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LITERARY COSMOPOLITANISMS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE, AMITAV GHOSH,
AND ARUNDHATI ROY

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

LITERARY COSMOPOLITANISMS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE, AMITAV GHOSH, AND ARUNDHATI ROY

Sunil S. Macwan, B.A., M.A.

Marquette University, 2018

Since the 1980s, literary critics have examined contemporary cosmopolitanism's relationship with globalization from postcolonial perspectives. An intriguing question in this area is: how do postcolonial authors justify their cosmopolitan critiques of globalization while relying on the economic structures that sustain the publishing industry? This dissertation attempts to answer the question by studying literary cosmopolitanisms of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy. It argues that by developing forms of literary cosmopolitanisms through fiction, some postcolonial writers create alternatives to neoliberal globalization and a reactionary nationalism from within those systems. The primary methods employed in this study include close-reading and critical-research-qualitative analysis.

Specifically, the dissertation contends that Salman Rushdie has developed a *critical cosmopolitanism* of the urban migrant that simultaneously challenges the inhibiting nature of fundamentalist nationalism and homogenizing globalization. Not satisfied with Rushdie's individualistic cosmopolitanism, Amitav Ghosh recuperates a family-based South Asian cosmopolitanism that evolved during the British colonialism in Asia and provided an alternative to Western cosmopolitanism through the dynamism of the littoral. Celebrating this *familial-littoral cosmopolitanism*, Ghosh envisions the possibility of a world-community, capable of defying rigid nationalism as well as neoliberal capitalism on the strength of family-like relationships among migrants. Also diverging from Rushdie, Arundhati Roy evolves a *small cosmopolitanism* that appeals to the global through the local. Roy reaches out to global readers with narratives of local struggles to inspire them to cultivate a cosmopolitan empathy towards those others who inhabit socioculturally backward parts of the World.

This dissertation identifies forms of postcolonial literary cosmopolitanisms that enable Rushdie, Roy, and Ghosh to imagine a cosmopolitan world-community, rooted in mutual respect and acceptance of difference. It opens avenues for further research in literary studies that examine postcolonial literature's creative potential to promote grounded cosmopolitanism as a powerful antidote to economic globalization in the twenty-first century.

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Sunil S. Macwan, B.A., M.A.

“The only people who see the whole picture are the ones who step out of the frame,” says a character in Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Now that my dissertation is complete, I step out of the frame, take a good look at the picture, and instantly recognize many names and faces that have made it whole. Below is an imperfect attempt to thank everyone who has helped me in one way or another during my doctoral program at Marquette.

A mandate from my former Provincial, Rev. Jose Changanacherri, S. J., to go to Marquette University for graduate studies made me look up Milwaukee on the world map in 2012 for the first time ever. Reflecting on it now, I am quite grateful to Fr. Changanacherri for sending me to Marquette for it has been a transformative experience. I also thank my current Provincial, Rev. Francis Parmar, S. J., who has extended his support to me throughout my doctoral studies.

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During my long and exasperating absence from India, my family and friends have remained a strong source of emotional support to me. I am truly grateful to each of them

for being such an important part of my life. I wish to express my special thanks also to my godparents Jose Vicente Torres and Ana Monteiro from Madrid, whose constant support and prayers have meant a lot to me. *Muchas Gracias, Padrinos.*

Finally, as I look at the whole picture again, I see the imprint of God all over it. Loving thanks to the Triune God – Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit – whose Grace alone has brought this dissertation to fruition.

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INTRODUCTION: GLOBALIZATION, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND POSTCOLONIAL WRITERS

“By this point, one might almost say that cosmopolitanism would look naked without that final “s”,” opine Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta in *Cosmopolitanisms*.¹ Robbins and Horta make this claim to highlight the remarkable evolution cosmopolitanism has undergone as a concept since the latter half of the twentieth century. Citing the cultural theorist David Hollinger, the editors draw a distinction between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ cosmopolitanism. The old was a normative ideal; the new refers to the lived conditions out of which it has emerged. This new cosmopolitanism, therefore, needs to be addressed in the plural as ‘cosmopolitanisms,’ according to Robbins and Horta. Moreover, they assert that given their sociohistorical and contemporary relevance, cosmopolitanisms have attracted the attention of social sciences like anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, and political theory in the twenty-first century, raising the interesting possibility of the concept’s further development as a cultural concept. In this context, even though Robbins and Horta fail to mention it, English fiction, too, has embraced cosmopolitanism since the twentieth century and literary criticism has vigorously engaged with the concept in since the 1980s.² However, like the social sciences, fiction and literary criticism have also grappled

¹ See Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 1.

² For instance, the novels of Joseph Conrad such as *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Nostromo* (1904), of James Joyce such as *Dubliners* (1914), *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and *Ulysses* (1922), and of Virginia Woolf such as *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), and *Mrs. Dalloway* contain certain cosmopolitan characteristics. For more information, see Rebecca L Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). For the pioneering literary criticism on cosmopolitanism, See Timothy Brennan’s *Salman Rushdie & the Third*

with both the old normative cosmopolitanism as well as the new empirical cosmopolitanisms. In other words, literary criticism has struggled to answer the question posed by Robbins and Horta: “can we really separate the new from the old, the plural from the singular?” (2). Insofar as cosmopolitanism characteristically involves both positive and negative connotations, it is bound to generate a theoretical tension about which of the two takes precedence over the other. While the positive aspect of cosmopolitanism involves transcending boundaries and widening horizons, its negative side comprises rejecting attachment to one’s city, country, and culture. The editors of *Cosmopolitanisms* remind us that the recent populist political events like Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States compel cultural theorists to re-evaluate cosmopolitanism in the present context. This call applies to literary criticism much like the social sciences mentioned earlier insofar as cosmopolitan fiction continues to negotiate the complex terrain of our globalized world while endeavoring to imagine creative alternatives to it. In this context, it is important to note that due to its intricate historical relationship with Western imperialism, postcolonial literature retains a unique ability to combine various cosmopolitan discourses in response to economic globalization as well as a reactive nationalism, currently on the rise across the world.

World: Myths of the Nation (1989), and *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997). In these texts, citing Rushdie as a prime example, Brennan questioned the postcolonial writers’ commitment to nationalism owing to their cosmopolitan leanings and expressed skepticism over cosmopolitanism’s usefulness in postcolonial studies. Brennan’s denunciation of the concept prompted vigorous intellectual responses from the literary circles in the late 1990s and early 2000s, resulting in texts such as *Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998), eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins; *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture* (2001), ed. Vinay Dharwadker; *Cosmopolitanism* (2002), eds. Breckenridge et al.; *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* (2002), eds. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen.

Therefore, the following discussion will concentrate on situating cosmopolitan fiction and its attendant literary criticism within current discourses of cosmopolitanism from a postcolonial perspective. To arrive at the main problem guiding this dissertation, the discussion will offer a brief history of cosmopolitanism – its origins, development, and diversification. In particular, the discussion will focus on how modern cosmopolitanism differs as a cultural concept from its classical version in Western philosophy, and how the former challenges globalization and neoliberal capitalist economy. It will further highlight ways in which *postcolonial fiction* critiques globalization from a cosmopolitan perspective, making a historical connection between globalization and imperialism. The discussion will also examine postcolonial fiction and criticism's capacity to challenge globalization from a Third-World perspective. Next, the discussion will pose the problem preoccupying this dissertation: *if postcolonial authors are themselves products of globalization and a Eurocentric cosmopolitanism by virtue of their training, residence, and readership as well as commercial value in the literary marketplace, how do they justify critiquing globalization and nationalism through cosmopolitan discourses?* The remaining segment of the introduction will offer an overview of the solution proposed in this dissertation—namely, that postcolonial authors consciously attempt to develop literary cosmopolitanisms that can address both globalization and Western cosmopolitan theories while operating from within the structures that represent economic globalization. Moreover, the solution will further suggest that it is the process of evolving specific cosmopolitan visions that enables them to respond to both globalization and narrow nationalism from postcolonial perspectives. In other words, by imagining alternatives to globalization and dominant forms of

cosmopolitanism as well as nationalism, postcolonial authors critique the very system they inhabit as celebrity writers. The discussion's final section will briefly describe how each of the three postcolonial writers studied in this dissertation – Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy – has developed a unique cosmopolitanism through engagement with specific themes in postcolonial cosmopolitan discourses, and in response to one another. The discussion will end with an elaboration of the usefulness, relevance, and future scope of this study.

The three Indian authors mentioned above indicate a specifically Indian literary cosmopolitanism that emerged with Rushdie in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Widely appreciated and recognized as one of the most prominent fiction-writers in English in the last forty-years, Rushdie has attained an iconic status among postcolonial cosmopolitan writers, even though his rise into stardom was triggered by the political controversy surrounding his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988). That said, Rushdie inaugurated postcolonial literary cosmopolitanism with *Midnight's Children* (1981) by depicting India's struggle with a growing authoritarianism in the seventies and the resultant rise of communalism, symbolized in the text by the former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's imposition of a State of Emergency in 1975.³ To counter Prime

³ Indira Gandhi imposed a state of emergency on India for nearly two years between 1975-1977. It lasted from 25 June 1975 to 21 March 1977. Rushdie's fictionalizes these events in *Midnight's Children* by placing both Saleem and Shiva – the two main protagonists interchanged at birth – in the political fallout of the Emergency, wherein Indira, referred to as the 'widow' and her son, Sanjay Gandhi, unleash waves of violence and atrocities, including forced sterilizations, on the masses. In some of his essays, Rushdie has blamed Indira for plaguing India not only with authoritarian, anti-democratic politics but also with excessive nationalism that emerged in India in the aftermath of the Emergency. For instance, in his essay, "Dynasty," Rushdie writes: the imposition of the Emergency was an act of folly comparable to the opening of the legendary [Pandora's] box; and that many of the evils besetting India today – notably the resurgence of religious extremism – can be traced back to those days of dictatorship and State violence" (52). Similarly, in the introduction to *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie claims, "[t]he reason why so many of us were outraged by the Emergency went beyond the dictatorial atmosphere of those days, beyond the

Minister Gandhi's authoritarianism and the resultant sectarianism in India, Rushdie envisioned an India of the masses – too diverse, too secular, and too multicultural for either a totalitarian government or the fundamentalist forces' control. *Midnight's Children* promotes this vision of secular India, built “on the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance, of devolution and decentralization wherever possible” (Rushdie 1991: 44). Rushdie sets up a contrast between the form and content of the text to highlight the dichotomy between the discouraging reality of an Independent India and the country's inherent strength to survive in the face of any totalizing attempts from political or communal forces by constantly re-inventing itself through a pluralist secular ethos.⁴ Therefore, while the protagonist Saleem meets a tragic end in the story, the narrative variety in the text hints at India's ability to avoid the same fate. Clearly, *Midnight's Children* emerges out of a specific sociohistorical context, namely, the turbulent political events leading to the Emergency and its repercussions in the form of the rise of sectarian politics and communal violence in India in the 1970s and 80s. Rushdie vehemently opposes both the totalitarian and fundamentalist designs that threatened to take over India in the 1970s because they attacked the very secular ideologies that sustained the Indian independence movement. Robert Young identifies these ideologies as “an orthodox Marxism, a Nehruvian socialism, and a populist Gandhism” (Young 339). Of these three,

jailing of opponents and the forcible sterilizations. The reason was that...it was during the Emergency that the lid flew off the Pandora's box of communal discord” (3). See Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

⁴ Commenting on *Midnight's Children's* perception as a pessimistic novel, Rushdie writes the following in his essay, “Imaginary Homelands”: “What I tried to do was to set up a tension in the text, a paradoxical opposition between the form and content of the narrative. The story of Saleem does indeed lead him to despair. But 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” (16). See *Imaginary Homelands* (1991).

Rushdie felt particularly concerned about saving the Nehruvian “model of cosmopolitanism;” even though, the other two came equally under threat during the Emergency (ibid). For instance, identifying secularism as the driving force of *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie states: “Midnight’s Children enters its subject from the point of view of a secular man. I am a member of that generation of Indians who were sold the secular ideal. The blatant erosion of this ideal in the 1970s then transformed Indian postcolonialism in terms of its theoretical direction. As Young points out, in the aftermath of the Emergency, a kind of “internationalism in theoretical work” exemplified Indian postcolonialism, and it “involved the work of Homi K. Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others” as well as “the Subaltern Studies historians” (ibid). Apprehending the weakening of both the Gandhian populism and Nehruvian secularism, these theories explored ways to make their postcolonial critiques more international. Correspondingly, Rushdie sought to make his fiction more cosmopolitan and internationally relevant.

That said, what makes *Midnight’s Children* a cosmopolitan novel is author’s immigrant status and the ironic distance with which he critiques post-independence India from the outside.⁵ As an expatriate writer, or rather, a migrated Indian, Rushdie reflects on independent India of the late 1970s with an irony that nurtured his cosmopolitan reading of the country and allowed him to make a scathing criticism of the grave political

⁵ While Rushdie’s immigrant status is well-known, I connect it with ironic distance borrowing Turner’s idea of “ironic cosmopolitanism.” In his essay, “Cosmopolitan Virtue, Globalization and Patriotism,” Turner claims that irony is a cosmopolitan virtue that allows a writer to maintain “a certain distance from one’s own culture, namely, an ironic distance” and promotes respect for others. Thus, an immigrant author becomes cosmopolitan by creating a certain emotional distance from one’s homeland through irony, which in turn, facilitates a balanced understanding of one own country and culture. See Bryan S. Turner, “Cosmopolitan Virtue, Globalization and Patriotism,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 19: 1-2 (2002): 55, 56-60.

condition of the nation under Mrs. Gandhi's government. Therefore, it was the combination of his immigrant-status and an ironic distance from the object of his inquiry that inspired him to envision a resilient India with an ability to survive and thrive as a postcolonial democracy in the face of totalitarian and fundamentalist forces. Being aware of a criticism that the nationalists might level against him owing to his cosmopolitan, and therefore unanchored, status as an Indian writer, Rushdie has defended himself vigorously. The following two quotes underscore Rushdie's views on his immigrant-status and cosmopolitan fiction. Defending the Indian expatriate writer, Rushdie claims in *Imaginary Homelands*,

the Indian writer, looking back at India, does so through guilt-tinted spectacles. I am speaking now of those of us who emigrated [...] Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again, our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. (15)

In the same essay, warning writers against a parochial outlook, Rushdie writes,

of all the many elephant traps lying ahead of us, the largest and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be...to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the 'homeland.' (19)

Taken together, these quotes explain why Rushdie was able to produce a Booker-Prize winning novel that was primarily concerned about India, its politics, its people, its

democracy, and culture. That is to say, it was his cosmopolitan worldview that enabled Rushdie to reflect on independent India in light of its historical and mythical pre-colonial past, colonial legacy, and postcolonial present. Because Rushdie inaugurated a type of postcolonial fiction with *Midnight's Children* that at once responded to Indian history and politics and yet appealed to Western readers for its extraordinary literary quality, this dissertation examines him extensively to understand postcolonial writers' ambiguous relationship with globalization, imperialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitan discourses.

Amitav Ghosh forms a part of the triumvirate studied here because, as a cosmopolitan Indian author, he has evolved a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism that is different from Rushdie's. In general, Rushdie has evolved a critical cosmopolitanism that critiques not only economic globalization but also cultural, not only colonialism but also postcolonialism, especially of the fundamentalist nationalism type. It celebrates the Individual's right to migrate to global urban centers in order to participate in and promote a cosmopolitanism borne out of processes of intermingling and hybridizing. However, for the same reasons, Rushdie's cosmopolitanism remains individualistic, masculinist, and urban. In contrast, Ghosh envisions a cosmopolitanism of the poor that develops on the periphery – through families and family-like relationships among strangers – and becomes vibrant through the unpredictable and uncontainable dynamisms of the littoral.⁶ By promoting this type of cosmopolitanism through his fiction, especially through his

⁶ In this dissertation, I use the term 'littoral' specifically to mean the way Ghosh envisions a familial cosmopolitanism that thrived on the Indian ocean in the precolonial and colonial eras. In this sense, 'littoral' represents both the sea vessels that symbolize the familial or family-like ambiance the South Asian migrants found on board small ships during their arduous and traumatic littoral migrations, and the openness and energy the vastness of the sea supplied them to dream of a liberated and cosmopolitan future across the sea.

Ibis trilogy, Ghosh simultaneously challenges a Eurocentric notion of cosmopolitanism and imperialism. For Ghosh, it becomes necessary to celebrate a postcolonial familial-littoral cosmopolitanism in the era of economic and cultural globalization that threatens to re-colonize the Third World.

Arundhati Roy completes the group because, responding to the sociopolitical and cultural context of the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century India, she has constructed a literary cosmopolitanism of empathetic solidarity that highlights and celebrates the small in comparison with the big. Unlike both Rushdie and Ghosh, Roy's fiction is quite limited – just two novels separated by a two-decade hiatus. However, such is the enduring fame of her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, that her nonfiction – mostly engaging social justice issues – remains quite popular, even if polarizing, in the English-speaking world. It is through her debut novel that Roy first attempted to speak for the writer's need to draw the world-community's attention to the apparently 'small' and localized issues the poor face in the modern globalized society. Her many essays and latest novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), point to Roy's attempt to create a small cosmopolitanism that can promote empathy and solidarity between India's poor, who populate her fiction, and her worldwide readers, who may remain largely unaware of the former's struggles and depend on her writerly intervention to bring the two into a constructive contact through cosmopolitan fiction. Despite its avowedly social-activist stance, Roy's literary cosmopolitanism retains the two main functions of postcolonial cosmopolitanism also evident in Rushdie and Ghosh: a robust critique of fundamentalist nationalism and capitalist globalization, and a need to widen our sociocultural horizons as a means to counter these antic cosmopolitan discourses. A brief discussion of the history

and development of cosmopolitanism will help to relate the concept, especially in its contemporary form, to the other important concepts addressed in this dissertation: globalization and postcolonialism.

History of Cosmopolitanism

Even though the concept of ‘belonging to the entire world’ dates back to the time of the Greek philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic (c.412-323), cosmopolitanism has evolved over the last two millennia to signify different aspects of the ideal of universal citizenship and human rights.⁷ The two main categories of the concept can be identified as classical and modern: the former began to decline in the West and the East in the second millennium, whereas the latter has emerged and re-emerged in the humanities in different sociocultural and political contexts.⁸ However, cosmopolitanism’s normativity and conceptual fluidity has turned it into a hugely contested term since its resurgence in the social sciences in the 1980s. For instance, even though some critics have labelled cosmopolitanism as a Euro-American theory reflecting elitist perspectives, others in recent times have considered it capable of breaking out of this mold and mutating itself

⁷ For an instructive discussion on the development of the concept in philosophy, political science, and literature, see Sybille De La Rosa and Darren O’Byrne, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal: Challenges and Opportunities* (New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 1-12; Robert Fine and Robin Cohen, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137-64.

⁸ See Delanty (2006): 18-88.

into a variety of cosmopolitanisms representing the global South in sociocultural, political, and economic debates.⁹

Prominent cultural theorists have traced cosmopolitanism's origin to the classical Western philosophy.¹⁰ The concept is generally attributed to the philosopher Diogenes and the cynics of the fourth century BCE.¹¹ The Greek word *kosmopolites*, which means 'citizen of the world,' still evokes "devotion to humanity and detachment from local bonds" in a general sense. (Spencer 2). According to Martha Nussbaum, Diogenes "refused to be defined by his local origins and group membership, so central to the self-image of the conventional Greek male" and "defined himself in terms of more universal aspirations and concerns" (Nussbaum 7). Taking their cue from Diogenes's universal

⁹ While cultural theorists such as Timothy Brennan (*At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*); Ulrich Beck (*The Cosmopolitan Vision*); Craig Calhoun ("Asia and Second Modernity," *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61.3 (2010)); Raewyn Connell ("How Can We Weave a World Sociology?" *Global Dialogue* 1:2 (2010) identify cosmopolitanism as primarily a Euro-American, neoliberal concept, others have argued in favor of the term's applicability and usefulness in postcolonial and Third-World studies. These include, Bhabha, Breckenridge, Chakrabarty, and Sheldon (*Cosmopolitanism*), as well as Vinay Dharwadker (*Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*); Gayatri Spivak (Foreword: "Cosmopolitanisms and the Cosmopolitical," *Cultural Dynamics* 24.2-3 (2012)); Bishnupriya Ghosh (*When Borne Across*); Berthold Schoene (*The Cosmopolitan Novel*); Fuyuki Kurasawa ("A Cosmopolitanism from Below: Alternative Globalization and the Creation of a Solidarity without Bounds," *European Journal of Sociology*, 45.2 (2004)); Michele Lamont and Sada Aksartova ("Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms: Strategies for Bridging Racial Boundaries among Working-Class Men," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19.4 (2002)); Julian Go ("Fanon's Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 16.2 (2013)); and Gerard Delanty ("The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory," *The British Journal of Sociology* 57.1 (2006).

¹⁰ See, for instance, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in A World of Strangers* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), viii-xiv; Martha Nussbaum, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Joshua Cohen, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 6-8; Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 45; Zlatko Skrbis and Ian Woodward, *Cosmopolitanism: Uses of the Idea* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2013), 2.

¹¹ Appiah traces the origin of the term back to the Cynics of the fourth century BC, who first coined the expression cosmopolitan, "citizen of the cosmos." See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006), xiv; and Cyrus R. K. Patell, *Cosmopolitanism and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

outlook, the Stoics advocated that “[w]e should regard all human beings as our fellow citizens and neighbors” and further insisted that

[w]e should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect. (7)

Clearly, the Stoics strove to rise above the narrow confines of family, ethnicity, and citizenship to treat others on equal terms as fellow human beings. Another great Stoic, Zeno, took the cosmopolitan ideal a step further when he argued for expanding the circle of inclusion from self, family, to friends, to city, to humanity.¹² For Zeno, all people “embodied the divine spark and all were capable of *logos*” (Fine and Cohen 137). Both Diogenes and Zeno prefigured a type of universal humanism through cosmopolitanism—one that imagined a universal human community founded on equal dignity and equal rights for all. Vinay Dharwadker interprets this type of humanism as an invitation to transform oneself “into a cosmopolite, a citizen not of just one state but of the world as a whole” and contends that it was aimed at challenging the Greek practice of not extending “the rights, freedoms, and acts of virtue (such as kindness and generosity)” to foreigners, conquered peoples, and enslaved populations (Dharwadker 6). Again, at the basis of the Stoics’ argument for equality was the moral worth of a human being that transcended the particularities of race, sex, social status, birth, and upbringing.

¹² Robert Fine and Robin Cohen, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 137.

Eastern Cosmopolitanism

While there is sufficient historical evidence to link cosmopolitanism to early Western philosophy, social scientists have recently argued that the concept also existed in some ancient Indian and Chinese traditions. For instance, acknowledging the Western roots of cosmopolitanism, Dharwadker claims that the concept did not originate in Europe *alone* as there are instances of a thriving cosmopolitanism dating back to 500 BCE related to the Buddhist asceticism. One such example refers to the Buddhist concept of the *sangha* of *bhikkus* and *bhikkunis*—the community of almsmen and almswomen—that emerged in parts of South Asia around 500 B. C. The *sangha* (community) accepted men and women as *bhikkus* and *bhikkunis* regardless of caste, wealth, rank, gender, or ethnicity. Dharwadker credits the emergence of the *sangha* to Buddha’s cosmopolitan response to the highly segregated caste-based Hindu society of his time—one that precluded the possibility of anyone attaining social acceptability except by belonging to a particular *varna* (caste group), *jati* (caste) and *vamsha, kula* or *gotra* (lineage, clan) by birth. The Buddha strongly rejected this notion and instituted the *sangha*, which stands as one of the oldest cosmopolitan systems in the world. About 2500 years ago, it “emerged as the first programmatically cosmopolitan community on the subcontinent, and remains the oldest continuously surviving community of this type in the world today” (7).¹³

Therefore, the above mentioned ancient cosmopolitanisms point to a systematic effort on the part of a small group of individuals to establish a human community based on values

¹³ For a more detailed description of the *sangha*, see Vinay Dharwadker, *Cosmopolitan Geographies* (New York and London: 2001), 6-7.

such as universal human rights, equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, and social justice. In recent times, social scientists have approached cosmopolitanism more as a universal phenomenon with culture-specific development around the world. Gerard Delanty, for instance, asserts in his recent study on cosmopolitanism, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, that “[t]he origins of cosmopolitanism lie in the ancient civilizations and can be directly related to the emergence of civilizations based on universalistic principles” (20). Delanty’s text demonstrates how cosmopolitanism emerged and flourished alongside ancient religious and linguistic traditions. The following discussion elaborates on classical cosmopolitanism’s linguistic connections.

At the literary level, too, two different types of ancient linguistic cosmopolitanisms existed: Latin in the West and Sanskrit in the East. Latin and Sanskrit flourished in different parts of the world in the first millennium before they were superseded by vernaculars at the beginning of the second millennium.¹⁴ According to Sheldon Pollock, both cosmopolitanisms exhibit “a remarkable parallel in the historical development of literary communication in these two worlds, where a long period of cosmopolitan literary production was followed by a vernacularity” which is now facing extinction in the face of capitalist globalization (Pollock 19). Both Latin in the West and Sanskrit in the East came to dominate vast regions as their spheres of influence through dissemination of secular literature in the first millennium, thus abandoning their role as

¹⁴ In his essay, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History,” Sheldon Pollock discusses the similarities and differences of first-millennium Western and Eastern linguistic cosmopolitanisms and their eventual erosion at the hands of new vernaculars, such as French, Italian, German, English, and Spanish in the West; and Sinhala, Javanese, Marathi, Thai, and Oriya in the East, to point out the divergent ways in which both Latin and Sanskrit cosmopolitanized their worlds and how these in turn impacted the spread and growth of the vernaculars themselves.

the language of the liturgical, magical, extraordinary communication. However, as Pollock argues, whereas the literary cosmopolitanism in the West represents a blend of

coercive cosmopolitanism and a vernacularism of necessity, where participation in larger or smaller worlds is compelled by the state or demanded by the blood; the other world presents a voluntaristic cosmopolitanism and a vernacularism of accommodation, where very different principles are at work inviting affiliation to these cultural-political orders. (19)

In short, because Latin cosmopolitanized itself through State power, it served as the vehicle of homogenization under political authority. Sanskrit, on the other hand, largely circulated through traders, authors, religious professionals, and freelancers and promoted itself through amicable cultural exchanges. Thus, there are significant differences in cosmopolitan traditions across the world even at the macro-level.

Critical Perspectives on Cosmopolitanism

In spite of its ancient traditions, cosmopolitanism still generates pessimism and criticism among scholars because of its utopian connotations as a philosophical concept of universal belonging. The idealistic underpinnings of cosmopolitanism, which privilege the global over the local, the international over the national, and the universal over the particular, often incur the ire of critics who consider addressing the geopolitical local realities of a region more useful in the realization of a just world than emphasizing our shared humanity and universal belonging. Therefore, they see philosophical cosmopolitanism as a variation of utopianism, escapism, or condescension and deride

cosmopolites “as free-floating and ethereal creatures: recklessly deluded and perhaps even selfishly indifferent to the travails and responsibilities of those who are confined through choice or necessity to the local sphere” (Spencer 2). One example of utopian cosmopolitanism is Ulf Hannerz’s description of a cosmopolitan outlook as “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrast rather than universality” (Hannerz 239). But it is the aesthetic quest for newness which turns a cosmopolitan into a passionate explorer of cultural novelties. “To become acquainted with more cultures is to turn into an *aficionado*, to view them as art works,” claims Hannerz (ibid). Needless to say, rootless cosmopolitanism such as this breeds skepticism by readily forgoing any sociopolitical or ethical commitment in favor of seeking after exotic cultural motifs and styles.

A cosmopolitanism based on the pursuit of the aesthetic without a sociopolitical commitment becomes indefensible from an ethical standpoint, too. Cosmopolitans given to immersing themselves into alien cultures for self-fulfillment fail to establish genuine cultural connections with those cultures as well as the people who represent them. If these cosmopolitans merely act out of aesthetic desires, such as becoming acquainted with the cultural dimensions of others’ lives, their interest in them remains superficial. At the center of such cosmopolitan exchanges are the cosmopolitans themselves, who often view the native cultures as consumable commodities and the native people as objects of their touristic gaze. This type of aesthetic cosmopolitanism is ethically problematic on at least three counts: one, it tends to objectify both the native cultures and peoples, thus denying them any agency to relate on equal terms; two, it evolves out of the cosmopolitan’s self-interest and therefore neglects the interest of others who do not enjoy

similar socioeconomic privileges and status – these may include both natives as well as fellow-cosmopolitans; third, it betrays a sense of cultural superiority wherein the cosmopolitans engage with the locals for leisure or curiosity because they possess the power to do so. Devoid of a sociopolitical commitment, aesthetic cosmopolitans therefore undermine the very basis of the cosmopolitan ethos of belonging to the world, for they suppress the very possibilities through which a ‘belonging’ can take place. In other words, aesthetic cosmopolitans fail to belong to the world and allow the world to belong to them by maintaining their privileged social status and distinctive identities as self-absorbed tourists. An ethically sound cosmopolitanism cannot privilege the aesthetic over the sociopolitical dimensions of cosmopolitan engagement.

Contemporary Cosmopolitanism

Contemporary cosmopolitanism differs from *classical cosmopolitanism* in its emphasis on the sociopolitical dimensions of cosmopolitan engagement.¹⁵ The resurgence of cosmopolitanism in the latter half of the twentieth century warrants attention to specific sociopolitical and economic conditions that necessitated it. That is to say, since its re-emergence in the second half of the twentieth century, the concept has become more sociopolitical, reflecting its usefulness in understanding our globalized world.

¹⁵ I am using the terms ‘classical’ and ‘contemporary’ in line with Gerard Delanty’s understanding of the terms. According to Delanty, classical cosmopolitanism spanned from antiquity to Enlightenment and largely remained a Eurocentric ideal; whereas, contemporary cosmopolitanism has re-emerged as an important social concept since the middle of the twentieth century and has evolved into a complex theory. See Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18, 51.

Vinay Dharwadker, in the introduction to his 2001 edited collection of essays *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, identifies three main causes for a resurgence in the debates on cosmopolitanism in the social sciences since 1975: (a) “the consolidation of new types of nationalism; (b) the empowerment of new immigrant communities in the national public spheres of the North and the West; (c) and the accelerated globalization of capital and material production and consumption after the fall of the Berlin Wall” (Dharwadker 1). These events sparked a critical interest into cosmopolitanism’s relationship with issues of racially, religiously, or culturally motivated nationalism, with the immigrant and diasporic communities in Europe and America, and with the processes of neoliberal globalization that created new transnational economic structures.¹⁶ Examining cosmopolitanism in conjunction with the late-twentieth-century sociopolitical global realities allowed cultural theorists to situate the concept in time and space so as to expand, as Dharwadker states, “the analysis of cosmopolitanism from its usual setting in post-Enlightenment modernity and contemporaneity back toward late medieval vernacular Europe and classical Latin Middle Ages” (3). Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen consider the cultural contexts directly arising out of issues related to globalization, nationalism, migration, multiculturalism, and feminism and how they give rise to “a new politics of the left, embodying middle-path alternatives between ethnocentric nationalism and particularistic multiculturalism” (Vertovec and Cohen 1).

¹⁶ Dharwadker mentions texts such as Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999) that contributed to these debates. Texts mentioned in note 3 also indicate attempts at gaining a better understanding of cosmopolitanism through critical theory.

In this context, cosmopolitanism becomes a new socio-cultural condition since World War II: one that has emerged as a result of “ease and cheapness of transportation across long distances, mass tourism, large-scale migration, visible multiculturalism in ‘world cities,’ the flow of commodities to and from all points of the compass and the rapid development of telecommunications” such as cell phones, email, and the internet (9). On the one hand, cosmopolitanism enhances interaction among people at sociocultural levels, and on the other hand, it confronts and questions “various ethnocentric, racialized, gendered and national narratives” at the political level (ibid).

However, since the narratives comprise different sociohistorical components in different parts of the world, they demand a historically situated and contextualized cosmopolitanism.¹⁷ The concept has evolved over the last two millennia, and therefore eschews a clear genealogy from Stoics to Immanuel Kant to its recent resurgence in the social sciences.¹⁸ As Pollock et al. point out, cosmopolitanism presents a challenging task of critical analysis and political practice because it is “a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not only as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definite specification,” given the very universality of the concept (Breckenridge et al. 1). However, the post-Cold War world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries demands forms of cosmopolitanism that can address the paradox of

¹⁷ Even though many such narratives revolve around issues of nationalism, globalization, and multiculturalism, their manifestations are largely determined by the local conditions which engender them.

¹⁸ It is important to note that in their essay, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments,” Fine and Cohen single out four different expressions of cosmopolitanism since its introduction by the Stoics: (a) Zeno’s Moment; (b) Kant’s Moment; (c) Arendt’s Moment, and (4) Nussbaum’s Moment. Fine and Cohen argue that each moment displays the development of a specific cosmopolitan characteristic as a response to the need of its time, and, therefore, each is distinct from the others. For more details, see Robert Fine and Robin Cohen, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 137.

a world defined by instant connectivity, opportunity, and enterprise, and media and market technologies on the one hand, and millions of refugees, migrants and exiles driven out of their homes due to impoverishment and threat to life on the other hand. When a cosmopolitanism grounded in the universal ideals of ‘Rationality,’ ‘Universality,’ and ‘Progress’ fails to address the ills of violent nationalism and rampant globalization, “a cosmopolitanism grounded in the tenebrous moment of transition” becomes more pertinent (ibid 5).¹⁹ Given the vastness, complexity, and the concept’s still emerging context, Breckenridge et al consider any attempt of defining cosmopolitanism itself “an unc cosmopolitan thing to do” (ibid).²⁰ Nevertheless, they stress “reconsidering concepts of cosmopolitanism” in light of the “late twentieth-century nationalism, multiculturalism, and the globalization of late liberalism,” thus recognizing the importance of historically situated cosmopolitanisms in negotiating the complex sociocultural terrains that constitute contemporary society (7). The process of re-analyzing cosmopolitanism, then, necessarily involves ushering it out of its Eurocentric affiliations. Breckenridge et al see this process unfolding through analyzing cosmopolitanism “beyond the singular,

¹⁹ Pollock et al insist on exploring different sociohistorical moments of cosmopolitanism across the world, rather than examining it as a Western philosophical concept which gained political significance under Kant, so that we can better account for the vast variety of cosmopolitanisms in different parts of the world.

²⁰ In their introduction to a collection of essays, *Cosmopolitanisms*, these scholars grapple with the issue of what constitutes the humanist-tradition based world citizenship in the contemporary world. They argue that there are non-Western forms of cosmopolitanism which flow from periphery to periphery and do not seek to distil into a singular tradition like cosmopolitanism in the West. To illustrate its thesis, the text discusses indigenous expression of linguistic, cultural, and political cosmopolitanisms in the global South; for instance, Sheldon Pollock’s comparison between the Latin and Sanskritic cosmopolitan traditions; Arjun Appaduari’s essay on the phenomenon of urban cleansing in Mumbai; Mamdou Diouf’s description of the Murid trade practices in Senegal; and Ackbar Abbas’ essay on Shanghai and Hong Kong’s indigenization of their cosmopolitan cultures are a few notable examples. These essays draw a clear distinction between the universal, theoretical, abstract, and conceptual forms of Western cosmopolitanism and the practical, grounded, and feminist types of local cosmopolitanisms of the East.

privileged location of European thought and history...so as to move the discussion beyond the stultifying preoccupations of Western philosophy” and allowing non-Eurocentric cosmopolitan practices, such as those in ancient China and India, to take the center stage in academic discourses (10). The idea of highlighting cosmopolitanism’s historical and cultural plurality in a way reflects the development of the concept in recent times but also underscores the challenges it faces as a universal ideal.

In response to the multiplicity and complexity of the globalized world, many forms of situated cosmopolitanisms have evolved in recent times. Cosmopolitanism as a singular ideal of a global human community has faced serious challenges in the new millennium. The ideal has not significantly reduced political tensions between nations or challenged the economic and cultural homogenization unleashed by globalization or raised sufficient awareness of the ecological threats posed by global warming in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. While cosmopolitanism’s proponents continue to promote the ideal as the panacea for these ills, its real effect in the new millennium remains questionable—especially, in light of the political and cultural events such as the Great Recession of 2008, the Arab Spring, the refugee crisis in Europe, the rise of the terrorist organization ISIS, the nuclear weapons proliferation by North Korea and Iran, and the United States’ withdrawal from the UN-sponsored climate-change-mitigation-program, the Paris Agreement on June 1, 2017. These developments have undermined the optimistic assumptions underlying the celebratory forms of cosmopolitanism.²¹ However,

²¹ Such as those espoused by Bhabha, Appadurai, and Zachary. Celebratory cosmopolitanism highlights the positive aspects of the cosmopolitan ideals at the expense of ignoring the debilitating socioeconomic and political consequences of globalization that must be addressed for cosmopolitanism to be relevant to all people. See Spencer, p. 23-24.

as Braidotti and Blagaard remark, “the notion of cosmopolitanism nowadays enjoys great currency in both the academy and in political discourse [since] it apparently has many different and often contradictory meanings and uses (1). It is this multiplicity of meanings that makes cosmopolitanism relevant today: In the current scholarly debates different forms of more narrowly defined ‘cosmopolitanism’ have gained currency such as ‘rooted cosmopolitanism,’ ‘postcolonial cosmopolitanism,’ ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism,’ ‘patriotic cosmopolitanism,’ ‘actually existing cosmopolitanism,’ ‘critical cosmopolitanism,’ discrepant cosmopolitanism,’ ‘practical cosmopolitanism,’ ‘cosmopolitanism from below,’ ‘affective cosmopolitanism,’ and ‘a cosmopolitanism of singularities,’ among others.²² These types of cosmopolitanism have evolved in response to the complex sociopolitical realities of our time; through them, cosmopolitanism not only provides an intellectually robust answer to above-discussed global issues but also demonstrates that it is not merely a transcendental ideal, rather a practical solution to address the increased interdependence in the contemporary world. A practical cosmopolitanism is one “that is more attentive to the material reality of our social and

²² These and other types of cosmopolitanism can be found across a variety of scholarly debates, such as: ‘Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism,’ Parry in “The Contradictions of Cultural Studies,” *Transition* 53 (1991): 41; ‘Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,’ Homi Bhabha in “Unsatisfied Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” in Peter C. Pfeiffer and Laura Garcia-Moreno, eds. *Text and Narration* (Columbia, S. C.: Camden House, 1996), 191-207; ‘Patriotic Cosmopolitanism,’ Anthony Kwame Appiah in “Cosmopolitan Patriots” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 91-116; ‘Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,’ Scott L. Malcomson in “The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 233-45; ‘Critical Cosmopolitanism,’ Paul Rainbow in “Representations Are Social Facts,” in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. (Berkeley: U of California, 1986); and ‘Discrepant Cosmopolitanism,’ Clifford James in “Traveling Cultures” 101, 108, and ‘Practical Cosmopolitanism,’ Paul James in “Political Philosophies of the Global: A Critical Overview,” in *Globalization and Politics*, vol. 4, ed. Paul James (London: Sage, 2014), xi. Also see Robert Spencer, *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 2; and Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin and Bolette Blaagard, (eds.), *After Cosmopolitanism*, (New York: 2013): 1-7.

political situation and less focused on linguistic analyses of its metaphorical implications” as a philosophical ideal (Braidotti et al. 3). Thus, sociohistorically situated forms of cosmopolitanism offer more “embedded and embodied perspectives...rather than a timeless and placeless perspective” (ibid 4). A cosmopolitanism determined to grapple with the menace of globalization is more relevant to social sciences and literary criticism in the twenty-first century than philosophical cosmopolitanism. Given the current dominance of neoliberal capitalism around the world, globalization mainly refers to economic processes that expand over continents and disregard national boundaries in search of new markets, cheap labor, and increased profit. Therefore, one of the main tasks of contemporary cosmopolitanism is to arrest the unhindered spread of economic globalization across the world, especially in the global South.

Cosmopolitanism and Globalization

Contemporary cosmopolitanism retains the ability to challenge *economic* globalization because they are different in an important aspect – what defines them.²³ Globalization, understood in the economic sense, primarily refers to the worldwide processes of mass production, distribution, and consumption of goods, promoted and sustained by neoliberal capitalism; however, in a secondary sense, it may include the resultant intensification of human activities that increase economic exchanges among

²³ In this study, globalization is primarily understood as an economic phenomenon. I endorse Sankaran’s description of globalization as “a movement that is suffusing the entire world with a form of production based free-market capitalism and an attendant ideology of individualist consumerism.” See Krishna Sankaran, *Globalization and Postcolonialism* (Lanham, Boulder, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 2.

nations. In either sense, however, it destroys diversity, curtails differences, and discourages creativity for the sake of imposing an uncritical cultural homogenization. Moreover, as Beck asserts, globalization is essentially connected with 'globalism' in that it "promotes the idea of the global market, defends the virtues of neoliberal economic growth and the utility of allowing capital, commodities and labour to move freely across borders (Beck 2008: 9). Cosmopolitanism, in contrast, mainly refers to the sociocultural aspects of transnational exchanges among people that promote relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, appreciation and the recognition of cultural diversities that necessitate transcending one's own sociocultural horizons. Considered in light of this basic differentiation between the concepts, it is the economic function that defines globalization, while it is the cultural function that gives cosmopolitanism its identity in the contemporary world. In other words, cosmopolitanism essentially functions in the realm of culture, wherein as an ideal it promotes openness and acceptance of others, and as a practice it helps people to recognize and appreciate their commonalities as human beings in spite of cultural differences. The phenomenon of Globalization, on the other hand, can be understood mostly in terms of the worldwide increase of economic activities since the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, given its intrinsic relatedness to power that seeks to control the world, globalization is ideologically closer to imperialism than cosmopolitanism. Whereas imperialism dominated the world until the latter half of the twentieth century through military and political power, globalization is influencing contemporary society through its capitalist economic system. In the final analysis, then, both globalization and imperialism manifest insidious agendas conceived to dominate the

entire world through one form of power or another. The following discussion analyzes this nexus in detail.

Considering their historical connection, Globalization is twenty-first century imperialism: it is the economic manifestation of the latter. Globalization is a form of imperialism in its ability to enforce a homogenization of cultures through a structural dominance of the world. Whereas imperialism maintained its control over much of the world for long periods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through Europe's military and political colonization of the Third World, globalization is reasserting the global North's hold over the rest of the world through neoliberal capitalism. Just as imperialism germinated in Europe and spread across much of the world at the dawn of the twentieth-century, globalization emerged as a capitalist principle in the global North in the latter half of the last century and has invaded much of the global South in the twenty-first century. "Globalization is the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide," Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin state. "In effect is the process of the world becoming a single place. Globalism is the perception of the world as function or result of the processes of globalization upon local communities" (Ashcroft 2000: 110). Somewhat differently, Krishna perceives the phenomenon more from a more economic perspective and relates it with neoliberalism. For Krishna, globalization denotes "the combined economic *and* sociopolitical cultural changes of the contemporary epoch, while the term *neoliberal globalization...*" mainly signifies "the economic—trade, investment capital, and policy-making aspects of these changes" (Krishna 3). Both views, however, clearly emphasize the capitalist nature of globalization that aims at an economic domination of

the world. Analyzed from its ultimate aim of imposing a capitalist homogenization on the world, globalization appears to be a modern variant of Western imperialism. As Ashcroft et al. correctly observe:

[d]espite the balance between its good and bad effects, identified by critical globalists, globalization has not been a politically neutral activity. While access to global forms of communication, markets and culture may indeed be worldwide today, it has been argued by some critics that if one asks how that access is enabled and by what ideological machinery it is advanced, it can be seen that the operation of globalization cannot be separated from the structures of power perpetuated by European imperialism. Global culture is a continuation of an imperial dynamic of influence, control, dissemination and hegemony that operate according to an already initiated structure of power that emerged in the sixteenth century in the great confluence of imperialism, capitalism and modernity. (Ashcroft 2000:113)

The powerful nexus between globalization and the neoliberal tendencies of European and North American capitalist economies should suffice to establish the former as imperialist in nature; however, given the ambiguity over what exactly constitutes modernity, it might not seem a straightforward inference after all.

Nevertheless, the tendency among certain cultural theorists to view globalization as a distinctly modern phenomenon overlooks its imperialist history even as it opens up the possibility of utilizing the concept for redefining modernity. Prominent scholars such as Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha, and Jan Nederveen Pieterse have argued for treating globalization as a benevolent modern development which makes the world more equal by making available its riches to people of diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.²⁴ As

²⁴ See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996), 32 and "Disjuncture and Difference," *Public Culture* 2.2 (1990), 1-24; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York

Gikandi notes, at least two positive discourses emerge out of these theorists' attempts at analyzing globalization as a modern category: they seek to explain "forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change" (Gikandi 628). However, such new theorizations can lead to a complete disavowal of globalization's imperialist past. Appadurai, for instance, describes the current global condition as "a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (Appadurai 1996: 32). Moreover, "[t]he master narrative of the Enlightenment" cannot explain the modern world, claims Appadurai, because "the diaspora of these terms and images across the world, especially since the nineteenth century, has loosened" it (ibid 36). Bhabha, in his turn, has described hybridity as a revolutionary factor in modernity. "For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire," claims Bhabha (1994: 112). Insisting that modernity articulates itself more through hybridity than its continuity with the past, Bhabha asserts that "[w]hat must be mapped as a new international space of discontinuous historical realities is, in fact, the problem of signifying the interstitial passages and processes of break-up that weaves 'global' text" (ibid 217). Clearly for Bhabha, then, the contemporary global articulates itself as such in its break with the past—that is, its history of colonization. Along similar lines, Pieterse maintains that "globalization can best be viewed as a process of hybridization—as against homogenization, standardization, cultural imperialism,

and London, 1994), 204; and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Hybrid Modernities: M \acute{e} lange Modernities in Asia," *Sociological Analysis* 1.3 (1998), 75-76.

westernization, Americanization, McDonaldization... , and as against the clash of civilization view” (76). Pieterse’s justification for privileging hybridity over imperialism and American neoliberalism as the defining image of globalization seems to stem from a conviction that hybridity “helps us to go beyond the menu of large-scale processes—such as rationalization, capitalism—which have been universalized from a Western experience” (ibid). From a postcolonial perspective, an exclusive focus on hybridity at the expense of globalization’s economic components, such as capitalism and neoliberalism, raises serious questions over cultural theorists’ predilection for the discursive elements of analysis. Its newness tends to elide a past postcolonial scholars cannot afford to forget.

Postcolonial Criticism and Globalization

To examine globalization through postcolonial theory is to excavate and expose the former’s colonial past. Postcolonial theorists reveal a number of disturbing trends related to globalization that otherwise can be erased in the name of conferring it with revolutionary properties such as ‘hybridity’ and ‘difference.’²⁵ Relating globalization to imperialism achieves the following objectives: one, it exposes Europe’s historical political, cultural, and economic dominance of the world; two, it forces us to revisit

²⁵ Postcolonial theorist Simon Gikandi has convincingly argued against this theorization. Gikandi holds that the celebration of globalization through cultural images such as ‘hybridity’ and ‘difference’ disavows postcolonialism’s historic opposition to colonialism as well as the former’s concern with “the material experiences of everyday life and survival” that are often contrary to the images of “transformations in social or cultural relationships.” For a detailed discussion on the topic, see Gikandi, “Globalization and Claims of Postcoloniality,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 631-33.

Europe's oppressive stand against the twentieth-century decolonization movements in Asia and Africa; third, it makes us aware of the West's continued influence over the rest of the world through military interventions and economic policies. As Gilroy asserts, "the colonial past and...the fascist interlude exert a powerful influence on contemporary Europe's political and cultural life. Those historical forces are often denied and sometimes disavowed but their under-researched effects are felt nonetheless" (Gilroy 111). Similarly, their effects are felt around the global South at socioeconomic and political levels in the twenty-first century as a direct consequence of imperialism, and in many ways, the unjust world order instituted by it continues to endure in the globalized world. It follows, then, that much of the current unjust and unequal power structures trace their origins in the colonial world order and, therefore, necessitate a postcolonial critique. Postcolonial theory can provide this critique by persistently analyzing globalism from a sociohistorical perspective. "It is only through the relentless focus on the world historical experience of capitalist colonialism and its contemporary manifestations everywhere that we can begin to understand and reverse its effects and embark on human development," claims Krishna (29). The first step in checking the ubiquity of globalization is to consider it a form of neoimperialism that now controls the world more by trade and information dissemination than military might.

Therefore, the ideal of cosmopolitanism—especially as a critical antidote to neoliberal globalization—becomes more intelligible as a sociohistorically grounded concept, and postcolonial literature, given its historical and consistent engagement with unjust power structures, seems to be a vibrant area of studying the effectiveness of the

ideal.²⁶ Postcolonialism's extended engagement with imperialism uniquely enables it to highlight the role of literary cosmopolitanism in challenging globalization. As a field that analyzes imperialism's history and effects on the world from a third-world perspective, postcolonialism retains the capacity to trace the inimical effects of globalization to colonialism and its modern avatar, neoliberalism. Postcolonialism strives to challenge colonialism's ongoing exploitation and injustice through globalization "by a comparable and countervailing globalisation of experiences, allegiances and values," suggests Spencer (18). Postcolonial literature, in turn, creates this globalization of critical voices among its readers by providing them "encounters with different and unfamiliar perspectives and via an appreciation of the limitations of orthodox points of view" so as to question their own parochial assumptions and worldviews (43). Spelling out literature's urgent need and its inherent capacity to engage critically with globalization, Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman state the following in their introduction to a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2001) on globalization:

²⁶ Nascimento credits the resurgence of cosmopolitanism in the social sciences to its potential to thwart globalization. "The concept," argues Nascimento, "continues to be applied because it speaks directly to the contemporary challenges and opportunities of globalization. On the one hand, recent global challenges have been related to the weakening of nation-states, the creation of multilevel political structures, the spread of chronic poverty, the volatility of financial markets, greater political instability, ongoing international conflicts, transnational environmental problems, and the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, among other issues. On the other, opportunities have arisen in relation to the recognition of a plurality of identities, the emergence of multicultural societies and new forms of individual and collective agency, increasing communication and interaction among cultures, the affirmation of contextual values and perspectives, the expansion of accessibility to education, and the promotion of human rights...cosmopolitanism has been used in direct relation to each one of these aspects" (14). Similarly, postcolonial critique's eligibility as the purveyor of the cosmopolitan ideal is convincingly argued by Bhabra who suggests that provincialized cosmopolitanism is best suited to current critical discourses. For a detailed discussion, see Amos Nascimento, "Humanity, Rights, and the Ideal of Global Critical Cosmopolitanism" in Sybille De La Rosa and Darren O'Byrne, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal: Challenges and Opportunities* (New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015): 13-38, and Gurminder K. Bhabra, "Cosmopolitanism and Postcolonial Critique" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka, eds. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 313-28.

[o]ne of the first things to realize about globalization is that its significance can only be grasped through its realization in a variety of narrative forms, spanning the range from accounts of the triumphalist coming-into-being of global democracy to lament about the end of nature; literature no doubt has a role to play in how we produce these often-contradictory narratives about globalization. (406)

That postcolonial literature is equal to such a task should come as no surprise—it is structurally, ideologically, and fundamentally equipped to challenge overt and covert forms of imperialism, including neoliberal capitalism. Postcolonial authors consciously produce works that seek to capture the various forms of violence – such as political, economic, and social – still prevalent in the postcolonial world as the ongoing effects of colonialism. They also, however, imagine new social structures that can counter and eventually eradicate the legacies of colonial oppression.²⁷ The literature they produce is imbued with the capacity to inspire readers to, what Spencer calls, “political tasks [that] they depict but cannot accomplish: the practical suppression of imperial forms of rule” (Spencer196). Postcolonial literature is an important component of postcolonialism, whose historical and contemporary critical functions come to the fore in the following statement by Robert Young:

[p]ostcolonial critique focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world: the politics of anti-colonialism and neocolonialism, gender, nationalisms, class, and ethnicities define its terrain...postcolonial theory’s intellectual commitment will always be to seek to develop new forms of engaged

²⁷ Spencer describes postcolonial literature in similar terms. “This is what makes them postcolonial: their composition and circulation in situations that gave rise to forms of violence and exploitation (torture, occupation, racism, the silencing of dissent and so on) but that also entail, albeit at lower volume, the exploration of radical new forms of moral and political community (expanded forms of awareness and empathy, the eschewal of exclusionary cultural and political dogmas, a desire to transcend national consciousness)”. See Robert Spencer, *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 196.

theoretical work that contributes to the creation of dynamic ideological and social transformation. (11)

Postcolonialism's avowed opposition to all forms of colonization, including economic globalization, thus enables it to employ cosmopolitanism to register a strong protest against the unjust social structures on the one hand and imagine viable alternatives on the other hand. In particular, postcolonial writers achieve this dual function of postcolonial theory through fiction that simultaneously critiques the contemporary society and imagines new alternatives.

In a way, the mandate to imagine transformative alternatives to our world places postcolonialism in a direct opposition to economic globalization in the twenty-first century. There are several features that delineate the confrontation. For instance, describing the salient features of postcolonialism's opposition to globalization, Sankaran Krishna observes:

[a]lthough globalization is a movement that is suffusing the entire world with a form of production based on free-market capitalism and an attendant ideology of individualist consumerism, postcolonialism articulates a politics of resistance to the inequalities, exploitation of humans and environment, and the diminution of political and ethical choices that come in the wake of globalization. If neoliberal globalization is the attempt at naturalizing and depoliticizing the logic of the market, or the logic of the economy, postcolonialism is the effort to politicize and denaturalize that logic and demonstrate the choices and agency inherent in our own lives...if globalization is the reigning or hegemonic ideology in the world today, postcolonialism, at its best, constitutes one of its main adversaries or forms of resistance to its sway. (2)

Through its narratives, postcolonial literature, especially fiction, negotiates the dual task of exposing the inherent contradictions of globalization and suggests sociohistorically grounded alternatives: for instance, the novels of prominent postcolonial writers, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy, evidence postcolonial literature's ability to critique globalization through cosmopolitan fiction. Even though these authors are primarily known as *postcolonial Indian* writers – their fiction displays distinctly cosmopolitan characteristics, such as a concern for the human community, transnational sociocultural exchanges, linguistic and cultural hybridity or, especially in the case of Roy, reflecting on the local realities through universal values such as human rights and justice.

Problem

Yet, Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy's cosmopolitan fictions cannot elide the fact that they remain deeply ensconced in the global economy of the literary marketplace – and to that extent, they appear to support through the publishing and distribution of their writings the very phenomenon they attempt to critique – economic globalization. Here in then lies the problem this dissertation will seek to answer: how do postcolonial authors justify critiquing globalization through cosmopolitan fiction while relying on global economic networks to reach culturally and geographically diverse readers around the world and still making financial gains through the literary marketplace? In other words, how do these authors explain their putative collusion with globalized economic structures while professing to critique the same through postcolonial theory? In particular, three

cultural theorists have raised this issue since the 1980s: Timothy Brennan, Graham Huggan, and Sarah Brouillette.²⁸ The following discussion elaborates the problematic.

