There's No Place Like Home: The Changing Definition of Exile in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Shame

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Abstract

The concept for this thesis was born out of my interest in identity construction and contemporary viewpoints on migrancy and exile. I first discovered Salman Rushdie's fiction upon reading the novel *Shame*, and was immediately struck by his intention, not only to discuss the issues surrounding migrancy, but also to make the reader feel a sense of migrant alienation through his narrative technique. I began to explore the unique ways in which Rushdie uses language, characters and plot to redefine exile as a liberating and positive experience, rather than simply a devastating loss.

However, during my research, I also began to notice that a long-standing tradition of scholars advocating migrancy already existed. It had been established long before Rushdie came on the scene and I felt that I needed to make reference to the ways in which his fiction *continues* the work of these intellectuals. Rather than being the inventor of the cosmopolitan ideal, Rushdie makes use of the English language and the tradition of the novel in order to reinvent the ways in which fiction can be written as well as read.

In the first chapter of this thesis, "The Changing Definition of Exile," I take a closer look at the ingrained notions of roots that tend to keep us in place and the ways in which we are taught as children about where we belong. I also examine the work of classical as well as modern philosophers and scholars in order to establish the framework from which Rushdie is working on issues of identity and home.

In "Midnight's Children," I explore the ways in which the narrator Saleem struggles to construct an identity in the face of the parallel Indian identity crisis. Born at the exact moment of Indian Independence, he must come to terms with the diverse aspects of his personal makeup in order to move forward. The telling of his life story and
the subsequent passing of that story onto his son allows for a positive ending—one that looks forward to the possibilities that exist for the next generation. I argue that this process is Rushdie's way of advocating for a change in our beliefs about home and away and where we belong.

Lastly, in "Shame," I point to the shift in Rushdie's story-telling and the ways in which Shame is much darker and more ominous than Midnight's Children. Rushdie seems to be taking his cues from history and this novel makes clear his feeling that the partition of Pakistan was a mistake. Our main character Sufiya Zinobia is the physical manifestation of Pakistan. As such, she takes on the disappointment, pain and shame of the people for the failure of their national experiment. Her character indicates the difficulty that Pakistanis must have in attempting to construct an identity based on lies.

This novel also brings up issues regarding memory and how migrants must reconcile the fact that their version of events may be fragmented. Bits and pieces of memory are fit back together in the mind in order to fashion what Rushdie calls an "imaginary homeland." This place is part unreliable memory, part history and part imagination. Throughout this thesis, I examine the ways in which Rushdie uses his narrative space to discuss these very contemporary and very relevant issues.
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There's No Place Like Home: The Changing Definition of Exile
in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Shame

by

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A THESIS

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Introduction

In “Out of Kansas,” an essay in Step Across This Line, Salman Rushdie discusses his fascination with the film “The Wizard of Oz.” Since boyhood, he has been interested in the dichotomy presented by the film’s representation of “home” (Kansas) versus “away” (Oz) and so it is noteworthy that he credits the film as being “his very first literary influence” (4). Despite the commonly held notion that the film is about there being “no place like home” and that whatever Dorothy seeks she shall find back in Kansas, Rushdie points instead to the “yearning in [her] voice” as she sings “Over the Rainbow”: “What she expresses here, what she embodies with the purity of an archetype, is the human dream of leaving, a dream at least as powerful as its countervailing dream of roots” (“Out” 13). The pull of leaving proved strong in Rushdie’s own life and he describes the discovery that he would be going to school in England “as wonderful a prospect as Oz” (4). “‘Over the Rainbow’ is, or ought to be, the anthem of all the world’s migrants...It is a celebration of Escape, a grand paean to the uprooted self, a hymn—the hymn—to Elsewhere” (13).

Rushdie’s longstanding interest in “The Wizard of Oz” is important to this study in that his examination of the themes of home, identity, migrancy, memory and belonging clearly began in his youth, and has continued in his essays and novels. The same dual perspective that Rushdie has in his observations on Kansas and Oz can be seen in his writings on Pakistan, India, England and the United States. And the “dream of leaving” that Rushdie observes in the film becomes his counter-ideal to the traditionally held beliefs regarding roots. This study will examine two of Rushdie’s novels—Midnight’s Children (1980) and Shame (1983)—and the ways in which they point to the limitations
of these ingrained beliefs on roots while creating an alternative space from which the migrant may navigate both past and present.

I begin this study by examining the foundation from which Rushdie is working. Calling on literary as well as anthropological scholars such as Liisa Valkki, Arjun Appadurai and Kwame Anthony Appiah, I will examine the ingrained notions of belonging that pervade our everyday language and discourse in an effort to show how Rushdie offers an alternative framework through his novels. By looking closely at the "taken-for-granted ways of thinking about identity and territory," we can see that Rushdie rejects the notion of roots firmly planted in place and instead opts for what he calls "multiple rooting" (Kaufman 23). But Rushdie is not alone in his cosmopolitan perspective.

One of the aims of this study is to show how Rushdie is continuing a long-standing tradition of intellectuals who believe in the power and possibility of migrancy. I will examine the classical writing of Plato, Seneca and Plutarch as well as the modern work of Theodor Adorno and Seamus Deane in order to show how prevalent the notion of being a Citizen of the World has been in intellectual circles throughout history. In his novels, Rushdie creates his own commentary on migrancy by giving the reader the opportunity, not only to read about the migrant experience, but also to feel it. The scope of the novel’s plot and characters, as well as the confusion that seems inherent in the narrative, all contribute to the reader's understanding of the unique situation of the migrant.

Saleem Sinai, the narrator in Midnight’s Children, is born at the exact moment of Indian Independence. His life becomes a parallel to that of India itself and the struggle of
the Indian people to come to terms with the failure of their national dream. Saleem’s effort to construct an identity for himself is hampered in several ways. First, he finds it difficult to navigate through life with all of the expectations that people have for him. He dreads letting everyone down. Then there is the truth of where he has come from. As the son of an Englishman, he struggles to come to terms with who he thought he was and who he actually is. Carrying the baggage of his English and Kashmiri sides, he attempts to put all of the pieces together to create a stable life.

But the Midnight’s Children Conference is yet another roadblock to Saleem’s identity construction. He fails to convince his brothers and sisters of midnight that they should work together to make India a better place. Led by Shiva, otherwise known as the “Destroyer,” the children end up fighting and dividing, and they ignore Saleem’s plea for a “third principle”—an alternative to the black/white, either/or environment that they have known. The disintegration of the M.C.C. is the failure of Saleem’s dreaming mind and, in turn, represents the failure of Indian Independence and the rejection of optimism.

Sufiya Zinobia in Shame also represents her national setting. She is the physical manifestation of the shame of the Pakistani experiment. Born as “the wrong miracle,” Sufiya lives her life carrying her own built-up shame and anger as well as the emotions of those around her (Shame 88). She becomes a beast with only one outlet—violence. The struggle for identity that Pakistan and its people go through can be seen as a parallel to the migrant experience of piecing together a life out of the bits and pieces of our stories. But Shame also focuses on the difficulty that migrants have in coming to terms with the missing pieces of their experiences—the parts of the past lost through memory.

Memory becomes the lens through which migrants may ground themselves. By
using memory in order to reconcile past and present, they can create a space of action and possibility. This process allows for migrancy to be seen as positive, rather than simply a limiting and devastating experience. However, this view of the potential migrant experience contrasts sharply with traditionally held beliefs about roots. I will set out to show how Rushdie writes against the idea that one must be rooted in place in order to comply with society’s rules of normality.

These two novels provide the reader with an account of the experiences of outsiders—those forced to live on the edge of society or in-between worlds. Though Rushdie’s concept of rejecting roots is not new, his innovative literary techniques create new ways of seeing the experiences of the outsider: the scope of his story-telling, his attention to detail, both in what is included and what is left out, and the way in which his plot moves in many directions—all contribute to the simulation of the migrant experience and the reader’s understanding of the space between here and there.

I will begin by examining the contrast between traditionally ingrained notions that tell us that rooting is necessary and the philosophy that humans are meant to move and change; next, I will show that Rushdie, writing with that philosophy in mind, creates an environment in his novels that advocates for and simulates the migrant experience while discussing the obstacles that must be overcome in order to do so. Rushdie once said, “I am a first generation immigrant from that part of the world [India and Pakistan]. I know how you can be here, and in a way, still there” (Marzorati 46). It is necessary to examine Rushdie’s work with the understanding that he comes from a privileged background and that his experience of migrancy is just that—a particular viewpoint on exile and the positive aspects that exist in embracing more than one home. The purpose of this study,
however, is to demonstrate how Rushdie’s novels act as a space between here and there—one in which the effects of migrancy can be examined up close and where possibility and hope for the future exist.
The Changing Definition of Exile

We are taught from an early age what a home is and where we belong. These beliefs are rarely questioned. But if we examine how pervasive these pre-conceived notions of home are, we quickly recognize why so many people feel uncomfortable about migrancy. We also gain an understanding of what Salman Rushdie is writing against in his fiction and how difficult it is to change a system of beliefs. In this chapter, I will first examine the ingrained beliefs that keep us from embracing migrancy; I will also demonstrate, through the writings of such philosophers as Plato, Seneca and Adorno, how intellectuals have long been working to dismantle these beliefs; lastly, I will show how contemporary novelists like Rushdie are reinventing the classical tradition of these philosophers by using their writing as a forum to discuss the migrant perspective and the unique space that migrants inhabit—a space where, as Thomas Mann points out, they are able to be “a citizen of two worlds” (Mann 105). To begin, I will examine the notion of roots.

