THE BLURRED BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FILM AND FICTION

IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN,

THE SATANIC VERSES, AND

OTHER SELECTED WORKS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Denton, Texas

August, 1999

This dissertation explores the porous boundaries between Salman Rushdie’s fiction and the various manifestations of the filmic vision, especially in *Midnight’s Children, The Satanic Verses, and other selected Rushdie texts*.

My focus includes a chapter on *Midnight’s Children*, in which I analyze the cinematic qualities of the novel’s form, content, and structure. In this chapter I formulate a theory of the post-colonial novel which notes the hybridization of Rushdie’s fiction, which process reflects a fragmentation and hybridization in Indian culture. I show how Rushdie’s book is unique in its use of the novelization of film. I also argue that Rushdie is a narrative trickster.

In my second chapter I analyze the controversial *The Satanic Verses*. My focus is the vast web of allusions to the film and television industries in the novel. I examine the way Rushdie tropes the “spiritual vision” in cinematic
terms, thus shedding new light on the controversy involving the religious aspects of the novel which placed Rushdie on the most renowned hit-list of modern times. I also explore the phenomenon of the dream as a kind of interior cinematic experience.

My last chapter explores several other instances in Rushdie’s works that are influenced by a filmic vision, with specific examples from *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, “The Firebird’s Nest,” and numerous other articles, interviews, and essays involving Rushdie.

In my conclusion I discuss some of the emerging similarities between film and the novel, born out of the relatively recent technology of video cassette recorders and players, and I examine the democratizing effects of this relatively new way of seeing.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COPYRIGHT NOTICE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND THE SATANIC VERSES</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND OTHER SELECTED WORKS</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In his review of Salman Rushdie's *East, West*, Paul Gray asserts: "No one writes more convincingly of the tug between old and new, home and the allure of the unknown" (58). Probably the most famous expatriate novelist of the last twenty five years, and winner of the most prestigious literary prize in the last quarter century, the Booker of Bookers (Chainani 2), Rushdie has uniquely voiced the post-colonial\(^1\) milieu of India more powerfully than any other writer, and he does so by reflecting this hybrid\(^2\), metamorphic\(^3\), heteroglossic identity and voice through the language, structure, and conventions of film.

In his 1983 interview with Jean Ross for *Contemporary Authors*, Rushdie claims, "I am very interested in movies, and I think they probably have influenced my writing quite a lot" (416). In fact, "movies," pictures that move, whether they be films or television programs, have certainly influenced Rushdie's writing. The Bombay cinema, Hollywood, the television industry, and the profession of acting have all affected, in pervasive ways, Rushdie's novels,
especially *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, and several of his shorter works. Rushdie himself pursued an acting career for several years, but realized that his talents lay elsewhere, writing prose fiction⁴; but his love for the moving picture seeped into his fiction, flavoring his prose with film's vocabulary, narrative strategies, and even structure.

Rushdie is not alone in believing that the genres of film and prose fiction have influenced one another. In an extremely useful study of film's effect on the novel and literature's influence on film, Harris Ross traces this history in his introduction to *Film as Literature, Literature as Film*. Ross also chronicles the relationship of film to literature through an extensive bibliography which lists almost 2500 articles and books on the subject published from 1908 to 1985.

Ross outlines the various positions scholars have taken regarding the interaction between film and fiction. He notes that the most highly elaborated statements of the purist position that establishes boundaries between film and literature are found in Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film* and Rudolph Arnheim's *Film as Art*, both of which seek a "radical separation of film from literature" (2). Exemplifying this distinct delineation between the two
genres, Ingmar Bergman in “Bergman Discusses Film-Making,” states, “Film has nothing to do with literature; the character and substance of the art forms are usually in conflict” (xvii). Interpreting Bergman, Ross explains, “Bergman was drawing the distinction between literature and film purely in terms of media and the way the audience apprehends a work because of the means of expression” (2). When adapting a novel into film, filmmakers must convey what is verbal by means of visual images, says Bergman, for film is an art of emotion and rhythm, like music, not an art of words and ideas like literature (Ross 2).

Proponents of a second theory of the relationship between film and literature, who includes Rushdie, generally argue that artists may and often do step beyond the boundaries of their arts and that a work may be thought successful precisely because it achieves effects associated with other arts (Ross 3). For example, Susan Sontag, in her “Note on Novels and Films,” says that film is a “pan-art” in that it “can use, incorporate, engulf virtually any other art: the novel, poetry, theater, painting, sculpture, dance, music, architecture” (243). Rushdie takes this formula and inverts it, using several non-literary media to form and infuse his fiction: comic books, music, particularly rock and roll, and radio, television, and film.
Ross states, "The majority of critics and theoreticians have found that film shares a closer relationship to prose fiction, particularly the novel, than to drama" (5). This conviction is based on several factors: "the broader scope of the plots of film and prose fiction, and the ease with which the two manipulate time and space" (5). Rushdie makes use of this convention, especially in Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses. Some critics, such as Gerald Mast, link the two media through the presence of the narrator. Other critics, such as Joy Gould Boyum, see film as a story mediated through an "enunciation of images," telling stories by means of pictures (38). This theory is sanctioned by a pre-structuralist view of the fictional narrator, who must tell his or her story so that the reader can "see" through the narrator's eyes (Ross 6). For instance, Louis Giannetti writes, "The cinematic equivalent to the 'voice' of the literary narrator is the 'eye' of the camera" (324). Mast, who discerns similarities between prose fiction and film, writes that like a novel, film uses focused narration through the employment of a lens which parallels the narrator (18). Furthermore, Boyum argues that in film the camera, by controlling the spectator's attention, "becomes the equivalent of a narrator, a cinematic storyteller itself" (38). Ross encourages a post-structuralist view,
one in which the old notion that the camera and narrator can perceive the same subject in the same way is discarded, and the reader or viewer is invited to detect "traces" of cinematic equivalents for pronouns, verb tenses, and other elements that indicate the narrator's presence (8-9).

Demonstrating his awareness of these techniques, Rushdie creates a narrator in *The Satanic Verses* who is concurrently a voice in the story and one of the camera lenses through which the story is spied. Within *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's narrator chooses to reveal some actions, not others. The narrator imposes personal limitations. Likewise, the cameras within the story partially reveal and partially conceal. The camera's eye grabs only bits of information.

Harris Ross argues that film's appearance in the first decades of the century shaped both drama and the novel; he asks, "didn't the drama shift from realism to theatricalism and didn't the novel shift from realism to impressionism at least partly in response to film?" (1). He adds, "at the same time, poetry, drama, and the novel appropriated various filmic techniques, such as montage in Joyce's *Ulysses*, the 'camera eye' in Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* trilogy, and the 'lap dissolves' in Robbe-Grillet's novels" (1). Contemporarily, Rushdie invokes film terms like "dissolve," "fade," and
"cut." I believe that Rushdie, besides employing stylistic allusions to the language of film, is also emphasizing the narratorial instability inherent in filmic telling, thereby mirroring the de-stable-ized identity of the post-colonial subject, who is neither here nor there, but in a homeless, marginalized space. For example, Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses is both a British subject and an Indian citizen, but he is not completely either, nor completely neither.

Another condition of Rushdie’s narrative is a discontinuity of space and time. This characteristic is also descriptive of film, according to Edward Murray, in his The Cinematic Imagination (in Ross 28). Ross also describes Gerard Gennette’s categories of temporal order in prose fiction. He calls analepses and prolepses, “anachronies” (Ross 27). Analapses is an event, such as material presented in a flashback, which happens earlier in the plot than in the story. Prolepses is an event, such as a flashforward, in which the plot leaps ahead to present an event that occurs much later in the story (27). As will be seen later, Rushdie employs these techniques liberally, especially in The Satanic Verses.

Regarding the post-cinematic novel and relativity, Alan Spiegel writes that though the camera can “objectively”
record the "surfaces of physical reality," it can do so only by means of a series of views from certain spatial positions. Spiegel continues:

This means that the images produced by the motion picture camera will only allow us to experience the object through a series of perspectives; that the ontology of the image itself will never allow for an apprehension of the object as a whole. In this sense no other art is less equipped to present a godlike and omniscient view of human experience than the cinema, and no other art form, therefore, presents a more accurate embodiment of a modernist and relativist metaphysics than cinematographic form. (32)

Perhaps this is why Rushdie uses film tropes so heavily in The Satanic Verses, a book which criticizes the possibility of dogma. In The Satanic Verses, Gibreel Farishta exemplifies the indeterminacy associated with postmodernism in his flashbacks in which past is present, present is past. The boundaries between time periods are blurred. Ross notes further that the novel has progressed toward a cinematic ideal of grounding the narrative in perception, of making the reader "see," as both Joseph Conrad and D. W. Griffith claimed was the purpose of their narratives" (Ross 37). As
Herbert Read has argued, the aim of film and literature is to "project on to that inner screen of the brain a moving picture of objects and events, events and objects moving towards a balance and reconciliation of a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order" (231). Furthermore, Read writes, good writing is about conveying images, "to make the mind see. To project on to that inner screen of the brain a moving picture. . . . That is a definition of good literature. . . . It is also a definition of the ideal film" (231). In Rushdie’s fiction, especially Midnight’s Children and The Satanic Verses, the inner screen figures prominently in the form of a dream. What is a dream, but a subjective filmplay, projected on the screen of the dreamer’s mind? Bruce Kawin even calls first-person film narration, "mindscreen," which takes place when the filmmaker cues the spectator that the source of the image is a character’s mind (in Ross 9). In The Satanic Verses, this distinction between what is happening in the narrator’s world, and what is happening in the fictive world of Farishta’s (the primary dreamer in the text) mind is indeterminate. The boundaries are blurred. What is dreamed and what is real is an ontological dilemma. Farishta even begins to wonder if his dream visions are mere projections (a pun on the film and psychological term) of other people’s
desires. Gibreel Farishta, as an angel, only allows what others in the story, including Mahound, desire in their own hearts to happen.

Moreover, later in this dissertation, I will demonstrate that Rushdie in The Satanic Verses uses the trope of the vision as its dominant metaphor to reflect an ontological crisis in Rushdie's fiction. Gibreel Farishta is a man who grapples with his identity as a man and possible angel. He has metaphysical visions. Farishta is suspicious of the objective value of his visions. Regardless of Farishta's doubt, a producer later translates Farishta's visions into filmic visions (movies). Views are consistently mentioned throughout the novel; the novel starts with a view of the silver screen of the sky, and the last line has Saladin "turning away from the view" (547). Such views are met with a hermeneutics of suspicion. Gibreel Farishta is not sure if his visions are real or not or if his visions are to be trusted or not. Rushdie thinks that visions are to be questioned. Rushdie espouses a postmodern view of grand narratives in the novel because monolithic voices or narratives are questioned and overturned.

The point of this technical display is that Rushdie illustrates another of his works' lessons, that film is
illusion; India's unity is illusion; Rushdie's fiction rejects the post-colonial trend of realism in representing the Indian national identity; in the end, the illusion itself has become the reality. Rushdie's fiction urges those who marginalize the post-colonial Other to see the subjects of Indian's post-colonial self anew, through new eyes, through post-colonial-eyes. He defamiliarizes the film and television presence in his settings and asks his readers to interiorize a new reality, seeing with new interior-eyes.

In an interview with Jean Ross, Rushdie commented on the effect of film on the novel, especially his own work, *Midnight's Children*:

> It [the development of film] has made people much more sophisticated about accepting what might once have been thought to be very strange techniques. For instance, if you want to intercut two scenes in prose now, people know what you’re doing and don’t think of it as confusing. The whole experience of montage technique, split screens, dissolves, and so on, has become a film language which translates quite easily into fiction and gives you an extra vocabulary that traditionally has not been part of the vocabulary of literature.
And I think I used that quite a bit.

(Contemporary Authors 416)

Here, Rushdie illustrates that the distinction between film, video, and television (and sometimes, even radio) is blurred, mimicking the blurring of identity characteristic of the post-colonial voice.

In his essay “National Identity and Imperialist Domination: The Crisis of Culture in Africa Today,” Ngugi wa Thiong’o speaks about the uses of film in a post-colonial world as possibly positive; Rushdie uses film in a way that both supports and challenges Ngugi’s vision of the post-colonial use of the audio-visual media. Ngugi suggests, that rather than being a tool of the colonial elite, technology such as film and television can be used to sustain, preserve, and codify pre-colonial tribal customs and past cultures (1815). While Rushdie’s fiction suggests that film is a poor replacement for humanity (The Satanic Verses 513), Rushdie uses film to question the status quo and to trouble all narratives, past and present. Rushdie is not the only writer, however, to use this new awareness of film. Other scholars and writers have studied the interplay between film and fiction in other writers’ work, besides that of Rushdie.⁵
This dissertation examines film's effect on Rushdie's fiction, exploring the blurred boundaries between the novel and film as a metaphor for the hybrid, metamorphic post-colonial identity which Rushdie's fiction showcases, for "Rushdie reminds us that borders crossed aren't merely the kind drawn in dirt" (Henry Louis Gates Jr. "The Empire Writes Back" 91).

In Chapter II, I begin by reviewing the criticism on Midnight's Children, then I discuss the fragmented nature of post-independence India as a model for Rushdie's novel. I then discuss the pervasiveness of film in Midnight's Children, and explore Rushdie's use of dreams in the novel. Finally, I argue that Rushdie is a post-colonial trickster who blurs the distinctions between film (a visual form which tricks the eye) and fiction in this trickster text. My conclusion is that Rushdie has written a new kind of hybridized novel which reflects the polyphonic nature of India, blurring the boundaries between fact and fantasy, fiction and film.

In Chapter III, I begin by exploring Rushdie's use of film conventions in The Satanic Verses as a metaphysical backdrop to explore the themes of post-colonial hybridity and fragmentation. I examine Rushdie's post-colonial voice, exploring how Rushdie's characters in this text are multi-
formic figures, how the text is multi-formic, and how these pluralities are symbolic of post-independence India. I then discuss Rushdie's use of filmic conventions in the novel, especially montage. I argue that Rushdie structures the narrative itself as film with flashbacks, dream-sequences, and various mise en scènes. I also trope the concept of the religious vision as a film-like experience and discuss the use of the dream as a means of interiorizing film and its illusional reality, blurring the boundaries between that reality and the film-like images in the imagination.

In Chapter IV, I examine several other of Rushdie's texts, including short stories, novels, interviews, and essays. I show how Rushdie's "vision," in terms of both theory and technique, has grown and how his works, by being permeated by the filmic and televisual presence, blur the boundaries between the various fragments which make up a postmodern self.

In my Conclusion, I observe the effects of this televisual/filmic presence on the contemporary experience, and how that overall effect works toward a democratizing end, blurring boundaries between social strata.

One of the reasons this study is necessary is that no extensive examination of these themes has been published yet. In her introduction to National Identity in Indian
Popular Cinema, 1947-1987, Sumita Chakravarty states, "readers and reviewers paid scant attention" (1) to the identity of the fictional dreamer in *The Satanic Verses*, Gibreel Farishta, a former Bombay film star. While a few critics have noted some of the obvious loci where film and television have surfaced in Rushdie's fiction, no book length study has been undertaken. Ashutosh Banerjee asserts that the interaction between fiction and film "would seem to deserve a volume to itself" (31). This project is an attempt to supply that volume.
Notes

1 By post-colonial, I am not referring to literatures which simply consist of writings that chronologically come after independence. I mean the broader sense of the term which Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have expanded to mean literatures which result from the "interaction between the imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices" (Post-Colonial Studies Reader 1).

2 In Rushdie’s texts, hybridity is a form of what Mary Louise Pratt calls, "transculturation, or a process whereby marginal or subordinate groups select and create new cultural forms [by syncretizing materials from their own culture with] materials of the dominant culture" (3-5).

3 By metamorphic, I am referring to the protean nature of Rushdie’s novels as a reflection of the ever-changing ontology of post-colonial India, which resists a unified, essentialist identity.

4 Factual details come from Jean Ross’s interview with Rushdie for Contemporary Authors 111: 416.

5 One of the best studies on the relation between film and fiction is an essay by Carol Thickstun called, “Filmic Fiction: Jorge Luis Borges’s ‘Las Ruinas Circulares.’” In this essay, Thickstun examines the interplay between film
and Borges's fiction. She asserts that "Las ruinas circulares" examines the artifice, the unreality of fiction and of reality as a linguistic creation" (606). Rushdie read Borges (Bookworm 2), and was most certainly influenced by his fictive style; Thickstun's claims about Spanish-American writers may certainly be applied to Rushdie. Thickstun argues that in creating filmic texts, contemporary Spanish American writers are encouraging new ways of reading. She explains:

Their texts induce readers to think differently about language and literature. These writers violate the laws of genre imposed by their predecessors. They push the limits of the novel to show just how far the novel can go. They also use language in a way that is revolutionary, not in a political, but rather in a literary sense. Readers are compelled to "see" the texts, not as transparent descriptions of another reality, but as artifices, graphic configurations, visual compositions of letters which simultaneously denote and exist as artistic objects. (605)

This dissertation is an attempt to demonstrate that Rushdie, also, is pushing the limits of the novel in his use of multiple forms and innovative language.
CHAPTER II

BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

In a world saturated by film's presence, it is not surprising that one of the most important novels of the last twenty years, Midnight's Children, is also saturated by film's influence, structure, and language. ¹ Salman Rushdie's quasi-autobiographical novel explores the fragmented self of post-colonial India, linking the story of the novel's protagonist, Saleem Sinai, with the history of post-Independence India up to the state of emergency decreed by Indira Gandhi. In this chapter, I argue that one of the most important metaphors in Midnight's Children is film, especially the Bombay talkie. I will give a brief overview of the critical response to Midnight's Children, then discuss the fragmented nature of Rushdie's subject, post-independence India. I then discuss the ubiquity of film's presence throughout the novel, and explore Rushdie's use of dreams in the story. Finally, I argue that Rushdie is a trickster, using film (another kind of trickster) to reflect the hybridity and Bakhtinian heteroglossia of Rushdie's perception of the post-colonial Indian experience.
Published in 1981, *Midnight’s Children* has been heralded as a book that “made everything possible” for contemporary Indian writers (Buford 8). In spite of Bill Buford’s praise, the novel has had a varied reception. In *The Rushdie File*, Rushdie notes that “in England people read *Midnight’s Children* as a fantasy, in India people read it as a history book” (7). Some critics, including Ronny Noor and Rushdie himself, have been careful to point out, however, the historical inaccuracies in the novel and correct them. Ron Shepherd reads *Midnight’s Children* as primarily a fantasy, a novel which “marks quite a radical departure from what has been written by Indian novelists in English to date,” because it breaks most of the usual ground rules associated with the older form of Indian fiction in that the unities of time and space are unstable and the ordinary notions of fictional realism are subverted (33). Shepherd claims the novel is “narrated with a passion for narrating rather than for clarifying meaning” (33). In this way, the novel is also about writing texts, as much as revealing history. Indeed, Ashutosh Banerjee views *Midnight’s Children* as a “self-conscious demonstration of craft, of the tools of one’s trade” (23). Richard Cronin sees Rushdie’s narrator Saleem Sinai as a “madman” who “accommodates the experiences of more than 600 million of his fellow
countrymen" (212). Makarand Paranjape reads Midnight's Children as a political novel, and believes that while the novel changed the trends of Indian English fiction, it is not "a very great book after all" (220) because it is "one great, big, confused bluff" (221) which does not offer an emerging vision of India (220). Joseph Swann offers an opposing viewpoint, however, and sees Midnight's Children as offering the reader a "fecund image of himself and of herself" in the novel, and that the end of the action of the novel, the annihilation of midnight's children, is "meaningful" (361).