Timothy Brennan pioneered cosmopolitan criticism in the late nineteen-eighties by calling into question the sudden rise of postcolonial writers, whom he called *third-world cosmopolitans*.²⁹ In his well-acclaimed study on Rushdie, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* (1989), Brennan explored the phenomenon of the rise of postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie, Mario Vargas Llosa, Bharati Mukherjee, Derek Walcott, and Isabel Allende in the post-World War II era. Describing the third-world celebrity-writers as spokespersons for the immigrant intellectuals, Brennan calls them ‘cosmopolitans’ who become “authentic public voices of the Third World writers” owing to their cosmopolitan credentials among “Western reviewers” (Brennan 1989a: viii). To highlight their cosmopolitan character, Brennan describes the cosmopolitan writers from a Eurocentric perspective. “Alien to the public that read them because they were black, spoke with accents or were not citizens, they were also like that public in tastes, training, repertoire of anecdotes, current habitation” (ibid ix). However, it is Brennan’s next claim that problematizes their cosmopolitan and celebrity status. Questioning the phenomenon of this type of writers, Brennan claims:

[j]ust as the ‘discovery’ of Third-World writers by mass-market publishing in recent decades has had very little to do with some sudden outbreak of artistic inspiration in the Third World (it was instead the result of the colonies shooting their way into our

²⁸ I am making this claim on the basis of Brennan’s pioneering works in literary cosmopolitanism, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989); *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997) as well as Huggan’s *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), and Brouillette’s *Postcolonial Writing in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007).

²⁹ Brennan problematized the postcolonial celebrity-writers’ cosmopolitan identities through *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, (1989) “Cosmopolitan and Celebrities” (1989), and “Cosmo-theory” (2001).

consciousness...), so there seemed to be a basically political motive in this rise of the Third-World ‘celebrity.’ (ibid)

That political motive for Brennan is the Third-World writers’ simultaneous recognition and rejection of the nation they represent to the Western readers. In claiming to hail from the Third-World, they embrace it, but by living in a self-imposed exile from it, they disown it. However, deriding this calculated ambiguity of the Third-World writers as a marketing gimmick, Brennan dismisses it for its self-serving nature. “Today cosmopolitanism is propelled and defined by media and market, and involves not so much an elite *at home*, as it does spokespersons for a kind of permanent immigration,” Brennan claims (33). Cosmopolitanism embraced by the Third-World immigrant-writers, then, appears more Eurocentric and capitalist in Brennan’s appraisal.

Brennan’s analysis directly questions postcolonial cosmopolitan writers’ legitimacy to speak not only on behalf of their nation but also against Western capitalism. If these writers are the products of the Western political and economic designs, as claimed by Brennan, how do they effectively promote a postcolonial critique of colonialism and neocolonialism? If these writers represent a cosmopolitanism that derives its force from *media and market*, how do they justify employing cosmopolitanism to challenge both fundamentalist nationalism and neoliberal globalization? Being avowedly cosmopolitan, these writers cannot claim to speak on behalf of the nation; at the same time, acting as global publishing industry’s native informants for Western readers, the Third-World writers cannot deny participation in the globalized economic processes surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of postcolonial literature.

However, these writers still write distinctly postcolonial fiction that contains a powerful critique of globalization. Third-World cosmopolitan writers, according to Brennan, represent an aporia that neither fully explains itself as postcolonial nor justifies its cosmopolitan identity.

Graham Huggan approaches the difficulty involved in the postcolonial writer's role as a critic of Western capitalism from a more theoretical perspective than Brennan. Huggan analyzes the field of postcolonial studies from two interrelated concepts: 'postcoloniality' and 'postcolonialism.' In *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, Graham Huggan spells out the conceptual differences between these terms. As a cultural value, postcoloniality is compatible with market goods: "its value is constructed through the global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities, and particularly, culturally 'othered' goods" (Huggan 6). Thus, whereas postcoloniality's value *per se* is market-driven, that of 'postcolonialism' is attached to its ideological opposition to the global processes of commodification. However, the two are intrinsically intertwined to the degree that "in the overwhelmingly commercial context of late twentieth-century commodity culture," Huggan points out, "postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products" (6). It is not that postcolonial writers and theorists are not aware of this predicament, rather they consciously live out this tension.³⁰ Huggan identifies an intent behind the postcolonial writers' dialectical relationship with globalization and describes it as a self-conscious

³⁰ Further Huggan singles out three dimensions of the postcolonial exotic which fuel commodification of literary texts: (1) mystification of historical experience; (2) imagined access to cultural other through the process of consumption, and (3) reification of people and places into exchangeable objects. For a detailed discussion of the topic, see "Consuming India," *The Postcolonial Exotic*, Ch. 2.

effort to embrace a “form of strategic exoticism, designed as much to challenge as to profit from consumer needs” (xi). This compromised move of postcolonial writers enables them to maintain their popularity in the West in spite of acting as the moral and political representatives of the East or the entire Third World.

By situating postcolonial authors at the intersection of postcoloniality and postcolonialism, Huggan undermines their capacity for a cultural criticism of the West. Following Brennan’s criticism of postcolonial authors, Huggan examines the inevitable exotification these authors themselves experience as postcolonial writers in the process of representing the East to the West. The problem relates to the ambiguous relationship between postcoloniality and postcolonialism as discussed earlier. The fact that postcolonial writers become implicated in both of these aspects while acting as the cultural representative of the postcolonial world compromises their ability to critique the literary marketplace that seeks to commodify them as well as their discourses of resistance to it. Huggan, nevertheless, feels that postcolonial authors find a way to critique the neoliberal market forces and the West’s economic dominance of the East through their writings. Yet, by participating in the exotifying process of both their writings and themselves, postcolonial authors weaken the force of their cultural critiques according to Huggan.

Similarly, Sara Brouillette analyzes the relationship between postcolonial authors and the Western publishing industry from an economic viewpoint to expand the debate concerning postcolonial writers’ identity construction and the publishing industry’s impactful role in it. In particular, Brouillette questions postcolonial authors’ need for a

greater self-scrutiny in light of their relationship with the literary marketplace and highlights the need to examine this nexus critically for a better assessment of postcolonial literature's relevance in the contemporary globalized world. In *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, Brouillette claims the publishing industry “now involves agents for a series of prominent ‘lead’ authors making deals for global distribution with publishers that are situated within transnational corporation or conglomerates” (83). The financial success of these publishing ventures relies heavily on, what Brouillette describes as, “the increasing presence of writers of nominally non-European origins, often from formerly colonized nations, writing in English for a largely Anglo-American marketplace” (ibid). Clearly, the more of a global celebrity the postcolonial writer is, the more entrenched she/he will be in the corporatization of literature, for much of the acclaimed postcolonial literature tends to be the product of this alliance.³¹

Because of its emphasis on postcolonial authors' financial value in the literary marketplace, Brouillette's intervention further problematizes the legitimacy of postcolonial authors' cultural critiques of the West. How do these authors justify their critiques of neoliberal globalization without reflecting on their own involvement in its economic processes? In this respect, Brouillette echoes what Gupta presents as literature's complicated relationship with globalization. Literature cannot ignore 'globalization' on two major issues according to Gupta. “At one level, globalization is

³¹ Brouillette also notes that postcolonial literature's politicized relationship with global capitalism raises concerns about 'imbalances between the northern metropolitan locations and their peripheral 'others'; the compromises involved in incorporation into the culture industries of late capitalism; and how local cultural production interconnects with or maintains some separate integrity from the global. (175).

something that is happening out there... , characterizing the economic, social, political, [and] cultural contemporary world,” he argues (Gupta 11). At another level, however, given the ubiquity of “ideologically-neutral and process-centered nuances” of globalization, “literature and literary studies are becoming globalized” (ibid). Therefore, any analysis of globalization has to include these two dimensions. Brouillette seems to suggest the same, albeit with a narrower focus on postcolonial authors in the literary marketplace. Nevertheless, her argument is compelling in that it forces this study to scrutinize postcolonial authors’ response to economic globalization through cosmopolitan discourses more cautiously.

Besides Brennan, Huggan, and Brouillette, some left-leaning critics have raised similar concerns. For instance, Arif Dirlik vehemently denounces the alliance between postcolonial writers and the literary marketplace. In “The Postcolonial Aura: The Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” he argues that the postcolonial critics’ complicity with global capitalism renders them incapable of posing a challenge to its economic homogenization through neoliberal means. In the First World’s wholehearted endorsement of a few leading Third World intellectuals and writers, Dirlik sees the genesis of a deeper nexus which has emerged out of “a new world situation... created by transformations within the capitalist world economy, by the emergence of what has been described variously as global capitalism, flexible production, late capitalism, and so on” (330). Dirlik goes on to assert that the valorization of a select few postcolonial intellectuals is more indicative of postcolonialism’s origin in and complicity with the

contemporary capitalism than of the critical caliber of these intellectuals.³² The real concern underlying Dirlik's critique is that in their bid to safeguard their material interests—the publication and distribution of their writings—postcolonial intellectuals might repudiate the obligation to challenge the unjust power structures of neoliberal globalization. Echoing a similar apprehension, Anne McClintock surmises in “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-colonialism’” that postcolonialism's inability to critique the ongoing forms of colonial oppression and exploitation stems as much out of its “academic marketability,” which “makes possible the marketing of a whole new generation of panels, articles, books, and courses,” as out of its preference for the temporal nature of its discourse over that of the relations of power (93). Not surprisingly, McClintock advocates the search for a term to describe post-colonial discourses capable of directly addressing the heterogeneity of power and histories at play in the current global socioeconomic and political dynamics among nation states. These concerns raise serious doubts on postcolonial authors' function as the literary counterparts of postcolonial intellectuals and cultural theorists, who strive to challenge

³² Other left-leaning critics, too, have raised relevant concerns on this issue. For instance, in her article ‘Notes on the “Post-Colonial”’ (1992), Ella Shohat bemoans postcolonial discourse's inability to make a direct critique of the neo-colonial economic dominance of Euro-American nations on the third-world countries because of its ‘a historical and universalizing deployments, and its potentially depoliticizing implications’ (99). Stressing the need for a more historically, politically, and culturally contextualized form of postcolonial criticism, Shohat envisages a postcolonialism well-equipped to analyze the increasingly skewed global relations between the First-World and the Third-World nations, and its economic aftereffects on the latter. Similarly, in *In My Father's House*, Anthony Kwame Appiah, too, detects a mutual dependency between postcoloniality and capitalism, stating “(p)ostcoloniality is the condition of what we might generously call a comprador intelligentsia: of a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained, group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery” (149).

the ongoing forms of imperialism in contemporary society. They, therefore, demand an informed response.

Solution

In response to the problematic discussed above, I would like to suggest that prominent postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy have evolved ways to justify their simultaneous engagement with both the literary marketplace and postcolonial theory through literary cosmopolitanism. These writers are as much postcolonial as they are cosmopolitan, even though the latter appellation becomes more highlighted because of their celebrity status. Being well-aware of the inevitability surrounding living in a globalized world, these writers have come to terms with it as a system they must inhabit; however, as we shall see, they continue to expose its detrimental effects on the Third-World, especially through their fiction. To accomplish this task, these writers have adopted literary cosmopolitanism that enables them to appeal to a world-wide readership in spite of writing postcolonial fiction. They also demonstrate a genuine protest against manifestations of globalization, namely, neoliberal capitalism and cultural homogenization, while not promoting a monolithic or Eurocentric cosmopolitanism. In other words, as postcolonial authors, Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy challenge one Western phenomenon, globalization, without advocating another, cosmopolitanism, because while the former tends to undermine the integrity of nation-states through economic onslaughts, the latter – especially as a cultural ideal in the singular – seeks to negate the importance of nation-states in favor of a universal human

community.³³ These writers have, therefore, evolved *forms of cosmopolitanisms* through fiction that accomplish a dual task: challenging globalization and promoting non-Western expressions of cosmopolitanism. Important to note here is that promoting cosmopolitanism also enables postcolonial writers to challenge aggressive nationalism that tends to justify exclusivism, particularism, and discrimination against the minorities in the name of safeguarding national interests. Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy have evolved distinct literary cosmopolitanisms that are postcolonial by virtue of their emphasis on imagining universal human communities that recognize and respect sociocultural diversities among nations and strive to create a just society on the basis of equal dignity of all human beings, irrespective of their cultural differences. This dissertation will, therefore, endeavor to show that Salman Rushdie – the pioneer of postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction – has developed a literary cosmopolitanism that has matured over the course of his literary career to become, what I will call, *critical cosmopolitanism* – one that has developed over the course of his literary career to subvert economic globalization from within and yet remain self-critical about one’s contribution in propelling it. Taking their cue from Rushdie, two other postcolonial writers, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy have also developed literary cosmopolitanisms that represent the diversity of postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction. Focusing on the family-based cosmopolitan communities that developed on the littoral in the East before and during the colonial era, Ghosh has evolved, what I will call, a *familial-littoral cosmopolitanism* of Asian migrants. Roy, on her part, has remained more focused on highlighting the non-

³³ For instance, Robbins and Horta identify cosmopolitanism’s main characteristic in terms of “a commitment to the good of humans as a whole that overrides all smaller commitments and creates a habitual detachment from the values of the locality. See *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 2.

cosmopolitan socioeconomic structures of India to promote, what I will call, a *small cosmopolitanism* that brings the non-globalized world to the international community through fiction and nonfiction. Through her form of literary cosmopolitanism, Roy aims to conscientize cosmopolitan readers to act on behalf of the victims of globalization and unjust social structures in a gesture of empathetic solidarity. These three authors then represent three different ways of answering the problem guiding this dissertation.

That said, the choice of Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy as the representative cosmopolitan postcolonial authors necessitates an explanation before a discussion on some recent developments in the field of postcolonial cosmopolitan criticism. Given Brennan's pioneering work on postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, it is easier to recognize Rushdie's inclusion in this study. As noted in the preceding discussion, Brennan not only situates Rushdie alongside other postcolonial writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Bharti Mukherjee, but also declares him the most iconic of all postcolonial cosmopolitans. "If there was any of them who seemed to capture what they collectively represented, it was Rushdie," claims Brennan (1989a: viii). Similarly, Sara Brouillette, too, builds her study on the literary marketplace around the Rushdie-phenomenon, that is, the aura of his personality as well as writing in the literary world. For instance, directly connecting Rushdie with the economics of the literary marketplace, Brouillette claims, "Rushdie's equally powerful agents and publishers ensure that his works reach the largest possible market share throughout the English-speaking world," as also other audiences through "lucrative translation contracts" (10). Examining the ways in which Rushdie negotiates these observations, therefore, becomes crucial for this study. Similarly, Ghosh,

too, has faced the charge of employing Western cosmopolitanism both through the form and content of his writing, requiring a closer look at his historical fiction. In her essay, “Amitav Ghosh: Cosmopolitanisms, Literature, Transnationalisms,” Inderpal Grewal questions Ghosh’s reliance on the novel-form and the use of Western archival methods to celebrate a form of non-Western, precolonial cosmopolitanism of the East in *In an Antique Land*. “Europe and the New World could not be erased and Ghosh’s text,” Grewal argues, adding that while celebrating the precolonial cosmopolitan East, the text “cannot escape its condition of cosmopolitanism that were linked to those histories of cosmopolitanism that the text hoped to disavow” (185). Moreover, Grewal argues that Ghosh’s romanticization of the East “was possible only through Europe, and, of course “America” as repository of the documents that made this history possible (187). This study will endeavor to show that Ghosh’s fiction has evolved since *In an Antique Land* to become more assertive of the ways in which the colonial communities developed family-like and littoral cosmopolitan connections to resist both social oppression from within the traditional Asian societies and economic exploitation by the colonizers. Unlike Ghosh, Arundhati Roy has faced criticism on account of her market-value since the publication of her Booker-prize-winning text *The God of Small Things* in 1997. For instance, commenting on the phenomenal success of Roy’s debut novel, Graham Huggan claims that Roy’s novel and the West’s remarkable interest in India since its publication are “products of the globalisation of Western-capitalist consumer culture, in which ‘India’ functions not just as a polyvalent cultural sign but as a highly mobile capital good” (Huggan 67). Further, attributing Roy’s astounding fame in the immediate aftermath of her first novel to the calculated designs of the publishing industry, Huggan claims that in

postcolonial English fiction, *The God of Small Things* remains remarkable “both as the arrestingly good first novel of a young, little-known and unusually attractive writer and as an example of the star-making industry, the media-driven process by which a writer can be catapulted to a quasi-mythical celebrity status” (Huggan 76).³⁴ This questionable interpretation of Roy’s remarkable rise as a literary celebrity begs an answer this dissertation will attempt to produce; namely, that Roy’s success is as much dependent on her literary cosmopolitanism, if not more, as it is on the publishing industry that promotes her for financial reasons. Roy herself has taken care to highlight the cosmopolitan aspect of her writings, especially nonfiction, to emphasize the need for the West’s active interest in resolving the East’s socioeconomic and human rights issues, rather than only appreciating its cultural richness from an aesthetic point of view. Not surprisingly then, her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, makes more evident the kind of cosmopolitanism Roy advocates in *The God of Small Things*.

Status of Postcolonial Cosmopolitan Criticism

In the literary field, postcolonialism has responded to debates on cosmopolitanism in different ways, hoping to arrive at a more balanced approach to it.³⁵ One reason for

³⁴ Following Huggan’s analysis of Roy, Padmini Mongia has argued forcefully that, in spite of the novel’s exquisite literary qualities, the unprecedented success of Roy’s debut novel was largely devised by the publishing industry that presented her as a non-cosmopolitan voice of rural India beautifully telling the tale through a pure natural talent, whereas Roy’s background reveals her quite cosmopolitan upbringing and connections as well as literary influence. See, Padmini Mongia, “The Making and Marketing of Arundhati Roy” in Alex Tickell, *Arundhati Roy The God of Small Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 103-109.

³⁵ See, for instance, *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Summer 2001) special issue on literature and globalization; Robert Spencer, *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Studies* (2011); and Suman Gupta, *Globalization and Literature* (2011): Chs. 1, 4, and 7.

postcolonialism's noticeable interest in cosmopolitanism is the former's intent of moving beyond its cherished task of denouncing colonial and neocolonial forms of inequality and exploitation through a robust critique of imperialism, and into formulating effective alternatives to it. In other words, besides challenging imperialism through "discourses of hybridity, diaspora, exile and migration," postcolonialism now seeks to "formulate principles, practices and procedures" for an alternative discourse of cosmopolitanism (Spencer 19). This progression becomes evident in the history of postcolonial criticism which, according to Spencer, has gradually progressed from being skeptical, celebratory, socialist to cosmopolitan. While the skeptical postcolonial critique tends to dismiss all efforts at "gaining knowledge of other cultures and societies" as coercive and influenced by Western ideologies and political practices, the celebratory critique "celebrates the advent of a condition in which borders between peoples and regions are rapidly being dismantled" (20, 23).³⁶ In opposition to the previous trend, the socialist critique denounces the homogenizing power of cosmopolitanism "that works to conceal the larger part of world population that is still vulnerable to the enduring power and centrality of the nation state," and ignores the egregious inequalities between the cosmopolitan elites—émigré writers, artists, academics, intellectuals, and professionals—and the poor migrants and refugees (24).³⁷ The cosmopolitan postcolonial critique draws on the best elements of the previous three by "combining the difference within community, local and national solidarities with larger trans-national ones" so as to bring into critical conversation the local and the rooted with the global and the cosmopolitan (38). This dialectical approach

³⁶ Spencer mentions scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said for the first type, and Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha for the second.

³⁷ Scholars in this category include: Timothy Brennan, Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik, Benita Parry, Sara Sureli, Tom Narin, and Andrew Smith.

taken by scholars such as Gerard Delanty, Fuyuki Kurasawa, and Gurminder Bhambra has been called ‘cosmopolitan criticism’ by Spencer. Cosmopolitan criticism

combines an attachment to diversity with a recognition of the need for community; political action at the level of the nation state with political action at a global level; and hard-headed awareness of the insufficiently cosmopolitan present with cognizance of the necessity and desirability of a cosmopolitan future. (Spencer 39)

Perceived from Spencer’s viewpoint, cosmopolitan criticism endeavors to balance its two-fold agenda: to grapple with the local socioeconomic and political realities, and to strive for creating new alternatives to them, without leveraging either one. Admittedly, postcolonial fiction has shown glimpses of its struggle with this balancing act but has also displayed increasing determination to continue its engagement with critical cosmopolitanism—the novels of Rushdie (notably his later works), Arundhati Roy, and Amitav Ghosh serve as good examples.

A series of recent critical studies indicate how cosmopolitanism’s dialectical relationship with postcolonial fiction has gained currency in the last few decades. In *When Borne Across*, Bishnupriya Ghosh examines the works of celebrated Indian writers such as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Arundhati Roy in light of the cultural identity their works reinforce as well as reshape. Ghosh’s work evolves the “conception of a situated literary cosmopolitics—one that mobilizes the imagination for newly urgent ethical and political tasks of worldling” (18). Similarly, in *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, Berthold Schoene juxtaposes globalization and cosmopolitanism as the particular manifestations of the contemporary to highlight the

role of imagination in the re-creation of the world. Schoene's study analyzes the works of contemporary British and postcolonial writers such as Ian McEwan, James Kelman, David Mitchell, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Hari Kunzru with a view to defending "the contemporary cosmopolitan novel as an art form—'vestigial' or not—in which the realities of the political and economic are subjected to imaginative scrutiny and recasting instead of undergoing a process of simple rendition" (32). Another interesting study exploring cosmopolitanism in the Indian English fiction is Pranav Jani's *Decentering Rushdie: Cosmopolitanism and the Indian Novel in English*. Jani equates the multiplicity of postcolonial representations of Indian society with the multiple cosmopolitanisms prevalent in the Indian English novel. Arguing that the Indian English novels often give voice to cosmopolitan, elite-characters by meditating on their relationship to the nation and its people, Jani claims that these novels "themselves can be read as manifestations of cosmopolitan practice" wherein speaking through the elite characters, their writers—who are often Western educated, middle class Indians—reach out to cosmopolitan audiences both in India and abroad (6).³⁸ In a similar manner, Robert Spencer's 2011 study *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature* explores how reading fiction affects the reader's conscience. Spencer's study articulates cosmopolitanism as an intellectual, moral and political process promoted by postcolonial literature as an alternative to Western imperialism and neoliberal globalization. Correspondingly, Suman Gupta's *Globalization and Literature* (2009) traces the relationship between globalization and literature, arguing that literary studies have not sufficiently articulated the phenomenon of

³⁸ To test his thesis, Jani analyzes Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), and *Rich Like Us* (1985); Kamala Markandya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969); Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980); Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).

globalization up until recently. The text analyzes how literature and literary studies have sought to respond to globalization in recent times: It frequently references Delillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003), Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), and Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) to illustrate how contemporary fiction reflects protests against the processes of globalization, the cosmopolitanization of world cities, the emerging trends in postmodern and postcolonial studies that focus on globalization studies, and the impact of globalization on the literary marketplace and the publishing industry. Finally, Cyrus K. Patell's 2015 study *Cosmopolitanism and the Literary Imagination* contributes to the debate on literary cosmopolitanism by examining the links between the two important fields of academic inquiry: theories of cosmopolitanism and literary studies. Patell suggests that cosmopolitanism which originated "in the idea of "world citizen" and conceived in contradiction to nationalism... can now be understood as a perspective that regards human difference as an opportunity to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved," and therefore, "it might be said to lie behind all "great" literature, which asks its readers to experience otherness by opening themselves up to another person's words and thoughts" (4). Patell a strong case for reading 'global texts'—texts that have become repositories of shared cultural heritages such as *Faust*, *Mobydick*, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—in the cosmopolitan framework so as to make their reading more relevant in the present context.³⁹

³⁹ Patell proposes the global text framework to elicit answers to three considerations: (1) how the global text adopted a "worldly" approach to move beyond its local context; (2) the role of the publication history, criticism, and performance of the text in making it "a global cultural commodity"; and (3) the cultural legacy a global text has in the global media forms such as plays, novels, operas, films, and works of visual art. As a framework, these considerations bring various critical approaches such as "close reading, influence study, reader-response theory, literary historiography, history-of-the-book analysis, translation studies, materialist approaches, cultural studies, and world literature theory," Patell claims.

Dissertation's Contribution

While taking its cue from the critical interventions discussed above, this study differs from them in one significant aspect. Instead of analyzing Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy as three different postcolonial responses to the challenge of critiquing globalization through cosmopolitanism, this study examines them in conjunction with one another. More specifically, the following analysis focuses on how Rushdie has evolved a masculinist, urban, and anti-nationalist literary cosmopolitanism in an attempt to celebrate the migrant individual's quest for a cosmopolitan lifestyle through disavowing local attachments, including those of one's place of birth, family, and homeland. Ghosh, on the other hand, develops a family-oriented cosmopolitanism of the poor, rejecting Rushdie's cosmopolitanism. For that reason, Ghosh's cosmopolitanism not only consciously responds to the need for a distinctly South Asian vision of cosmopolitan communities, but also challenge Rushdie's individualistic form on cosmopolitanism that seems to accept globalization as a necessary condition for cosmopolitans. Similarly, Arundhati Roy advocates a spatial cosmopolitanism based on an empathetic solidarity with the postcolonial poor not only in a gesture of protest against globalization but also against Rushdie's elitist cosmopolitanism that tends to ignore the rural and urban poor populations and their socioeconomic struggles in the increasingly globalizing Third World, especially those of India. That said, Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy promote forms of literary cosmopolitanism in direct opposition to both economic globalization and

fundamentalist nationalism and offer alternatives to these phenomena through cosmopolitan discourses. Demonstrating the interrelated nature of these authors' cosmopolitanisms while analyzing them in light of their opposition to globalization will, therefore, remain a special focus of this study.

Conclusion

This dissertation will make a useful contribution in the ongoing debates on cosmopolitanism in postcolonial discourses. In particular, it will offer a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of postcolonial authors' intricate relationship with globalization and provide a positive understanding of their attempts to critique Western imperialism in its current manifestations – globalization, Euro-centric cosmopolitanism, cultural pluralism, and universalism – through fiction. It will also help readers become more appreciative of fiction's unique ability to promote postcolonial cosmopolitan visions that remain unavailable to social sciences such as history, sociology, and anthropology. To that end, this study will emphasize the imaginative component of fiction that allows it to envision alternative cosmopolitan worlds, even in the midst of rampant globalization and rising fundamentalism across the world. It is hoped that this study will pave the way for future research in postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction, especially that produced by Indian cosmopolitan novelists such as Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, and Arvind Adiga and expand the scope of postcolonial cosmopolitan criticism in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER ONE: SALMAN RUSHDIE'S CRITICAL COSMOPOLITANISM

Salman Rushdie wrote *Midnight's Children* in 1981, and *The Moor's Last Sigh* in 1995. Both novels are set in Bombay and both project the city as a synecdoche for India: Bombay reflects India's political, cultural, and social situation between 1947 to 1993 in the two texts, and some major historical events during this period – India's Freedom Struggle, the Independence, the Partition, the Emergency, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid (mosque) in Ayodhya – are referenced from the points of view of characters living in Bombay. Yet, the major difference between them is the mood with which each novel ends: *Midnight's Children* ends on an optimistic note that despite Indira Gandhi's political authoritarianism India will uphold its secular democratic nature on the strength of constant reinvention and cultural multiplicity; whereas, *The Moor's Last Sigh* ends with a somewhat defeatist tone, wherein the protagonist, Moor, seeks to slip into a deep sleep in faraway Spain, hesitantly hoping that the power of love and human spirit will endure through death and destruction. The reason between a defiantly optimistic ending and a faintly hopeful ending is that Rushdie's worldview as a writer had grown significantly and his personal life had changed dramatically during the fourteen years between the two novels.¹ The time lapse seems to have also changed Rushdie's understanding of Mumbai and India – a fact detectible in the latter novels. Rushdie

¹ I am referring to the events of the so-called Rushdie Affair that concerned the Islamic world's violent reaction against *The Satanic Verses* (1988), culminating in a fatwa declared on Rushdie by Iran's supreme spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, following which the writer was forced to go underground for several years.

describes *The Moor's Last Sigh* as “a novel that comes out of my experience of India as an adult, (whereas in a way the inspiration of *Midnight's Children* was from my experience of India as a child)” (Rushdie 2008b: 33). While Rushdie employs magic realism in *Midnight's Children*, resonating a child's amazement at the breathtaking cultural richness of India, he envelops *The Moor's Last Sigh* in a realism, reflected in Bombay's religious fundamentalism and economic globalization in the 1990s. Both novels depict the changing political and economic climate in independent India between 1947 and 1992 and contain Rushdie's critical assessment of India. Importantly, Rushdie wrote both texts as an Indian immigrant writer residing in England.

Rushdie's shifting focus on the nature of threats facing independent India in the course of *Midnight's Children*, and *The Moor's Last Sigh* indicate an evolution in his cosmopolitan outlook as a writer. In the former, Rushdie largely protests against the authoritarianism of the former Indian Prime Minister, late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and her Congress Party in the 1970s. In *The Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie states: “one of the threats to democracy in India has come, in recent years, from the dynastic aspirations of the Nehru family itself, and from the peculiarly monarchic style of government which Mrs. Gandhi developed” (Rushdie 1991: 43). The novel is Rushdie's attempt to challenge it. In contrast, *The Moor's Last Sigh* represents Rushdie's denouncement of the two equally potent threats to Indian democracy: Hindu fundamentalism and economic globalization. Rushdie develops these themes through Raman Fielding, a politician who dreamt of establishing a particular brand of Hindu nationalism in the country, and Abraham Zogoiby, an Indian Jew, who rises to become one of Bombay's richest businessmen through illegal activities, including human trafficking, drug-smuggling,

arms-smuggling, and even stealing nuclear weapons. Rushdie highlights the inimical effects of fundamentalism and globalization by portraying how these forces drastically ruin the life of the protagonist Moraes Zogoiby and how he had to flee to a cosmopolitan refuge in the Andalusian Spain to save his life. An interesting character that contributes to the Moor's departure from Bombay is that of Adam Braganza, the son of Saleem and Parvati from *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie introduces an eighteen-year old Aadam Sinai as Adam Braganza who has made some fortune running the Braganza Pickle factory. In the Moor's Last Sigh, Adam emerges as a corrupt accomplice of Abraham Zogoiby and finally ends up in jail in a bribery case. This is how, then, Rushdie distorts the optimism expressed at the end of *Midnight's Children* through Saleem's infant son Aadam in his next Bombay-novel nearly fourteen years later.

The rising religious fundamentalism, corruption, and capitalist greed in India in the 1990s compelled Rushdie to look for a place outside the nation to sustain his cosmopolitan vision. Bombay had degenerated into a breeding ground of religious fanatics and corrupt business-tycoons, and the underworld mafia in the last decade of the last millennium, seriously undermining the city's cosmopolitan culture in which Rushdie grew up. Emphasizing the multicultural character of the city, Rushdie writes, "I come from Bombay... 'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, [and] hybridity" (Rushdie 1991: 32). However, in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, "Rushdie presents religious nationalism and economic corruption as the tides that fill the void left by the failure of modern plurality... and Bombay's cosmopolitanism," observes Schultheis (588). Perhaps, this is why the cautiously hopeful tone in the text comes from the protagonist's mouth, who escapes to the West. In cosmopolitan Spain, Moraes

Zogoiby finds the strength and the will to overcome the animosity and malice that drove him from Bombay. The Moor's optimistic hope "to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time" on the strength of the human need "for flowering together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self" reflects Rushdie's faith in the power of cosmopolitanism to guide individuals beyond the narrowness of nationalism and exploitative greed of economic globalization and into a world without ideological borders (Rushdie 1995: 433-34).

Since the turn of the millennium, Rushdie's cosmopolitan vision has expanded to include not only a literary response to the inhibiting forces of fundamentalist nationalism and neoliberal globalization but also a reflection on his own complicity with the systems that engender and sustain them. Rushdie has apparently realized that in the twenty-first century globalized world one can neither remain immune to the sweeping power of economic globalization, which affects most social aspects of human life through visible and invisible global flows of capital, goods, services, and information, nor ignore the ever-rising chorus of aggressive nationalist tendencies in many parts of the world. The realization has prompted Rushdie to enrich his cosmopolitan vision by focusing on the personal dimension of literary cosmopolitanism while simultaneously critiquing economic globalization's adverse effects on individuals as well as society in general. His first novel of the new millennium, *Fury* (2001), provides a good example of this development. Similar to his previous novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* analyzes the predicaments of postcolonial migrants in the United States of America, but adds the dimension of simultaneously commenting on a nationalist struggle in a former British colony, an imaginary island in the South Pacific ocean. More importantly,

Rushdie creates the protagonist in his own image – a Mumbai-born, Cambridge-educated Professor of Ideas who migrates from Bombay to London and to New York to find a new meaning and purpose in life. While such a move may be negatively perceived as narcissistic, in fact, it serves a major critical purpose in the text: it allows Rushdie to critique his own role as a writer in contributing to the processes capitalist globalization as well as nationalist fundamentalism. Rushdie reflects on this troublesome aspect of cosmopolitan writers through the motif of magical dolls that the protagonist Malik Solanka creates but loses control over once they enter the market as commodities. In the novel, the dolls are used or misused by people with vested interests, including the warring parties in the Island nation of Lilliput-Blefuscu to Solanka's dismay and utter helplessness. As if to reject the inadvertent contribution of artists and writers like him in intensifying the globalizing processes in the world, Rushdie makes Solanka return to the serenity of family life in England in the final pages of the text – physically, emotionally, and intellectually distanced from the frantic life in New York. This is how *Fury* presents a dimension of Rushdie's cosmopolitan vision that was lacking in his earlier novels, and makes it more complex and mature.

A failure to understand this gradual evolution of Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism has led a section of Marxist critics to accuse him of a comprador complicity in the global literary marketplace and to devalue his fiction as exotifying the Third World for Western readers.² Marxist critics who rely on a historicist and materialist interpretations of literary works often find fault with Rushdie for the modernist, magical

² Specifically, I am referring to critics such as Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad, and Ella Shohat who have denounced Rushdie for his putatively capitalist fiction. A detailed discussion on these theorists' accusations against Rushdie will be offered in the final section of this chapter.

realist, and ironic elements in his novels. Timothy Brennan also raises questions over Rushdie's ability to speak on behalf of the Third World owing to the author's status as a cosmopolitan celebrity. In fact, this chapter is an attempt to defend Rushdie against Brennan's charge by demonstrating how Rushdie's ever-evolving cosmopolitanism enables him to negotiate the tension between fulfilling the needs of the publishing industry and providing a robust critique of globalization. However, understanding the nuances of the process through which Rushdie accomplishes the balancing act requires a repudiation of a monolithic Marxist interpretation of Rushdie. In other words, merely rejecting Rushdie for his marketability and popularity in the literary marketplace, as certain Marxist literary critics do, hinders a more balanced appraisal of the author from the perspectives of literary cosmopolitics. Aided by his cosmopolitan vision, Rushdie in fact rises above the material and capitalist dimensions of postcolonial cosmopolitan writing.

In light of the preceding discussion, I will argue that in order to respond to the twin challenges of fundamentalist nationalism and neoliberal globalization, Rushdie develops a particular form of literary cosmopolitanism. It evolves over the course of his literary career from '*reactive*' to '*creative*' to '*critical*' in three distinct stages. Analyzing this evolution, I argue, helps us to understand the limitations of a Marxist critique of Rushdie that tends to denounce him as a postcolonial celebrity pandering to the marketplace demand for exoticized Third-World fiction. A detailed explanation and analysis of the three stages in Rushdie's cosmopolitanism will be offered later in the chapter, but a brief comment on each might help here to establish their connections with Rushdie's fiction. Reactive cosmopolitanism mainly emerges in the context of Rushdie's

opposition to authoritarian political figures and their dictatorial aspirations that pose a serious threat to secular democracies in postcolonial world.³ Rushdie reacts to such non-democratic tendencies of political establishments through a cosmopolitan ideal that privileges the historical openness and cultural diversities of postcolonial nations. In particular, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* demonstrate Rushdie's reactive cosmopolitanism. Somewhat differently, creative cosmopolitanism evolves out of Rushdie's attempt to address nationalist or religious fundamentalism and economic globalization with the creative resourcefulness of cosmopolitan migrants. Instead of vehemently denouncing the opposition, Rushdie invents ways through creative cosmopolitanism to counter particularism and exclusivism inventively. Thus, in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie confounds religious and political inflexibility and exclusivity with Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha's ability to transform themselves into magical beings, capable of surviving amidst hostility and rejection. Then again, using creative cosmopolitanism in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie exposes a nexus between religious fundamentalism and economic globalization, and blames it for destroying a healthy cosmopolitanism in the postcolonial world, especially in India. The creative solution Rushdie offers to defeat the dangerous alliance involves crossing the borders and going beyond the grasp of fundamentalism and globalization, as exemplified by the Moor's flight to rural Spain in the text. Finally, critical cosmopolitanism develops from Rushdie's reflective engagement with both economic globalization and himself as a contributor to its processes of production, distribution and consumption. For instance, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie ridicules the commodifying and exotifying

³ See my explanation of this point in the introduction. pp. 4-7.

power of Western cultural industry through Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara, who defy the limits of time and space to subvert the discourse of Western cultural domination of the East. In this text, Rushdie denounces the ever-increasing influence of economic globalization across the world. But it is the process of critically evaluating his role as a postcolonial author, with its pitfalls and promises, that lends Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism a critical edge. Malik Solanka, the protagonist, embodies critical cosmopolitanism in *Fury*. Even as he resembles the author more than any other character in Rushdie's fiction, Solanka produces a self-critical evaluation of his creative talent and its positive and negative impact in the globalized world, thus indicating an advanced stage in Rushdie's cosmopolitanism.

In order to arrive at the conclusion that despite his apparent neoliberal connection with the literary marketplace Rushdie registers a strong protest against fundamentalism and globalization from a postcolonial perspective, a roadmap is required to steer the following discussion. Accordingly, a brief discussion on nationalism and globalization in the relation to Rushdie's fiction will precede a preliminary analysis of his literary cosmopolitanism, including an inquiry into its aesthetic dimension. In the most important section of this chapter thereafter, a detailed analysis of the afore-mentioned three stages in Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism will be analyzed. The final section will address certain concerns about a section of Marxist critics regarding Rushdie's fiction and discuss Rushdie's response to the criticism.

Fundamentalist Nationalism, Globalization, and Rushdie's Literary Cosmopolitanism

Fundamentalist nationalism and economic globalization are the two contemporary manifestations of imperialism. Cultural theorists have endeavored to connect the combined impact of these phenomena with other culturally homogenizing forces in contemporary society. For instance, Sheldon Pollock highlights the current dominance of English that leaves little to choose between two far-from-ideal options. We are left with only two choices, Pollock writes, “between, on the one hand, a national vernacularity dressed in the frayed period costume of violent revanchism and bent on preserving difference at all costs, and, on the other, a clear-cutting, strip mining multinational cosmopolitanism that is bent, at all costs, on eliminating it” (Pollock 17). Since violent nationalism fed by an insistence on preserving difference is often rooted in fundamentalist principles, and a ‘multinational cosmopolitanism’ determined to eradicate the former is more properly a form of globalization that aims to homogenize the world by wiping away pockets of local resistance, Pollock’s observation seems to refer to fundamentalist nationalism and economic globalization. Currently, globalization appears to have an upper hand in the struggle with aggressive nationalism because of its ability to breach national boundaries through flows of trade and information technology. Consequently, in the contemporary Third World, “the ‘nation’ has begun to have a decreasing importance as individuals and communities gain access to globally disseminated knowledge and culture, and are affected by economic realities that bypass the boundaries of the state” (Ashcroft et al. 2000:110). For postcolonial nations, however,

the opposition between a nationalism that seeks to defend national interests and supranational forces, such as globalization and neoliberal capitalism, seems superfluous as these can be traced back to Western imperialism.

In itself, nationalism is neither postcolonial nor fundamentalist, but a product of European Enlightenment.⁴ Recounting the historical circumstances in which nationalism emerged—namely, the need for the European principalities and kingdoms to muster sufficient workforce for its new technologies—Leela Gandhi concludes: “[i]t is generally agreed upon that nation-ness and nationalism are European inventions which came into existence toward the end of the eighteenth century” (Gandhi 113). While the quest for a rapid scientific and technological advancement provided a local basis for the flowering of nationalism in Europe, the ever-increasing demand for raw materials and labor forced Europeans to expand their nationalist fervor into European imperialism. What emerged as an expression of European modernity in the eighteenth century, then, quickly evolved in the colonized countries’ anticolonial movements as cultural nationalism. Ashcroft states, it is not surprising that “for all its contentiousness, and the difficulty of theorizing it adequately, [nationalism] remains the most implacably powerful force in twentieth-century politics” (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 151). It is ironic, therefore, that nationalism became the ideological force of anti-colonialism in Asia and Africa in the twentieth century. The colonized deployed nationalism to defeat the very structure, namely,

⁴ Leela Gandhi examines this assertion in her essay, “Imagining Community: The Question of Nationalism.” Nationalism primarily emerged in the context of Western powers seeking to unify their workforce under one banner to meet the demands of new technologies and rapid expansion in the eighteenth century, argues Gandhi.

colonialism, that flourished as a form of political power and Europe's cultural domination of the world.

The fundamentalist nationalism of postcolonial world throws into relief its intrinsic connection with Western imperialism. A direct relationship between nationalism and imperialism emerges in the historical analysis of the two. As Ashcroft and others point out, because of nationalism's primacy as a modern mode of governance, "it was largely in terms of a resistant nationalism that the anti-colonial movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came into being, even though it was the force of nationalism that had fueled the growth of colonialism in the first place" (Ashcroft 154). Therefore, considering nationalism's Western origins, its use by the anti-colonial movements in the twentieth century across the world cannot be deemed radical. Rather, it adduces to the postcolonial nationalism's inexorable dependence on Western ideological structures to achieve its own political ends. The same link also indicates, however, that if nationalism continues to persist in the Third World—in fact, taking more ominous forms such as identarian, sectarian, and religious extremism—in the twenty-first century, it still continues to struggle against its old nemesis: Western imperialism. To highlight its ongoing relevance as a proper political system despite its insidious tendency to slide towards fundamentalist radicalism, postcolonial scholars point to its resourcefulness as an anti-imperialist principle. Leela Gandhi, for instance, valorizes it "as the principal remedial means whereby the colonized culture overcomes the psychological damage of colonial racism," and claims that "nationalism responds to the urgent task of rehumanisation... It becomes a process of reterritorialization and repossession which replaces the 'two-fold citizenship' of colonial culture with a radically unified counter-

culture” (Gandhi 111-112). The rising levels of fundamentalist nationalism in the formerly colonized countries prove that the postcolonial nation’s quest for ‘rehumanization’ and ‘repossession’ of themselves and their cultural identity is far from accomplished. While direct political colonization has largely ceased in the twenty-first century, economic globalization is quickly becoming a form of neoimperialism in the twenty-first century. It has, therefore, drawn two major responses from the postcolonial world: one, political establishments tend to react to globalization through aggressive nationalism; two, postcolonial writers turn to the ideal of cosmopolitanism to envision new alternatives for the Third World.

Rushdie’s Literary Cosmopolitanism

Rushdie adopted a cosmopolitan outlook in his early fiction to challenge fundamentalist nationalism in the Indian subcontinent that, in his opinion, replicated the oppressive forms of imperialism through authoritarian governments combined with a conservative nationalism. The two most representative texts of this trend are *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983); however, during and after the so-called Rushdie Affair, the author seems to have recognized globalization as a more rampant form of imperialism – currently at work both in the West and the East – economic globalization⁵. Rushdie turned to cosmopolitanism to defend the right of the individual to have multiple

⁵ In general, economic globalization refers to the unprecedented intensification of economic exchanges, prompted mass productions and consumption of goods, services, and information across the world since the latter half of the twentieth-century. In particular, the term alludes to the West’s domination over the world through capitalist economic practices that tend to homogenize the world through mass production and international trade. For a more detailed explanation of the term, see Ch. 1 of this dissertation, “Introduction.”

affiliations and loyalties in order to cultivate a cultural openness, inclusiveness, and hybridity while retaining an affinity with one's homeland, but he expanded it to address wider global issues related to migration, racism, cultural pluralism, and freedom of expression. Following his migration to New York at the turn of the millennium and in the aftermath of 9/11, Rushdie's cosmopolitan has further evolved in response to globalization to represent the complexities involved in conceiving literary cosmopolitanism in a highly globalized age. Nevertheless, I claim that Rushdie embraced literary cosmopolitanism primarily for three reasons: personal, literary, and political. A brief discussion of each constitutes the remainder of the section.

In the first place, Rushdie turned to cosmopolitanism to satisfy his own longing to remain attached to Bombay and, by extension, India—his imaginary homeland. It is a well-known fact that Rushdie left Bombay, his birthplace, for England in his early teens; whereas, his family migrated to Pakistan soon after the Partition in 1947. It is equally well-known that Rushdie has remained emotionally attached to Bombay and India even after becoming a renowned writer and a cosmopolitan celebrity. His writing reveals the trauma he continues to feel living out of India. In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie offers a moving account of a migrant writer's predicament: "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" (Rushdie 1991: 10). However, being well aware that 'looking back' could only occur nostalgically and in imagination, Rushdie writes,

[b]ut if we do look back, we must also 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 was lost; that we will in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (ibid)

It is this profound urge to return to his homeland through past memories that, I believe, has brought Rushdie to cosmopolitanism primarily. Because his expatriate status and the rapidly changing face of modern India renders his relationship with ‘homeland’ tenuous, Rushdie adopts a cosmopolitan outlook in his fiction that serves a two-fold function: it allows him to recreate India of his dreams, and renew his bonds by revisiting it temporally, that is, by writing a fiction about India that travels back in time. Hence, it could be argued that, at a personal level, Rushdie’s cosmopolitanism springs from his fascination with Bombay and life in independent India as he knew it. “The evolution of Rushdie’s cosmopolitanism is linked to his representation of the Indian postcolonial city,” claims Srivastava. “In *Midnight’s Children* and in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Bombay appears as radically secular, its located cosmopolitanism constantly emerging out of its landscapes and the experiences of its inhabitants” who appear completely at ease in the cosmopolitan Bombay, like the author himself (Srivastava 174). Not surprisingly, then, *Midnight’s Children* celebrates Bombay’s cosmopolitanism through characters such as Mr. Methwold, Adam Aziz, Homi Catrack, and Saleem Sinai—all of whom display a connection with the West in some form or another. In one of his interviews, Rushdie declares:

[o]ne of the things that has become, to me, more evidently my subject is the way in which the stories of anywhere are also the stories of everywhere else. To an extent, I already knew that because Bombay, where I grew up, was a city in which the West was totally mixed up with

the East. The accidents of my life have given me the ability to make stories in which different parts of the world are brought together, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in conflict, and sometimes both—usually both. (Rushdie 2005: 110)

Bombay and India's continued relevance to Rushdie's fiction confirms the author's faith in his birthplace as an inexhaustible source of cosmopolitan critique.

At the literary level, Rushdie's cosmopolitanism is an attempt to challenge English literature's canonical rigidity and elitism. The opening meditation in *Imaginary Homelands* partly reveals Rushdie's literary reasons for embracing cosmopolitanism; therein, he passionately argues for the postcolonial writers' right to borrow from different literary traditions, techniques and strategies, and still be recognized as important figures in the English canon:

[a]rt is a passion of mind. And the imagination works best when it is most free. Western writers have always felt free to be eclectic in their selection of theme, setting, form; Western visual artists have, in this century, been happily raiding the visual storehouses of Africa, Asia, the Philippines. I am sure that we must grant ourselves an equal freedom. (Rushdie 1991: 20)

In support of his argument, Rushdie mentions global literary masters such as “Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, (and) Machado de Assis” as those he “selected half consciously, half not” as his literary “parents” (ibid 21). From the beginning Rushdie did not track the beaten path of the English literary tradition. Instead, he sought to deviate from it by adopting a more eclectic or universal approach as a postcolonial writer. Consequently, cosmopolitanism seems to have aided Rushdie to challenge a

straitjacketed approach to the English canon.⁶ The traces of literary influences in Rushdie's writing confirm their cosmopolitan make-up: Kipling, E. M. Forster, and Shakespeare share the stage with what Morey calls "influences from Hindi, Urdu, the languages and texts of South India, the Persian inheritance and the visual style and argot of Bollywood cinema" (Morey 32). Besides, the author himself acknowledges "Swift, Conrad, (and) Marx" as equivalent to "Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy" in terms of their literary influence on Indian writers (Rushdie 1991:20). At the literary level, then, Rushdie's cosmopolitanism constitutes itself in stark contrast to the English literary tradition that, according to Morey, prides itself on epistemological objectivity, that is, "formal realism...which contributed to the defining effect of verisimilitude, of being true to life" (ibid 32). Literary cosmopolitanism functions in Rushdie's fiction as a channel of defying empiricist simplicity of narration. On the contrary, it revels in magic-realist thematics, polyglot language, and multiple plots, spanning countries and continents. By drawing diverse literary techniques together, "Rushdie is offering a critique of a particular kind of imagined Englishness, sanctified by time and codified in certain notions of the 'literary,' agrees Morey (30). In the hindsight, Rushdie's oppositional cosmopolitanism has not only expanded the scope of his own fiction; it has also made the

⁶ I make this argument partly borrowing from Peter Morey who claims that "Rushdie's great contribution to the English tradition might be said to be the way he opens up this comforting parochial vision (of the canonical English literary tradition), with its low-key mode of address, to international influences and concerns, as part of his postcolonial revision of Englishness." I depart from Morey, however, when he insists that implicitly Rushdie does not divert from the English tradition that canonized empiricism as the best mode of writing fiction. See, Morey, "Salman Rushdie and the English Tradition," *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*, Ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah, (New York: The Cambridge University Press, 2007) 29-44.

English literary tradition truly 'global' by embracing its postcolonial exuberance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

From a political perspective, Rushdie was forced to adopt literary cosmopolitanism in order to respond adequately to the diminishing space between the private and the public dimensions of life in the latter half of the twentieth century. In some recent interviews, Rushdie has drawn a distinction between the sociopolitical circumstances that informed Jane Austen's world and those of his own. Highlighting the fact that the latter remained largely unperturbed by the political upheavals and wars across the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Europe, and that Austen's fiction reflected a peaceful world framed in social cohesion and traditional modesty, Rushdie attributes Austen's poetics to the clear separation between the private and the public spheres of life at the time. "So it is not that she was deliberately averting her gaze. It is that she could tell her story completely without reference to the public dimension," Rushdie states adding that, "...now the space between private life and public life has just vanished. They are up against each other all the time. And as a result, I have felt as a writer the need to recognize that and therefore to include a discussion of the public dimension" (Rushdie 2008b: 20). Perhaps it could be the author's acute awareness of the public dimension's invasion of the private that goaded him to respond to it through cosmopolitanism which tries to make sense of the local in the global perspective. Rushdie seems to offer a further evidence to support this argument in another interview. In a conversation with Jack Living for *The Paris Review*, the author declares quizzically, "[m]y life has given me this other subject: worlds in collision. How do you make people see that everyone's story is now a part of everyone else's story? It's one thing to say it, but

how can you make a reader feel that is their lived experience?" (2005: 110). If globalization has caused the irreversible merger of the public and the private dimensions of life, then cosmopolitanism is its panacea; if the former creates a heady-mix of cultures for economic gains, the latter endeavors to make sense of it all by recognizing the uniqueness of the local in the global discourses. Therefore, as Mignolo describes it, if "globalization is a set of designs to manage the world, ...cosmopolitanism is a set of projects toward planetary conviviality" (Mignolo 2000: 157). Considering the same point from the Rushdie's perspective might prove helpful here. Rushdie's status as an eminent postcolonial writer and global celebrity consecrates him as a representative of the Third World. His fiction is expected to address issues such as racial prejudice, political and economic oppression, and the inequalities underlying the relationships between the West and the East. Given this reality, it becomes "his responsibility as author to write the current historical and political moment," according to Sanga (131). As we shall see, through his cosmopolitanism, Rushdie has intervened in the ongoing debates concerning the Third World, which is now less immune to forces of neoliberal globalization than ever before. Hence, Rushdie's writing demands a closer examination "for definitively altering the normative place of fiction, for exposing its limitations and excesses, for bringing it face to face with the perilous constraints of all cultural and political perspectives" (Sanga 131). Clearly, his turning to literary cosmopolitanism has played a decisive role in forming public opinions on issues of global dimension through his compelling critiques.

Through literary cosmopolitanism, Rushdie seeks to combine its sociopolitical orientation with an aesthetic dimension to offer imaginative alternatives to the reality it

portrays. As discussed earlier, historically informed critiques can generate enough evidence to call imperialism the catalyst of both postcolonial nationalism and globalization. Walter Mignolo's essay "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism" is a case in point. Mignolo traces globalization's ideological links with the West's historical global designs such as 'Christianity' and 'Civilizing Mission' of the modern European nation-states, of which "[t]he first was a religious project; (whereas) the second was secular" which also metamorphoses as "late-twentieth-century neoliberal globalization" (Mignolo 2002: 158).⁷ As an antidote to neocolonialism—whose capitalist expression has accentuated the colonial difference in the form of racial and religious fundamentalisms—Mignolo proposes a critical cosmopolitanism that is "dialogic, emerging from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference" (ibid 179). Since postcolonialism retains a capability to promote a critical cosmopolitanism, the question is: how can Rushdie utilize it in his fiction without rendering it too sociopolitical? That is, how can Rushdie prevent his fiction from becoming too polemical or politicized or simplistically oppositional and still register a genuine protest against economic globalization? The obvious answer is through aesthetics. Rebecca Walkowitz raises the possibility of combining the sociopolitical with aesthetics in fiction by defining critical cosmopolitanism as "a type of international engagement that" can be characterized for "an aversion to heroic tones of appropriation and progress, and a suspicion of epistemological privilege" (2). Critical cosmopolitan fiction, by this definition, seeks to maintain an aesthetic distance from the sociohistorical

⁷ Mignolo's analysis equates cosmopolitanism with colonialism and stresses the need to develop a 'critical cosmopolitanism' that can reveal the inherent contradictions in the West's missioning, civilizing, and modernizing designs.

narratives of modernity and yet engages them critically so as to question their assumptions about ‘progress.’ Similarly, Alan McCluskey’s interpretation of literary cosmopolitanism as a marriage of literature’s aesthetic and sociopolitical orientations might prove instructive to the analysis of Rushdie’s fiction. Cosmopolitanism can be regarded “in the aesthetic sense of attitude and cultural preoccupation, but also in a manner more geared toward the sociopolitical,” McCluskey asserts (12). An important unanswered question here is: why do fiction writers and literary critics insist on the aesthetics? A preliminary answer is due to the power of the imagination. Fiction writers employ aesthetic imagination to envisage alternative realities for our world. Several of Rushdie’s novels conjure up imaginative alternatives for the world from among seemingly defeatist narratives – *Midnight’s Children*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* for example.