The term “roots” is common enough in our everyday vocabulary. But rarely do we stop to examine how deeply the metaphorical implications of roots are embedded in our consciousness and how far this idea of being held in place extends into our associations of home. Roots are defined as “an essential part or element; the basic core” and also as “the condition of being settled and of belonging to a particular place or society” (OED). It is this notion that roots are the essential core of our existence that leads many to feel uneasy about ripping them out in favor of new soil.

In The Need for Roots, Simone Weil claims that “[t]o be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul” (43). It is this assumption
that Rushdie seems to be responding to in *Shame* when the narrator tells the reader,

“Look under your feet. You will not find gnarled growths sprouting through the souls. Roots, I sometimes think, are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places” (84). By way of a myth passed down from generation to generation, that is, we have come to believe that we must be grounded, a belief that means compliance with societal rules of normality. “Such commonsense ideas of soils, roots, and territory are built into everyday language...That the world should be composed of sovereign, spatially discontinuous units is a sometimes implicit, sometimes stated premise” (Malkki 26). And, in that same vein, there are those who would argue that to migrate is to turn your back on your country and your own identity. They believe that unless we are connected firmly to one place in particular, something is wrong. We are “unstuck from [our] native land” and are, therefore, outsiders (*Shame* 85). In this view, the separation of an individual from his homeland indicates a loss even when that person adopts one or more new homes and cultures.

For those people brought up believing in the power of roots, it may be generally difficult to understand the notion of being a Citizen of the World. Connecting to more than one place doesn’t fit into what is seen as the “natural” order of being grounded to one’s home. In an interview with Gerald Marzorati, Rushdie talks about this general rejection of a personal identity created from diverse geographic sources:

But most of the time, people will ask me—will ask anyone like me—are you Indian? Pakistani? English? What is being expressed is a discomfort with plural identity. And what I am saying to you...is that we have got to come to terms with this. We are increasingly becoming a world of migrants, made up of bits and
fragments from here. There. We are here. And we have never really left anywhere we have been. (Marzorati 100)

The discomfort that Rushdie speaks of comes from the inherited notions of home and belonging that influence us into trying to fit people into neat cultural categories. These categories describe where someone belongs and also where he does not. People feel a general uneasiness when they are not able to attach specific labels to themselves and others. This uneasiness with plural identity seems to stem from a sense of belonging to a specific place. Perhaps this ideal is connected to what anthropologist Liisa Malkki calls “sedentarist metaphysics” (31). She refers to Yi-Fu Tuan’s explanation of the human impulse to stay close and true to the soil: “Rootedness in the soil and the growth of pious feeling toward it seem natural to sedentary agricultural peoples” (31). Tuan and Malkki believe that our historically close ties to the soil and to the cultivation of the land have caused a psychological bond to the specific bit of earth nurtured by us and by our forefathers.

Arjun Appadurai points out that these metaphorical roots are often strong enough to keep one firmly grounded in place: “[N]atives are not only people who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places” (Appadurai 37). This concept of being held in place fits into Rushdie’s notion of roots as confining. And so what happens when someone either chooses to leave his country or is forced out? He is either “transplanted” or “uprooted” (Malkki 31). The obvious botanical references here cannot be ignored. But they are telling. Expatriates who choose to leave their country in favor of another are transplanted—their move is smooth and they can attempt to replant their roots elsewhere.
Being *uprooted*, however, is a much more violent migration. These roots are ripped out of their soil and often wither and die. But in either case, the separation of the roots from the soil is complete. This leads many to reference migrants as rootless—no longer belonging to their native soil but not yet belonging to another country either.

Rushdie takes issue with this term of *rootlessness*. He does not believe that exile, whether deliberate or forced, causes rootlessness but, rather, he sees exile as opening up a multitude of doors to identity:

> It seems to me that the idea of rootlessness has certain problems. I know it is something that explains a kind of Western intelligentsia. But I don’t think that migration, the process of being uprooted, necessarily leads to rootlessness. What it can lead to is a kind of multiple rooting. It’s not the traditional identity crisis of not knowing where you come from. The problem is that you come from too many places. The problems are of excess rather than absence. That’s certainly the feeling that I have. (Kaufman 23)

Rushdie doesn’t see migration as a process that strips away identity. Rather, he believes that migrancy offers the opportunity for a range of choices. Multiple rooting can be seen as complicated due to the overwhelming range of choices available to the migrant. But it is also evident that Rushdie sees the migrant’s space as both positive and empowering. This space is the periphery—the border between home and away, between here and there—a space which Rushdie believes is privileged. The advantage here is the ability to see the world in full-view—forward and backward—as opposed to the limiting view of being attached to the same place for life.

This in-between space can be one of great opportunity. George Steiner believes
that “the border [is] one of the most powerful inventions shaping the modern mind” (Robinson xxii). The border acts as a reliable space in which migrants may navigate their choices and prepare to take action. It is a space of readiness. Steiner’s observation on borders is one that I would like to examine further because it is my argument that what Rushdie is creating through his writing is an alternative space to either home or away. Rather, the “third space” that I speak of is one of contemplation, reflection and memory. But most importantly, it is a space that holds all of the possibility that comes with multiplicity and mobility.

This alternative space was built on the foundation of long-standing traditions that regard migrancy as a positive experience. Throughout history, there have been intellectuals and philosophers who have connected migrancy with the pursuit of knowledge and divine law. They often felt the need to speak out against the negative associations of exile in an attempt to change the perceptions of migrancy from painful to positive. And it is based on this foundation that I believe Rushdie is working.

As far back as classical Greece, intellectuals have embraced the idea that travel to foreign lands is essential. Homer himself described the perfect man as a world-traveler, consistently pursuing knowledge through interaction with diverse groups of people and their cultures. In The Odyssey, Homer “led his Aeneas through numberless cities and shores” (Petrarch 184). At that time, it was thought that journeys abroad were important to both the personal knowledge of the philosopher as well as the necessary knowledge of the empire.

In The Laws, Plato describes the theoroi or the “men with the spirit of scientific research who will go abroad to theorein, to ‘contemplate’ the civilization and laws of
other men and study conditions abroad at their leisure” (Jaeger 259). These journeys were often made in the spirit of self-education and were encouraged by leaders of state. The classical Greeks believed that their society could only benefit from the information that they gathered on these journeys. They also allowed foreigners onto their soil so that they might educate themselves in all areas of Greek development.

All of this movement between countries created what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls “contamination”—his counter-ideal to the notion of cultural purity (111). He sees contamination as an intermixing of influences that combines native culture, languages and traditions with the foreign ones brought in by migrants. Contamination takes place slowly over time but these influences eventually become part of the native landscape.

“The early Cynics and Stoics took their contamination from the places they were born to the Greek cities where they taught. Many were strangers in those places; cosmopolitanism was invented by contaminators” (Appiah 112). And the contaminants that have had a global affect are not exclusively modern either. For instance, Appiah traces contamination through Alexander’s Empire in Egypt and North India, the shaping of Asia by the Mongols and the Mughals, and the effects of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism on the world (112). All of these movements of people, information or goods from one place to another have shaped the way in which our world has evolved.

This high regard for travel for educational travel and cultural enrichment did, however, clash with mass opinion about forced exile due to political circumstances. It was considered a terrible fate to have to leave one’s city-state or country and the feelings of the classical exile were much the same as those that followed him throughout
history—to leave one’s home was to lose a part of one’s own being. This notion of rooting, which we examined earlier, thus stretches far back in history. But ancient scholars attempted to convince others that the fate of the exile did not have to be devastating. According to them, it is, in fact, unnatural for man to stay in one place his whole life. The movement of man is as natural as the movement of the stars.

Plutarch, in “To A Young Exile,” writes to Menemachus urging him not to despair about having to leave Sardis for Athens. Plutarch writes that, although the young man mourns the loss of his native land, “by nature there is no such thing as a native land, any more than there is by nature a house or farm or forge or surgery” (200). Plato, too, said that man “is ‘no earthly’ or immovable ‘plant,’ but a ‘celestial’ one—the head, like a root, keeping the body erect—inverted to point to heaven” (200). Plato’s insistence that man is not an “immovable plant” is a point that directly contradicts the notion of roots, which we previously examined. Rather than being rooted to the ground of our homeland, Plato sees man as being attached by the head to the ever-changing heavens.