Viney Kirpal characterizes Midnight's Children as part of the body of work called the New Indian Novel in English, and is reluctant to call Rushdie's works post-modern, because they "do not remain aesthetic creations but rather have an animated correspondence to the world outside the text" (xvi). Instead, Kirpal links Rushdie's fiction to the structure of the traditional Indian narrative - "the story looping itself, repeating itself, going back to an earlier point" (xv). Juliette Myers in her article, "Postmodernism in Rushdie's Midnight's Children and The Moor's Last Sigh," persuasively argues, though, that Rushdie is indeed a postmodernist writer, and that Midnight's Children is a post-colonial postmodernist work because it, like modernist
works, "criticizes traditional mimetic art for its attempt
to portray the totality of a particular experience in a
single narrative, and yet it goes beyond modernism" by
progressing from the epistemological concerns of modernism
to the ontological concerns of postmodernism (1).
Midnight’s Children attempts to examine and narrate a
confused post-colonial world which is asking ontological
questions like “What is a world?” and “Who am I in this
world?” Furthermore, Myers notes that Rushdie exploits the
ability of postmodern fiction to draw on innumerable
fictional and factual sources as a means of (re)presenting
the world. Rushdie problematizes the historical novel form,
for example, by demonstrating the impossibility of
classifying all the data of experience without
generalization or omission: “there are so many stories to
tell [. . .]. I have been a swallower of lives; and to know
me, just the one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as
well” (Midnight’s Children 4).

Jean-Pierre Durix interprets the novel as primarily a
magically real novel, revealing Rushdie’s “desire not to
separate reality and the imagination” (63). Novy Kapadia,
along with other critics, calls Midnight’s Children
innovative in its narrative techniques, but adds his theory
that Rushdie’s work “sets the trend for uninhibited
experimentation in Indo-Anglian fiction" (239). Part of that trend of "uninhibited experimentation" involves Rushdie's use of intertextuality. Rushdie's fiction is uniquely post-colonial in that works like *Midnight's Children* are "bound up in a dialogue not only with the history of India's independence, but also with other Third World fictional narratives and the English canon itself" (Myers 2). This intertextuality in Rushdie's fiction reflects a sense of the "syncreticity or hybridity of the postcolonial, postmodern world" (3).

Another revealing aspect of Rushdie's syncretistic writing involves Rushdie's use of the film and television industries, including their language, their history, their characters, and their effects. This chapter explores the way that film has deeply influenced *Midnight's Children* to a greater degree than any critic has noted before. Indeed, Rushdie blurs the boundaries between film and his prose fiction as a means of reflecting the fluid identity of the subject of *Midnight's Children*, post-independence India.

During Rushdie's interview with Michael Silverblatt for *Bookworm* in 1996, Rushdie said of *Midnight's Children*:

'I've tried to suggest in my books that [a kind of fragmented vision of the world] is actually a truthful way of writing about the world — the
world seen in fragments. In *Midnight’s Children* a man sees a woman in fragments. He’s a doctor and examines her because she’s a veiled Muslim woman so when she’s ill he can only examine her through a hole in the sheet. Over the course of many years he sees different six inch circles of her body and has to glue them together in his imagination. And having glued together in his mind these different pieces of a fractured woman he falls in love with them and ends up marrying her. (Part 2 1)

Rushdie’s story in *Midnight’s Children* is cinematic, visual. Just as the sheet and the partial views that the hole in it require the doctor to imagine in his mind a complete picture of the woman he is examining in parts, so does Rushdie’s novel require its readers to piece together the myriad details and plot-twists in their imagination. Rushdie also admits that the sheet with a hole in it is the trope for his fiction. He says about this scene, “It’s also a metaphor for the way I was trying to write. Which is to say that we do see the world in fragments and we try to make a picture (emphasis mine) of it by adding those fragments together” (Part 2 1). This reinforces Viney Kirpal’s idea that the purpose of *Midnight’s Children* “was to enable
people to see the world more intensely" (xvi). *Midnight's Children* is highly visual. Rushdie uses a visual industry, the film industry, to convey his picture of post-independence India. He especially borrows from the Bombay film industry.

Film is important in *Midnight's Children* in that it provides a metaphysical backdrop to explore the themes of post-colonial hybridity and partitioning of the self. Several characters in the story are connected to the Bombay film industry. One of the more prominent characters is Amina's brother, Hanif, who dreams of working for one of the great studios in Bombay. The narrator describes his "uncle" thus:

Precociously confident, he had not only succeeded in becoming the youngest man ever to be given a film to direct in the history of the Indian cinema; he had also wooed and married one of the brightest stars of the celluloid heaven, the divine Pia. (167)

Pia becomes famous for starring in a movie which features the "indirect kiss" (168), a technique whereby the actor and actress would kiss objects in turn, conveying longing and eroticism without any forbidden, erotic direct contact
between the actor and actress. This coy allusion to the actual physical act of the kiss is emblematic of Rushdie's work, which tends to tease the reader with hints of what is to come in the story; his narrator, Saleem Sinai, says, "I provided clues" (136).

Midnight's Children is grounded on the premise that the one thousand and one children born on or around the stroke of midnight, August 15, 1947, the year of India's birth as independent from the British Empire, are endowed with miraculous talents which parallel the vast possibilities for India's future. Saleem "Sinai" is born at the exact moment of midnight and is the narrator of the novel, and his arch-rival, Shiva, is the only other child born on the exact moment of midnight. They are switched at birth, allowing Sinai to grow up in a middle-class environment, while Shiva must beg on the streets. James Harrison, in his book Salman Rushdie, notes that Saleem Sinai's multiple personality and the frequently asserted metaphoric equivalence of his life story to that of India constitute the novel's most extraordinary bid for unity. He is, in the first place, the biological son of William Methwold and Vanita, the unwittingly adopted son of Ahmed and Amina, and the subsequently presumed son of Wee Willie Winkie.
and Vanita - that is, the joint product (as is India) of Hindu, Muslim, and English influences.

(51)

Shiva eventually becomes a violent, high-ranking officer in the Indian Army, while his prodigious sexual appetite results in several offspring. Saleem Sinai is eventually hunted down by Shiva, who carries out Prime Minister Gandhi’s policy of forced sterilization. The novel ends with the annihilation of the children of midnight and their potential power, for, like India, the midnight’s children resist unification while being “sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes” (552).

The idea of a unified India is brought together in the character of Saleem Sinai’s supposed grandmother, Naseem Aziz (mentioned above), who is introduced to her future husband in parts. The narrator later refers to her as “now unified and transmuted into the formidable figure she would always remain, and who was always known by the curious title of Reverend Mother” (41). As a fragmented-but-now-unified person, she is a picture of “Mother India,” which does not represent the reality of an India which resists unification; rather, she is representative of an idealistic picture of India which paradoxically embodies the plurality within her single body: “she lived within an invisible fortress of her
own making, an ironclad citadel of traditions and
certainties" (41).

The resistance to unity is eloquently described when
Sinai records the numerous disparate concerns and aims of
the conferring children of midnight, which include
collectivism, individualism, filial duty, capitalism,
altruism, science, religion, courage, cowardice,
declarations for women's rights, and improvement for the lot
of untouchables, among others (273). In a word, the
children of midnight are India, the polyglot, multi-lingual,
multi-concerned plurality which is the country and entity
called India.

Rushdie notes that "India is home of the largest film
industry on earth" (Imaginary Homelands 27). He argues that
"most Hindi movies were then and are now what can only be
called trashy" (Wizard of Oz 11). According to Rushdie,
"'Bollywood' [in the late forties and early fifties]
produced more movies per annum than Los Angeles or Tokyo or
Hong Kong" (107); but his awareness of that industry did not
come into full focus until he had gone to London, for he
claims that while he was growing up, he knew more about the
international cinema than he did about Bombay film.
In his critique of *The Wizard of Oz*, Rushdie comments on the Bombay cinema:

Typewriters of Life, sex-goddesses in wet saris (the Indian equivalent of wet T-shirts), gods descending from the heavens to meddle in human affairs, supermen, magic potions, superheroes, demonic villains and so on have always been the staple diet of the Indian filmgoer. (11)

Rushdie extends the food metaphor by calling the Bombay cinema the equivalent of "junk food," for the "classic Bombay talkie uses scripts of appalling corniness, looks by turn tawdry and vulgar and often both at once, and relies on the mass appeal of its stars and its musical numbers to provide a little zing" (13).

The Bombay talkie and elements of the international film industry significantly color *Midnight’s Children*. Rushdie writes, in the title essay of his collection *Imaginary Homelands*, “The movement towards the cinema screen is a metaphor for the narrative’s movement through time towards the present, and the book itself, as it nears contemporary events, quite deliberately loses deep perspective, becomes more ‘partial’” (13). Consciousness of the Bombay Talkie permeates the book. Sinai is constantly asking the reader to imagine the camera panning to the left
or right, or zooming in, or pulling back. The narration of Rushdie's story is likened to the cinema screen.

Another way in which film's effect seeps into the space of the novel is in Rushdie's use of the language of the film industry. Within the first two chapters of narration, Rushdie is using explicit film vocabulary: "Close-up of my grandfather's right hand [. . .] (we cut to a long-shot -- nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary)" (31). Later in the text, the narrator tells his audience, "No close-up is necessary" at that point in the story (34). The narrator is practically giving the kind of notations and instructions found in screenplays.

Allusions to the Bombay film scene, especially the Bombay talkie, are recurrent and numerous. Rushdie's narrator calls Bombay a "glamorous leech, producing nothing except films bush-shirts fish" (147). This Bombay is home to such characters as Rashid the rickshaw boy. Sinai describes this boy's experience at the cinema one day:

That morning he'd seen two men pushing a low trolley on which were mounted two enormous hand-painted posters, back-to-back, advertising the new film, Gai-Wallah, starring Rashid's favourite actor, Dev. FRESH FROM FIFTY FIERCE WEEKS IN DELHI! STRAIGHT FROM SIXTY-THREE SHARPSHOOTER
WEEKS IN BOMBAY! the posters cried. SECOND RIP-ROARIOUS YEAR! The film was an eastern Western. [. . .] (The film was made for Hindu audiences) [. . .] The songs and dances were good and there was a beautiful nautch girl who would have looked more graceful if they hadn't made her dance in a ten-gallon cowboy hat. (51-52)

On the way home, Rashid imagines himself to be a hero in the manner of Gai-Wallah, which means cow-fellow, and lets somebody into his friend's home, stealthily. The narrator notes, "Well, real life was better than the pictures, sometimes" (53). Later in the text, what Sinai calls "real life" and the language of cinema leak into one another as the narrator mimics the spirit of those Bombay movie posters when he describes a fire at a bicycle factory: "Look: the cloud of the disaster [. . .] rises and gathers like a ball [. . .] see how it thrusts itself westward [. . .] 'Come see everything, see the whole world, come see!'" (82). Finally, another way that the boundaries of film and "real life" blur in Midnight's Children is evident when characters seem to step out of pictures (142).

In time, the action of the novel is actually referred to as "acquiring the coloring of a Bombay talkie" because of the "melodrama piling upon melodrama" (174). The text is
also influenced by coloring of a different type, in that *Midnight’s Children* was profoundly textured by *The Wizard of Oz*. In his critique of *The Wizard of Oz*, Rushdie states that the color effects of the film, including the yellow of the Brick Road, the red of the Poppy Field, the green of the Emerald City and of the witch’s skin, caused him to dream as a child of green-skinned witches:

I gave these dreams to the narrator of my novel *Midnight’s Children*, having completely forgotten their source. “No colours except green and black and the walls are green the sky is black . . . the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black,” begins the stream-of-consciousness dream-sequence, in which the nightmare of Indira Gandhi is fused with the equally nightmarish figure of Margaret Hamilton: a coming-together of the Wicked Witches of the East and of the West. (33)

Other characters are affected by Rushdie’s consciousness of the Bombay cinema, especially the talkie. Sinai says of his aunty Pia, “to live with her was to exist in the hot sticky heart of a Bombay talkie. [. . .] Deprived of film roles, Pia had turned her life into a feature picture, in which I was cast in an increasing number of bit-
parts" (289), reminiscent of the pretty nurse selling poppies from a tray who thinks she’s in a play, and is anyway, in John Lennon and Paul McCartney’s *Penny Lane*. Sometimes the perception is the reality, even if life seems like a mere performance.

Elsewhere in *Midnight’s Children*, the language of film is evident. Jump cuts\(^2\) are used to describe the countdown to the births which will occur at midnight on the day of India’s independence from the United Kingdom, August 15, 1947 (130-31). Later, Sinai uses the cinema as a place to speed the narration: “To save time, I shall place all of us in same row at the Metro cinema” (216). To end a later chapter, Rushdie’s narrator again slips into the language of film: “Finally, [. . .] I leave you with the image of a ten-year old boy with a bandaged finger, [. . .] zooming out slowly into long-shot, I allow the sound-track music to drown my words, [. . .] (Fade out.)” (283). Later in the text, Sinai again resorts to speaking in the tone of movie-trailers, using film-industry vocabulary in a melange of references and allusions:

smacking of lips at the sight of the title NEXT ATTRACTION, superimposed on undulating blue velvet! O anticipatory salivation before screens trumpeting COMING SOON! [. . .] I exhort my
mournfully squatting audience, “I’m not finished yet! There is to be electrocution and a rain-forest [. . .] there is still plenty worth telling [. . .] in short, there are still next-attractions and coming-soons galore; a chapter ends when one’s parents die, but a new kind of chapter also begins. (414)

Here, Rushdie is melding the language and cinema into the same text. He invokes cinema at one moment and alludes to writing books at another, likening life to chapters which end and begin. His use of filmic language does not stop there, though. He continues in this same passage in a parenthetical statement about his narrator’s local audience, Padma:

I permit myself to insert a Bombay-talkie style close-up—a calendar ruffled by a breeze, its pages flying off in rapid succession to denote the passing of the years; I superimpose turbulent long-shots of street riots, medium shots of burning buses and blazing English-language libraries [. . .] (414)

Again, Rushdie’s narrator is thoroughly saturated by film and its language. Later, he refers to his loss of memory as a “gimmick regularly used by our lurid film-makers.” He
continues, "I accept that my life has taken on, yet again, the tone of a Bombay talkie" (418). By the end of the novel, the narrator is admitting that his whole story has taken on the melodrama of the Bombay cinema. He says, "Yes, you must have all of it: however overblown, however Bombay-talkie-melodramatic, you must let it sink in, you must see!" (523). Yet, one of the elements in the novel that differs from those Bombay films is the lack of a so-called "happy ending," for reality "nags" at Sinai, who says, "Love does not conquer all, except in the Bombay talkies" (530).

An aspect of intertextuality that goes unmentioned in the criticism about Midnight's Children is the structure of the novel as screenplay. The novel is a double-voiced screenplay. Myers argues that Midnight's Children structure is based on the three-volume form of the nineteenth-century realist text, highlighting Rushdie's awareness of his literary predecessors. It is true that Rushdie is aware of and even borrows the form of nineteenth and even eighteenth century novels. Since Midnight's Children uses the Bombay talkie as a dominant metaphor in the novel, however, I also argue that the three-book form of the novel is also modeled after the format of those Bombay talkies, the three act screenplay. Nancy E. Batty notes that the "chapter by chapter progression of the novel resembles the structure of
an episodic film, or serial, in which synopses of previous events provide a rhythmic counterpoint to the tantalizing teasers which anticipate events to come" (56-7). This strategy of recapitulation of what has happened and foreshadowing of what has yet to happen enhances suspense and holds together a narrative that might otherwise fall apart (Harrison 63). Sinai’s narrative voice is the one constant which maintains the thread, holding the story together.

Syd Field, in his Screenplay: The Foundations of Screen Writing, A Step-by-Step Guide from Concept to Finished Script makes the following observations about the general form of a screenplay. He begins by saying that a screenplay is a "story told with pictures [. . .] about a person, or persons, in a place or places, doing his or her 'thing'" (7). Field claims that all screenplays execute this basic premise, and that all screenplays contain the basic linear structure of a beginning, middle, and end; "this model is known as a paradigm" and is the conceptual scheme to which writers typically adhere (7). Field describes the paradigm thus:

The standard screenplay is approximately 120 pages long, or two hours long. [. . .] The rule holds firm – one page of screenplay equals one minute of
screen time. The beginning is Act I, referred to as the setup, because you have approximately 30 pages to set up your story. [. . .] At the end of the first act, there is a PLOT POINT: A plot point is an incident, or event, that hooks into the story and spins it around into another direction. [. . .] Act II contains the bulk of your story. It takes place between pages 30 and 90. It is termed the confrontation portion of the screenplay because the basis of all drama is conflict; once you can define the need of your character, that is, find out what he wants to achieve during the screenplay, [. . .] you can then create obstacles to that need. This generates conflict. [. . .] The plot point at the end of the second act usually occurs between pages 85 and 90. [. . .] Act III usually occurs between pages 90 and 120. It is the resolution of the story. [. . .] All screenplays execute this basic, linear structure. (8-10)

Field is adamant about his last point, that all screenplays execute this basic, linear structure. He says that even if a story is told in flashback, it still has a definite beginning, middle, and end (10). He qualifies his stance by
noting that “all good screenplays fit the paradigm” (11). Some critics may notice that Field gives himself room to maneuver out of the limitations of the word “all” by qualifying that “good” screenplays follow the model. It is not my purpose to argue whether this model is always true; it is only a conventional paradigm. Whether by accident or not, Rushdie’s novel follows this paradigm almost precisely. Book One corresponds to a screenplay’s Act I. It occupies the first quarter of the text (138 pages). Book Two comprises the bulk of the text and parallels a conventional Act II (269 pages). Book Three takes up the last quarter of the text and can be likened to an Act III (139 pages). The Books are almost precisely correspondent in lengths to the proportional lengths of a conventional screenplay.

At the end of Book One, in the style of the screenplay and its format of plot points, moments in the text which critically spin “the action around in another direction,” Rushdie’s narrator reveals that he and Shiva had been switched at birth. At this point in the text, Padma, Sinai’s immediate audience, says, “All the time [. . .] you tricked me. Your mother, you called her; your father, your grandfather, your aunts” (136). Rather than admit to being a trickster, Sinai, as narrator, wiggles out of the appellation by saying, “it made no difference [that he had
been switched at birth)! I was still their son: they remained my parents” (136). So, now at the end of the first “Act,” Sinai is revealed to be the son of an Englishman, William Methwold, who is also a trickster of sorts, in that he wears a hairpiece to conceal his baldness (132). Methwold has had a sexual encounter with Wee Willie Winkie’s wife, Vanita, who gives birth to the baby who will later become the “child” of Ahmed and Amina Sinai, because Vanita’s handmaid switches Shiva and Saleem at birth. Rushdie’s text is a trickster text which conceals its secrets in the manner of Indian architecture, about which Rushdie’s narrator in *Midnight’s Children* observes, “concealment has always been a crucial architectural consideration in India” (57).

At the end of Act II, which is the bulk of the story, and in which Shiva and other forces have conspired to block Sinai’s goal of finding meaning for the children of midnight, another significant plot point occurs: Sinai is “stripped of past present memory time shame and love” by a bomb blast, which leaves him “empty and free” (409). Now Sinai no longer can transmit the Midnight Children’s Conferences. Thus begins Act/Book Three, which contains the “resolution” of the story, in which Sinai is castrated by the Prime Minister’s servant and Sinai’s switched-at-birth-
fellow-midnight-child, Shiva, who is acting according to the policies of Indira Gandhi.