Therefore, Rushdie’s cosmopolitanism shines through its aesthetic dimension even as it feels weighed down by the sociopolitical complexities with which it grapples. A cursory glance at some famous Rushdie novels provides ample evidence of the aesthetics mingling freely with the political. For instance, in *Midnight’s Children*, the untenability of a politically centripetal and monolithic India is satirized through the disintegration of Saleem’s body into millions of specks; in *The Satanic Verses* the racial discrimination and stereotyping of Asians in England is portrayed through the grotesque metamorphosis of Saladin Chamcha who appears like a beast after the fall from the sky; and in the *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, the Hindu fundamentalist Raman Fielding’s agenda to turn Mumbai into a Hindu stronghold is challenged through Aurora’s painting that reinvent the city through imaginative and cosmopolitan palimpsests. Taken together,

these instances then illustrate Cecil's observation that Rushdie "has developed throughout the years an aesthetics based on his imagining of the world in such a way that an ethical meaning can be forged against the threats of nationalism and communalism" (Cecil 100). Other critics have detected the aesthetic influence in Rushdie's narrative strategies. For instance, from among the different techniques used by cosmopolitan writers to engender critical reflection through fiction, Walkowitz attributes 'mix-up' to Rushdie as an aesthetic practice. "Rushdie uses strategies of flirtation and mix-up to offer an alternative to the opposition between accommodation and antagonism," claims Walkowitz (113). However, this mix-up "does not offer a heroic alternative" but rather revels in disrupting "the traditional, the correct, and the necessary" (ibid). *The Satanic Verses* is an outstanding example of Rushdie's strategy to subvert the self-assured narratives of power with "aesthetic and cultural mistakes: inadvertent double meanings; the mispronunciation of words; lightness of tone where seriousness seems to be required" (Walkowitz 152).⁸ And without Rushdie's aesthetics of mix-up, the novel could not have rejected Islamic fundamentalism and British racism as equally confusing expressions of exclusionary politics. This sardonic rejection of the only available political options enables Rushdie to create the conditions for the possibility of other alternatives. If neither 'this' nor 'that,' then there must exist a third possibility to comprehend the world, and Rushdie, indeed, contemplates a third option through his aesthetics. John Su, for example, cites the following passage from *Midnight's Children* to identify it. Saleem Sinai urges his fellow midnight's children—1001, all born on the night of India's independence and bestowed

⁸ For specific textual examples of these strategies, see Walkowitz, "Rushdie's Mix-up," *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 131-52.

with clairvoyant powers—to reject the binary description of India’s sociopolitical reality. He exhorts them saying,

[d]o not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour, them-and-us to come between us! We...must be a third principle, we must be the force which drives between the horns of the dilemma; for only by being other, by being new, can we fulfil the promise of our birth. (Rushdie 2006: 292)

That Saleem’s proposal meets with a disheartening rejection does not extinguish its future possibility. Rushdie’s aesthetics imbricates narratives of hope within narratives of despair. The narrator in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* captures this Rushdiean faith in aesthetics’ utopian resilience epigrammatically: “In the end, stories are what’s left of us, we are no more than the few tales that persist” (Rushdie 1995: 110). While the author’s sociopolitical commitment to the postcolonial world compels him to speak against fundamentalism and globalization novel after novel, his cosmopolitan aesthetics simultaneously lead him to imagine a cosmopolitan world, full of diversity, hybridity, and sociocultural fluidity. In his early novels, however, Rushdie employs cosmopolitanism more in reaction to demigods of politics, who distort the secular and multicultural ethos of postcolonial nations such as India and Pakistan, than to develop a full-fledged alternative vision for the world.

Reactive Cosmopolitanism

Midnight's Children and *Shame* are two of Rushdie's most important novels not only for their resounding success in the literary marketplace but also in the academia: their enduring appeal in the critical circles is as much grounded in the novels' thematic exuberance as their political relevance.⁹ However, a less explored theme in the critical analyses is the texts' cosmopolitanism—that is, how Rushdie employs cosmopolitan principles to invoke and subvert homogenizing, authoritarian, and repressive political establishments in the postcolonial world. If *Midnight's Children* explores these issues through the overbearing figure of Indira Gandhi, *Shame* assesses them through the political intrigues involving Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder's families. Rushdie's antagonism to these autocratic political powers is well-known.¹⁰ As the following

⁹ After Rushdie's first novel *Grimus* underwhelmingly failed to make any mark both in the market and in the academy, *Midnight's Children* launched Rushdie into the limelight through an instant success in the UK, US, and India upon its publication in 1981. The novel won the illustrious Booker Prize the same year, The Best of the Booker in 1993 and 2008. "It made Rushdie famous, and in the years that followed, ensured his frequent presence in the book pages of national newspapers: as novelist, reviewer and commentator on current events," writes Abdulrazak Gurnah, adding that the text's "narrative inventiveness, its huge ambition, (and) its intertexts" have generated an immense critical response for several decades. Whereas *Shame* did not achieve the same commercial and literary success, it nevertheless continues to attract critical attention for its searing debate on women's place in the conservative Pakistani Islamic society and political establishment. "Not surprisingly," Gurnah remarks, "*Shame* was banned in Pakistan, although it was short-listed for the Booker Prize." These novels remain relevant in debates over nationalism's role in the globalized world. For a more extensive appraisal of these novels, see Gurnah, *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie* (2007), Intro: 3-5.

¹⁰ For instance, in his essay "The Assassination of Indira Gandhi," Rushdie castigates Gandhi for destabilizing Indian democracy by divesting states of administrative powers and appropriating the same for herself. "In recent years, however, that delicate relationship [between states and Center] has developed severe imbalances, and much of the responsibility must lie at Mrs. Gandhi's door." Similarly, in "Zia Ul-Haq. 17 August 1988," Rushdie condemns the former Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq writing, "[w]hen a tyrant falls, the world's shadows lighten, and only hypocrites grieve; and General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq was one of the cruelest of modern tyrants." See, *Imaginary Homelands* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991) 41-42, 53.

analysis will show, Rushdie utilizes a form of cosmopolitanism to register his unequivocal protest against them, which I call ‘reactive.’

I define *reactive cosmopolitanism* as a form of literary engagement with political forces that inhibit cosmopolitan values such as openness to others, inclusiveness, eclecticism, plurality, and hybridity. Because it displays an eagerness to confront and challenge anticosmopolitan establishments, reactive cosmopolitanism mounts a direct challenge to its opposition, whether in the form of a person or establishment. For instance, *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's protest against the former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; whereas, *Shame* represents the author's scathing criticism of Pakistan's dictatorial families that weaken the country's democratic structure through constant power struggles and military coups. Moreover, it tends to prioritize satire and magic realism as preferred means of expression, a trait that lends it a confrontational edge. While satire ridicules the opposition by caricaturing and rendering it ludicrous, magic realism distorts the spatiotemporal certainties of the antagonistic discourses or entities and destabilizes them. Reactive cosmopolitanism is also a form of literary universalism that highlights our shared commonalities as human beings and analyzes the challenges the ongoing effects of imperialism – fundamentalist nationalism and capitalist globalization – pose before them. Employing a reactive cosmopolitanism, therefore, Rushdie opposes the homogenizing tendencies of these effects and promotes a cosmopolitanism from below which recognizes the diversity of cultures, and strives to cultivate openness towards others. In order to overcome the sociopolitical challenges facing the cosmopolitan ideal of a democratic and just world, Rushdie imagines new

relationships between self, other, and the world from a universal perspective as the following discussion demonstrates.

Midnight's Children's failure as an epic of the Indian nation does not imply the failure of Rushdie's literary imagination or that of his reactive cosmopolitanism. Prominent Rushdie critic Timothy Brennan has equated the apparent failure of the author's vision for independent India, as allegorized through the Saleem Sinai's tragic life and death, with the nation's inability to check rampant corruption and political intrigue. In *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, Timothy Brennan, for example, characterizes *Midnight's Children* as "an attempt to explain in the Indian context a problem found nearly everywhere in the Third World...namely, the rise of the domestic collaborators, the corrupt neo-colonial elite" (Brennan 1989: 85). A little later, Brennan seems to indicate that in *Midnight's Children* that problem is vocalized through a larger-than-life spokesperson of the masses; for instance, underlining the main difference between *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, Brennan notes, "in *Midnight's Children* the masses speak in a written form through an epic scribe...; whereas in *Shame* it is the Pakistani elite who speak in an oral form through a matriarchal storyteller" (Brennan 1989: 118). However, in the concluding remarks of the text, Brennan belittles Rushdie's depiction of mass protests in the text stating, "[w]e get protest, but not affirmation, except in the most abstractly 'human' sense [...] For the greatest problem is still being unable to conceive of the colonial as even having a voice that matters" (Brennan 1989: 166). To dismiss Rushdie's achievement in *Midnight's Children* as aesthetically pleasing but politically inept might prove contentious because viewed from a cosmopolitan perspective Rushdie positions the masses against political power, hoping that the pluralist

nature of the former will react vociferously against the totality of the latter. It is not the voice that matters but the ability to react. Rushdie ensures that the standardizing attempt of Indira's government is met with a reactive cosmopolitanism in the form of symbolic and real protest. Insofar as the novel fails to offer a viable alternative to Indira's India, it leaves open its possibility in the future, but only as a utopian ideal. That ideal, I argue, is a cosmopolitan India that will reject the political authoritarianism and homogenization Indira represents. If *Midnight's Children* "involved huge and nebulous collectivities—Gujaratis, Kashmiris, Dravidians, Sikhs and Bombay Christians with Portuguese names," as Brennan puts it, Rushdie's imagination creates a cosmopolitan India teeming with these very identities in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (Brennan 1989: 121). Not least among them is Saleem's son, Adam Pereira, who survives as the only hope of a different and cosmopolitan India at the end of *Midnight's Children*.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs cosmopolitanism in the of resistance to narrow nationalism, making it necessary to take into account the dialectical relationship between the two in any analysis of the text. The novel's key historical events—the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre in 1919, the Partition in 1947, the Indo-China war of 1962, the creation of Bangladesh in 1971—also include the 'Emergency' of 1975 imposed by the erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in response a High Court conviction for election-related frauds. Reflecting on Indira's vicious attempt to suppress all democratic apparatuses in order to usurp unlimited powers for herself, Saleem wonders:

[w]as my life-long belief in the equation between the State and myself transmuted, in "the Madam's" mind, into that in-those-days-famous phrase: *India is Indira and Indira is India?* Were we competitors for

centrality—was she gripped by a lust for meaning as profound as my own...? (Rushdie 2006: 483)

Indeed, the answer to these questions is in the affirmative for Rushdie rejects any attempt to impose a monolithic vision on India. As Su has argued, both Saleem and Indira's "epic longing, for Rushdie, represents a dangerous desire for consistency, coherence, and meaning that can efface the cultural diversity of the Indian peoples" (Su 2001: 546). The death of Saleem is a symbolic rejection of Indira in the text. For Rushdie, neither Saleem nor Indira can truly represent India because their totalitarian tendencies seek to create a monolithic India. My contention is that besides condemning Indira's totalitarian vision as ultimately disastrous and untenable vis-à-vis the Indian cultural diversity, Rushdie attempts to dwarf it by populating the novel with cosmopolitan elements that coalesce to make India a vibrant and viable postcolonial democracy in South Asia. Some of these include the following: frequent allusions to Hindu deities such as Ganesha, Shiva, and Parvati, the magical world of Indian street artists and miracle-workers alongside references from the Koran, and "[i]nfluences of *The Arabian Nights*, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*" (Lahiri 15). Besides, Saleem's ego-centric narrative is challenged by a thousand other *Midnight's Children* as well as by Shiva, his nemesis, and Indira's totalitarian vision of India is offset by the cultural diversity of the masses; the science of sterilization is undermined by the magic of the slums; the political power of Delhi is challenged by the cosmopolitanism of Bombay. The heady mix churned from a dazzling array of sociocultural and literary images gives a lie to Indira's political vision of a unified, subdued India. Through the transnational, Western, mythical, literary, and

historical elements, Rushdie succeeds in proposing a different vision for his homeland: a cosmopolitan India of his imagination. What necessitates Rushdie's intervention in the first place is a systematic erasure of Indian cosmopolitanism and secular ethos under Indira's regime. Rushdie's reaction in defense of the former, then, results in *Midnight's Children* – a text equally well-known for its form and content both in India and the West.

Rushdie's next novel *Shame* (1983) provides further understanding into his reactive cosmopolitanism in that it emerges as a powerful magico-temporal antidote to the spatio-political ills of Pakistan, the author's 'second home' after India. Unlike the epic exuberance of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's *Shame* concentrates largely on a bloody political power-struggle between two elite clans of independent Pakistan: Iskander Harappa, representing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and his nemesis Raza Hyder, portraying Zia ul-Haq. Since the ignominious squabble between the warring parties constitutes a shameful blot on Pakistan's fragile democracy—not least because it resulted in a bloody coup that ended with Raza Hyder assassinating Harappa—and a pathetic statement on the status of women in a conservative patriarchy, Rushdie recruits a temporal cosmopolitanism to distance himself from Pakistan's disgraceful political history. This cosmopolitanism manifests itself through the fairy tale and it satirically invokes and subverts the self-absorbed notion of the nation among the country's elite. The fairy tale, as Brennan suggests is “the genre of subversives—the covert satirist operating under conditions of intense repression. It suggests the author's right to castigate his government and to refuse it as his own” (Brennan 1989: 135). Rushdie achieves his goal in *Shame* by countering local anarchy with cosmopolitan timelessness.

Shame registers Rushdie's protest against Pakistan's postcolonial demagoguery by undercutting it through a temporal palimpsest. Setting the story in the fourteenth century according to the Hegiran calendar allows Rushdie to undermine the politically motivated popular belief in independent Pakistan that transitioning from democracy to theocracy via autocracy was a progressive development in itself. Reacting to such misguided beliefs, Rushdie distorts the very idea of temporal progression in Pakistan's history by placing the country's flawed political present in a distant past, thus questioning dictatorship through the cosmopolitan worldview of the narrator, Omar Khayyam Shakil, an Asian, educated and residing in England like Rushdie himself. Having lived as a migrant-writer for decades, Rushdie travels back in time in the text to Pakistan—a country he briefly migrated to but never really adopted. The novel is consistent with the trend wherein, as Revillon states, "[t]he many embedded layers of Rushdie's novels and multiple plots they contain are all made to explore and reflect the intricacies of History and the working of the human mind or, more precisely, of memory" (Revillon 60). The examples below illustrate how Rushdie activates temporality to replace Pakistan's Machiavellian political history with a palimpsest of change:

[a]ll this happened in the fourteenth century. I'm using the Hegiran Calendar, naturally: don't imagine that stories of this type take place longlong ago. Time cannot be homogenized as clearly as milk, and in those parts, until quite recently, the thirteen-hundreds were still in full swing" (Rushdie 1983: 6)

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 dreaming mind" (ibid 92).

Even though the events in the story took place in the latter half of the twentieth century, Rushdie deliberately anachronizes them by placing them in the Hegiran Calendar. Distorting temporality, then, becomes an important strategy of Rushdie's reactive cosmopolitanism in the text. It allows him to emphasize the timeless ideals such as universality, openness, and diversity alongside those of European Enlightenment – Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity – over the nondemocratic and antic cosmopolitan values promoted by Raza Hyder's dictatorship. The second quote reveals Rushdie's intent to deny Pakistani dictatorship a prominent place in history by destabilizing and destroying it with a counter story that constitutes the text's cosmopolitan character, Omar. Considered synoptically, the story of Omar Khayyam, his three mothers, on the one hand, and the Hyder and the Harappa families, on the other hand, allude to the contingent nature of Pakistan's political history. The two overlapping stories testify to, what Revillon calls, "Rushdie's desire to discard the well-known metaphor of the arrow of time and to replace it by a string of personal and forceful images" (60). Rushdie constructs an alternate vision for Pakistan out of ideals and reactions unheard of in the authoritarian state. Again, Rushdie's anachronic temporal palimpsest in the text results from his reaction to a totalitarian vision of Pakistan projected by a dictatorship. Equating it with Sufiya Zanoobia Hyder's violent shame, Rushdie warns the politically unstable postcolonial nation to embrace a democratically viable cosmopolitan vision lest it perish through shameful politics.

In that regard, the uneven and fragmented narrative of *Shame* evidences cosmopolitanism's power to disrupt Pakistan's linear history of oppressive totality. In the novel, the author displays the migrant's ability to look back critically at one's native

place; Rushdie speaks through the mouth of Omar Khayyam, the protagonist, to condemn the Machiavellian political intrigues of Pakistan. Justifying the scandalous representation of Pakistan in the text, the narrator says:

[i]f this were a realistic novel about Pakistan, I would not be writing about Bilquis and the wind; I would be talking about my youngest sister. [...] I think what I am confessing is that, however, I choose to write about over-there, 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... Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modern fairytale, so that's all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need to be taken, either. (Rushdie 1983: 71-72)

Evidently, the fragmentation of the past into bits of loosely connected memories creates an image of the real Pakistan that is at once imaginary and real. Privileging temporality over spatiality, then, serves a double function for Rushdie: it allows him to maintain an aesthetic distance from the characters and their local milieus, and enables him to critique them without obvious political overtones, thus maintaining the literary character of his fiction. More importantly, the fragmented narrative of *Shame* facilitates an easy inclusion of literary techniques that challenge the Pakistanis' conservative mindset. A reactive cosmopolitanism allows Rushdie to critique a nation and its people without turning the novel into a polemic, without naming and shaming them directly. Yet, this form of cosmopolitanism also enables Rushdie to convey his strong opposition to non-democratic political systems through allegory. In this sense, Rushdie uses *Shame* to sustain the intensity built up in *Midnight's Children* against authoritarian tendencies in postcolonial societies. Rushdie targets the contradictions within the Pakistani political establishment in *Shame*. Caricaturing the idiosyncrasies within the Hyder and Harappa families, for

example, and exaggerating the violence born out of shameful personal and dynastic aberrations, Rushdie reacts vehemently against the monstrosity represented by Iskander Harappa and his cronies in Pakistan's political leadership. By attempting to dehistoricize Pakistan's political shame through allegory, Rushdie throws into relief the contradictions that characterize Pakistan's tenuous democracy in the first few decades after independence. In a way, Rushdie "uses the conditions and contradictions within Pakistan's historical experience...as an apparatus upon which to base exaggeration" (Nicholls 110). *Shame's* exaggerations weaken Pakistan's enamored with dictatorship – a nation with whose culture and political ethos Rushdie, the cosmopolitan, shared little sympathies as evident in the text. For instance, the improbabilities of the story about Omar's mysterious birth and upbringing, Sufiya Zenobia's personality and violent behavior, and the narrative's temporal background unambiguously deride Pakistan's dictatorial politics. While Rushdie registers his protest against an authoritarian Prime Minister in India through thinly-veiled attack on Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie adopts an astute tactic of denouncing Zia ul-Haq through allegory in *Shame*. The fairytale-template and temporal distortion work to create a cosmopolitan response that enable Rushdie to distance *Shame* from a direct association with Pakistan, even though the opposite is true. This subtle improvement in his reactive cosmopolitanism further develops into a creative element in Rushdie's fiction that leads him beyond staging a strong literary protest, and into evolving more sophisticated cosmopolitan responses to the challenges of fundamentalism and globalization.

Creative Cosmopolitanism

After his first two successful novels—*Midnight's Children* and *Shame*—had sought to counter aggressive nationalism through an equally vociferous cosmopolitanism, Rushdie evolves a more creative cosmopolitan response to the issues of nationalism and globalization in his mid-career novels such as *The Satanic Verses*, and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. These novels limn a more mature cosmopolitanism that challenges the non-universalizing tendencies of political, religious, and cultural establishments without denouncing them vehemently and directly; this aspect distinguishes Rushdie's cosmopolitanism from a combative narrative style evinced in Rushdie's early novels. Therefore, I call it '*creative cosmopolitanism*' which presents alternatives to fundamentalist politics, whether stemming from nationalistic, religious, or cultural sources, with aesthetic and artistic subtleties. This section will show how moving away from a confrontational approach and adopting a more creative one, Rushdie succeeds in constructing a more mature form of literary cosmopolitanism—one that acknowledges the postcolonial migrant's complex relationship with his/her homeland, considers the cultural dynamics at play between the East and the West, and analyzes the changing nature of cosmopolitan India, especially in its urban centers.

The Satanic Verses marks an important shift in Rushdie's writing, wherein geopolitically his focus moves beyond the Indian subcontinent, and critically into a mode of more advanced cosmopolitanism. Even though, this novel brought the author unprecedented fame as well as notoriety for the political fallout following 'The Rushdie

affair,' the text's lasting influence in the literary world is rooted in its cosmopolitan character.¹¹ While the political controversy skyrocketed Rushdie into international fame, it was his ability to interrogate the ideas of cultural, racial, and national purity that seems to accomplish the text's literary objective. As Veer observes, in *The Satanic Verses*, "[t]he boundaries between religion, culture, fiction—in short, between ideas—are questioned, and the game we are in is political" (Veer 100). Similarly, recognizing an important juncture in Rushdie's literary career that began with this novel, Walkowitz asserts that "*The Satanic Verses* marks a significant shift in Rushdie's career from narratives of decolonization in India and Pakistan to narratives of immigration in Britain and the United States" (Walkowitz 134). Not surprisingly, Rushdie's later novels have increasingly addressed the postcolonial migrant's westward journeys and the trauma of deracination as well as a renewed longing for 'the imaginary homeland.' Narrowing down the shift in the author's focus within the personal struggle of the postcolonial subject, Spivak identifies "the post-colonial divided between two identities: migrant and national" as the text's central concern (Spivak 79). Rushdie's quest for blurring the boundaries between the sociopolitical and religious issues of migration, his apparent shift from the Indian subcontinent to the metropolitan centers in the West establish *The Satanic Verses* as a prime example of creative cosmopolitanism.

¹¹ Peter van der Veer labels the publication of the novel "a major political-literary event," noting that besides the fatwa issued against Rushdie by Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme religious leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, in 1989, the novel's publication had also sparked simultaneous and violent reactions in England and India, ironically led by the people "whose plight is eloquently described in the novel." See Peter Veer, "Satanic of Angelic? The Politics of Religious and Literary Inspiration," *Public Culture* 2.1 (1989), 100.

The *Satanic Verses* redefines migrancy to represent hybridity-promoting ‘newness’ in order to question England’s discriminatory stereotypes against Asian immigrants, represented in the text primarily through Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. In other words, Rushdie employs the trope of migrancy to emphasize the cultural variety, richness, and diversity postcolonial migrants bring to the West by journeying eastward. Alongside their Eastern mindset and worldview, they usher in a cultural freshness that both disturbs and challenges certain Western perceptions of the East. Even though *The Satanic Verses* devotes a significant amount of space to stories concerning the origins of Islam and gullible characters from rural India, its main focus remains steady on the protagonists’ life as Indian immigrants in England. Underlining this point, the well-known Rushdie-critic Timothy Brennan hails the novel as “the most ambitious novel yet published to deal with the immigrant experience in Britain” (Brennan 1989a 149). Albeit, Rushdie seems to fulfil his ambition by celebrating immigrants as the newness that enters the world. Saladin and Gibreel’s dramatic descent in England from a crashing, hijacked flight is Rushdie’s answer to the rhetorical questions which accompany Saladin and Gibreel’s fall: “How does newness come into the world? How is it born?” (Rushdie 1997: 8).¹² However, the magical transformation Saladin and Gibreel undergo—that of a goat and the Angel Gabriel respectively—goes to show how hybridity itself, as defined by Bhabha, becomes a form of newness.¹³ In their hybrid new selves,

¹² In connecting migrancy with the ‘newness’ Rushdie talks about in the text, I am endorsing similar interpretations of ‘newness’ proposed by postcolonial critics Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Simon Gikandi, and rejecting Andrew Wernick’s view that newness is Rushdie’s ability to market his writing and himself as a trusted commodity with a unique flavor. For more on this distinction, see Neil Kortenaar, “Fearful Symmetry: Salman Rushdie and Prophetic Newness,” in *Mapping Out the Rushdie Republic*, ed. Tapan Kumar Ghosh, and Prasanta Bhattacharya (New Castle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 134-54.

¹³ The term ‘hybridity’ here denotes various forms of cultural, linguistic, political, or racial exchange between the colonized and the colonizer. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi K. Bhabha uses it to

Saladin and Gibreel, neither resemble their fellow immigrants nor the Britons completely, but cause curiosity in both, inviting a cultural exchange. Their newness articulates a cultural Third Space which allows them to stage their difference with confidence.

Kortenaar describes this process from a postcolonial perspective: “antiauthoritarian social progress arises as a function of mimicry, repeating the colonizer but with a difference, and of hybridity, the liminal position between the culture of origin and the host culture, which affords the migrant a stereoscopic view that encompasses both” (Kortenaar 134).

Important to note here is that Saladin and Gibreel alone do not personify the ‘newness’ in the text as there are other characters who flirt with it as well; for example, Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, or Ayesha, the eccentric girl from rural India also represent newness in terms of a new economic policy and prophetic action respectively.

But discussing *The Satanic Verses* in his essay, “In Good Faith,” Rushdie himself seems to suggest that ‘newness’ is most effectively articulated by the two cosmopolitan characters—Saladin and Gibreel—in the text:

[s]tanding at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. *The Satanic Verses* 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. *Mélange*, 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

explain the presence of the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ in the colonizer/colonized interactions which renders suspicious any claims to cultural purity and empowers the colonized. For a more detailed explanation of the concept, see Ashcroft et al, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2006), 118-19.

embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves. (Rushdie 1991, 394)

Changing-by-fusion and changing-by-conjoining, Saladin and Gibreel extol the hybridity and impurity their cosmopolitan selves bestow on them.

An important aspect connecting migrancy with creative cosmopolitanism arising out of the migrant's universal outlook is the migrant's innovative capacity to adapt to diverse cultural milieus—a key point emphasized by Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie's creative cosmopolitanism connects with migrancy through the two protagonists: Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. Rushdie seems to equate their migration to England with a traumatic passage that transforms them forever against their own will, and permanently attaches an angelic and a devilish form to each one respectively. Their experiences in England, the reactions they receive from people, and the way they struggle to cope with their new transformation flow from the trope of migration. In England, Farishta and Chamcha have been changed not only physically but also psychologically. That is how Rushdie uses migration to critique the negativity that people with nationalist mindsets direct towards migrants in the West; he accomplishes this delicate task only by focusing mainly on Farishta and Chamcha. Rushdie's cosmopolitan assessment of political, cultural, and religious particularism develops through partly comic and partly ironic description of the protagonists' fall. Rushdie's cosmopolitan creativity, then, lies in describing and presenting migration as a traumatic cultural experience. Not surprisingly, migrancy stands out as a powerful motif in the text, and insofar as it highlights the cosmopolitan character of the migrants, the trope receives

special attention from Rushdie. In effect, migrancy symbolizes postcoloniality itself in the sense that it emerges out of a cultural exchange between former colonies and metropolis. As Sasser suggests, “[i]f relationality defines late globalization, perhaps *movement* is the word that sums up the reconfiguring of belonging resulting from late globalization and the postcolonial age... Migration is a defining feature of this temporality (Sasser 45). That Rushdie makes migrancy a crucial motif in the text should clarify how through it he highlights the importance of the cultural richness that postcolonial migrants bring with them. Along the same line, Sanga makes an instructive observation about ‘migration’ as a theme in Rushdie’s novels wherein it operates metaphorically in a generative capacity as Rushdie provides new and extended alternatives to imagining the nation” (Sanga 13). While *The Satanic Verses* serves as its instructive example, the text goes beyond just imagining the nation: it re-imagines the cosmopolitan space of the migrant. Indicating the non-belonging of the migrants and the total transformation they experience in the process of migration, Gibreel Farishta sings excitedly while falling to the ground: “[w]e are creatures of air, Our roots in dreams And clouds, reborn in flight” (13). Here, Rushdie seems to celebrate the transformative power of migration through Farishta, an aspect of the text that leads Gane to assert that “[a]t the heart of *The Satanic Verses* is the enterprise of imaging how migrants change in the course of migration, an enterprise that raises wide-ranging questions about the nature of identity in a mobile, multiple, interconnected world” (Gane 25). Therefore, the act of imagining becomes crucial in creative cosmopolitanism in that it provides alternatives to current realities, such as the migrants’ condition in Thatcher’s England in the text. Indeed, the novel underscores the changes migrants endure, but in conjunction with it, the

text also announces the metamorphoses they, in turn, effect. For instance, consider these words from Dr. Uhuru Simba's fiery speech, delivered at a rally before his death in police custody:

[w]e are here to change things...African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we have not crossed the oceans... We have been made again: but I say we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from the bottom to the top. (Rushdie 1997:428-29)

The immigrants desire, as expressed by Dr. Simba, to transform the very forces that change them evidences the migrant's capacity for re-creation, for innovation, and for change. If crossing the seas has set the process in motion, crossing the cultural barriers will bring it to fruition.

Nevertheless, *The Satanic Verses* maintains ambiguity about postcolonial migrant's affinities to both 'home' and 'away'—an aspect that demonstrates creative cosmopolitanism's ability to critique both fundamentalism and imperialism as essentialist. In spite of celebrating the 'newness' and the 'creative' power of migrancy in the novel, there remains a nagging uncertainty about where exactly the migrant's loyalties lie. Even if we consider Saladin as the representative of those who sever all ties with the homeland, and Gibreel as the one who clings to all forms of attachment with one's native country, they exhibit qualities that blur the distinction. Two key assertions in the text clearly demonstrate that Rushdie has intentionally covered the two characters in ambiguity—thereby indicating the kind of cosmopolitan resources they carry:

[w]ell, then.—Are we coming closer to it? Should we even say that these are two fundamentally different *types* of self? Might we not agree that Gibreel, for all his stage names and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses;—has wished to remain, to a large degree, *continuous*—that is, joined to and arising from his past;—that he chose near-fatal illness nor transmuting fall; that, in point of fact, he fears above all things the altered states in which his dreams leak into, and overwhelm, his waking self, making him that angelic Gibreel he has no desire to be;—so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as “true”... whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* re-invention; his *preferred* revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, “false”? And might we then go on to say that it is this falsity of self that makes possible in Chamcha a worse and deeper falsity—call this “evil”—and that this is the truth, the door, that was opened in him by his fall?—While Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered “good” by virtue of *wishing to remain*, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom, an untranslated man.” (Rushdie 1997: 441-42):

Rushdie then quickly introduces an antithesis:

—But, and again but: this sounds, does it not, dangerously like an intentionalist fallacy?—Such distinctions, resting as they must on an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogenous, non-hybrid, “pure,”—an utterly fantastic notion!—cannot, must not, suffice” (ibid 442).

While in the first quote Rushdie appears to endorse what Gibreel and Chamcha seem to represent as two diametrically opposed immigrant attitudes—that of a continued association with the authentic and of a dissociation resulting in grotesqueness—in the second quote, he seems to reject the first in favor of the hybrid and the heterogenous. In terms of Rushdie’s critical cosmopolitanism this move highlights the point that both Farishta and Chamcha together create a cosmopolitan vision. As cosmopolitan migrants, they are neither isolated from each other nor opposed. Rather, they embody a complex form of cosmopolitanism that rises from seemingly contradictory characteristics, such

that the physical and idiosyncratic differences between the two indicate. This move rejects the essentialist attitudes that engender racial stereotypes and discrimination. By highlighting the similarities between Farishta and Chamcha, then, “Rushdie aligns himself with contemporary anti-essentialism and the version of postcolonial theory that valorizes hybridity and multiplicity—and with everything he himself has said in celebration of newness born of fusions, conjoinings, and translations” (Gane 32). To go a step further, Rushdie’s rejection of a clear-cut distinction between Gibreel and Chamcha as ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ ‘authentic’ and ‘fake’ reveals a cosmopolitan individual’s inherent mistrust in the essentialist categories of fundamentalism and imperialism that represent the two forms of ‘purity’ in the text. As evident in the text, Islamic fundamentalism and British imperialism haunt the protagonists in equal measure; it is only their cosmopolitan resilience that offers means to counter them. Cognizant of the oppressive tendencies of both fundamentalism and imperialism, Rushdie explores the possibility of a third option, one that can envisage a different future. Spencer believes “the inadmissibility of fundamentalism and of the need to find some other way of ordering human affairs constitutes the basis of a cosmopolitan sensibility, though not yet, of course, the achievement of a cosmopolitan condition” (Spencer 161). *The Satanic Verses* is a step towards envisaging such a possibility.

In the end, creative cosmopolitanism emerges strongly in Rushdie’s own similarities with Saladin Chamcha and the latter’s similarities with Gibreel Farishta, all of whom have embraced a cosmopolitan way of life without fully cutting ties with their ‘homeland’—India. Rushdie’s penchant for molding his protagonists in his own image is clearly detectable in *The Satanic Verses*: He shares striking biographical details with

Saladin Chamcha.¹⁴ Like the author, Saladin grew up in Bombay, dreamed of England, lived with his father before starting school in England, had a kipper served at breakfast, and took up acting after graduating from Cambridge. Even though their similarities end when, unlike Rushdie, Saladin becomes a ventriloquist, as Gane states, “one must suspect that something like this was in Rushdie’s own mind: Saladin is at some level a caricature of Salman, a parodic exaggeration” (Gane 34). In his turn, Saladin resembles his counterpart Gibreel Farishta, sharing some striking similarities with him. Both men are transformed after an airplane explosion, which “literally evokes the explosiveness of postcoloniality as it upsets the binaries that have hitherto informed the relations between the imperial center and the colonial periphery,” for example (Sanga 33). Rushdie himself describes their transmutation as dialectic, intermixed, and confused, a bit of this and a bit of that: “the two men, Gibreelsaladin Farishtachmcha, condemned to this endless but also ending angelicdevilish fall, did not become aware of the moment at which the process of their transmutation began” (Rushdie 1997: 5). It is not surprising, then, that the respective roles Saladin and Gibreel take up as their profession—that of a voiceover artist and a film actor, specialist in portraying Hindu gods and goddesses in the Bollywood cinema—also share the element of mimicking. These subtle similarities suggest that Saladin and Farishta have more in common than their diametrically opposed transformation permits them. As Kuttari observes, “they could be seen as different sides of the same character, as ‘doubles’” (Kuortti 129). In creating the doubles Rushdie rejects the binaries and purity of both Eastern fundamentalism and Western imperialism and endorses cosmopolitanism that allows space for differences to co-exist; moreover, his biographical similarities, not

¹⁴ Other notable examples of this Rushdiean trait are Salim in *Midnight’s Children*; Moraes Zogoiby in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, and Malik Solanka in *Fury*.

only with Chamcha but also with Gibreel, vouch for his cosmopolitan thinking as a postcolonial author. However religious fundamentalism and economic globalization remained the focus of Rushdie's cosmopolitanism in the last decade of the twentieth century even as he challenged them through a creative cosmopolitanism.

The Moor's Last Sigh (1995) represents Rushdie's vociferous protest against the menacing collusion between religious fundamentalism and economic globalization as well as his efforts to undermine their influence through a creative cosmopolitanism. Moraes Zogoiby, the narrator who was born in Bombay in 1957, recounts the intriguing history of his Judeo-Muslim ancestry with roots in Andalusian Moorish Spain and in Cochin, the Jewish-dominated ancient town in Southern India. The story eventually travels northwest to Bombay where the Zogoiby family finds itself enmeshed in the city's political, criminal, economic, and communal upheavals in the 1980s and 90s. Through Zogoiby's wittily perceptive and, at times, acerbic narration, Rushdie critiques the increasing religious and political intolerance in India, about which he expressed grave concern in 1991—four years prior to *The Moor's Last Sigh's* publication—in *Imaginary Homelands*. In his essay, "The Assassination of Indira Gandhi," Rushdie writes:

[t]he dangers of communalism, of the kind of religious sectarianism which motivated the assassins' bullets, are even more to be feared... The growth of Hindu fanaticism, as evidenced by the increasing strength of the RSS, the organization which was behind the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, has been very worrying; and it has had its parallel in the Bhindranwale group and, recently, in the increased support for the Muslim extremist Jammāt Party in Kashmir—this support being, itself, the result of the toppling of Farooq Abdullah by the Centre, which seemed to legitimize the Jammāt's view that Muslims have no place in present-day India. (Rushdie 1991: 42-43)

This passage foreshadows the major topics covered in the novel: The emergence of the Hindu nationalist politics in the grab of regionalism, the resultant waves of communal violence in the country, the retaliatory rise of Muslim underworld mafias in Mumbai, and the marginalization of the minorities from public life in India. Rushdie portrays the xenophobia, communal tension between Hindus and Muslims and the myopic politicians' regrettable attempts to gain political mileage out of these to highlight a mindset impervious to Bombay's cosmopolitan ethos. Yet, Rushdie choose not to react viscerally. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie's cosmopolitanism changes to address Hindu fundamentalism; his response to it is an artistic palimpsest of cosmopolitan Bombay, created by the Moor's artist mother, Aurora. Juxtaposing art with religious fanaticism empowers Rushdie to privilege his vision of Bombay over that of the fundamentalists. A second important theme in the text is economic globalization and attendant corruption that vitiated Bombay's peaceful public life in the 1990s. In *Step Across This Line*, Rushdie writes:

[i]n my novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a character offers his definitions of modern Indian democracy ("one man one bribe") and of what he calls the Indian theory of relativity ("everything is for relatives"). Like most things written about India, this looks like an exaggeration but is actually an understatement. The scale of public corruption is now almost comically great. (Rushdie 2002: 162)

Rushdie creatively registers his protest against both a religious fundamentalism and economic corruption through his cosmopolitan narrative. The character that most embodies a globalization-induced corruption is the Moor's father, Abraham Zogoiby, who amasses immense wealth through several illegal trades, including smuggling nuclear

weapons. Rushdie also reintroduces Saleem Sinai's son Aadam Sinai and Adam Braganza, who reappears as a business-owner. Nevertheless, Rushdie counters these actors of Bombay's rampant corruption and economic greed through Moraes Zogoiby alias the Moor. His final escape from the dangerously polarized Bombay towards the end of the text assures readers of Rushdie's faith in the creative power of cosmopolitanism that can survive the combined onslaught of religious fundamentalism and economic globalization. Significantly, Rushdie also employs the motif of art to develop his response against these forces.

The Moor's Last Sigh explores arts' role in challenging the inhibiting regional and communal politics with a cosmopolitan critique. Rushdie intersects aesthetics with politics in the text to comment on the declining cosmopolitan culture in present day Bombay and asserts that an artistic cosmopolitan vision can remain above the inhibiting discourses of fundamentalism and neoliberal capitalism, both of which operate from narrow or one-dimensional perspectives. Rushdie also insists that a cosmopolitan can rise above regional, religious, and economic concerns to promote universalism against particularism. Rushdie's credential as both a creative artist and a cosmopolitan lend indirect support to Aurora and Moraes Zogoiby – respectively an artist and a cosmopolitan in the text; his aesthetic narration presents Bombay as a cosmopolitan city, symptomatic of India's cultural pluralism and respect for the minorities. For instance, consider the Moor's following description of Aurora's paintings depicting Bombay:

[s]he filled the sea with fish, drowned ships, mermaids, treasure, kings; on the land, a cavalcade of local riff-raff – pickpockets, pimps, fat whores[...]crowded towards the water like the real-life Bombayites on the beach, taking their evening strolls[...]Call it Mooristan,' Aurora told me,

‘This seaside, this hill, with the fort on top. Water-gardens and hanging gardens, watch towers and towers of silence too. Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another, and wash away. Place where an air-man can drown in water, or else grow gills; where a water-creature can get drunk, but also choke on air. One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumping into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it Palimpsest. (Rushdie 1995: 226)

Through Aurora’s paintings, then, Rushdie recuperates a dominant way of visualizing Bombay with conspicuously cosmopolitan motifs. Just as Aurora’s paintings, whether inspired by Vasco Miranda or not, conceptualize Bombay as a palimpsest of cultures, Moor himself comes to represent a cosmopolitan palimpsest of the city in the text. While Rushdie emphasizes Bombay’s essentially cosmopolitan character through the palimpsest-trope, Moor himself becomes an embodiment of the city’s cosmopolitan spirit. As Henry points out, "Moor is a veritable product of the city’s cultural heritage; as the son of a Jewish-Muslim father and Portuguese-Catholic mother, he represents the zenith of India’s cultural eclecticism. (Henry 143). However, as religion-based politics grips the city in the early 1990s, Bombay is enmeshed in a spiral of communal violence. Not surprisingly then, by the time the Moor reaches adulthood, the city’s pluralist ethos gives way to a spiraling regionalism and communalism. Both Bombay’s and Moor’s cosmopolitanisms begin to erode in the face of fundamentalist forces. Yet, Rushdie’s consistent references to Aurora’s mid-career paintings that depicted a cosmopolitan Bombay remind readers a creative resistance to the communal polarization of the city.

However, the increasing intolerance in India in the 1980s and 90s remains Rushdie’s main concern in the text. The shifting trajectory of Aurora’s painting reflects the turbulence religious fundamentalism effected in Moor’s life. The text compares India

with various female icons: Nargis, the Muslim actress portraying the Hindu middle-class woman, as the embodiment of Mother India; Aurora, the Moor's mother and accomplished painter, and Indira Gandhi, the autocratic Indian Prime Minister. While Schultheis identifies them as "religious, political, and aesthetic figures of unification across historical periods," and claims that "[t]he aesthetic can provide a new perspective to heal historical wounds enough to make renewed faith in the nation possible," I contend that the text's aesthetics advocates Moraes the 'Moor' as an alternative to nationalistic and fundamentalist elements like Mainduck, the caricatured representative of Bal Thackrey, a Hindu nationalist politician from Bombay. (Schultheis 570-71). While Aurora's paintings do not valorize Mother India, "the India peasant woman [...] as bride, mother, and producer of sons; as long-suffering, stoical, loving, redemptive, and conservatively wedded to the maintenance of status quo," they, nevertheless, reflect the increasing polarization of the nation (Rushdie 1995: 139). Her pre-independence paintings, likewise, express the exuberance of India's cultural richness depicted through Indian spices, people, and cultural icons such as the Taj Mahal; her post-independence paintings largely intertwine India's political upheavals with the turmoil in Moor's life, including his erotic affection for her, liaison with Uma, and his expulsion from family. Insofar as Aurora follows Moraes' life trajectory in her paintings, as Schultheis remarks, his "downfall mirrors the changing fortunes of the city itself; his underworld experiences have their political analog in the rise of Bombay's Shiv Sena (Army of Shivaji) party" (Schultheis 587). Aesthetically speaking, then, Rushdie not only aligns Moor's misfortunes with the rising religious and political intolerance in India, but also portrays his deformities as reflective of the rising fundamentalism India. In a way, Rushdie

personifies India through Moor by making his emotional struggles and physical deformities represent the mid-1990s India's political and sociocultural challenges.

Obviously, the most problematic of these developments is the rapid rise of Mainduck, the thinly-veiled caricature the Hindu nationalist, Bal Thackrey, and Indira Gandhi's return to power—both of which adversely affect the Bombay-based Jewish-Christian-Indian Zogoiby family.

Through the Moor's eventual exile to Spain, Rushdie reignites the debate on the cosmopolitan's ability to move beyond the realm of aesthetics and influence realpolitik of the nationalist brand. Whether cosmopolitan individuals can withstand the onslaught of fanatic nationalism is the question *The Moor's Last Sigh* seems to moot, and one possible answer it suggests is that a cosmopolitan can discover favorable sites even outside one's homeland and keep one's cosmopolitan spirit creatively alive. When the political ascendancy of Raman Mainduck Fielding turns Moor's beloved Bombay into a communal inferno, the novel's aesthetic presentations of the all-inclusive and all-caring 'Mother India' get consumed by it quickly. In this sense, "Rushdie presents religious nationalism and economic corruption as the tides that fill the void left by the failure of modern plurality (Aurora's vision) and Bombay's cosmopolitanism" (Schultheis 587). That Mainduck's party thrives on both jingoistic nationalism and economic malpractices, resulting eventually in Moraes's flight to Andalucía in Spain speaks for the secularist pluralism's erosion in urban India in the 1980s. Whereas it might also suggest a defeat for Bombay's cosmopolitan culture, Rushdie does not announce its demise; rather, he seems to suggest that Indian cosmopolitanism continues to survive and thrive abroad. Neither Mainduck's violent fanaticism nor Indira Gandhi's sly despotism can deprive the Moor of

the cosmopolitan positivity he has imbibed in India; his ability to identify it at the global level, such as in Andalusian Spain, evidences Rushdie's faith in its enduring power:

[t]he Alhambra, Europe's red fort, sister to Delhi's and Agra's—the palace of interlocking forms and secret wisdom, of pleasure-courts and water-gardens, that monument to a lost possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament to lost but sweetest love, to the love that endures beyond defeat, beyond annihilation, beyond despair; to the defeated love that is greater than what defeats it, to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self. (Rushdie 1995: 433)

These words of Moor, passionately describing the impact his story, can be compared to his words of reconciliation with his mother, and presumably with Mother India. He had said earlier in the text: “First I worshipped my mother, then I hated her. Now at the end of all our stories, I look back and can feel—at least in bursts—a measure of compassion. Which is a kind of healing, for her son as well as for her own, restless shade” (Rushdie 1995: 223). Clearly at the end of the story Rushdie celebrates a cosmopolitanism engendered by a willingness to reconcile and reunite with the homeland without ever surrendering to its anticosmopolitan politics. However, Rushdie neither concedes that cosmopolitanism can always remain immune to politicization nor expresses a strong hope that economic globalization will lose its grasp on the world in the near future. The latter topic leads him to engage with the phenomenon of globalization from a postcolonial migrant's view in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999). The novel represents a self-critical appraisal of the cosmopolitan artist's participation in the cultural industry and

thus inaugurates a new phase in Rushdie's literary cosmopolitics – critical cosmopolitanism.

In the final analysis, it is important to note that Rushdie's creative cosmopolitanism progresses past its reactionary tendency on two counts: one, it looks beyond the nation; two, it emphasizes aesthetics against politics. The novels discussed in this section demonstrate that Rushdie transcended the national boundaries in order to develop his cosmopolitanism when the national locations became increasingly inhibitive to cosmopolitan worldviews. Through his characters, Rushdie creatively challenged the inimical power of narrow nationalism and oppressive authoritarianism rather than just registering a protest from within. Similarly, instead of resisting the political power of oppressive nation states, Rushdie resorted to promote his cosmopolitan vision in opposition to it through his aesthetics – such as through Gibreel and Saladin's dream sequences in *The Satanic Verses*, and Aurora's paintings in *Midnight's Children*. In the creative phase of his cosmopolitanism Rushdie rendered his fiction more imaginatively cosmopolitan through a brilliant use of aesthetics, thus overcoming the pessimism that surrounded his earlier novels. However, economic globalization still posed significant challenges to Rushdie at the turn of the millennium, which necessitated a yet another phase of development in his literary cosmopolitanism. It is, then, through a critical cosmopolitanism that Rushdie addressed the complexities of an artist's role in the twenty-first century globalized world.

Critical Cosmopolitanism

The new millennium marks the third stage in Rushdie's cosmopolitanism that is characterized by its critical dimension. I call it 'critical cosmopolitanism' because it identifies globalization as the contemporary manifestation of imperialism and responds to it with a characteristic ambivalence, resulting from the postcolonial subject's simultaneous attraction and revulsion to it. The term 'critical cosmopolitanism,' then, requires an elaboration here. In recent times cultural theorists and literary critics have engaged with critical cosmopolitanism to make it more effective in answering the challenges posed by globalization and fundamentalism. Walter Mignolo conceives it "from the perspective of coloniality...and within the frame of the modern/colonial world" which historically expands "from the sixteenth century until today, and geographically in the interplay between a growing capitalism in the Mediterranean and the (North) Atlantic and a growing colonialism in other areas of the planet" (Mignolo 2002:159).¹⁵ Mignolo's critical cosmopolitanism operates from outside modernity so as to critique capitalism and modernity from the perspectives of those left out by them. In this respect, it serves as an alternative to a benevolent recognition of people's rights and humanitarian pleas for their inclusion—the two cosmopolitan projects from inside modernity itself—and "comprises projects located in the exteriority and issuing forth from the colonial difference (ibid

¹⁵ Mignolo distinguishes critical cosmopolitanism as different from both, what he calls, 'global designs—as in Christianity, nineteenth-century imperialism, or late-twentieth-century neoliberal globalization—and 'emancipatory cosmopolitanism—as in Vitoria, Kant, or Karl Marx—and argues that it arises from the shortcomings of both. Global designs ultimately aimed at colonizing the world, and emancipatory cosmopolitanism failed to escape the ideology global designs because of its origin in modernity.

160).¹⁶ It grapples with the racial and religious conflicts that have emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in reaction to the homogenizing power of global capitalism, and is, therefore, “critical and dialogic, emerging from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference” (ibid 179). More crucially, critical cosmopolitanism can be effectively used to create a democratic and just world to thwart both neoliberal globalization and regressive forms of fundamentalism. To promote and sustain diversity in all its forms, critical cosmopolitanism can prove crucial in critical discourses from the perspective of local histories that are currently under threat from global designs such as capitalism and neoliberal globalization.

The adjective ‘critical’ adds a social dimension to the cosmopolitan ideal that its philosophical version lacks. Unlike the ideal of belonging to the world in a spirit of openness towards others and detachment from local affinities, critical cosmopolitanism emphasizes the sociopolitical dimensions of an individual’s life. Delanty credits the social dimension with expanding our understanding of the cosmopolitan ideal. Critical cosmopolitanism evolves through an approach in which “the cosmopolitan imagination occurs when and wherever new relations between self, other and world develop on

¹⁶ Mignolo develops critical cosmopolitanism as the fourth moment in what he describes as historical and complementary projects that define the modern/colonial world from the sixteenth century until today. The preceding three are: (1) the Spanish and Portuguese colonialism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries related to the Christian mission; (2) the French and English colonialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries related to the civilizing mission, and (3) the U.S. and transnational (global) colonialism related to the West’s modernizing mission. The fourth moment refers to the postmodern/postcolonial moment in the second half of the twentieth century and is related to the global capitalism which, for Mignolo, signifies the colonial difference. For a detailed discussion, see Walter Mignolo, “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism.” in *Cosmopolitanism*, Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., Durham and London: Duke University press (2002): 159-188.

moments of openness” supplying “a different kind of cosmopolitanism, one less premised on the assumptions of a world republic or on elites and also one less Eurocentric” (Delanty 2006:27). Placing the individual at the center of modernity, instead of globalization, is a distinct characteristic of critical cosmopolitanism: it facilitates a reflective focus on the self in regard with one’s role in the globalizing processes. Therefore, critical cosmopolitanism stands out as an excellent theoretical tool to examine the current global society in its sociopolitical intricacies, while simultaneously exploring ways of transforming it. The social dimension also encourages an examination of the individual’s participation or absence from the processes that advance world citizenship, international justice and peace. The critical component also enables cosmopolitanism to develop from a philosophical disposition of openness towards others into what Kurasawa describes as “a more substantive and systemic project of universal emancipation tackling structurally-produced sources of inequality and global injustices blocking the exercise of individual and collective capabilities and the flourishing of human potential” (Kurasawa 280). Thus, in critical cosmopolitanism any reflection on one’s involvement in the globalized world necessarily assumes a dimension of social responsibility and self-awareness.

Rushdie’s recent fiction contains some traits of critical cosmopolitanism; however, since Rushdie expresses his cosmopolitan vision through fiction, his critical cosmopolitanism takes on certain literary features besides the social dimension. These include irony, distance, imagination, aesthetics, and self-reflexiveness. Irony empowers Rushdie to expose the detrimental effects of globalization and fascism in contemporary society; distance allows him to present an objective picture of both the postcolonial and

Western societies from a cosmopolitan viewpoint; imagination enables him to offer alternative visions of the materially interconnected yet ideologically divided twenty-first century world; aesthetics permit him to create literary manifestations of his cosmopolitan ideals; finally, self-reflexiveness leads him to examine his positive and negative contributions to globalization. Rushdie's recent fiction displays these features, as indeed his earlier fiction to some extent, but it is a keenly expressed concern about the cosmopolitan writer's embroilment in the contemporary world's socioeconomic and political condition that conspicuously reflects his critical cosmopolitanism.

In light of the preceding discussion, I define Rushdie's critical cosmopolitanism as a form of heightened awareness about the dialectical relationship between the cosmopolitan individual and the phenomenon of globalization. A critical-cosmopolitan-inspired critique necessarily reflects on the individual's positive and negative contribution to the processes of globalization and its impact on society. Similar to a standard postcolonial critique, critical cosmopolitanism opposes the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, but also challenges its commodifying power by subverting the structures that sustain it. The texts that contain characteristics of Rushdie's critical cosmopolitanism are *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), and *Fury* (2001). With a particularly enhanced understanding of the neoliberal capitalism's global dynamics and its local manifestations in the global cities such as New York and London, Rushdie embarks on a journey in these texts that places him in the heart of economic globalization – a scenario at once exhilarating and intimidating. The outcome is a self-reflection on his globalized 'celebrity self' that challenges readers to re-think economic globalization and

media revolution in the twenty-first century as well as the sense of transcendence these phenomena convey.

Since the late 1990s, Rushdie's novels have focused on the globalized world-city, such as New York, to reflect the author's own migration to the United States of America from England. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is first among Rushdie's "New York novels" and it encapsulates his fascination as well as consternation with the United States of America, especially as miniature and showcased in cosmopolitan New York.¹⁷ In her discussion of contemporary writers who wear multiple identities and affiliate with multiple locations, and who, therefore, characterize the globalization-driven migrations across the world, Kunow notes that, "Salman Rushdie is one such writer, a multiple migrated man; his various journeys...have taken him—like some of his characters—from Bombay/Mumbai to England and back, again to England...and most recently to the United States" (Kunow 369). His latest destination seems to have altered his postcolonial vision that empowered him to critique oppression and totalitarianism in the world. In other words, there is a growing consensus among critics that Rushdie's locational shift to New York has caused an ideological shift in his recent writings, raising a serious concern among postcolonial intellectuals about his commitment to the Third World. Priyamvada Gopal comments, for instance, claims that Rushdie has abdicated the political

¹⁷ Two essays specifically deal Rushdie's so-called American turn since the new millennium: Kunow argues in favor of it to claim that even though Rushdie belongs to multiple locations, his recent position is 'American.' Whereas Mendes seems to reject this argument in favor of calling it one more phase in Rushdie's career that does not adversely impact his postcolonial outlook. See Rudiger Kunow, "Architect of the Cosmopolitan Dream: Salman Rushdie," *American Studies*, 51.3 (2006): 369-85; and Ana Cristina Mendes, "Rushdie, the Public Intellectual," *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace* (Surrey (UK), Burlington (USA): Ashgate, 2013) 145-67.

commitment that led him to write “powerful essays about institutional racism, cultural condescension, Thatcherism, anti-immigrant legislation, Raj nostalgia and a sham multiculturalism” in the West as well as denounce with equal ferocity “those in postcolonial nations and ethnic minority communities who asserted themselves through chauvinism, fundamentalism, censorship and literalism” (Gopal npg). And as if *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* exemplify this abdication, Mondal claims these novels “warrant critical attention...because they represent a profound ideological shift in Rushdie’s writing” (169). The salient feature of the apparent metamorphosis of Rushdie’s recent fiction is “the relocation of Rushdie’s imaginative geography away from the Indian subcontinent” completed in the displacement of Bombay by New York (ibid). While the geographical shift definitely indicates Rushdie’s more central position in the globalized world since the turn of the millennium, it also raises questions about the writer’s evolving understanding of cosmopolitanism itself. Kunow, for instance, argues that Rushdie’s “more recent works of criticism and fiction suggest that his cosmopolitanism has now acquired a new tone, has, as it were, sited itself, in the United States, more especially in New York” (Kunow 382). However, despite of their locational preference for New York, and besides their obvious parallel to the transatlantic migration of their author, the two novels in question offer little straightforward inferences about the mitigation of Rushdie’s postcolonial sympathies for the South-Asian cosmopolitan migrant.