Likewise, Seneca, the Roman essayist, who was exiled to Corsica in A.D. 41, believed in the correlation between man and the heavens. When his mother wrote to him saying, “To be deprived of one’s country is intolerable,” he responded with a similar attitude as Plato:

Celestial things by their very nature are always in motion, they ever flee and are driven on its swiftest course... What folly, then, to think that the human mind, which has been formed from the self-same elements as these divine beings, is troubled with journeying and changing its home, while God’s nature finds delight...
or, if you will, its preservation in continuous and most speedy movement.

(Seneca 159)

Socrates also expressed the notion that all humans are connected to one another and to the universe in which we live. These philosophers felt at home among strangers because they saw humans solely as citizens of the world. According to this theory, if we refuse to open ourselves up to the possibilities that exist in embracing multiple homelands, “we bind ourselves, confine ourselves, immure ourselves, herd ourselves into cramped and sordid quarters” (Plutarch 201). We close ourselves off to the possibilities that exist through migrancy, and we deny the divine aspect of diversity.

A large part of the argument that heavenly movement and human migration are connected comes from a religious viewpoint. These philosophers saw God as the chief operator of the heavens and as the creator of man. Therefore, the movement of the stars and human life are in perfect alignment. They are both meant to move and change but never to stay stagnant. In Petrarch’s “A Letter from Exile,” written in 1352, he connects religion and celestial movement with the human need for migration:

I do say this: that our souls are created by God and by him are at once infused in our bodies; that God’s throne is in heaven; that the movement of the heavens is perpetual, as we see with our own eyes; so it is not surprising that we have some relation of likeness with the home of our Creator. Whatever its origin, I know that in men’s minds, especially in superior minds, resides an innate longing to see new places, to keep changing one’s home. (355)

Petrarch sees a connection between God’s creation of our souls and his creation of the heavens. According to this view, all of God’s creations are in alignment and, in order to
maintain that balance, we must move as the stars do. Home can, therefore, be found anywhere on earth.

Hugo of St. Victor, a twelfth-century monk from Saxony, also saw a religious aspect to migrancy. He believed that exposure to foreign soil, among other areas of knowledge, was “necessary to man for the attainment of his human perfection and his divine destiny”:

It is, therefore, a source of great virtue for the practiced mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about invisible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether. The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. (Hugo 101)

Hugo saw man living out his “divine destiny” through various intellectual and spiritual pursuits. And one of the tenants of his philosophy on how to attain perfection was to discard earthly concerns in an effort to embrace a love for all places and all people. This recognition of the transitory nature of possessions comes into play in more modern philosophy as well.

In Minima Moralia (1951), the philosopher Theodor Adorno, who himself was in exile, points out his great opposition to what he calls the “administered” world (Said 184). Instead he steers us in the direction of rejecting the traditional notion of home and fleeting objects which do not guarantee belonging:

The house is past. The bombings of European cities, as well as the labour and
concentration camps, merely proceed as executors, with what the immanent
development of technology had long ago decided was to be the fate of houses.
These are now good only to be thrown away like old food cans...It is part of
morality not to be at home in one’s home.” (Adorno 39)

In essence, he is advocating the removal of the self from what we know to be home so
that we may observe it with an exile’s lack of prejudice (147). In fact, Adorno sees
continual technological advances as even more reason to abandon our reliance on the idea
of home. Instead, we must face the current predicament in which the world finds itself
and be prepared for any and all events or “executors,” which may ultimately force us to
abandon these homes anyway.

Adorno’s philosophy of rejecting the traditional notion of home parallels the
movement of modern novelists. Rushdie and his contemporaries create work that
reinforces the idea that migrancy and the embrace of alternate homelands are essential to
the world we live in today. In particular, the themes in Rushdie’s work are unique to the
migrant experience and often shed light on the experiences of those who are living in
exile and those who have stayed behind. And his reinvention of both the stylistic and
linguistic elements of the novel itself creates for the reader an environment that actually
mimics the migrant experience. This in-between space in one of great possibility and
perspective. But in Rushdie’s novels, this space is carefully thought out and described.
Just as Rushdie is creating a world through his story-telling, he is also rejecting the
limitations that would oppose the migrant’s voice. He celebrates the migrant and his in-
between status and points to this outsider’s voice as one of truth and enlightenment.

Today, especially in the context of the literary world, there seems to be more
acceptance of Rushdie’s claim that migrancy leads to multiple rooting rather than rootlessness. Seamus Deane describes the way in which modern beliefs regarding the value of multiplicity have connected with classic ideals in order to form a new perspective on exile:

Exile is [now seen as] only the loss of one possible home; it can lead from belonging nowhere to becoming at home everywhere, a migrant condition that owes something to the Enlightenment ideal of the Citizen of the World, but also owes much to the contemporary belief that there is an essential virtue and gain in escaping from the singularity of one culture into the multiplicity of all. (Deane 367)

Deane’s description of the benefits associated with welcoming other cultures is a liberating one. Breaking free from “singularity” in order to embrace “multiplicity” evokes the rejecting of limiting beliefs in favor of overflowing knowledge. Though nationalists cherish their unique identities, there are consequences in confinement. Rushdie sees the most frightening such outcome as “the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong...would be...to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the ‘homeland’” (“Imaginary” 19). In rejecting this ghettoization, migrants open up immeasurable possibilities for communication, re-identification, and invention.

It has been said that “the exile, to be happy, must be born again” (Santayana 44). Rushdie’s work celebrates the possibilities that come from the “rebirth” that migrants must go through in crossing borders. In his “Declaration of Independence,” written for the International Parliament of Writers in 1994, Rushdie discusses the requirements of
freedom necessary for literature as an art to function at its fullest potential. Literature requires:

...that the writer be free to move between his many countries as he chooses, needing no passport or visa, making what he will of them and of himself. We are miners and jewelers, truth-tellers and liars, jesters and commanders, mongrels and bastards, parents and lovers, architects and demolition men. The creative spirit, of its very nature, resists frontiers and limiting points, denies the authority of censors and taboos. ("Declaration" 250)

This innate creative energy that resists boundaries is exactly what defies the rules of many dictatorial states and is, therefore, treated by them as an enemy. This explains the reaction that many have had to Rushdie’s work: “in making what he will of [his many countries] and himself” he has rejected the limits that are normally imposed upon us by traditional notions of roots and faces the issues of migrancy head-on. Rushdie rejects the limitations of maps and borders as well as the attitudes of those who would attempt to stifle the migrant voice. Instead, he works to create a new type of space in his novels—one that focuses on newness and diversity.

It is precisely because of such traits that Appiah points to Rushdie as “the most elegant exponent” of the ideal of contamination (Appiah 112). In combining all that he has experienced in his journey as a migrant, he has created a third space in his novels—one in which it is safe to discuss issues of identity and belonging. He has said that his own work:

celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics,
movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it (“In Good Faith” 394).

“Hybridity” is a term which Homi Bhabha writes of frequently and the above quotation explains it well. A hybrid is a crossbreed or a combination of more than one element. It is an appropriate term for the migrant who both contaminates and becomes contaminated himself by the influences of home and away. However, Rushdie’s use of the hybrid model was not by pure invention on his part. In fact, Rushdie looked to James Joyce’s work for inspiration of theme and style.

Joyce was an innovator in terms of his exploration of the place of “the Other” in contemporary society. His novels often give detailed accounts of the struggle of the outsider to find his place in the world. It is Joyce’s influence that, perhaps more than any other writer, affected Rushdie’s work as well as the structure of the modern novel itself. Neil Davison describes the effect of Joyce’s Ulysses by saying, “The idea that culture can only be re-evaluated from the position of the Other has of course become one of the intellectual staples of our age” (Davison 154).

Rushdie works from this position of the Other in his novels. Later in this thesis, I will examine how his characters are generally those on the periphery—the ones who are somehow minimized and marginalized by those around them. Rushdie elevates the outsider to the important role of narrator and main character, allowing him to be the catalyst for the action of the novel. The value of the outsider as an observer is in his ability to stay neutral. Just as “exiled writers…are often seen as better equipped to
provide an ‘objective’ view of the two worlds they are straddling by virtue of their alienation,” so, too, are the narrators of these novels able to report on both sides of the migrant divide (Mardorossian 16). It seems that this neutrality and ability to observe the past with a fresh eye are what Joyce was seeking in his self-exile.

