivers God's word to Mohammed, the revered prophet and creator of the Qur'an in the Islamic religious tradition (The Qur'an).

division between homeland and self illustrates the threshold chronotope Gibreel continuously crosses. His forays into a dream world provide him with a connection to his fading cultural origins. His failure to connect results in his hysterics.

The oscillation between Gibreel's waking and dreaming worlds suggest the phenomenon of what McClintock again describes as anachronistic space. Usually a space representing the native land to the empire, the lands of Jahilia represent a time before empire. Anachronistic spaces, thus, represent imperial spaces that were thought as “existing in an earlier, more primitive, prehistoric time. These groups and spaces coexisted spatially with modernity . . . but were figured as somehow not really belonging in the time of imperial modernity” (18, my ellipses). This further shows that “madness [is] a condition of exile” (17). Gibreel's dreams are similarly removed from the time-space of empire into a more primitive, pre-imperial time-space—that of Jahilia. This time-space further illustrates the negative effects anachronistic space has on Gibreel's sanity.

Gibreel's dreams allow him to return to a time before the empire racialized, objectified, and subjugated India. Shortly after he lands in England, Gibreel remembers that it was “a few days before he connected what was going on to the world behind his eyelids, and only then did he understand that he had to get away, because the universe of his nightmares had begun to leak into his waking life” (SV 148). As Gibreel struggles against connecting his mentally and culturally divided identity, his madness grows. Wolfgang Kayser asserts that “in the insane person, human nature itself seems to have taken on ominous overtones. Once more it is as if an impersonal force, an alien and

inhuman spirit had entered the soul. The encounter with madness is one of the basic experiences of the grotesque which life forces upon us” (184-5). The grotesque “is the estranged world” and the worlds Gibreel lives in now is, and have become, unreliable and unlivable; he cannot reorient himself in the alienated world because it has become absurd as Kayser further explains (185). Moreover, the alien spirit entering his soul comes in the form of Shaitan and Mahound in his dreams.

As the chapter “Mahound” illustrates, Gibreel's dreams return him to a time before empire and a dominant monotheistic religion, yet they return him to a space tainted by doubt, debauchery, and carnivalesque religious practices. Also, Gibreel's madness as expressed through his dreams, visions, and his increased inability to accept England has a home, becomes a grotesque expression of his struggles as a migrant. First, in “Mahound,” the very origin of the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an, is not only distorted, but questioned in terms of basic legitimacy. After struggling with his doubt, Gibreel dreams: “. . . angels, they don't have much in the way of a will. To will is to disagree; not to submit; to dissent. I know; devil talk. Shaitan interrupting Gibreel. Me?” (SV 95). The legitimacy of Gibreel/Gabriel as messenger to Mahound, the prophet, suggests that the prophet's messages are not from God. This heresy is repeated again when describing the prophet: “Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; he has adopted, instead, the demon-tag farangis hung around his neck . . . our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym, Mahound. That's him. Mahound the businessman” (95, my ellipses). Mahound's questioned legitimacy recalls Saladin and Gibreel's questioned legitimacy. As Saladin is rendered illegitimate through

his transformation into a devil, Gibreel's legitimacy is undermined by Shaitan. This dream space, which should be a space without empire, becomes tainted. After getting caught up in Hind's bed, Mahound causes the deaths of several followers toward the chapter's end, completely nullifying his legitimacy.

Further, the carnival nature of Jahilia is revealed as absurd as the text moves to the scene portraying the Festival of Ibrahim. After Salman,<sup>12</sup> Mahound's scribe and follower, notes the absurdity regarding the idea of Mahound receiving messages from who Mahound believes is God: "Nobody will ever take us seriously again," Jahilia returns to its pagan practices (SV 108). The city puts on its Festival of Ibrahim, which becomes a grotesque carnival of the night:

. . . a night of masks. Walking the debauched Jahilian streets . . . men and women in the guise of eagles, jackals, horses, gryphons, salamanders, warthogs, rocs . . . two-headed amphisbaenae and the winged bulls known as Assyrian sphinxes. Djinns, houris, demons populate the city on this night of phantasmagoria and lust. (119, my ellipses)

Jahilia's pagan celebrations present Gabriel, the prophet, and the prophet's followers with a grotesque, debauched, and unlivable environment; thus, the prophet and his faithful migrate into the desert (128).