In a way, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* appears to celebrate globalization as Americanization at the expense of Rushdie’s postcolonial opposition to it. In this text, Rushdie projects American Rock music to represent globalization and its social, cultural, economic, and political impact on the American society as well as the rest of the world,

thus marking a major shift in Rushdie's strategy of addressing from the postcolonial migrant's point of view, for instance, in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*. While using Rock music to examine and interrogate globalization adds an aesthetic element to the plot, it also undermines the text's postcolonial critique. Not surprisingly then, critics have mostly identified *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* with the author's uncritical endorsement of globalization. Srivastava, for instance, claims that in the novel, "Rushdie seems to be unashamedly embracing globalization and its benefits for the privileged protagonists of his fictions," a trait more visible in the post-9/11 phase (Srivastava 176). In fact, Srivastava's argument covers the author's other recent novels such as *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown* as well, indicating an evolving trend in Rushdie's recent fiction.¹⁸ Similarly, Mondal relates this shift in Rushdie's focus and geographical location "with the realignment of Rushdie's imaginative centre of gravity away from the global South to the North, from the economic and cultural margins to the centre, from the postcolonial stage to the hegemonic arena of the world's only current superpower" (169). Interestingly, these allusions to the author's apparent disavowal of the postcolonial critique of globalization hint at the increasingly central role Rushdie has recently assumed in the globalized centers of the North, especially, in the United States. The following words from Vina Apsara in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* illustrate how instead of Bombay—a central location in some of Rushdie's earlier novels—New York comes to dominate the thoughts of the protagonist:

[y]ou can either stay and I don't know immigrunt the rest of your life away, [...], or you can cross the mighty ocean and leap into that old hot

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of a new type of cosmopolitanism evident in Rushdie's latest fiction, see Neelam Srivastava, "Cosmopolitanism and globalization in Rushdie," *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007) 157-80.

pot. You get to be an American just by wanting, and by becoming an American you add to the kind of American it's possible to be, that's in general I'm talking about?, Okay?, and New York City, in particular. However you get through your day in New York City, well then that's a New York kind of day, and if you're a Bombay singer singing in the Bombay bop or a voodoo cab driver with zombies on the brain or a bomber from Montana on an Islamist beardo from Queens, then whatever's going through your head?, well that's a New York state of mind [...] You won't know shit but it'll right away become an American type of ignorance. Not belonging, that's an old American tradition, see?, that's the American way. (Rushdie 1999: 331)

This perception of the globalized New York, where anyone can feel at home, betrays the author's increased familiarity with the city. In addition, it also suggests a glorification of New York and of the United States by Asian immigrants – notwithstanding the trauma of 'unbelonging' that many postcolonial migrants suffer because of their social, economic, and political deracination in the globalized West.

Rushdie critiques and challenges the cultural globalization of the world in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – a critique which also indicates a major shift in the author's literary cosmopolitanism. Rushdie's analysis of globalization in the text reveals the invisible force against which his characters grapple. Globalization, presented in the text in the form of American jazz music, in a way becomes a form of imperialism in the contemporary world. No wonder then, in the novel, globalization has replaced the dictator-figure of his earlier novels such as Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher or Zia-ul-Haq, who personified a coercive system against which the vehemently opposed. Therefore, Rushdie undermines it through the text's two main migrant characters: Vina Apsara. Vina, for instance, establishes herself as a rock star while Cama becomes a famous a photographer – both swept into the American mass culture to the extent that she

reminds the audience of Marilyn Monroe, and he compares her to the ground on which people stand. Nevertheless, their migration to America had resulted from their dislike for the sociocultural restrictions of India and not just out of a fascination with the glamor world of America. The narrator, Umeed Merchant expresses it the best.

We find ground on which to make our stand. In India, that place obsessed by place, belonging-to-your-place, knowing-your-place, we are mostly given that territory, and that's that, no arguments, get on with it. But Ormus and Vina and I, we couldn't accept that, we came loose. Among the great struggles of man—good/evil, reason/unreason, etc.—there is also this mighty conflict between the fantasy of Home and the fantasy of Away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey. (Rushdie 1999: 55)

As this passage suggests, even though Vina and Ormus easily establish themselves in the American music industry, the subconscious awareness of their forced-migration from India decreases the thrill of a glamorous lifestyle in America. Here Rushdie establishes a direct link between the postcolonial subjects' dissatisfaction with the homeland and their current entanglement economic and cultural globalization. Through Vina and Ormus' tragic ends, then, Rushdie expresses his mistrust of globalized America.

Moreover, employing a literary technique of subversion, Rushdie issues a forceful critique of economic globalization in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. In particular, he derides globalization through the two Indian migrant characters—Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama—by turning their apparent capitulation to the American mass culture into defiant acts of subversion. Inasmuch as rock music represents the simultaneously attractive and terrifying face of capitalist globalization in the text, Vina and Ormus seem to expose its vulnerability to a cosmopolitan critique: both offer a serious resistance to a

self-destructive cultural assimilation by mass-media and rock music. Rushdie uses Vina's death, for example, to dismantle the popular culture's commodifying power over her persona: after her death in an earthquake in Mexico on Valentine Day in 1989, Vina reappears in numerous avatars. The "impersonation craze" recasts her as "the Vina supperclub/cabaret look-alikes, the underground, heavy metal and reggae Vinas, the rap Vinas, the Vina drag queens, the Vina transsexuals, the Vina hookers on the Vegas Strip, the Vina Strippers,...the porno Vinas..., the hardcore...blue-video Vinas, and the...karaoke Vinas" (490). Vina's post-death domination of the American cultural industry reveals the postcolonial migrant's ability to counteract objectification through simulacra that evades both easy identification and ideological control. Even though the simulacrum may seem like a trap, as Mendes contends, wherein Vina is "subjected to the demands of capital enhancement strategies and forced post-mortem to cater for the artificial needs of postmodern consumer culture," her omnipresent rebirth rivals the popularity of American cultural icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Long Tall Texans, and *Star Trek* conventioners (Mendes142). What is more, Vina disrupts the capitalist culture by escaping both commodification and objectification while managing to use her multiple images to create a frenzied chaos and confusion. Similarly, Ormus challenges the imperialist power of rock music by clairvoyantly writing and performing the most famous American pop songs of the 1960 and 1970s even before they appear in the market. Ormus's musical appropriation assumes a critical character in light of the following comments by Rai:

[i]n India it is often said the music I'm talking about is precisely one of those viruses with which the almighty West has infected the East, one of the weapons of cultural imperialism, against which all right-minded

persons must fight and fight again. Why then offer up paeans to culture traitors like Ormus Cama, who betrayed his roots and spent his pathetic lifetime pouring the trash of America into our children's ears? Why raise low culture so high, and glorify what is base? Why defend impurity, that vice, as if it were a virtue? (Rushdie 1999: 95)

Knowing fully well the colonizing power of the American rock music, Ormus undermines its very cultural identity by preempting the pop songs' release, thus destroying Rock music's ability to promote Americanization of the world—the most contemporary form of capitalist globalization threatening the Third-World nations. As Srivastava notes, Ormus's tryst with American pop songs “questions the supposed colonization of Indian culture by American pop music” (177). Rushdie, in fact, achieves more than just questioning the colonizing tendencies of American cultural symbols. He deliberates obscures and confuses the origins of a powerful Western globalizing symbol. By hybridizing Rock Music, Rushdie renders it powerless and even turns it into a weapon of disrupting the flow of globalization itself. In other words, if Rock Music originates in India, and not in the United States, how could it represent Western music in the rest of the world? Interestingly, Rushdie achieves this remarkable disempowerment of Rock Music through a brilliant act of subversion. That said, Rushdie never offers a direct disavowal of globalized popular culture, a fact indicative of his overall recognition of globalization as a twenty-first century phenomenon that can be critiqued and challenged but cannot be fully eradicated from the cosmopolitan world. For instance, Srivastava claims that “Rushdie celebrates, rather than condemns, cultural globalization as an inevitable by-product of economic globalization. But this celebration of globalization is ambivalent” (ibid). Along the same line, Mendes surmises that “Rushdie places the stress

on the ambiguity residing between the resistance of the megastar protagonists to that global power structure, and their capitulation to the seductiveness of US mass culture” (Mendes 142). Thus, holding the two interrelated dimensions of globalization—its inescapable sway over the contemporary world and its colonizing potential—in balance, Rushdie offers a stark critique of the latter through a critical cosmopolitanism. Crucially, recognizing the urgency of challenging globalization’s increasing economic and cultural domination of the world in Rushdie’s fiction also provides an insight into his tactics to destroy it. By embracing, hybridizing, and indigenizing the so-called universal cultural symbols of Western capitalism – such as Rock Music – cosmopolitans can drain them of their colonizing power. In a broader sense, Rushdie then seems to suggest that the postcolonial migrant can subvert the economic and cultural monopoly of neoliberal globalization by inhabiting and appropriating it.

In spite of ingeniously critiquing globalization through Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara’s subversive acts, Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* carries little evidence of the author’s self-reflexiveness – a lacuna amended by Rushdie in *Fury*. Pressing the trope of subversion further, Rushdie explores the notion that in the globalized world commodities themselves can subvert the purposes of the producer or the artist because their ubiquity frees them from anyone person’s control. The following discussion, therefore, examines, the dynamics of production and consumption in light of the cosmopolitan individual’s self-awareness of an inextricable entanglement in the globalizing processes – as exemplified by the protagonist Malik Solanka. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie distorts economic globalization’s linear history projecting a fictional world that closely resembles the twentieth-century America but is, nevertheless,

imaginary. Moreover, the re-introduction of a few famous characters from the author's previous novels, such as Homi Catrack from *Midnight's Children*, S. S. Sisodia from *The Satanic Verses*, and Aurora Zogoiby from *The Moor's Last Sigh* works to further destabilize globalization's neoliberal discourses. Yet, the narrator, Umeed Merchant does not offer sufficient *self-reflection* as an actor in the globalized drama that the text portrays. Merchant's peripheral role in the story in comparison to Cama and Apsara explains this observation. In this regard, *Fury* (2001) makes good progress: not only does the protagonist Malik Solanka provide a significant amount of self-reflection, he also closely resembles the millennial Rushdie in character traits and biographical background. In addition, Rushdie further develops critical cosmopolitanism with a simultaneous critique of globalization and aggressive nationalism in a story based in New York – one of world's most cosmopolitan cities – yet simultaneously concerning a violent political struggle in a fictional former British colony, closely resembling modern Fiji.

In *Fury*, Rushdie presents a bad form of cosmopolitanism to reveal its tacit endorsement to economic globalization, but also critiques the same through the protagonist Malik Solanka. Globalization still comes across as a Janus-faced phenomenon in *Fury*: at times, it is the new normal of the new millennium; at other times, it is a deeply disturbing reality of a globalized city. The presence of the latter – which largely emerges out of Solanka's early reflections of New York – provides the evidence of Rushdie's changing stance on globalization and a type of cosmopolitanism that flirts with it. Rushdie has become more attentive to its insidious effects on the individual in a capitalist society. Consider Solanka's two different reflections on New York:

[i]n all of India, China, Africa, and much of the southern American continent, those who had leisure and wallet for fashion... would have killed for the street merchandise of Manhattan... America insulted the rest of the planet... by treating such bounty with the shoulder-shrugging casualness of the inequitably wealthy. But New York in this time of plenty had become the object and goal of the world's concupiscence and lust... (Rushdie 2001: 6)

This description reveals Solanka's unambiguous admiration of the globalized America's opulence, material richness, and economic superiority over rest of the world. An experienced cosmopolitan in his own right, Solanka, a Cambridge-educated Indian professor from London, here represents a deficient cosmopolitanism that approaches globalization uncritically. Later, Solanka begins to see the dichotomies, disjunctures, and contradictions embedded in the apparently dazzling manifestation of economic globalization, and becomes more critical.

For instance, a little later in the text, the third person narrator signals a change in Solanka's perception of New York as the new Rome:

[h]e had come to New York... in ambivalence, in extremes, and in unrealistic hope... telling himself that the great World-City could heal him, a city child, if he could only find the gateway to its magic, invisible, hybrid heart... But perhaps his was not the only identity coming apart at the seams. Behind the façade of this age of gold, this time of plenty, the contradictions and impoverishment of the Western human individual, or let's say the human self in America, were deepening and widening... Might this new Rome actually be more provincial than its provinces; might these new Romans have forgotten what and how to value, or had they never known? (Rushdie 2001: 86-87)

Clearly, Rushdie devises the change in Solanka's perception of New York to articulate the empty consumerism this globalized "New Rome" signifies. Rushdie carefully

contrasts the material exuberance of globalization with the emotional ennui it breeds. The author's tacit acknowledgement of globalization's underbelly dark side marks a departure from his earlier support of globalization, expressed in one of his essays in 1999, wherein he equated any opposition to globalization as an "anti-American sentiment" (266).¹⁹ In *Fury*, Rushdie seems to have moved away from that position to evaluate globalization more from the individual's perspective and how it affects the person, especially a migrant individual, at the emotional level. Throughout *Fury*, this transition aligns with the author's use of a critical perspective in his cosmopolitan outlook.

Critical cosmopolitanism, in a way, becomes the framework through which Rushdie exposes the personal isolation a capitalist culture can unleash on cosmopolitan individuals, ostensibly at ease in a globalized city. Insofar as critical cosmopolitanism strives to imagine new relationships between the self, other, and the world, it facilitates a critical perspective on the elements that hinder such imagining. In *Fury*, Rushdie can critique globalization more neutrally than in his essay "Globalization" because he affords a greater attention to the personal predicament of Solanka in his dream city New York. Primarily, Rushdie uses a narrative voice to create a false identification between the narrator and the reader and then utilizes it demonstrate the weakness of Solanka's position. For all his praise of and success in metropolitan New York, the deep-down

¹⁹ In this essay, Rushdie takes a strong pro-American stand, defending the American cultural domination of the world and denouncing any ideological opposition to it. Noting that "the debate about cultural globalization and its military-political sidekick, intervention, has continued to intensify, and anti-American sentiment is on the increase," the author claims that, "the globalizing power of American culture is opposed by an improbable alliance that includes everyone from cultural-relativist liberals to hardline fundamentalists, with all manner of pluralists and individuals, to say nothing of flag-waving nationalists and splintering sectarians, in between." See Rushdie, *Step Across this Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), 267-68.

emptiness of an excessively globalized lifestyle frequently makes Solanka dissatisfied with himself. Even though, he had deliberately left his wife and son in England, the apparent meaninglessness of cosmopolitan New York forces him to long for a reunion with them. He juxtaposes New York's globalized opulence with the individual impoverishment it causes through insecurity and dissatisfaction with it. Not surprisingly, then, the narrator remarks at one point, “[p]erhaps that wider disintegration was also to be made visible in this city of fiery, jeweled garments and secret ash, in this time of public hedonism and private fear,” the narrator remarks in *Fury* (86). Viewed in this way, the novel ceases to defend of neoliberal globalization, and appears to express Rushdie's critical cosmopolitanism. Therefore, Rushdie does not defend globalization or American culture in *Fury*; rather, as Zimring observes, “it is an exploration of the complex reactions to the loss of a stable identity and a home” that raise questions about “a cosmopolitan ethics of transnational allegiances” (6). By focusing on individual characters, especially the Third-World immigrants like Malik Solanka, Mila Milosovic, and Neela Mahendra, Rushdie stresses the moral and psychological layers attached to cosmopolitanism – they come to the fore in critical cosmopolitanism, making cosmopolitanism a more emotionally charged approach to the issues of cultural displacement in the global community than an abstract philosophical ideal of universal belonging and equal rights. *Fury*'s omniscient narrator precisely highlights critical cosmopolitanism's interest in the individual's emotional involvement in a cosmopolitan world:

[n]ow that Solanka knew that someone somewhere know what he would never know...he felt the dull irritation, the slow anger, of the fool. He felt like a drone, or a worker ant. He felt like one of the shuffling thousands in the old movies of Chaplin and Fritz Lang, the faceless ones doomed to break their bodies on society's wheels while knowledge exercised power

over them from on high. The new age had new emperors and he would be their slave. (Rushdie 2001: 45)

Quite interestingly, the narration lingers around Solanka's feelings of hapless anger, ignoring the wider issues concerning life in capitalist New York. In a way, the narrator captures what Nitsch describes as his cosmopolitan dilemma: a simultaneous attraction and revulsion towards life in the globalized New York. Rushdie makes Solanka an embodiment of a cosmopolitan's dichotomies in a globalized world. As Nitsch remarks, "[Solanka] is repelled by conspicuous consumption and attracted to dot-com wealth; he is enamored with the crowd and enraged by individuals; he is culturally comfortable and socially agitated in the various metropolises he calls home" (30). The simultaneous ease with the material comforts of globalization and a deep mistrust of its constricting power on one's individuality and freedom triggers the narrator's reflection on Solanka's inner struggles in the novel—it also spurs further reflection on the merits and demerits of capitalist globalization.

That reflection turns into self-reflection for Solanka in the context of commodification and politicization of his creation – the living dolls from Galileo – 1. Rushdie portrays Solanka grappling with two contrasting emotions concerning his dolls: an amazement at their coming to life on their own and setting the internet-world abuzz with frantic online activity, and a consternation at their use as merciless soldiers in a counter coup in Lilliput-Blefuscu. Solanka is thrilled that his doll-making venture had turned digital through "PlanetGalileo.com" and "[m]ajor production, distribution, and marketing agreements with key players – Mattel, Amazon, Sony, Columbia, Banana

Republic – were already in place” (Rushdie 2001: 214). The dolls viral success instantly turns him in to a business-owner whom everyone sought for commercial agreements. Yet, Solanka is shocked when the same dolls become the foot soldiers of the Filbistani Resistance Movement or FRM – the counter coup force of the Indo-Lilliputians in Blefuscu. He was disturbed to know that “[t]he cyborgs of Akasz Kronos [the living dolls] led the way” in a coup that left “hundreds dead, hundreds more seriously injured or classified as walking wounded” (ibid 226). The counter-coup leaders’ ingenious appropriation of Solanka’s dolls as foot soldiers suggests that in a globalized society the disparity between the cyber world the Third World is not too large to overcome. The unhealthy alliance also indicates that commercialization and violence, cyber-technology and brute force, artistic creativity and revengeful destruction can easily merge and proliferate in the cyber age. The juxtaposing the unexpected commercial success of Solanka’s artistic creation with its unintended political embroilment, then, provides Rushdie a space in the text to develop his critical cosmopolitanism through self-reflection. Insofar as the two events hint at a cosmopolitan artist’s predicament about losing control over their artistic creation through commodification in a globalized marketplace, they express Rushdie’s great concern over a cosmopolitan artist’s vulnerability to the inimical effects of globalization. These events also reveal Rushdie’s specific fear about a mass-produced product’s free rein in the globalized economy – just as evidenced by Solanka’s dolls. Solanka fully grasps the gravity of his loss of control over his own product, but feels helpless against it. Therefore, the critique that Rushdie makes here concerns a cosmopolitan writer’s need to globalize one’s product for a greater distribution and commercial reward. In that context, then, the aporia Rushdie presents is:

where can a cosmopolitan artist/writer draw the line between maintaining a close control over the product in order to convey the intended message through it, and allowing it to take on a life of its own to conquer the market? Sarah Brouillette avoids answering this dilemma but claims that this predicament is part of contemporary writers' professional struggle and so it should not become the cause of pessimism about literature in general. Brouillette describes the aporia as "a tension between self-articulation and its market constraints" and comments that "this is a productive tension that shouldn't be sidelined by resignation about the commercial dominance of any denationalized, depoliticized, easily consumable world literature" (Brouillette 2007: 82). On the contrary, I argue that a mere awareness of the tension cannot counterbalance the apprehension arising out of the cosmopolitan artist's doublebind. Rather as Rushdie seems to suggest in *Fury*, it should lead the artist or writer or critic to engage in self-reflection, self-evaluation, and a sincere appraisal of one's role in the globalized cultural industry. A process of self-reflection not only helps one become aware of the tension involved in commercializing one's products, but also produces alternatives to the apparently inescapable condition. For instance, seeing the mal-effects of his creation – the living dolls – that also indirectly contributed to Neela's tragic death, Solanka removes himself from New York and returns to his family in London for freshness, peace, and a renewed artistic inspiration. That is how a materially cosmopolitan Solanka grows into a discerning individual through critical cosmopolitanism.

Ultimately, *Fury* evinces critical cosmopolitanism's capacity for challenging globalization while simultaneously acknowledging the latter's sway over contemporary urban society. The text's storyline often vacillates between its immigrant character's

explicit praise for life in New York and an implicit aversion to it; in the final analysis, however, the latter becomes more emphatic. For instance, Solanka confesses to have come to America “to receive the benison of being Ellis Islanded, of starting over,” to make America his “flying saucer” to fly “to the rim of space” (51). Crucially, in the same breath, Solanka also talks about the loss of identity and history: “Bathe me in amnesia and clothe me in your powerful unknowing...No longer a historian but a man without histories let me be...I’ll rip my lying mother tongue out of my throat and speak your broken English instead. Scan me, digitize me, beam me up” (ibid). To become an American, then, entails for Solanka not only forgoing of his own history, and identity, but also a willingness to embrace the nameless homogenization that it involves. Through Solanka’s admission of the cost of Americanization, Rushdie exposes the cultural cost of assimilation into the world’s most globalized nation. Solanka’s candid confession lays bare the dark side of American style cosmopolitanism wherein, as Zimring observes, “the differences that should be allowed to flourish in a hybrid America will in fact be flattened out and annihilated by the capitalist engine of its relentless commercialism” (9). Rushdie registers his protest against this forced assimilation into the mainstream, but pragmatically accepts its inevitability in contemporary Western society.

That said, insofar as other immigrants share Solanka’s broken English, they contribute to the resistance against an aggressive cultural assimilation in America. In *Fury*, Rushdie introduces several minor immigrant characters such as a Polish Catholic cleaner, a German Jewish plumber, a Punjabi construction worker, a Pakistani taxi driver, a Yugoslav poet; they all speak loudly, with accent and grammatical mistakes—posing an annoying challenge to the homogenized ‘American’ way of living in New York.

However, from a critical cosmopolitanism's perspective, their peripheral existence in the mainstream American society indicates as much social and economic inequalities in the globalized America as in the rest of the world. Therefore, as Cecil remarks, "[t]he accents heard in *Fury* are directly caused by a social status" but their "representation inserts a permanent side to it: the process of converging in New York seems to be stuck in an endless struggle for survival in the new world" (Cecil 103). *Fury* precisely underlines this struggle primarily through Solanka but also through the two other major characters – Mila Milo and Neela Mahendra. Unlike Solanka, these two immigrant women preserve their distinct ethnic identity even in the ultra-cosmopolitan New York.

The two female protagonists in the text, Mila and Neela, resist objectification by New York's neoliberal capitalist culture in their own way: Mila, by cherishing her past, and letting her creativity expresses her independence, and Neela, by fiercely participating in her country's civil war, in spite of being ensconced in downtown New York. Their similarities with Solanka heightens their resistance to American capitalist culture: "Like Malik, neither Mila nor Neela are native-born Americans; both represent diasporic experience; New York provides a context for their globally far-reaching arts of expression (in Mila's case, the web; in Neela's, film); and both are wounded and furious" (Zimring 9). And yet both easily fit the narrator's description of the young, confident, and self-obsessed New-York women:

[i]f you'd asked these young women, these tall confident beauties on their way to..., these Princesses of the Now... They were no body's dolls, but their own women, playing with their own appearance, their own sexuality, their own stories: the first generation of young women...at Blue-beard's gate. (74)

However, Rushdie asserts their individuality and resilience at key points in the text to highlight the importance of their critical cosmopolitanism. In spite of her troubled past, Mila builds an irresistibly powerful personality in New York and rekindles the emotional needs of Solanka who was trying to overlook them through doll-making. Similarly, Neela, too, impresses him with her political activism and her outstanding talent in film-making. In fact, as Zimring claims, “she may be the most cosmopolitan of all the characters in the novel, a notion Rushdie conveys in both dramatic and trivial ways” (Zimring 10). On the one hand, Mila and Neela’s independent and savvy personalities make them strong cosmopolitans; on the other hand, through them, Rushdie challenges the stereotypes of immigrant women as meek and submissive. The manner in which they maintain a distance between their globalized and ideological selves makes them strong. That is how, morally self-critical cosmopolitans Mila and Neela display a distinct ability to hold the competing aspects of globalization in healthy tension. In a way, their representation as independent and economically powerful women in the text “counters the homogenized portrait of the exploited “Third-World woman” that dominates most Western cultural representations of women in the Global South” (Nitsch 35). Moreover, Neela’s wholehearted participation in her country’s civil war and her violent death in that struggle further highlights Rushdie’s critique of the stereotypes surrounding immigrant women as exotic, seductive, and vainglorious. Because when it mattered, Neela readily discarded the glamor of New York; perhaps, she found it hollow compared to the meaningfulness of participating in her native country’s political struggle. By deliberating and emphasizing the critical consciousness of the text’s female protagonists, then, Rushdie

both anticipates and challenges the readings that might interpret them as merely globalized urban migrants. Aided by to their critical awareness, Mila and Neela certainly defy most stereotypes.

Similarly, the ending of *Fury* signals the author's rejection of New York as the locus of his happiness, indicating Rushdie's mistrust in the global city's glamorous cosmopolitanism. Despite its relentless and furious action in the cosmopolitan New York almost throughout the plot, the concluding scene of the text takes place on a quiet heath in North London, where Solanka returns at the end. Rushdie's approach to end *Fury* with a return to a familiar and familial surrounding is somewhat unusual given that his characters always emphasize the need to leave the safety security of one's home and homeland to discover the wider world. Perhaps through an unusual ending, then, Rushdie is hinting at a disillusionment with globalized life, and indicating the critical nature of his cosmopolitanism. Solanka's last few actions—leaving New York and meeting up with his estranged wife and young son in England; jumping up and down a bouncy castle to draw his son Asmaan's attention – signify Rushdie's discontent with both American globalization and British imperialism. If Rushdie's rejection of rampant globalization becomes evident in Solanka's flight away from New York, the denunciation of imperialism reveals itself in the protagonist's ecstatic bouncing over the inflated symbol of British aristocracy, the castle. In other words, the author expresses his disenchantment with the market-driven, exciting-yet-chaotic globalization by quitting New York, and displays his displeasure with Western imperialism by jokingly trampling on the bouncing castle. The latter action also reflects his unease with life in London where “there were few purposes for which [he] felt suitable” in that moment (257). In a way, repudiating his

connections with both New York and London, Solanka moves from the center to the margins in relation to these global cities; it brings into a sharp focus the distance between centrality and marginality in the new geography of global economy.²⁰ Sassen claims that the global cities like New York and London continuously play out the dynamic of centrality and marginality because they “concentrate a disproportionate share of global corporate power and are one of the key sites for its valorization. But they also concentrate a disproportionate share of the disadvantaged and are one of the key sites for their devalorization” (Sassen xxxiv). For Rushdie, however, the rejection of New York and London not only carry a sociopolitical purpose but a personal sense of disillusionment as well. That is why, he gives the reader an alarmingly close look at the corporate power of the global cities and disavows the same through Solanka’s final act in the text.

Novels such as *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* signal an important critical turn in Rushdie’s recent fictional writing that becomes detectable only by analyzing the change in the author’s cosmopolitan theory—a failure in this regard runs the risk of either dismissing his latest fiction as frivolous or celebrating it as iconic of the cyber age. On the face of it, Rushdie seems to endorse economic globalization and its attendant neoliberal cosmopolitanism in both novels. Some critics have understandably denounced *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* in this regard. Srivastava, for example, claims that “*Fury*’s often uncritical celebration of the globalized city tends to

²⁰ Saskia Sassen discusses this dichotomy in from the perspective of the economic and sociocultural marginalization arising out of huge disparities among people in major international business and financial centers such as New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Sydney, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Taipei, Bombay, and Mexico City. For a detailed analysis, see Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: The New Press, 1998), xix-xxxiv.

overlook the risks of a ‘managerial’ or globalized cosmopolitanism...” (Srivastava 177-78). James Wood, a well-known reviewer, also decries the literary value of the novel, claiming that its “cartoonish and inauthentic voice produces a cartoonish and inauthentic reality” (Wood, npg). In an apparent reply to Wood’s comment, Pankaj Mishra asserts in another review that “Rushdie’s recent fictions seem to be most persuasive precisely where their subject matter is least understood” (Mishra, npg). Disagreeing with these scholars, I claim that Rushdie, in fact, rejects economic globalization in both texts and seeks to curtail its hold on society through a critical cosmopolitanism that he expresses through subversion and self-reflexiveness. Moreover, Rushdie presents the dazzling side of a globalized cosmopolitanism only to expose the hollowness of both; for instance, characters such as Vina Apsara, Ormus Cama, Neela Mahendra, and Malik Solanka initially revel in the globalized metropolis but eventually, either rebel against it or move away from it in disillusionment. The negative critiques fail to notice this dimension of Rushdie’s evolving cosmopolitanism because they remain focused on the narrative content of the texts rather than the broader sociopolitical issues they address. In contrast, critical cosmopolitanism, with its emphasis on acknowledging globalization as a powerful social, political, and economic phenomenon driving the contemporary world, equips us to decipher Rushdie’s literary response to it. Similar to Solanka, Rushdie expresses a recurrent restlessness with each new homeland, perhaps, with the intuition that globalization quickly colonizes every new cosmopolitan center, and that he must continuously escape its grasp through a cosmopolitanism that is both imaginative and critical.

A Marxist Critique of Salman Rushdie

The evident change in Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism can be attributed to a steady development in his cosmopolitical thinking over the course of his career. As analyzed in the preceding section, Rushdie utilized cosmopolitanism first in reaction to fascism, then to provide creative solutions against the combined menace of fundamentalism and globalization and, in recent times, to critique unhealthy forms of cosmopolitanism. In spite of this easily traceable progression in the author's cosmopolitan thinking, critics have levelled charges against him such as writing mainly for the Western readership, colluding with the global publishing industry, and exoticizing the Third World through magical-realist fiction and so on. Srivastava, Wood, and Mishra are not alone in devaluing Rushdie's fiction. A certain section of Marxist critics has consistently tried to denounce Rushdie for his alleged capitalist sympathies and collusion with the global publishing industry. While there is some truth in their critique, I will argue that there is more to Rushdie's fiction than its supposed commercial links with the publishing industry, and that examining it from the lens of literary cosmopolitanism helps to sidestep an erroneous representation of Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie's rise to prominence in the literary marketplace as a key postcolonial figure since the 1980s has generated an intense debate about the corporatization of postcolonial literature in the globalized world. Since the publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981, Rushdie has appeared prominently in concerns raised by cultural theorists about the postcolonial field's dependence on the neoliberal global

marketplace for the production and circulation of its intellectual and literary output, supporting the apprehension that such a reliance might nullify the former's ability to critique and challenge the latter's capitalist agendas.²¹ Such a nexus between postcolonial authors and the literary marketplace has gone from strength to strength since the turn of the millennium. For instance, Sarah Brouillette points out in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, the collusion "now involves agents for a series of prominent 'lead' authors making deals for global distribution with publishers that are situated within transnational corporation or conglomerates" (83). The financial success of these publishing ventures relies in good measure on, what Brouillette describes as, "the increasing presence of writers of nominally non-European origins, often from formerly colonized nations, writing in English for a largely Anglo-American marketplace" (ibid). Clearly, there exists a complex relationship between the postcolonial cosmopolitan writer and the global publishing industry or the literary marketplace, and much of the acclaimed postcolonial literature tends to be the product of this alliance.

From a socialist point of view, well-known postcolonial writers and critics like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Homi Bhabha can be read as supporting neoliberal globalization on account of their direct reliance on the global capitalist infrastructures for the publication, advertising, and marketing of their literary production. In her article, "South Asian Literature and Global Publishing," Sarah Brouillette names some postcolonial intellectuals and writers as those fueling the globalization of Southeast Asian

²¹ For an elaborate discussion of such concerns and related issues see Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* (Routledge: London and New York, 2001), Introduction: 1-33.

writing. Citing the instances that capture trends within the emergence of a globally accredited and heavily circulating postcolonial canon, Brouillette writes:

[t]hese moments include the unprecedented success of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* after its 1981 release; the later emergence of set of writers such as Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Jhumpa Lahiri, who consistently achieve strong sale figures while garnering stellar reviews and an impressive bounty of literary prizes; Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things* in 1997...; a number of celebratory volumes and magazine cover stories produced to coincide with the 1997 anniversary of India's independence...; V. S. Naipaul's 2001 Nobel Prize; and the first International Festival of Indian Literature held in Delhi in 2002. (34)

Nevertheless, the socialist critics not only object to the considerable financial gains postcolonial cosmopolitan authors make through the literary marketplace but also question these their myopic vision of cosmopolitanism communities. Brennan states this charge against cosmopolitan intellectuals with some emphasis:

[t]he complaint with cosmopolitan discourse is not only that it falls prey to cultural fascination with new diasporic communities at the expense of questioning the market; nor that the culture of diasporic subjects is usually given a positive inflection in cultural theory without remarking on its coercive nature—that people often do not want to be diasporic. It is also that the discourse of cosmopolitanism is exceedingly narrow in what fascinates it, failing to link the market with imagination, and then failing to link that nexus itself to the non-Western world, which any cosmopolitanism should properly foreground. (Brennan 2001: 674)

Because of his status as a cosmopolitan writer, Salman Rushdie has redefined postcolonial literature's relationship with cosmopolitanism.²² Timothy Brennan's *Salman*

²² See for instance, Timothy Brennan's *Salman Rushdie & the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989), and *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997). In these texts, citing Rushdie as a prime example, Brennan questions the postcolonial writers' commitment to nationalism owing to their cosmopolitan leanings, and expresses skepticism over cosmopolitanism's usefulness in postcolonial studies. Brennan's

Rushdie & the Third World: Myths of the Nation ignited this debate as early as in 1989. Simultaneously crediting cosmopolitanism for the rise of the third-world-writer on the global scene and deriding it for that writer's pessimism towards' nation-forming processes, Brennan claims that the "result has been a trend of cosmopolitan commentators on the Third World, who offer an *inside view* of formerly submerged peoples for target reading publics in Europe and North America in novels that comply with metropolitan literary tastes" (Brennan 26). Another prominent postcolonial thinker, Kwame Anthony Appiah, appears to agree with Brennan regarding the cultural translator's role of the postcolonial celebrities; however, unlike Brennan, he describes their function as that of "mediating the international trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery (Appiah 1992: 149). To implicate postcolonial writers in the capitalist commodification of culture is tantamount to undermining their capacity to critique economic globalization. Despite having made considerable financial gain from his novels, alongside a celebrity status and international fame, promoting a postcolonial cosmopolitan vision of the world remains Rushdie's most important objective.

Certain critics have linked Rushdie and other cosmopolitan writers with elitism and capitalist establishments within the literary world, thus belittling their importance in postcolonialism. Timothy Brennan commenced this line of postcolonial criticism in the late 1980s. In Brennan's view, Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism remains elitist in character, reflecting the ills of global capitalism and couched in aesthetic distance. For

denunciation of the concept prompted vigorous intellectual responses from the literary circles in the late 90s and early 2000s resulting in texts such as *Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998), edited by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins; *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture* (2001), edited by Vinay Dharwadkar, *Cosmopolitanism* (2002), edited by Breckenridge et al; *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* (2002), edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen.

Brennan, immigrant writers like Rushdie, Varags Llosa, Mukherjee, and Allende fail to sympathize with the vision of the oppressed espoused by Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Gramsci “although they are deeply aware of it” instead, “to a great extent their work is specifically addressed to it, and against it.” (Brennan 198a: 52). Brennan detects a direct link between cosmopolitanism and the rise of the Third-World intellectual both of which emerged on the literary scene in the post-World-War II era in opposition to nationalism. Unlike nationalism, cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan intellectual/writer flourished “in a world run by global media networks, international agencies and multinational corporations” according to Brennan (Brennan 1989b: 2). In fact, these dynamics afford cosmopolitan celebrities a space to maintain a detached distance from the nationalistic politics of their native country, the platform to trace their roots to many different sources, and the sophistication to swear their allegiance to both the East and the West.²³ Their special position of fluid in-betweenness allow them to oppose nationalism both as a sovereignty that has turned itself into an exploitative mechanism against its own people, and as independence whose desirability renders itself suspicious in the face of such exploitation in the postcolonial nations. Brennan claims that such a cosmopolitan stand of the Third-World celebrities removes them further away from local nationalistic struggles as well as from their ‘resistance literature;’ instead, preferring to play an intermediary role between the Third-World literature and the Western metropolitan audiences, they “hover between borders (as) the products of that

²³ Citing the examples of well-known postcolonial writers like Salman Rushdie and Bharti Mukherjee, Brennan argues that given their cosmopolitan training and immigrant experience, and “an authentic native attachment to a specific Third-World locale,” these writers do not suffer from rootlessness but rather revel in their plurality of belonging and strategic in-betweenness (Brennan 1989b 3).

peculiar 'weightlessness' that Rushdie saw in his and others' 'migrant' consciousness" (6). In terms of distance from the nationalist lobbies, Brennan's criticism of Rushdie and other cosmopolitan writers deserves merit; however, it neither makes them elitist nor indifferent to the nation. Rushdie's several novels have exhibited a persistent concern with the Third World in general and India in particular.

While Brennan mostly criticizes these cosmopolitan postcolonial celebrities for dehistoricizing the postcolonial reality through poststructuralist abstractions, leftist critics denounce them as materialist agents of late capitalism – a charge more serious and less defensible than Brennan's. Left-leaning critics have avowedly denounced Rushdie's celebrity status and his cosmopolitan fiction on account of his perceived neoliberal sympathies. On the one hand, the rise of postcolonial celebrities like Rushdie since the 1980s drew considerable attention to postcolonial literature from Western readers, on the other hand, it also exposed the commodification of postcolonial literature at the hands of the corporate publishing industry—a detail which ignited the ire of postcolonial thinkers such as Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmed, and Ella Shohat. For instance, in "The Postcolonial Aura: The Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," Dirlik vehemently denounces writers like Rushdie, arguing that their emergence can trace its origins "in a new world situation that has also become part of consciousness globally" and what can be "described variously as global capitalism" (Dirlik 1997:330). Moreover, their meteoric rise to fame does not surprise Dirlik for "the critical orientations that they represent have acquired a respectability dependent on the conceptual needs of the social, political, and cultural problems thrown up by this new world situation" (ibid). In the First World's wholehearted endorsement of these few intellectuals and writers, Dirlik sees the

genesis of a deeper nexus which has emerged out of “a new world situation...created by transformations within the capitalist world economy, by the emergence of what has been described variously as global capitalism, flexible production, late capitalism, and so on” (330). It is a critique that finds an echo in Ella Shohat, who in her essay “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’” expresses discontent over postcolonial discourse’s inability to make a direct critique of the neo-colonial economic dominance of Euro-American nations on the third-world countries because of its ‘ahistorical and universalizing deployments, and its potentially depoliticizing implications’ (Shohat 1992: 99). Stressing the need for a more historically, politically, and culturally contextualized form of postcolonial criticism, Shohat envisages a postcolonialism well-equipped to analyze the increasingly skewed global relations between the First-World and the Third-World nations, and its economic aftereffects on the latter. Aijaz Ahmad strongly aligns himself with Dirlik and Shohat in his reading of postcolonial literature’s nexus with late capitalism. Ahmad directs his critique on the commodification of postcolonial literature by the postcolonial writer. Arguing that in the universal commodity market, postcolonial literature elides differences of class, nation, and gender, Ahmad claims that when “cultural criticism reaches this point of convergence with the universal market...it becomes indistinguishable from commodity fetishism” (Ahmad 1992: 217). These conditions provide a fertile ground for both the immigrant writer and the global capitalist structures, which conceal their Western capitalist origins under the guise of multinational corporations, according to Ahmad. Echoing a similar apprehension, Anne McClintock surmises in “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term “Post-colonialism” that postcolonialism’s inability to critique sufficiently the ongoing forms of colonial oppression and exploitation stems as

much out of its “academic marketability,” which “makes possible the marketing of a whole new generation of panels, articles, books, and courses,” as out of its preference for the temporal nature of its discourse over that of the relations of power (93). Not surprisingly, McClintock advocates the search for a term to describe the post-colonial discourses capable of directly addressing the heterogeneity of power and histories at play in the current global, socioeconomic and political realities. Through their sustained critiques, the concerned scholars look for a way to safeguard postcolonialism’s unique ability to represent the sociopolitical concerns of the Third World—especially those emanating from the exploitation by neoliberalism and its homogenizing cultural onslaught through market-driven globalization.

A Response to Marxist Critique

Just as cosmopolitanism’s evolving nature necessitates a re-evaluation of the concept in the humanities, Rushdie’s ever-changing fiction, too, requires a re-reading for a better understanding in light of literary cosmopolitanism. Earlier discussion has demonstrated how cosmopolitanism defies fixed categorization as only a philosophical or political or cultural or literary concept but combines elements of each to emerge as an intellectually sound universal doctrine, cognizant of the local realities of people. Similarly, Rushdie’s fiction eschews a straitjacketed thematization as anti-nationalist or magic-realist or neoliberal and demands a recognition of its cosmopolitanism that encompasses a vision of the world wider than any of these categories can separately afford

him.²⁴ Rushdie has actively declined a fixed categorization by emphasizing his multiple identities and affiliations both as an immigrant writer. In a review of Rushdie's *Step Across This Line*, Boyagoda mentions that in this text the author presents himself as "a Muslim, Indian, New Yorker, Briton, European, American, trans-nationalist, post-nationalist, immigrant, exile, emigrant, (and) migrant" (48). In his fiction, too, Rushdie's characters come from all walks of life; therefore, to judge them from a fixed criterion – socialist, postcolonial, or capitalist – serves to ignore their fluidity and cosmopolitan richness. Mendes also calls a subtle shift in Rushdie's fiction – from his early texts that "dealt predominantly with the individual's relation to the materiality of territorial figurations [to] the non-physicality of the globe and the ultimate discarding of frontiers" in his latest novels – an espousal of de-territorialization, evident in the socioeconomic processes of globalization (Mendes 146). A balanced appraisal of Rushdie, then, requires an examination of this gradual evolution of the author's worldview.

Insofar as Rushdie's later texts depict a cosmopolitan world of transnational interactions, of people with multiple cultural backgrounds, ideologies, and political agendas, literary cosmopolitanism holds the key to unraveling their critical potential. Rushdie's later fiction attempts to capture what he pithily expresses in *Shalimar the Clown*: "[e]verywhere was now a part of everywhere else. Russia, America, London, Kashmir" (37). His other later texts such as *Fury* (2001) and *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) also depict a world of global movements and resultant

²⁴ Mendes makes a similar argument while defending Rushdie against the charge of his "American turn" since 9/11, which claims that his literary production and politics now "advance US economic and political interests" (145). Mendes rejects such a simplistic evaluation of Rushdie to argue for a broader appraisal of the writer's works. For a detailed discussion, see *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013): Ch. 5. 145-68.

chaos. Literary cosmopolitanism unlocks postcolonial literature's power to portray the legacies of colonialism, and the effects of neo-colonialism with its characteristics of "an attachment to diversity with a recognition of the need for community; political action at the level of awareness of the insufficiently cosmopolitan present" in addition to a will to keep striving for viable alternatives to the twin extremes of neoliberal globalization and fundamentalist nationalism, (Spencer 39). Literary cosmopolitanism can also facilitate the "the principle purposes of postcolonial literary criticism," namely "to address the ways in which postcolonial literature engenders a critical and ultimately moral and political response to contemporary imperialism" (42). Therefore, adopting literary cosmopolitanism to re-analyze Rushdie's fiction becomes all the more an urgent task in light of the fact that the socialist critics such as Timothy Brennan, Aijaz Ahmed, Arif Dirlik, and Benita Parry have hitherto failed to appreciate its critical potential.

Rushdie has employed critical cosmopolitanism in his fiction to highlight the ills of globalization which itself stems from Western imperialism. He represents our globalized world both through aesthetics and materialism. Rushdie's fiction does not merely reflect the world but also creates the space for its transformation. In other words, the author's concern with the materialist aspects of critical cosmopolitanism—such as the issues of migration, exploitation, justice, economic equality, and the representation of the migrants—do not blur his vision of cosmopolitanism's promise. Rushdie staunchly persists with his transformative vision of the world even while depicting the stark socioeconomic realities that render it idealistic. In his essay, "Outside the Whale," Rushdie forcefully lays down the fiction-writer's inescapable duty to depict the world as it is—with its sociopolitical ugliness:

[o]utside the whale is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, the dialectic of history. Outside the whale there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that drawn new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world. Outside the whale we can see that we are all irradiated by history, we are radioactive with history and politics; we see that it can be as false to create a politics-free fictional universe as to create one in which nobody needs to work or eat or hate or love or sleep. Outside the whale it become necessary, and even exhilarating, to grapple with the special problems created by the incorporation of political material... Outside the whale the writer is obliged to accept that he (or she) is part of the crowd, part of the ocean, part of the storm, so that objectivity becomes a great dream, like perfection, an unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success. (Rushdie 1991:100-101)

“Outside the Whale” (1991) confirms that Rushdie has carried a strong conviction about politicizing his fiction from the beginning of his writing career. His early novels *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* also illustrate this point with their politics-ridden plotlines. However, Rushdie eschews a strict adherence to depicting only the sociopolitical realities of the contemporary world; rather, he always seeks to go beyond them and into the realm of imagination—a creative space that germinates an alternative world to replace our contemporary reality. If, then, Rushdie considers a realistic portrayal of the world a writer’s primary obligation, he also values the obligation to dream of new realities through fiction. Combining various literary traditions from the East and the West, philosophies, mythologies and histories empowers Rushdie to envision a different world with diverse traditions forming a harmonious whole. In fact, he seems to consider the imaginative component of fiction a necessary condition for re-writing the sociopolitical assumptions of contemporary world. In his essay, “Imaginary Homelands,” Rushdie writes:

redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it. And particularly at times when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized... Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is a way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth. (Ibid 14)

The abundance of the magic realist, the carnivalesque, the mythical, and the hybrid strands in Rushdie's politically-charged fiction bears witness to the author's conscious attempt at holding the imaginative and the realist dimensions together. Critical cosmopolitanism empowers Rushdie to speak to the Western the world and represent the postcolonial world through fiction.

Two examples from Rushdie's novels further illustrate how the aesthetic and materialist components are held together by critical cosmopolitanism. The first comes from the ending of *Midnight's Children*, wherein Saleem says,

[y]es, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one, two, three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to the specks of voiceless dust, just as, in all good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in piece. (Rushdie 2006:533)

Even though these words describe Saleem's apparent sense of defeat at the hands of history, they can be interpreted positively at least in two different ways. A straightforward optimistic reading of this passage suggests that the future generation of

India, namely Saleem's son and his progeny, will somehow survive the tyranny of the totalitarian government of the Widow and preserve its potential for a bright future. A second, and somewhat against-the-grain, reading suggested by Su, however, points more directly towards Rushdie's brilliant use of the opposition of form and content to juxtapose the story of India's grim post-independence reality with the utopian hope of its bright future. Insofar as Saleem represents the failure of a unified India, his prophecy about the despairing future of the next generation resembles his futile attempt to control future by defining it future with certainty. Although Saleem had a penchant for prophecy, as Su points out, it was "undercut by his awareness that all his previous prognostications were wrong" and "since the future defies expectation and representation, Saleem's pessimistic prediction of an India doomed to recurrence also might be wrong" (Su 562). Therefore, the present's inability to predict the future accurately envisions a different India in the text. Thus, in *Midnight's Children* Rushdie undermines a sweeping defeatism of the plot through the contradiction of the form and "the novel's ability to formulate a critique implies that the ideals themselves still endure" (ibid). Interestingly, Rushdie manages to twist a gloomy storyline with a hopeful ending by coalescing the real and the utopian in its final paragraph.

The second example comes from the ending of his recent novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015); however, unlike *Midnight's Children*, herein Rushdie counterbalances a cosmopolitan idealism with a situated realism:

[w]e take pride in saying that we have become reasonable people. We are aware that conflict was the defining narrative of our species, but we have shown that the narrative can be changed. The differences between us, of race, place, tongue, and custom, these differences no longer divide us.

They interest and engage us. We are one. And for the most part we are content with what we have become. We might even say that we are happy. We—we speak briefly of ourselves, and not the greater “we”—we live here in the great city and sing its praise. Flow on, rivers, as we flow on between you, mingle, current of water, as we mingle with human current from elsewhere and from near at hand! We stand by your waters amid the sea gulls and the crowds, and are glad. Men and women of our city, your costumes please us, close-fitting, colorless, fine; great city, your foods, your odors, your speedy sensuality, casual encounters begun, fiercely consummated, discontinued, we accept you all; and meanings jostling in the street, rubbing shoulders with other meanings jostling in the street, the friction brining new meanings unmeant by the meaners who parented them; and factories, schools, places of entertainment and ill repute, our metropolis thrive, thrive! You are our joy and we are yours and so we go together, between the rivers, towards an end beyond which there is no beginning, and beyond that, none, and the dawn city glistening in the sun. (Rushdie 2015: 285)

Rushdie’s tone changes to a sober note in the next paragraph which concludes the novel:

But something befell us when the worlds were sealed off from each other. As the days lengthened into weeks, months into years, as the decades passed, and the centuries, something that once happened to us all every night, every one of us, every member of the greater “we” which we have all become, stopped happening. We no longer dreamt. It may be that this time those slits and holes were closed so tightly that nothing at all could leak through, not even the drips of fairy magic, the heaven-dew, which according to legend fell into our sleeping eyes and allowed us our nocturnal fantasies. Now in sleep there was only darkness. The mind fell dark, so that the great theatre of the night begin its unforeseeable performances, but nothing came. Fewer and fewer of us, in each successive generation, retained the ability to dream, until now we find ourselves in a time when dreams are things we would dream of, if we could only dream. We read of you in ancient books, O dreams, but the dream factories are closed. This is the price we pay for peace, prosperity, understanding, wisdom, goodness, and truth: that the wildness in us, which sleep unleashed, has been tamed, and the darkness in us, which drove the theatre of the night, is soothed. (ibid 285)

If the storyline in this novel spoke of a heady-mix between the worlds of the Jinns and the humans, moving dizzyingly between the past and the future, the concluding paragraphs grounds it in the interplay between the real and the imaginary. Having won the brutal battle with the forces of evil with a heavy-price, Duniya's offspring momentarily pride in their hard-fought victory and freedom, only to become aware of the mundane human-realities surrounding them. Rushdie dents the celebration of their cosmopolitan equality, freedom, and friendship with its more realistic counterpart, where dreams have ended, and the reality has won. This distinctive authorial ability of Rushdie to leverage the socioeconomic and political storylines with an aesthetically motivated utopianism highlight his critical cosmopolitanism.

While a certain type of Marxist critique of Rushdie has remained static over the years, Rushdie's fiction has evolved to accommodate the changing sociopolitical currents in contemporary global society. Over the years, the materialist critique of Rushdie has not moved beyond denouncing him from a Marxist perspective, which is historically valid in itself, but too static for Rushdie's recent fiction. For instance, Timothy Brennan grouped Rushdie with a few other prominent postcolonial writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Bharati Mukherjee, Derek Walcott, and Isabel Allende, and labelled them "Third-World cosmopolitan celebrities" in 1989 (Brennan 1989b: 2). Claiming that these writers flaunt their "'Third World' identities" at international events, Brennan calls their cosmopolitanism as "propelled and defined by media and market" and these cosmopolitan writers, "spokespersons for a kind of perennial immigration" (ibid). If this argument was made in the late 1980s, Brennan appears to reiterate his position in a recent interview with Tapan Kumar Ghosh and Sisir Kumar Chatterjee, published in *Mapping*

Out the Rushdie Republic: Some Recent Surveys (2016). Asked to clarify whether his position on Rushdie has remained the same since the *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989), Brennan admits that he never meant to claim that “Rushdie cannot be said to represent” the Third-World, but also asserts that Rushdie’s fame “was a result of a massive misperception” (Brennan 2016: xlv). That is, the West perceived Rushdie as a balanced and historically grounded postcolonial voice; “whereas he was out of touch with those who made (the Indian) history, and at a great distance – and at times even contemptuous – of their contemporary counterparts,” Brennan believes (ibid xlv-xlv). Further, Brennan observes that Rushdie belongs to “a South Asian academic diaspora (that) wants to be on both sides of the question of authenticity” out of vested interests (ibid). In the final part of his answer, Brennan again targets Rushdie, stating the author’s “career since (1989), as well as the New York, Paris, and London book-market promotion of cosmopolitan authors from the former colonies” vindicate his stand (ibid). For Brennan, then, Rushdie remains intrinsically connected with the literary marketplace of the West and therefore incapable of authentically representing India and its masses. On the contrary, Rushdie’s fiction since *Midnight’s Children* has sought to represent the Third World in general and the India of the masses. In other words, while a certain Marxist criticism has upheld a monolithic view of Rushdie’s fiction, it has evolved to represent the world with a special “determination to create a literary language and literary forms in which the experience of formerly colonized, *still-disadvantaged peoples* (emphasis mine) might find full expression” (Rushdie 1991: 394). The gradual evolution of his literary cosmopolitanism witnesses to this endeavor. Having said that, a clarification is in place here. I am not failing all Marxist critics for their misinterpretation

of Rushdie. I am only responding to a few critics, such as Brennan and those mentioned in the discussion earlier, who discredit Rushdie for his celebrity status that inadvertently attracts the global publishing industry for financial reasons. If the masses struggle to avoid the grasp of globalization, global celebrities find it challenging, too, and Rushdie is no exception. Therefore, it helps to evaluate Rushdie and his fiction from the view point of literary cosmopolitics that highlights the author's worth as a prominent postcolonial cosmopolitan voice in contemporary globalized world. There are tensions and challenges in carrying out the role of critiquing globalization from within it; yet, continuing to fulfill that role with an ever-evolving literary cosmopolitanism certainly demands more recognition and credit than certain Marxists give to Rushdie.

Rushdie's commitment to critique prevalent forms of imperialism from postcolonial perspectives has remained prominent in his fiction, even though its presentation has grown more complex in his latest fiction. Despite the vehement accusations on Rushdie over his alleged nexus with the literary marketplace, he has not lost sight of the need to critique neoliberal capitalism and fundamentalism through fiction. In "Is Nothing Sacred," he spells out the novelists' vital role in contemporary society:

[i]n the last decade of the millennium, as the forces of religion are renewed in strength and as the all-pervasive power of materialism wraps its own weighty chains around the human spirit, where should the novel be looking? It seems clear that the renewal of the old, bipolar field of discourse, between the sacred and the profane, which Michel Foucault proposes, will be of central importance. It seems probable, too, that we may be heading towards a world in which there will be no real alternative to the liberal-capitalist social model... In this situation, liberal capitalism or democracy or the free world will require novelists' most rigorous

attention, will require reimagining and questioning and doubting as never before. (Rushdie 1991: 426-27)

This literary quest to interrogate the new neoliberal world through fiction has shaped Rushdie-novels in the new millennium. Yet, some critics continue to interpret Rushdie's fiction as emblematic of the new globalized literature while others excoriate it for promoting the Americanization of the world.²⁵ Lubric-Cvijanovic and Muzdeka, for example, wonder whether in a bid to keep up with a multicultural world with mixed traditions, cultures, and genres, Rushdie's fiction has transformed from being postmodern-postcolonial to cosmopolitan to now reside "in between and beyond categories" (439). Nevertheless, labelling Rushdie's fiction 'cosmopolitan' and 'globalized' does not imply that "postmodernism and postcolonialism cease to bear any significance in its analysis" – it only draws attention to the challenges a globalized literature will face from "universalization, homogenization, or equation," Lubric-Cvijanovic and Muzdeka surmise. On the other hand, instead of acknowledging the increasing complexity of Rushdie's fiction, Kunow labels it as 'Americanized' in since the new millennium. "Rushdie's cosmopolitanism has...over the last few years undergone significant changes," contends Kunow. "While in his early writing cosmopolitan ideal attached itself to certain realities of India..., his more recent works of criticism and fiction suggest that cosmopolitanism has now acquired a new tone, as it

²⁵ See, for instance, Arjana Luburic-Cvijanovic and Nina Muzdeka, "Salman Rushdie from postmodern and postcolonialism to cosmopolitanism: Toward a Global(ized) Literature?" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 57.4 (2016); 433-47 for the former; and Rudiger Kunow, "Architect of the Cosmopolitan Dream: Salman Rushdie," *American Studies* 51.3 (2006), 369-85 for the latter.

were, sited itself, in the United States” (382).²⁶ Certain passages in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* might seem to support this claim, but there is more to Rushdie’s recent fiction than a locational shift to the United States of America. Rushdie, the cosmopolitan writer, continues to critique anticosmopolitan phenomena such as economic globalization and fundamentalist nationalism from a postcolonial perspective even in his so-called American novels.