In Book Three, Sinai has a son, whose birth recapitulates the original beginning of the story in a cyclical stylistic maneuver, because even this son is not his; it is Shiva's. Again, the language of film permeates the narrative when Sinai is about to reveal the final secrets of the novel: "We are coming, however, to a time beyond illusions; having no option, I must at last set down, in black and white, the climax I have avoided all evening" (509). Here, Sinai reveals the horrors of the forced mass sterilizations and hysterectomies performed on the children of midnight to keep them from perpetuating their power. In this part of the text, Rushdie forcefully displays the danger of the univocal voice, in this instance, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's, which is questioned by the cacophony of the many voices. Finally, in this Book Sinai reveals that his "son," Adam, a post-independence second-generation Indian (The boy is genetically Shiva's son.), is a sickly boy stricken with tuberculosis, suggesting that the post-colonial condition of India is corrupt and unhealthy (Meyers 4).

Not only is Midnight's Children arguably structured after a screenplay, but the multi-voiced narration of
Rushdie's story is likened unto the cinema screen. As Rushdie's narrator, Saleem Sinai, gradually brings the reader up to the present from his grandparents' past, he says,

Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves — or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality . . . we have come from 1915 to 1956, so we're a good deal closer to the screen. (197)

Here is an explicit reference of the text's time-line as a kind of psychological film screen.

Here the narrator reveals that he came to have the ability to telepathically communicate with the other children born of the day of India's independence. Later, he "leap[s] into the heads of film stars" as he "mind hop[s]" (206). In Midnight's Children, Rushdie experiments with the concept of characters being able to eavesdrop on other characters' dreams. Naseem Aziz checks in on her daughter's dreams just to know what she is "up to" (60). This is a theme which Rushdie will develop much further in The Satanic
Verses. Even more close to this novel is the action Sinai describes in Midnight's Children, where he awakens one night "to find my grandfather's dream inside my head, and was therefore unable to avoid seeing him as he saw himself" (224). In both these novels, consciousness between characters blurs from one to the other. In this phenomenon Rushdie tropes the idea of "vision" and uses it in a kind of double-entendre, meaning both vision as prophetic activity, and vision as field of view. This happens when Sinai "contented [himself] with discovering, one by one, the secrets of the fabulous beings who had suddenly arrived in my mental field of vision" (237). Sinai is at once seeing the midnight's children, and foreshadowing, again, the type of "vision" which Farishta, in The Satanic Verses, will have.

Sinai describes this telepathic phenomenon as a "dangerous condition to get into" (244). In a remarkable trope in the text, Rushdie's narrator brings to together all three of the subjects of this dissertation into the same sentence:

Knowing what dreams had in store for her, she forced herself to stay awake; dark rings appeared under her eyes, which were covered in a thin, filmy glaze; and gradually the blurriness of her
perceptions merged waking and dreaming into something very like each other. (244)

Here, dreams cause the character, Mary Pereira, to avoid sleep, thereby causing her eyes to become glazed with a filmy glaze, resulting in blurred perceptions. Later in the story, the narrator refers, again, to film in this other sense. Referring to Major Shiva, Sinai says, "mist of his legend coat[ed] their fingertips so that they [the noblest and fairest in the land] touched him through the magical film of his myth" (487). This theme of distorted vision being linked to film is discussed in more detail in the chapter about *The Satanic Verses.*

Moreover, Rushdie connects dreams to one of the main themes of *Midnight's Children* at the beginning of the novel. The narrator says of Naseem, the future wife of Dr. Aziz, "This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination, she accompanied him on all his rounds, she moved into the front room of his mind" (23). The theme of the fragmented self is common throughout the story, and goes in both directions, from partitioned to whole, and from whole to disintegrated: "I am falling apart" (37). Much later in the story, this feeling of disintegration becomes emblematic of Sinai's physical condition, for he is sterilized during the
Prime Minister’s campaign of forced “-ectomies” (521). Rushdie’s narrator refers to his condition as being “unmanned” (39).

Later in the text, Rushdie’s narrator connects dreams and film. He tropes the idea of dream, meaning both the mental vision that people have when they sleep and the conscious hopes that people have when they are awake. This dynamic is clear in Sinai’s description of the Pioneer Café, which was a “repository of many dreams,” for

Early each morning, it would be full of the best-looking ne’er-do-wells in the city, all the goondas and taxi-drivers and petty smugglers and racecourse tipsters who had once, long ago, arrived in the city dreaming of film stardom.

(258)

Later, the windows of the Pioneer Café are likened to a cinema-screen (259); this is another influence of one of the effects of The Wizard of Oz, in which Dorothy looks out a window frame and sees filmic images (The Wizard of Oz 30). Near the end of the story, Rushdie revisits this theme when his narrator notes that Parvati-the-Witch’s “dreams of marriage and Kashmir have inevitably been leaking into me” (485).
Moreover, when Aadam Aziz, Saleem Sinai's supposed grandfather, travels away from home, he comes home with another kind of “altered vision. He saw through travelled eyes” (5). The narrator says, “His German years, which have blurred so much else, haven’t deprived him of the gift of seeing” (7). Aadam’s sight is blurred, reflecting his interior condition of being caught in that liminal space between borders of belief and disbelief. At another intersection in the text, Rushdie’s narrator discusses altered vision again when he notes that his mother had lost her “city eyes.” He explains that when a person has city eyes, he or she “cannot see the invisible people, the men with elephantiasis of the balls and the beggars in boxcars don’t impinge on you, and the concrete sections of future drainpipes don’t look like dormitories” (92).

Another example of altered vision concerns religion and the loss of faith; Aadam Aziz hits his nose while praying one morning and mysteriously, if not impetuously, resolves “never again to kiss earth for any god or man. This decision, however, made a hole in him, a vacancy in a vital inner chamber” (4). This is the kind of hole in the soul that Rushdie says may be the new role of literature to fill. Aziz is caught in a “strange middle ground, trapped between belief and disbelief” (6). While he now has an altered
vision, he is not deprived of sight. For the characters in *Midnight’s Children*, film, and for Rushdie, literature, become kinds of replacements for religion. This dynamic, along with the ritual of going to the movies, is poignantly described in the text when the narrator explains how he, as a child, would occupy his days during the holy month of Ramzân. He says that he and his friends would go to the movies as often as they could. They participated in a matinee movie club, called the “Metro Cub Club,” (215) which has the same initials as the “Midnight’s Children Conference,” the telepathic meeting of the living children of midnight, mediated by Saleem Sinai (247), and also, the exclusive, underground “Midnight-Confidential Club” which catered to the “cream of Bombay society” (542). Sinai says, “There was not much praying in our family [. . .] but we were always willing to fast, because we liked the cinema” (215).

By the end of *Midnight’s Children*, in his musings about the bigger picture of India’s post-colonial situation, Sinai conjures the image once more of that cinema-screen of his childhood, matinee days of the Metro Cub Club, and the people who sit too close to it. He says,

I refuse absolutely to take the larger view; we are too close to what-is-happening, perspective is
impossible, [. . .] right now we’re too close to the cinema-screen, the picture is breaking up into dots, only subjective judgments are possible.

(518)
Here, Rushdie links perspective about the world with the physical perspective of watching a film. He reveals the truth about the pictures, that from another perspective, they are a lot of dots. At that point, only subjectivity is possible. Here a double value for subjectivity may be inferred, for Rushdie is brandishing a two-edged sword with this image. Subjectivity in relation to objectivity and perspective may be seen as a negative thing, but seeing the heteroglossia that characterizes India’s many selves, in other words, India’s subjectivity, is a positive thing. In his novel, Rushdie gives his own unabashed perspective, his subjective opinion regarding the way history has played itself out in India, Pakistan, and Kashmir, including the way Prime Minister Indira Gandhi managed the country during her terms of office.

This leaking, this blurring of boundaries between identities and ownership of dreams is possibly endemic with Indian writers. Rushdie is one of several Indian writers who reflect the fractured, schizophrenic, angst-ridden nature of India and India’s literary products. Rushdie’s
own fragmented self is revealed, according to Ashis Nandy, in the difference between Rushdie's sensitivity in his prose fiction versus his insensitivity revealed in his non-fiction sociological work like that found in Rushdie's film commentary, "Attenborough's Gandhi" (16). Nandy writes that before Rushdie, few writers had matched the insight with which Rushdie speaks in *Midnight's Children* of "elements of the new popular culture in urban India, such as Bombay films and professional wrestling bouts, entering the interstices of the middle-class worldview" (15). Rushdie's formal social and political comments are, to Nandy, a "direct negation of these sensibilities" (15), because they are "cliché-ridden and pathetically dependent on categories derived from the popular Anglo-Saxon philosophy of the interwar years" (16). In his article about *Mirrorwork*, an anthology of Indian writers from the twenty five years since India's independence from the British Empire, including Rushdie - who also co-edits the work and gives an introductory essay - Sonnesh Chainani comments on Rushdie's splintered self: "He [Rushdie] does not examine his own bias, and he does not even ask (much less attempt to answer) larger questions about India, Indian literature, Indian authors" (3). Chainani is commenting about Rushdie's work
as an editor and critic of Indian fiction, not as an author. However, Chainani calls Rushdie's fiction "triumphant" (3).

Rather than see Rushdie's non-fiction as insensitive, I think these works' clumsiness with the complexities of the real world is a further testament of the power of Rushdie's type of post-colonial novel, especially those novels like Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, which do "capture the interplay among the popular, the folk, the nascent pan-Indian mass culture in urban India, creating new contradictions and absurdities for millions" (Nandy 15). Where Nandy is disillusioned with Rushdie, I am reminded of the capacity for fiction to be more truthful than non-fiction.

Midnight's Children revolves around the situation of emergence out of the colonization of India by the United Kingdom of Great Britain on August 15, 1947. In the final part of this chapter, I examine some of the cultural bits that Rushdie uses in his English Indian novel, applying the theories of the novel of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin.

Although Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin lived until 1975, he did most of his writing in the thirties and forties. However, according to Alan Velie, because of Bakhtin's
political unacceptability in the Soviet Union, the consequent suppression of his works for years, and the general ignorance of Russian criticism in the West, his works were largely unknown in Europe and America until recently (121). His ideas have had such an effect on postmodern critics, he could be considered a proto-postmodernist. Bakhtin calls human language "heteroglossic, polyvocal," the speech of each individual enabled not so much by language as a system as by the actual speech of other individuals. Bakhtin stresses the social dynamic of language. Speech is social and meaning is open and in flux, inevitably a dialogue among speakers. Contrasted against the epic, which Bakhtin calls monologic, the novel provides the fullest literary illustration of relativized, dialogic discourse. The novel is an open genre. Bakhtin writes in *Discourse in the Novel*,

> Novelistic dialogue is pregnant with an endless multitude of dialogic confrontations [. . .] novel dialogue is determined by the very socio-ideological evolution of languages and society. A dialogue of languages is a dialogue of social forces perceived not only in their static co-existence, but also as a dialogue of different times, epochs and days, a dialogue that is forever
dying, living, being reborn: co-existence and becoming are here fused into an indissoluble concrete unity that is contradictory, multi-speched and heterogeneous. (365)

Rushdie has succeeded in creating a new type of language out of English in Midnight's Children (Chainani 2). Rushdie's Midnight's Children is a novel of thousands of voices, dialogic confrontations, and openness in language, what Bakhtin calls "double-voicing." Rushdie's narrator, Saleem Sinai, says, regarding Pandit Nehru's post-independence partitioning of India,

India had been divided anew, into fourteen states and six centrally-administered 'territories.' But the boundaries of these states were not formed by any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words. Language divided us. (225)

Language is the spark of the confrontation. Paradoxically, it is also the catalyst of cross-cultural communication. Cronin comments that the "paradox of the Indian English novel is that it is the only kind of Indian novel there is, and it is scarcely Indian at all" (202). To write about India in any of its vernaculars, even in Hindi, its national language, is inevitably to divide it, for it confers on the
writer a regional identity that unavoidably takes precedence over his identity as an Indian. That is why, according to Cronin, the Indian novel, the novel that tries to encapsulate the whole of Indian reality can, as yet, be written only in English. And this is odd, he remarks, because English is the first language only of the smallest of India's racial groups, the Anglo-Indians, and of the tiniest of its classes, the few thousand middle and upper class families who speak English in their homes and educate their children abroad or in India's English-style public schools (201). This segment of society represents only two percent of the population.

One of the answers to the riddle of how to write an Indian novel resides in the heteroglossic base of folktales and borrowed stories from other cultures, in other words, fantastic stories. This is also where film can be useful, for the pictures inherent in the movies can aid in telling the stories, regardless of their language.

Cronin asserts that Rushdie can write an Indian novel only by taking the secret place of a child's fantasy life and, in a stupendous effort of the imagination, expanding it, until it becomes coextensive with a subcontinent. Or, [ . . . ] the Indian English
novel can operate only be adulterating the high seriousness of the classical novel with injections of genre fiction. (205)

For example, Saleem Sinai is "mild-mannered Clark Kent, protecting [his] secret identity" (182). Furthermore, the children of midnight (those born on the hour of India's independence) are Midwich Cuckoos, aliens with strange gifts that threaten the limited adult notion of reality. Another example is that Saleem's uncle, Hanif, has a mission to reform the Hindi cinema, to do away with melodrama in favor of documentary realism. Melodrama and sentimentality are the hallmarks of traditional Indian film. Hanif, however, is working on a script of a documentary with the working title "The Ordinary Life of a Pickle Factory." The film is never made. It cannot be made when the material is viewed more or less realistically. Cronin argues that the Indian English novel cannot be written by a "simple realist, but only by a writer willing to flirt with fantasy, a writer ready to dally with the Bombay talkie" (205). Ironically, the pickle factory is the place where Saleem Sinai is narrating his story to Padma, which is in no way ordinary, either (550).

But what is reality? In the polyphonic novel, reality is double-voiced, indeterminate, and open. Rushdie's
narrator, Sinai, says, "Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible" (197). If reality is a question of perspective, then cinematic reality, or a film shot, is even more a matter of perspective.

The perspective in Midnight's Children is one which embraces a plurality of literary cultures and stories. For instance, Sinai's grandfather is Doctor Aadam Aziz. It is not an accident that the major Indian character in E. M. Forster's novel, A Passage to India, is named Adam Aziz. Rushdie is counting on the audience to make the connection between his work and Forster's Indian character. Also, in the opening words of the novel, the story of Snow White is invoked. Throughout the novel, reference after reference is made to the myths and stories from a diversity of cultures, including The Wizard of Oz, of which Rushdie says in his monograph of the film for the British Film Institute,

So striking were [the] colour effects [like the yellow of the Brick Road, the red of the Poppy Field, the green of the Emerald City and of the witch's skin] that, soon after seeing the film as
a child, I began to dream of green-skinned witches
[...]. (33)

Rushdie was influenced by the high production values of the
color in the movie in another way: the stepping out of the
sepia and gray tones into Technicolor, Dorothy's
homelessness, her "unhousing" is brought into a heightened
vibrancy. From this point in the film on, Dorothy will not
be permitted to enter any interior at all until she arrives
at the Emerald City (The Wizard of Oz 33). Similarly, in
The Satanic Verses, the main characters are unhoused and
fall from the sky, and spend the rest of the novel's
narrative time looking for a home. In Midnight's Children,
Saleem Sinai fails to sustain his vision of an imaginary
homeland. Imaginary Homelands is the title of Rushdie's

While the intertextuality of the novel encompasses the
competing voices of the Indian dialects which keeping
popping up through the English, or even the dependence on
the reader to know the literary references to previous
literary works, the intertextuality touches the film genre
most forcefully. Interestingly, right after his musings on
perspective mentioned above, Sinai asks his reader to
"suppose yourself in a large cinema" (197). Here, Saleem
Sinai addresses the reader’s imagination, the cinema of the mind. Keith Wilson eloquently notes,

What Saleem [Sinai] attempts to impose explanatory shape on, by an extended exercise in literary pointillism fired by his own and Padma’s desire for meaning, are tiny details that may form themselves into the illusion of reality. (30)

Sinai attempts to see the whole picture, even as he proclaims, with the smile of a trickster, its partiality and illusoriness.

Characteristics of the trickster include, according to Gates: “individuality, satire, parody, irony, magic indeterminacy, open-endedness, ambiguity, sexuality, chance, uncertainty, disruption and reconciliation, betrayal and loyalty, closure and disclosure, encasement and rupture” (6). Saleem Sinai is a trickster on almost every count. In a sentence which Rushdie stylistically constructs to cover two pages, Sinai says,

I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode, bones splitting breaking beneath the awful pressure of the crowd, bag of bones falling down down down, [. . .] only a broken creature spilling pieces of itself into the street, because I have been so-many too-many persons, life unlike syntax allows
one more than three, and at last somewhere the striking of a clock, twelve chimes, release.

The trickster is double voiced, always in transformation, a polyphony of voices, masks. The trickster is a double-voice within a double-voice. Gates calls the trickster a trope within a trope, a speakerly text: "A double-voiced word is a word or utterance decolonized by inserting a new semantic orientation into a word which already has - and retains - its own orientation" (50), and Kathleen Ashley call the trickster a folklore figure par excellence (127). Velie writes,

Whatever his form, trickster has a familiar set of characteristics: he plays tricks and is the victim of tricks; he is amoral and has strong appetites, particularly for food and sex; he is footloose, irresponsible and callous, but somehow almost always sympathetic if not lovable. (122)

Sinai is sympathetic and the reader comes to be lulled into affection to his voice, a voice which meanders, yet never veers from the locus of the story. Like a juggler who has eight balls in the air, Rushdie's narrator never misses a beat.

Swann writes that "In Midnight's Children the terrible
and the pleasant, the serious and the absurd are related with the same all-pervading, all-knowing smile” (355). This is the smile of the trickster at work. In the opening chapter, “The Perforated Sheet” Saleem Sinai narrates how his grandfather, Doctor Aadam Aziz, was introduced to his grandmother, Naseem Ghani. Doctor Aziz is called to examine Naseem. But there’s a catch. Aziz is not permitted to see her, “not in any circumstances” (19). Aziz asks Naseem’s father, “Ghani Sahib, tell me how I am to examine her without looking at her?” The narrator tells the reader that “Ghani smiled on” (19). Then, Ghani produces a perforated sheet through which the doctor may see parts of Naseem at a time. The perforated sheet is the instrument of partitioning. In the story, India will soon be partitioned itself. India is a woman in the narrative and the fathers of partitioning are the smiling spectators.

Only later does the reader find that Sinai’s father (and therefore grandfather) is not an Indian at all, but an Englishman. The narrator has tricked the reader all along. Rushdie concludes his story, still troping the notion of fatherhood:

Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless
dust, just as, in all good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight’s children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace. (552)

In this dangerous world of violence, absurdity, twists and turns, the act of playing games, signifying, is Sinai’s means of survival.

In another way, Rushdie himself is a trickster, playing with his audience’s expectations and demands on the two genres of prose fiction and film. Several elements of the film process involve tricksters; for example, directors generally want their audience to see continuity, one moving picture. George Bluestone notes in his Novels into Film that film itself is an illusion, “For it was delight in an illusion resembling reality that first brought customers to the zoetrope, the nickelodeon, and the carnival sideshows” (6). Bluestone explains further:
The film is based on the optical principle known as persistence of vision. After exposure, the retina of the eye retains the image of a picture approximately 1/10 of a second longer than the duration of actual contact. The principle was applied in the old zoetrope, for example, where apertures were cut in a freewheeling disc. When the disc was revolved at a given speed, the light through the apertures would seem to be continuous. A series of separate images, run behind the apertures, would create the illusion of constant motion. The principle has remained the same from the flashcards of the nickelodeon to the splendor of the widescreen. In the movie theater we sit in darkness much of the time. Our eye fills in the gaps. (14)

So, in a very real way, film is a trickster, too, and Rushdie uses this characteristic of film to demonstrate the illusory nature of constructed realities like the self, India, and the post-colonial voice.