As an actor, Gibreel spends most of his time in front of the camera, which is another grotesque chronotope occurring in the form of the threshold. The camera lens threshold illustrates Laura Mulvey's theories on the act of voyeurism, or fetishized watching. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Mulvey establishes that "woman's desire is subjugated to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it" (432). Though Mulvey's arguments discuss

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<sup>12</sup> Ironically, Rushdie creates another mirror by inserting his own name here.

woman as other and subject of the subjugating masculine gaze, the same conclusion nevertheless applies to the racial other, the space Gibreel occupies. He bears the “wound” that is his dark skin and the insecurities marked upon it through the subjugating white Western gaze. What the West sees as threatening to its own idea of identity, solidarity, and cohesion are projected onto the racial other; the West gains its notion of self only by seeing the East as what the West is not. As Edward Said explains in *Orientalism*, the “Oriental” is seen as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'”; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal’” (40). Therefore, the East and West are in opposition. In *The Satanic Verses*, then, Gibreel's image during his stage play and filming his theological film trilogy is transformed through the lens.

Gibreel begins his reemergence into the public spotlight by starring in a play that is presented as a caricature of an off-Broadway or Broadway production, or an extreme satire of a popular Bollywood film. The text reveals that Gibreel:

was rehearsing, in those days, for his grand public reappearance at the latest in a successful series of stage song-and-dance shows featuring Indian movie stars and staged by one of Billy Battuta's companies at Earls Court. He was to be the unannounced, surprise top-of-the-bill show-stopper, and had been rehearsing dance routines . . . also reacquainting himself with the art of mouthing to playback music. (SV 360, my ellipses)

Playing into the notion of spectacle, the play's cast is not diverse and is seemingly type-cast specifically for race. Gibreel suggests this when he notes that he is the “Dark Star” of the entire production (360). The lens, then, becomes the threshold for prejudice to cross and it transforms Gibreel and the play into a representation of the West's insecurities and prejudices. During the play, Gibreel “was to be lowered from the flies surrounded by

clouds of cardboard and smoke—was the intended climax to the English segment of his reentry into his superstardom” (360). Gibreel's lover, Alleluia Cone points out that the play comes across as a farce and that producer Battuta only “wanted to make sure he'd be a hit with the Manhattan dowagers” (360). Thus, the stage performance plays into Western notions of the other as spectacle.

Gibreel's theological film trilogy<sup>13</sup> present the grotesque results of his existence in front of the camera lens. Hence, filming distorts Gibreel's identity and religious culture. By taking part in the Western gaze, Gibreel's directors succeed in objectifying and transforming him into a mockery. Earlier in establishing the questionable nature of the prophet's holy message, viewing the distorted representation of the message in light of the camera lens explains why such is transformed. In Jahilia, the religious practices of the city's seers are questioned and distorted. The text shows “the city's many seers who, in return for pilgrim money, are chirping, cooing, hissing, possessed variously by djinnis of birds, beasts, snakes” (SV 99). Offers to create love charms or chants that make girls fall in love with men, or charms that will quash enemies are also made for a small fee. Abu Simbel's palace reveals the actions of those who perform religious services for profit are a farce and the debauchery and false, absurd nature of the city. The seers and religious figures ignore and subvert the sacred positions they hold in preference to money and tourism, turning this aspect of culture into a performance.