The critical cosmopolitanism evident in Rushdie’s fiction exposes the limits of materialist critiques and compels postcolonial theorists to invent new parameters of evaluation. A consistent tendency apparent in most left-leaning or avowedly Marxist critiques of Rushdie, it seems, is to interpret his fiction in light of his life—that is to say, it attacks his fiction on the basis of his personality. Consequently, Marxist critiques have focused on the person of Rushdie rather than discovering the evolving complexities of his fiction. This ossification, in turn, seems to have undermined the materialists’ capacity to offer a robust critique of Rushdie’s novels. Therefore, the preceding analysis of Rushdie’s cosmopolitanism has highlighted the polymorphic nature of his fiction – temporal, magic-realist, anti-nationalist, postmodern, postcolonial, global – in that no fixed categories can fully define it. The failure to recognize this essential feature of his fiction may lead critics to ignore the critical profundity of Rushdie’s oeuvre. By evolving consistently, Rushdie’s fiction strives to depict the contemporary world in all its

²⁶ Timothy Brennan subscribes to this view, lamenting Rushdie’s sympathies for the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 as an unhappy development. “In a climate of dangerous international tension and belligerent imperial designs, Rushdie has become a weather vane for the bellicose social democracy found in his adopted American home—progressive on domestic issues but all caricature when staking out the enemy.” For a full-fledged discussion, see Brennan, *Wars of Position* (New York: Columbia University Press), 65-92.

complexity. His novels channel cultural flows such as migration, world-wide-web, civil wars, and other globalization processes because the so-called public dimension has penetrated private lives to the extent that nothing personal remains unaffected by the global. In the process, his novels might resemble an exoticized commodification of the postcolonial world, but critical cosmopolitanism even debunks the inaccuracy of this perception. Perhaps, *Fury*'s protagonist, who shares striking biographical similarities with the author, powerfully represents the critical dimension of Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism that rises above literature's commodification in the contemporary world. "Sitting on the steps of the great museum, caught in a sudden burst of slanting, golden afternoon sunlight, scanning the *Times* while he waited for Neela, Professor Malik Solanka felt more than ever like a refugee in a small boat, caught between surging tides: reason and unreason, war and peace, the future and the past" (144-5). Rushdie portrays Solanka, the glamorously cosmopolitan creator of an immensely popular entertainment product, brooding on his existential struggle in the center of New York. Through him Rushdie challenges postcolonial studies to describe personal and collective challenges of living in the twenty-first century globalized world as well as imagine new alternatives to it.

Conclusion

A scene from one of Rushdie's more recent novels, *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), succinctly articulates the perils of dismissing a cosmopolitan writer like Salman Rushdie from the literary world. In the latter half of the novel, Rushdie describes the

events of Qara Koz and Vespucci's expulsion from their adopted cities and serves a warning to readers about antagonism towards cosmopolitans. The hospitality and welcome that Florence and Fatehpur Sikri extended to Qara Koz and Vespucci ended abruptly when some locals object to their foreignness and demand expulsion. Consequently, Qara Koz is maligned as a "witch" and Vespucci is expelled by Akbar even before he could complete his tale (Rushdie 2008a: 296). The banishments greatly affected Qara Koz and Vespucci, but their consequences inflicted even greater pain on the citizens themselves. Highlighting the punishments suffered by the two cities after the expulsions, Rushdie warns both cosmopolitans and locals alike: the cosmopolitans should not take for granted their wholehearted acceptance by the locals, and the locals should not invite misfortune by unjustifiably turning hostile towards foreigners and strangers. However, Rushdie lays a greater emphasis on the punishment of the locals as both Florence and Fatehpur Sikri begin to suffer from the lack of water in the immediate aftermath of expulsions: The Arno river in Florence goes dry for a year, while the only source of water in Fatehpur Sikri, the city lake, dries up inexplicably, marking the eventual demise of the city itself. As Thiara remarks, "[t]he drying up of life-giving water signals the decline of Florence and the end of Fatehpur Sikri's status as the empire's capital, but it also stands symbolically for the withering of the cities' cosmopolitanism" (Thiara 428). By the time Akbar becomes aware of the curse he has brought upon himself and the city by dismissing Vespucci from his presence, it was too late. Nevertheless, his words should concern all anti-cosmopolitans.

It was the future that had been cursed, not the present. [...] But once he was gone, all he had thought, all he had worked to make, his philosophy and way of being, all that would evaporate like water. The future would

not be what he had hoped for, but a dry hostile antagonistic place where people would survive as best as they could and hate their neighbors and smash their places of worship. (Rushdie 2008a: 347)

Through the prescient words of Akbar, Rushdie passes a judgment on not only post-Mughal India, but also on modernity itself; its message is stern but clear: in annihilating the cosmopolitans, the locals destroy their own future. *The Enchantress of Florence* conceals a cautionary tale for our times in the wrappings of a four-centuries-old imaginary story. More importantly, this dire warning from Rushdie contains a personal message from the author. In the aftermath of the so-called Rushdie Affair that forced him into a self-imposed exile from public life for nearly a decade, Rushdie's warning echoes his sentiments: silence a cosmopolitan writer and the world loses narratives that promote openness, intermingling, and hybridity at all levels in public life, and becomes susceptible to the inimical powers of religious fundamentalism and economic globalization.

If cosmopolitan writers face rejection from the literary world on account of their multiple allegiances, their place might be usurped by those who propagate parochial, prejudiced or absolutist discourses. Rushdie raises this concern in *Imaginary Homelands*, too. Discussing the difference between religion and literature, he writes,

[i]t is not a dispute of simple opposites. Because whereas religion seeks to privilege one language above all others, one set of values above all others, one text above all others, the novel has always been *about* the way in which different languages, values and narratives quarrel, and about the shifting relation between them, which are relations of power. The novel does not seek to establish a privileged language, but it insists upon the freedom to portray and analyse the struggle between the different contestants for such privileges. (Rushdie 1991: 420)

Arguably, the characteristics that Rushdie attaches to religion can be applied to fascism, fundamentalist nationalism, and economic globalization. These forces, too, tend to privilege one ideology over others, one interpretation over others, and one language over all others. Cosmopolitan writers like Rushdie disrupt the uniformity and standardization these discourses endeavor to force on the world. Their fiction consistently creates space for the perspectives suppressed by all one-dimensional structures of power. However, it is critical that cosmopolitan writers continue to make relevant interventions in the ongoing debates on globalization and nationalism. In their absence, only particularism, exclusivism, and fanaticism will thrive.

Finally, going by Rushdie's assertion in the preceding paragraph about the novel's strength to promote contesting narratives and divergent viewpoints, it is important to note that Rushdie's cosmopolitanism is not the only way to respond to issues of nationalism and globalization. Rushdie provides one model – that of an individualist urban migrant's cosmopolitan vision for the world. Other postcolonial cosmopolitan writers might construct different forms of literary cosmopolitanism to respond to the same challenges. In this context, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy emerge as two other postcolonial writers who share not only Rushdie's entanglement with the literary marketplace, but also his celebrity status. Their responses, therefore, enrich the understanding of postcolonial literary cosmopolitanism derived from Rushdie.

CHAPTER TWO: AMITAV GHOSH'S FAMILIAL-LITTORAL COSMOPOLITANISM

In *When Borne Across*, Bishnupriya Ghosh compares Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh's views on Indianness. Both authors expand the understanding of Indianness to include the diasporic migrants, who continue to relate to India in various ways despite residing outside the country. For Rushdie, the Indian diaspora "is the most interesting feature of India in the latter decades of the twentieth century" – one that offers new ways of being Indian (B. Ghosh 128). Amitav Ghosh shares the Rushdiean "centrality of migrancy to the Indian perspective" to offer "a direct repudiation of the essentialized national subject" (ibid). Insofar as the migrant-Indians carry the Indian culture, values, and ethos with them, India travels along with the migrants, in the process widening the definition of Indianness. "Just as the spaces of India travel with the migrant, India too has no vocabulary for separating the migrant from India," claims Ghosh in his essay, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture" (quoted in B. Ghosh, ibid). However, the similarity ends with the two authors' expanded notion of Indianness in that they significantly differ from each other in conceptualizing the migrancy of diasporic Indians. For Rushdie, it constitutes an individual's journey away from home country, often undertaken in a quest of personal freedom. Rushdie's migrancy is an act of self-assertion and privilege. On the contrary, migrancy for Ghosh becomes symbolic of the predicaments the migrant communities face in diaspora. In Ghosh's fiction, migrancy often alludes to "a physically and socially painful experience for...migrant peoples" (ibid). Therefore, a key difference emerging from Rushdie and Ghosh's perceptions of

migrancy is the following: for Rushdie, a migrant is an educated, urban individual who leaves one's country of birth to become a cosmopolitan citizen of the world through easy mobility; for Ghosh, a migrant is a colonial subject who is forced to leave home by pressing socioeconomic conditions. While Rushdie typically concentrates on the migrant individuals who relocate in the cosmopolitan centers such as London and New York, Ghosh typically portrays postcolonial migrants as members of the diasporic communities

that inhabit marginal spaces such as Burma and Mauritius. Given this distinction, Ghosh's manner of celebrating the Indianness of the diasporic communities departs considerably from that of Rushdie's. The following discussion further spells out the difference by exploring the ways in which Rushdie and Ghosh understand India from cosmopolitan perspectives.

A crucial point to assess Rushdie's cosmopolitan fiction is the centrality of the nation to understanding all cultural and political conflicts. In spite of being an expatriate writer himself, India figures prominently in Rushdie's early fiction, including *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *The Enchantress of Florence*. To a lesser extent, even *Shame* refers to India, although the text primarily satirizes Pakistan, formerly a part of the Indian subcontinent under the British Raj. Thus, India occupies a central place in the Rushdie's imagination—a tendency that the author credits to his departure for England at an early age. "Since then the characters in my fiction have frequently flown west from India," Rushdie explains, "but in novel after novel their author's imagination has returned to it. This, perhaps, is what it means to love a country: that its shape is also yours, the shape of the way you think and feel and dream" (Rushdie

2002: 180). However, India does not occupy a central place in the author's later novels; in fact, even in *The Satanic Verses*, the sole focus is not on India as England becomes the locale of much of the actual story in the text. Therefore, while the nation still remains a major motif in Rushdie's later fiction, India is replaced with England and the USA in novels such as *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, and *Fury*.¹

Irrespective of the country Rushdie engages with in his texts, however, a cosmopolitan critique often informs his views on the nation. Indeed, the nation provides the larger frame of reference to his cosmopolitan critique, which often concentrates on a cosmopolitan's opposition to national and familial rootedness. Rushdie's preoccupation with the nation reflects in his protagonists' fear of becoming geographically and culturally stagnated in the homeland. For instance, in *Midnight's Children*, the narrator Saleem Sinai, unequivocally laments his personal connection with India in the opening paragraph of the text. "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country," he states (Rushdie 2006: 3). Saleem's major struggle concerns crafting a personal history that is distinct from India's. Similarly, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the narrator Umeed Merchant time and again compares India with an inhibiting space that stifles his progress and exploration of the rest of the world. He claims that Bombay, the most iconic city of India and the place of his birth, was so restrictive that he felt like being in his mother's womb, and wonders: "Did I quit Bombay, in other words, because the whole damn city felt like my mother's womb and I

¹ Along with *Shalimar the Clown*, these two texts are cited by scholars as evidence of Rushdie's 'American turn' which has supposedly converted the author from a vociferous critique of Western imperialism to a supporter of US economic and political policies in the aftermath of the Fatwa and the 9/11. See, for instance, Ana Cristina Mendes, *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 145-168.

had to go abroad to get myself born?" (Rushdie 1999: 76). This assertion indicates a birthplace's comparison with a mother's womb, suggesting that an individual must leave it in order to grow. Nevertheless, Rushdie's characters leave their homelands not only to find a space to grow elsewhere but also to sever their ties with family – a connection that keeps them ironically rooted in a place and culture. In the context of the above-cited example, Umeed Merchant feels suffocated in Bombay because he sees the city as entirely claimed by his parents. He muses: "Was it because, between them, they had possessed the city so completely—was it because I felt that the land was theirs—that I decided to award myself the sea?" (ibid). Failure to leave the "womb" i.e. birthplace leads to a slow death and decay. Umeed claims that we to leave home "to avoid the sight of our elders running out of steam. We don't want to see the consequences of their natures and histories catching up with them and beating them, the closing of the trap of life" (ibid 154). Thus, Rushdie's fiction draws a clear contrast between 'home' or 'nation' as the space of rootedness and diminishment, and 'away' as that of individual freedom, growth, and fulfilment.²

If there was any doubt whether Rushdie's cosmopolitanism is conspicuously urban and individualistic, some of his more recent texts provide the answer. *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001) prove the case in point. The protagonists from each text highlight Rushdie's praise for those who migrate to Western cosmopolitan

² Rushdie's tendency to stigmatize 'the home' and the 'the nation' as anticosmopolitan sites finds an echo in recent debates on cosmopolitanism. In her discussion on 'rooted cosmopolitanism' in Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*, Shameem Black clubs the two together as examples of "bounded forms of community" that present challenges to cosmopolitanism. See Shameem Black, "Cosmopolitanism at Home: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (41.3: 2006), 46.

centers as well as his dislike for those who remain attached to their native land. For example, in the former text, Veena Apsara, a half-Indian, half-American girl of phenomenal beauty and huge fan-following unleashes a tirade against everything she dislikes in India: the heat, the rain, the food, the water, the poor people, the rich people, the crowds, the dirt, the smell, the money, the stores, the movies, the dancing, the music, the languages, the schools, the kids, the radio. The astonishing variety of things Veena hates is aptly summed up in her first utterance of the outburst: “I hate India” (Rushdie 1999: 72). Umeed ‘Rai’ Merchant, the other main character in the text, expresses a similarly vociferous dislike for those tied up by the narrow affinities of “family or location or nation or race” as well as those “who value stability, who fear transience, uncertainty, (and) change” (ibid 72-73). In the text, Rushdie makes the two champions of those “*born not belonging*” (ibid). The cosmopolitanism Veena and Umeed project is quite Western in nature, at least insofar as their aversion to India is concerned, and it is very individualistic too. Similarly, in *Fury* (2001), Solanka, a professor from London but originally from Bombay, revels in his new cosmopolitan location, downtown New York. Not surprisingly, Rushdie introduces him as someone “who thought of himself as egalitarian by nature and born-and-bred metropolitan of the countryside-is-for-cows persuasion” at the beginning of the text (Rushdie 2001: 6). One of his love-interests in the text, Neela Mahendra, too, originally hails from India but, being a descendent of a *girmitiya*, an Indian indentured laborer from a remote island in the Indian Ocean, does not maintain any affinity with India, and chooses to sacrifice her life for her adopted country, Lilliput Blefuscu. Like Solanka, Neela also feels completely at ease in the fast-paced and glamorous life-style of New York—a trait typical among Rushdie’s

cosmopolitan characters. Moreover, Umeed and Solanka's biographical similarities with Rushdie – especially their status as middle-aged, well-educated Indian migrants hailing from Mumbai – attest to the author's understanding of the typical cosmopolitan characters as those who resemble him the most: migrant, affluent, self-reliant, and constantly seeking to move closer to the world's most cosmopolitan centers.

Family as Nation

Amitav Ghosh, in contrast, chooses to place the family at the center of his form of cosmopolitanism, despite his urban and cosmopolitan background. Because of his Bengali middle-class roots, Ghosh has inherited a cosmopolitan heritage that overlaps with both colonial and postcolonial Indian history. For instance, Inderpal Grewal identifies Ghosh as a writer who “comes from a particular social formation, the Bengali English-educated middle class created by British colonization in India during the nineteenth century” (Grewal 180). While a tailor-made British education equipped most of the target group with “a colonial cosmopolitanism,” Grewal infers, “[it] was nevertheless a condition of possibility for” a postcolonial cosmopolitanism of the 1990s (ibid). Having received a British education in India and England, Amitav Ghosh has been influenced by both forms of cosmopolitanisms during his formative years. Moreover, insofar as cosmopolitanism involves transcending national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries in order to cultivate multiple affiliations and affinities, Ghosh can boast of a remarkably cosmopolitan background. He was born in India, educated at Oxford, and has

taught at universities in the United States of America.³ Even though, Ghosh primarily writes in English, he is fluent in Bengali and Hindi, and can speak Arabic. Ghosh's cosmopolitanism flows into his writing as well: while his fiction includes settings in India, the Middle East, Britain, China, and Burma, it also draws considerably from disciplines history, anthropology, and the natural sciences for plot development.⁴ Given these credentials, Ghosh might be presumed to advocate a cosmopolitanism similar to Rushdie's – individualistic and urban. Yet, Ghosh prefers to highlight the role of the family in fostering a distinctly South Asian cosmopolitanism that thrived on the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His novels, *The Glass Palace*, *The Circle of Reason*, *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire*, in particular, provide examples of his tendency to involve vast, transnational geographical territories as locales, and groups of closely-bonded people—friends, fellow-travelers, or family members—as main characters. This technique helps Ghosh to critique the imperial version of individualistic, West-centered cosmopolitanism, and promote his own version of it that draws inspiration from the family and family-like bonds to establish

³ Besides these general details, Ghosh's cosmopolitan background includes visiting countries like Bangladesh, Iran, and Sri Lanka in childhood; studying at prestigious institutions such as St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, New Delhi (1969-73), St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, (1979), and teaching stints as visiting Professor at University of Virginia (1988), and Columbia University (1989, 1994), and speaking at several prestigious institutes around the world. For more details, see Chitra Sankaran (ed.), *History, Narrative, and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), ix-xi.

⁴ Ghosh credits his awareness of the limitations of writing postcolonial fiction in English to his multilingual background. Similarly, he praises the novel as a complete form for the expression of the human predicament because of his first-hand knowledge of the limitations of history, anthropology, and sociology in this regard. See, Clair Chambers, "The Absolutes Essentialness of Conversations': A Discussion with Amitav Ghosh" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 41.1 (2005), 26-39.

cosmopolitan communities, capable of transcending not only social but also religious and cultural differences.

Ghosh's rejection of the individualist and urban cosmopolitan in favor of the poor migrants' cosmopolitanism can be traced to his idea of what constitutes postcolonial India. If imperialism annihilates the colonized people's sense of a connection with a ruler, Ghosh believes it also crushes their individuality in the long run. In other words, the imperial power not only deprives the subjugated population of their emotional attachment to a political figurehead, but also leaves it "with a sort of atavistic individualism" (Kumar 102). There is a direct correspondence, then, between the colonial loss of sociopolitical cohesiveness and the absence of a sense of identity or individualism among the colonized. This is not the case, however, among Rushdie's characters, who display a conspicuous individuality and assert their identity at both home and away. Interestingly, Rushdie compares himself to one of his characters from *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Aurora, the narrator's mother and a famous artist from Bombay. In an interview, Rushdie describes her as one of his favorite characters who is "very noisy, sexually predatory, aggressive, a brilliant painter, and...determined to put her art above the considerations of a private life and so on. She's like me" (Herwitz and Varshney 26). In Aurora, there is no slightest hint of the timidity, mildness, and subservience generally associated with Indian women. Ghosh, in contrast, considers characters such as Aurora quite urban and therefore not really representative of the real India. Declaring his predilection for those on the periphery, those deprived of privileges of education and wealth, Ghosh claims the following in a discussion about his fiction:

I'm just not interested in writing about pop culture and Bombay. It's not that I dislike it, I think there's a lot to be written and other people are writing those books. But I'm drawn to rural India, to marginal India, I'm drawn to marginal people in India, I'm drawn to marginal people around the world, I'm drawn to Burmese, Cambodians, the obscure figures, defeated figures and people who salvage some sort of life out of wreckage...these characters appeal to me, they interest me. (Sankaran 13)

The author's preference for the marginalized or the subalterns from the remote and less-modernized parts of the world suggests a rejection of the individualist, urban, and savvy postcolonial cosmopolitan portrayed in Rushdie's fiction. This disavowal, I will argue, prepares the way for Ghosh to develop his own vision of the cosmopolitan postcolonial subject—one who compensates for the lack of a strong sense of nationality and identity with the family and the community.

Understanding why Ghosh focuses on family for his cosmopolitan vision, however, requires a familiarity with his views on the nation as an inadequate category for postcolonial writers. While Ghosh acknowledges the relevance of nation-states in the contemporary world political order, he detects their steady deterioration, both in the West and East.⁵ The erosion among nation-states has come about in two distinct ways,

⁵ In an interview with T. Vijay Kumar, Ghosh underlines the political importance of the nation states, citing the example of two South Asian postcolonial nations: India and Pakistan. Their contrasting histories and diverse patterns of ongoing development, convince Ghosh of the need to take nation states seriously. Ghosh asserts, "I think nations do matter, they matter profoundly and it's a kind of solipsism to pretend otherwise. I think most of all we see this in the subcontinent, more than in any other place in the world. That India as a project has taken a different shape from, say, Pakistan as a project, and this is a very serious, important and real difference. And the project of India of, let us say, Nehru or Subhash Chandra Bose is completely different from the project of India that's in the mind of, say, the BJP. These are very serious material differences, and one has to take them seriously. C. L. R. James says somewhere that we have to understand that our Indian leaders used to talk about productivity, which many leaders [at that time] never did! That's something very important that people talked about producing, of working, of making a life, a living, and of making a viable kind of entity which I feel very proud that today India has increasingly become. This is not the case with, say, Pakistan certainly, but also not with Nepal, or with Sri

according to Ghosh: from the top, such as in the West where the rich nations have merged with one another to form transnational entities like the EU, G8, allowing “people [to] travel freely from one [nation] to the other” and from the bottom, such as in the East where “if you travel now between so many parts of, say, Burma, Thailand and India, there really are no borders, it’s completely porous” because of insurgencies (Kumar 102). Although these countries are sovereign nations by designation, warlords control parts of their territories, thus undermining state power. Ghosh blames the oppressive colonial systems that have left the postcolonial nations struggling to establish themselves firmly long after their independence. Describing colonialism’s devastating effect on the colonized people and their ‘nation’, Ghosh declares, “one of the things that you suddenly realize is that really what imperialism does is that it breaks, completely takes apart, that sort of overarching structure of society. It removes your king, it removes your belief in the wider organisms, so the wider cause of society completely disintegrates” (ibid 102). Therefore, the postcolonial writers cannot imagine the nation correctly in their fiction for they lack a ready familiarity with the subsets of the nation such as “the background, milieu, setting, dialects...a culture or a class...or a generation,” Ghosh argues in an email correspondence with the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002: 166). The nation, then, along with class, generation, and culture, remains a challenging concept for most postcolonial authors.

Lanka even. So, I think nation states are very important, and one ignores them at one’s own peril (101). See, T. Vijay Kumar, “‘Postcolonial’ Describes You As a Negative.” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 9.1 (2007): 99-105.

In the absence of a strong sense of the nation, the family assumes a central position for Ghosh as a unit of society that sustains people's sense of identity and belonging in the postcolonial world. Ghosh identifies the lack of a robust social cohesion through a national culture as the reason for postcolonial authors' tendency to promote the family metaphor in postcolonial fiction. He further claims that is "why Indian (and African) writers so often look to a different kind of collectivity, the family" (Ghosh 2002: 166). Making a direct comparison between the nation and the family in relation to his fiction, Ghosh declares: "In my case, the family narrative has been one way of stepping away from the limitations of 'nation' etc. – I think this is true also of many others" (ibid). Substituting the nation with the family proves an effective strategy for Ghosh at two levels: one, it allows him to avoid portraying people always in the postcolonial context, that is, as a people of a formerly colonized country; two, it facilitates a greater focus on people's predicaments in their concrete sociohistorical conditions rather than as allegories of the nation. Ghosh eschews the term 'postcolonial' owing to its historical and temporal references to colonialism; continuing to call former colonies as postcolonial derecognizes their individual identity, independence, and sovereignty, according to Ghosh. For instance, in an interview with T. Vijay Kumar, Ghosh defines the postcolonial as a condition of negativity because it ultimately derives from a history of colonialism. Explaining his dislike for the term postcolonial, Ghosh states:

'postcolonial' is essentially a term that describes you as a negative. I mean, when I think of the world that I grew up to inhabit, my dominant memory of it is not that it was trying to be a successor state to a colony; it was trying to create its own reality, which today is the reality that we do inhabit. (Kumar 105)

In a way, privileging the family metaphor to describe the people of former colonies avoids the negativity associated with the term ‘postcolonial’ in Ghosh’s understanding. Similarly, the family metaphor also counteracts essentializing postcolonial nations, such as evident in Frederic Jameson’s allegory of the nation. Commenting on this trend popularized Jameson, Ghosh denounces it strongly and points out the centrality of the family in postcolonial fiction. In an interview with Frederick Aldama, Ghosh describes the Jamesonian allegory-of-the-nation idea as “a load of rubbish” (Aldama 89). Ghosh asserts that “[m]any of my books, if not all of my books, have really been centered on families. To me, the family is the central unit, because it’s *not* about the nation, you know? Families can actually span nations” (ibid). For Ghosh, it is quite evident to postcolonial writers who, therefore, place the family above the nation. “I think the reason why you see so many Indian books essentially centered on the family is precisely because the nation is not, as it were, the central imaginative unit,” Ghosh asserts. (Aldama 90). Not surprisingly, then, in Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*, the family becomes a sustaining link for the main characters - such as Rajkumar, Dinu, and Jaya – in their predicaments across time and space. The text “actually ranges between what are now many different nations, so it’s absolutely not about a nation, or one nation or whatever,” declares Ghosh, adding that “[t]he fact that it has been *structured around the family is absolutely essential to its narration...I mean the family is absolutely critical to my narration*” (emphasis mine) (Aldama 89). A focus on the family, therefore, enables readers to see postcolonial people constructing their identities out of social relationships that span beyond the geopolitical borders of postcolonial nations and provide a support structure in diasporic milieus.

In Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy, the act of crossing geopolitical borders to sustain familial relationships and cultivate new affinities with strangers on the basis of a shared destiny as fellow-migrants assumes a special significance. The three volumes of the trilogy – *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015) revolve around an unlikely couple Deeti and Kalua's struggle for survival as girmitiyas, i.e. indentured Indian laborers from British India, in the historical backdrop of the First Opium War (1839-1842) between the United Kingdom and the Chinese Empire. The most striking image Ghosh employs in the trilogy is that of the ship, the *Ibis*, that carries a group of indentured laborers, including Deeti and Kalua, to Mauritius in 1838. From what transpires on their journey, the ship comes to symbolize a migrant community's bonds of relationship, resilience in the face of oppression and exploitation, and the triumph of a familial cosmopolitanism among colonial migrants. The *Ibis* provides the girmitiyas, along with a few Asian sailors and two convicts, the space to develop not only family-like bonds of trust and mutual affection among themselves but also empowers them to challenge the two oppressive powers they encounter along the way: the British colonialism, and the Indian caste system. It seems as if the *Ibis* encouraged the protagonists to cross sociocultural boundaries while transporting them across geopolitical borders. In Ghosh's trilogy, then, the *Ibis* also becomes a symbolic home for the cosmopolitan community of girmitiyas, sailors, and political prisoners to develop a solidarity that allows them to nurture a familial spirit even when separated by unfavorable circumstances and antagonistic powers.

The familial cosmopolitanism that Ghosh envisions in his early fiction further evolves in the *Ibis* trilogy to acquire an added dimension of the *littoral*. While

communitarian relationships fostered by close-knit social connections remains the distinguishing feature of Ghosh's fiction in general, his intense focus on the events on the ship in the *Ibis* trilogy – both in terms of their immediate impact on the sailing community and its historical significance in their lives – necessitates examining familial cosmopolitanism in conjunction with its counterpart, the littoral. The latter term denotes two interrelated meanings in this chapter: one, the ship that represents a special space on the water that is at once replicative of the social hierarchies of the land, and antagonistic to it – such as the *Ibis*; two, the unbounded dynamism signified by the constantly shifting parameters of land and sea. Noticeably, this understanding of the littoral differs from a general sense of the term as “of, relating to, or situated or growing on or near a shore especially of the sea.”⁶ The specialized sense of the littoral applied in this chapter differs also from Pearson's explanation of the concept. In “Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems,” Pearson states: “[t]his then is the littoral: the coastal sea zone, the beach, and some indeterminate frontier on land” (354). Pearson narrows down the littoral largely to life on the coast in order to analyze littoral societies; Ghosh, on the other hand, I would argue, broadens the concept to include the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of life at sea that shape life on land for all those who straddle the two spaces, for instance, the characters in the *Ibis* trilogy. In this respect, the littoral in this analysis echoes Gabriel and Rosa's conceptualization of the term as “an expansive, complex and interactive geo-historical nexus of plurality and simultaneity” (Gabriel and Rosa 118). Nevertheless, for

⁶ As defined in Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/littoral>.

the purposes of this chapter, the littoral strictly refers to the ship and the sea in relation to Ghosh's familial cosmopolitanism.

The Family Metaphor and a Familial Cosmopolitanism

In light of the above discussion, I would argue that through his fiction Ghosh has developed a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism that privileges family and family-like relationships among migrant communities and enables individuals to remain in close contact with their sociocultural roots while seeking cosmopolitan connections with strangers on the littoral space. I would further contend that in his later fiction Ghosh develops the concept of the littoral more fully, which is present alongside the family metaphor in his early fiction as well. In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh employs the littoral metaphor to emphasize the liberative potential of familial cosmopolitanism; moreover, it is through the littoral that the author throws into relief the stark contrast between a corporately motivated Western cosmopolitanism and a relationally inspired familial cosmopolitanism. The latter evolves through sociocultural aspects such as marital and extramarital relationships, friendships, and linguistic multiculturalism. The overall claim of this chapter is that through his historical fiction Ghosh promotes a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism that is both postcolonial and South Asian.

Ghosh's cosmopolitanism is unique in contemporary postcolonial fiction because of its four characteristics. Distinct from Appiah's notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism,' which encourages an attitude of immersion in one's own culture and country while being

open to those of others, distinct from Fanon's 'postcolonial cosmopolitanism,' which aims to remember colonial history rather than elide it with a view to realizing the ideals the latter has failed to uphold in practice, and distinct even from Bishnupriya Ghosh's notion of 'situated cosmopolitanism,' which envisages a social imaginary rooted in democratic self-rule and cosmopolitics, Ghosh's cosmopolitanism combines not only 'home' and 'world' but also 'family' and 'community' as well as 'land' and 'sea' in a unique vision of a South Asian littoral cosmopolitanism.⁷ As we shall see, each of these

⁷ Appiah compares 'rooted cosmopolitanism' with 'cosmopolitan patriotism' and describes a 'rooted cosmopolitan' as one "attached to a home of his or her own, with its cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different, people. The cosmopolitan also imagines that in such a world not everyone will find it best to stay in a natal patria, so that the circulation of people among different localities will involve not only cultural tourism...but migration, nomadism, diaspora. Shameem Black, in her essay, "Cosmopolitanism at Home: Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*," argues that Ghosh promotes a version of Appiah's 'rooted cosmopolitanism' through his fiction by bringing the domestic and the foreign in conversation through the metaphor of 'home' as an essential part of a cosmopolitan sensibility. See Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots" in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 91-114; and Shameem Black, "Cosmopolitanism at Home: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (41.3: 2006), 45-65.

Similarly, Fanon's 'postcolonial cosmopolitanism' emerges out of his dissatisfaction with colonial rulers' hypocrisy inherent in the colonial ideal of global citizenship and its distorted practice, favoring Europeans over non-Europeans as the beneficiaries of this ideal. Fanon detects a contradiction between colonialism's ideals and practices on three counts: (a) colonialism and its dehumanizing effects; (b) the sociopolitical bifurcation, and (c) the economic exploitation of the colonized. To counter colonialism's contradictions Fanon advocates evolving a 'postcolonial cosmopolitanism' that is "constructed by the colonized rather than adopted from their colonizers; something...sought, created, cultivated, crafted and nurtured on other grounds." It seeks to achieve the following objective: A promotion of a Non-Western cosmopolitanism that engages with Western imperialism to allow the latter to learn from its troubled history of domination and exploitation. See Julian Go, "Fanon's Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism," (*European Journal of Social Theory* 16.2: 2013), 213.

B. Ghosh develops the concept of the 'situated literary cosmopolitics' to define cosmopolitan postcolonial writers' efforts to challenge the globalization-reinforced forms of nationalism in the postcolonial world. She identifies three major characteristics of this concept: (1) a linguistic localism which captures the distinctness of a postcolonial literary text, (2) vernacularity, (3) a self-reflexive communication style, and (4) a political commitment to the Third-World socioeconomic concerns. See Bishnupriya Ghosh, *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 1-13.

categories has progressively shaped Ghosh's vision of cosmopolitanism – a development most evident in the *Ibis* trilogy. Its salient features could be described as follows: one, Ghosh's rejection of an individualistic, urban cosmopolitanism leads him to disavow the category of the nation as well. The nation has been used by some proponents of an individualistic cosmopolitanism such as Rushdie to establish an ideological opposition between the two categories. Two, the author instead chooses the category of the 'family' in order to find a healthy interaction between home and away in a communitarian cosmopolitanism that emerges out of the family and not as a result of a departure from it. Three, the 'family' functions as both a literal and a metaphorical image of Ghosh's form of cosmopolitanism in that it nurtures the subaltern's cosmopolitan spirit through the family and inspires them to reach out to strangers with openness and acceptance to create new family-like relationships in far-off places. Finally, Ghosh's cosmopolitanism thrives on the littoral as the space between the land and the sea that empowers migrants to resist the oppression unleashed on them by both the unjust social structures and the imperial system, especially British colonialism in India.

Although unique and distinctive, Ghosh's literary cosmopolitanism bears certain resemblances with a few recent varieties of the concept. Since the turn of the millennium, cultural theorists such as Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gerard Delanty, and Vinay Dharwadker have developed non-hegemonic

and non-Western forms of cosmopolitanism to make it more relevant to the twenty-first century globalized world. Ghosh's vision of a family-centered littoral cosmopolitanism echoes some concerns raised by these theorists regarding the ongoing evolution of cosmopolitanism as a philosophical, political, cultural, and literary concept. For instance, Breckenridge, Pollock, Bhabha, and Chakrabarty's attempt to identify and celebrate non-Western forms of cosmopolitanism that flow from periphery to periphery and do not seek to distil into a singular tradition like cosmopolitanism in the West. Their approach compares well with Ghosh's endeavor to re-create and re-establish a distinctly Asian precolonial cosmopolitanism in *In An Antique Land*.⁸ Similarly, Chakrabarty's famous argument in *Provincializing Europe* that Europe is "not an adequate intellectual resource for thinking about the conditions for political modernity in colonial and postcolonial India" resonates with Ghosh's condemnation of British imperialism's justification of colonizing India on the basis of the latter's lack of egalitarianism in *The Glass Palace* (Chakrabarty 15). In particular, the character of Uma exposes the hollow logic of colonialism that ultimately derives its strength from Western Enlightenment-led modernity. Likewise, Delanty's 'critical cosmopolitanism' – which concerns itself with establishing a dynamic relationship between the global and the local and highlights the role of people as agents of intercultural dialogues – resembles to Ghosh's idea of a familial cosmopolitanism. As developed in the *Ibis* trilogy, a familial cosmopolitanism

⁸ Breckenridge et al. contribute to the debate on cosmopolitanism through a collection of essays, which include discussions on indigenous expression of linguistic, cultural, and political cosmopolitanisms in the global South. These essays draw a clear distinction between the universal, theoretical, abstract, and conceptual forms of Western cosmopolitanism, and the practical, grounded, and feminist types of local cosmopolitanisms of the East. Breckenridge and co-authors propose an important concept of 'a cosmopolitanism from the periphery' which evolves on the margins and spreads across the margins without assuming any ideological pretensions – an idea also promoted by Ghosh in the *Ibis* trilogy.

unites the universal and the particular, the foreign and the domestic through cosmopolitan narratives of South Asian immigrants.⁹ Finally, Dharwadker assertion that “the cosmopolite is a classical creature, a figure of antiquity – and not just in Europe alone” mirrors Ghosh’s portrayal of the Buddhist monks who spoke Indian languages and sheltered non-Chinese people in their monasteries in *The Flood of Fire*.¹⁰ These resemblances indicate that Ghosh’s cosmopolitanism, although unique in the genre of historical fiction, is in conversation with non-Eurocentric, anticolonial cosmopolitan theories. Ghosh’s conscious attempt to highlight non-Western and non-European forms of universalisms recorded in history, especially those on the Indian subcontinent, in Egypt, and on the Indian ocean reflects this similarity. Furthermore, Ghosh’s emphasis on the role of cosmopolitan communities in promoting dialogue and amicable relationships among people of diverse sociocultural backgrounds is also a major outcome of this conversation.

With a view to underlining the role of the family in non-Western cosmopolitanisms, Ghosh places the family at the center of his fiction. For Ghosh, the family remains an important part of a cosmopolitan’s identity – both socially and

⁹ See, Gerard Delanty, “The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory,” (*The British Journal of Sociology* 57.1: 2006), 25-47.

¹⁰ As an illustration of a non-European, ancient cosmopolitanism, Dharwadker mentions the *Sangha of bhikkus* (almsmen) and *bhikkunis* (almswomen) – the community of Buddhist monks and nuns that was founded around 500 B.C. These community was “open to anyone, regardless of caste, wealth, rank, sex, or ethnic origin.” In the same manner, Ghosh’s Buddhist monastery in Honam Island surprises Neel for its cosmopolitanism as he encounters Bhojpuri-speaking Tibetan monks who had spent a considerable amount of time in Gaya in Northern India. For more information on this comparison, see Vinay Dharwadker, *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 6; and Amitav Ghosh, *Flood of Fire* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 135-136.

emotionally. His cosmopolitan characters deliberately seek to maintain family connections and regret these are broken. In *The Circle of Reason*, for instance, Zindi, one of the most cosmopolitan characters in text who cares little for what people make of her image as a prostitute, deeply laments the fact that her own family in Egypt had severed all ties with her, and on finding the doors of the house closed for her, she felt as if “she would not live to see another day” (Ghosh 2005: 364). In a desperate attempt to cling on to some connection with her loved ones, Zindi breaks open the door open and steals a few valuables; nevertheless, even though those objects carried a sentimental value for her, as the narrator remarks poignantly: “they could make no difference to a woman who had lost her nephews, nieces, land, even the magic of the name she had chosen for herself” (ibid). Moreover, the narrator also describes her as a “mother of nothing, poor, simple, (and) barren Fatheyya” (ibid). Thus, Ghosh seems to relate a cosmopolitan’s sense of identity to his/her emotional closeness with relatives, home, and native place. In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh introduces Saya John, the Malay businessman in Burma, as a “*dhobi ka kutta*” – a laundryman’s dog, figuratively a person who belongs neither to one place nor another (Ghosh 2001: 9). Obviously, Ghosh describes Saya insultingly owing to his lack of family identity and roots. For all his entrepreneurial success in Burma, Saya remains a person without an identity, without a family background. This is how, Ghosh underlines the importance of strong family connections for his cosmopolitan characters by describing the negativity and trauma they suffer without such connections.

The emphasis Ghosh places on familial connections between cosmopolitan characters further becomes evident in *The Glass Palace* through some of the women characters in the text. Even though the text evolves out of the personal and familial

histories of male characters such as King Thebaw, Burma's last king, Rajkumar, the Indian boy who goes on to become a successful entrepreneur, and his friend, Saya John, the women also play an important role in establishing the importance of the family in different ways. For instance, Thebaw's eldest daughter, the First Princess, chooses to travel back to Ratnagiri, after accompanying her mother back to Rangoon, in order to reunite with her husband, the coachman Sawant, and their children. Ghosh describes her as "a true daughter of her dynasty, every inch a Konbaung – her love for her family's former coachman proved just as unshakable as her mother's devotion to the late King" (Ghosh 2001: 183). As Ghosh points out, these women opted to live in foreign lands out of a love for their families, thus making a direct link between their cosmopolitan adventures and familial attachment. In other words, Ghosh establishes an unmistakable link between the Queen and her daughter's love for their families, i.e., husband and children, and the cosmopolitan life they chose to live. The Queen migrated to Madras and Ratnagiri, learnt the local languages and customs to remain loyal to her exiled husband, King Thebaw; her daughter, The First Princess, on the other hand, chose to return to Ratnagiri and live as a commoner to reunite with her husband, a local Maratha man of humble origins. Thus, it was the love of family that enabled these women to embrace a cosmopolitan way of life. Similarly, Uma, the widowed wife of Ratnagiri's Bengali collector, Beni Prasad Dey relishes the liberty of a free woman while on a tour of Europe and America but overcomes with emotion on remembering her deceased husband in London. The kindness and eagerness shown to her by the collector's friends and acquaintances in London evoke strong memories of Mr. Dey. Consequently, her decision to leave London was guided by the notion that "the whole city was conspiring to remind

her of her late husband” (Ghosh 2001: 165). Even while traveling around the world, “reveling in this sense of being at liberty,” Uma misses her only familial connection in the world – her late husband. Later Uma also detects a cosmopolitan connection among her friends and their children. Looking at Neel and Dinu, and Alison and Timmy, the children of Rajkumar and Dolly, and Matthew and Elsa, Uma imagines their faces as “inscribed [with] the history of her friendships and the lives of her friends – the stories and trajectories that had brought Elsa’s life into conjunction with Matthew’s Dolly’s with Rajkumar’s, Malacca with New York, Burma with India (ibid 195). Alison, on her part, underlines another aspect of the familial cosmopolitanism: the mutual need for emotional support among relatives. Having been born in New York and raised in Burma, Saya John’s granddaughter Alison sorely misses her grandfather’s emotional support in the aftermath of her parents’ death in a road accident. She finds it devastating to accept that her grandfather, “an unfailing source of support,” had lost his sanity “in the hour of her greatest need, (and) chosen to become a burden” (ibid 280). Through these cosmopolitan women characters, then, Ghosh underlines the strong family bonds they cherished.

In a way, the domesticity enshrined in the ending of *The Glass Palace* reaffirms Ghosh’s idea of a familial cosmopolitanism of the international novel.¹¹ Inadvertently written in the manner of the nineteenth-century dynastic European novel, the novel spans nations and chronicles the story of a large family, connected both by kinship and

¹¹ I borrow the phrase, ‘cosmopolitanism of the international novel’ from Inderpal Grewal who employs it to describe the cosmopolitan novels written by Bengali writers in the early decades of the twentieth century. Grewal argues that Ghosh enjoys a direct connection with this literary tradition as a Bengali writer himself. See Inderpal Grewal, “Amitav Ghosh: Cosmopolitanisms, Literature, Transnationalisms,” in *The Postcolonial and the Global*, Eds. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 180-83.

marriage over three generations.¹² The cosmopolitan character of the text emerges out of the vast geographical areas and wide-ranging cultural and linguistic diversity it covers within that family history: the plot meanders through countries such as India, Burma, England, and the United States, and brings the colonial histories of India and Burma, and to some extent that of Ireland, into frequent conversation with that of Rajkumar's extended family, which becomes inextricably intertwined with the sociopolitical upheavals on the Indian subcontinent in the twentieth century. The narrative rambles through diverse landscapes, borders, and geographic regions to thrive on a delightful mixture of storytelling, narration, history, and fiction. Yet, in contrast to the novel's impressive cosmopolitan framework, its ending, however, presents a rare image of domesticity in that it describes, in some detail, the physical intimacy between Rajkumar and his lifelong political adversary Uma through the eyes of the former's great-grandson. Ending the text in this way creates a sense of bewilderment on the one hand, and a sense of frustration on the other. Why would a story so rich in its expanse and historical context conclude with a somewhat distasteful scene of promiscuity between two aging members of the family? Why should the promise of a nonviolent nationalist-resistance, exemplified by Uma's political transformation as a Gandhian midway through the text, be allowed to dissipate in favor of a domestic infidelity? All the same, the ending of the text makes better sense when viewed in the context of Ghosh's own understanding of the

¹² In response to a question about the novel's formal similarity to the European dynastic novel, Ghosh denied any conscious attempt on his part in this regard, stating that "if anything, the book is written in a form that is mimicking a memoir. The book started as a family memoir, a project chronicling a family history." He further defined the nature of the memoir as 'contemporary' as opposed to that of the nineteenth century, and insists that *The Glass Palace* is essentially about a family and not a nation or nations. See Aldama, Frederick Luis Aldama, "An Interview with Amitav Ghosh," *World Literature Today* (76.2: 2002), 87-89.

relationship between the domestic and the cosmopolitan. For Ghosh, ultimately, the local provides the space and orientation for a cosmopolitan outlook to flourish, as he makes it clear in his discussion of the international novel. Any cosmopolitanism evolves out of people's interaction with the local that gradually becomes interesting to others around the world. In his essay, "The March of the Novel through History: The Testimony of my Grandfather's Bookcase," Ghosh writes: "The paradox of the novel as a form is that it is founded upon a myth of parochiality, in the exact sense of a parish – a place named and charted, a definite location" (Ghosh 2010, 296). Over a period of time, the best of the novels become consecrated as "universal 'literature,' a form of artistic expression that embodies differences in place and culture, emotion and aspiration, but in such a way as to render them communicable," Ghosh surmises (ibid 294).¹³ Thus, a form of belonging at the local level becomes universal through the cosmopolitanism of the novel; in other words, the particularity of the story transcends its parochialism through the international distribution and consumption of the novel as a cultural capital, which in its turn inspires the domestic subjects to become cosmopolitan. Perhaps, Ghosh reflects on his experience as a Bengali cosmopolitan, who grew up reading cosmopolitan literature as a direct result of the universalization of Rabindranath Tagore's writings in the aftermath of winning the Nobel Prize. As Grewal indicates, "Ghosh's participation in the production and consumption of [the international] novels... becomes possible through [the] familial and colonial history" of his grandfather's collection of world literature and Tagore's Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 (Grewal 182). Comparing the larger historical background of

¹³ In this essay, Ghosh mentions Tagore's Nobel Prize as the catalyst for a euphoria among the Bengali readers for international novels since the early twentieth century, which also gave them a sense of a cultural cosmopolitanism as consumers of world literature.

Ghosh's upbringing and Bengali literary history with the ending of *The Glass Palace*, then, allows us to see the latter in a positive light. Both Rajkumar and Uma were essentially family-loving individuals who became transformed by cosmopolitan interests: Rajkumar with a transnational business venture, and Uma with the Indian freedom movement. Ghosh seems to make no distinction between Rajkumar and Uma's adventurously cosmopolitan past and embarrassingly senile present.

However, in the twilight of life both returned to the safety and security of the family, perhaps in grateful acknowledgement of the role family had played in their cosmopolitan ventures. Seen in this light, a rather domestic ending of *The Glass Palace*, in fact, consecrates the family as that sacred ground where cosmopolitanism is nurtured. Finally, the description of this incident by Jaya's son, who reveals himself as the narrator of the entire family saga, further validates this union. Rajkumar and Jaya are not only connected by familial relationships in the past but also share descendants who promise to preserve their cosmopolitan spirit. The ending then represents Ghosh's unwavering faith in family's fundamental place in the cosmopolitan's life. That said, *The Glass Palace's* ending is unusual in all of Ghosh's fiction. The larger trend is that of celebrating the family ideal in cosmopolitan surroundings, as evident in the *Ibis* trilogy.

Recognizing how Ghosh reintroduces the theme of familial cosmopolitanism in *Sea of Poppies* is crucial to understanding its full-fledged expression in the *Ibis* trilogy. The first novel of the trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*, celebrates cosmopolitan familial connections in the historical background of the Opium Wars between China and the British imperial forces in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, Ghosh

primarily relates the story of a group of girmityas – Indian indentured laborers – on their way to *Mareech Dweep*, whose lives destinies were greatly affected by the British opium trade on the subcontinent. Even though, the girmityas had apparently left their homeland and everything else they held dear there in order to begin a new life on some plantation far away on the Indian Ocean, most of them clung to the memories of the loved ones they had left behind. In the text, Ghosh captures the emotional struggle of the group to come to terms with the reality of forced separation from their family; in particular, he highlights their predicament through two characters: Deeti, a warrior-caste woman who eloped with the dalit Kalua, and Neel, a Bengali rajah whom the British authorities sentenced to seven years of hard labor in exile. For the former, even though leaving India for Mauritius meant a new promise of familial happiness with freedom and dignity, the cost of realizing it was too dear in that she had to leave her only child Kabutri, born of her first marriage in Bihar, India. Ghosh depicts the characters' struggle over choosing a cosmopolitan way of life on the one hand and having to sever family ties on the other hand. When Kalua insinuates that Deeti might have to leave Kabutri behind so as to make a hasty exit to Calcutta, the latter furiously asks him: "How could he imagine that she would agree to abandon her daughter forever?" (Ghosh 2008: 190). Nevertheless, with no other alternative, when she finally decides to part from her and sends her away to her brother's family, "it was as if Deeti's last connection with life had been severed. From that moment she knew no further hesitation: with her habitual care, she set about making plans for her own end" (ibid 146). Yet, Deeti's attachment with her daughter grows stronger on the ship instead of weakening over time: Kabutri's was the first portrait Deeti drew on the roof of the *Ibis* to keep her memory alive – an act indicative of the fact that

Deeti always remained emotionally attached to daughter, even though she had to leave her behind to become a girmitiya on a faraway island. Likewise, Neel, a former rajah, displays a similarly strong attachment to his wife and son. After learning about his seven-year exile, he utters a few words of promise to his wife. Neel declares not only his love for them, but also what will be the guiding light of his life away from home. In response to his wife's plea to stay alive for the family's sake, Neel answers: "I *will* stay alive. I make you this promise: I will. And when these seven years are over, I will return, and I will take you both away from this accursed land and we will start new lives in some other place" (ibid 249). Perhaps, Ghosh is suggesting here that while a subaltern like Deeti could never hope to meet with her child ever again and therefore she keeps alive her memory through art, an aristocrat-turned-exile like Neel strongly hopes to reunite with his family in the future through a successful cosmopolitan adventure. However, Ghosh poignantly expresses the attachment each of them carried for their loved ones.

Ghosh's *River of Smoke* expands upon the centrality of family in the lives of cosmopolitans by depicting their sincere efforts to reconnect with blood-relations in creative ways. While the text brings the readers closer to the events directly responsible for the first Opium War, Ghosh again highlights the individual predicaments of the characters to comment on the larger historical events. For example, rather than analyzing the political circumstances that ignited the First Opium War, Ghosh allows individual actors such as Bahram Moddie, Chi Mei, Neel, Paulette, and Zadig Bey to give readers a sense of the inevitable. It evidences Ghosh's penchant for presenting the imperial history through minor actors. That said, the characters' love and attachment towards their families find expression throughout the text. For instance, *River of Smoke* opens with

Deeti leading the entire Clover Clan, her children and grandchildren with Kalua, to the “Memory-Temple” – *Deetiji-ka-smriti-mandir*” that she had built to perpetuate the memory Kalua and his companions on the *Ibis* (Ghosh 2011: 4). Interestingly, the second most important object in the temple, after the image of Kalua, was “a panel that was known to the Fami as ‘The Parting’ (*Birha*); it served to remind every member of the clan of the “critical juncture in the history of their family—the moment of Deeti’s separation from her spouse” (ibid 12). Through Deeti’s painting, Ghosh re-emphasizes the significance of remembering landmark familial events among the diasporic communities as exemplified by Deeti and her descendants. Ghosh communicates the same idea somewhat differently through other characters in the text. Mr. Fitcher, the botanist who travels to China in search of a rare species of flowers, for example, offers a free passage and a job to Paulette solely in memory of his deceased daughter, Ellen, who shared his passion for gardening. Similarly, Neel expresses enduring love for his wife and son in the encounter with Baboo Nob Kissin in Canton. Although Neel tries to conceal his identity from Nob Kissin at first when they meet again in China, he breaks down when told about his family. “Tears came into Neel’s eyes now, and he lowered his head to blink them away unseen,” and “the constriction in his throat was caused not merely by the reminders of his wife and son, but also by his remorse for his initial response to Baboo Nob Kissin” (ibid 372). Neel’s immense gratitude to Nob Kissin is expressed through his feeling that he “was in fact, almost a protective deity, a guardian spirit...” (ibid). In the context of this episode it is significant to note how the fear of the British colonial authorities makes Neel mistrustful of his one-time friend and well-wisher, Nob Kissin, and how the reference to his family instantly leads him to restore his faith, and consequently,

relationship with the Nob Kissin. Thus, Ghosh alternates patterns of the characters' intense longing for their families, but his message throughout the text remains the same: the cosmopolitan journeys of many individuals are often driven by their familial attachments.

Ghosh's idea of familial cosmopolitanism reaches maturity in *Flood of Fire*, especially in his depiction of Bahram's wife, Shireen. Four main characters – Havildar Kesrisingh, an Indian soldier who volunteers to join the British expeditionary force to China, Zachary Reid, an American mulatto sailor who is seeking to make a fortune in the opium business, Neel Rattan Haldar, a former rajah, deposed and exiled by the British and now living in disguise to evade recapture, and Shireen, the widowed wife of Bahram Moddie, one of the biggest Indian opium traders from the Parsi community in Bombay – propel the plot forward in the shadows of the first Opium War (1839-1842) – a piece of history recreated by Ghosh to serve as the backdrop of the story.¹⁴ However, if there is a character in the text who embraces cosmopolitanism purely out of love for the family, it is Shireen Moddie who demonstrates a remarkable ability to disregard social obstacles in her desire to fulfil familial obligations. Interestingly, unlike the other three main characters, Shireen appears in the story as a 'local' who, in spite of possessing strong credentials to become a cosmopolitan, has remained quite rooted in her home in Bombay.¹⁵ Ghosh introduces her as the widow of Mr. Bahram Moddie, who decides to

¹⁴ Alex Clark observes that the "four characters' stories rotate and gently converge" in such a way that the text never feels like "a dry history lesson." See Alex Clark, "*Flood of Fire* by Amitav Ghosh review – the final installment of an extraordinary trilogy," *The Guardian* 5 June 2015, available online at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/05/flood-of-fire-amitav-ghosh-review-instalment-trilogy>.