Rushdie has often praised James Joyce’s masterpiece, *Ulysses* as being the novel that has most influenced his own work. Rushdie saw Joyce’s use of stylistic invention and excessive and specific details as ingenious. “Joyce built a whole universe out of a grain of sand. That was a revelation to me: so that is the way one could also write!” (Dijkgraaf). Joyce’s unique perspective came from his own self-exile. “His various forms of exile did not simply express cold detachment, but rather a distrust of and a distaste for belonging, and a fear of conformity” (McCourt 9). The invention in Joyce’s work sprang from a lack of wanting to belong or fit in. Those in exile usually struggle to fit in. In *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce describes his own rebellion against conformity and his quest for self-expression:

> I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning. (*Portrait* 246-247)

Despite Rushdie’s respect for Joyce’s work, he states that he does not think that his defense strategy for writers of “silence, exile, and cunning” works in today’s world. In an interview with Margot Dijkgraaf on the subject of Joyce and *Ulysses*, Rushdie says, “…you just cannot assume straight-away that there is something like freedom. Against silence it is that now we have to fight. And exile does not work. Therefore, cunning is the
only thing that remains” (Dijkgraaf). Rushdie acknowledges first-hand that exile is no longer what it once was. But Joyce’s exile from Ireland was not only physical. He was also in a state of mental detachment that created the self-reliance that he longed for. In order to create, Joyce needed to leave the space that he wanted to describe in order to see it with fresh eyes—in much the same way all migrants are forced to look at the homelands they have left. Joyce sought out for himself the neutrality that all migrants feel in the in-between borderland of mobility.

Rushdie also borrowed ideas from Joyce regarding language in order to invent his own world. He saw Joyce’s technique of remaking English to conform to his needs as a way in which to make the language his own—a way of taking possession of his own writing despite it being in English. Rushdie describes Joyce’s linguistic invention:

Joyce spoke against the politicizing of literature, but his language is a purposeful attempt to create English which was not the property of the English. He employs a lot of borrowed words from other European languages and creates an un-English kind of English (Dijkgraaf).

Joyce and Rushdie’s manipulation of the English language is a tool that allows them to tell their story in their own way. By breaking the tradition of language in the English novel up to this point, they are making the statement that they refuse to conform to someone else’s rules. Migrant writers must create their own set of parameters for both their writing and their lives.

George Steiner has even proposed that a whole genre of twentieth-century Western literature is “extraterritorial,” a literature written by migrants that also describes their experiences (Said 174). Steiner’s description of migrant literature as
“extraterritorial” seems to perfectly describe Rushdie’s novels. As a writer whose work discusses the issues of migrancy, identity, and belonging, Rushdie brings the discussion of exile back full-circle to the writings of classical philosophers. Rushdie continues the tradition of these intellectuals by reinforcing the possibilities, and not the losses, associated with migrancy.

Salman Rushdie has likened his work to that of the African American writer Ralph Ellison who once said that he “was taken very early… with a passion to link together all [he] loved within the Negro community and all those things [he] felt in the world which lay beyond” (“Imaginary” 20). We see this connection in Rushdie’s novels in the way in which he sets up dualities—past and present, good and evil, home and away, community and the world—in order to link his experiences of East and West. In the following chapters, I will examine Midnight’s Children and Shame in order to show how Rushdie utilizes these dualities as a way of discussing migrancy. Rather than embracing one or the other of these opposites, Rushdie invites the reader to consider the possibility that our reality is not either-or but both-and. I will examine Saleem Sinai in Midnight’s Children and Sufiya Zinobia in Shame and their allegorical struggle for identity, which is meant to parallel the turbulent atmosphere of their national settings. I will also consider the ways in which the construction of a personal identity is further complicated by migrancy, specifically in terms of belonging. Finally, I will discuss how Rushdie utilizes memory in order to create an alternative space for the migrant—one that is neither of the dualities that he points to but, rather, is in between.
Salman Rushdie’s novels focus on the struggle of both individuals and nations to establish identities in tandem. As Rushdie sees it, the prevalence of migrancy in our world today makes it necessary for all of us to examine the diverse influences that make us who we are. In *Midnight’s Children*, the narrator Saleem Sinai exists side-by-side with another important character—India itself. As the country begins its tumultuous journey of independence, Saleem is born into an environment of uncertainty and expectation. He acts, not only as a symbol of India, but also as one of migrants everywhere who must navigate the middle ground between the world of their past and that of their present. In this chapter, I will first examine Saleem’s struggle for personal identity and the ways in which he and India mirror the larger issues of migrancy, and then, I will demonstrate how Rushdie utilizes memory as an alternative space in which the migrant may reconcile past and present. Examining the broken political promise of India is necessary for understanding the connection between Saleem and his birthplace.

India, as Rushdie sees that place, is the perfect setting for a novel whose core issues revolve around identity and diversity. India is “a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a dream we all agreed to dream” (*MC* 124). And where there is a dream, there is also the possibility that it may not come to fruition. Amartya Sen recalls the great sense of anticipation surrounding the birth of a free India and the promise made to all Indians on the eve of Independence:

Jawaharlal Nehru’s voice roared loud and clear over the radio telling us about India’s ‘tryst with destiny.’ The ‘task ahead’ included ‘the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.’ We heard with rapt
attention and we felt powerfully inspired. (Sen 193)

However, despite some achievements in the areas of education, basic health care, and poverty over the years, Sen points to the work that has yet to be done: "What Nehru hoped would happen automatically with the independence of India...continue[s] to be neglected" (202). According to Rushdie, the mood of Indians following independence consequently went from one of "idealistic hope" to one of "disenchantment" (Step 160). Shashi Tharoor even describes August 15, 1947 as "a birth that was also an abortion" (Tharoor 15). Partition was, in a sense, a betrayal of the dream of a pluralist, progressive India. Independence brought with it a turbulent political and economic climate and the dream that people had for India quickly faded away.

But Rushdie observes that the basic idea of India continues to be upheld in the minds of all Indians. He sees this concept of India—a nation made up of one billion people, all different but, somehow, all Indian—as an example of the modern acceptance of multiplicity:

In the modern age, we have come to understand our own selves as composites, often contradictory, even internally incompatible. We have understood that each of us is many different people...The nineteenth century concept of the integrated self has been replaced by this jostling crowd of "I"'s. And yet, we usually have a relatively clear sense of who we are. I agree with my many selves to call all of them "me." (Step 163)

Rushdie refers here to an individual's self-construction, but he also uses this example to describe the way in which India itself has adapted to the modern notion of identity. India has embraced all of its diverse people, languages and cultures. All of India's people call
themselves Indian. As Winston Churchill once said, “India...is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the equator” (Tharoor 7). And it is into and with this amalgam that Saleem Sinai is born.

Saleem’s greatest concern for his life is significance: “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” (MC 4). His struggle for meaning is at the heart of this novel. From an early age, it seems that Saleem fights against the current of life within his family, his country and the secret world of the midnight’s children. His struggle for identity takes place on several levels.

First, he is born at the exact moment of Indian independence and, therefore, his life and the lives of the other one thousand midnight’s children become symbolic of their other sibling—India. The pressure to succeed is great for Saleem, even as a young boy. His mind repeatedly returns to the letter sent to him by Jawaharlal Nehru on the occasion of his birth: “You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (MC 139). The letter is an overwhelming message to Saleem that he is tied to the history of his country and he cannot fail to live up to expectation.

With the knowledge that much is expected of him, Saleem feels a constant sense of dread at letting down those who hope for his greatness:

Midnight and baby-snaps, prophets and prime ministers had created around me a glowing and inescapable mist of expectancy...cursed by a multitude of hopes and nicknames...I became afraid that everyone was wrong—that my much-trumpeted
existence might turn out to be utterly useless, void, and without a shred of a purpose. (173)

These feelings about his life echo the feelings that lie just beneath the surface of Indian consciousness at that time regarding the fate of the new nation. Just as Indians feared being disappointed by the failure of their country so, too, does Saleem fear letting down the masses. He says, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (3). Saleem’s birth coincides with the birth of the nation and so his life—with its successes and failures—becomes a living measure of the development of the Indian dream.

Saleem finds it difficult to come to terms with his unique position in the world. He does not belong only to his family but is, rather, a public possession:

In fact, all over the new India, the dream we all shared, children were being born who were only partially the offspring of their parents—the children of midnight were also the children of the time: fathered, you understand, by history. It can happen. Especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream. (MC 132)

The construction of a personal identity is clearly made more difficult when one’s foundation is not quite real but a hopeful dream that has yet to become reality. This type of struggle to construct an identity from the various pieces of one’s life is a theme often repeated in Rushdie’s work and we will see it again in Shame.

The second thing that makes Saleem’s struggle for identity even more difficult is his true parentage. He believes himself to be the son of Amina and Ahmed Sinai. To discover that his real birth parents were Vanita and William Methwold would be enough to lead to an identity crisis. But being the son of an Englishman conflicts on some level
with being a citizen of India. Saleem must choose to acknowledge or reject his Britishness. He says, “we throw our lot in with India; but the alienness of blue eyes remains” (119). Just as Saleem must come to terms with the British parts of himself, so too must India reconcile the remnants of British rule with its new independence.