Finally, Rushdie's use of the various forms of the trickster may also give a clue to the ending of the novel, which is also modeled after *The Arabian Nights: The Marvels and Wonders of the Thousand and One Nights*. In that ancient
story, Sheherazade stays alive by telling stories, creating fictions for her murderous listener. Rushdie writes in his novel, "I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning—yes, meaning—something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity" (4). Furthermore, there are 1001 midnight children, because 1001 is the number of "alternative realities" and because it is "the largest imaginable number." So, when Padma, the chutney-stirring woman who ministers to Sinai and forms his devoted nighttime audience, à la Arabian Nights, asks, "But what is so precious to need all this writing-shiting?" (21), the answer is a matter of survival. By the end of the novel, the narrator has resigned himself to the fate of the children of midnight, what he calls "annihilation" (552). However, Bakhtin’s theory on the grotesque body sheds some light on Sinai’s resignation. The narrator knows that he is disintegrating, and will inevitably be reintegrated with the next incarnation of India, whatever that may be. His body is a model of the "grotesque body" as described by Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World:

> Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body. [.. .] The grotesque is interested only in protruding eyes.
But the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world. (42)

The clue to the end of the novel is found on the first page of it: "I, Saleem Sinai, later variously called Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha, and even Piece-of-the-Moon, had become heavily embroiled in Fate" (3). Sinai is Rushdie's incarnation of the grotesque body. One page later, he is revealing that he has been a "swallower of lives" (4). Sinai, in the mode of the grotesque, is a body which is, like India, constantly re-forming, becoming something else. It is hybrid, metamorphic, and dynamic. Rushdie himself has remarked about the form of Midnight's Children, saying,

I tried quite deliberately to make the form of the book a kind of opposite to what the narrative was saying. [...] The optimism in the book seems to me to lie in its 'multitudinous' structure. It's designed to show a country or a society with an almost endless capacity for generating stories, events, new ideas, and constantly renewing, rebuilding itself. (Kunapipi 23)
India, like the novel, is not static, for the grotesque body "is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (Bakhtin 42). Rushdie's novel is a type of grotesque, carnivalesque, hybrid of film and prose fiction. This fictional carnival is part screenplay, part nineteenth-century realist novel, part magical-realist fantasy, part history, part autobiography, part Arabian Nights, and part cinema, especially Hollywood's cinema and Bombay's Talkie, with its "cast of thousands, songs, dances, exaggeratedly sumptuous scenarios, [and] horrifying blood and gore" (Wendy Faris 185). The blurring of its boundaries concerning genres is a reflection of the postmodern exploration of identities, especially the oblique and ever-shifting identity of the emerging post-colonial voice of India.
Notes

1 In fact, Vintage Books published a screenplay version of *Midnight’s Children* in 1999.

2 According to the glossary in *Film Art: An Introduction*, 3rd edition, a jump cut is “An elliptical cut that from shot to shot either keeps the same framing on a background with the figures instantaneously changing or keeps the figure constant and changes the background” (David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, eds. 410).

3 The presence in *Midnight’s Children* of the explanation of the name Mahound is a foreshadowing of *The Satanic Verses*. Saleem Sinai reveals that the prophet was also known as “Mohammed, Mahomet, the Last-But-One, and Mahound” (192). In his *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie’s prophet within Farishta’s dreams is called Mahound, and has a life which closely parallels the prophet Muhammad.

4 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says, regarding his theory of the Signifyin(g) Monkey,

Lest this theory of criticism, however, be thought of as only black, let me admit that the implicit premise of this study is that all texts Signify upon other texts, in motivated and unmotivated ways. Perhaps critics of other literatures will find this theory useful as they attempt to account
for the configuration of the texts in their traditions. (xxv)

I have found his theory extremely helpful in my studies. In his work discussed in this chapter, Gates explains that Signifyin(g) is the use of figurative language, tropes, to convey meaning. Signifyin(g) is the Afro-American rhetorical trope of tropes which includes for instance, metaphor, repetition, rhyming, rapping, and playing the dozens. Signifyin(g) is connected to Bakhtin's notion of double-voicedness, which is the openness of a speech utterance. Gates compares his notion of Signifyin(g) to Saussure's theory on the signifier. Gates writes,

Whereas signification depends for order and coherence on the exclusion of unconscious association which any given word yields at any given time, Signification luxuriates in the inclusion of the free play of these associative rhetorical and semantic relations. (49)

The free play of associative rhetorical and semantic relations is particularly significant in stories like Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses. One of the novels which influenced Rushdie's Midnight's Children is Laurence Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, another story in which the narrator's tale about
his birth continues to be deferred (cf. Norton). One of the
dominant principles in Tristram Shandy is John Locke's
theory of the association of ideas, which asserts that life
is not based on logical progressions of facts, but on random
and sometimes logical associations between a myriad of free-
floating moments and facts. Tristram's life reflects
Locke's theory, in that his history is the product of myriad
accidents and associations of irrational but inevitably
linked events (Work xlix-1). His is also a story that
ecludes telling, just as Saleem Sinai's story continues to be
defferred.
Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is a novel influenced by and thematically about filmic visions. The book is a post-colonial commentary on the pervasiveness of Western culture in the East through the pervasive presence of the film industry, especially its vocabulary and techniques, and the themes and stories of Hollywood, the *Wizard of Oz* in particular. In several ways, *The Satanic Verses* is a recreation of the *Oz* story, replete with a journey far from home, a miraculous fall from the sky into an Oz-like land, confrontations with witches and metamorphosized creatures, meetings with sham wizards, and a desire to go home, with a final realization that “home” is yet another type of illusion for the emigrant, for there indeed is no place like home, except for the “Oz’s” we carry in our dreams.

Rushdie himself says that *The Satanic Verses* is about the Indian migrant’s homelessness in the post-colonial condition, about people “pluck[ed] out of their life whether by accident or by design or by war or exile or through a
random act of God, as they say" (Bookworm Part 1 4). Rushdie claims that this phenomenon of migration is the primary subject of The Satanic Verses, people suddenly "unhoused, without the protection of comfortably known surroundings and [. . .] suddenly obliged to act out of pure humanity" (4). In this chapter, I argue that Rushdie borrows filmic visuality and the film industry to comment on the hybrid and "unhoused" nature of the post-colonial experience, thus creating a new form of the novel, one which tropes the projection of images, and gives fresh significance to the idea of the religious "vision."

Rawdon Wilson writes, in his "The Metamorphoses of Fictional Space: Magical Realism," "The Satanic Verses opens by pointing toward the abrupt entrance of postcolonial subjects into the former imperial center; an entrance without transition, without preparation" (221). For example, in Rushdie’s novel, the problem of transformation is introduced in the first few pages:

Mutation?

Yessir, but not random. Up there in air-space, in that soft, imperceptible field which had been made possible by the century and which, thereafter, made the century possible, becoming one of its defining locations, the place of
movement and of war, the planet-shrinker and power-vacuum, most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory discontinuous, metamorphic . . . under extreme environmental pressure, characteristics were acquired. (5)

Gibreel becomes, questionably, the archangel Gibreel, and Saladin seems to become the cloven hoofed, horn-sprouting Satan described by Daniel Defoe, in the epigram to the novel, as a wandering vagabond, "without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon."

Through Saladin's transformation into a goat-devil, Rushdie illustrates, notes Steven Walker in his article "Magical Archetypes: Midlife Miracles in The Satanic Verses," that the Immigrant as Other, defined and described in terms of degrading and animalistic racist stereotypes, undergoes, in the world of magical realist procedures, an actual metamorphosis into manticore, devil, or other fantasmagorical figures. (351)

Rushdie fleshes out in this novel the metaphor of demonization, a procedure by which "People who find themselves identified as 'foreigners' or 'aliens' often find unwelcome hostile identities imposed upon them" (Paul Brians "The Unity of The Satanic Verses" 1). Brians argues that in
The Satanic Verses Rushdie challenges the English/European/white sense of identity. He rejects its claims to centrality. London is changed into an exotic land where people follow strange customs (wiping themselves “with paper only” and eating bony fish). People of traditional Anglo-Saxon stock are almost entirely absent from the London of The Satanic Verses. Instead the city swarms with immigrants: Indians, Bengalis, Pakistanis, Jamaicans, German Jews, etc. He reminds the English that they too were colonialised, by the Romans and the Normans. (2)

Furthermore, Wilson argues that the creatures into which characters metamorphose are also hybrid, calling upon more than one world for their identity. He adds, “This hybridism occurs within the folding of worlds when one, bearing its own distinct laws, erupts into the other” (225). For example, when Saladin and Gibreel fall from the exploded Air India plane into the world of Rosa Diamond’s England, neither die; rather, both begin to transform into their respective new forms, Saladin into a goat, and Gibreel into an archangel (The Satanic Verses 83).

Moreover, as a representative of the film industry, Gibreel Farishta, like Saleem Sinai of Midnight’s Children,
becomes a cultural transmitter, "emanating and capturing countless bits and fragments of a collective national life: political intrigue, lurid journalism, film gossip, Satyajit Ray" (Chakravarty 3). Farishta is a composite, reflecting the hybrid form of Rushdie's novel. Farishta is both Muslim and Hindu, mythological character and romantic hero, Bombay superstar Amitabh Bachchan and South Indian actors-turned-politicians M. G. Ramachandran and N. T. Rama Rao all rolled into one. Farishta's compositeness is a "figure for cinematic discourse as a symbolic force in postindependence India" (Chakravarty 4).

The notion of hybridity is important to Rushdie, who states that

The Metamorphoses of Ovid were quite useful. It's one of my favourite books and after all this [The Satanic Verses] is a novel about metamorphosis. It's a novel in which people change shape, and which addresses the great questions about a change of shape, about change, which were posed by Ovid: about whether a change in form was a change in kind. Whether there is an essence in us which survives transmutation [. . .] The question is whether or not there is an essential centre" (Interview with the London Consortium 58).
While *The Satanic Verses* "keeps turning into another kind of book," (58) Rushdie illustrates that some values do not lose their power. For example, in the most poignant, and climactic, scene in the novel, Saladin reconciles with his father before his father's death (Chapter IX), affirming the value of familial loyalty and acceptance of change.

Other examples of hybridization in the novel include the following instances. Names are hybridized: Pamela Lovelace's name is a hybrid of three competing narratives: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*'s heroine, Clarissa's villain, and the seventies porn star of *Deep Throat*, Linda Lovelace. Events are hybridized: Flight AI-420, which "blows apart without any warning" (4) seems to be based on elements conflated from two events, the hijacking of a TWA flight on June 14, 1985, and the crash of Air India Flight 182 on June 23, 1985 (Brians "Chapter 1: The Angel Gibreel" 2). Historical film actors are hybridized: Grace Kelly's name is punned in the reference to Gracekali, which refers to the fifties film star and later Princess of Monaco, and Kali, the destroyer goddess of Hindu mythology, and a third sense of "kali" which means "flower-bud," so that Gracekali can also mean Gracebud (Brians "Chapter 1: The Angel Gibreel" 14), a possible reference to *Citizen Kane*'s Rosebud.

Moreover, Rushdie writes of authors as hybrids:
Now it is obviously true that those other freakish, hybrid, mutant, exceptional beings—novelists—those creators of the most freakish, hybrid and metamorphic of forms, the novel, have frequently been obliged to hide behind secret identities [like comic book heroes do]. ("Is Nothing Sacred?" 425)

Rushdie argues, then, that authors are hybrid, novels are hybrid, his characters are hybrid, and his subject, India, is hybrid; so, for in *The Satanic Verses*, film becomes an exceptionally suitable tool to reflect that hybridity.

One of Rushdie's characters in *The Satanic Verses*, Mr. Muhammad Sufyan, comments on his wife's "gastronomically plural[istic]" cooking; he says, "let us not pretend that Western culture is not present; after these centuries, how could it not also be part of our heritage?" (246). Sufyan's statement could just as easily refer to the influence of film in *The Satanic Verses*. Both the Indian cinema and Western cinema cultures have blended in a hodgepodge of fictional curry in Rushdie's fiction. In this chapter, I demonstrate that film is the binding ingredient. Cultural critic Sumita Chakravarty has observed that like one of the protagonists in the novel, Gibreel Farishta,
Indian commercial cinema has come to symbolize an order of psychic investment for immigrants of Indian origin all over the world. Both, in fundamental sense, evoke the problematic scenario of [...] the desire for origins [...] that lies at the very heart of the attempt at new identity formation on the part of displaced peoples. There are countless stories and phenomenological accounts of the Bombay film and film song providing the common ground of social intercourse in Indian diasporic gatherings.

(Chakravarty 3)

Just as film in India is part of the binding agent that holds together the several disparate loyalties and identities, so does film bind together the numerous stories and themes in The Satanic Verses.

Even if film is reflective of a deeper binding force in India and in Rushdie's fiction, there are some scholars who do not see Rushdie's novel as a binding force. Some scholars are critical of The Satanic Verses, perceiving it as an attack on Islam. Critics like Ngugi and Aijaz Ahmad argue that Rushdie is guilty of "Orientalism," reinscripting the West's traditional cultural authority by writing a text like The Satanic Verses, which belongs to
what Ahmad calls a "long tradition of anti-Islamic sentiment in the West" (Bart Moore-Gilbert 19). These same writers are critical of academics, Edward Said in particular, for assuming that writers like Rushdie represent the authentic voice of his country of origin, rather than those writers who use the languages, or even better, the dialect, of their country of origin (Moore-Gilbert 19).

Said, the author of Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism, contributed to a response to the fatwa called The Rushdie File. In light of the fact that Said has made a career out of defining Orientalism and combating it through writing about it, his defense of Rushdie may seem to some out of character. He notes that "what shocks Moslems in [The Satanic Verses] is the book's knowing intimacy with the religious and cultural material it so comically and resourcefully plays with" (165). Said clearly respects Rushdie's abilities as a novelist, yet he also can imagine what an offended Muslim might say:

Why must a Moslem, who could be defending and sympathetically interpreting us, now represent us so roughly, so expertly and so disrespectfully to an audience already primed to excoriate our traditions, reality, history, religion, language, and origin? Why, in other words, must a member of
our culture join the legions of Orientalists in
Orientalizing Islam so radically and unfairly?

(165)

Said's answer to his own hypothetical question reveals the
heterogeneous nature of the new post-colonial text which
Rushdie represents. He notes the paradoxical responsibility
of readers, "to accept the brilliance of Rushdie's work and
also to note its transgressive apostasy" (166). He suggests
that this peculiar paradox is also "an emblem of the fate of
hybrids and immigrants" and of the contemporary world, for
there is no pure, unsullied, unmixed essence to
which some of us can return, whether that essence
is pure Islam, pure Christianity, pure Judaism or
Easternism, Americanism, Westernism. Rushdie's
work is not just about the mixture, it is that
mixture itself. To stir Islamic narratives into a
stream of heterogeneous narratives about actors,
tricksters, prophets, devils, whores, heroes,
heroines is therefore inevitable. (166)

Brians couches the debate in these terms: "The Satanic
Verses strives to break down absolutes, to blur easy
dichotomies, to question traditional assumptions of all
kinds" ("The Unity of The Satanic Verses" 4), for
In the end, despite the postmodern trappings of Rushdie's narrative, the values of the novel seem remarkably traditional: belief in individual liberty and tolerance, freedom of expression, skepticism about dogma, and belief in the redemptive power of love. Lest we too quickly claim triumphantly that these are distinctly European values, Rushdie reminds us of the remarkably intelligent and innovative Mughal ruler of India, Akbar, who challenged the orthodoxies of his time and brought more than his share of newness into the world (190). (4)

For example, in the text, Saladin Chamchawala takes a final look out his childhood home window and thinks to himself while he is gazing at the Arabian Sea, "If the old refused to die, the new could not be born. [. . .] in spite of all his wrong-doing, weakness, guilt - in spite of his humanity - he was getting another chance" (546). Here, Rushdie illustrates the old-fashioned value and power of redemption.

Though there is a resistance today to the hybridization of culture about which Rushdie writes, Rushdie says that he writes about this process of mélange to "say that it's there, and then to continue to offer some other notions" (65). He claims, "my preference is for mongrels over
pedigree dogs; and I’ve always thought that the idea of purity as a dangerous idea [. . .] so I’ve always written from a position of celebrating impurities” (65).

In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss Rushdie’s use of film language and techniques in The Satanic Verses as examples of the hybrid nature of his novel. In his Interview with the London Consortium about The Satanic Verses, Rushdie said:

I thought one of the reasons I could tackle such a structure and expect my readers to follow me is that those of us who are educated in the cinema (and that means everybody) are very familiar with the idea of interrupted narrations — flashbacks, dream sequences etc. are the commonplaces of cinema. (51-52)

Indeed, The Satanic Verses is laden with film language and conventions, especially montage, which involves the interruptions in narrative. According to Lee Bobker, "cinematic montage is the use of a succession of visual images and/or sounds to create emotional impact. Generally, the montage is used to compress or expand time or space and to create special moods” (38). Film director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein advocated montage as a type
of film editing in which "the aim was not so much to promote invisible continuity of a narrative, but rather to suggest meanings from the dynamic juxtaposition of many carefully selected details" (Phillips 574). In his essay, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," Eisenstein writes, "The montage method is obvious: the play of juxtaposed detail-shots, which in themselves are immutable and even unrelated, but from which is created the desired image of the whole" (232). Rushdie's text relies on the intricate placement of narrative fragments to convey a sense of indeterminacy and instability, for the narrative voice is the one constant which holds the story together. In fact, Eisenstein believes that montage is "the most powerful compositional means of telling a story" ("Film Language" 111). For Eisenstein, the most powerful montage is what he calls "montage tropes" ("Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" 240), which produces its best effects through juxtaposition and conflict - "montage juxtaposition" - not parallelism and continuity - "representational montage pieces" (241). For Eisenstein, in this kind of montage, we find a literary and filmic technique that is also an attribute of thought itself. Eisenstein writes, "Montage thinking is inseparable from the general content of thinking as a whole" (234).

That film and the novel can be so closely linked
through montage is crucially significant. Indeed, Eisenstein notes with a sense of religious reverie - he called the insight a "revelation" - that D. W. Griffith credited Dickens with the inspiration for many of his early innovations, including those involving interruption of the narrative line, for instance: parallel montage, close-ups, shifts of camera angle, expressive framing shots, and the like ("Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" 201). These are the same conventions which Rushdie uses often in The Satanic Verses. For example, he uses the flashback numerous times in the narrative:

Once upon a time - it was and it was not so, as the old stories used to say, it happened and it never did - maybe, then, or maybe not, a ten-year-old boy from Scandal Point in Bombay found a wallet lying in the street outside his home.

(35)

The use of flashback technique is one way that Rushdie elaborately splices together several competing narratives: 1) the present-time narrative of Gibreel Paroshtha and Saladin Chamcha's misadventures in India and London; 2) the past-time narrative within Farishta's dream sequences involving Mahound; and 3) the story of Ayesha and the foot-pilgrimage to Mecca which involves Ayesha's assumption that
the pilgrims can walk across the bottom of the Arabian Sea. Other subplots are intricately woven into these stories.