¹⁵ For instance, Zadig Bey, cites Shireen's educational, linguistic, and social background in order to persuade her to make a trip to China. "You are educated, you speak English, you are the daughter of Seth

set out on a voyage to China to pay a visit to her husband's tomb and to meet with his illegitimate son, AhFatt. Shireen silences the vociferous objections of her brothers and daughters against her decision by asking pointblank, "[i]s it scandalous for a widow to want to visit her husband's grave?" (Ghosh 2015: 44). Her assertion made it abundantly clear to all her relatives that she was prepared to cross the sea and overcome all obstacles in her way to fulfill her wish. However, once away from her home, Shireen looks for ways to maintain her closeness with 'home.' She takes a liking to Macau not only because the houses there "reminded [her] of old Parsi homes of Navsari, in Gujarat," but also because she was invited to move in with her cousin Dinyar who felt "he owed it to [Bahram's] memory to look after her" (ibid 376, 389). That said, towards the end of the novel, she again defies her community to accept the marriage proposal of Zadig and decides to start a new life in China. Ghosh seems to attribute Shireen's emotional maturation to her exposure to the wider world as well as some of the darker secrets of her husband's life in China. While in Macau that she discovers how Bahram had indeed been unfaithful to her to the extent that even though, "[h]e was above all a family man...it so happened that fate gave him two families, one in China and one in India" and that "his actions in Canton, as an opium-trader, would haunt both families, for generations" (ibid 452). In light of this revelation from Zadig, Shireen's decision to accept his marriage proposal endorses at least two characteristics of a familial cosmopolitanism: one, even though she had transformed herself into a cosmopolitan by the end of the story, Shireen

Rustamjee Mistrjee who built some the finest ships to sail the ocean. Why should it be difficult for you to go?" insists Zadig. See *Flood of Fire*, 187.

could imagine love only within the context of marriage and family; two, her second marriage to Zadig, an Armenian, indicates that marriage can become a powerful means of promoting cosmopolitan communities – a theme that recurs frequently in Ghosh’s recent novels. Moreover, a cosmopolitan marriage between Shireen and Zadig does not force them to cut ties with other family members – both provide for their children before starting a new life together and remain in contact with them. From this point of view, Ghosh seems to promote the ideal of cosmopolitan communities more than cosmopolitan individuals by celebrating the characteristics that hold families together: relationality, mutual support, and a sense of belonging. Expanding the idea of family enables Ghosh to emphasize the importance of cosmopolitan communities in a familial cosmopolitanism.

Therefore, in order not to attach his cosmopolitanism solely to a sociological understanding of family, Ghosh also employs the ‘metaphor’ of family in his fiction. While it is true that Ghosh makes an extensive use of family in his fiction to sidestep the category of the nation, he deliberately expands his idea of family to include both its literal and metaphorical connotations.¹⁶ Nevertheless, there is one crucial difference that sets apart the ‘real’ and ‘metaphorical’ families in Ghosh’s fiction: the former helps the author to emphasize the importance of family in cosmopolitan discourses in a positive

¹⁶ In his essay, “History as Handmaiden to Amitav Ghosh,” Frederick Luis Aldama makes a similar point about the image of the family in Ghosh’s fiction. “As Ghosh reminds us, his novels are centrally about family, the fictional family members and their vicissitudes, the settings where the stories take place, and so on having nothing to do with “real” families and everything to do with very skilled and intellectually captivating narrative style.” Conceding that Aldama’s first observation about the centrality of family in Ghosh’s fiction is correct, I would argue that, while still focusing on the fictional narratives of families in his novels, Ghosh indeed employs the family category in the real as well as metaphorical sense. In *The Glass Palace*, for instance, all components of the family history of King Thebaw are ‘real’ whereas, those of Rajkumar’s are fictional. A better analysis, therefore, I reckon, should concentrate on Ghosh’s use of the family-unit at both sociological and metaphorical levels. See, Frederick L Aldama, *A User’s Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 67.

manner – that is, by directly showing how real families and familial connections engender a cosmopolitan spirit; the latter allows him to underscore the need of family and familial connections cosmopolitans by highlighting how his characters strive to build new quasi-familial relationships when they lack ties with their real families. To illustrate these two dimensions, a brief analysis of Rajkumar – the hero of *The Glass Palace* – might prove helpful. The fact that he was an orphan, a man without any close relatives in the world, haunts Rajkumar in the early part of the text: He confesses it to Dolly saying, “I have no family, no parents, no brothers, no sisters, no fabric of small memories from which to cut a large cloth. People think this sad and so it is” (Ghosh 2001:127). Nevertheless, he zealously sets about making a fortune to win Dolly’s hand by his wealth. Rajkumar’s longing to start a family with Dolly drives his quest for entrepreneurial success and becomes the driving force of the multigenerational family saga to such an extent that, as Aldama notes, the story “finishes three generations later at the end of the twentieth century with the character Jaya re-collecting a record of family through shards of archival documents (Aldama 81). Yet, Rajkumar’s journey in search of a family of his was not short or straightforward: He falls in love with Dolly as a boy while she was still a maid to Queen Supayalat in Rangoon and does not reunite with her until after he retraces her in Ratnagiri, India, many years later. In the meanwhile, Rajkumar’s desire to cultivate his “own attachments” sees him accept Saya John, his friend and mentor, as his father. This is evident in the incident when he held his first important meeting for a commercial contract: “he stooped to touch Saya John’s feet in the Indian way” (Ghosh 2001: 113). Thus, for Ghosh, Rajkumar’s quest for happiness is encompassed by his search for a family or family-like relationships. In a way, then, *The Glass Palace* becomes Ghosh’s

fictional representation of a familial cosmopolitanism that, somewhat awkwardly, ends in a senile Rajkumar seeking intimacy with his onetime political adversary, Uma, within her ancestral home. Perhaps, it indicates that a senile Rajkumar might not have a place in the corporate cosmopolitanism, i.e., his timber business in Burma for which he hired laborers from southern India, but he certainly enjoys a comfortable position of a respectable elder in Uma's family. For Ghosh, then, cosmopolitans can always return to the safety and comfort of home so long as they continue to belong to a family.

The correlation between not having strong familial connections and a tendency to long for family-like relationships occupies an important place in Ghosh's other novels as well besides the *Ibis* trilogy. Ghosh portrays characters whose lives transform positively due to familial or family-like relationships they cultivate as cosmopolitans. In *The Circle of Reason*, for example, Zindi, the Egyptian woman who has lived in India as well as in different parts of Egypt, finds it difficult to relate with anyone intimately. Her tenants – Mast Ram, Abusa, Professor Samuel, Kulfi, Jeevanbhai Patel, and Alu – interest Zindi only because she can “make a good enough living from them most of the time” but even such a cosmopolitan group of people fails to inspire her to become emotionally attached with anyone. The trauma of having been ostracized by her own family, perhaps, contributes to Zindi's emotional distance from others, even those living in her house. Nevertheless, that changes towards the end of the novel as Zindi decides to travel to India with Boss, the orphan son of Karthamma, born on the vessel *Mariamamma*. With everything seemingly lost in Egypt, Zindi clings on to Boss as she begins “to wait for Virat Singh and the ship that was to carry them home” (Ghosh 2005: 423). Significantly, for Zindi, holding on to Boss amounts to clinging to her only real emotional connection left in life.

In a way, Boss becomes Zindi's reason to hope for a new life, and as the narrator remarks in the concluding sentence of the text: "Hope is the beginning." In other words, Boss comes to represent a renewed hope of a family for Zindi, without which travelling to India would not feel like a journey that will take them home. Similarly, in *Sea of Poppies*, Paulette calls Jodu – the son of her Indian wet-nurse, Tantima – her brother, and maintains a close contact with him throughout their trip to Mauritius on the *Ibis*. When Zachary questions Paulette about her perceived closeness to Jodu, the latter reveals:

[y]ou see, Jodu, who you rescued, is the son of the woman who brought me up. Our growing was together; he is like my brother. It was as a sister that I was holding him, for he has suffered a great loss. He is the only family I have in this world. All this will seem strange to you no doubt...." (Ghosh 2008: 137)

Strange as it might have seemed to Zachary, Paulette's act of claiming Jodu as her brother seems quite natural in the context of those onboard the *Ibis*, who find reassurances and support through their loved-ones. Ghosh seems to suggest that through their mutual recognition of a shared childhood, Paulette and Jodu reclaim each other as siblings. A key thing to remember, then, is how Ghosh consistently seeks to place the ideal of the family at the center of his characters' lives – many of whom, like Rajkumar, Zindi, and Paulette choose to pursue a cosmopolitan way of life. Without the family-like relationships made available to them by their real and metaphorical border-crossings, these characters would overcome the sociopolitical challenges they encounter on their journeys. Not surprisingly, then, Ghosh portrays these characters' longing for familial relationships as emphatically as their cosmopolitan aspirations – the two seem to complement each other seamlessly in Ghosh's fiction. In the case of Rajkumar, a longing

for a family translates into a cosmopolitan journey in search of his childhood love Dolly – Queen Supayalat’s favorite maid who travels with her into exile to Ratnagiri in western India. Rajkumar finds family happiness by marrying Dolly and caring for their two sons, even while frantically pursuing his business projects.

Ghosh broadens the scope of his cosmopolitanism further by assimilating the metaphor of marriage and cosmopolitan communities. Beyond the familial attachments that sustain and nurture a cosmopolitan’s spirit of openness to others, marriage plays an important role in promoting the type of cosmopolitan Ghosh envisions. In other words, the author sees marriage and relationships produced by conventions of marriage emerge as effective ways of overcoming sociocultural differences that hinder a cosmopolitan exchange. *The Glass Palace* provides a few good examples in support of this argument. Rajkumar’s identity as a respectable businessman begins to grow after he marries Dolly, a Burmese girl who had spent a few years in India. Their union brings them children who seem to enjoy their dual identities as Indian and Burmese. For instance, Rajkumar and Dolly gave each of their sons two names: Neel was to be known as Sein Win (Burmese) and Neeladhri (Indian), and Dinu as Tun Pe and Dinanath (168-69). Both boys shared features of their parents, albeit each in contrasting ways: “Neel looked very much like Rajkumar: he was big and robust, more Indian than Burmese in build and coloring. Dinu on the other hand, had his mother’s delicate features as well as her ivory complexion and fine-boned slimness of build (175). Both brothers also create cosmopolitan families by marrying girls from different backgrounds. Neel’s marriage with Manju, Uma’s niece, brings the two families closer and even reduces the animosity between Rajkumar and Uma towards the end of the text.

Similarly, Saya wholeheartedly approves of Dinu's marriage proposal to Alison, his granddaughter: "Rajkumar's son and Matthew's daughter... What could be better? The two of you have joined the families. Your parents will be delighted," exclaims Saya. In fact, Ghosh devotes a considerable attention and space to describe the relationship between Dinu and Alison in the last few chapters of the text, and implicitly reiterates his faith in the families brought about by cosmopolitan unions as a way forward by introducing the narrator of the text as the grandson of Neel and Uma – a character who embodies both the familial and the universal outlooks in the text.

In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh further explores the role of marital relationships in bolstering cosmopolitan connections among people of diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Insofar as the trilogy provides a full-fledged understanding of Ghosh's cosmopolitanism, its conception of marital alliances among strangers or sociologically incompatible characters indicates a further refinement of the author's literary cosmopolitanism. The main characters of *Sea of Poppies*, Deeti and Kalua, for example, communicate a few powerful messages by eloping, marrying, and starting a family on the Mauritius island. First of all, they defy the caste restrictions that forbid a Dalit man, a so-called lower-class Hindu, from marrying a Rajput, warrior-class, woman. Secondly, in tying the knot by themselves on the bank of the Ganges, they also challenge the social conventions of marriage that require a Brahmin priest to officiate a Hindu wedding. Thirdly, Deeti's voluntary act of declaring herself an untouchable, like her second husband Kalua, represents inter-caste marriage's potential to break narrow boundaries that separate people in traditional societies, especially in the Indian subcontinent. Deeti's act provides a crucial evidence to Ghosh cosmopolitanism's

transformative power in terms of social change. In a traditional Hindu society, it would be impossible for Deeti even to relate with a so-called untouchable like Kalua, let alone marry him. Similarly, she could also not have converted herself into an untouchable just by declaring it, as the Hindu society considers caste status permanent and received at birth. Because Deeti first converts herself into a cosmopolitan by crossing the geographical confines of India, she is able to become an untouchable to identify with her husband more fully by transcending the sociocultural boundaries. The narrator conveys this idea powerfully in the following words: “Confronted with the prospect of cutting herself loose from her moorings in the world, Deeti’s breath ran out... We my husband and I, we are Chamars” (Ghosh 2008: 217). Finally, Deeti and Kalua’s act not only strengthens them on their journey into an unknown future, it also ensures that Deeti survives along with her children and grandchildren to chronicle the success of her liberative cosmopolitan adventure in the form of a Smriti Mandir – a memory temple: “Deeti’s shrine was hidden in a cliff, in a far off corner of Mauritius... Later Deeti would insist that it wasn’t chance but destiny that led her to it,” the narrator states in the opening paragraph of *River of Smoke* (3). Nevertheless, if anything, it was her conscious decision to marry Kalua, an untouchable, in an act of open defiance of social norms that enables her to control her destiny. Likewise, another important cosmopolitan mentioned in the text, Ashadidi – a Chinese woman who grew up in Calcutta – sets another example of a cosmopolitanism facilitated by marriage. Just like Deeti and Kalua’s, Ashadidi’s marriage to Baburao or Ah Bao, a Chinese sailor, resulted from a love affair. Baburao settled in so well with Ashadidi’s family in Calcutta “that no one could remember why he had been considered an unsuitable groom for Eldest Daughter” (305). While appreciating

the adjustment her husband had made to adapt to life in Calcutta, Ashadidi moves to Canton with him, and becomes a cultural bridge between India and China through the kitchen-boat she set up for her visitors:

[t]his eatery (Asha-didi's kitchen-boat) was an institution among the Achhas of Canton: visiting it was almost a duty for the innumerable sepoy, serangs, lascars, shroffs, mootsuddies, gomustas, munshis and dubhashes who passed through the city. [...] Asha-didi's fluency in Hindusthani and Bengali often came as a surprise to Achhas for there was nothing about her to suggest a connection with their homeland (302-03).

Viewed from a cosmopolitan perspective, then, Ashadidi's marriage to a Chinese man in a way helps her return to her roots while simultaneously inspires her to keep alive her Indian connection through the magic of her culinary skills. Ghosh's characterization of Ashadidi, in this sense, is innovative because it transports a traditional Asian housewife to a maritime cosmopolitan world of the nineteenth century South Asia without diminishing any trait of her domesticity. By emphasizing the transformative influence of marriage in Deeti and Ashadidi's cases, Ghosh seems to assert that the institution of marriage promotes cosmopolitanism. Marriage opens up Deeti's world and makes her more sensitive to the social oppression of people lower than her, such as her husband and other girmitiya women on the *Ibis*. Likewise, marriage makes Ashadidi appreciative of her Chinese roots as well as Indian upbringing. That said, not all cosmopolitans rely on marital relationships to expand their cultural horizons in Ghosh's fiction – characters like Bahram Moddie and Zadig Beg even draw positive energy out of extramarital relationships in the *Ibis* trilogy.

In order to understand Ghosh's cosmopolitanism more fully, we need to understand extramarital relationships as well. Cosmopolitanism, for Ghosh, encompasses all aspects of social relationships. This is evident from a number of extra-marital relationships and illegitimate offspring that appear in Ghosh's fiction alongside the more prominent narratives based on families, children, and marriages. For example, in *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh interrupts the smooth-running parallel narratives of King Thebaw and Rajkumar's family histories by inserting the character of Illongo, who is revealed as Rajkumar's illegitimate son born of a coolie woman. While Rajkumar's social rejection of Illongo and his mother raises questions over his morality and character, the text shows that he makes provides them a considerable financial support. "[H]e sends money," Illongo's mother reveals to Uma when interrogated about how Rajkumar treats them (Ghosh 2001: 205). From Uma's point of view, Rajkumar has abused Illongo's mother and must be held accountable for his crime, but the woman herself insists on not initiating any action against him. Shanthini Pillai suggests that Ghosh deliberately portrays the coolie-woman as in-charge of her life, rather than presenting her as a vulnerable poor subaltern. "The sense of agency is very much in evidence," Pillai argues, "and through this characterization, the sign of the passive female victims of the plantation system is reinvented as she determines her own path" (Pillai 61). On the contrary, I content that focusing on the coolie-woman in this episode is akin to missing the point. There is not clarity in the text whether she remains a victim or emerges as an assertive single-mother in her relationship with Rajkumar. Instead, Ghosh focuses more on why in the first place Rajkumar seeks an extramarital relationship and how he assumes a partial responsibility for his conjugal relationship. According to Illongo's mother, Rajkumar began a

relationship with her because “his wife had turned away from the world; that she’d lost interest in her home and her family, in him...” (Ghosh 2001: 205). As evident in the text, Dolly’s interest in Rajkumar and children had indeed begun to wane by that point in the story. In inserting this detail in the text Ghosh seems to restate the importance of healthy familial relationships for cosmopolitans, the absence of which might drive men and women to seek happiness in extramarital relationships, for instance, in the case of Rajkumar. In any case, Rajkumar tacitly recognizes Illongo as his love-child by providing for him without fail. Nevertheless, Illongo’s survival and prosperity in *The Glass Palace* remains an interesting aspect of Ghosh’s familial cosmopolitanism.

Two other examples from the *Ibis* trilogy make explicit what Ghosh leaves implicit through Illongo in *The Glass Palace*: individuals with a cosmopolitan outlook can show kindness towards those born of extramarital relationships. The first instance occurs in *River of Smoke* in the life of George Chinnery, the famous British painter who spent much of his life in India and China, and who fictionally takes up residence in the Calcutta to distance himself from the monotony of family life in England and to explore new avenues in painting. Further, Ghosh depicts Chinnery as happily settled in Calcutta, prospering through his painting, and living with a woman who bore him two sons and on whom he “had lavished luxuries” (Ghosh 2011: 130). However, the twist Ghosh gives to Chinnery’s story after the arrival of his legal wife and children from England sheds light on his understanding of a cosmopolitan’s mindset. That is, instead of banishing Sundaree and her two sons, Khoka and Robin, Marianne Chinnery treats them humanely and tries to accord them a degree of dignity as her husband’s second family. The narrator reveals that on learning about them, Marianne “had tried to ensure that they were provided for

and that her husband did his duty by them. She had even arranged a church christening for the two little boys” (ibid 131). Because these events in George Chinnery’s life are fictional, they serve a purpose in the text: namely, Marianne Chinnery who became a cosmopolitan in order to end her forced separation from her husband by relocating with her children, was more capable of imagining the plight of Sundaree and her sons if they were disowned. Her cosmopolitan sensibility inspires her to recognize Sundaree and her sons as inseparably related to her husband despite illegitimacy. Similarly, Ghosh conveys a similar message in *Flood of Fire* from another main character, Bahram Moddie, who deeply loves his Chinese mistress, Chi-mei, and dotes on their love-child, Ah-Fatt. Bahram’s wholehearted acceptance of Chi-mei and Ah-Fatt stands in sharp contrast with his views on betraying one’s legal and ethnic community for another family. When Zadig proclaims his willingness to do that out of a concern for those who need him more (i.e., his illegal family), Bahram looks at him in disbelief. The narrator notes in *River of Smoke* that Bahram “could not imagine that a responsible man of business would seriously contemplate breaking his ties with his family and his community: in his own world such a step would, he knew, bring not only social disgrace but also financial ruin” (Ghosh 2011: 70). Nevertheless, by the end of the novel, Bahram had indeed incurred a complete ruin of himself, partly out of the impossibility of giving himself equally to both his family and partly out of his profound sadness at the plight of his illegitimate son, Ah-Fatt. In itself, Bahram’s tragic suicide points to a limitation in Ghosh’s cosmopolitanism, namely, that individuals with a cosmopolitan outlook might show an acceptance of illegitimate blood-relations, but the cosmopolitans directly involved in extramarital relationships, nevertheless, suffer from a sense of betrayal to their families.

Crucial to Ghosh's effort to develop a family-based cosmopolitanism that challenges the myopia of nationalism is a celebration of multilingualism. Adopting an alien culture through marriage also involves accepting a culture of linguistic plurality in the family. Similarly, accommodating people of different linguistic backgrounds becomes an essential part of cosmopolitan communities in Ghosh's fiction. Perhaps, the linguistic plurality in Ghosh's fiction reflects his own multilingual background as well as his appreciation of languages. In an interview with T. Vijay Kumar, Ghosh claims that while writing *The Hungry Tide*, he often conceived the scenes or dialogues in Bengali, his mother tongue, and then translated them into English. "When I was writing this book I really felt that there were long passages which I was translating from Bengali. I would think of it in Bengali and then write it in English" claims Ghosh (Kumar 104). The implication, for Ghosh, is that the cultural plurality of India makes it impossible for an author to describe it in one language. In the same interview, Ghosh asserts that the very act of writing about India necessitates multilingual sensibilities to portray the country's cultural richness accurately: 'It's a society where, if you seek to represent that society in a single language, no matter what that language is, you are in some profound way distorting the reality of that society' (ibid). Therefore, Ghosh claims that any attempt to write about the Indian society has to transcend the boundaries of the nation to sufficiently capture its cultural and linguistic richness. In "any act of representation in an Indian circumstance," Ghosh asserts, "[y]ou are already embarked upon some kind of transnational enterprise (ibid). The author's insistence on creating multilingual characters could be traced also to a point related to his opposition to nationalism – one that rejects a superficial sense of unity projected on the nation in the form of a national language. For

instance, Sharmani Patricia Gabriel argues that Ghosh's preference for heteroglossia over a monolingual narrative "derives from the writer's rejection of prescribed anthropological assumptions about cultural coherence, continuity and authenticity" (Gabriel 41).¹⁷ The multilingualism and heteroglossia present in Ghosh's fiction reveals not only the impossibility of describing the Indian society in a monolingual narrative but also the necessity to imagine India in more universal, diasporic, and cosmopolitan terms. In addition to the metaphors family and marriage, then, Ghosh introduces the idea of linguistic plurality to describe his cosmopolitanism. Just as familial and marital bonds among cosmopolitans directly challenge the coherence and control of traditional societies rooted in local cultures, linguistic plurality among cosmopolitan communities also undermine the homogenizing discourses of nationalism and globalization. The ability to describe and understand social realities in different languages empowers cosmopolitans to perceive the limits of one-dimensional worldviews such as nationalism and fundamentalism. Therefore, Ghosh celebrates linguistic diversity in his novels.

Ghosh's two early novels – *The Glass Palace* and *The Circle of Reason* – promote multilingualism as a remedy to overcome communicational challenges in cosmopolitan milieus. *The Glass Palace* scrutinizes the idiosyncrasies and predicaments of characters in some detail. One such detail about the four princesses, the daughters of the exiled Burmese monarch, King Thebaw, stands out for its importance to heteroglossia and

¹⁷ Gabriel interprets Bakhtinian heteroglossia as a literary technique capable of 'denoting the presence of tension and struggle – of otherness – within any linguistic, national or cultural system' and which also creates 'conditions of dialogue in which differences permit the process of 'othering' to occur.' It is this type of heteroglossia that appeals Ghosh as a means to register his opposition to a homogenic description of the nation. See Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, "The Heteroglossia of Home: Re-'routing' the Boundaries of National Identity in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*" (*Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 41.1: 2005), 41.

cosmopolitan discourse. Ghosh remarks that two of the king's daughters were born in Burma and two in India, but growing up in the Indian town of Ratnagiri, near Bombay, "they learnt to speak Marathi and Hindustani as fluently as any of the townsfolk – it was only with their parents that they now spoke Burmese" (Ghosh 2001: 67). Interestingly, their exilic status allows the princesses to transcend the boundaries of their royal status and learn to communicate in the two Indian languages spoken in Ratnagiri. The text does not mention whether the king and the queen learnt these languages themselves; however, as Ghosh makes it clear, Burmese remained the only language of communication with their daughters. Yet, the royal couple makes no attempt to stop their daughters from embracing the Indian culture and languages. In light of this, the first princess's eventual marriage with the king's coachman, Mohan Sawant, ("a local boy from impoverished hamlet") and her bold decision to return to Ratnagiri to spend the rest of her life with him, even after initially returning to Rangoon to accompany her mother, appears to celebrate a familial cosmopolitanism.¹⁸ Somewhat differently, Rajkumar, another major character in the text, learns to speak "fluent but heavily accented Burmese" for his survival in Mandalay, Burma, and then learns to speak "Tamil" to advance his business through South Indian laborers (3, 173). Similarly, his friend, Saya John, too, "seemed to know Hindustani" besides Chinese and Burmese (8). While the princesses could have opted not to learn the local languages, for Rajkumar and Saya John learning to speak different languages was essential to their survival in the wider world. Their entrepreneurial and social advancement can be, therefore, attributed to their linguistic

¹⁸ According to the text, the First Princess "went back to Sawant and never left Ratnagiri again. She lived the rest of her life with her husband and her children in a small house on the outskirts of town. It was there that she died twenty-eight years later." See, *The Glass Palace*, 183.

skills. Likewise, in *The Circle of Reason*, Alu, the protagonist whose transnational flight the text traces, masters several languages in order to express himself among cosmopolitan crowds. For instance, Jeevanbhai, one of Zindi's tenants in the fictional Egyptian town of Al-Ghazira, marvels at the power of Alu's heteroglossiac babble:

I saw a man I knew, but I heard a voice I had not heard before... (and) I saw the very crowd absolutely silent listening to a man, hardly more than a boy, talk, and that too, not in one language but in three, four, God knows how many, a khichri of words; couscous, rice, dal and onions, all stirred together, stamped and boiled, Arabic with Hindi, Hindi swallowing Bengali, English doing a dance; tongues unravelled and woven together—nonsense you say, tongues unraveled unravelled are nothing but nonsense—but there again you have a mystery for everyone understood him perfectly, like their mother's lullabies. (Ghosh 2005: 279)

Even though, this description of Alu's address contains homely images – such as cooking a delicious dish or lulling a baby to sleep – and a cacophonous connotation, it reflects the strength of a multilingual communication. The ability to speak multiple languages equips Alu with a communicability that he had begun to acquire in Lalpukur, his hometown. “It had taken him amazingly little time to learn English. And then Balram had tried to teach him a little French... He had learnt to speak a number of languages too,” the narrator informs us, going on to add that a certain, “Cycle-shop Bolai... had taught him Hindi. And he was fluent in the villagers' dialect... It was a nasal sing-song Bengali, with who knew what mixed in of Burmese and the languages of the hills to the east? (26-27). It becomes clear in the text that Alu survives and thrives among strangers in foreign lands because of his facility with languages. It could be argued, then, that an ability to

communicate with others in ways that respect other cultures is fundamental to Ghosh's cosmopolitanism – more so than a mere mastery of languages. Alu's amazing resilience and ability to rally people around him might depend on his facility with languages to a certain extent, but it is his closeness with the people of Al-Ghazira that makes his multilingual communication with them quite a success.

In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh celebrates a multilingualism that sustains familial cosmopolitanism, but remains pessimistic about a scholarly mastery of languages that undermines one's cultural loyalties. In the trilogy, characters such as Paulette, Bahram Moddie stand out for their linguistic pluralism as well as familial attachment and communitarian spirit. For example, for Paulette, the daughter of a *French* botanist who lived in Calcutta, “the first language she learnt was Bengali” (Ghosh 2008: 62). Interestingly, Ghosh relates Paulette's knowledge of Bengali with her upbringing by an Indian woman who raised her, and whom, “in the confusion of tongues that was to characterize her upbringing,” Paulette called “‘Tantima’ – ‘aunt-mother’” (ibid 61). Thus Paulette, whose French name was domesticated as Putli, meaning ‘doll,’ learnt Bengali because of Jodu's mother who adopted her. Somewhat differently, for Bahram Moddie, speaking Cantonese and English in China was as natural as speaking his mother tongue, Gujarati: On entering the factories in Canton harbor in his flagship the *Anahita*, “he would thrust his head out and begin to shout greetings, sometimes in Gujarati (*Sahib kem chho?*), sometimes in Cantonese (*Neih hou ma Ng sin-saang? Hou-noih-mouh-gin!*); sometimes in Pidgin (‘Chin-chin, Attock; long-tim-no see!’); and sometimes in English (‘Good morning, Charles! Are you well?’)” (Ghosh 2011: 209). For Neel, a familiarity with English and a few Indian languages ensures his survival while living in disguise

after his escape from the *Ibis*. Nevertheless, Ghosh seems less enthusiastic about merely promoting multilingual individuals as he remains suspicious about a positive relationship between knowing a language and erasing cultural prejudices. In *Flood of Fire*, for instance, Neel, one of the most cosmopolitan characters in the *Ibis* trilogy, both on account of his background and his experiences on the sea, produces this pessimistic reflection on his linguistic ability. When offered a translator's job by Zhong Lou-si, the governor of China during the First Opium War, he says:

[i]t is madness to think that knowing a language and reading a few books can create allegiances between people. Thoughts, books, ideas, words – if anything, they make you more alone, because they destroy whatever instinctive loyalties you may once have possessed. (83)

Neel utters these words in the context of his dilemma that involved choosing between maintaining his loyalties to his country and working for the Chinese authorities as a translator in the time of war. Nevertheless, it highlights Ghosh's understanding of the relationship between multilingualism and cosmopolitanism. Ghosh clearly contrasts an individual linguistic mastery with a linguistic plurality born out of cultural attachments or appreciation of others. Clearly, Ghosh privileges the latter. For instance, Neel rejects his scholarly knowledge of languages because it transformed him into a professional translator, lacking any patriotic sentiments for his country, at least in the eyes of the Chinese governor. Neel, the British convict, on the other hand, strongly felt for his country, people, land, and family in spite of being able to communicate fluently in English, and never once entertained a thought of betraying those attachments. The dilemma Ghosh presents through Neel's predicament clarifies his understanding of

linguistic ability as necessarily imbedded in the cosmopolitan's familial and communitarian attachments, and not independent of or antagonistic to them.

The ideal of heteroglossia that Ghosh develops in the *Ibis* trilogy, then, is both diasporic and communal – one that promotes a collective assimilation of an immigrant community through language. The ‘Clover Fami’ – the community of relatives made up of Deeti and Kalua's descendants in Mauritius – introduced at the beginning of the second installment of the trilogy, *River of Smoke*, illustrate how Ghosh sees heteroglossia as a process of the immigrant community's adoption of the local language and culture. At the beginning of the text, Ghosh re-introduces Deeti to the readers, but now in the role of an aging, venerable matriarch, who uses the local Kreol as much as her native Bhojpuri to lead her clan to the Memory Temple on a yearly pilgrimage to commemorate the events on the great *Ibis* that transformed her life. “Revey-te! E Banwari; e Mukhpyari! Revey-te na! Hagle ba?...Garatwa! Keep moving...,” shouts Deeti mixing Bhojpuri and Kreol (4). Interestingly, as the description of the clan's pilgrimage progresses, Kreol and Bhojpuri become interspersed to the degree of indistinguishability in Deeti's account of the great escape on the *Ibis*. For instance, she speaks Kreol words and expressions like ‘Bon-dye,’ ‘are you a fol dogla or what?’ ‘Don't be ridkil,’ ‘it was nothing but jaldi-jaldi, a hopeless golma, tus in dezord,’ ‘a mirak,’ ‘the kind of mulugande,’ ‘a burrurra,’ and so on (14). Deeti's liberal use of Kreol words and expression indicates the process of enculturation that began in her clan soon after it came into existence. It also hints at the linguistic adaptation the migrant communities, like that of Deeti's family, made in the regions they were indentured. Ghosh inserts these instances of linguistic admixture at the beginning of the text, I argue, to support his claim that Indian diasporic communities have generally

opted to adopt foreign languages by way of cosmopolitanizing themselves. In his essay, “The Diaspora in Indian Culture,” Ghosh contends that Indian diasporic communities have traditionally shown more dexterity at adapting to new linguistic patterns. “Wherever they went,” claims Ghosh, “Indian migrants proved to be linguistically adaptable in ways that British or French or Chinese migrants were not” (Ghosh 2008b: 248). Further, citing the examples of how the principle language of Indian migrants in Mauritius is a French creole, and creole of those in Trinidad and Guyana, Ghosh argues that “India exported with her population, not a language, as other civilizations have done, but a linguistic process – the process of adaptation to heteroglossia” (ibid 249). Having said that, the linguistic process of adaptation does not result in a sudden and complete abandonment of one’s native language; Deeti’s persistent use of Bhojpuri confirms that the process of adaptation unfolds over several generations. Nevertheless, Ghosh’s argument holds true in that even the first and second generation Indian immigrants embrace a foreign language with ease, as evident in the case of Deeti and her progeny. Crucially, the Clover-Fami model of linguistic process provides a model of cosmopolitanism that Ghosh seeks to promote in his fiction. This model neither abandons native languages nor seeks to erase local dialects: it strikes a fine balance between the two, wherein a diasporic community’s linguistic heritage gradually blends with its adopted country’s linguistic newness to create a creole that holds the two cultural diversities together. Deeti’s Bhojpuri-mixed French supplies a fine example of this phenomenon.

The Dynamism of the Littoral and Ghosh's Familial Cosmopolitanism

While the family, family-like bonds, marital and extramarital relationships, and multilingualism explain Ghosh's cosmopolitanism to a great extent, these leave out the dynamism that it exhibits, especially in the *Ibis* trilogy. In other words, Ghosh's cosmopolitanism contains a special dimension is present in his early novels to a certain extent but further develops his literary cosmopolitanism in the trilogy. The astonishing transformation the principal characters of the story – Deeti, Kalua, Neel, Jodu, Kersri, Serang Ali, and Raju – achieve in the course of the *Ibis* trilogy demands an exploration from an added dimension that plays a major role in developing Ghosh's cosmopolitanism in the trilogy: the littoral. As explained in the introductory section of this chapter, the littoral signifies both the ship *Ibis* and the ever-changing dynamism of the sea. Essentially, while the ship provides the above-mentioned protagonists with a space to nurture familial and family-like relationships within the group, the sea infuses them with a courage to challenge social and political oppression in spite of their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The dimension of the littoral as the space between land and sea, and littoral communities as those who inhabit it play a crucial role in the development of Ghosh's literary cosmopolitanism. If Ghosh's fiction explores the transnational cosmopolitan histories of South Asia, an important part of that exploration occurs on the space of the littoral – that is the space of the coastal areas where land and water meet. In other words, Ghosh endeavors to rewrite the colonial history of South Asia through an imaginative re-

creation of the littoral cosmopolitanism that thrived in precolonial Asia as well as that which struggled to resist imperialism during the height of British colonialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh retrieves the littoral as an alternative space where a familial cosmopolitanism forms into a subversive force in opposition to both social oppression and imperial exploitation. However, the littoral has featured in Ghosh's early fiction, indicating the importance of the travel by sea in Ghosh's fiction.

In an Antique Land – Ghosh's ethnographic travelogue – registers the author's first attempt to recreate a precolonial past in which transnational cultural exchanges flourished at sea, notably between India and Egypt. The text itself partly chronicles his anthropological research-related stay in Egypt in the nineteen-eighties, and partly re-traces the interactions between of Bomma, an Indian slave from Mangalore, and his master, the Jewish trade merchant, Ben Yiju in the twelfth century. The peculiar literary tactic of intertwining two different stories – separated by over eight centuries – allows Ghosh to bring Egypt's glorious, cosmopolitan precolonial past in conversation with its postcolonial, economically and culturally debilitated present. However, unlike European historical narratives, Ghosh offers a nonauthoritative reading of history in *Antique Land*.¹⁹ Therefore, the alternative history of trade relationships between India and Egypt that Ghosh recreates also substitutes the European interpretation of it in the text. As

¹⁹ In response to a question about whether he intentionally created a non-manipulative anthropological text in *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh responded that he consciously shunned the authoritative style of anthropology to be able to produce a non-hegemonic narrative. The text, therefore, is the author's attempt to avoid an authoritarian voice. "I never had that sense of authority. And essentially, this was because I'm Indian," Ghosh states. See Clair Chambers, "'The Absolutes Essentialness of Conversations': A Discussion with Amitav Ghosh" (*Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 41.1 :2005), 29.

Grewal points out, “the text argue[s] for a cosmopolitanism that [Ghosh] suggest[s] was not Western in its origin but rather a product of Indian Ocean trading practices of the tenth and eleventh centuries” (Grewal 184). The non-Western origin of this littoral cosmopolitanism can be established through two instances. One, the syncretism prevalent among sailors and traders as evidenced by their use of a pidgin. Vernerey calls it, “a specialized trade language composed of many trade languages” that recognized the cultural and religious plurality among them. Two, the almost family-like relationship Bomma, the slave, attained with Ben Yiju, his master (Vernerey 180). In a way, the bond between the slave and the master, as presented by Ghosh, serves as “an ideal microcosmic symbol of the Indian Ocean trade world’s cosmopolitanism: their relationship demonstrates both the permeability of religious and cultural boundaries and a profound respect for difference” (ibid 181). Oceanic trade and cultural exchanges between India and the Middle East were not limited to ancient times alone; In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh celebrates a modern version of a littoral cosmopolitanism between the two Asian regions.

Even though many of the major events in Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason* take place in the fictional city of Al-Ghazira, the littoral plays an important role in engendering the cosmopolitanism imbedded in the text. The vessel *Mariamamma* embodies the space of the littoral on which the main characters become acquainted with one another to establish relationships that sustain throughout the story. The vessel had spent “many long and peaceful years” in Calicut harbor and the backwaters of Alleppy in Kerala before undergoing a refurbishment to be plunged into the “lucrative al-Ghazira trade” by Haji Musa and his teen-aged helmsman, Sajjan (169). Alu’s cosmopolitan

connections begin on the *Marriamma*; the narrator introduces these characters as if Alu himself is getting to know them by closely observing their peculiarities. For instance, on board he meets Rakesh, “who was very thin and a little sickly;” Professor Samuel, “a short, stocky man, bespectacled and balding;” Karthamma, “tall luminously black, heavy with child, her belly straining before her like full sail;” Zindi, who “looked as though her body had somehow outgrown her extremities;” Kulfu, “the pale gori one in the white widow’s sari,” and Chunni, “the other one” who likes spending time with Hajji Musa in the evenings (172-73). During *Marriamma*’s nine-day voyage to Al-Ghazira, Alu not only comes to know those on board beyond his first impressions but also develops life-long relationships with most of them. Not least among them is Karthamma’s son, Boos, who was born on the vessel, and whom Ghosh presents as a beacon of hope for Zindi at the end of the novel. In a way, the *Marriamma*, replaces the domestic space of home wherein relatives forge strong affinities and life-long loyalties. Ghosh draws a direct parallel between the vessel and a family-home by portraying the characters on board living harmoniously with one another, even when thrown in the cosmopolitan chaos of al-Ghazira. Moreover, the vessel’s familial character is further highlighted by the fact that Zindi, a prostitute with no real attachment to anyone, saves, raises, and protects Boss, like a mother just because he was born on *Marriamma* in her presence. While the littoral, therefore, becomes conducive to a communitarian cosmopolitanism in the text, the corporate sector proves quite inimical to it. In other words, the bonds formed between strangers on voyages enable them to relate with one another with family-like affinity, but the same does not hold true for people who live together on the same land for many years. For instance, in the midst of the violent and chaotic scenes of confrontation

between Alu's supporters and the local police, many foreigners working at the oil plant in the city stand emotionless and idle, as if totally cut off from the social reality around them. Nury, the commander, comes across them while leading the chase for Alu and his friends:

Nury just ran, on and on, until in front of him, out of the sand, there suddenly arose the barbed-wire fence of the Oiltown. From the other side of the fence, faces stared silently out—Filipino faces, Indian faces, Egyptian faces, Pakistani faces, even a few Gahziri faces, a whole world of faces. (260)

The irony implicit in this scene becomes accentuated when contrasted with the fact that a corporate venture can assemble people of different nationalities in one place, but cannot engender a relationship-based cosmopolitanism among them that the littoral, i.e. the ship and the sea, can facilitate.

The fullest expression of Ghosh's littoral cosmopolitanism is contained in his *Ibis* trilogy – the littoral herein is not only employed to replicate the domesticity of 'home' but also to provide an impetus to resist cultural and imperial anti-cosmopolitan structures. In a recent interview, Ghosh explains the stylistic and formal differences between the first two texts of the *Ibis* trilogy as intentional. "The books are indeed quite different," declares the author, "the principal continuities between them are of time and certain characters" (Ghosh 2011b: npg). Even so, the space of the littoral unites the texts besides the similarities mentioned by Ghosh; in fact, to a large extent the main characters cultivate cosmopolitan attachments among them because of the ubiquity of the littoral space across the trilogy. That Ghosh begins and ends the trilogy with references to the

Ibis underlines its importance in bringing the narrative to a full circle. Besides the *Ibis*, other vessels mentioned in the trilogy such as Bahram's *Anahita*, Mr. Pembroke's *Redruth* (*River of Smoke*) and Mr. Burnham's *Hind* (*Flood of Fire*) also play major roles in providing platforms to important events in the first two texts, not to mention the British warships that dominate the war-scenes in *Flood of Fire*. The following analysis will, therefore, focus on the role of the littoral in lending a coherent unity to Ghosh's literary cosmopolitanism, especially as reflected in the *Ibis* trilogy.

The littoral strengthens familial bonds among poor migrants by affording them a 'space' to share their predicaments. Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy recreates the infamous history of the Opium Wars from the subaltern's point of view; the three novels portray how the opium trade destroyed the lives and social structures of millions of rural poor in India. Ghosh powerfully captures the resilience of the victimized communities in the face of these atrocities. The space of the littoral offers them a safe haven to sustain their family bonds and to re-create new ones in order to resist their exploitation collectively. "History itself is...in a novel...not very interesting, except in as much as it forms the background of an individual's predicaments," declares Ghosh in an interview (Sankaran 1). In *Sea of Poppies*, for example, the *girimtiyas* – indentured laborers – find themselves huddled together in a gloomy boat while on their way to the *Ibis*, but instead of instilling fear and trepidation the dingy belly of the boat helps them to become familiarized with one another and establish emotional bonds by sharing their personal stories:

[t]o spend three weeks in that small, dark and airless space should have been, by rights, and experience of near-unbearable tedium. Yet, strangely, it was anything but that: no two hours were the same and no two days alike. The close proximity, the dimness of the light, and the pounding

drumbeat of the rain outside, created an atmosphere of urgent intimacy among the women; because they were all strangers to each other, everything that was said sounded new and surprising; even the most mundane of discussions could take unexpected twists and turns. (222)

Even though, the *girimityas* were not on the *Ibis*, the “close proximity” of the littoral, symbolized by the *pulwar* (a river boat), helps them recognize the commonality of their fates through a spontaneous sharing of personal histories – some of which could only be revealed in the safety of the boat.²⁰ Similarly, the littoral also empowers few other non-subaltern characters in the trilogy. For example, journeys on the sea and spending several months on the ship transform Shireen from a timid housewife into a bold cosmopolitan, who ultimately chooses to marry *Zadig*, her late husband’s best friend, and rediscovers familial happiness in a foreign land. Likewise, the royal convict Neel finds strength to escape his British captors in the company of his *Ibis* friends.

Ghosh reiterates the significance of the *Ibis* in nurturing familial bonds among her travelers by using the metaphor of ‘parents’ for the ship as if to anticipate the kind of parental role she was destined to play in the birth of a new ‘*Ibis*’ community. In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh remarks about “why the image of the vessel had been revealed to [Deeti] that day, when she stood immersed in the Ganga,” revealing:

²⁰ Ghosh relates several examples of the *girimitya* women’s unspeakable woes, inflicted on them both by the opium trade and repressive social structures: “As for stories, there was no end to them: two of the women, Ratna and Champa, were sisters, married to a pair of brothers whose lands were contracted to the opium factory and could no longer support them; rather than starve, they decided to indenture themselves together—whatever happened in the future, they would at least have the consolation of a shared fate. Dookhanee was another married woman, travelling with her husband: having long endured the oppressions of a violently abusive mother-in-law, she considered it fortunate that her husband had joined in her escape.” See, *Sea of Poppies*, 223.

it was because her new self, her new life, had been gestating all this while in the belly of this creature, this vessel that was the Mother-Father of her new family, a great wooden *mai-bap*, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties yet to come: here she was, the *Ibis*. (328)

Ghosh instantly transforms the littoral space into a parental spirit that sets in motion the vision of a cosmopolitan community of liberated subaltern.

The abundance of linguistic plurality easily detectable on ships and coastal areas in Ghosh's trilogy acknowledges the littoral as a cosmopolitan space where linguistic and cultural differences are not only tolerated but celebrated. Even before the *Ibis* arrives in Calcutta to become the floating home of the *girmitiyas* on their way to Mauritius, Ghosh gives readers a glimpse of the ship's cosmopolitan culture. For instance, the group of lascars, i.e. Asian mercenary sailors, whom Zachary Reid hires to bring the *Ibis* to Calcutta includes: "Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arkanese. They came in groups of ten or fifteen, each with a leader who spoke on their behalf" (Ghosh 2008: 13). In order to converse with them, Zachary has to "memorize a new shipboard vocabulary, which sounded a bit like English," but contained a lot of strange words (15). As the narrator remarks, these lascars "had nothing in common except the Indian Ocean" (12-13). Yet, most of them maintain close contacts within the group even when circumstances turn them into fugitives later in the trilogy. By highlighting the friendships and fellow-feelings among the lascars, Ghosh seems to convey that the bonds formed at sea transcend sociocultural differences and stand the test of time. Moreover, the lasting relationships and bonds among the lascars might also arise from using words of one another's mother tongues. Similarly, in *River of Smoke*, Ghosh

mentions several Indian lascars, who live in Canton and speak a type of sailor's pidgin. Overlooking the Canton factories from ship the *Anahita*, Bahram, for example, "hears the voices of Chulia boatmen talking, shouting, and singing in Tamil, Telugu and Oriya" (Ghosh 2011: 60). However, setting aside their linguistic plurality, these sailors and merchants evolved a sailor's pidgin to communicate with relative ease. Ghosh mentions this historical detail in *River of Smoke* to emphasize the egalitarian feature of the Chinese pidgin:

[i]n pidgin they reposed far greater trust, for the grammar was the same as that of Cantonese, while the words were mainly English, Portuguese and Hindusthani—and such being the case, everyone who spoke the jargon was at an equal disadvantage, which was considered a great benefit for all. (ibid 163).²¹

Ghosh's observation that the pidgin served to eliminate any linguistic advantage among traders further confirms his faith in the littoral's ability to render linguistic differences unimportant at sea.²² Notably, Ghosh offers one more example in this regard – the Indian

²¹In an interview on the first two texts of the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh relates how he discovered a 19th century dictionary of lascars' pidgin and how it confirmed his thesis that the sailors' language must have been an impressive mix of words from several Asian and European languages: 'When I was researching *Sea of Poppies* I looked at a lot of old crew lists, from 19th century ships. These crews were often incredibly diverse, with sailors from East Africa, the Gulf, Somalia, Persia, India, China. It made me wonder how these crewmen, who were all known as 'lascars', communicated with each other. It struck me that this must have been an especially pressing issue on a sailing vessel, for it is impossible to work a sailship without clear commands – that's why there's such an extensive nautical jargon in English. So how did lascars communicate, with their officers (who were usually European) and with each other? These questions puzzled me for a long time and then one day, while looking through a library catalogue, I came upon a 19th century dictionary of the 'Laskari' language. I'd never seen any references to this dictionary anywhere, so it was a really exciting discovery. And the language proved to be a wonderful nautical jargon that mixed bits of Hindi, Urdu, English, Portuguese, Bengali, Arabic, Malay and many other languages. It was fascinating for me personally because it incorporated elements of many of the languages I grew up with.' See Amitav Ghosh, Interview by Angiola Codacci, *L'espresso Magazine* (Nov. 24, 2011b), available at https://www.amitavghosh.com/interviews.html#gpm1_7. npg.

²² It should be noted here that later this factor of "an equal disadvantage" assumes indirect importance in the episodes where the opium traders and the British East India Company representatives insist on having

contingent in Funtai Hong (also Accha Hong), the one and only non-White factory in Canto's Fanqui town in *River of Smoke* – that vividly narrates the complete erosion of differences among Indians hailing from vastly different sociocultural and religious backgrounds. Wondering at the improbable harmony among the Accha-Hong Indians from Neel's perspective, Ghosh writes,

Fungtai Hong was a world in itself, with its own foods and words, rituals and routines: it was as if the inmates were the first inhabitants of a new country, a yet unmade Achha-sthan. What was more, all its residents, from the lowliest of broom-wielding kussabs to the most fastidious of coin-sifting shroffs, took a certain pride in their house, not unlike that of a family. This surprised Neel at first, for on the face of it, the idea that the Achhas might form a family of some kind was not just improbable but absurd: they were a motely gathering of men from distant parts of the Indian subcontinent and they spoke between them more than a dozen different languages; some were from areas under British or Portuguese rule, and others hailed from states governed by Nawabs or Nizams, Rajas or Rawals; amongst them there were Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Parsis and also a few who, back at home, would have been excluded by all. Had they not left the subcontinent their paths would never have crossed and few of them would ever have met or spoken with each other, far less thought of eating together. At home, it would not have occurred to them they might have much in common—but here, whether they liked it or not there was no escaping those commonalities; they were thrust upon them every time they stepped out of doors, by the cries that greeted them in the Maidan: 'Accha! Aa-chaa?' (181)

A clearly noticeable difference among the Achhas is their multilingualism: they spoke more than a dozen languages among them. Yet, when obliged to live under the same roof, near the coast, thousands of miles away from 'home' in Canton, their linguistic plurality ceases to become a dividing factor.

a correspondence with the Chinese authorities in English to register their complaints against the latter's objections on allowing a free opium import into Chinese mainland.

The *Ibis* texts intricately reveal how characters utilize the littoral space to unite a disparate group of girmitiyas, commoners, and convicts into a close-knit ‘family’ with a shared destiny. Even before the girmitiyas begin their journey on the *Ibis*, they come to embrace one another as brothers and sisters. Paulette makes an inspired declaration on the barge: “[f]rom now on, and forever afterwards we will all be ship-siblings—jahazbhais and jahazbahens—to each other. There will be no differences between us” (Ghosh 2008: 328). While Paulette’s astonishing assertion takes her listeners by surprise, in light of her background it does not seem totally inconceivable. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Paulette, the daughter of a French botanist in Calcutta, was raised by a Muslim Bengali woman and, therefore, easily familiarized herself with the Indian culture as well as the Bengali language and cuisine. At the same time, she also spent enough time with her father to appreciate her French roots, including the language. He sparked in her a strong desire to go to Mauritius to visit the places where her grandmother had once lived. Appreciative of her French ancestry her Indian upbringing, Paulette becomes the first person on the *Ibis* to recognize the invisible cosmopolitan bonds that the *Ibis* had established among the girmitiyas and co-voyagers. Ghosh, then, seems to present Paulette as a catalyst of a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism – one who can reflect on the journey optimistically in light of the familial spirit engendered by it. For instance, she paves the way for a family-like unity among the girmitiyas by comparing their journey to a pilgrimage. She says, “[o]n a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste, and everyone is the same: it’s like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannath, in Puri” (ibid). By emphasizing the pilgrimage-like nature of their passage, Paulette dispels the inequality among the girmitiyas, and by declaring those on board ‘siblings,’ she engenders mutual respect and

love among them. The littoral space on the *Ibis* – at once homely and challenging – thus plays a major role in Paulette’s recognition of the giritiyas’ common humanity and interrelatedness.

By making Deeti embrace Paulette’s idea of interrelatedness among the giritiyas and reject any spiritual connotation attached to it, Ghosh emphasizes the cosmopolitan nature of their relationship over a religious interpretation. Deeti’s wholehearted acceptance of Paulette’s suggestion that they were now transformed into ship-brothers and ship-sisters results mainly from the familial symbolism inherent in Paulette’s declaration. However, Deeti displays an indifference regarding Paulette’s comparison of the group with a pilgrims’ party. Clearly, there is no endorsement of Paulette’s religious metaphor by Deeti, although some scholars have suggested otherwise. For instance, Rai and Pinkney claim that Paulette’s statement “conceives of a new reality based upon a particular type of devotional, Vaishnavite egalitarianism associated with Caitanya..., a Bengali saint idealized (in the text) by Baboo Nob Kissan” (75). These scholars also suggest that through Deeti, Ghosh lends “voice to the emotions raised by Paulette’s radical statement” (ibid). Yet there is no such indication in the text itself as neither Paulette nor Deeti were fully aware of Baboo Nob Kissan’s devotion to Ma Taramony, even if the latter were associated with Vaishnavite spirituality. On the other hand, Deeti’s enthusiastic endorsement of Paulette’s sibling-metaphor seems to derive from its familial connotation of everyone becoming a brother or sister to all the others on the ship. Not surprisingly, then, Ghosh chooses the words *jahaz-bhai* and *jahaz-behen* to emphasize the *ship*’s role in making them brothers and sisters to one another. Ghosh further confirms the same through Deeti by making her compare the ship to a mother.

“[W]e are *jahaz-bhai* and *jahaz-behen* to each other; all of us children of the ship (Ghosh 2008: 328). Indeed, as Deeti’s words affirm, the littoral of the of *jahaz* (ship) metamorphoses into a home for the cosmopolitan family of the *girmitiyas* in *Sea of Poppies*. Above all, the *Ibis* instantiates Ghosh’s familial-littoral cosmopolitanism without attaching any religious significance to it, which can become a divisive factor among cosmopolitans.

The acknowledgement expressed by some major characters of the trilogy pertaining to *Ibis*’s role in creating life-long bonds of attachments among indicates the littoral’s conduciveness for cosmopolitan communities. In *Flood of Fire*, Neel is surprised at his overwhelming emotions on reuniting with the sailor boy Jodu, who had fled with him from the *Ibis*. “It was not as if he and I had even been friends, after all, and nor did we share any other connections or commonalities—of family, religion or even age...” Neel writes in his diary. “It was our flight from the *Ibis* that brought us together...when Jodu stepped into my lodgings something dissolved within both of us and wept as if we were brothers, reunited after a long parting” (Ghosh 2015: 288). Neel’s concluding words in this reflection place the bond of the ship even above those of kinship. “The shared secret of our escape from the *Ibis* has become a link between who we were then and who we are now; between past and present. It is a bond more powerful even than ties of family and friendship” (ibid). Of course, their co-travelers on the *Ibis* share similar feelings. For instance, Paulette confesses to Ah-Fatt in *Flood of Fire*, “[t]he *Ibis* has tied us together in a strange way” even as the narrator observes, “Paulette sensed a powerful bond of kinship with Ah-Fatt (364-65, 368). Likewise, after finding himself transformed into an opium trader and captain of the ship, Zachary begins to

wonder whether the *Ibis* had a soul and if she “had conspired in making his transformation possible” (373). Finally, towards the end of the text, Ghosh repeats Neel’s observation about the strong bond of relationships generated by the *Ibis* – albeit, in relation to Paulette’s inability to sever her complicated ties with Zachary: “[t]he bond of the *Ibis* was like a living thing, endowed with the power to reach out from the past to override the volition of those who were enmeshed in it” (439). Ironically, Zachary ignores this bond towards the end in *Flood of Fire*, leaving Paulette heart-broken and devastated. Perhaps, the fact that Zachary increasingly moved away from the *Ibis* community in search of wealth and power explains his betrayal.