The influence of the British Raj on the Indian people is represented in the novel by the exchange of property that takes place between the Sinai family and William Methwold. Methwold’s Estate becomes a site of transformation. Saleem describes the changes that take place within his family upon moving into their new home:

the sharp edges of things are getting blurred, so that they have all failed to notice what is happening: the Estate, Methwold’s Estate, is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling-fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath…All is well. (109)

The influence of all things British has changed the Indian people for better or worse. They have taken on the attributes and personal possessions of the British and so, in some strange way, have become hybrids, made up of a little of this and a little of that—another way of living between two worlds. India’s struggle to navigate this in-between space parallels the struggle of migrants everywhere.

Another level of Saleem’s identity struggle lies in what he calls his “inheritance”—the “baggage” packed by generations before him, which he must carry into the world:
How many things people notions we bring with us into the world, how many possibilities and also restrictions of possibility!—Because all of these were the parents of the child born that midnight, and for every one of the midnight children there were as many more. (120)

This inheritance contains thousands of stories, actions, thoughts and secrets, all of which become part of Saleem’s genetic makeup. He describes this “baggage” as being full of possibilities but also as holding us back from what is possible. Baggage is invisible but it is nonetheless there and it affects every aspect of one’s life. Each piece of luggage that Saleem carries into the world contains thousands of pieces of influence. An individual is made up of all of these overwhelming elements. Saleem describes the consequently diverse makeup of one individual: “To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world” (121). Therefore, identity is not concrete. There are many factors, whether seen or unseen, that influence a person’s makeup and those influences consistently evolve. This fact reinforces the concept of plural identity. But in the case of Saleem and others who go through exile as he does, making sense of the pieces of oneself can be difficult.

The final roadblock in Saleem’s struggle for meaning comes from the voices of the midnight’s children. Rushdie utilizes the downfall of the Conference to show the negative aspect of society—the side that rejects diversity and mutual understanding in favor of nationalism and commercialism. This attitude reflects our deeply ingrained notions of rooting and committed homelands. Once seen by Saleem as the path to the significance and purpose that he hoped for, the Midnight’s Children Conference eventually begins to fall apart:

Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the
Prejudices and the world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian “blackies;” there were religious rivalries; and class entered our councils. (292)

The prejudices that lead to the destruction of the M.C.C. and, in turn, the loss of hope for India are connected to our traditional ideas about belonging. Saleem notes that these beliefs are picked up in childhood much like our ideas about roots. “[C]hildren are the vessels into which adults pour their poison, and it was the poison of the grown-ups which did for us” (293). This is Rushdie’s reminder that children are born innocent and learn about the world from their parents and teachers. Prejudice, hate and ideas about who belongs and who doesn’t are taught to us just as we are taught from an early age about borders and boundaries on a map.

Saleem sees the Conference as an alternative to the world of the grown-ups, a chance to change the status quo. He begs Shiva, “But...free will...hope...the great soul, otherwise known as mahatma, of mankind...and what of poetry, and art, and...” (293). Despite Saleem’s protestations and his hopes for humanity, the Midnight’s Children Conference splinters, and no one is more supportive of its destruction than Shiva, Saleem’s alter-ego. In response to Saleem’s pleas to the children to create their own program for progress in India, Shiva harshly answers:

No little rich boy; there is no third principle; there is only money-and-poverty, and have-and-lack, and right-and-left; there is only me-against-the-world! The world is not ideas, rich boy; the world is no place for dreamers or their dreams; the world, little Snotnose, is things. (293)
Shiva and the others reject Saleem’s hopeful vision and the M.C.C. becomes exactly what it was prophesied to be: “a mirror of the nation” reflecting back intolerance, violence and hatred (292). Rushdie points to the importance of supporting the underdog who would fight for freedom and equality in the face of the Shivas of the world. In doing so, Rushdie seems to be saying that he and novelists like him are vital as both voices for the underdog and the defenders of freedom. Shiva must be present in the novel as the reminder of what migrant writers are fighting against.

It is Shiva’s attitude to which Rushdie seems to be responding in this work. Where most think that it must be one way or the other, that things must be either black or white, Rushdie opts instead for Saleem’s optimistic view of a “third principle” despite the loud cries of protest from the masses. This alternative principle is the way of the migrant. It refers specifically to the act of embracing “Otherness” and all of the pieces of one’s inheritance. When Saleem says that “only...by being new can we fulfill the promise of our birth,” he is referring to the losses that India endured because those in charge refused to see with a fresh perspective (292). Leaders continued to use the old method “divide and conquer” mentality, which only led to violence and destruction. The notion of a unique identity—one in which we ignore our shared identity as humans—leads inevitably to conflict (Sen 350). What Rushdie is pointing to is the ability that human beings have to reject ingrained notions of separatism in favor of something else. In essence, he suggests, we should re-teach ourselves tolerance, acceptance and love by casting off the baggage that weighs us down in favor of newer, better ways of doing things. But Rushdie recognizes the difficulty of re-programming old belief systems.

Rushdie points out that the optimism that Saleem attempts to inject into the
Midnight’s Children Conference is often seen as naïve by those who see the world as Shiva does. In fact, Rushdie describes optimism as a “disease” and “an epidemic” (MC 47). He reinforces the rejection of naïve optimism with the Rani of Cooch Naheen, Aadam Aziz and Nadir Khan. They embody the optimism of the nation, but their optimism is resisted and finally destroyed. The Rani, a close friend of Aadam Aziz and supporter of the Free Islam Convocation, sees her disease of going white as a direct result of the rejection of her hopes for the country and the world. With the death of Mian Abdullah, also known as the “Hummingbird,” the Rani sees her dream disappear. “I am the victim…the hapless victim of my cross-cultural concerns. My skin is the outward expression of the internationalism of my spirit” (45). She had great hopes for change within society but those dreams slowly faded just as the dream for India itself gradually disappeared. And as her dream dies, her skin slowly turns white until she practically disappears along with her hopes for the future of India.

It would be easy to assume that Rushdie’s viewpoint in this novel is pessimistic and that his intention in writing about the downfall of the Midnight’s Children Conference is to reinforce the national feeling of hopelessness. Cynthia Ho believes that “the systematic disillusionment, murder, and diaspora of Saleem’s midnight generation also represents India’s movement from optimism to despair” (252). Considering the unpleasant ending of the novel, Ho’s assessment would seem to be on target. But Rushdie claims that, despite the fact that Saleem’s story is filled with despair, he meant for the novel to end on a note of optimism:

The story is told in a manner designed to echo…the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration. This is why the narrative constantly throws up new stories, why
it "teems." The form—multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country—is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem's personal tragedy. I do not think that a book written in such a manner can really be called a despairing work. ("Imaginary" 16)

In essence, Rushdie is saying that there is a contradiction between form and content and that, despite the horrible things that occur within the novel, the structure of the narrative lends itself to the possibility that exists in the end. The optimism in the novel seems to come from the ability of the new generation of children to learn from the mistakes of their parents and grandparents. Despite Mary Pereira's broken promise when she says, "...anything you want to be, you can be," Saleem has hope for his son's generation (144). He leaves one jar empty at the end of the novel—one jar not preserved—"what cannot be pickled, because it has not taken place" (MC 532). Because the future has not yet taken place, there is still hope that the status quo will change. And Saleem ensures that his son will have the entire story of his ancestry—a full inventory of his "inheritance"—so that he might create a better future and, perhaps, continue his father's third principle.

The way in which Saleem wills this inheritance to his son is through his memory. In Grimus (1975), Rushdie writes, "It is the natural condition of the exile, putting down roots in memory" (127). The roots of memory take the place of the confining roots that would keep us in place. Essentially, rooting in memory rather than in a specific home allows for plural identity and possibility. Saleem's memory is the alternative framework that allows him to reconcile his past, present and unfortunate future. The synthesis of both his inheritance and his memory creates Saleem's identity and his story. The earliest piece of that story comes from his Kashmiri grandfather Aadam Aziz.
Aadam, having been away studying in Germany for five years, returns and sees his old home:

through traveled eyes. Instead of the beauty of the tiny valley circled by giant teeth, he noticed the narrowness, the proximity of the horizon; and felt sad, to be home and feel so utterly enclosed. He also felt—inexplicably—as though the old place resented his educated, stethoscoped return. (5)

He was branded an alien by Tai the boatman who felt that by leaving his homeland, Aadam had lost a piece of himself and was no longer pure. Although Aadam doesn’t feel as though he has changed because of his voyage to Europe, he has, both in the way he views his homeland and the way in which he is viewed by others within that space. On the opposite side, he has been separated from his German friends because of “this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors” (6). No longer belonging home and not quite fitting into European society, he finds himself “caught in a strange middle ground”—the middle ground of the migrant (6). It is this sense of being what Thomas Mann calls “a citizen of two worlds” that trickles down generations into Saleem’s blood (Mann 105).