Rushdie also uses the compression of time associated with montage:

What Changez Chamchawala did when the aeroplane took off: trying not to let his son see him doing it, he crossed two pairs of fingers on each hand, and rotated his thumbs. [here Rushdie inserts a blank space on the physical page] And when they were installed in a hotel within a few feet of the ancient location of the Tyburn tree, Changez said to his son [. . .]. (41)

Furthermore, the text alludes to the montage’s compression also: "Here London has been altered — no, condensed, — according to the imperatives of film" (422). Nicholas Rombes Jr. comments on Rushdie’s use of the montage technique to “link themes together by bridging them over time, rendering the frequent leaps forward or backward through time less jarring” (50). For instance, Rombes writes,

In one scene, Chamcha successfully manages to eat a bone-filled kipper under the watchful eyes of his British school mates, even though it takes him a full ninety minutes [. . .]. The very next
scene takes place five years later, in India.
[. . .] Chamcha’s mother fails to eat fish successfully, “choking on the fishbone of her death” (46). (50)

Rushdie also refers to the narrative as if it were a film: “something happened, the scene grew blurred” (152). He refers to the measurement of rhythm in theater and film called a beat: “the offer of coffee in the kitchen came several beats too late” (402). Rushdie frequently introduces or dismisses characters from scenes with the language of film. In the following example, Rushdie alludes to the editing process, in relation to one of his characters: “Exit Pimple, weeping, censored, a scrap on a cutting-room floor” (13). Rushdie describes film’s frames:

[. . .] but then, as the new story, too, falls into the old pattern, continuing each time he [Gibreel Farishta] drops off the precise point at which it was interrupted, and as his own image, translated into the avatar of the archangel, re-enters the frame, so his hope dies, and he succumbs once more to the inexorable. (216)

He also structures the text at times to resemble a movie script, using the language of the director:

This is what the television camera sees: [. . .] -
Cut. — A man lit by a sun-gun speaks rapidly into a microphone. [. . .] — Cut. — Sun-guns illuminate a new face, [. . .] — Cut. — Here is a brightly lit video story. (454-455)

Furthermore, Mahound, one of the characters in Gibreel Farishta’s dream/film, is described in a kind of character sketch frequently found at the beginning of scripts:

The description is limited only to the outward, physical characteristics of the man. The language is almost terse, as definite articles and pronouns are dropped from the beginnings of sentences. Mahound is a businessman who “looks as he should, high forehead, eaglenose, broad in the shoulders, narrow in the hip. Average height, brooding, dressed in two pieces of plain cloth, each four ells in length, one draped around his body, the other over his shoulder. Large eyes; long lashes like a girl’s” (93). This is a sketch of how he should look, as if he were being cast for a scene. Rushdie uses this technique to explore how the novel might “look” or sound as a movie. (Rombes 48)

Rushdie also uses the cinematic equivalent of the dissolve, which is a transition shot in which the old shot
gradually fades as the new shot appears, suggesting the passage of time or changes in location. Rombes points out the following example:

In the “Ayesha” chapter, Gibreel moves from his dream of destruction with the Imam, to “the next narrative” involving Ayesha the prophetess (216). Gibreel’s dream with the Imam takes him to Jerusalem while his dream with Ayesha takes him to the village of Titlupur, and Rushdie links these [two dreams] via the dissolve. (50)

Rushdie then describes the narrative in terms of a fade sequence:

what story is this? Coming right up. To begin at the beginning: On the morning of his fortieth birthday, in a room full of butterflies, Mizra Saeed Akhtar watched his sleeping wife . . .

On the fateful morning of his fortieth birthday, in a room full of butterflies, the zamindar Mizra Saeed Akhtar watched over his sleeping wife [. . .]. (216)

Rombes notes that this “strikingly similar” language bridges the abrupt shift in location and story (50).

Another feature of the Indian cinema that Rushdie’s
novel presents is the playback. For example, Saladin Chamcha is a masterful voice-over artist. In Indian cinema, the sound-track is clearly and consciously divorced from the image, both in production and in reception. "One of the key narrative moments in the novel, Saladin’s obscene phone calls to Alleluia Cone, operates exactly this breaking apart of sound and image" (Interview with The Consortium about The Satanic Verses 54-55).

The text is even perceived by some critics to have the quality of a film in other ways. For example, Ahmed Deedat, one of the staunchest apologists for Islam and critics of Rushdie, perceives The Satanic Verses as a film. He remarks about the novel and the disclaimer in films which says that the similarity to fictional and non-fictional people is incidental and so forth:

Rushdie claims that his The Satanic Verses is only a novel, it is a dream within a dream. Don’t you remember that every movie before its screening, at one time, displayed a notice, to wit "All characters in this film are fictitious and the similarity of any name to persons living or dead are merely coincidental." Tell that to Mark Thatcher or Carol Thatcher, Mrs. [Margaret] Thatcher’s son and daughter, and see what they do
to you! Nobody will blame them for any grievous bodily harm. Try! Try! (6)

In this case the similarities in the novel between film and fiction are so convincing that a critic unwittingly does not even differentiate between the two forms.

In the next section of this chapter, I will comment on the other filmic aspects of *The Satanic Verses*, including the dreams, the ubiquity of film, the limitations of film, and the characters' use of film for information on how to play out their lives.

Cultural and film critic Robin Wood has remarked that the truth lies not in one dream but in many (46). Salman Rushdie's fiction confirms this observation, especially in his *The Satanic Verses*, in which the protagonist's dreams reveal some of the "truths" of the post-colonial identity of India and of her subjects. In a text which is permeated by film, it is no surprise that Rushdie uses a type of prototypical film, the dream, as one of his most persistent narrative devices. While dreams are not literally projections in the mind, I propose that, conceptually, dreams are film-like experiences, for many dreams are perceived as a seen image, not just a felt experience during sleep. Also, sometimes dreamers know they are dreaming at
the time of the dream, so the dreams are a visual experience other than the dreamer's primary consciousness, in other words, like film. Carol Thickstun writes,

> While dreams have no semiotic basis and therefore cannot be considered in the same light as narrative fiction, the images contained in them are not unlike the images found in film. While some may claim that dreams are based in reality, they are, nonetheless, made up of images which do not always remit to objects in the real world.

(606)

Moreover, Bluestone demonstrates his belief that film is not an adequate vehicle for communicating dreams when he writes, "The rendition of mental states — memory, dream, imagination — cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language" (47). Film can represent the dream experience, but not as forcefully as prose fiction, but perhaps film is so widely popular because it is so like a shared dream experience.

Though film cannot represent dreams as adequately as fiction, Rushdie uses fiction to display the power of film to communicate a shared vision. The imagination, the dream, the vision, these are all kinds of movies in the mind. Rushdie alludes to the movie in the mind that novels can
project:

And this, finally, is why I elevate the novel above other forms, why it has always been, and remains, my first love: not only is it the art involving least compromises, but it is also the only one that takes the "privileged arena" of conflicting discourses right inside our heads. The interior space of our imagination is a theatre that can never be closed down; the images created there make up a movie that can never be destroyed. ("Is Nothing Sacred?" 426)

In a work which deals with this theater of the mind, Kawin begins his study of film theory, Mindscreen:

Film is a dream — but whose? One rests in the dark, and sees; one is silent, and hears. [. . .] The filmmaker dreams in the daylight — stages, blocks, budgets, points, shoots, edits, writes, acts — solo or as a member of a collective; but always with reference to the image he creates for the dark. The film lives under his eyelids, till the means of production make it public. Between the dreaming artist and the dreaming audience, the artifact mediates. (3)
In *The Satanic Verses*, film is not merely an external referent; it is also an interior phenomenon, in the form of numerous dreams and visions. I think that Rushdie is using the dream, not simply because it is a film convention or because it a form of filmic vision, but because it is useful way to blur the boundaries between fact and fantasy.

The dream/films are used by Rushdie to trouble the notion of epistemological and theological certainty. Rushdie troubles the reliability of the religious vision and the texts that may follow when his character, Gibreel Farishta, has dreams in which he is the archangel Gibreel. Sura 53 of the Koran, entitled "The Star," states:

> By the declining star, your compatriot [Muhammad] is not in error, nor is he deceived! He does not speak out of his own fancy. This is an inspired revelation. [...] His [Muhammad's] own heart did not deny his vision. How can you [the unbelievers], then, question what he sees? (525)

Rushdie directly refers to "The Star" in his text, for Gibreel appears to Mahound, who later recites, "The Star," and the scribes begin to write what Muslims call "the satanic verses," apocryphal lines which affirm the mediating existence of three pagan goddesses (114). The episode regarding Mahound and Gibreel is a dream sequence. "And one
of the things about dream sequences is that they distort knowledge and memories" (Interview with the London Consortium 55). Rushdie demonstrates this distortion in *Midnight's Children* when Saleem Sinai remembers Mrs. Gandhi, a historical figure. In *The Satanic Verses*, however, Rushdie is not merely commenting on Islam here; he is questioning the nature of revelation (Interview with the London Consortium 56).

Some may criticize Rushdie for replacing Islam's certainty with his own brand of dogma, a religious faith, as it were, in absolute freedom of the imagination; but even literature, which is almost sacred to Rushdie, is not something that society should totemize, because the act of doing so negates the power of literature, which is forever changing, offering a means of questioning absolute "Truth," providing alternatives ("Is Nothing Sacred?" 421). For Rushdie, literature is not sacred, but essential: "for a secular, material culture, [literature] is some sort of replacement for what the love of god offers in the world of faith" (421). Rushdie advises against seeing literature as a new sacred entity, because the notion of the sacred "seeks to turn other ideas — Uncertainty, Progress, Change — into crimes" (416); rather, he believes literature should be used as a tool to provoke new ideas and discover answers to the
old questions. In his lecture in honor of Herbert Read in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie comments on the question, "Is Nothing Sacred?" He argues, "Art . . . must constantly strive to find new forms to mirror an endlessly renewed world" (418). The anthology of Indian literature from the last fifty years which Rushdie and Elizabeth West edited is aptly named *Mirrorwork*. Rushdie continues in "Is Nothing Sacred?," "No aesthetic can be a constant, except an aesthetic based on the idea of inconstancy, metamorphosis, or, to borrow a term from politics, 'perpetual revolution'" (418). Rushdie comments, "[Europe’s] rejection of totalized explanations is the modern condition. And this is where the novel, the form created to discuss the fragmentation of truth, comes in" (422). Rushdie claims, the elevation of the quest for the Grail over the Grail itself, the acceptance [. . .] that reality and morality are not givens but imperfect human constructs, is the point from which fiction begins. This is what J. F. Lyotard called, in 1979, *La Condition Postmoderne* (422).5

Furthermore, Rushdie argues:

while the novel answers our need for wonderment and understanding, it brings us harsh and unpalatable news as well. It tells us there are
no rules. It hands down no commandments. [. . .] And it tells us there are no answers; or, rather, it tells us that answers are easier to come by, and less reliable, than questions. (423)

Rushdie believes in the power of fiction to "fill our god-shaped holes" (423). It is uniquely able to do this in a post-modern age, Rushdie claims, because

literature is the art least subject to external control, because it is made in private. The act of making it requires only one person, one pen, one room, some paper. (Even the room is not absolutely essential.) Literature is the most low-technology of the art forms. It requires neither a stage nor a screen. It calls for no interpreters, no actors, producers, camera crews, costumiers, musicians . . . The more money a piece of work costs, the easier it is to control. Film, the most expensive of art forms, is also the least subversive. This is why, although Carlos Fuentes cites the works of film-makers like Bunuel, Bergman and Fellini as instances of successful secular revolts into the territory of the sacred, I continue to believe in the greater possibilities of the novel. Its singularity is its best
In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie can have the best of both worlds, the filmic and the fictional, for he can insert the filmic within his prose fiction via the film-like pictures in Farishta's mind.

The blurring of these two forms is reflected through Gibreel Farishta, who ultimately cannot differentiate between his dream-state and his waking-state. The boundaries between the two have blurred for Gibreel. The text states, "Gibreel: moves as if through a dream [. . .] he no longer recognizes the distinction between the waking and dreaming states" (457). In a surprising twist in the novel, the dreams of Gibreel Farishta are almost turned into actual "theologicals," movies about religious figures and their adventures, in which Gibreel will star. The producer, S. S. Sisodia, and Billy Batuta, the head of the London-based film production company which would make these films discuss the project. Batuta explains, "We are making a high-taste, quality picture. A moral tale: like — what do you call them? — fables" (272). Sisodia responds, "Like a dream" (273). The movies are like the dreams; the dreams will become the movies that they already prototypically are. Gibreel Farishta's dreams are transferred from the movie in his mind to actual Bombay films in which Farishta stars. In
both forms, Farishta is the star; in one, he is the dreamer; in the other, he is the dreamed. Rombes notes, "The proposed cinematizing of Gibreel's dream-state creates only more confusion about the nature of Gibreel's dreams" (48).

Dreams have another metamorphosizing effect on the dreamer. For example, Saladin Chamcha, "emerging from the dream, found his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade" (34). Even Chamcha wonders if his metamorphosis into a "supernatural imp" is the result of a "delirious dream," but it is not (158). Later, Ayesha is transformed before Gibreel in his dream. Dreams and metamorphosis are inextricably linked in The Satanic Verses (c.f. 294).

A dream is also a type of aspiration, visually described as a "vision," which may come from outside the dreamer. The Satanic Verses tells of a mountain climber's vision to ascend Mount Everest solo (304). Rushdie uses the word "vision" in the same context to mean a mental kind of revelation, so in the story, a vision is both a mental picture-show and a dream-like aspiration. Later in the text, a god-like entity appears to Gibreel Farishta in a vision, and says, "We sent Revelation to fill your dreams" (319), bringing together again both of the above connotations of the filmic vision. At another important
part of the narrative, probably the most controversial part, dreams are linked to aspirations within one of the dreams of Gibreel in which the whores of Jahilia begin to fantasize about being submissive wives of Baal (384), in a type of imitation of Mahound and his wives, which incensed Islamic fundamentalists with the resonance that this story had in relation to Muhammad and his wives.

Gibreel Farishta’s dreams are called “serial visions” (205) in the manner of a serialized movie or television program. Gibreel “sees himself in the dream” as if he is the character in a film he is watching (211). Later in the text, Saladin Chamcha begins “to appear to the locals in their dreams” (285). The dreams are likened to a transmitted moving picture: “the dreams turned out to have the terrifying quality of being serial, each one following on from the one the night before, and so on, night after night” (285-86). Later, Gibreel Farishta’s “serial dreams” are called “nightshows” (340). Moreover, dreams are cast as a commodity, for the narrator speaks of the dream experience as being equivalent to the experience of being able to afford such luxuries as going to movies: “They even told her [Mishal Saeed] their dreams, although few of them dreamed more than once a month on account of being too poor to afford such luxuries” (220-221).
The varied aspects of the dream are brought together into one passage when Rushdie's narrator says about Saladin Chamcha's father, Nasreen, who is dying: "gazed up [...] with his open dreaming eyes, which could see into three worlds at once, the actual world of his study, the visionary world of dreams, and the approaching after-life as well" (524). Here, the dreaming eyes see actuality, visions, and revelation of metaphysical potentiality.

Finally, regarding dreams and *The Satanic Verses*, the film that influenced *The Satanic Verses* most heavily, *The Wizard of Oz*, is built on the premise that the post-tornadic part of the movie, which includes the transition to color, is a dream-sequence. Using a dream sequence allowed the makers of *The Wizard of Oz* to portray Wicked Witches that were green and monkeys that could fly, for Kawin notes that "dreams, like movies, endow the writer with temporary freedom," and "*The Wizard of Oz* capitalizes on this similarity (56). Rushdie's novel also capitalizes on this freedom, albeit short-lived, for he can grapple with questions of the religious text's reliability in the mediated form of the dream-sequence.

In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the numerous ways in which film's other influences are seen in
The Satanic Verses, including film's ubiquity, its limitations, and its instructional usefulness.

Film is pervasive in The Satanic Verses. This nine chapter novel comprises two major competing narratives, one of the present day experience of two film stars from India, and the other, the past story, communicated through Gibreel Farishta's dreams, of Mahound and his visions and the people in his life. Both stories are filmic. Both involve cinematographic vision; the earlier story is a prototypical cinematic experience, and the present-day story is steeped in contemporary film jargon, film techniques, and film business in general. The cinema world, both film and television, is ubiquitous throughout the novel. Besides being the industry in which nearly every character works, film or television appear in numerous scenes incidentally. For example, in the airplanes that carry the characters to and from India, in-flight movies are one of the major foci (18, 76). When the first plane mentioned in the story is hijacked, the narrator mentions the "grubby movie screen on which, earlier in the journey, the inflight inevitability of Walter Matthau had stumbled lugubriously into the aerial ubiquity of Goldie Hawn" (18). Goldie Hawn is ubiquitous, the text implies, because film is. Later, the in-flight movie has replaced the flight attendants to a degree, for
now, "On the cabin’s movie screen a stewardess was demonstrating the various safety procedures. [. . .] This was progress, Chamcha recognized. Film instead of human beings [. . .]" (513). Chamcha’s recognition is ironic, for he is noticing the dehumanization which film’s technology has provided in this situation.

Moreover, in the opening pages of the novel, Rushdie introduces the reader to Gibreel Farishta, a Bombay film star who has decided to leave India and go to London. In the process, the airplane he is flying on is hijacked and subsequently blown up. The reader familiar with Bombay film jargon and gossip is teased with a host of references, which are scrambled "in the manner of the average commercial [Indian] film" (2). Rushdie’s narrator says the following about Farishta’s disappearance:

After he departed the ubiquitous images of his face began to rot. [. . .] Outside the picture palaces of Bombay, mammoth cardboard effigies of Gibreel were seen to decay [. . .] His portraits on the covers of movie magazines acquired the pallor of death [. . .] Even on the silver screen itself, high above his worshippers in the dark [. . .] projectors jammed unaccountably [. . .] his films ground to a halt, and the lamp-heat of the
Farishta's images are ubiquitous, like film's presence in this novel; picture palaces of Bombay, movie magazines, and film projectors are mixed in with musings of stardom and the fickle nature of memory. This passage introduces another important idea in the novel, the seeming near-deification of superstars. When Farishta is supposed dead, since he plays gods on screen, it is as if a true god has died:

It was the death of God. Or something very like it; for had not that outsize face, suspended over its devotees in the artificial cinematic night, shone like that of some supernal Entity that had its being at least halfway between the mortal and the divine? [. . .] Gibreel had spent the greater part of his unique career incarnating, with absolute conviction, the countless deities of the subcontinent in the popular genre movies known as "theologicals." It was part of the magic of his persona that he succeeded in crossing religious boundaries without giving offence. (16)
though he is not a Hindu, he plays Hindu gods. Rushdie, in
his own career, did not cross those boundaries so
innocuously, for his fictional dream became a living
nightmare, when life imitated art, and the fundamentalist
Islamic leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, sentenced
Rushdie to death, like Mahound in the novel who sentences
Baal the poet to death (392). Some of Rushdie's critics
failed to differentiate between the illusory nature of
reality, so he became a victim of the illusion. Rushdie's
plight has been called "The Rushdie Affair" (cf. Daniel
Pipes).

Another way that film is pervasive in The Satanic
Verses is that film insinuates itself into every aspect of
the characters' lives. The first time Chamcha goes to
London, the narrator relates, "he was too nervous to ask his
[Chamcha's] father if they could go to a movie, not even
one, not even The Pure Hell of St Trinians [sic]" (42).
Furthermore, characters are constantly in the presence of
television programs or films. For example, Rekha Merchant
[stays] "glued to the Doordarshen TV programmes" (14);
Pamela Chamcha, while mourning the supposed death of her
husband, watches "old movies on television" (182); a couple
of swinging moderns collect contemporary art and throw wild
parties to which they invite "friends for fumbles in the
dark on sofas while watching soft-porno VCRs" (227); and similarly, Hal Valance and his wife, Baby, "watch pornography on video" on Sunday afternoons" (270). Film becomes an intimate part of these characters’ lives, present in times of satisfaction, sorrow, socializing, and sex. The ubiquity of the photographed image takes numerous forms. It is not always a moving picture; sometimes, the image is simply a Photo-Me machine (452), Polaroid cameras (500, 527), or video-controlled entry systems (520).