More than employing the littoral as conducive to nurturing domesticity and linguistic pluralism among strangers, Ghosh engages it as a space for resisting sociocultural and colonial oppression. The beginning of *Sea of Poppies* presciently indicates the type of liberative role the iconic ship will play in Deeti’s and her ship-brothers’ and ship-sisters’ lives. In spite of never having lived near the sea, Deeti sees a vision of the great *Ibis* “at sail on the ocean” and becomes entranced with it (Ghosh 2008: 3).²³ Besides “the immense ship with two tall masts,” Deeti also sees “a man in the background, standing near the bow, and although she could not see him clearly, she had a sense of a distinctive and unfamiliar presence” (ibid 7). While Deeti’s vision remains

²³ Ghosh establishes the vision as the guiding force of Deeti’s quest for liberation from her social and familial plight by emphasizing how real it was for her. For instance, the narrator says, ‘Deeti knew that the vision was not materially present in front of her – as, for example, was the barge moored near the factory. She had never seen the sea, never left the district, never spoken any language but her native Bhojpuri, yet not for a moment did she doubt that the ship existed somewhere and was heading in her direction.’ See *Sea of Poppies*, 8.

mysterious to her at the beginning, the events that carry the trilogy to its conclusion render its meaning crystal-clear: the *Ibis* was that huge ship that would change Deeti's course of life forever by realigning her future with Kalua, a low-caste Hindu, with whom she starts a new life in Mauritius and becomes the matriarch of a cosmopolitan community. Ghosh gradually reveals the full meaning of Deeti's vision of the *Ibis* through the many challenges those on board the ship face from both oppressive social structures and exploitative colonial system. While Deeti's in-laws, who were in close pursuit, represent the former in *Sea of Poppies*, Captain Chillingworth personifies the latter. In fact, Ghosh portrays the two as close allies who seek to destroy Deeti and Kalua's new-found hope for a cosmopolitan future completely. Chillingworth, for example, attempts to perpetuate the victimhood of the girmitiyas on board the *Ibis* as soon as the ship enters the Indian Ocean. Not only does he declare himself as the sole master of all girmitiyas on board, he also orders them to obey the Subedar Bhyro Singh as they "would [their] own zemindar" (Ghosh 2008: 371). Ironically, while the Captain declares the laws of the land defunct on the *Ibis*, he reimposes its oppressive structure with even more severity by demanding absolute obedience at the pain of incurring severe punishment or even death. Nevertheless, both Deeti and Kalua oppose this oppression with subtlety and courage: Deeti becomes a de facto representative of the women on *Ibis* and Kalua provides her support with his imposing physique and reputation as one of the strongest men on board. That said, when Bhyro Singh and his men discover the real identity of Deeti and Kalua, and demand permission to inflict a heavy punishment on the latter, Captain Chillingworth readily grants it saying, "[a]nd what right do we have to deny them the vengeance that we would certainly claim as our due?" (442).

Chillingworth allows Bhyro Singh to exact a gruesome revenge on Kalua for eloping with his sister-in-law on the pretext of respecting the Indian social segregation among hierarchically placed castes. Insisting on supporting the Indian caste-system for the sake of maintaining the Britishers' hold over India, Chillingworth claims, "in matters of marriage and procreation, like must be with like, and each must keep to their own. The day the natives lose faith in us, as the guarantors of the order of castes – that will be the day, gentlemen, that will doom our rule" (Ghosh 2008: 442). The irony evident in Chillingworth's words and action is that he consciously works to strengthen the nexus between the social oppressors of the poor and colonial power in order to maintain his hold over both the local oppressors as well as the oppressed. His actions give the lie to Britain's justification for colonizing India: its Civilizing Mission.²⁴ Here again, facing a double opposition from the sociocultural and political oppressors, Kalua and his companions feel inspired by an opportunity of rebellion the ship presents to them. Trusting on the dynamism and vastness of the sea to carry them far from the danger,

²⁴ It is crucial to note here that Ghosh emphatically rejects the idea that British imperialism in any way served to mitigate or abolish social inequalities in India. He also strongly denounces 'the Civilizing Mission' as the justification of India's colonization by the British. In an email correspondence with the historian, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Ghosh expands on these arguments as follows: 'Are we not implicitly conceding the argument that imperialism was, in at least one of its aspects, an enterprise of social reform? This is worth asking because many Indians have been down this road before us, and I for one, have come to be very interested in the ways in which they charted this path. Take Tilak for example: his early essays give the impression that he accepted (perhaps even against his own will) the idea that there was an important reformist impulse in colonialism. But then, in a later essay (written about 1906, I think, soon after a visit to Burma) Tilak went on to produce a very interesting deconstruction of this assumption. The argument goes something like this (so far as I remember): Yes, of course it is true that there are many evils in contemporary Indian society; that Hinduism has become a caricature of itself and is desperately in need of reform. These are all facts: but those who offer these facts as a justification for the imperialist presence in India are proceeding on a mistaken assumption. They are assuming that the British are here to reform us. They are wrong because our imperfection is not their reason for being here. They would be here anyway, even if our society did not have any of its present evils. If tomorrow we were to become a perfect society, they would still be here.' For more on this topic, See Amitav Ghosh and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "A Correspondence on *Provincializing Europe*," (*Radical History Review* 83: 2002), 157.

Neel, Jodu, Serang Ali, and Ah-Fatt make a daring escape from the ship. The vast territory of the Indian Ocean becomes their ally and escape route.

Similarly, Ghosh uses Muniya's narrative to evoke a larger historical pattern of the subaltern taking the littoral routes to flee from abject poverty and exploitation in India. In *Sea of Poppies*, inspired by Deeti's comforting words, the girmitiya women begin to share their stories one by one. Among them, the story of Muniya – a lone survivor of a family massacre – becomes significant for its parallel with the larger socio-historical factors that forced the subalterns to volunteer as indentured laborers in the first place. As the narrator describes it, Muniya was raped by an opium-agent who frequented Ghazipur, near the girl's village, and made her pregnant. When Muniya's family demanded that he provide for the mother and the child, the agent "burnt down her hut, killing her father, mother, and her 18-month-old child" (Ghosh 2008: 226). Facing a certain death, Muniya chose "to look for the duffadar's pulwar, just as her brothers had done before her," thus becoming a girmitiya not only to save her life but also to hope for better opportunities elsewhere (ibid). The accounts of other women echo the elements of exploitation, oppression, and resultant flight towards the sea embedded in Muniya's story. Not surprisingly, then, after the abolition of Slavery by the British Empire in 1833, "the total number of *girmitiyas* "exported" to overseas colonies numbered some one and a half million people" (Rai and Pinkney 66). The socioeconomically oppressed and exploited groups like Muniya and other girmitiya women preferred the back-breaking hard labor on the British plantations to the dehumanizing treatment they were subjected to in India. The Indian ocean offered them a safe passage on the way to freedom from sociocultural and political oppression.

Subedar Kesri Singh personifies the liberative dimension of Ghosh's familial-littoral cosmopolitanism. In *Flood of Fire*, Ghosh characterizes the Subedar as a reluctant cosmopolitan, who had left home and family to join the British Army with a hint of lasting regret. Soon after joining the army against the wishes of his father Kesri feels that "he had abandoned not just his family and his village, but also himself—or rather the person he had once been, with certain ideas about dignity, self-containment and morality" (Ghosh 2015: 112). Kesri's implicit regret evidences not only his love for his family but also for the traditions and social structure that upheld them. His enthusiasm for a disciplined and purpose-oriented army life helps him adapt to the demands of army life until the traditional Hindu society's social conventions return to haunt him in the army. Subedar Nirbhay Singh's warning to have him ostracized in the entire paltan (battalion) on account of his sister Deeti's elopement with Kalua leaves him with no choice but to quit the army.²⁵ Facing the dire consequences of ostracism, and not willing to subject his own sister to torture at the hands of her former in-laws, Kesri opts to join Captain Mee on the China expedition. Thus, he chooses to avoid a social death by escaping to new possibilities on the sea; his decision to go take to the sea also eventually empowers him to

²⁵ The Subedar's warning of total ostracism to Kersi is a typical form of punishment by social alienation in the Hindu Society, which amounts to a social death for the ostracized. Nirbhay Singh's declaration involves the following consequences for Kesri: 'The only way you can redeem your honour, Kesri Singh, is by delivering your sister to us so that she can be made to answer for what she has done. Until that day on one in this paltan—not the afsars and nor the jawans—will eat with you or accept water from you, or even exchange words with you. From now on you have no place in this paltan—if you choose to remain here it will be a ghost. I will explain all this to the English officers in the morning; as you know, in matters of family and caste, they always respect our decisions. I will tell them that as far as we are concerned you are now a pariah, an outcast.' See *Flood of Fire*, 174.

escape to total freedom on the *Ibis*. Prior to that, his experience of opposing social discrimination in the barracks had taught him to promote a culture of equality among soldiers of different castes – “Brahmin, Rajput, Aheer, Kurmi and a few others” – on the ship that was transporting them to China. “Didn’t they understand that on ships it was impossible for them to carry on as if they were back in a village?” (229). Ironically, in spite of his efforts to promote nondiscrimination among Indian soldiers, Kesri continued to face racial discrimination by his colonial masters, most notably evident in the incident that obliged Kesri to report a misdemeanor by an English corporal, only to come under investigation himself. Such experiences of blatant racial discrimination by the British officers led Kesri to make a final escape from them on the *Ibis*. Kesri’s decision to “throw the satchel (of money) in the water... than to lose it” to the British officers, who “would find a pretext to take it away,” is also guided by a belief that the ship would guide him to safety. Ghosh memorializes Kesri’s daring seaward run on the *Ibis* through Deeti’s painting the ‘Escape.’ In this context, Deeti’s final depiction of the ‘Escape’, in which “Kesri...was always drawn with a bundook,” becomes Ghosh’s final testament to Kesri’s fighting spirit that inspired his successful escape from both local and colonial oppression (606). From a literary perspective, the final escape of the six new-*jahajbhais* (ship-brothers) – Kesri, Jodu, Neel, Raju, Serang Ali, and Kalua – celebrates a vision of the littoral that adds a liberative dimension to Ghosh’s familial cosmopolitanism.

A Western Capitalist Cosmopolitanism versus A Familial-Littoral Cosmopolitanism

Ghosh poses a serious challenge to a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism at the end of *Flood of Fire* through the incident that captures the triumph of Western capitalism in the nineteenth-century China. Towards the end of the last chapter, Ghosh describes the meteoric rise of Zachary at the end of the First Opium War. Starting his sailing career as a mulatto boy from Baltimore, Zachary quickly gains power and position under Mr. Burnham to become his business partner, and an estate owner, at the end of *Flood of Fire*. However, in the course of his professional advancement, Zachary foregoes the family-like attachments he had once developed on the *Ibis*. Not surprisingly, by the end of the novel, he is neither with the six men who escaped on the *Ibis* nor with Paulette, the woman he once passionately loved. Instead, Ghosh places him in the company of Mr. Burnham and Mr. Chan, triumphantly holding hands as a co-owner of the newest business firm in Hong Kong in 1841:

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ said Mr. Burnham, ‘it gives me the greatest pride to announce that from this time on the firm of Burnham and Reid will be working closely with our good friend, Mr. Leonard Chan.’

Now, taking Zachary’s wrist in his right hand and Mr. Chan’s in his left, Mr. Burnham hoisted up their arms and held them aloft in triumph. (606)

Clearly, Zachary, along with Burnham and Chan represents a Western capitalist cosmopolitanism that evolves out of common entrepreneurial interests among the three partners of different nationalities. What unites an American sailor, a British business

tycoon, and a Chinese smuggler, then, is not a shared appreciation of one another's cosmopolitanisms per se, but the enormous fortune their alliance promises to make in China. By depicting them jubilantly hoisting interlocked arms in triumph, Ghosh strongly indicates the rise of a Western-style comprador cosmopolitanism in South Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century. In a way, the incident fictionalizes an argument Ghosh makes in an interview about the Western imperialism's economic domination of the world in the name of Free Trade in the eighteenth century. Asked about how he compares the current sway of economic globalization over the world with the British empire's capitalism after the Opium Wars in South Asia, Ghosh remarks that there are striking parallels between the two situations. In the nineteenth century, Europe was in trade deficit with China and needed to destroy the country's economy and military in order to impose favorable trade conditions on it. "This is why the British East India Company started exporting opium to China on a large scale – with catastrophic consequences for that country," claims Ghosh (Ghosh 2011b: npg). Ironically, the British waged that war "in the name of Free Trade – even though the main commodity that they were exporting, opium, was produced under a state monopoly in the Bengal Presidency," Ghosh reveals (ibid). Making a direct connection of those events with the contemporary world, Ghosh explains that the Western powers "cannot today resort to quite the same means that they did in 1830s and 1840s" to perpetuate their economic supremacy. "What they are doing instead is that they are ratcheting up the rhetoric about 'Free Trade' 'Liberalization' etc." (ibid). Ghosh's insightful remarks about the colonial capitalism and rhetoric of 'Free Trade' resonate with Peter Gowan's understanding of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Gowan describes it as a phenomenon the "seeks to overcome the limits

of national sovereignty by constructing a global order that will govern important political as well as economic aspects of both internal and external behavior of states,” (Gowan 79). Significantly, the jubilant business alliance of Zachary, Burnham, and Chan strongly resembles the capitalist and neoliberal characteristics of Free Trade both Ghosh and Gowan describe. At the end of the first Opium War many such cosmopolitan business partnerships took a foothold in China, as the competitive bidding scene towards the end in *Flood of Fire* suggests. More importantly, by placing the alliance-scene immediately before the ‘Escape’ scene, Ghosh indicates that, in order to flourish, the familial-littoral cosmopolitanism of the postcolonial migrants will have to compete with not only the national and imperial interests, but also with an economically more attractive option: the neoliberal capitalist cosmopolitanism. However, Ghosh’s makes his support for the former quite evident in the last two passages of *Flood of Fire*.

The ending of *Flood of Fire* highlights Ghosh’s unequivocal support for a familial-littoral cosmopolitanism as well as his rejection of a capitalist alliance. Ghosh chooses not to end the novel with the capitalist-alliance scene. Following it, he inserts two other sections to complete the final chapter of the trilogy: one, that of Nob Kissin’s reflection on Zachary’s metamorphosis and realization of the missing *Ibis* – on which the six men had made their escape; and two, Deeti’s imaginative pictorial representation of the ‘Escape.’ In terms of a direct comparison, then, the ‘hoisting of hands’ and ‘escaping on a ship’ contradict each other for the type of cosmopolitanism each embodies. The former is entrepreneurial and triumphant, the latter is cultural and optimistic. Ghosh clearly privileges the familial-littoral over the capitalist in the text’s ending. It is evident in Nob Kissin’s sardonic, pessimistic, and ominous reading of the alliance’s role in

hastening the annihilation of the world by the goddess Kali. It is also detectable in Deeti's celebratory, optimistic memorialization of the 'Escape.' In promoting an alternative cosmopolitanism, Ghosh is perhaps reasserting his opinion on Third-World nations' tendency to valorize non-European world leaders by naming famous roads after them: "they represent a yearning to reclaim an interrupted cosmopolitanism" (Ghosh 2009: 38). If Burnham, Zachary, and Chan represent the faces of the most visible cosmopolitans, who remain prominent on the world stage on account of their economic and political powers, Kalua, Kesri, Serang Ali, Jodu, Neel, and Raju represent the postcolonial cosmopolitans, who rely on one another for acceptance and support. Theirs is an alternative cosmopolitanism that Ghosh actively seeks to promote. Fiction, more than any other medium of expression, enables him to share this vision with readers around the world in imaginative ways.

Ghosh's Cosmopolitanism and the Primacy of Fiction

Fiction holds distinct advantages over social sciences in terms of the ability to capture Ghosh's cosmopolitan vision of a familial-littoral nature. In the first place, choosing fiction over social sciences such as history and anthropology makes it possible for Ghosh to re-create history by keeping the individual actors and their struggles in given historical circumstances at the center. As a trained historian who has opted to create a worldview through fiction, Ghosh privileges literature over history and

anthropology – the two social sciences that dominated his studies at Oxford.²⁶ The historian Mark Frost describes Ghosh’s narrative style as heavily influenced by ‘thick description,’ “which provides a total picture of a place and its time, the landscapes, the clothes, the languages” and allows readers to imagine the concrete socio-historical circumstances that shape a story (Frost 1538). Because of his exceptional ability to integrate ‘thick descriptions’ in his fiction, Frost commends Ghosh for answering detailed historical “questions that historians have failed to ask” in the first place (ibid 1539) and acknowledges him as an inspiration for historians.²⁷ However, Ghosh differs from historians in one major respect: namely, that while the former look at the macro-level picture of reality to arrive at general conclusions, Ghosh seeks to understand the same reality from the point of view of individuals whose lives are shaped by it at the micro level. It is at this juncture, then, that Ghosh becomes a fiction writer and excavates history to find evidence of social reality of the time through records of human experiences. “[S]torytellers turn to the past is because history is replete with compelling human predicaments,” Ghosh claims (2012b: npg). Identifying the human issues involved in a given historical event as “unique and unrepeatable” instances in history, Ghosh declares that the human predicament “shapes the narrative and determines the design and the content of the book” (ibid). Since historians largely study the past from a particular

²⁶ See, for instance, the introductory section in this chapter that describes Ghosh as a cosmopolitan by upbringing, education, and profession.

²⁷ Even the editors of the history journal, *The American Historical Review* credit Ghosh for their newly-discovered academic interest in ‘historical fiction’. The introduction to a special issue examining Ghosh’s Ibis trilogy states: ‘Historical fiction is a category of literature that contains everything from works that only barely, and often crudely and exploitatively, relate to a historically recognizable past to those which meticulously succeed in reimagining past times and events in ways that often provoke the envy of historians. One recent example of this second type of historical fiction is surely Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis Trilogy, the last installment of which, *Flood of Fire*, was published in 2015.’ See Introduction. “History Meets Fiction in the Indian Ocean: On Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis Trilogy,” *The American Historical Review* (121.5 Dec. 201) 1521, available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.5.1537>.

perspective and write history to offer verifiable explanations of their perspective, they part ways with Ghosh who places the human beings in the foreground and larger historical events in the background of his narratives.²⁸

Therefore, the novel emerges as a complete form for Ghosh – one that allows him to bring into conversation not only people with different predicaments, but also diverse disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, and geology. To write fiction is akin to privileging human insights over principles of history and anthropology for Ghosh. That is to say, fiction affords Ghosh the liberty to re-write or re-imagine history from its individual actors' perspective, an element not available in history and anthropology that rely on an interpretation of the mostly through generalizations and abstractions. Therefore, if history and anthropology tend to offer Eurocentric accounts of the postcolonial world, Ghosh counters them with novels that depict the same world through the eyes and words of postcolonial subjects – thus rendering the privileged readings of history suspect. For instance, Ghosh's history of Burma in *The Glass Palace* analyzes the British invasion and subsequent colonization of Burma in the nineteenth century from a Burmese perspective. Embracing the novel form enables Ghosh to write alternative

²⁸ In an interview with Claire Chambers, Ghosh clearly spells out how he differs from social sciences with respect to interest in historical research. He also reiterates the centrality of human actors in his novels: Research for me is not the same thing as what it would be for, say, someone in the social sciences. I like libraries, I like research, but for me it's just the beginning of a story. It's true that I do a lot of research, but that's why I know the limitations of research. And when you're writing fiction in terms of history, I think it's important to acknowledge that an historical novel is like any other novel: essentially, it's about people. Unless people's stories are interesting, the history itself doesn't matter at all, it's only a backdrop. History is interesting to me because it creates specific predicaments, that are particular to that moment in time and nowhere else. So I'm interested in history to the point that I can represent that predicament truthfully and accurately. But beyond that, history for the sake of history doesn't interest me. And I would say the same about research. It's a beginning, it gives me ideas about what's in the world, it starts me off, that's all.' See Clair Chambers, "The Absolutes Essentialness of Conversations': A Discussion with Amitav Ghosh" in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (41.1: 2005), 32.

versions of history. Therefore, in response to a question about transcending disciplinary boundaries through his fiction, Ghosh lauds the novel as “the most complete utterance that a human being is capable of,” and declares the form uniquely capable of capturing the emotion – a strength lacking in history and anthropology (Kumar 103). In fact, Ghosh admires the novel as complete form that “can synthesize geology, history, personal relationships, emotion, everything” (ibid). The novel’s ability to harmonize diverse sociohistorical as well as emotional elements that comprise human predicaments compels Ghosh to write fiction to re-interpret history. Historians object to fiction writers’ tendency to incorporate details from history without bearing the burden of making them verifiable; Ghosh, on the other hand, considers it the strength of the novel. Because the novel has no boundaries or rules, its flexibility suits a fiction writer who employs imagination to create narratives.²⁹ In the final analysis, though, the novel appeals to Ghosh because of the directness with which it engages peoples’ lives. While history, sociology, and anthropology rely on abstractions about human beings and their societies, fiction evolves out of the individual histories that are easily missed by abstract observations. To give an illustration, two recent essays on Ghosh’s fiction offer two contradictory verdicts on the author’s portrayal of the subalterns. Examining the *Ibis* trilogy from a history’s point of view, Pedro Machado cites two errors in the trilogy: one, “having both indentured laborers and penal transportees aboard the same ship,” that is the *Ibis* in *Sea of Poppies*; two, constructing “an enduring teleology of the Indian Ocean as a

²⁹ Mark R Frost, for instance, expresses envy at writers who produce historical fiction by accessing archives and primary resources. ‘Such sources’ enable ‘these authors to tease out the mundane, the microscopic yet often revelatory intricacies of the past’ without ‘having to justify their endeavors to research councils and grand bodies.’ See, Frost, 1537.

British “lake whose dynamics were ultimately and definitively shaped by the logic of empire and driven by the force of capital” (Machado 1549). Analyzing these details purely from a historical perspective, Machado faults Ghosh for an inaccurate portrayal of the characters and the Indian Ocean in the trilogy. His critique exposes the limits of history by insisting on a historical accuracy in what is primarily a narrative born out of a marriage between history and fiction. By remaining faithful to the official version of history, Ghosh would have merely reiterated the imperial version of the Opium Trade or the First Opium War; rather, he consciously certain distorts historical details in the *Ibis* trilogy to offer an insight into an alternative history that might have happened but for a suffocating control of the British Empire over the history and destiny of its colonial subjects. If Ghosh were to write the trilogy strictly on the basis of history, it would not have produced the many moral victories the subalterns achieve over their Indian and British oppressors in the course of the story; nor would it have had a happy ending that guarantees the freedom of the six men, whose escape Deeti memorializes in her paintings. In contrast, Shanthini Pillai detects a deliberate positivity in Ghosh’s depiction of the coolies, especially in *The Glass Palace*, and argues that in the text “signs of docility and malleability to imperial dominance are resignified and what we encounter are people who faced the onslaught of imperial capitalism and overcame its bitterness with strengths of their own (Pillai 48). Likewise, the *Ibis* trilogy can be read as a story of hope for the oppressed because the literary richness of the texts offers a positive interpretation of an otherwise a bleak history comprising the Indian indentured laborers, British colonialism, and the Opium Wars. It is the recuperative power of Ghosh’s historical fiction, as evident in the trilogy, that makes it relevant to his familial, littoral

cosmopolitan vision. Thus, while the rigidity of history may not allow Ghosh to re-imagine it from a positive or subaltern perspective, the novel guarantees it.³⁰ “What makes a novel powerful, what makes it strong, what wins readers for it in the end is the same: story – whether it is a historical novel or whether it is any other kind of novel, it is the characters, the emotions,” Ghosh maintains (Kumar 101). Therefore, Ghosh’s familial-littoral cosmopolitanism, with its pre-colonial and colonial, transnational, heteroglossiac, subaltern, and, to an extent, feminist dimensions, could not have been realized without fiction. In other words, Ghosh needed fiction to re-narrate the history of cosmopolitanism in South Asian from the Asian migrants’ perspective because the Western historians had largely ignored it. Ghosh could not rely only on history and anthropology to recreate his cosmopolitanism because Western imperialism tends to suppress the colonized cultures’ potential to promote a cultural cosmopolitanism, capable of transcending national and social boundaries. On the contrary, fiction empowers Ghosh to show an imaginative version of that lost cosmopolitanism and, more importantly,

³⁰ In a recent essay on storytelling and the past, Ghosh asserts that social sciences such as history and anthropology are constrained by their focused approach to historical research, whereas the form of the novel allows the storyteller to describe a historical event or place or tradition from multiple viewpoints that different characters entertain. Ghosh states: ‘It is easy to lose sight of these peculiar circumstances while reading historical monographs on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canton. This is because the protocols of historical research impose certain constraints. In the same way that a novel is shaped by its protagonists, a historical monograph is shaped by its subject and the questions it asks. The trade historian sees a busy port; the historian of science sees a city with innumerable nurseries; the art historian sees a collection of studios. This limitation is also a strength, in that it focuses the range of the research and thereby gives the historian the right to assert claims to truth, or at least verifiability. A work of fiction cannot make truth claims no matter how detailed and exhaustive the research. Yet, in rendering a setting through the eyes of individuals, a novel can take on the task of re-creating the multifaceted nature of a character’s experience. This project would not be possible, of course, if historians had not laid the foundations for it. But some things can elude even the highly disciplined and rigorous gaze of the historian.’ See A Ghosh, “Storytelling and the Spectrum of the Past” *The American Historical Review* (121.5: Dec. 2016), 1555. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.5.1537>.

enables him to suggest that saving alternative cosmopolitanisms is the best strategy to counter economic globalization and nationalist fundamentalism in contemporary societies.

Conclusion

To return to the topic discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to repeat that Ghosh considers diasporic communities an integral part of India – an intellectual stand that leads to exploring the cultural strengths the Asian migrant communities have retained while living outside India. As evident in Ghosh's fiction, the strengths include characteristics such as strong familial bonds, preservation of native culture and language in foreign lands, and an ability to transform into cosmopolitan diasporic communities by adopting local cultures and languages through marital and friendly relationships with the others. Emphasizing the importance of the sea and oceanic journeys in the history of the Indian diasporic communities, Ghosh acknowledges the littoral's role in maintaining the migrant Indians' lasting connections with India. Since most of the diasporic migrations of the subaltern Indian populations took place during the British colonial era, Ghosh invariably develops their stories against the background of imperial history. However, it is the communitarian resilience of the diasporic Indians, and in some cases other South Asians, that seems to triumph over the overwhelming might of colonial powers in Ghosh's fiction. Similarly, it is the diasporic communities' desire to expand their world and reach out to new communities by transcending the sociocultural confines of their homeland that makes them cosmopolitans according to his understanding of cosmopolitanism. It is a unique cosmopolitanism that neither requires

the migrant to renounce family ties nor forgo one's cultural connections on their journey into the wider world. Moreover, the dynamism of the sea and the homeliness of the ship combine to offer postcolonial migrants a sense of belonging as well as a spirit of social transformation. Cognizant of these elements, Ghosh calls the relationship between the diaspora and India an epic: "an epic without a text" (Ghosh 2010: 250). More importantly, it is a relationship that is "lived within the imagination" (ibid). In this context, Ghosh's recourse to fiction as a means to describe this relationship is justified owing to the imaginative dimension involved in it. Explaining the same point in his essay, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture," Ghosh writes, "[i]t is because this relationship is so much a relationship of the imagination that the specialists of the imagination – writers – play so important a part within it" (ibid). Led by his literary imagination, Ghosh has succeeded in positively relating cosmopolitanism with deeply cherished familial and communitarian ties among South Asian migrants; more importantly, by imaginatively including the transformative space of the littoral in his fiction, Ghosh has imbued his cosmopolitanism with a liberative dimension, too.

Inasmuch as India remains at the center of Ghosh's literary creation, he joins the postcolonial celebrities like Rushdie and Roy, whose writings inspire much debate about the postcolonial cosmopolitan writers' role in the contemporary world. Like Rushdie, Ghosh looks at India as an expatriate writer and seeks to expand the understanding of India and Indianness beyond geographical and ideological boundaries. Arundhati Roy differs from both in this respect. She develops her cosmopolitanism in an attempt to make India more recognizable among cosmopolitans with its socioeconomic, political, and

cultural limitations. Instead of taking India to the West, Roy brings the West to India to expand its cultural and cosmopolitical horizons.

CHAPTER THREE: ARUNDHATI ROY'S SMALL COSMOPOLITANISM

Rushdie and Roy: The Cosmopolitan Celebrities

A reputed Indian daily, *Hindustan Times*, published an interesting article on Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy online in 2012. The article claims there is a lukewarm relationship between the two Booker-Prize winners and substantiates it with quotes from Rushdie. These quotes refer to three different instances when the celebrity-writers met each other at literary events, and the most significant of the three concerns Roy's candid appraisal of their writings. Roy seems to have remarked at her Booker-Prize ceremony that Rushdie's writing "was merely 'exotic' whereas hers was truthful" – a comment not taken kindly by Rushdie for obvious reasons.¹ However, not wishing to start a war of words with her, Rushdie accepted the explanation from Roy's publisher that she was misquoted, states the article.

Whether or not this was the case, there are noticeable differences between Rushdie and Roy, at least as far as the trajectories of their writing careers since 1997 are concerned. In the last twenty years, Rushdie has continued to write novels at a prolific rate, addressing nationalism and globalization using magic realism as his favorite trope; whereas, Roy has written dozens of essays and one novel on social activism and human

¹ See "Rushdie, Arundhati Not on Same Page" in *Hindustan Times e-paper*, 20 September 2012. Available at http://www.hindustantimes.com/books/rushdie-arundhati-not-on-same-page/story_wxSsx8kFm0aHv9jx8CbL1N.html

rights issues in India.² However, as postcolonial cosmopolitan writers, both Rushdie and Roy remain committed to critiquing, what Bishnupriya Ghosh calls, “a cosmopolitics aimed at dislodging violent inscription of nationalism and globalism” (Ghosh 132). The difference in enacting their cosmopolitics primarily stems from the cosmopolitan perspective each of these writers adopts. That is to say, Rushdie and Roy differ from each other not so much in the exoticism and truthfulness of writing, as the latter claims, but in the manner in which they address fundamentalist nationalism and neoliberal globalization. Rushdie critiques them from a migrant’s cosmopolitan perspective, and Roy, from a local’s ‘small’ perspective.

Essentially, since the publication of *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Rushdie has continued to express concerns about the dangers of aggressive nationalism and homogenizing globalization threatening the Third World, in particular, India – a fact recognizable in his fiction. For instance, in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Rushdie indicates the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in Bombay in the early 1990s through Raman Fielding. As Rushdie reveals, Fielding had planned to restore “Hindu-ness” of the Hindus by launching a political movement called “Mumba-Ai, Mumbadevi, Mubabai – thus uniting regional and religious nationalism in his potent, explosive new group” (Rushdie 1995: 231). Rushdie strongly challenges India’s communalization by fundamentalist forces through the creative aspect of his fiction and imagines a cosmopolitan India. Similarly, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, he critiques globalization for its insidious power of cultural homogenization of the East and undermines it through appropriation and

² For instance, Rushdie’s novels such as *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), and *Fury* (2001).

subversion.³ For instance, to strengthen his critique of globalization, Rushdie enables Cama to anticipate and appropriate the American Rock hits, thereby challenging their ability for a cultural colonization of the East. Thus, even though, exoticism might feature prominently in Rushdie's in fiction, he consistently critiques both fundamentalist nationalism and neoliberal globalization.

When it comes to his nonfiction, Rushdie adopts a more journalistic approach to lobby in favor of those who oppose the combined might of nationalism and globalization, as in the case of Arundhati Roy and her co-activists. In an essay entitled "August 2001 – Arundhati Roy," Rushdie defends her activism on behalf of the poor populations affected by the construction of big dams in India. Describing Roy's involvement in the protest against a mega project in Western India that threatened to displace thousands of people and cause an ecological imbalance in the region, Rushdie writes,

[o]ne of the biggest new dams under construction is the Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada River in the State of Gujarat, with a proposed final height of 135.5 meters (375 feet). Among its most vocal opponents is the novelist Arundhati Roy...She objects to the displacement of more than 200,000 people by rising waters, to the damage of the Narmada Valley's fragile ecosystem, and points, tellingly, to the failure of many big dams to deliver what they promised. She argues further that while the rural poor are the ones who pay the price for a dam, it is the urban rich who benefit... (Rushdie 2002: 331)

In particular, Rushdie highlights the harassment meted out to Roy, along with other prominent social activists such as Medha Patkar and Prashant Bhushan, by the Supreme

³ For a detailed analysis of this argument, see the sections on Rushdie's creative and critical cosmopolitanisms in chapter 2.

Court of India while protesting the construction of the Narmada dam in 2000. Rebuking the Supreme Court for its unjustified legal action against the activists, Rushdie warns, “[t]he Court should realize that by pursuing Arundhati Roy, Medha Patkar, and Prashant Bhushan in this fashion, it places itself before the court of world opinion” (Rushdie 2002: 333). Here again is a striking example of Rushdie’s active participation in India’s current sociopolitical struggles with nationalism and economic globalization. Rushdie’s support of Roy and other social activists reveals his political stand on the social justice issues in India and the Third World.⁴

In spite of Rushdie and Roy’s celebrity status as postcolonial writers, and the similarities between their sociopolitical concerns about India, there remains a major difference between the two writers that distinguishes their literary cosmopolitanisms. As mentioned earlier, it is the difference that primarily evolves out of the perspective with which these writers write about India. Rushdie offers a migrant’s perspective to describe India because of his expatriate status and cosmopolitan life style. Very often Rushdie’s perspective involves the imagination to reconnect with the India of his dreams. For instance, acknowledging the reality of a “physical alienation from India,” Rushdie underlines the need to “create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of mind” (Rushdie 1991: 10). Rushdie’s imagination follows Indias of his dream – secular, multicultural, plural, and hybrid. Like Aurora’s painting of Bombay, Rushdie’s fiction actively imagines a cosmopolitan India that migrants like him had left behind and aspire to recreate in the future. Roy, on the other

⁴ For a detailed information of the political and economic issues surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Project, see Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good” in *The Cost of Living* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), 1-90.

hand, lives in India and approaches it in her fiction and nonfiction from a localized perspective; that is to say, she depicts rural and urban India from an insider's point of view and then attempts to relate it with the wider world through her cosmopolitanism. Her localism enables Roy to focus on the small: small things, small stories, small events, small narratives, and small persons. Roy's celebration of the small directly challenges the big represented by national and global discourses that often overlook the interests of the rural poor as well as women and children. Therefore, it is through the small that Roy critiques fundamentalist nationalism that ignores those socially, religiously, and culturally marginalized, and economic globalization that either objectifies or exploits the poor. By writing fiction about these weaker sections of society and the small spaces they inhabit, Roy hopes to throw into relief the contradictions inherent in the big sociopolitical and economic changes occurring in the Third World in the twenty-first century. For instance, consider Roy's following discourse on the dynamics between the big and the small:

[i]t's possible that as a nation we've exhausted out quota of heroes for this century, but while we wait for shiny new ones to come along, we have to limit the damage. We have to support our small heroes... We have to fight specific wars in specific ways. Who knows, perhaps that's what the twenty-first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the Big. Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the century of the small. Perhaps right now, this very minute, there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Could it be? Could it *Possibly* be? (Roy 1999: 12)

Clearly, for Roy, the answer to the military, economic, and cultural threats posed by the so-called 'big' is a promotion of the 'small.' Essentially, Roy's cosmopolitanism emerges out of her critical engagement with the small, the local, and the here-and-now.

Arundhati Roy privileges the local over the global, the particular over the universal, in both her fiction and nonfiction. In doing so, she successfully highlights the sociopolitical issues concerning the poor and marginalized in India. Through her writing, Roy seeks to “globalize dissent [that] involves the cosmopolitical pursuit of human rights” (Ghosh 2004: 127). In fact, the intense focus Roy devotes to the local events and issues in her fiction achieves the same effect as her powerful nonfiction in terms of making readers aware of how global events, international trade and politics affect the local. *The God of Small Things*, for example, largely narrates the events that occurred in a little village in the South Indian state of Kerala, specifically in Ayemenem, in the summer of 1969. The story revolves around how these events profoundly affected the lives of the twins, Estha and Rahel, who were forced to go their own ways after their cousin Sophie Mol’s death by drowning but were never able to regain their childhood happiness and peace thereafter. However, the novel also powerfully highlights the plight of Kerala’s poor and backward-class communities through events such as Velutha’s brutal death in police custody, and the Kathakali dancers’ exotified performance at the five-star hotel Heart of Darkness. Roy’s penchant for globalizing dissent is evidenced in the text’s narrative technique: while the main events are narrated by Rahel, which largely revolve around her early years in Ayemenem, the accompanying commentaries on these events are offered by the third-person omniscient narrator who analyzes them through sociohistorical and political perspectives. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy depicts the idyllic beauty of Ayemenem, on the one hand, and bemoans its deterioration through greed and globalization, on the other hand. She also reveals the dark side of the Communist politics and caste relations in Kerala, critiques the globalized exotification of

Indian culture, and valorizes the cosmopolitan aspirations of the marginalized, such as Velutha, in rural India.

Roy tends to speak more forcefully about the sociopolitical issues underlying the plight of the poor and the marginalized in her nonfiction than fiction: she highlights them through the small, the insignificant, and the trivial. In the first place, Roy's predilection for the small indicates her opposition to the discourses of globalization and even Eurocentric cosmopolitanism that is usually associated with travel, border crossing, and global cities. Yet, celebrating the localized discourses of the small through her writing makes her cosmopolitanism interesting as well as unique for it involves thinking against the grain. Typically, cosmopolitanism involves ideas and events of universal, transnational, and global scope. For instance, the migration of people from East to West; cultural exchange between Europe and Africa; the global flows of commodities, services, and information, etc. Roy's cosmopolitanism eschews these grands designs to focus on the local and the small. More importantly, it hints at the role the small can play in advancing cosmopolitan ways of thinking and acting. For instance, in an opinion piece, entitled "Under the Unclear Shadow," published in *The Guardian* in 2002, Roy poignantly relates the things that will be annihilated in the much-feared nuclear war were to break out between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue:

[m]y husband's writing a book about trees. He has a section on how figs are pollinated, each fig by its own specialised fig wasp. There are nearly 1,000 different species of fig wasps. All the fig wasps will be nuked, and my husband and his book. (Roy 2002, npg.)

At the end of this essay, which also catalogues the things a nuclear war could decimate, such as “every friend, every tree, every home, every dog, squirrel and bird,” Roy sharply reprimands the world for tolerating the war mongering nations that sit armed with nuclear weapons, ready to incinerate the world at the slightest pretext of a war (ibid). But, as always, Roy builds her argument from the local. Her instinctive poetic sensitivity towards the ‘small’ never leaves her prose, no matter how grave the topic of discussion. That is not to say, however, that Roy eschews “globalizing dissent” in her fiction; in fact, the opposite is true. Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, devotes entire sections to some of the most volatile political issues in contemporary India: the Kashmiri separatist movement, the Hindu-Muslim communal tensions, the rise of the Hindu fundamentalism, and the Mao-inspired Naxalite movement. Yet, she comments on these events through small and powerless characters. For instance, the main character in the novel, Anjum, is a Muslim eunuch, who lives in a graveyard. Through Anjum, Roy, maintains her focus with the small and the trivial and offers insights into modern-day India from a marginalized and minoritarian perspective. While the small may refer to those things or persons physically or socially inferior to others, the trivial refers to the natural or manufactured things and living beings that carry little or no social or economic value. Thus, for example, Anjum and her graveyard community represent the ‘small’ in the society, the insects and the trees which populate it qualify as trivial. In Roy’s worldview, however, both categories remain important because it is through them that she constructs her form of literary cosmopolitanism.

Roy’s literary cosmopolitanism ultimately evolves out of her intent to draw the world-wide literary community’s attention to the sociopolitical realities that shape the

live of small communities in localized settings. This move allows Roy to appeal to her readers' ability to empathize with others, especially those living on the fringes of society in non-globalized parts of the world. In other words, Roy appeals to the cosmopolitan and empathetic spirit of her readers on the basis of a shared humanity and fellow-feeling. By taking the stories of the weaker strata of society to the international readership, Roy becomes their representative and conveys two important messages: one, many individuals and groups continue to suffer social, political, and economic injustice in traditional Third-World communities because the dominant groups often fail to see the lived social relations of inequality on account of the social structures they inhabit; two, cosmopolitan readers have a distinct advantage over these localized communities in terms of an enhanced awareness of equal dignity and respect for all people irrespective of their socioeconomic, religious backgrounds or political affiliations. Further, Roy seems to convey that cosmopolitan readers have a greater ability to empathize with the victims of social injustice and oppression – such as those represented by the marginalized characters in Roy's fiction – and create a more just society. This chapter will, therefore, argue that Arundhati Roy has developed a literary cosmopolitanism of the small that at once highlights the injustice and oppression of the 'small' prevalent in traditional local societies, justified by the unequal socioeconomic structures that reflect the big ideas and ideologies of globalization and fundamentalist nationalism, and appeals to the cosmopolitan sensitivity of readers to recognize and globalize the plight of the poor on the basis of universal human rights. As the following analysis will demonstrate, Roy's fiction remains rooted in the local contexts but raises issues of global relevance. It is this fine balancing act of globalizing local dissent while reaching out to her world-wide

readers through her novels that makes Roy's fiction a unique example of, what I will call, *small cosmopolitanism*.

The verb 'to *cosmopolitanize*' takes on a special meaning in the analysis of Roy's literary cosmopolitanism and requires some explanation of its function in this chapter. Insofar as Roy's fiction deals with situated contexts of rural and urban India's poor, it begs an explanation to qualify as 'cosmopolitan.' The characters in *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* transcend few real and metaphorical boundaries like those in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, involve few transnational families, like those in Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*. Yet, it is the author's celebrity status and considerable stature as an influential postcolonial writer that enable her to take her localized stories to a worldwide audience. This writerly act of globalizing local narratives is what defines Roy's cosmopolitanism. To cosmopolitanize, therefore, means appealing to readers' human sensitivity towards other human beings through fictionalized versions of real life struggles for human dignity and respect. In a way, this understanding of Roy's cosmopolitanizing echoes Robert Spencer's definition of cosmopolitanism: for Spencer, it is "a disposition – one characterized by self-awareness, by a penetrating sensitivity to the world beyond one's immediate milieu, and by an enlarged sense of moral and political responsibility to individuals and groups outside one's local or national community" (Spencer 4). As an activist-writer – one who is actively involved in the local struggles of people, and one who is globally engaged in sharing the narratives of those struggles through her fiction and nonfiction – Roy herself, it is presumed, experiences a self-transcending awareness of the world and feels an obligation to share it with others. Therefore, the act of cosmopolitanizing fiction necessarily involves communicating a

social awareness to readers. Yet, it is a complex process that progresses through three stages: one, describing the local with an acute awareness of its sociocultural and geographical distinctness; two, highlighting the inhibiting ‘localized’ factors that prevent individuals to treat others as persons with equal dignity, respect, and rights, and three, appealing readers to cultivate a cosmopolitan outlook to expand their sociocultural horizons and reach out to others with fellow-feeling and empathy.

The Local and the Global in *The God of Small Things*

True to its title, *The God of Small Things* focuses intensely on the small and trivial things in life that scarcely figure in globalization discourses. The beginning of the text emphatically indicates the things that come to dominate the narrative – ‘things’ of nature as observed by unimportant individuals in a small village in southern India. However, the keen eye with which the narrator notices and describes these things foreshadows the importance they acquire in the text. The nondescript Kerala village Ayemenem comes alive through Roy’s description of it in the first two paragraphs, which exclusively focus on the things that characterize the village in the summer. For example, to illustrate why “May in Ayemenem is a hot and brooding month,” Roy lyrically depicts the varying effects of the summer heat on things such as the ‘river,’ ‘mangoes,’ ‘bananas,’ ‘jackfruits,’ ‘bluebottles’ (Roy 1997: 3). Similarly, to capture the transformation “the southwest monsoon” brings to Ayemenem, Roy refers to the ‘glittering sunshine,’ the ‘immodest green’ countryside, the blooming ‘tapioca fences,’ the ‘mossgreen’ brick walls, the snake-like ‘pepper vines,’ along with “small fish [that] appear in the puddles

that fill the PWD potholes on the highways” (ibid). While the trivial things of nature, such as those listed above, dominate the opening of the novel, the first characters to appear in the narrative – Rahel, Sophie Mol, and Estha – remain small, helpless, and unimportant in the major events in text such as Velutha’s torture and subsequent death in police custody, or the communist party’s agitation through Ayemenem. Also, the first things Roy narrates about Rahel’s memory of Estha concerns seemingly insignificant events such as “what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man did to Estha in Abhilash Talkies” and “the taste of the tomato sandwiches – Estha’s sandwiches, that *Estha* ate – on the Madras Mail to Madras” (ibid 5). Likewise, the two things Rahel notices at Sophie Mol’s funeral are as mundane and miniscule as “the newly painted high dome of the yellow church” and a “bat baby” that clings on to Baby Kochamma’s sari (ibid 7-8). These instances clearly indicate how Roy invites the readers to acknowledge the presence of insignificant objects and events that shape the lives of the ordinary folks who languish on the margins of globalization—especially when globalization is conceptualized as a process “generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power” (Gupta 4).⁵ The typically small, rooted, particularized, micro-realities described by Roy at the beginning of the text stand in stark contrast to the abstract definition of globalization referenced above that exclusively focuses on the macro-level socioeconomic and political processes. Roy’s delicate treatment of the commonplace throws into relief its triviality in the face of globalization that powerfully seeks to convert the world “into one economic space via increased

⁵ This description of globalization is from David Held’s definition of the concept as quoted by Gupta. For a more detailed discussion on the topic, see David Held et al, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 19.

international trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, [and] the internationalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunications system” (Gibson-Graham 37). A general absence of these processes, or their agents, in the opening paragraphs of *The God of Small Things*, points to Roy’s simultaneous rejection of globalization and endorsement of localization.⁶

In order to establish the sociohistorical relatedness of the small with the big, Roy underlines the history-making genealogies of the small events in the opening chapter of *The God of Small Things*. Apart from the captivating description of Ayemenem, it is Sophie Mol’s funeral that dominates the opening pages of the novel. However, Roy allows the grimness of the event to emerge out of a description of the ‘small things’ that only Estha and Rahel observe and investigate at the funeral. For instance, the narrator notes how Sophie Mol lay in a “special child-sized coffin...with her hair in a ribbon and her Made-in-England go-go bag that she loved,” how “Sophie Mol smelled of cologne and coffin-wood,” how “[a] bee died in a coffin flower” and how Rahel noticed “the newly painted dome of the yellow church,” and “the bat baby” that “climb[ed] up Baby Kochamma’s expensive funeral sari with gently clinging curled claws” (Roy 1997: 6-8). The apparent absent-mindedness and disinterest with which Rahel participates in her cousin Sophie Mol’s funeral, allowing her eyes to stray and imagination to wander, reveals nothing more than a child’s ignorance of the gravity of death and the somberness of a funeral. Nonetheless, by describing Rahel’s fascination with strange things at her

⁶ Although, the narrator makes a passing remark in chapter one about the prevalent sociopolitical unrest in Rahel’s country, India: “In the country she came from, poised forever between terror and war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening” (20). However, the comment only describes a general level of anxiety in India owing to its perennial border issues with the neighboring Pakistan and China, but does not directly connect them with the story.

cousin's funeral, Roy makes her readers aware of the tragic nature of death, albeit by trivializing it through a child's mind. A little later, the narrator powerfully associates the nine-year-old Sophie Mol's funeral with some of the most iconic events in Kerala's history merely by wondering where the story of *The God of Small Things* began. "In a purely practical sense it would probably be correct to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem," states the narrator, but goes on to wonder, at some length, whether the little events that constitute the novel in fact can trace their roots much father down in history:

[e]qually, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut. Before three-purple-robed Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. (Roy 1997: 33)

By the narrator's argument, then, Sophie Mol's death could be attributed to events older and more historical than her casual arrival in Ayemenem for a vacation: it implicates forces that have shaped modern Kerala over the last several centuries: Christianity, colonialism, and Marxism. What is more, the narrator looks beyond the recorded history of Kerala and claims that the story of *The God of Small Things* "really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The Laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much" (ibid). Alex Tickell reads Roy's history of Love Laws in light of their postcolonial ramifications.⁷ "It is remarkable that in this history of successive encounter,"

⁷ The term 'Love Laws' here refers to Roy's usage of it in *The God of Small Things*. Roy calls 'Love Laws' those social and cultural restrictions in traditional Indian society, such as the Syrian Christian community

Tickell notes, “Roy recognizes the deeply cosmopolitan, syncretized nature of South India’s past, yet also maintains the rhetorical importance of...authentic cultural times and spaces, as locations from which ‘equally viable’ modes of postcolonial self-fashioning can occur” (Tickell 2003: 85). Insofar as the Love Laws invoked here concern the human society’s efforts to contain, socialize, and control the human desire for intimacy and love through various cultural restrictions, Roy situates an apparently ‘small’ event of a young girl’s funeral – described with a strange admixture of pathos and humor – within the perennial human struggle to find a healthy balance between ‘nature’ and ‘culture.’ Then on, Roy sets a discernible trend in the text – relate the seemingly insignificant present with the monumental events of history, thereby justifying her overall strategy of connecting the local with the global and individuals with histories. Connecting history with the lives of small people in the present allows Roy to convey that no events or individuals, however small, can be fully understood without analyzing them in larger sociohistorical contexts.

Estha, one of the main characters, exemplifies this trend by hiding behind the triviality of Ayemenem’s rural life as an adult, successfully shielding the tragic events of the past that have traumatized his life. The Estha that readers first encounter is not only quiet but also invisible – the two extra layers of ‘smallness’ he had built up over the years. Without revealing the reason behind it immediately, Roy tells the readers that Estha’s silence “had been a gradual winding down and closing shop...As though he had simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say” (Roy 1997: 12). Moreover,

in Kerala, over individuals’ freedom to cultivate romantic/sexual relationships with those below their social status as well as strangers.

being able to “blend into the background of wherever he was – into bookshelves, gardens, curtains, doorways, streets – to appear inanimate, almost invisible to untrained eye,” Estha gradually became a living non-entity (ibid). Surrounded by myriad things, we are told, Estha turned himself into “[a] quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise” (Roy 1997: 13). Roy further teases the readers with her acute attention to the ‘small’ things by describing in vivid detail how Estha sympathized with his aging pet dog, Khubchand, by caring for him so tenderly. “When Khubchand, his beloved, blind, bald, incontinent seventeen-year-old mongrel decided to stage a miserable, long-drawn-out death, Estha nursed him through his final ordeal as though his own life somehow depended on it” (ibid). Despite the seeming meaninglessness of Estha’s life, aptly symbolized by his reclusive life and fascination with insignificant things, Roy’s detailed description of Estha’s silence leaves the readers suspecting an ominous event in his childhood, hints of which appear early in the novel through the reference to Sophie Mol’s funeral but does not become evident until towards the end of the text. In the chapter that describes the police station scene wherein Estha gives a false testimony against Velutha, Roy concludes the scene with a few epigrammatic sentences: “The inspector asked his question. Estha’s mouth said Yes. Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt. Someone switched off the light and Velutha disappeared” (ibid 303). It is only with these revelations that readers learn how traumatic and profound the reasons behind Estha’s trivial silence were; it was imposed by a false testimony procured under a threat of violence and solidified by a realization that it contributed to the social injustice inflicted on a Dalit that brutally took his life. As Roy makes it clear through the incident of Estha’s false testimony, his silence had ultimately resulted from a word that claimed an innocent

life and reinforced the brutality of the Indian caste system that has oppressed the Dalits – the socially backward classes often considered ‘untouchable’ in the traditional Indian society – through unjust sociocultural, religious, and economic practices for centuries. By connecting Estha’s silence with the ills of the Indian caste system in this way, Roy employs the ‘small’ to comment on the ‘big’ and uses the ‘local’ to highlight the ‘universal’ through her debut novel.

Similarly, the minor details mentioned about Rahel and Estha early in the novel, in one sense, presage the extraordinary events that would scar their lives permanently, but also set the stage for the social commentary Roy makes through the twins. Roy’s characterization of Estha and Rahel, the twin-children of Ammu, contributes to the smallness, brilliantly captured in the opening pages of *The God of Small Things*. “They were two-egg twins. Dizygotic” doctors called them. Born from separate but simultaneously fertilized eggs,” remarks the narrator in one of the first references to the twins in the text (Roy 1997: 4).⁸ The small things Rahel remembers also include the ‘Orangedrink Lemondrink’ at ‘Abhilash Talkies’ who abuses Estha under the pretext of

⁸ It is instructive to note that critics have pointed out bigger sociological and psychological implications of Rahel and Estha’s dizygotic birth even though novel does not offer any such connections explicitly. Alex Tickell, for instance, calls the twins “merged or doubled subjectivity” and considers them representative of the colonies’ fraught relationship with their Western colonizers. “Roy’s doubled protagonists work as a figurative reminder of the historical violence of colonialism, manifested as an ideological force which transforms the colonized self into a belated copy of the European Enlightenment subject.” Similarly, Brinda Bose identifies the twins’ as symbols of sexual subversion against the oppressive social taboos. “Rahel and Estha’s incestuous lovemaking as the culmination of a ‘dizygotic’ closeness that transcends – and violates – all biological norms,” Bose claims, “is proof...of the subversive powers of desire and sexuality in an arena that is rife with the politics of gender divisions and the rules that govern them.” Alex Tickell, “The God of Small Things: Arundhati Roy’s Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38.1 (2003), 73-89; and Brinda Bose, “In Desire and in Death: ‘Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*’” in Alex Tickell, ed., *Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 120-131.

offering him a free orange-lemon drink. As the text suggest, Rahel has preserved strong memories of these events and with their help she attempts to break Estha's silence, to bring him back to enjoy the world as he once did as a child. The ever-present force of those memories, in a way, allows Rahel to enter into the silent Estha's world and flood it with "the sound of passing trains, and the light and shade and light and shade" as well as" for a few moments on her return to Ayemenem, two-decades after she left it as a child (ibid). Another hint of the enduring closeness between the twins is the sensitivity and alertness with which Rahel notices the raindrops on Estha. "She could feel the rhythm of Estha's rocking, and the wetness of rain on his skin. She could hear the raucous, scrambled world inside his head" (ibid 22). However, the natural closeness between the twins, even as adults, assumes a 'smallness' that Roy celebrates in the novel. That said, as the story unfolds to unveil Estha and Rahel's inadvertent yet egregious involvement in Sophie Mol's death and its consequences – Estha's banishment, Velutha's murder, Ammu's death, and Rahel's exile to a convent school – the readers become aware that the seemingly innocuous bond between the twins is inextricably connected with big events that ignited a caste-struggle involving the powerful Syrian Christians, the Kerala Police, the local leaders of Communist Party of India, and Velutha the Dalit and his poor family.