In the strange middle ground that exists between the two worlds of migrant life, one of the biggest challenges is making sense of memories—what is remembered, what is missing and what is simply made up. Saleem’s struggle to piece together the fragments of his existence into an understandable and truthful narrative acts as an example of the difficulty that migrants face when attempting to reconcile their past and present. Saleem questions his own telling of events: “then it occurs to me that I have made another error…but although I have racked my brains, my memory refuses, stubbornly, to alter the
sequence of events” (254). He worries that these small errors of memory will inevitably lead to larger ones.

Rushdie has said that the experience of writing *Midnight’s Children* was, at first, equally as frustrating for him as narrating seems to be for Saleem. He would make internal plot inconsistencies and not be able to remember details that had once been clear. Some facts just slipped by him completely. But then he decided that such errors were part of Saleem’s charm and he would leave the errors in place as a way of proving the problems of memory ("Errata" 24). For example:

> even though Saleem admits that no tidal wave passed through the Sundarbans in the year of the Bangladesh War, he continues to be borne out of the jungle on the crest of that fictional wave. His truth is too important to him to allow it to be unseated by a mere weather report. ("Errata" 24)

Whether this is simply a way for Rushdie to rationalize his own errors or not, the novel still points to the difficulty of remembering clearly and objectively, and suggests how our memories become our truth regardless of their historical accuracy.

The biggest challenge of memory is in choosing what we believe is essential and what is disposable. That is exactly what Saleem is trying to do before time runs out. At night he does to memories what he does to fruit by day—he preserves them:

> My chutneys and kasaundies are after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings—by day amongst the vats, by night within these sheets. I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks. (MC 37)

The memory of which Saleem speaks turns out to be problematic for him because it is
selective. Despite Saleem’s early belief in his “new, all-knowing memory,” he later must admit that what he remembers to be true is now suspect (97).

I told you the truth... Memory’s truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own. (242)

What is really behind Saleem’s concern about his memory is his desire to understand the truth of his experiences. But as the novel progresses, we get the sense that Rushdie is saying that truth is a difficult thing to get a hold of. Truth is not one-dimensional but, rather, has many sides to it. Rushdie seems to be advocating a self-defined version of events because such a version has the most meaning for the individual recalling it. As he asks, why would one trust another person’s story more than his own? But constructing one’s own story becomes difficult when things are not what they really seem.

In Midnight’s Children, Rushdie plays with the tension between truth and reality by showing us how deceiving the “facts” can actually be. For example, even when it comes to the issue of time, reality becomes obscured. The narrator tells us that “in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist” (MC 389) such that:

- time has been an unsteady affair, in my experience, not a thing to be relied upon.
- It could even be partitioned: the clocks in Pakistan would run half an hour ahead of their Indian counterparts... “If they can change the time just like that, what’s real any more? I ask you? What is true?” (87)
Ever more significantly than just issues of time, the whole notion of whether or not India actually exists is under examination in this novel, which questions how one can believe in the reality of “a country which is itself a sort of dream” (132). This is undoubtedly the main source of frustration for Indians who cannot grasp the foundations of their country’s existence let alone their own. Indian culture is defined by bits and pieces of national and personal memories. They are made up of fragments from the British Raj and from centuries of Indian history as well as the stories that are contained in the “inheritance” that Saleem carries with him. These are also the bits and pieces that make up the fragmented migrant identity.

Fragments and shards are recurring themes in Rushdie’s work. They represent the experience of migrants and the ways in which they must piece together a life. Saleem describes the infamous perforated sheet of his grandparents as the start of his own splintering existence: “the ghostly essence of that perforated sheet, which doomed my mother to learn to love a man in segments, and which condemned me to see my own life—its meanings, its structures—in fragments also” (119). Although this fragmentation would seem to be a loss, Rushdie points to the possibilities in being a part of the in-between space of the migrant. He likens it to translation: “I too am a translated man. I have been borne across. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion...that something can also be gained” (Shame 23). What can be gained is, in fact, a new story or identity. One must excavate one’s own history for the largest and most prominent shards of memory—the things that stick out as being significant and worth preserving.

Rushdie likens these shards of memory to shards of pottery discovered on an
archaeological dig. All that is left are the pieces of artifacts but they are nonetheless valuable, and seem to take on more importance because they are representative of the whole. "The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly flawed...The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols" ("Imaginary" 12). The meaning of our lives comes from scraps of memory, conversation, movies, relationships, accomplishments and sacrifices. Meaning is made up of all of these pieces. And this is why Saleem struggles to tell his story in all of its fragmentation—for meaning and significance.

In *Shame*, Rushdie continues the journey that he begins in *Midnight's Children*, moving "not only westward but inward, searching for yet another way to redescribe a world increasingly connected, but in no way whole" (Marzorati 25). Rushdie himself has described his writing as "a migrant's eye-view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis...that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe can be derived a metaphor for all humanity" ("In Good Faith" 394). Many of the themes of these two novels are similar, but *Shame* ends on a much more violent and pessimistic note. Rushdie has pointed to the optimism that he attempted to infuse into *Midnight's Children*, But the possibility that he hoped for didn't take effect in reality. The political events in India since Rushdie wrote about Saleem and Shiva have been much worse than he could have imagined. *Shame* and its overtly pessimistic tone is a reaction to the failure of Partition and the fate of the Pakistani people.

While discussing the political climate of Pakistan, Rushdie also makes clear his intention of bringing the migrant experience to the forefront. The twists and turns of the
narrative itself, the narrator’s constant interjections and the emphasis on fragmentation and missing pieces all contribute to the novel’s representation of migrancy in the modern world. And, from a political perspective, Pakistan lacks India’s pluralism, thereby limiting even further the opportunities that “outsider” characters have for acceptance and belonging within their own society.
Shame

In Shame, Rushdie continues the themes of identity, belonging and migrancy. From the relationship that the characters have to the Pakistani experiment, to the symbolic life of Sufiya Zinobia, to the fate of the hero, Omar Kyayyam Shakil, Rushdie has created a forum for discussing both the difficulty of the migrant experience and the possibility that can exist for migrants if they choose to embrace being citizens of more than one home. In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which Rushdie injects his narrative with many of the same attributes of the migrant himself. In this chapter, I will first demonstrate how he uses Sufiya Zinobia in much the same way that he employs Saleem Sinai in Midnight’s Children—as a symbol of the overwhelming shame of the Pakistani people. Then, I will examine the ways in which Rushdie uses fragmentation as a means of discussing the importance of memory and how he utilizes his narrative space, not only as a means of conveying the idea of migrancy, but also as a way in which to simulate the migrant experience. I will begin by discussing the history of Pakistan and Sufiya Zinobia’s role in Shame.

The fact that Rushdie set his novel in Pakistan is important because the history of the country has often involved a denial of the past. Pakistan was built on centuries of Indian history that have been hidden. Rushdie accordingly describes the country as a palimpsest—something that obscures what is actually beneath it:

To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done...It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting
palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the human mind. (Shame 86)

In contrast to the situation in India, Pakistanis had to create a new identity by denying the one that they previously had. If India was a dream, then Pakistan was fiction. It is a country created from the pieces of someone else’s story. For the people of Pakistan to deny that their country was built on Indian history was to deny their own ancestry and culture. The failures of Pakistan’s government made the situation for Pakistanis that much worse. The landscape around them becomes unrecognizable and they are no longer able to identify themselves within that context.

Rushdie describes Pakistan as a monster—but not a single monster to blame for its own actions. Instead, it was created from the collected actions of many people. And as David Punter points out, the blame for these actions is never accepted by anyone. The reasons behind all of it have to do with power:

Like Frankenstein’s monster, Pakistan—and India, and Bangladesh—was born of an exercise of pure colonial power; it derived its existence from lines drawn on a map, lines drawn by a foreign body; and thus there is a sense in which the very country becomes a foreign body to itself, something inorganic, unnatural. (Punter 114)

Like India, much was invested in the economic and social success of Pakistan that when it didn’t develop as planned, there was a great sense of failure among the people. As Latif Sherwani describes in “The Constitutional Experiment in Pakistan,” the people of the country believed that along with their newfound freedom would come economic benefits. But “the persons who came to the helm of affairs in Pakistan proved themselves
unworthy of the trust that the people placed in them” (10). By 1958, the country found itself in economic ruin due to the mismanagement and dishonest actions of its leaders:

The foreign exchange resources of the country had gone down to the dangerously low level of 720 million rupees (about 150 million dollars); mills and factories in Karachi, the industrial center of Pakistan, were working at only 35% of their installed capacity and there was an acute shortage of consumer goods. (Sherwani 10)

There had been such anticipation in the hearts and minds of Pakistanis that to have their dream turn into a nightmare was heartbreaking. Inevitably, when such a failure occurs, there is a great deal of pain and shame associated with the loss. This shame is what Rushdie uses as the basis for the character of Sufiya Zinobia.