Moreover, in the novel, film is present not only in its most obvious forms, television, movies, the appearances of film stars, producers, and so on, but nature also takes on the characteristics of the moving picture image. For example, at one point, even the physical world looks like television’s white noise: "the snowstorm that was building up out there [was] making England look like a television set after the day’s programmes end" (194). This metaphor also reflects the fragmentation with which the post-colonial mind like Rushdie’s sees the world. Rushdie says in his Bookworm interview, "we live in fragmented and fractured societies" (Part 2 1).

Using natural images as metaphors in film is a two-way dynamic. Farishta is called "the biggest star in the history of the Indian movies" (11). The hijackers are
called "actors," also. The narrator explains, "they were stars now, shooting stars or falling (emphasis mine), and they had their own stage names. [. . .] they were here to be on television" (78). Even the angel Lucifer is recast as an actor, in light of this film vocabulary, for he is "the morning's star" (131).

One of the most significant ways film intersects with The Satanic Verses is the number of direct and indirect allusions to actual films, foreign and American. Rushdie directly refers to no fewer than thirty-five movies in the text, and makes at least fifteen indirect references to titles of films in the novel. Rushdie alludes to or mentions film directors and producers like D. W. Griffith, in the form of D. W. Rama (11, 23); Ridley Scott (63); The Merchant Ivory Film Production Team, in the form of Rekha Merchant (350); Satyajit Ray (440); Mrinal Sen (440); G. Aravindan (440); and, Ritwik Ghatak (440). Rushdie refers to numerous actors and film stars in The Satanic Verses, including Sigourney Weaver (62); Rex Harrison (424); Rutger Hauer (268); Goldie Hawn (18); Charlton Heston (132); Dustin Hoffman (321); Hal Holbrook (265); Lana Turner (298); Buster Keaton (399); Grace "Gracekali" Kelly (25); Kermit the Frog (62, 140); Bruce Lee (244); Shelley Long (77); Linda Lovelace, in the form of Pamela Lovelace (49-50); Klaus
Maria Brandauer (416-17); Miss Piggy (62); Marilyn Monroe (61); Robert de Niro (48, 456); Kim Novak (139); Elvis Presley (51); Madonna (245); Vanessa Redgrave (341); Christopher Reeve (341); James Mason (341); Peter Sellers (51, 403, 425); and Arnold Schwarzenegger (268). Several television shows and characters, and film characters are mentioned also: The Goon Show (406); Kung Fu (278); The Muppet Show (62, 140); The Munsters (62); and Sesame Street (62).

Film’s influence and ubiquity in The Satanic Verses is also seen in the way the novel resonates with elements which are remarkably similar to what Rushdie calls his “first literary influence,” The Wizard of Oz, “the film, not the book, which I didn’t read as a child” (The Wizard of Oz 9). One of the more obvious but easily neglected similarities between the film and Rushdie’s novel is that both are heavily informed by a dream sequence. In fact, the entire color section of The Wizard of Oz is a dream sequence. Rushdie’s Gibreel constantly moves back and forth between two separate worlds of consciousness in his negotiation between dream and waking reality.

It is significant that the movie about Dorothy and Oz affected Rushdie in his childhood, and this fact contributes to an important theme of the novel which will be discussed
later in this chapter. First of all, *The Satanic Verses* begins with two people “tumbling from the heavens,” much like Dorothy does in her post-tornadic fall into the Land of Oz (3). One of those “falling stars” (4), for they are movie actors, is Saladin Chamcha, whom the other star, Gibreel Farishta, calls “Chumch” (3). Crying a name which sounds like *Munchkins* (emphasis mine), Rushdie’s characters invoke another story of fantastic adventures in mysterious foreign lands. Later, Rushdie explicitly refers to “the other bloody Munchkins,” (55) proving that *The Wizard of Oz* is in his literary consciousness as he writes the novel. Several other possible connections between the film may be seen throughout the novel. The most obvious connection is thematic: the protagonists are trying to find home, navigating through a strange place, trying to carve out valid identities, asserting their own voices in the process. Dorothy’s song “Over the Rainbow” becomes for Rushdie, “the anthem of all the world’s migrants, all those who go in search of the place where ‘dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.’” In *The Wizard of Oz*, he continues, “It [the song] is a celebration of Escape, a grand paean to the Uprooted Self, a hymn — the hymn — to Elsewhere” (23). Later, in *The Satanic Verses*, a novel about uprooted people, Rushdie uses the exact phrase, “somewhere over the rainbow”
The novel borrows several other elements from *The Wizard of Oz*. Some of the images in the book include a "long, vertical tunnel . . . that went to Wonderland" (6), like Dorothy’s cyclone which blows her to Munchkinland. Actors’ costume changes, “which could go from purple to vermilion between shots” (62) is reminiscent of Oz’s “Horse of a Different Colour You’ve Heard Tell Of [caps sic],” which changes hue in each shot in which it appears (*The Wizard of Oz* 14). In chapter 3, Rushdie introduces Rosa Diamond to the story. Rosa is an eighty-eight year old woman who is looking through a window, “watching the full moon’s sea” (129) when the two actors fall from the sky onto her British property. Two features of this action are like *The Wizard of Oz*: 1) Rosa is looking out a window at a silver screen of sorts. In *The Wizard of Oz*, as she is falling through the sky, Dorothy looks out the supposed window of her home (the audience does not know that this part of the story is enfolded in a post-tornadic dream sequence yet). Rushdie comments in his criticism of the film, “What she see through the window is a sort of movie – the window acting as a cinema-screen, a frame within the frame – which prepares her for the new sort of movie she is about to step into” (30). For this and several other
reasons, Rushdie calls the movie "a very filmic film" (47). Accordingly, *The Satanic Verses* is a very filmic novel. While in the sky, Farishta spies Rekha Merchant, who is flying on a carpet (7), quite like Miss Gulch who turns into the Wicked Witch of the East and whom Dorothy sees through her film-like window as she is in the sway of the tornado's gales. This Oz-like fall serves another function; it prepares those falling for the "sort of movie" they are about to step into (*Wizard of Oz* 30). The narrator states, while pushing their way out of the white came a succession of cloudforms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, gods into bulls, women into spiders, men into wolves. 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. (6-7)

Farishta and Chamcha are both about to play their part in a filmic drama in which Chamcha actually metamorphosizes into
a goat-like, devil creature, and Farishta slips back and forth from lucidity to insanity, from human to angel, from a defined being to one with a blurred identity to match his hybrid film-star subjectivity. The text, by using film as a catalyst for change, reflects this hybridity and metamorphic action.

Incidentally, another aspect of the Rosa Diamond scene that is reminiscent of *The Wizard of Oz* film is that the original Ruby Red Slippers were "Silver Shoes" (*The Wizard of Oz* Rushdie 14). Rushdie invokes both the moon, which he earlier describes as "alabaster" (3), not too unlike a silver screen, and the color red, in "Rosa." The location in which Farishta and Chamcha fall to the ground is, like Munchkinland is a segue to Oz, both a connecting point (a segue to "Ellowen Deeowen" — London) between the former life in India and the new life of these two characters, who are now supposed dead, and an intersection between film and fiction.

Another element in the novel which has a parallel in the film about Oz is the seeming nonchalance with which the fantastic characters such as a singing, dancing, skipping scarecrow, tin-man, lion, or flying monkeys are met. In *The Satanic Verses*, Saladin metamorphosizes into a talking goat-devil and is met with little surprise or wonder. This
immigrant is brutalized and treated like a beast. Instead of looking for a brain, a heart, or courage, Chamcha’s quest is for a reclamation of his humanity. Is this any different than the metamorphosed farm hands, who in the Land of Oz are trying to reclaim their best human qualities? According to Rushdie, this transformation is an experience of formerly colonized, disadvantaged people, and he claims that “it is a migrant’s eye view of the world [...] written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis [...] that is the migrant condition, and from which [...], can be derived a metaphor for all humanity” (“In Good Faith” 394).

One of the most significant features of the film The Wizard of Oz is the duplicitous wizard, who masks his true identity behind a curtain, from behind which he controls the projected and unreal Wizard of Oz. In The Satanic Verses, several such wizards make appearances. The Imam looks like the Wizard of Oz (see page 210): “His head, looking too large for the body beneath, lolls ponderously on the surprisingly scrawny neck that can be glimpsed through the grey-black wisps of beard. The Imam’s eyes are clouded; his lips do not move. He is pure force, an elemental being; he moves without motion, acts without doing, speaks without uttering a sound. He is the conjurer and history is his
trick" (210). Later in the text, another Oz-like head floats before Saladin Chamcha in his dreams: "a shape, a face, was floating closer, ghostly still, unclear, but one day soon he would be able to call it by its name. [. . .] Submission" (289). Here, Islam is cast in the light of the terrifying (but sham?) Wizard.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, the dog, Toto⁹, pulls back the curtain, revealing the Wizard's more accurate identity, a non-Wizard. In his monograph about the film, Rushdie writes, "I couldn’t stand Toto. I still can’t. [. . .] Toto: that little yapping hairpiece of a creature, that meddlesome rug! (I should point out that I felt this way about Toto even when I still had hair of my own)" (17-18).

Ironically, Rushdie, himself, is a Toto of sorts in that he, too, is a revealer, a puller aside of curtains; in this case, he pulls aside the curtain of illusions regarding the film about Dorothy and Oz. He writes, "We do not really want to know [the unpleasant realities behind the illusion of effortless enjoyment in the film]; and yet, so fatally willing are we to do that which may destroy our illusions, that we also do want to know, we do, we do" (45), a paraphrase of the Cowardly Lion's fear.

*Oz*’s influence is also seen in three other significant ways in the novel: 1) A curtain plays a significant role in
The *Satanic Verses*, for the whores of Jahilia are behind a veil, or curtain (376); 2) Rushdie’s narrator refers to the “four hundred and twenty pairs of ruby slippers,” alluding to Dorothy’s ruby slippers and also suggesting the actual shoe collection of Imelda Marcos (361); and, 3) At one moment in the text, Rushdie refers to the book, *The Wizard of Oz*, by alluding to the “green-tinged spectacles” (22). In the text, all those who enter the Emerald City must wear green glasses, which turns out to be a ruse by the wizard/humbug to deceive people into thinking that the city is really all green, because he wanted the color of the Emerald city to fit its name, which he also invented (Baum 77-78; 93; 126).

Finally, *The Wizard of Oz* represents the stories of childhood. Rushdie admits “the stories we start with, like *The Wizard of Oz*, like *Alice in Wonderland*, like the Arabian *Nights* stories I heard when I was a kid, shaped me very profoundly” (*Bookworm* Part 2 4). Furthermore, Rushdie says that he “went on and on writing variations of them,” and laughingly says, “So I guess it’s all Dorothy’s fault” (Part 2 4). Rushdie is placing a tremendous amount of weight on the effect that the *Wizard of Oz* had on his writing. If his writing is a variation on *Oz*, *The Satanic Verses* is one of the more profound variations on that theme. These
multiple appearances of *The Wizard of Oz* reveal two things: 1) the power of childhood stories to instruct and transform a person, and 2) Rushdie is indeed writing variations of the movie over and over in his fiction. He may not owe "everything to Dorothy," but his fiction does appear to be a veiled homage to her plight and her story.

Film’s ubiquity is not always welcomed, though. In a foray into the fantastic, the dead mountain climber, Maurice Wilson, complains that a Chinese expedition “actually had the gall, the sheer face, to film my corpse” (196). This quote reveals the presence of film as a means of not only recording, but violating the sacred spaces. The “Rushdie Affair” is a prime example of a violent reaction to a perceived attack on the sacred, in this case, Islam’s text and prophet.

Rushdie’s fiction, while using film as a paradigm at times, reflects the multi-formic, heteroglossic, hybrid character of post-colonial India, Rushdie’s postmodern texts, and even Rushdie himself as an author. But the metaphor is, of course, limited. The camera has its own unique limitations. As *The Satanic Verses* reveals, there are “places which the camera cannot see” (457). Also, the camera flattens events and reduces them to mere surface facts. This flattening effect is, perhaps, one of the
reasons that the use of film as metaphor for India and Rushdie’s fiction is so useful; India’s identity resists totalizing statements which give the complete picture, if a complete picture could ever be possible. Film as Rushdie’s metaphor must break down soon enough, for to make an observation that film reflects a voice or an identity is to work from the assumption that there is something to reflect. Rushdie’s texts are constructed. I also acknowledge that so is the entity called a “post-independence, post-colonial Indian voice;” to observe a pattern in Rushdie’s fiction is a useful tool to understand better the multitudinous identity of the subject about which Rushdie is writing. In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie incorporates cinematic language, techniques, and narratological strategies. Rushdie uses frequent film references to link the frame story to the other stories in the text, and also to comment on the nature of film itself, which Rushdie’s narrator calls, “artificial” and “fabricated” (347).

In his article titled “The Satanic Verses as a Cinematic Narrative,” Rombes astutely explores the different ways of “seeing” offered by the novel, which are suggested by the dichotomy between the narrator’s omniscient point of view and the constricted point of view of the “camera eye” (50). By using film language and technique, Rombes argues,
Rushdie is raising epistemological questions (51).

Rombes especially examines Rushdie’s use of the aerial point of view, which has a foreshortening effect which flattens the image. Rushdie presents this illusion for the reader in the dream sequence passage in which the Imam is flying on Gibreel’s shoulders over an immense landscape, reddish, with flat-topped trees. They “fly over mountains that are also flat-topped; even the stones, here, are flattened by the heat” (213). Here, Rushdie’s text reduces three-dimensional images to two-dimensional images. Rombes notes that the high aerial shots tend to dehumanize or objectify the action below, imbuing the narrative with a detached, distant quality. Rombes argues that the resulting flatness from the high aerial perspective also suggests a type of “cultural or artistic flatness” (49). When Saladin uses his remote control at the end of the narrative, his channel-surfing reduces the banal and the significant to the same level. Rombes notes that the text here begins to take on the character of that channel-surfing quality, changing from long, convoluted cadences to the staccato, abrupt changes suggested by flipping rapidly through the channels with a remote control: “Lycanthropy was on the increase in the Scottish Highlands. The genetic possibility of
centaurs was being seriously discussed. A sex-
change operation was shown” (405). (49-50)

Rombes states,

Here, Rushdie is using cinematic techniques (such
as cutting — from image to image) not as a purely
visual device, but as a narratological device to
mimic the discontinuity and randomness of video
images at the mercy of remote control. (50)

Another effect is suggested, though. This aspect of
Rushdie’s fiction may also be seen as a metaphor for the
powerlessness that an author has over his or her fiction
once it is released into the public domain, as the fatwa on
Rushdie demonstrates.

Finally, the “camera eye” is unable to formulate the
questions necessary to understand the action unfolding
before it. For example, during the raid on Club Hot Wax,
television cameras are present: “This is what a television
camera sees: less gifted than the human eye, its night
vision is limited to what klieg lights will show” (454).
The only reality for the camera is that which it immediately
apprehends, while for the narrator “reality exists beyond
the purely phenomenal” (Rombes 51). Ironically, Rushdie
uses filmic technique in his fiction to expose the potential
shortcomings of camera perspective, but Rombes points out
that "the novel is, finally, less a condemnation of cinema and more a cautious affirmation of our curiosity — our desire to ask important questions despite what we 'see'"

53).

Ultimately, Rushdie sprinkles throughout his text an ever-present cinematic-consciousness. The world of surfaces that makes up the videotape or film is a world that glorifies the appearance of things versus their reality. While film is physically a surface, its didactic possibilities are not wasted on Rushdie, who recently commented publicly regarding this fascination with the surface appearance in an appearance on the ABC television show, Politically Incorrect, hosted by comedian Bill Maher. In response to the Massacre at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, in which thirteen victims were gunned down by two teens who then took their own lives, Maher criticized those in Littleton, Colorado who had spoken to the media so soon after their loss (29 April 1999). He likened these people to guests on the popular Jerry Springer Show, whose host was also on the panel of Politically Incorrect that evening, along with Rushdie, Ted Nugent, and Laura Innes. Maher opined, "I think they’re [the people sharing their feelings with the media so soon after the tragedy] worse than the people who come on Jerry’s show." Rushdie
responded to the larger concept of the confessional television spectacle, saying:

I do think there's something interesting and strange about, you know, confessional culture. These days, it seems as if we're not real until we, until we spill it all out on television. (emphasis mine) . . . To do something in private is not to do it any more. . . . This thing happening [the unfolding drama and spectacle regarding the shooting at Littleton, CO] [is] the first great public mourning act . . . after the death of Princess Diana, which I think was initially spontaneous and surprised everybody by the size of it. I went to Kensington Palace like three days after the accident to witness what was being called the “Miracle of the Flowers.” You know, by then, already, of course, there had been mass media attention upon it, and what you saw there was not people mourning; you saw tourism and you saw people doing what they had seen on t.v. They were performing a “televised act” now, and within two days, two and a half days, it had changed from a spontaneous mourning to something in inverted commas.
In this new paradigm of the televisual possibility of being seen, to do something in private, according to Rushdie, is not to do it at all. Being seen, being viewed two dimensionally by a mass audience is an act which validates existence in a self-reflexive postmodern age. Television and cinema, according to this theoretical construct, become types of guidebooks for how to act in times of crisis, much the same way eighteenth-century literature modeled behavior for readers to emulate. One of the results of this pervasiveness, then, is that film and television are surrogate teachers to a new generation of watchers. In *The Satanic Verses*, film is an unwitting instructional tool. The hijackers who blow up the *Bostan* at the beginning of the novel “want[ed] to behave the way they [had] seen hijackers behaving in the movies and on TV” (78). The narrator comments, “They are reality aping a crude image of itself, they are worms swallowing their tails” (78). Yet again, the novel is not endorsing a sense of bipolar opposition, where film is either bad or good; rather, it is revealing the multi-faceted capacities in it. “Cinematic commercials,” the narrator reveals, “implant” their “residue” on the viewers’ consciousness regarding AIDS (284). Furthermore, Jumpy Joshi learns from movies how to revive someone who has fainted (289).
The Satanic Verses is a story which uses film not just as a backdrop to illustrate society's dependence on the televisual/filmic realms for apparent instruction on how to act or who to adore. This novel also encourages through the action of one of its main characters, Chamcha, the turning away from the screen, a move which symbolizes a maturity and independence from the ways of youth, not unlike Saint Paul's admission that when he was a child "he spake as a child," "understood as a child," and "thought as a child," like "see[ing] through a glass, darkly," but when he became an adult, he "put away childish things" (King James Version, I Cor. 13.11-12). The novel begins with a filmic presence, and ends with an abandonment of those very elements present at the beginning. In the novel, the moon is one of the symbols for the presence of the filmic image. It is the ultimate natural reflective surface, like a gigantic movie screen. At the beginning of the story, "the moon" is mentioned in the same sentence as "the movies" (3). The two film stars are falling from the sky after their airplane has been hijacked and blown up. As they fall "beneath a moon of alabaster," Gibreel Farishta says to Saladin Chamcha, "in the movies you only mimed to playback singers" (3). From then on, film is a ubiquitous presence in the novel. By the end of the story, both Saladin and Gibreel
have returned to India. The final scene depicts Saladin, who is now referred to by his original, pre-film career, name, Salahuddin Chamchawala, "looking out the window of his childhood bedroom" (543). Farishta comes to see him, but Farishta is by now a psychotic murderer who has gone crazy from his inability to escape the filmic visions, which he now cannot differentiate from reality. Farishta commits suicide in front of Chamcha. Earlier in the novel, Rekha Merchant accuses Farishta of "being a creature of surfaces, like a movie screen" (27). When he could not negotiate between his blurred world of surfaces and reality no longer, he shoots himself in the mouth with a pistol — quite an unglamorous way for a "god" to die.