Also, the legitimacy of an entire cultural and religious belief is undermined in several acts of translation in scenes focusing on Mahound. As discussed, the camera lens

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13 The film chapters are “Mahound,” “Ayesha,” and “Return to Jahilia” are those cited as the reasons Rushdie’s fatwa.

and Western gaze translate Gibreel as an other; likewise, Salman, the intermediary between Mahound and Gabriel, distorts Gabriel's message in an attempt to “test” the prophet, “polluting the word of God with my own profane language (SV 379-80). Salman's actions arguably make a fool of Mahound, and Mahound's position as prophet becomes grotesque by undermining his legitimacy. Gibreel commits the same sin in “The Wonderful Lamp” when his translation of the Hindu holy text, the Ramayana, into film, distorts the holy book tremendously to the point where staff leaves the set and the safety of his life is in question (553).

Gibreel's madness reaches such intensity, that in the chapter “The Angel Azraeel,” not only is he living in his dreamland within the waking world, but he decides that the only way to make England hospitable is to purge it with fire. His delusions begin as he believes himself to be the incarnation of the angel Azraeel, the agent of God's judgment bent on transforming England to his desires, an England cleansed of its wrongs. Gibreel, sometimes, “finds himself among walking corpses, great crowds of the dead, all of them refusing to admit they're done for, corpses mutinously continuing to behave like living people” (SV 474). As Gibreel walks on, “the city becomes vague, amorphous. It is becoming impossible to describe the world” (474). The grotesque illustrates not only Gibreel's alienation from the world around him, but also that he cannot interpret this world, nor can he orient himself within it. He has crossed the threshold into Kayser's estranged world. His India contains history, memory, and everything recognizable to him—England is removed from everything he knows and accepts. Once he sounds his golden trumpet and “after the stream of fire has emerged from the mouth . . . Gibreel understands

. . . he breathes them in [and] this city is a city that has cleansed itself in flame, purged itself by burning down to the ground” (476, my ellipses).

Likewise, in “Return to Jahilia,” the prophet Mahound has returned to Jahilia with his faithful, to find that the city, the prophets home and the ancient time-space Gibreel repeatedly returns to, is decaying from strict moral law at the hands of Hind:

the city . . . was no longer built of sand . . . the sorcery of the desert winds, the petrifying moon, the forgetfulness of the people and the inevitability of progress had hardened the town, so that it had lost its old, shifting, provisional quality of a mirage in which men could live, and become a prosaic place, quotidian and . . . poor. Mahound's arm had grown long,; his power had encircled Jahilia, cutting off its life blood . . . the fairs of Jahilia, these days, were pitiful to behold. (SV 372, my ellipses)

Jahilia’s deterioration further reflects Gibreel’s mental deterioration to the point that it signals his point of no return—any possibility of reconciling his position in the time-spaces of England and Jahilia are gone. Also, as Salman, the treacherous scribe who has attempted to alter the prophet's teachings, converts to Islam, signaling the religion's growth. Just as Jahilia can no longer return to its past, so too is Gibreel completely unable to differentiate between the dreaming and waking worlds he occupies; he has reached his similar point of no return. His inability to recognize his failure quickly morphs into jealousy, which he takes out on Saladin. Gibreel’s theological films are flops, and after his madness turns destructive, he loses his lover,<sup>14</sup> killing her in the end. The loss of Alleluia raises Gibreel’s madness to fever pitch. The chapter, “A Wonderful Lamp,” shows:

the Gibreel Farishta who returned to Bombay from London to pick up the threads of his film career was not, by general consensus, the old,

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14 Alleluia refuses to go back to Gibreel after the scene in “The Angel Azrael” where Gibreel causes the fires at Brickhall (Rushdie 552, Majumdar 47).

irresistible Gibreel. 'Guy seems hell-bent on a suicide course,' . . . 'Who knows why? They say because he was unlucky in love he's gone a little wild' . . . And now here he was . . . shipwrecking himself again. (552, my ellipses)

Gibreel has been metaphorically pushed to the margins by his friend and lover; his return to Bombay signals yet again that he cannot return to his homeland after trying to reforge a new identity in order to fit in with the empire. Now, Gibreel is the center of gossip and once more a spectacle because of the gossip (553). Last, in existing in a perpetual liminality, or never-ending exile, and upon realizing he cannot return to India or England, he takes Saladin's magic lamp, pulls a gun out of it, and kills himself (560-61).