Sufiya Zinobia is the novel’s physical manifestation of the shame of Pakistan. The country is described as “a miracle that went wrong,” whereas Sufiya Zinobia is described only two pages later as “the wrong miracle” (Shame 86, 88). She was a girl when she was expected to be have been a boy. Her parents associated her immediately with shame for not fulfilling their greatest wishes. Sufiya, in turn, represents the shame of Pakistanis for the anticlimactic birth of their nation. Shame describes the story of the constant corruption that has continued to destroy Pakistan’s hopes for prosperity (Punter 112). What follows is a long history of inexcusable political actions devoid of any feelings of remorse or shamefulness:

Imagine shame as a liquid, let’s say a sweet fizzy tooth-rotting drink, stored in a vending machine. Push the right button and a cup plops down under a pissing stream of the fluid. How to push the button? Nothing to it. Tell a lie, sleep with
the white boy, get born the wrong sex. Out flows the bubbling emotion and you
drink your fill...but how many human beings refuse to follow these simple
instructions!...What of the unquaffed cups of pop?...The button is pushed; but
then in comes the shameless hand and jerks away the cup! The button-pusher does
not drink what was ordered; and the fluid of shame spills, spreading in a frothy
lake across the floor. (Shame 125)

This overflow of emotion must be cleaned up by someone and, in this case, it is done by
Sufiya Zinobia. She is one of the “misfortunate few, janitors of the unseen, their souls the
buckets into which squeegees drip what-was-spilled. We keep such buckets in special
cupboards. Nor do we think of them, although they clean up our dirty waters” (125). No
one who knows her can admit to themselves that she is a danger to society until it is too
late. The reason for their denial is that, in admitting that she is their shame, they would
have to face their own mistakes as well and this is too painful a realization. “To
comprehend Sufiya Zinobia would be to shatter, as if it were a crystal, these people’s
sense of themselves; and so of course they would not do it, they did not, not for years”
(Shame 210).

Sufiya’s shame begins at birth when it is discovered that she is actually a girl
rather than the expected boy. She is so much of a disappointment that her father tells the
hospital official, “‘Genitalia! Can! Be! Obscured!’” (88). It takes many years for her to
fully comprehend her own shame. As she grows, she feels that something is wrong with
her and that she is not able to have the same experiences as other women around her. She
watches her sister give birth to twenty-seven children while Shahbanou tells her that she
will never give birth. Then she hears her ayah slipping out of the room at night to be with
her husband and she finally understands that what was meant for her is now in the womb of Shahbanou. With each successive embarrassment, Sufiya Zinobia's soul becomes filled with the dirty waters of shame and it can eventually no longer hold. At that point, there is no longer a trace of the old Sufiya. Like cancer cells that spread, the Beast's core of violence is growing and building, "swelling slowly, feeding on inadequacy, guilt, shame, bloating towards the surface" (230). Finally, it explodes with dangerous consequences. As the narrator tells us, "...the power of the Beast of shame cannot be held for long within any one frame of flesh and blood, because it grows, it feeds and swells, until the vessel bursts" (305).

Rushdie seems to be reminding us of the consequences of political actions devoid of any responsibility. The shame of the Pakistani people over the failure of the Partition experiment eventually overwhelms them and spills out into violence and rage. Identity construction amidst this chaos becomes a struggle and is further complicated by the lack of true facts from which to piece a life together. Things are consistently hidden and the lines blurred when it comes to the identity of the country itself and where the people fit within that setting. Imagine trying to create an identity for yourself when the place that you choose to call home is struggling to find an identity for itself as well. In that vein, Rushdie has described the main purpose of his fiction writing as a journey of discovery:

It seems to me, more and more, that the fictional project on which I've been involved ever since I began *Midnight's Children* back in 1975 is one of self-definition. That novel, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses* strike me as an attempt to come to terms with the various component parts of myself—countries, memories, histories, families, gods. First the writer invents the books; then, perhaps, the
books invent the writer. (Grant)

And this novel certainly attempts to show the difficulty that exists for Pakistanis who seek to reconcile all of the “component parts” of themselves. Moreover, the dizzying atmosphere of Pakistan in the years highlighted in *Shame* can be seen as a parallel to the confusion and uncertainty experienced by migrants all over the world.

In order to communicate the truth of the migrant experience, Rushdie focuses quite a bit on fragmentation, both in terms of his characters as well as plot. He admits that he cannot possibly include everything in his narrative, which is probably why he has the narrator describe his setting as a place “at a slight angle from reality,” not quite Pakistan (*Shame* 22). Rushdie’s experiences with the country have been limited as well as limiting, and his memories of Pakistan are skewed because he lived there, was away for many years, and then continued to travel back and forth. He was born in India, moved to Pakistan with his family, went to school and lived for a time in England and eventually moved to the United States.

Similarly, our narrator describes the way in which he has gotten to know Pakistan in the same terms in which he got to know his younger sister whom he grew to love her in successive snippets of time, seeing her every few years: “So there have been none youngest-sisters for me to get to know. I have felt closer to each successive incarnation than to the one before. (This goes for the country, too)” (*Shame* 66). In admitting that he has had limited personal experience in the country, he is also admitting that his view of Pakistan is that of an outsider. But he is a privileged outsider in that he has lived there and does have memories from long ago that he can fall back on. He invites us to either join him in his discovery or reject his point of view but he does not attempt to deceive us:
However I choose to write about [Pakistan], I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors, the way Farah Zoroaster saw her face at the bollarded frontier. I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits.

Rushdie seems to use this lack of abundantly clear memories to his advantage when writing. By admitting that he is an outsider to Pakistan, he enables the reader to fill in the “missing bits” along the way as he does, or to reconcile that they will simply have to stay missing.

The missing bits that Rushdie speaks of can also be seen as part of the ambivalence of migrancy. On the one hand, not possessing the details of memory or experience can threaten the legitimacy of the migrant writer. But on the other hand, not having the full picture of the past allows for the invention of imagination that I mentioned earlier when discussing Midnight’s Children. The pieces are often more valuable than the whole because they are symbolic of what once was. The fragments are all that remain and so the full picture must be recreated from these pieces as well as ideas of what may have occurred. Migrants are forced to reconcile the fact that their memories, though precious, will always be part imagination:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that we lost; that we will, in short, create fictions,
not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands. Indias of the mind ("Imaginary" 10).

This excavation process allows the migrant to sift through memories of the past and extract shards of detail, conversations, photographs, music and points of interest. These fragments can be more important than the historical truth because they are true to the experience as the migrant knows it. Rather than making up what he believes happened or tweaking his narrative to fit side-by-side with historically accurate accounts of the past, he simply tells the only story that he knows—his own. Rushdie describes the emptiness that accompanies the partial history of migrancy:

And what's the worst thing [about migrant peoples and seceded nations]? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time. I may be such a person. Pakistan may be such a country. (85)

Rushdie describes the sense of having invisible luggage—of being separated from time and space, from history and memory. Although there is great hope in the migrant experience, there is also the dislocation of being separated permanently from all things familiar.

As Rushdie mentioned when he talked about the "missing bits," memory is also greatly affected. Shame's narrator describes this feeling when he says, "I, too, face the problem of history; what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change" (86). This reveals a conflict that Rushdie dealt
with in writing the novel as well as something that he allows to come through in the narrator's experience of compiling this history. He asks the question: what parts of the past are important, what should be kept in the recesses of the mind to be called up in the future and what can be discarded? These questions reflect the exilic mind as well. The migrant must combine what he knows with what he imagines to be true in order to reconcile the “missing bits” of his past.

In “On a Magic Carpet,” Blake Morrison says that the missing bits are significant enough to do damage to the novel:

The missing bits include the generous and authentic detail, the sights, smells, sounds, that made “Midnight’s Children” so compelling. Instead of super-sensory Saleem we have what Rushdie calls a “peripheral hero” (a dignified way of handling the fact that Omar never took off as the author had hoped?) and a plot so frenziedly eventful as to make one hanker at times for a long cold bath of Proust or Henry James. (31)

Morrison’s review doesn’t seem to be a fair analysis of Rushdie’s intentions, however. The detail in Shame is plentiful and, although Omar is described as a “peripheral hero,” it would seem that Rushdie wanted it that way. Omar Khayyam is peripheral in that he is “marginalized by his own tribe for the inauspicious circumstances of his birth” and because his life parallels the migrant’s displacement and relegation to the position of the outsider (Afzal-Khan 143).

The narrator in Shame points to the way in which outsiders are often seen as not being worthy of telling a story that doesn’t belong to them:

We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped
around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell us but lies? I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? Can only the dead speak? (Shame 22)

Rushdie actually rejects the notion that he, being an outsider, should not attempt to tell this history. He admits that his is a flawed tale and that he is making much of it up as he goes along, but he convincingly asserts that history is not solely to be told by the people who either survived it or, in some cases, didn’t. Sometimes it must be told from the perspective of those on the periphery—those with genuine knowledge of the inside watching what occurs from the outside.