A gap in the text implies that some time has gone by, and now Chamcha is standing again "at the window of his childhood and look[ing] out at the Arabian Sea." Again, the filmic presence of the moon is invoked. The omniscient narrator says, "The moon was almost full; moonlight, stretching from the rocks of Scandal Point out to the far horizon, created the illusion of a silver pathway" (546). The pathway is silver, like the silver screen of cinema's reflective surfaces. Chamcha is gazing out a window, just like the film within a film of Dorothy's view out the window in her tornadic fall (The Wizard of Oz 30). Rushdie
observes that the window in the *Oz* scene "prepares her for the new sort of movie she is about to step into" (30). In *The Satanic Verses*, this time, the narrator comments about the scene which is going to prepare Chamcha for his new sort of movie. He claims, "Childhood was over, and the view from this window was no more than an old and sentimental echo" (547). The echo is a hearkening back to the fairy tales of the past, the "theologicals" of the Bombay cinema, the Hollywood movies which motivated Farishta and Chamcha to be stars in the first place, the stories, like *The 1001 Arabian Nights*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Wizard of Oz*, that inspired youthful imaginations. By the end of the narration about Chamcha, Chamchawala has matured tremendously; he has made peace with his father, who has passed away; he has accepted the changes which will take place in the wake of his father's death. He has grown up, and now, the narrator informs the reader, Chamcha "turned away from the view" (547). This is how *The Satanic Verses* ends, with a turning away from the filmic window, the filmic view, not because this view is inherently inferior, but because, Chamcha realizes that he is "getting another chance" (547). He is accepting the world as it is, surfaces and all, and embracing life.
Notes

1 By "Orientalism," I mean Edward Said's definition: "the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient'" (Orientalism 26). Said notes that "Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought" (42); Said argues that the "essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (42). Said observes that in the past, many terms were used to express the relationship between the strong West and the weak East. For example, "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (40). Matthew Bernstein describes orientalism generally: "Orientalism is a distinctive means of representing race, nationality, and Otherness" (2).

2 Ben Brady's Principles of Adaptation for Film and Television contains an excellent glossary of film terms, including camera language and screenplay terminology (cf. 62-63; 207-15). William Phillips's Film: An Introduction also provides an excellent glossary of film terms (cf. 562-82).

3 Eisenstein notes that Dickens himself writes, in a digression at the beginning Chapter XVII of Oliver Twist,
that montage is a way of providing structure and meaning for
“sudden shiftings of the scene, and rapid changes of time
and place” that are found in real life and in fiction
(“Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today” 224).

Furthermore, Eisenstein’s film theory reflected his
Marxist political views, for he believed that parallel
montage reflects the structure of bourgeois society (234).
In Eisenstein’s view, conflict lay at the heart of montage,
creating a dialectic in which juxtaposition produced
conflict, and conflict generated something new and different
from the pair of conflicting elements (cf. Bluestone 25).

"Kawin has coined the term “mindscreen,” which he
defines as the “field of the mind’s eye,” or what a
character thinks (10).

5 A similar elevation occurs in Rushdie’s novels when
the act of telling the story becomes the primary story,
which happens in Midnight’s Children and to a lesser degree
in The Satanic Verses.

6 Rushdie’s freedom was squelched, for Khomeini issued
a fatwa against Rushdie in 1989 which stated:

I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that
the author of the Satanic Verses book which is
against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all
involved in its publication who were aware of its
content, are sentenced to death.

7 The direct references to films include the following: All the President's Men (265); Alphaville (4, 439); El Angel Exterminador (439); L'Argent du Poche (302); Blade Runner (268); Cactus Flower (18); Citizen Kane (439); Dr. Strangelove (402); The Elephant Man (275); Les Enfants du Paradis (34); Howard the Duck (401); Imitation of Life (298); Our Hospitality (399); Labyrinth (401); Legend (401); Love Story (64); The Magnificent Seven (64); Mephisto (416-17); The Message (272); Mother India (440); Mr. India (440); Otto e Mezzo (429); The Pure Hell of St. Trinian's (42); The Seven Samurai (439); Shree 420 (407, 440); Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (195, 225, 281, 325, 497); Star Wars (62); and Superman (178).

8 The indirect references to films include the following: Alien (62); Altered States (427); For Your Eyes Only (267); Goldfinger (460); Foul Play (77); Gremlins (182); The Ten Commandments (132); Love is a Many Splendored Thing (487); Nightmare on Elm Street (252); The Shining (252); Ghoulies (252); The Omen (252); The Exorcist (252); A Star is Born (346); Titlipur (217); and, The Wizard of Oz (22, 55, 282, 317, 361).

9 Ironically, Toto is the catalyst for all the
significant action in the movie. The dog runs away, causing
the altercation with Miss Gulch and subsequent exposure to a
cyclone; the Cowardly Lion’s attack on Toto musters a
courage in Dorothy which is previously hidden behind the
phrase, “lions, and tigers, and bears, oh my!”; Toto directs
the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion to the sleeping
Dorothy who has been magically drugged by the Wicked Witch
of the West; Toto pulls back the curtain to reveal the
Humbug who is not a Wizard; Toto leads the three companions
to the Witch’s castle; and finally, Toto jumps out of the
balloon basket to chase a cat in the Emerald City,
temporarily thwarting Dorothy’s attempt to go home to
Kansas. The movie illustrates, through Toto’s (an animal’s)
actions, that in most cases the human characters are victims
of chance and circumstances out of their control (for
example, the Wicked Witch of the East is accidentally killed
when Dorothy’s house falls on her), just as Rushdie’s
characters are also victims of circumstances they cannot
control (for example, Chamcha’s transformation into a goat-
man).

10 In this instance, Rushdie puns “falling star,” which
is another colloquial appellation borrowed from the
vocabulary of astronomy.
CHAPTER IV
BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND OTHER SELECTED WORKS

Salman Rushdie's use of the cinematographic world is present in many of his other works, including his short stories, essays, and interviews.¹ By employing filmic and televisual metaphors repeatedly, Rushdie stylistically fragments his works, which structure reflects the hybrid, fragmented self to which his post-colonial subjectivity gives voice. This chapter is an examination of several instances of Rushdie's use of this visual troping of the filmic vision, especially in those works by Rushdie besides Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses.²

"The Firebird's Nest"

The epigram of Rushdie's "The Firebird's Nest" is a quote from Ovid's Metamorphoses, "Now I am ready to tell how bodies are changed into different bodies" (122). In fact this short story is about the indeterminacy of boundaries between the old traditions and the new ways of thinking, of old fairy tales and new stories written in the mind and projected onto the mind's eye.
In "The Firebird’s Nest," Rushdie’s narrative is tinged with the presence of external and internal visuality. The main character is an American woman who is newly wed and brought to an unspecified Indian ex-kingdom by her husband, Mr. (not Prince) Maharaj. She struggles, in part through rewriting dreams and fantasies, to navigate through the tension between old-style customs and modern American ways, through drought and fertility, through poverty and conspicuous consumption, and through fairy tales and reality. The kingdom is suffering an oppressive drought, metaphorically symbolized by the firebird, who sets wives aflame, reminiscent of sati, the immolation by fire by Indian wives who have lost their husbands. It turns out that Mr. Maharaj is the firebird, and his pregnant wife does not succumb to his flames, but rather douses them with her passionate outpouring of fury at the past jealousies and punishments of Mr. Maharaj’s predecessors. The narrator says that

Unleashed, she [Mrs. Maharaj] crashes upon Mr. Maharaj like a wave, and the angry dancers pour behind her, seething, irresistible, she feels the frontiers of her body burst and the waters pour out, the immense crushing weight of her rain, drowning the firebird and its nest, flowing over
the drought-hardened land that no longer knows how to absorb it, carrying away the old dotard and his murderous fellows, cleansing the region of its horrors, its archaic tragedies; [sic] of life.

(127)

Mrs. Maharaj survives the torrential emotion and goes back to America with her unborn child. The story's last line claims that she is "both fire and rain" (127), for she is, herself, water, and is inextricably linked to her child, who is the offspring of the firebird.

Rushdie's story is not unlike Mrs. Maharaj, in that it, too, is a narrative whose "frontiers are burst." Rushdie smudges the boundaries of the narrative by invoking the reader's mind's eye, the interior/eyes, to see a film on the screen of the imagination, in the form of Mrs. Maharaj's dream, which I will discuss below.

In "The Firebird's Nest," Rushdie speaks of cinema, prose fiction, and dreams as virtual synonyms:

Our [India's and the West's] entertainment is full of monsters, of the fabulous, because outside the darkened cinemas, beyond the pages of the books, away from the gothic decibels of the music, the quotidian is inescapable, omnipotent. We dream of other dimensions, of paranoid subtexts, of
underworlds, because when we awake the actual hold us in its great thingy grasp and we cannot see beyond the material, the event horizon. (124) Rushdie brings together film, dreams, books, and seeing in one paragraph to make a distinction between the power of the quotidian and the power of the visual arts to bring relief. "The Firebird's Nest" deconstructs itself on this point, because it is the power inherent in (re)writing stories, of (re)visioning dreams that protects us from the quotidian and the "thingy grasp" of archaic, oppressive traditions and "old wives' tales" (124).

One of the dreams that Mrs. Maharaj rewrites is recounted in the story:

She [Mrs. Maharaj] dreams of burning bridges, of burning boats. She dreams of a movie she has always loved, in which a man returns to his ancestral village and somehow slips through time, to the time of his father's youth. When he tries to flee the village, and returns to the railway station, the tracks have disappeared. There is no way home. This is where the film ends. (125)

This is also where the dream ends. Mrs. Maharaj awakens to realize that she is part of a larger drama taking place in her new home, and that she is far away from the seeming
safety of her old homeland, America. She feels increasingly anxious to go back home, for "In her mind’s eye the story is closing around her, the story in which she is trapped, and in which she must, if she can, find the path of action" (125). In this part of the narrative, Rushdie bursts the frontiers of film, dream, prose fiction, and imagination. In this one intersection of these states, Rushdie uses all of these concepts interchangeably. Mrs. Maharaj is in a "story" in which her "mind’s eye" (the interior-eyes) perceives an imminent oppression, characterized by a "dream" in which she "dreams a movie." That Mrs. Maharaj’s husband has a lucrative satellite-dish franchise is no coincidence (122, 125), for he is a man of power, the firebird, and he controls the dissemination of the televisual picture. In the end, the dreamer, Mrs. Maharaj, is more powerful than her husband, for she "sees Miss Maharaj [Mr. Maharaj’s sister] burn," and this death unleashes the waters of action (127).

The story illustrates that the person who controls the image has power. Mr. Maharaj controls the image, until his wife’s power destroys him. She, then, rewrites the firebird’s story by destroying him. She has control of the image; she rewrites the dream, for she can and does go home, with new life in her body, in the form of her unborn
child. This embrace of new life is similar to Chamchawala's appreciation for his "second chance" at the end of The Satanic Verses (547) and Dorothy's newfound appreciation of home in The Wizard of Oz.

While "The Firebird's Nest" has what many readers could call a happy ending because the female protagonist of the story does not succumb to the traditions of a patriarchal oppression, Rushdie is himself the player in a story in which he is trying to avoid a firebird of his own, in the form of fundamentalist Islamic zealots who would like to impose their dogma of certainty and intolerance upon him. This very attitude about religion has been crucial in Rushdie's aesthetic of the novel. The ABC News program, The Century, closed its week-long series with a dissection of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in Tehran in the 1970's called The Evolution of Revolution. Commenting on the seizing of the U. S. embassy in Tehran in late 1979 by Islamic fundamentalists, Correspondent Peter Jennings characterizes the event as a time when "the progressive notions of 20th century America came face to face with the 7th century certainties of Islam" (2). Significantly, in a segment which closed this last show in the series, Jennings asked "some of the world's great writers and scientists, musicians and businessmen and economists . . . to
contemplate the past and think about the future" (21). Rushdie gave a statement which can be applied to Iran’s fundamentalism, or can just as easily be a deconstructable postmodern statement of faith:

A really crucial thing is to reject the idea of purity. . . . The moment people start talking about . . . racial purity, cultural purity, ethnic purity, this leads directly to the gas chamber. . . . It leads directly to ethnic cleansing; it leads . . . to mass murder, really. . . . And so I’ve come to feel that . . . probably the most important thing to learn is the value of impurity. . . . For things not to be cleansed . . . a bit of dirt, I think, is very valuable. (22)

Rushdie applies this attitude to his writing as well. His language usage is unique; it is not just English or just Hindi or just Urdu; it is a conglomerate of them all, mixed together in a kind of language curry. Like his character in Midnight’s Children whose body “was to show a marked preference for the impure,” (371), Rushdie’s literary body reflects this preference for a type of “impurity.”

The Moor’s Last Sigh

Commenting on The Moor’s Last Sigh, his first major
novel after The Satanic Verses, Rushdie said, in a 1996 interview for Bookworm with the KCRW radio interviewer Michael Silverblatt, "I thought I needed to try and find a way of writing a kind of hot, smelly, noisy, crowded, messy prose because that would, it seemed to me, be a way of echoing a reality that was there [in Bombay]" (15).

Rushdie uses profuse culturally specific references in his stories. In the 1996 Salon interview, Rushdie explains his use of these references: "I use them as flavoring" (4). Without this "flavoring" or skillful mixing up of the ingredients, Rushdie believes that a writer would not be characterizing the India that Rushdie knew, and that he and his Indian literary colleagues and spoke like (Bookworm 12). In The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie incorporates a sensibility to colloquial language and also includes an awareness of television, in the form of satellite dishes again, and in several popular culture references such as Bugs Bunny, Tweety Pie and Sylvester, and Tom & Jerry, about whom Rushdie says, "these give us modern myths which are international, which require no language, which therefore communicate globally" (Part 2 2). Rushdie reveals here one of the primary reasons for using the film and television industries in his works. These pop-culture allusions "give us a way of talking about ourselves not unlike the way in
which once upon a time, the people would have used the Greek or Roman myths to talk about themselves" (Part 2.2-3). So, these film and television references function for Rushdie as a type of modern globally mythological framework from which to borrow. This global inclusive style could be termed "impure," and Rushdie's aesthetics of impurity are reflected in his final comments to Jennings in The Century television program:

And so I think that . . . if there's one thing to learn about the 20th century is that anybody who wants to simplify life into something pure, anybody who wants - who claims to have that one idea, one race, one cultural definition [or claims that this definition] is a total explanation of what's right and good and how things should be, that's the person to put the straightjacket on. And those who are the advocates of the impure, you know, and that of - it's just - you know, not too much, just a little dirt, that's the way to go, I would say. (22)

Rushdie is espousing not only an aesthetic of dirt, but a broader philosophy which embraces hybridity, "impurity," a smudging of lines of demarcation of race, culture, and ethnicity. In this statement, the number, "one," becomes an
emblem of fascistic oppression, for Rushdie equates a desire for one race, or one cultural definition to which all must accede, with the ideologies which produced Nazi gas chambers and ethnic cleansing, a cleansing of the "impure."

Rushdie's novels apply this aesthetic of dirt to literature by bringing in thematically, structurally, and linguistically film and its televisual counterparts. By doing so, Rushdie blurs the boundaries between the novel and film, the novel and television, the novel and radio, and in his last novel, The Ground Beneath Her Feet, the novel and rock and roll music, and even the novel and comic books, which haziness provides a resource of characters who have double identities and "split personalities" (Bookworm Part 2 3). These dual natures better equip the characters to deal with the whirligig of culture. This technique becomes a way of talking about serious things, like the "genius of the true artist" (Bookworm Part 2 3).

Rushdie also uses photographic metaphors to describe his texts. About The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie says,

[it] is a novel about layering, whose subject is that reality as we experience it is not what it seems, that there is this bright overworld that we live in which contains the sensuality of life and also the dailyness of life, the things we know
about life. But every so often the picture (emphasis mine) cracks and there comes bubbling up from the cracks, oozing up from the cracks, an underworld which is altogether another thing, blacker and harder to comprehend and more dangerous. The thing I want to suggest by creating in the book these layers of overworld and underworld is to suggest that both these worlds are true. *(Bookworm Part 2 5-6).*

This layering of movie and cartoon stories, photo novellas, and classic narrative styles illustrate that for Rushdie, somewhere there may be a truth, but only a multiplicity of forms, high and low, could ever arrive at it *(Bookworm Part 2 7).* For Rushdie, the possibility of truth is so complex that it eludes simple statement, much less analysis.

While Rushdie is makes several references to realistic objects and places and lingos in the Bombay he grew up in, *The Moor's Last Sigh* rejects the post-colonial trend of realism in representing the Indian national identity, like those representations found in Anita Desai's *The Clear Light of Day* or Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy.* *The Moor's Last Sigh,* according to Jyotsna Singh, in her book *Colonial Narratives: Cultural Dialogues,* "represents the postcolonial Indian nation as unrepresentable, especially via the
certitude of simple mimesis, the hallmark of post-
independence literature and film" (174), films like Mother
India (1955), about which Rushdie’s narrator discusses as an
idealized, constructed myth of the “motherness” of India:

Motherness [. . .] is a big idea in India, maybe
our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as
land, as the firm ground beneath her feet.
Ladies-O, gents-O: I’m talking major mother
country. (137)

The title of Rushdie’s most recent novel, The Ground Beneath
Her Feet, appears in the above quote. In that novel, these
words become the refrain in a love song about a woman whom
the singer/songwriter worships but who has broken his heart.
Like a palimpsest, the lyrics can easily be placed atop The
Moor’s Last Sigh’s version of Mother India, to describe the
disillusionment the narrator feels about India: “She was my
ground, my favorite sound, my country road, my city street,
my sky above, my only love, and the ground beneath my feet”
(The Ground Beneath Her Feet 475). One can hear the echoes
of Rushdie’s narrator’s fall from idealism in his critique
of Mother India,

The year I was born, Mehboob Productions’ all-
conquering movie, Mother India – three years in
the making, three hundred shooting days, in the top three all-time mega-grossing Bollywood flicks—hit the nation’s screens. Nobody who saw it ever forgot that glutinous saga of peasant heroism, that super-slushy ode to the uncrushability of village India made by the most cynical urbanites in the world. (137)

Instead what Rushdie offers in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is a non-essentialist vision of an India where boundaries are not clearly demarcated and which is a nation in constant formation.

*Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997*

In his article “Damme, This is the Oriental Scene for You!” in *The New Yorker*, which also served as the Introduction to the anthology, *Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997*, which he co-edited with Elizabeth West, Rushdie discusses the phenomenon of Indian writing, specifically the fifty years of writing since India’s independence from the United Kingdom. Rushdie characterizes the new Indian writer as heteroglossic and multicultural:

Indians—and, following the partition of the subcontinent almost fifty years ago, one should also say Pakistanis—have long been migrants,
seeking their fortunes in Africa, Australia, Britain, the Caribbean, and America, and this diaspora has produced many writers who lay claim to an excess of roots. (50)

As a result, it is difficult, claims Rushdie, to make any simple, summarizing statement about so "multiform a literature, hailing from [. . .] that vast, metamorphic, continent-size culture, which feels [. . .] like a non-stop assault on the senses, the emotions, the imagination, and the spirit" (50). Rushdie notes that these new writers featured in Mirrorwork are as polymorphous as the India (50), and that these post-independence writers are trying to "encompass as many Indian realities as possible, rural as well as urban, sacred as well as profane [. . .], pushing out the frontiers of the possible" (54).