Gibreel's death reveals the destructive effects of grotesque horror in the form of colonial madness and the ultimate result of such: death. Saladin, however, evades such destruction by returning to Bombay and reconciling with his father. While Saladin's return and reconciliation seems positive, it is not. Saladin's return to Bombay removes him from the site of empire and reinforces the notion that he should return "to the place where he 'belongs'" though this betrays the text's arguable cosmopolitan impulses (or its arguments for plurality) (Majumdar 47). The text thus puts the cultural/racial other in its "proper" place in relation to empire, with no possibility of the post-colonial figure achieving the plurality that critics so commonly argue for (47). Instead, the grotesque chronotope shows the movement toward reinforcing exile as the migrant's road to the loss of self. Finally, Saladin is relegated to ambivalence and perpetual migration as he leaves his father's deathbed; this scene in the text leaves the question of where Saladin ends up completely unknown.

## Chapter IV

### CONCLUSION

The effects of the grotesque chronotope are expressed in various ways as this thesis has shown. Both *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* grapple with what Wolfgang Kayser asserts is the grotesque's expression that

we are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death. Structurally, it presupposes that the categories which apply to our world view become inapplicable . . . the fusion of realms which we know to be separated, the abolition of the law of statics, the loss of identity, the distortion of “natural” size and shape, the suspension of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of historical order. (185, my ellipses)

Indeed, as both of these texts illustrate, dislocation and a perpetual rootless life are both alienating and destructive to the point that if the migrant/exile cannot come to terms with hybridity, or cannot return home, the destruction of the self is the alternative. As *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* have shown, the grotesque emerges within the heavily politicized time-spaces of cultural tribulation where the migrant/exile disappears from the site of empire either through further migration/exile, or through death.

In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem, who is unable to live in the constantly changing cultural climate of post-independence India, fervently tries to reorient himself within India's increasingly unreliable “realities.” His hybridity, a part of himself he is not aware

of, is left unaddressed and explains part of his liminality as a man in the middle of things. Moreover, as a physical time-space, where the fragments of India's Partition interact, Saleem also illustrates the physical results of India's fragmented historical order. He does so through his body's grotesque changes. As India grows, so does Saleem; as the political climate in India turns sour, Saleem becomes ugly. His map-like face becomes the representation of the remapping of India; and finally, his continuously cracking and decaying body reflects India's cracking and decaying cultural and social order.

D.C.R.A Goonetilleke points out that India's destiny (marked by the promise of Saleem's birth) is marred by the histories that continually impede India's aspirations (29). India is partitioned, invaded by the Chinese, the MCC fails, and Indira Gandhi brings fear to the fledgling nation through dictatorship. Hence, India's "meaning" is never fully realized by the end. Likewise, having been desperate up until the very end to find meaning and purpose for his birth and life, he is unsuccessful and succumbs to the absurdity he fears through death. The novel ends with the lingering uncertainty it began with, only now future generations of post-Independence Indians will have to piece together the meaning Saleem attempted to solve. For *Midnight's Children*, Saleem as grotesque chronotope contains the struggles of his nation; the grotesque is the manifestation of the fear of life Kayser argues for, the suffering and terror endured. Finally, the grotesque chronotope is destroyed, illustrated through Saleem's death, yet still exists in a perpetual state of apprehensive uncertainty regarding the future possibility of hope.

*The Satanic Verses* presents a more intense version of the grotesque's embodiment of cultural alienation and identity loss. Unlike Saleem, Saladin is not a physical grotesque chronotope, but instead interacts with them throughout the text. An English-educated, Indian expatriate, Saladin returns to England after a trip to India only to find the veil violently lifted from his Anglophile fantasies. He is presented with a series of thresholds, mirrors, that dismantle and subvert his preconceived notions regarding his identity. He has always believed himself to be English, but once he makes his first return trip to India (the point at which the text begins), he can no longer live as English. His transformation into a devil after looking in the old woman's mirror confirms his point of no return and is further exacerbated by English authorities and the violence they exert on him.