As for the frenzied plot that Morrison speaks of, Rushdie seems to be utilizing the actual structure of the novel as a metaphor for migrancy itself. Part of the reason, perhaps, that migrants are able to accept that they must give up part of the places that they have called home is because they know they will still be attached to them in some way. Rushdie conveys this sense of being but not being in one place:

I tell myself this will be a novel of leavetaking, my last words on the East from which, many years ago, I began to come loose. I do not always believe myself when I say this. It is part of the world to which, whether I like it or not, I am still joined, if only by elastic bands. (Shame 22)

The image of the elastic band is a good one because it reflects that pulling outward from a space and then being bounced right back into it. And the farther you attempt to get away from it, the further back into it you are pulled. This image is especially clear in the experience that Rushdie has upon hearing of the father who murdered his daughter in
London. She has brought dishonor upon her family, and her father would rather kill her than deal with that shame. Rushdie describes the strange feeling that he had, not being appalled by the murder, but at actually “understanding the killer” (117). The idea of a father murdering his daughter because she has shamed the family is not an alien concept to Rushdie and others like him who come to the West still carrying the baggage of their own Eastern cultural beliefs. But he, nonetheless, assumes that it is alien to the reader.

The fact that Rushdie can actually relate to the father’s feelings is a profound statement about cultural connection. Having been brought up in an environment that equates shame with death, he can see where the father must have been coming from emotionally in order to commit such a crime:

> We who have been brought up on a diet of honour and shame can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy: that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride. (Shame 117)

Despite living in England at the time, where killing one’s own daughter is seen as madness, Rushdie cannot escape the innate mentality of eastern shame. But as the narrator tells us, “Shame, dear reader, is not the exclusive property of the East” (22).

It is because of Rushdie’s image of the “elastic bands” that we can argue that he is not simply discussing the themes of cultural displacement and the questions that arise regarding identity. Rather, it seems that he is also creating his narrative in a style that mimics the experience of actually being culturally displaced. Shame, for example, begins from the perspective of our “peripheral hero” and continues to be expressed from the viewpoints of characters who are considered outsiders. Omar often talks about being at
the edge of the world and feeling as if he might fall off—about being inverted, dizzy, lost. Rufus Cook describes the way in which both the characters and the narrative contribute to “acts of reader estrangement”:

But [the novel] attempts...to infect its audience with this same sense of cultural vertigo: jolting us with its unexpected shifts from the Western to the Hegiran calendar, with its casual introduction into a realistic modern narrative of fairytale motifs long ago ‘consigned to peripheries by conventions of disbelief,’ with its teasing ‘metafictive’ asides on the novel that it might have become instead of this one. (Cook 23)

Cook’s argument is persuasive. The frenzied plot that Blake Morrison believes is so overdone actually functions as a device to place the reader within a space of disconnection (Morrison 31). This is the sensation that Cook describes as “cultural vertigo”—the feeling of cultural displacement, of being all over the place, topsy-turvy, right side up, upside down, of never really knowing what is going on or where you fit in all of it. We get the sense when reading Shame that we are attached to that elastic band and that Rushdie is bringing us back and forth, back ad forth in the narrative until we really feel pulled in many directions. This technique is quite effective in making the reader feel a part of the narrative.

This back and forth, both/and dichotomy that Rushdie employs is a technique that wouldn’t be possible without the input of the migrant perspective. Rushdie’s work honors the belief that many migrant writers have regarding the value of crossing borders. In defense of this belief, Muriel Spark once commented that “travel to other countries [is] essential for all writers. Literature has little or nothing to do with a writer’s home
address” (“Damme” 151). Travel, Rushdie believes, allows the writer to converse with the world and to better understand the human condition (151). In his “Declaration of Independence,” written for the International Parliament of Writers in 1994, Rushdie discusses the requirements for literature as an art to function at its fullest potential.

Literature requires:

...that the writer be free to move between his many countries as he chooses, needing no passport or visa, making what he will of them and of himself. We are miners and jewelers, truth-tellers and liars, jesters and commanders, mongrels and bastards, parents and lovers, architects and demolition men. The creative spirit, of its very nature, resists frontiers and limiting points, denies the authority of censors and taboos. (“Declaration” 250)

This innate creative energy that resists boundaries is exactly what defies the rules of many dictatorial states and is, therefore, treated as an enemy. This explains the reaction of many of his critics. These include, most notably, the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, who in 1989 issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie’s execution for his writing of The Satanic Verses. In “making what he will of [his many countries] and of himself,” he has rejected the limits that are normally imposed upon citizens of, not only oppressive lands, but also lands in which something hidden lies beneath; the palimpsests of the world don’t want to be exposed. Migrancy, though difficult and emotional, allows for what may be called the liberation of the tongue and the pen. Lying somewhere between here and there, writers like Rushdie are able to illuminate the truth and, perhaps also something new, in both places.
Conclusion

Despite being novels about India and Pakistan, Midnight’s Children and Shame hold relevance for people of all nations. In our time, migrancy is at its peak. According to the United Kingdom’s Office of National Statistics, 1 out of every 12 citizens is foreign born and “in 2001, 4.9 million (8.3 percent) of the total population of the UK were born overseas. This is more than double the 2.1 million (4.2 percent) in 1951” (“Foreign Born”). The makeup of British, European and American neighborhoods, schools and citizenry is changing more than ever before. Those who have held fast to a certain way of life have seen their landscape shift, and migrants who have left one home in search of another find it difficult to navigate the discomfort on both sides. Migrant writers and champions of cosmopolitanism like Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Buchi Emecheta and Zadie Smith seek to record the effects of cultural dislocation, political ambivalence and the rejection of immigrants in their novels. As I have argued in this thesis, Rushdie forces the reader to view the world from the periphery—a position in which many migrants find themselves.

A recent New York Times article chronicled the uprising by locals in a small Georgia town due to the fact that their neighborhood has become inundated with government-placed refugees from around the world, many of whom are children. As one of the citizens of the town admits, these “outsiders” stir up local feelings about who belongs and who doesn’t:

[The immigrants] “trigger people’s reactions on class, on race. They speak with accents and don’t seem American. A lot of people get shaken up by that…”

Clarkston High School now has students from more than 50 countries. The local
mosque draws more than 800 to Friday prayers. There is a Hindu temple, and there are congregations of Vietnamese, Sudanese and Liberian Christians. At the shopping center, American stores have been displaced by Vietnamese, Ethiopian and Eritrean restaurants and a halal butcher. The only hamburger joint in town, City Burger, is run by an Iraqi. (St. John 1.1)

Issues of roots and the rejection of the plural identity that Rushdie advocates in his novels are topics that affect people globally. There is a struggle going on between people like those in Clarkston who want to hold onto life as they have known it for generations and those like the refugees who seek to create a better life by melding their past and the present. These feelings of difference and disconnectedness and the idea that we are separated by language, skin color or religion, are not new beliefs and are often the subject of novelists working in Rushdie’s style.

In her novel, White Teeth, Zadie Smith points to the inevitable changes that migration has brought to Britain over the last few decades. She makes it clear that there is an internal ghettoization going on within Britain that allows for immigrants but not integration. When the “purity” of the nation is threatened, the citizens take action, sometimes with violent repercussions:

This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O’Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checkups…Yet, despite all this mixing up, despite
the fact that we have finally slipped into each other’s lives with reasonable comfort…it is still hard to admit that there is anyone more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist. (271-272)

With the changes in Western demographics, there has also been a parallel discontent among those people who “are of the opinion that intermingling with different cultures will inevitably weaken their own” (“In Good Faith” 394). Rushdie sees this continued discontent and action towards national purity as dangerous. “Doesn’t the idea of pure cultures, in urgent need of being kept free from alien contamination, lead us inexorably toward apartheid, toward ethnic cleansing, toward the gas chamber?” (“Globalization” 269). I would argue that Rushdie’s work, especially Midnight’s Children and Shame, is a way of reacting to what he sees as the rejection of diversity in favor of cultural purity.

In Rushdie’s case, the benefits of celebrating hybridity and embracing the unique circumstances of migrancy include being able “to be inside and outside the British culture he has depicted” (Woods 746). Being on the periphery allows one a certain freedom of expression and an alternative viewpoint to the mainstream. Rushdie acknowledges that “[t]o some, globalization…[has] alarming implications for the survival of true cultural diversity, of the world’s precious localness: the Indianness of India, the Frenchness of France” (“Globalization” 268). But he questions whether there might be “other universals besides international conglomerates and the interests of super-powers” (268). Like Shame’s narrator Saleem, Rushdie asks us to consider a “third principle”—a middle ground in which the old and the new can exist together. But more than anything else, he
points to the unique circumstances of the migrant. The questions that are raised within
Midnight’s Children and Shame parallel the experiences of migrants around the globe—
those who are both here and there, attempting to navigate the past and the present at once,
sometimes under harsh scrutiny.
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