Rushdie attributes some of that "pushing out" to influential colonial novels which proposed political change, like Mahatma Gandhi's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, which Rushdie compares to Italian neorealist postwar cinema, particularly Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* and Roberto Rosellini's *Rome, Open City* (57). Rushdie perceives the influence of the kind of fiction which he says is like film also in the writing of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the author of the Booker Prize-winning *Heat and Dust* (afterward made into a Merchant-
Ivory movie). Rushdie notes that while being a master of the short-story form, Jhabvala has a second career as an award-winning screenwriter. Rushdie adds, "But not many people realize that India's greatest film director, the late Satyajit Ray, was also an accomplished author of short stories" (59).

Haroun and the Sea of Stories

The first novel Rushdie wrote under the sentence of death, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, was, according to Rushdie, a revision of the Oz myth which sought, claims Stuart Culver, "to correct the censorship at work in Hollywood's narrative of departure, recognition and return" (317). In the monograph on *The Wizard of Oz* Rushdie wrote for the British Film Institute, Rushdie asserts:

of all the movies, the one that helped me most as I tried to find the right voice for *Haroun* was *The Wizard of Oz*. The film's traces are there in the text, plain to see; in Haroun's companions there are clear echoes of the friends who danced with Dorothy down the Yellow Brick Road. (18)

When he began to devise the story that became *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie wanted to "write a tale in such a way as to make it of interest to adults as well as children"
The reason he used cinema as the source of his voice for *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, claims Rushdie, is that "the world of books has become a severely categorized and demarcated affair, in which children's fiction is not only a kind of ghetto but one subdivided into writing for a number of differing age groups," and the cinema "has regularly risen above such categories" (18). Rushdie grapples with what he calls Oz's central problem in his novel, "how one locates the imaginary elsewhere in everyday life and how one understands the dream as a reconstruction of the real" (Culver 317).

For Rushdie, Dorothy's journey to Oz anticipates the migration of post-colonial subjects to the various Emerald Cities of the West, like London and New York (*The Wizard of Oz* 51, 54). Culver argues in his article, "There's No Place Like Home: Salman Rushdie and the Myth of Oz," that Rushdie's criticism of Hollywood's Oz is itself "complicated if not contradicted by his own narrative revisitation of the myth in *Haroun*" (317). Culver thinks so because Rushdie's novel ends with a "happy ending" in which Haroun goes back to a home from his dream journey, a home which is now as happy as he had wished it to be (202-11). So, Rushdie's story parallels *The Wizard of Oz* in a narrative way, too, for a boy, Haroun, who is the victim of an unhappy home,
leaves home in a dream-sequence, goes to a mysterious land which is full of colorful streams of story, must vanquish a terrible foe, Khattam-Shud, and meets a wizard-like figure, the Walrus, who, more powerful than Dorothy’s ineffectual wizard, does make Haroun’s wish come true, which he finds to be fulfilled when he gets home.

“At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers”

The mythic world of The Wizard of Oz is brought into the world of Auctioneers, where “we go to establish the value of our pasts, of our futures, of our lives,” (The Wizard of Oz 64) in Rushdie’s short story, “At the Auction of the Ruby Red Slippers,” a reference to Dorothy’s magical shoes which could have taken her “home in two seconds” the whole time of her adventure (56). Rushdie’s short story is an opportunity to explore again the migrant’s condition of homelessness and desire. These two concepts are sensually linked in the story. The narrator claims that Gail7, another reference to Dorothy, whose last name is Gale, is a loud lover, who iteratively cries out at the moment of penetration, “Home, boy! Home, baby — you’ve come home!” (61). In this light, the moral of the film, The Wizard of Oz, “there’s no place like home,” takes on new sexually charged meaning. In the next moment of the narration,
however, the narrator reveals that he later finds his lover in the arms of a “hairy escapee from a caveman movie (emphasis mine),” and he [the narrator] moves out from his home the same day, “weeping” (61). The narrator is homeless in more than one way, then. As a result, the narrator wants to win Gail back by buying her the Ruby Slippers, which are being auctioned, just as Dorothy thinks the retrieval of the Wicked Witch of the West’s broomstick will appease the Wizard of Oz. From the use of this hidden model, one may infer that the narrator’s marriage will not be saved by the purchase of the Ruby Slippers, just as the Wizard rejects the broomstick.

In the fictional world of the story, a televirtual presence provides two opposing effects: 1) unification and 2) angst. Satellites and television monitors provide unification; people from all over the globe may participate in the auction through the satellite feed. The narrator observes that “during that auction, bids came in cross the video links with Tokyo, Los Angeles, Paris and Milan, and they were so rapid and of such size that I lost my nerve” (64). Later, the narrator refers to his rival bidders as “disembodied heads on video screens” (64). Not only are the people who are bidding technologized in this story, their humanity, their human form, is necessarily diminished, also.
This dynamic regarding technology physiologically unhinges the narrator, but it also bothers him in another way — it reminds him of the difficulty of fulfillment.

In this story, whose theme is embodied by its most recognizable totems, the Ruby Slippers, Rushdie uses another iconic film with a similarly recognizable totem, a renegade computer, to demonstrate this difficulty regarding technology. In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the computer HAL, revolts against the astronauts who have been given nominal control of the mission, but whom HAL deems ineffective. In "The Auction of the Ruby Slippers," one of the dramas unfolding on the television screens within the narrative is that of "the sad case of the astronaut stranded on Mars without hope of rescue, and with diminishing supplies of food and breathable air" (62). Cameras inside his marooned spacecraft continue to supply "poignant images of his slow descent into despair, his low-gravity, weight-reduced death" (62). This reminds the narrator of *2001* and also *The Wizard of Oz*, for what he needs, and ultimately what all lost travelers wish they possessed, are those Ruby Slippers, which can be clicked together, along with the secular prayer, "There's no place like home," and return the clicker to a place of familiarity, home (62). The underlying reality, though, is that slippers cannot return one home.
The narrator recognizes this by the end of the story, and decides to let go of the desire for his cousin, the desire for the slippers, and the desire, even, for home. Instead, he reveals the "slipper"-iness of desire's objects, and desire's endless deferral as he begins a further narrative with the question, "Did I mention my love for my cousin Toto?" (65).

Rushdie's revised version asks no such question, which readers of his monograph about The Wizard of Oz would perceive as an ironic remark, for Rushdie, the author, admits that he "couldn't stand Toto," and "still can't" (17). Rather, the last paragraph in the new version is an existential reflection: "Thanks to the infinite bounty of the Auctioneers, any of us [. . .] can be — as we long to be; and as, cowering in our shelters, we fear we are not — somebody" (103), reflecting the main theme of much of Rushdie's fiction, the longing for, but unlikelihood of, a unified self which is not unhoused, "cowering" in a "shelter;" for, earlier in the text, the narrator reflects, "'Home' has become a scattered, damaged, various concept in our present travails" (93). Home is another place that keeps slipping away, so it must become where one presently is. In this schema, home is human subjectivity, the "somebody"-ness of the person longing for home. Rushdie
proposes, "there is no such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began" (The Wizard of Oz 57).

Moreover, elsewhere in this text, Rushdie tropes the idea of the alienation, by invoking the popular film, E. T. The Extraterrestrial, the quintessential story of an "alien" trying to "go home." In this section which shows the ubiquity of the televisual image, the narrator notices a television monitor which is showing the alien from E. T. Rushdie's use of the word "alien" is a play on the word which also means "immigrant." He is bothered that "heroes step down off cinema screens and marry members of the audience" (61). (For example, in Woody Allen's The Purple Rose of Cairo, a film character steps out of the screen to interact with an audience member.) He claims that "there can be little doubt that a large majority of us opposes the free, unrestricted migration (emphasis mine) of imaginary beings into an already damaged reality" (61). Rushdie comments that "the permeation of the real world by the fictional is a symptom of the moral decay of the culture of the millennium" (61). Here, the "fictional" world becomes a type of signifier for the experience of the alien, who is homeless but trying to negotiate in the land to which he or
she has migrated. These worlds, the fictional and the real, have borders, to Rushdie, but their borders are easily crossed.
Notes


2 I am not the only critic to notice the deep influence of film on Indian fiction. For example, Chainani writes about Mirrorwork, “This is a young literature (not Indian literature, but Indian literature since independence), and many of the stories are about teenagers or young adults, affluent, growing up in Calcutta or Bombay, watching television” (emphasis mine) (3).

3 Though Mr. Maharaj is already “home” in his country, his flaw is that he is trying to impose an archaic patriarchal order on an existence which cannot be classified.

4 I am not counting Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Rushdie’s first novel after the Ayatollah proclaimed a fatwa on Rushdie, as a major novel, but as a children’s book.

5 Ironically, Rushdie is guilty here of the same kind
of philosophical straightjacketing of which he is a victim.

6 Michael Barry at the University of Canberra has written a paper in which he claims that the academic analysts of popular culture references in Rushdie's works have tended to concentrate on movies, television, and Hindi popular culture. The reality is that not very much has been written about any of these elements; but, the comic book culture in Rushdie's works has been written about even less. Rushdie, himself, has commented on his use of comic books on several occasions.

7 "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers" is revised and included Rushdie's collection of short stories, East, West: Stories (1994). In his first version, Rushdie spells the narrator's lover's name, Gail; in the revised version, Rushdie spells the same character's name, Gale, which is the spelling of Dorothy Gale's name in The Wizard of Oz.

8 Rushdie makes parallels between various characters in The Wizard of Oz and his own family; for example, he writes that his father was the "first Wizard Deluxe," and that, like the Wizard of Oz, Anis Ahmed Rushdie was a good man but a very bad wizard (9-10). Moreover, Rushdie loosely connects himself to Dorothy, who is the one with whom an immigrant might most closely identify, because of her "unhoused" condition through most of the story (10, 23).
Ironically, though, the one character which Rushdie "can't stand" is Toto, the one character whom Rushdie is most like in action. Toto is the revealer. The little "yapping hairpiece" pulls aside the curtains to expose the reality behind the illusion of the Great Humbug (18). Similarly, Rushdie plays that same role in his own fiction, exposing what he perceives to be weaknesses in the multiple cultures his characters inhabit.
Salman Rushdie’s fiction reflects the fragmented nature of post-colonial writing. *Midnight’s Children* reveals the polyphonic voice of India through a trickster text. *The Satanic Verses* reflects a postmodern suspicion of totalizing texts through the troubling effect of dream visions. Both of these texts, and several other of his shorter works, use film as a dominant metaphor to create a new form of hybrid novel, one that is filmically fictional.

A final example of the pervasiveness of fragmentation is the remote control device, which places the power to organize and control (literally) in the hands of the viewer rather than the creator. *The Satanic Verses* reveals another aspect of the postmodern effect of one of the most important inventions of the television age, the remote control, which has influenced the way people watch television and movies. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer describe the former way that a movie was available to a viewing audience, and what effect it had on their analytical skills:

The sound film [. . .] leaves no room for
imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story. (34)

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that spectators have to be careful how much they question, lest they miss "the relentless rush of facts" being presented to them (34). The remote-control and the video player have changed this. Now people and characters like Farishta can watch television and movies with a different sensibility. Farishta watches television "with half an eye, channel-hopping compulsively, for he was a member of the remote-control culture of the present" (405).

Not only has the remote control changed the way people watch television and movies, but it has also contributed to a new mentality about life, for earlier in the text, a nine or ten year old points an imaginary video remote control at Chamcha and yells, "Fast forward!" The narrator comments, "His was a generation that believed in skipping life's boring, troublesome, unlikable bits, going fast-forward from one action-packed climax to the next" (402). Elsewhere, the remote control is called "a leveller" (405). The narrator says of the remote control that it is
a Procrustean bed for the twentieth century; it chopped down the heavyweight and stretched out the slight until all the set’s emissions, commercials, murders, game-shows, the thousand and one varying joys and terrors of the real and the imagined, acquired an equal weight. (405)

The remote control has a democratizing effect on television offerings as well as literally putting more power in the hands of the viewer, who can now at the press of a button change what he or she views with great ease. The narrator of the text calls it “letting his fingers do the chopping” (405). The capabilities which are available to the video viewer are relatively new and powerful, for now all viewers are potential serious critics who may dissect a movie in such a way that heretofore was only possible to an elite group of movie critics who had access to the cinema or to film archives. Now, people may easily and cheaply rent a movie, watch it innumerable times, fast-forwarding through the parts they do not like, and rewinding the tape again and again to see the parts they want to savor or study. Today’s viewer may even freeze the frame to examine the composition of the scene. Such was the case in Rushdie’s experience of critiquing the film The Wizard of Oz for the British Film Institute Film Classics series. He writes,
And now I’m doing something strange, something that ought to destroy my love for the movie, but doesn’t. Now I am watching a videotape, watching it with a notebook on my lap, a pen in one hand and a remote-control zapper in the other. I am subjecting The Wizard of Oz to the indignities of slow-motion, fast-forward and freeze-frame. (19)

Rushdie then analyzes the composition, color, and nuances of the film with an eye on the details which typically go unnoticed, but not without effect.

One of the effects of Rushdie’s critical eye has been the ire of some scholars, such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, who are critical of writers such as Rushdie for being critical of their own countries and cultures. Ngugi claims that what he calls the “colonial elite” is already using technology to perpetuate the current presence of an imperialism, a mental imperialism. He says, “they saw [the West], perceived themselves and the possibilities opened out to them, with glasses ‘Made in Europe’ and which were now permanently glued to their eyes” (1817). Ngugi may regard Rushdie as one of the colonial elitists, for Rushdie was born in India, educated in England, and returned to his homelands of India and Pakistan with a critical set of eyeglasses which seem to have been “glued to his eyes” (1817). Rushdie knows the
pitfalls which accompany travelling away from home and coming back with an altered vision. His narrator responds to this new way of seeing in *The Satanic Verses*:

> But to be raised in the house of power is to learn its ways, to soak them up, through that very skin that is the cause of your oppression. The habit of power, its timbre, its posture, its way of being with others. It is a disease [. . .] infecting all who come too near it. If the powerful trample over you, you are infected by the soles of their feet. (211)

Ngugi argues further that in the hands of the colonial elite, the mass media are used as instruments of coercion, persuasion, and propaganda. Ngugi warns that in the city where the "colonial elite" perpetuate mental imperialism, "state theaters, cinemas, television and radio stations [the native bourgeoisie] mostly allow only reactionary foreign programs" (1818). The bourgeoisie which control those programs champion the cause of imperialism which they present as "modern and national" while in the countryside they pay lip service to peasant cultures by championing irrelevant traditionalism emptied of all meaningful dynamic content, a
petrified museum culture for the amusement of state guests and tourists. (1818)

Rather than seeing modern science as only an imperialistic tool of oppression, Ngugi asserts that if organized, owned and controlled differently, [technology] could make a total economic transformation of the countryside and the construction of a whole people’s culture on a structure of prosperity instead of on that of backwardness. (1815)

Ngugi even goes so far as to name specific types of modern technologies that can carry out his ideas. He says, “far from destroying tradition, modern technology (e.g. video, cinema, television, radio) should make it possible to actually reclaim the positive aspects of tradition and peasant cultures” (1815). Ngugi envisions a reclamation of the positive aspects of tradition, including oral literature and theater, through the integration of the visual image, the voice, and the music of African cultures, using film, video, and television (1815). Peasant theater, claims Ngugi, “relies heavily on song, dance, and mime, and these can now be permanently captured on the screen” (1816). More significantly, Ngugi sees the potential democratizing effect of these mass media. He asserts, “for more people can be
told the tale at the same time—but even more crucial, it is possible to use [technology] to integrate the cultures of the different nationalities within the geographic state into a national whole" (1816). Ngugi foresees that through video, television, or cinema, “the tales from the different nationalities [will] become mutually accessible and comprehensible” (1816). Contrary to Ngugi’s analysis, that is precisely what Rushdie is doing. He has indeed used the tales from several different nationalities and cultures, and even different genres, to make them accessible to new generations. His blurring of boundaries between fiction and film has been one of Rushdie’s dominant metaphors to reflect the hybrid, multi-cultural voice of post-colonial India. Rushdie has used his texts to question the cultural foundations which created him. The novel has been, and continues to be, Rushdie’s way of coyly suggesting, “I only ask” (The Wizard of Oz 42), with a view to troubling the status quo, to pull the essentialist, univocal “curtains” aside, like a postmodernist Toto. Through his fiction, Rushdie seeks to mimic the remote control’s democratizing power, offering novelistic alternatives to monolithic certainties.

Indeed, if the novel has any power at all, Rushdie hopes that novels can bring peoples together. He continues
to this day to urgently, almost desperately, encourage political cooperation and peace in the world, especially in places like Kashmir, which is consistently important in Rushdie’s texts, a place wedged between India and Pakistan and struggling for peaceful, coexistent autonomy (New York Times 3 June 1999). In his op-ed piece, titled “Kashmir, the Imperiled Paradise,” Rushdie observes that unending quarrels only produce poverty, violence, and partitioning (1). While Rushdie’s fiction is about the blurring of frontier boundaries, this blurring seems to be more about genres, about the self, and about the walls which people put against one another. Rushdie notes that selves are fragmented, hybrid, and even schizophrenic, and his own inconsistencies are brought out in his multiple views on those boundaries. He desires unity and peaceful coexistence, but not a complete destruction of the boundaries. He wants to see Kashmir a free, independent place, but fails to see that the autonomy he desires is a strengthening of barriers, of certain boundaries; and, this is because the post-colonial, post-cold war, postmodern world is not a Paradise; it is dangerous and corrupt, and fraught with peril (3). Rushdie’s fiction is a lens through which the reader can see that Rushdie’s India/Pakistan/Kashmir is multi-
faceted, protean and resistant to unifying impulses. In the larger picture, Rushdie believes that "it's necessary to start constructing ideas of a just society, which are genuinely post-colonial in that they don't fall into the linguistic traps of colonialism" (Interview with the Consortium on The Satanic Verses 70).

The language of colonialism is the language of demarcation and polarities like the constructs East and West, bad and good, and Rushdie is not optimistic that the old ways of thinking will change soon. He says, "I think it needs to happen, and there are obviously [...] writers [...] who have tried to begin this process" (Interview with Consortium 70). The exile that Rushdie has had to endure, the hijackings, the countless other injustices still occurring in the world, including the special case of Kashmir, show Rushdie's readers, though, that "there is an incredible distance to go" (Interview with Consortium 70), for when a critic examines a text which many perceive to be sacred, like the Koran, or The Wizard of Oz to others, danger is inevitable. In The Rushdie File, Umberto Eco notes the irony involving the ever-present media, which Rushdie has so skillfully illustrated in texts like The Satanic Verses. He remarks that Rushdie's "potential killers are summoned through the media; [so], any medium
covering the event contributes to inform and mobilize new potential killers" (171). The media may, indeed, be part of Rushdie's literal undoing.

The "incredible distance" Rushdie mentions is brilliantly reflected in Rushdie's texts which are fraught with blurred boundaries: blurred borders between fact and fantasy, history and imagination, and film and prose fiction. One of the triumphant results of Rushdie's emphasis on and use of these blurred boundaries is that he has created a dynamic, new kind of English Indian literature, and that in doing so, he has provoked an awareness for the need of a kind of better eyesight in those who are watching, reading, and dreaming.
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