The threshold in *The Satanic Verses*, for Saladin, is a time-space which reveals the “truth” of his identity, that of the Indian man, while at the same time presenting him with the “truth” the English see. Both “truths” are fantasies and the grotesque rises out of this fantasy, revealing Saladin's fears of absurdity and alienation. The text finally draws him back to Bombay. This notion supports what Joel Kuortti discusses when he states that “colonialism has always carried its double within but when in the postcolonial period the colonised other is emerging from its imposed invisibility it poses a crisis for the colonial culture” (129).

Gibreel's encounter with grotesque chronotopes is the most extreme in comparison with Saleem's and Saladin's experiences. His inability to differentiate between the dreaming and waking world he occupies is the best example of the fusion of

worlds we know should, and are supposed to be, separate as Kayser explains. Kayser also states that “we are unable to orient ourselves in the alienated world, because it is absurd . . . [the grotesque] is primarily the expression of our failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe” (185). Gibreel frequently travels between the waking and dreaming worlds to the point where reality and fantasy become so fused that eventually he can no longer distinguish between the two. When the past and present come to reside within the same time-space, the effects allow the grotesque to emerge. Gibreel's madness is proof of this as it is the result of his oscillation between worlds and his inability to orient himself in a space he finds absurd and unreliable. Gibreel's acting career ends after the spectacle of his stage plays and the failure of his theological trilogy. He fails time and time again at finding success for himself and grows resentful.

As *The Satanic Verses'* chapter “The Angel Azrael” illustrates, the madness that results from Gibreel continuously crossing the threshold between the dreaming and waking worlds proves to be destructive (as is the general result in *Midnight's Children* and in Saladin's experiences). He has blasphemed and distorted the Islamic faith and has lost the woman he loves, Alleluia Cone. Further, he finds London so inhospitable that he destroys Brickhall, the immigrant quarter, in a blaze of fire and wrath, suggesting he finds the idea of life in London impossible. In “A Wonderful Lamp,” Gibreel finally follows Saladin back to Bombay after the realization that he has committed an extreme blasphemy, he has now corrupted the great Hindu text, the Ramayana, “in which the heroes and heroines had become corrupt and the evil instead of pure and free us from sin. Here was a lecherous, drunken Rama and a flighty Sita” (SV 553). Gibreel's heresy is so

extreme that production personnel walk off the set and it is a heresy that many predict will “break him into bits” (553). Gibreel meets Saladin in Saladin's home, where he takes Saladin's lamp (a relic of tradition), and recounts a fragmented story about how “always one part of me is standing outside screaming no please don't no but it does no good you see when the sickness comes I am the angel . . . Gibreel the avenger always vengeance . . . for the crime of being human” (559). Gibreel opens the lamp and kills himself with the gun hidden inside after a struggle that clearly shows he has been unsuccessful in trying to reassert reality and identity. Thus, Gibreel's crossing to India presents the final threshold and the last crossing that finally destroys him.

As a whole, grotesque chronotopes in both *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* contain all of the political and cultural conflict present in Bakhtin's interpretation of time-space. As Saleem's, Saladin's, and Gibreel's experiences illustrate, they interrogate the fear inherent in migration, hybridity, and the impossibility of orienting the self within a new, foreign space. As Harish Trivedi explains, as one “interacts with the Other . . . each ceases to remain what it previously was and becomes 'hybrid' . . . [yet] . . . the origin is a myth and the search for it must grow ever more recessive or deferred” (158). The grotesque, also theorized by Bakhtin, expresses the fear and horror at the realization that the origin the exile/migrant seeks to connect, or reconnect, with is a myth. The grotesque also is the embodiment of the resulting alienation and knowledge of the fact that one exists in neither space (new and old homeland) and that he or she cannot go back. What the political time-space thus contains and perpetuates is not just fear and hopelessness, it also restores the status quo.

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