Despite this, Rahel and Estha's incestual act towards the end of the novel, which takes place on their mother's old bedroom, reveals the extent to which their lives were scarred by the big events in the past. On meeting twenty-three years after their last meeting in Ayemenem, they met and, as the narrator notes, "once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (ibid 311). The thinly-veiled sexual act between Estha and Rahel sparks a debate on sexual morality

and subversion against societal laws concerning incest. Critics have pointed out bigger sociological and psychological implications of Rahel and Estha's dizygotic birth even though the novel does not offer any such connections explicitly. Alex Tickell, for instance, calls the twins "merged or doubled subjectivity" and considers them representative of the colonies' fraught relationship with their Western colonizers. "Roy's doubled protagonists work as a figurative reminder of the historical violence of colonialism, manifested as an ideological force which transforms the colonized self into a belated copy of the European Enlightenment subject" (Tickell 79). Similarly, Brinda Bose identifies the twins' as symbols of sexual subversion against the oppressive social taboos. "Rahel and Estha's incestuous lovemaking as the culmination of a 'dizygotic' closeness that transcends – and violates – all biological norms," Bose claims, "is proof...of the subversive powers of desire and sexuality in an arena that is rife with the politics of gender divisions and the rules that govern them" (Bose 126). On the one hand, it could be argued that Rahel and Estha sought intimacy with each other in an attempt to become small again, almost infantile, as in their mother's womb; on the other hand, it could be perceived as an act of open rebellion against a society that violently opposed theirs and their mother's love for Velutha the Dalit. Considered in this light, Rahel and Estha signify the small and the trivial whose final act of incestual sex becomes representative of their desire to reunite on their mother's bed, as if in her womb, again. Inadvertently, they also attempt to merge the universal and the local, the social history of Kerala with their personal destinies. In the final analysis, however, through Estha and Rahel's incest, Roy registers a strong protest against the unjust social structures that dominate, distort, and destroy the lives of the small in society.

Similarly, the acute sense of observation evident in Roy's narration enables her to highlight the seemingly trivial aspects of her story that later reveal them as quite impactful on other characters. In order to take readers closer to the Ipe family – a symbol of Kerala's economically and socially powerful Syrian Christian Community – Roy begins Chapter Seven with a description of Pappachi's study through Rahel's eyes. Once the space of her grandfather's intellectual and professional status, Pappachi's study shows the first signs of decadence when Rahel returns to Ayemenem as a grown-up woman. By then it was a place where “mounted butterflies and moths had disintegrated into small heaps of iridescent dust that powdered the bottom of their glass display cases, leaving the pins that had impaled them naked” (148). It was a place where “[a] column of shining back ants walked across a windowsill, their bottoms tilted upwards, like a line of mincing chorus girls in a Busby Berkeley musical,” and where “[s]ilverfish tunneled through the pages [of grandfather's entomology books], burrowing arbitrarily from species to species, turning organized information into yellow lace” (149). As the story unfolds, the real significance of this minute description comes to light. The gradual but incessant decay of Pappachi's study indicates the superficiality of his intellectual and professional status and reveals how his servile attitude towards the British failed to bring him the recognition he craved as an entomologist, and how he failed to behave courteously with his wife and daughter in spite of a carefully cultivated image of a gentleman. Earlier in the text, the Rahel labels Pappachi “an incurable CCP, which was short for *chi-chi poach* and in Hindi meant shit-wiper” because of his obsequiously reverent attitude towards the British (50). His uncritical admiration of the British had even led him to doubt Ammu's story that Mr. Hollick, the English manager of the tea estate in northeast India had tried to abuse her.

According to Rahel, Pappachi did not believe Ammu's accusation against both her husband and the Englishman "not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, *any* Englishman, would covet another man's wife" (42). Ironically, his own treatment of his wife, too, belied his cultivated image of a gentleman who seemed incapable of such cruelty in private dealings. The slowly spreading decadence of Pappachi's study, then, indicates, a gradual erosion of the hypocrisy surrounding the Ipe family – an erosion set in motion by the invisible insects of false pride and hypocrisy. Likewise, Pappachi's study's steady takeover by nature – the black ants and the silverfish, for instance – reflects Ammu's eventual surrender to nature by way of indulging in a passionate relationship with Velutha, thus triggering the social downfall of the Ipe family in the eyes of the so-called upper-caste community. Interestingly, Roy leaves these associations latent in the text, but the story itself throws them into relief in the retrospect. Roy thus harnesses the power of the small to propel a story as a counter-narrative to history; "her-story" directly rebels against "his-story" by undermining the established authorities – both sociopolitical and literary – with small things, such as ants and silverfish. Therefore, as Jani remarks, for Roy "[r]ecovering the small...is thus an active process of reconstructing subaltern narratives against the grain of the state and its accomplice, history, in whatever way possible" (Jani 205). That process of recovery, therefore, invariably begins with recovering the small from the ongoing decadence of the big.

The detailed description of Pappachi's deteriorating study ironically relates with Roy's cosmopolitanism in a subtle way. Through the prying eyes of adult Rahel, Roy not only reveals the irreversible disintegration of the Ipe family but, more importantly, the

root cause of it: Pappachi's limited social awareness about the status and dignity of women in his own family. Roy presents him as an imposter who acts like an educated scholar in public but behaves like a male-chauvinistic patriarch in private. What is more, unable to express his professional frustration to his English bosses, Pappachi subjects his wife and daughter to regular beatings and torture. As Roy makes it clear in the text, he never regretted it or reflected about it or considered it socially and morally unacceptable because his understanding of women was so inhibitive conditioned by the traditional Kerala society. Surprisingly, the years he spent in Delhi with his family as an entomologist did little to alter his views on the status of women in the family. To accentuate this social reality, Roy sets up the Oxford-returned Chacko, his son, to confront him for beating Mammachi in his presence. Through Chacko's act, Roy raises the intriguing question of whether or not he would have found Pappachi's treatment of his mother objectionable without an exposure to a cosmopolitan milieu and education or whether Chacko would have felt the pain of his mother's physical and psychological suffering at the hands of his father if he had not been to Oxford. These questions reflect a key point in Roy's cosmopolitanism that certain social structures inhabit a person's ability to cultivate cosmopolitan sensitivity to the plight of others; whereas, certain types of exposures to cosmopolitan environment equip people with a humanitarian sensitivity towards others. Chacko's cosmopolitan training makes him a saving grace of his family, at least insofar as putting an end to his mother's domestic abuse is concerned.

Along the same lines, Velutha provides a further example of Roy's ability to critique social structures and conventions while maintaining the narrative focus on those living on the margins of society. Although, Velutha is introduced at first as Chacko's

handyman, doing odd jobs at Mammachi's pickle factory, his background reveals that he is "a Paravan. A toddy tapper" – a low-caste, and therefore, untouchable who would not be allowed "to touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians" (70-71). As Estha and Rahel once learn from their grandmother, Mammachi, Velutha's ancestors

were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouth when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. (71)

Yet, Roy portrays Velutha as quite unlike his ancestors who had been subjected to inhuman oppression and social discrimination at the hands of the powerful Hindus and Christians of the so-called-upper-castes, who control access to education and employment throughout India. Velutha was educated at an Untouchables' School in Ayemenem, had mastered carpentry from a German carpenter, Johann Klein, and had a way with machines. "He mended radios, clocks, water pumps" (72). Moreover, unlike other Paravans, Velutha exuded "[a]n unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head," and in the way he offered suggestions without being asked or disregarded suggestions "without appearing to rebel" (73). Above all, without fearing the consequences of his transgression of the Love Laws, he consciously becomes the man Ammu loved "by night" and "her children loved by day" (193). However, aware of the fatal consequences of such a love, Ammu sees him as the "God of Loss," the "God of

Small Things,” and the “God of Goosebumps and Sudden Smiles” (207). The striking element in Roy’s characterization of Velutha is the evacuation of his ‘untouchability,’ ‘backwardness,’ and ‘social handicap’ in favor of qualities that transform him into a small god: physical attractiveness, strength, dexterity, intelligence, and an ability to love. In other words, Roy makes a concerted effort to characterize Velutha as a Paravan, who not only defies the social construction of Paravans but also transcends the qualities of both the so-called upper-caste Hindus and Christians. That is what perhaps attracts Ammu to him. As Ammu’s lover, then, Velutha becomes the author of “[l]ittle events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted” to rewrite the history of centuries-old oppression and injustice (32). In daring to love Ammu, Velutha sheds his socially handicapped low status. According to Jani, in the latter half of the story, Velutha “is no longer marginal but *shown* to be marginalized, no longer a minor character but the central one” (Jani 207). Yet, Jani seems to ignore that Velutha remains a small god and a god of loss throughout the text because of traditional India society’s intransigence in according him the status and respect his qualities and character demand.

In this context, the valorization of Velutha succeeds in challenging the social stereotypes that condemn the socially ‘small’ to perpetual anonymity and subjugation. Apart from his outstanding carpentry and mechanical skills, Velutha distinguished himself from other Paravans in one more respect: his active participation in the Marxist movement in Kerala. Interestingly, Ammu admires Velutha’s courage to participate in the communist agitations in the state, and quietly wishes that the man Rahel saw in the march with a red flag in his hand was indeed Velutha. “She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she

so raged against. She hoped it had been him” (167). Perhaps, Velutha’s political aspirations against the socially and economically powerful caste-people finds an echo in Ammu’s resentment against the society that had condemned her to a marginalized existence in her father’s house on account of her being, what Kochamma described as “a *divorced* daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage” (45). Her own castigation by a society that laid the love-laws and drew caste-lines ironically leads her to endorse Velutha’s rebellion against it through political means. As Brinda Bose suggests, in his communist affiliations, Ammu sees “a possibility of relating to Velutha’s mind, not just his body” (Bose 125). Bose’s observation raises an intriguing possibility here. Perhaps Velutha’s political activism sparks the desire of a sociocultural transgression in Ammu who had otherwise accepted her peripheral and obedient existence as a divorced woman. Perhaps it was his transgressive and rebellious personality that caught her attention the most. The same Velutha – the dark, strong, intelligent, and emotionally caring man – teaches Ammu to leave “no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors” to rewrite history and love-laws through the small things that find no footprints in history. The quiet confidence of Velutha and his ability to concentrate on the small things that surround life – such as the “ant-bites,” the “clumsy caterpillars sliding off the end of leaves,” the “overtaken beetles,” a “particularly devout praying mantis, and “the minute spider who lived in a crack in the wall of the back Verandah of the History House,” – inspire the hope of a happy tomorrow in Ammu, who promises to meet again with a confident “*Naaley*” that is, tomorrow, after every nightly assignation with him (320-21). Although Velutha succumbs to the brutality of the state police, unleashed on him at the instigation of Kochamma – the epitome of caste-discrimination in the text – his story of

a subaltern resistance, effected in a small way, finds a new life through Rahel, who returns to Ayemenem twenty-three years after his death to relive his memories. “Rahel, the central cosmopolitan-elite figure, takes responsibility,” claims Jani, “for constructing the small, suppressed tale of Velutha’s murder” (Jani 208). Through Rahel, the novel celebrates Velutha as a god of small things whose story produces a counternarrative against the forces that had subjugated his caste to subhuman existence – without the right to live with dignity and love with freedom. Therefore, Rahel’s reminiscences of Velutha’s story signifies

both the small, such as Ammu and her twins, and the big, such as the Ipe family, Comrade Pillai, the Kerala Police, and the caste system for his untimely and brutal death. Interestingly, Roy allows Rahel to award Velutha the recognition and acceptance he deserved for his ability to challenge the oppressive social structure that denied the Paravans any possibility to live and love like the Touchables on the other side of the river Meenachal. By ending the novel with Ammu’s act of crossing the river to meet Velutha by night, Roy celebrates a small act of love that empowered both Velutha and Ammu to challenge big social conventions, restrictions, and hierarchies. None of those could prevent Velutha and Ammu from communicating a hope for the ‘small’ expressed in their mutual promise: “Naaley. Tomorrow” (321).

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy records the insidious effects of globalization on Ayemenem in order to convey the fact that cultural or economic penetration of the local by the global does not necessarily effect a social transformation. In fact, it may seek to modernize the local purely through technological and infrastructural changes without

challenging its unjust social structures. In “Cosmo-theory,” Brennan describes this phenomenon with regard to the Third World:

[i]n cosmo-theory, modernity is generally considered to be ubiquitous—its penetration complete, and largely welcome. Here one is struck by the relative absence of any substantive proof for this penetration of metropolitan style, pace, or value, which is almost always overstated. Even now, the villages of rural India or of Latin America—with or without television—are hardly in modernity in any sense meaningful to cosmopolitans. Quite apart from what the cosmo-theorists are arguing, the world is largely outside modernity, although being in and out, in this sense, is naturally always a matter of degree. (Brennan 2001: 678)

In the text, Roy critiques a modernity that overwhelms Ayemenem with superficial newness, such as the introduction of the satellite TV and the World-Bank sponsored development projects in Ayemenem in the early 1990s. Roy seems to question the cosmopolitan value of such modernity by showing how it fails to change the rigid mindsets of the local communities in regard with the unequal treatment of the Dalits.

That said, Baby Kochamma’s fascination with Dish TV, and the resultant neglect of her ornamental garden, provide a striking example of globalization’s consequences on rural India. The narrator’s observation that Baby Kochamma is “living her life backwards” proves accurate in more ways than one. In one sense, she lived backwards by living like a “man-less woman” for most of her youth and yet taking a passionate liking to adorning herself with her dead mother’s jewelry in her later years; in another sense, she justifies that description by returning to Ayemenem after earning an academic degree in Ornamental Gardening from the American University of Rochester to while away her time in tending a small garden at the Ayemenem House, and then suddenly awakening to the wider world again by developing an instant passion for the Dish TV on which

“[b]londes, wars, famines, football, sex, music, coups d’état – they all arrived on the same train” (27). It amazed Rahel’s curmudgeon grandaunt to no end that she could satiate her thirst for entertainment with endless sports and soap operas like “American NBA league games, one-day cricket...all the Grand Slam tennis tournaments, [and]..*The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Santa Barbara* (27-28). Ironically, globalization-induced changes in the Ipe family quickly transform Baby Kochamma into a passive spectator of American entertainment to the text that she totally neglects her ornamental garden and forgets to enforce the social hierarchy on her servant. It might suggest the ambiguity surrounding globalization’s cultural impacts on rural India, but in terms of promoting progressive thinking, Dish TV completely fails to influence Baby Kochamma positively, as evident in her villainous role in Velutha’s brutal death. The superficial modernization embraced by Baby Kochamma makes little impact on her compromised views on the Dalits as well her socially disadvantaged family-members such as the single-mother Ammu and her dependent twins.

Likewise, the changing condition of the river Meenachal in the text captures the ecological imbalance besetting “God’s-own-country” Kerala as well as provides an insight into Roy’s ability to critique the big through the small. Two clearly contradictory pictures of Meenachal, Ayemenem’s iconic river, emerge in *The God of Small Things*: one from Rahel’s childhood memories of the beautiful river Meenachal that inspired awe and admiration in the twins, and the other from the adult Rahel’s lamentable encounter with the much-diminished and heavily polluted river about three decades later. As children, both Rahel and Estha “dreamed of the river” (116). They dreamed

[o]f the coconut trees that bent into it and watched, with coconut eyes, the boats slide by. Upstream in the mornings. Downstream in the evenings. And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. (ibid)

Clearly, during their childhood, the Meenachal defined life in Ayemenem not only for the twins but also for the many boatmen who relied on the river for their livelihood.

However, within the next thirty years, the Meenachal loses her youthful glory as well as prominence in Ayemenem's life because damming and polluting had almost dried it up to nonexistence. For example, chapter 5, "God's Own Country," opens with the river's pitiable state three decades later:

[y]ears later when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her with a ghastly skull's smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed...Downriver, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer lobby. The barrage regulated the inflow of salt water from the backwaters that opened into the Arabian sea. So now they had two harvests a year instead of one. More rice, for the price of a river...Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. (118)

Roy deliberately juxtaposes the two states of the Meenachal emphasize the difference. Even though the two moments occur nearly three decades apart, one follows the other almost immediately in the novel. Therefore, the shocking deterioration of the river strikes the reader instantly. This technique, once again, enables Roy to critique a larger phenomenon while focusing on the small. Of course, in both descriptions the river remains central, but a scathing critique of the farmers' capitalist greed accompanies the second. If the first depicts how the river supplied a life of dreams to Rahel and Estha, and indeed to entire Ayemenem, the second description exposes how the farmers' lobby had

robbed the Meenachal of her beauty and vivacity for financial gain – more rice, more profit. In this context, it is important to reference the narrator’s description of the adult Estha’s long walks in Ayemenem: “Some days he walked along the banks of the river that smelled of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils” (14). The passing remark about the putrid river-bank and the pesticides deftly connect the two with “World Bank loans,” just as it does the dead or diseased fish. Correspondingly, the degenerated river also indicates the traumatized lives of the adult twins. “The pollution of the river from toxic wastes coincides with the onset of social learning in its proteges— Rahel and Estha,” points out Anand, “[t]he clinical violation of the river coincides with the desecration of their childhood innocence” (Anand 102). Roy’s technique of juxtaposing the small and the big, the local and the global achieves two critical purposes here: it facilitates a connection between her social commentary and the main storyline in the text, and it enables Roy to relate the seemingly non-globalized and un-cosmopolitanized parts of the world with the sociopolitical debates surrounding these phenomena.

From a cultural perspective, the changing fortunes of the Kathakali dancers mirror the rising tension between traditional India and globalization which encourages the exotification of the Third World for commercial purposes. Like the Meenachal’s description, the Kathakali dancers in *The God of Small Things* present two sides of their story: traditional and contemporary. The former celebrates the revered classical dance-tradition of Kerala; whereas, the latter bemoans its present deterioration due to increasing commercialization of the Kathakali. As the storytelling dancers of Kerala, the Kathakali

are not only renowned for their artistic abilities but also for their love for their art. “To the Kathakali Man [the] stories are his children and his childhood. He has grown up with them...They are his windows and his way of seeing” (219). Roy further describes the aesthetic beauty of the Kathakali dancers in glowing terms:

[t]he Kathakali Man is the most beautiful of men. Because his body *is* his soul. His only instrument. From the age of three it has been planed and polished, pared down, harnessed wholly to the task of storytelling. He has magic in him, this man within the painted mask and swirling skirts. (219)

However, Roy disrupts this glorious description of the Kathakali dancer by noting that in the absence of respectable means of livelihood, “he turns to tourism. He enters the market. He hawks the only thing he owns. The stories that his body can tell...He becomes a Regional Flavor” (ibid). Insofar as this touristic phrase refers to the Kathakali men’s commercialization as objects of entertainment for foreign tourists, it also illustrates Graham Huggan’s term ‘exoticism.’ For Huggan, exoticism is not a quality essential to specific people, objects or places; rather, it is “a particular mode of aesthetic *perception*” that ironically makes otherness “strange” while seeking to “domesticate” it (Huggan 13). The text’s Kathakali dancers’ exotification – their metamorphosis into a Regional Flavor through which foreign tourists commodify and consume the Indian culture as entertainment – takes place at the hotel Heart of Darkness. There the foreign tourists were treated to short-versions of the classic Kathakali presentations, just by way of their cultural immersion:

[i]n the evenings (for that Regional Flavor) the tourists were treated to truncated kathakali performances (“Small attention

spans,” the Hotel people explained to the dancers). So ancient stories were collapsed and amputated. Six-hour classics were slashed to twenty-minute cameos. (121)

The truncated Kathakali performances at the Five Star hotel not only expose the cultural distortion of traditional India but also capture humiliation Indian folk artists feel as exotic commodities for curious foreigners. Clearly, the capitalist perception of the Kathakali dancer as an impoverished and, therefore, cheaply available local commodity runs counter to Roy’s appraisal of them as the living embodiment of India’s cultural richness. Therefore, Roy ensures to bring to readers’ attention the human side of the Kathakali dancer. By presenting to readers the two sides of the Kathakali dancers side by side, Roy highlights how the local is utilized to enrich the global, how culture made subservient to commerce, and how the suffering of the small is blatantly masked by their exotification in the commodity culture. *The God of Small Things* is Roy’s attempt to unmask these contradictions.

If Ayemenem is home to aspiring individuals such as Velutha, Rahel and Estha, and Ammu, who defy the restrictive social norms to reach out to others with openness and courage, it is also a hub of narrow-minded individuals, who exploit the unjust social systems to discriminate against the poor and the marginalized while ostensibly embracing the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. The local politician, K. N. M. Pillai and his Communist Party of India represent the latter group. By exposing the contradictions between their public image and private dealings, and by commenting on the real-life Malayali Marxist politician E. M. S. Naboodripad, Roy uncovers the inimical power of lived-conditions of social inequality and injustice in non-cosmopolitan settings.

Roy's strategy of highlighting the big through the small in *The God of Small Things* enables her to critique the Marxist political leadership in Kerala for its dilution of the Marxist ideology in exchange for political power. In Chapter Two, Roy overlaps the two different stories of Pappachi's rise as a colonial entomologist, and the ruling Communist Party's pro-worker procession near Cochin. While both stories deal with an obsession with power, their introductions focus on small incidents involving powerlessness as symbolized by the people involved. For instance, Pappachi the entomologist's story starts with his docile wife Mammachi's accidental discovery of her pickle-making talent that later developed into a full-fledged business for the Ipe family; whereas, that of the Kerala Marxists begins with the family's trip to Cochin in Chacko's blue Plymouth. In fact, early in the chapter, Roy establishes an indirect connection between Chacko's car and the Marxists in the state. On "a skyblue day in December sixty-nine," reveals the opening line of Chapter Two, members of the Ipe family – Chacko, Ammu, Rahel, Estha, and Baby Kochamma – were on their way to Cochin airport to receive two guests from England (35). The skyblue Plymouth...sped past young rice fields and old rubber trees on its way to Cochin...in a small country with similar landscape (jungles, rivers, rice fields, Communists), enough bombs were being dropped to cover all of it in six inches of steel" (ibid). The parenthetical reference to "Communists" in the above quote appears insignificant and negligible at first but later form the basis of Roy's scathing critique of the Marxist political practices in Kerala.⁹ It

⁹ Given Roy's seamless weaving of the Marxist politics in the story, it is easy to miss its importance in terms of Roy's vociferous critique of localized Marxism in Kerala in *The God of Small Things*. Richard J. Lane, for instance, completely fails to mention the Marxist component of the novel in his brief summary of the plot. "*The God of Small Things* performs a critique of the Indian caste system and of patriarchal values within marriage and society," writes Lane, "transgresses conservative codes of caste and 'good taste' in its depiction of intimate human relationships and creates a new poetic prose that deconstructs

paves the way for a more direct criticism of the diluted version of Marxism prevalent in Kerala – a politically corrupt version of the Marxist ideology that sought to form an alliance with the very forces it was meant to oppose. Having established a link between the cultural life and the Communist power blocks in Kerala early in chapter, Roy exposes the latter’s hypocrisy in a series of accusatory statements:

[t]he real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists worked from *within* the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to. They offered a cocktail revolution. A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy. (64)

This rather derogatory analysis of communism’s presence in Kerala, in fact, follows the narrator’s two speculative ‘theories’ on the Communist Party’s political hold over Kerala – one of only two states in India with a significant Communist presence in the political establishments. Roy utilizes the incident of the blue Plymouth and the Communist march to critique the global through the local, the abstract through the concrete, and the ideal through the real. Equally, it enables Roy to critique the localized political and social power-structures that fail to uphold universal ideals of equality and justice because of their compromised political ideology.

The incident of the blue Plymouth and the Communist procession serves as the starting point of Roy’s criticism of the Communists in general, but of the Kerala

the dominance of English grammar and opens a new chapter in magical realism.” Roy’s critique of a compromised Marxism in the text, I argue, is as important, if not more, as the themes cited by Lane here. See Richard J Lane, *The Postcolonial Novel* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 97-108.

Communists in particular. Although not central to the text, the blue Plymouth incident sets the tone for Roy's scathing criticism of the Kerala communists in *The God of Small Things*. Roy in fact began writing the novel with the scene of a blue Plymouth stranded at a level-crossing some twenty-three kilometers from Cochin. "I didn't start with the first chapter or end with the last.... I actually started writing with a single image in my head: the sky blue Plymouth [car] with two twins inside it, a Marxist procession surrounding it...[The story] just developed from there," claims Roy (as quoted in Tickell 2003: 73). However, the light-hearted description of the Ipe family's joy-ride to Cochin soon turns to horror as the passengers in the car notice a boisterous crowd of communist cadres directly marching at them in procession. Perhaps Roy's description quickly turns grim to indicate how distorted the Kerala Marxism has become to generate fear and misgivings among the commoners by their mere presence on the streets, instead of communicating safety, security, and hope for the masses. The fear surrounding Chacko, Ammu, Rahel, Estha, and Baby Kochamma is easily perceptible in Roy's description of the blue-Plymouth-occupants' reaction to the arrival of the march:

As the marchers approached, Ammu put up her window. Estha his. Rahel hers...

Suddenly the skyblue Plymouth looked absurdly opulent on the narrow, pitted road...

'Look down!' Baby Kochamma said, as the front ranks of the procession approached the car. "Avoid eye contact. That's what really provokes them.'

On the side of her neck, her pulse was pounding. (63)

Roy goes on to narrate the terror caused among the public by the communist procession on both sides of the level-crossing. It was not only the Ipe family who felt threatened by the marchers but almost everyone else who happened to cross their path that day. More importantly, Roy interrupts the narration of the level-crossing incident to offer a few “theories” of the Communist Party’s remarkable success in Kerala politics: The large and powerful Syrian Christian community that saw “Marxism [as] a simple substitute for Christianity,” or “it had to do with the comparatively high level of literacy in the state,” or because the Communists conveniently overlooked the unjust social structures in the state in exchange for political power (64). The narrator quickly disregards the first two and concentrates more on the third: “that Communism crept into Kerala insidiously” (64). As noted earlier, it is the Communist leadership’s clandestine policy of noninterference in caste-based discrimination and class-based exploitation of the poor that preserved them in power. Like Mammachi’s pickles, the Communists needed a lot of political mixing for the preservation of power. This is how the blue-Plymouth incident affords Roy the first opportunity to expose the corrupt Communist leadership in Kerala. For instance, in the same commentary, Roy names “Comrade E. M. S Namboodripad” as the Communist leader who openly adopted the policy of “implementing the Peaceful Transition,” that is to say, by “harnessing [people’s] anger for parliamentary purposes” (66). He was once ousted from power by the former Indian Prime Minister Nehru for spreading violence and anarchy in Kerala and, therefore, adopted a more cautious approach when returned to power “in 1967 – almost exactly ten years after they first came to power” (65). In the same digression, Roy briefly notes how Namboodripad expelled the Naxalites from the state, earning “the wrath of the Chinese Communist Party” (66). Before resuming the

description of the “March,” Roy calls it an example of Naboodripad’s politicized brand of Marxism. The level-crossing incident involving the blue Plymouth and the Communist marchers remains central in Chapter Two, wherein Roy’s audacious criticism of the iconic Malayali Marxist leader E. M. S. Naboodripad ingeniously exposes the real face of Kerala Communists.

Within the story, however, K. N. M. Pillai illustrates the compromising nature of Communist politics in practice and its consequent deleterious effects on the poor. Early in the text, Comrade Pillai is introduced as the owner of Ayemenem’s printing press who was “essentially a political man. A professional omeleteer... a chameleon” who neither revealed himself nor appeared to hide anything (15). Later in the story, Pillai emerges as a local Communist leader who appeared to defend people’s rights but in fact worked to safeguard his own interests. His opportunistic dealings become evident in the way he incites Chacko’s workers on the one hand and strikes business deals with him on the other hand. For instance, Pillai rallies Chacko’s workers to “be courageous, *dare* to fight, *defy* difficulties and advance upon wave” (114). He goads them to action saying, “[y]ou must demand what is rightfully yours. Yearly bonus. Provident fund. Accident insurance” (114). However, not wishing to offend Chacko, one of his major clients at the printing press, Pillai never mentions him by name; he instead refers to Chacko as “the management” (115). This way Pillai maintained his commercial dealings with Chacko and justified his actions telling himself “that Chacko-the-client and Chacko-the-management were two different people. Quite separate of course from Chacko-the-Comrade” (ibid). Pillai takes his hypocrisy to the next level when Velutha approaches him for protection in the aftermath of the revelation of his love-affair with Ammu by his

own father, Velyapappen. Pillai not only refuses to help Velutha but also preaches to him the empty rhetoric of the Communist ideology which he blatantly defied for his own interests:

*It is not in the Party's interests to take up such matters.
Individual's interest is subordinate to the organization's interest.
Violating Party Discipline means violating Party Unity. (271)*

In both instances of Pillai's moral bankruptcy, two general trends of Kerala Communist Politics emerge: one, it employs a high-sounding, people-centered rhetoric to lure people to the Marxist ideology; two, in practice, however, it indulges in power politics that requires compromising the Communist ideals at both personal and party levels. Pillai's betrayal of Velutha, then, magnifies Roy's accusation against the Communists that "[t]he Marxists worked from *within* the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to" (64). Pillai consciously chooses to abandon Velutha to his own fate so as not to disturb the *status quo* in Kerala. Consequently, the card-holding, slogan-shouting, active member of the Communist Party, Velutha, meets a brutal end at the hands of Kerala Police, the law-and-order ally of the powerful Syrian Christian community. Roy draws readers' attention to these dichotomies within Communist politics through characters such as Pillai and Naboodripad to highlight the inefficacy of unethical political practices in thwarting oppressive social structures in India.

Even though opinions remain divided on whether or not Roy's critique of the Kerala Communist Party is justified, her criticism is aimed more at the imperfect application of global ideals to the local contexts than Marxist Communism in general.

Nevertheless, taking exception to Roy's disparaging portrayal of the Communist Party in Kerala, the well-known Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad registered a strong protest against it and faulted the author for courting certain literary failures, such as the excessive use of capitalizations, repetitions, and linguistic over-experimentations, while showing an implacable "hostility" towards the Communists. For instance, Ahmad points out how Roy vividly describes "the terror felt by the women inside the car [while] the other side of this conflict, the striking workers, remains for her an indistinct mass" (Tickell 2007: 112). Additionally, Ahmad cites the factual errors concerning certain details about the text's historical figure E. M. S. Namboodripad and the exaggerated portrayal of one of its fictional characters, K. N. M. Pillai to berate Roy for her anti-Communist stance. "Her ideological prejudice masters and makes nonsense of the Realist's commitment to verisimilitude," claims Ahmad, and observes that "this is the only area where the commitment so dramatically falters" (113). It could be argued against Ahmad that Roy's primary concern in the text is not a realist depiction of Kerala. If it were so, *The God of Small Things* would have abounded with the lyricism that enralls the reader in the opening lines of the novel. Rather, by highlighting the anomalies in the localized form of Communism in one of its strongholds in India, Roy seems to argue that ideals however well-defined fall short in practice, and global schemes become less effective when mixed with dubious local aspirations. For Roy, then, the Communist Party in Kerala is not a local evil as much as it is a corrupt localized manifestation of a pure universal ideal. Jani proffers a similar defense of Roy's depiction of Communism in the text. He argues that Communism's criticism is ultimately "the rejection of a big idea that masquerades as the redeemer of the small but actually helps to crush it" (Jani 221). Ultimately, it is the

dilution of the Marxist ideals for personal and political gains, as personified by M. N. K. Pillai, that Roy decries, not Communism or the Communist Party of India as such.

One of the main characters of *The God of Small Things*, Velutha – a low-caste, untouchable Paravan – provides a key example of locally rooted individuals with cosmopolitan aspirations. Respecting the dividing lines between the socially and economically stronger Syrian Christians and the weaker Paravans, Velutha lives on the other side of the river Meenachal in Ayemenem. If the former represent what Anand describes as, “hypocrisies and pretenses in the garb of age-old values and traditions,” Velutha, along with his father, brother, and ailing mother, represent “the untouchable world of caste Christians—low caste, low class Paravans ensconced in the lap of nature” (Anand 102). Given this binary, Velutha becomes a symbol of purity and harmony with nature, as signified by his ease and expertise in swimming the river. More importantly, Velutha becomes a visible face of the untouchables who “were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint” (71). Roy highlights Velutha’s courage to defy caste barriers by frequently portraying him crossing the river – an act of symbolically crossing the invisible social boundaries between the so-called high caste and the low-caste Indians. Crossing the river for him meant an act of defiant resilience against social oppression insofar as it invited little Rahel and Estha to become fond of him and to desire his reassuring company on a daily basis as well as encouraged their mother to cross the river in the dark of night to sail way from a world of patriarchal restrictions into a subversive romance with him. For Velutha, therefore, crossing the river “meant the flouting of class and caste hierarchies,

challenging the feudal order and thereby overturning all social and cultural observances” (Anand 102). His brief triumph against the oppressive and dehumanizing social discrimination through an intense love-affair with Ammu establishes Velutha as a beacon of hope for all oppressed. Through his characterization, Roy seems to suggest that the social liberation of the Dalits will become achievable only through acts of personal rebellion like Velutha’s. Her faith in the transformative power of the small shines through Velutha’s characterization. Even though Velutha pays with his life for, what Jani describes as, “a long list of the proud Dalit’s transgressions of class, caste, and sexual boundaries,” he also acquires for himself a social mobility almost impossible for a Dalit in the traditional Indian society (Jani 211). In other words, Velutha deliberately indulges in acts of social transgressions – such as learning carpentry, becoming the technician at Chacko’s pickle factory, befriending and touching Rahel and Estha, and having a passionately physical relationship with their mother, Ammu – to challenge the social ostracism and exploitation his people have suffered for centuries. That Roy underlines Velutha’s transgressive acts as much as his simplicity and preoccupation with the small things in life, as seen in his playful episodes with the twins and in the final assignation on the riverbank with Ammu, registers her own protest against the oppression faced by the Dalits in India, and reveals her intent to evoke international empathy for them.

In spite of his tragic and untimely death, Velutha emerges as a hero because of what Suzanne Keen calls *strategic empathy*.¹⁰ The description of Velutha’s death in *The*

¹⁰ In her influential work on the role of empathy in fiction, Keen differentiates strategic empathy from other forms of empathy such as inaccurate empathy, false empathy, or failing empathy. Strategic empathy manifests itself in three different forms according to Keen: ‘First, *bounded strategic empathy occurs within an in-group, stemming from experiences of mutuality, and leading to feeling with familiar others*. This kind of empathy can be called upon by the bards of the in-group, and it may indeed prevent

God of Small Things stands out for its explicit depiction of horrifying violence: full of gory imagery and savage brutality. What is more, Roy describes it through Rahel who witnessed it from close quarters along with Estha. Thus, when the twins saw Velutha after the police had beaten him up, this is how he looked:

his skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The blood on his breath bright red. Fresh. Frothy. His lower intestine was ruptured and hemorrhaged, the blood collected in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged in two places, the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his kneecaps were shattered. (294)

This horrifying description might evoke great pity in readers for Velutha. It may even appear as a brutal lesson and a dire warning to all who ever dream of committing a similar transgression. But that is certainly not Roy's intention, and for that reason, any readers sympathizing with the bloody and broken Velutha would do so out of, what Suzanne Keen terms, "empathetic inaccuracy" (Keen 137). Primarily, it arises out of an incorrectly identified feeling about the character by the reader. "Empathetic inaccuracy occurs when a reader responds empathetically to a fictional character at cross-purposes

outsiders from joining the empathetic circle. Certainly, some experiences of empathetic inaccuracy can be accounted for by recognizing that a reader does not belong to the group invited to share bounded strategic empathy. Second, *ambassadorial strategic empathy addresses chosen others with the aim of cultivating their empathy for the in-group, often to a specific end*. Appeals for justice, recognition, and assistance often take this form.... Third, *broadcast strategic empathy call upon every reader to feel with members of a group, by emphasizing our common vulnerabilities and hopes* (142). My understanding is that in *The God of Small Things* Roy employs the third type of strategic empathy. For more on the topic, see Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145-168).

with an author's intentions" explains Keen (ibid). Far from seeking to evoke pity for Velutha, Roy inserts the description of his horrifying injuries to expose the gravity of the cultural violence inflicted on the Dalits in India for centuries. It discloses the inhumanity of Velutha's merciless killers and protests against their refusal to recognize and respect the basic human dignity of every person, no matter how small. That is why, the comments that precede the police brutality on Velutha contribute more towards highlighting the former's evil intent than the latter's punishment for a social transgression. For instance, Roy begins by saying, "[t]here was nothing accidental about what happened that morning. Nothing *incidental*" [emphasis in the original] (293). Rather, was "History in live performance" (ibid). "They were not arresting a man, they were exorcising fear," Roy goes on (ibid). "After all they were not battling an epidemic. They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak," she observes sarcastically. Then follows the methodical violence that left Velutha more dead than alive. Therefore, Roy seems to employ "strategic empathy" to raise the readers awareness about the worldwide exploitation and inhuman treatment of the poor and the marginalized at the hands of the socioeconomically powerful in society.¹¹ Insofar as, *strategic empathy* is the author's "attempt to direct an emotional transaction through fictional work aimed at a particular audience," through the mortally injured Velutha, Roy appeals to the readers, in Keen's words, "*by emphasizing our common vulnerabilities and hopes*" (Keen 142). In light of her comments leading up to Velutha's ordeal, Roy's strategic empathetic message is clear: readers need to become aware of the grave injustices done to people like Velutha and learn to identify with their struggles.

¹¹ The previous footnote explains the term 'strategic empathy.'

The God of Small Things offers glimpses of Roy's social commitment that makes her fiction empathetically cosmopolitan – a fiction that represents local realities to global audiences from the perspective of the weak, with a view to engendering both an empathetic connection and moral support. Although ostensibly a story of a traditional Malayali family, narrated as a series of memories, the novel contains sufficient evidence of its author's social awareness as well as concern for society's weakest. Not surprisingly, Roy's novel frequently and intensely engages the 'small' throughout the story. It is the physically, socially, economically, and politically small that find a sympathetic treatment in *The God of Small Things*, not the opposite. Several examples cited earlier in this chapter illustrates the creative ways in which Roy becomes their voice, be they the Dizygotic twins, their mother Ammu, her lover Velutha, the Kathakali dancers, or even the ailing fish in the polluted river Meenachal that "suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils" (Roy 1997: 14). By describing the world from their perspectives, Roy problematizes the unjust, uneven, and unsustainable structures they inhabit, and by raising the underlying social issues, she turns the novel into a social commentary – albeit a commentary according to the small. Amitabh Roy claims that the novel essentially attempts "to analyze power and powerlessness" through the four representative categories of the 'small': The women, the children, the downtrodden, and the environment (Roy 2005: 46). While it is an apt description of the novel's social dimension, it is an incomplete one. Roy not only analyzes the sociocultural aspects of people's lives in her novel; she goes a step further to invite the readers to look at them with empathy – to feel their pain and join in their struggle. While the social commentaries on issues such as the Indian caste-system or the Indian Marxism or the Kathakali dancers

help the international readers to familiarize themselves with the cultural contexts of the novel, the powerful yet tragic characterization of Ammu, Rahel and Estha, and Velutha allows readers to empathize with them instantly. In a way, Roy creates empathy in the novel by appealing to the common human experiences of her readers – experiences of pain and pleasure, struggle and success, despair and hope. It is what drives her cosmopolitanism – a cosmopolitanism of solidarity. The main reason for Roy's appeal to a shared-humanity of all cosmopolitans and locals alike is its power to evoke emotions towards the suffering others.

Roy endeavors to cosmopolitanize the sociocultural and political issues she raises in *The God of Small Things* by retelling the tale of the Ipe family from Ayemenem in southern India through the eyes of Rahel – one of the central characters in the text. In an interview with Taisha Abraham in 1998, Roy insisted that *The God of Small Things* examines the general human behavior in a cultural context rather than depict a few characters in an isolated context. The text is not “specifically about ‘our culture’ – it’s a book about human nature,” asserts Roy (As quoted in Aldama 64). Roy's claim stands in sharp contrast with her focus on the small and the local in the text, but herein lies the explanation of her cosmopolitanism. Critiquing or commenting on the big through the small does not imply a celebration of particularism. Rather, for Roy, it implies the significance of the small in the globalized world. If a cosmopolitan world-community of mutual respect and acceptance is to become a reality, the process has to begin with its smallest and weakest members. However, in light of the fact that Roy's debut novel revolves around two unevenly crafted temporal templates of the same story – first, the thirty-one-year-old Rahel's return to Ayemenem in 1992, and second, the tumultuous

events involving the Ipe family that resulted in Chacko's half-British daughter Sophie's death by drowning in the river, the custodial death of Velutha because of police brutality, and the expulsion of Estha from Ayemenem in 1969 – Roy's statement demands an explanation. It is true that there are very few events in the text that happen outside Ayemenem and almost none outside Kerala; Roy remains fiercely focused on the small things that made up the world of Rahel and Estha and the events that destroyed it. Yet, Roy makes her readers acutely aware of issues such as the oppressive caste-system, social discrimination in India, the Communist Party's power-lust and distortion of the Marxist ideals in practice, the exotification of rural India and its cultural heritage, and the social oppression of women in the Indian society through a powerful commentary on the human nature, mostly delivered through a third-person narrator. While these issues largely pertain to India, the sociocultural injustice inherent in them has a universal implication in that they indicate a systemic violation of human rights. Roy's ability to guide the reader's attention to these issues and invite them to perceive them as a symptom of the ills of our globalizing/globalized world is perhaps the reason for the novel's immense popularity in the literary world. In this context, Binoo K. John's observation that Roy has "managed to make the whole world a stage for Ayemenem and its people" succinctly captures the cosmopolitanism imbedded in the novel (as quoted in Ghosh, 108). Making the reader feel one with the Ayemenem landscape, with Rahel, Estha, Ammu, and Velutha, with the mother earth and her less privileged children – the women, the children, the marginalized – is Roy's way to cosmopolitanize the local. This commitment of Roy to bring the local to the global is evident in her nonfiction, too, which remains an important component in understanding her literary cosmopolitanism.

Roy's Nonfiction and Social Activism

Whereas Roy's fiction is known for its lyricism and literary quality, her nonfiction is famous for a directness and forcefulness that characterize her social activism. That said, fiction and nonfiction function in tandem for Roy: her nonfiction contains the themes evident in her novels – for instance, the struggle between the small and big, local and global, power and powerlessness, tradition and individual freedom in the globalized world. Unlike in her fiction, however, Roy takes sides in her nonfiction, even at the cost of sounding polemical and biased. For instance, in *Power Politics*, she writes, “I have a point of view...I make it clear that I think it's right and moral to take that position, and...I use everything in my power to flagrantly solicit support for that position” (Roy 2001: 11). This is the key to small cosmopolitanism. Roy's critique primarily emerges from her perception of the lived conditions around her; her opinions, therefore, emerge from a grounded point of reference. Yet, Roy claims to write to defend the universal human rights of the poor and the defenseless. She writes to solicit international support for the local struggles of the oppressed and voiceless. In doing so, Roy still engages with the small and the local in the first place, but actively seeks to globalize her dissent on their behalf. This tension makes Roy's nonfiction interesting from a literary point of view in that how she negotiates it in her fiction.

Roy's non-fiction far outweighs her novels in terms frequency and volume of publication. While *The God of Small Things* brought her instant fame in the literary world in 1997, her nonfiction since then drawn the international community's attention to the

issues underlying her social activism. In many ways, Roy's nonfiction dialogues with and magnifies the issues concerning human rights and social justice, also highlighted in her fiction. Roy's prolific nonfiction since the publication of her first novel attests to her relentless activism on behalf of the poor and socioeconomically weaker sections of society. It goes in conjunction with her activism; it supplements it; it supports it. Writing nonfiction empowers the writer-activist to globalize dissent in that, with whatever means available for maximum publicity and outreach, Roy is able to draw the world's attention to her protest against the oppression and exploitation of the poor in India.

Her powerful nonfiction, often written in advocacy for the rights of the disadvantaged groups in society, justifies Roy's identity as a 'writer-activist.' Since the publication of her debut novel in 1997, Roy has published over a dozen works of nonfiction, mostly collections of essays on topics as wide-ranging as the plight of the poor in India (*The Cost of Living, Power Politics*) to neoliberal capitalism and neoimperialism in the twenty-first century (*An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire, Capitalism: A Ghost Story*) to the ongoing separatist political movements in India (*Walking with the Comrades, Kashmir: The Case for Freedom*). While the lyricism evident in her fiction remains easily detectible in Roy's nonfiction, her tone and directness appear more journalistic in the latter. She writes nonfiction with the aim of getting her point across clearly and garnering support for it quickly. Her fame as a postcolonial celebrity writer and world-wide reputation as a human rights activist have earned her the appellation 'writer-activist.' Roy herself dislikes the attribute, calling it a "twenty-first century vernacular [expression]... "[I]ike a sofa-bed" (Roy 2001: 10). Expressing her disapproval of the hyphenated-appellation, Roy asks, "why it should be

that the person who wrote *The God of Small Things* is called a writer, and the person who wrote the political essays is called an activist?” (ibid 10-11). However, the moniker in fact honors Roy’s exceptional standing in the intellectual world as both an accomplished writer and a fierce champion of human rights. It confirms her credentials as one of the few well-known fiction writers who make an equally powerful impact in the world through their activism and direct participation in people’s struggle for human dignity and justice. More importantly, it recognizes her unique ability to produce fiction and nonfiction that generate empathy among readers across the world. The immense popularity of Roy’s nonfiction among readers both in the West and the East is discernible from the fact that her essays are regularly translated in dozens of languages around the world. Perhaps, the main reason for the enduring appeal of Roy’s nonfiction is her ability to represent the silent majorities – especially the economically and socially backward classes, and the politically oppressed communities – through her writing. Unlike the subtleties of fiction, Roy speaks her mind clearly in her nonfiction and makes the position known from the outset. She adopts this strategy for her nonfiction on purpose, namely, “[to] take sides.” (ibid 11).¹² Therefore, Roy’s ‘writer-activist’ identity is important to

¹² In my opinion, Roy is well aware of the differences between writing fiction and nonfiction and has laid out quite clearly why she has been labeled a ‘writer-activist.’ In *Power Politics* she claims the following: ‘My thesis...is that I’ve been saddled with this double-barreled appellation, this awful professional label, not because my work is political, but because in my essays, which are about very contentious issues, I take sides. I take a position. I have a point of view. What’s worse, I make it clear that I think it’s right and moral to take that position, and what’s even worse, I use everything in my power to flagrantly solicit support for that position. Now for a writer of the twenty-first century, that’s considered a pretty uncool, unsophisticated thing to do. It stakes uncomfortably close to the territory occupied by political party ideologues...I am all for being circumspect. I’m all for discretion, prudence, tentativeness, subtlety, ambiguity, complexity. I love the unanswered question, the unresolved story, the unclimbed mountain, the tender shard of an incomplete dream. Most of the time.’ Roy goes on to justify the writers and intellectuals’ need to take sides. See *Power Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2001), 11-12.

understand her cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, it justifies her intense focus on the local and active involvement in people's struggles for equality and justice. On the other hand, it explains why she solicits global support for the "local" issues through her fiction and nonfiction. The twin act of participating in localized social activism and reporting it to the global community in terms of a global struggle for human rights and universal justice powerfully characterizes Roy's small cosmopolitanism.

The prominent sociopolitical themes from Roy's fiction find recurrent echoes in her nonfiction, providing further evidence to the interrelated nature of the two modes of writing. While it is difficult to deny that Roy is a fiction writer who also writes impactful nonfiction, the author herself considers such distinction misplaced. The political nature of her fiction remains easily verifiable as does the literary quality of her nonfiction. Therefore, there is some justification in Roy's protestation against drawing a dividing line between the two. "*The God of Small Things* is a work of fiction, but it's no less political than any of my essay," Roy argues and goes on to ask, "the essays are works of nonfiction, but since when did writers forgo the right to write nonfiction?" (Roy 2001: 11). In fact, analyzed synoptically, Roy's fiction and nonfiction prioritize the same concerns, albeit in different styles. Thus, while Roy highlights through her fiction the sociopolitical issues – caste politics, Dalit atrocities, the political nexus between the socioeconomically powerful to exploit and impoverish the poor, the human rights violation against the minorities and the marginalized communities – concerning the contemporary Indian society, she intervenes in debates surrounding the same through her

nonfiction. Based on this similarity, then, it becomes necessary to evaluate Roy's nonfiction for the ways it reinforces the political views espoused in her fiction.

Roy's activism further confirms her strategic empathetic approach as a writer; in particular, her recent support of the Gujarat Dalit leader, Jignesh Mevani, explains the pro-subaltern tendencies in her fiction. In the build-up to the Gujarat State assembly elections in 2017, Jignesh Mevani, a social activist, lawyer, and journalist from Ahmedabad, emerged as a Dalit leader capable of challenging the vice-like grip of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party on in the state of Gujarat. Recently, Arundhati hit the national headlines, by announcing a donation of Rs. 300'000 (roughly about USD 4650) in response to Mevani's plea for donations to contest the Gujarat elections against the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party. "I contributed because I believe Jignesh Mevani represents a kind of breakthrough in mainstream Indian politics," Roy explained on the crowdsourcing website that accepted her donation.¹³ Roy lauded Mevani's social activism, undertaken on behalf of the Dalits, as "[a] solidarity that rises from the bottom upwards... one with vision, sophistication, confidence and a real, multi-faceted understanding of the direction we as a people need to move in" (ibid). In fact, Mevani won Roy's admiration after he formed a non-profit organization, Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch (The National Front for Dalit Rights) in the aftermath of the Dalit Atrocities in Una, Gujarat, in July 2016, where four Dalit youth were subjected to brutal public

¹³ As reported in an online news magazine, *The News Minutes* (TNM). See, "Arundhati Roy Supports Jignesh Mevani, Contributes Rs. 3 Lakh for His Gujarat Campaign." Politics. *The News Minute*. TNM, 30 November 2017. Available at <http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/arundhati-roy-supports-jignesh-mevani-contributes-rs-3-lakh-his-gujarat-campaign-72435>.

flogging by a group of Hindu youth for skinning a dead cow. It is also important to mention that for her donation to Mevani's crowdfunding campaign, the current Gujarat Chief Minister, Vijay Rupani, accused both Roy and Mevani of working against national interests and having ties to the Jawaharlal Nehru university (JNU) in Delhi, a prominent educational institution known for promoting liberal thinking. While the university vaguely figures in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* as the architecture school where Tillo meets her three lovers, including Musa, the Kashmiri militant commander, neither Roy nor Mevani have ever went to JNU. Therefore, the politicians' attempt to malign Roy for her empathetic support to progressive educational institutions and social activists, such as JNU and Jignesh Mevani, underlines the challenges she faces as a writer-activist.

Roy's support of Mevani contains important implications for her cosmopolitanism. As mentioned earlier, Mevani is now a well-known powerful Dalit leader in the aftermath of the Una incident and under his leadership the protests against this atrocity gained a nation-wide momentum, encouraging other minorities in India to unite under one banner. Mevani-led protests also received considerable coverage by the international media both in print and on TV. The Una incident and its aftermath also went viral on the internet. The unprecedented international attention to Mevani's Dalit activism must have pleased Roy considerably for it is what she hopes to achieve by advocating support for local acts of resistance against social oppression and economic exploitation. Without the national and global support for such activism there is little chance for a successful political impact. Without transforming an individual act of protest against the unjust social structures into a mass movement, it becomes a valiant attempt of individual bravery against the systemic violations of human rights, without any lasting impact. For

instance, Velutha in *The God of Small Things* died a miserable death while defying the age-old Love Laws that discriminated against the Dalits and denied them an equal status in society. However, Roy depicts another rebellious Dalit character, Saddam or Dayachand, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* far more positively. Unlike Velutha, Saddam receives support in his fight against Dalit atrocities from millions in India and abroad. Encouraged by an overwhelming political and moral support, Saddam discards a self-destructive plan of murdering the policeman responsible for his father's lynching by a Hindu mob, and begins to launch a nation-wide movement to end Dalit atrocities across the country through protests and activism. What inspired Roy to make such an optimistic change in characterizing Saddam when she had so pessimistically depicted the tragic end of Velutha the Dalit? Who convinced Roy that Dalit heroes can be triumphant in their fight against the Indian caste system and its attendant injustices? The answer is Jignesh Mevani. Through his successful leadership, agitation, protest, and activism for Dalit causes, Mevani has demonstrated to Roy that there is hope for the human rights activist in India and that Dalits themselves are capable of leading the fight for their right to equal dignity and justice. If Roy's material and moral support to Mevani reflects her unwavering commitment to the human rights issues in India, Mevani's activism, in turn, represents the optimistic change in Roy's portrayal of Dalit characters in her fiction.

Small Cosmopolitanism and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Two decades passed before Arundhati Roy wrote another novel since the publication of *The God of Small Things* in 1997. She continued writing during that time

but mostly nonfiction in the form of essays and commentaries on her social activism. However, Roy never ceased thinking about writing fiction but did not want to “write *God of Small Things 2*” (Aitkenhead npg).¹⁴ Unlike her first novel, which was a semi-autobiographical family-story situated in a small village in Kerala, her second, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, reflects her activism that involves going to strange places in India and meeting interesting people from different walks of life. “I wanted to write where I’m just drifting around, the way I do in Delhi, in mosques and strange places, as I have all my life” Roy explains to Aitkenhead (ibid). A cursory reading of the novel should confirm the author’s claim: the novel teems with stories and characters that have influenced her life of social activism since her first novel; they come as varied as the stories of the Indian transgender community to those of the Kashmiri separatists in north India and the Naxalites in southeast India. Connecting them through her eponymous presence in the story is S. Tilottama, the character sharing striking biographical similarities with Roy. Tilo freely roams conflicted zones and enthusiastically interacts with the outcast to experience “the joy in the saddest places, and the unexpectedness of things” (ibid). *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is essentially about Roy’s faith in the power of small resistances that carry the potential to change the world. In fictionalizing the fierce conflicts among the many diametrically opposed aspects of social activism – such as the mainstream society vs the outcasts, the state power vs people’s movements,

¹⁴ These references are from Aitkenhead’s recent interview with Roy – “Fiction Takes its Time: Arundhati Roy on Why It Took 20 Years to Write Her Second Novel” – on the publication of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Roy’s views in this conversation reflect her predilection for fiction over nonfiction. The interview is available online at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/27/arundhati-roy-fiction-takes-time-second-novel-ministry-utmost-happiness>. 15 Nov. 2017.

and a culture of despair vs an ideology of hope – Roy, once again, turns to story-telling to appeal to the human sensitivity of readers, hoping that an enhanced awareness of others might inspire them to reach out to them in cosmopolitan solidarity.

Beginning and ending in a graveyard, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* celebrates the transformative power of solidarity-based small movements, amidst discriminatory and oppressive social structures. The novel is about finding joy amidst sadness and surprises amidst the mundaneness of life. Interestingly, Roy makes the graveyard – a symbol of death and decay – a place of refuge for all who are rejected by society on account of their caste, class, faith, gender, or political views. The main plotline revolves around an Indian *hijra*, a transgender person, called Anjum, who leaves her family to join a *hijra* community in Delhi and then relocates to a graveyard in the city to help the marginalized like herself live a respectful and happy life.¹⁵ Anjum constructs a guest house in the graveyard after a few friends opt to live with her. In spite of her own traumatized life, she works assiduously to make her graveyard guest-house a home of comfort and hope for all. One of the friends who joins Anjum at her guest house is S. Tilottama, an architecture-student-turned-social-activist. She arrives with an infant girl, Miss Jebeen the Second, whom she had adopted after finding her abandoned at Jantar Mantar, the historic Delhi ground where several protests against the government were taking place. However, before finding her peace and happiness at the Jannat Guest House with Anjum and other friends, Tilo becomes involved in the Kashmiri separatist movement and barely escapes with her life with the help of a friend, Biplab Dasgupta. In

¹⁵ I am referring to Anjum as ‘she’ following Roy’s use of the pronoun for her in the text. Throughout the novel, Roy uses the pronoun ‘she’ and the possessive pronoun ‘her’ for all transgender characters, probably, in deference with the Indian hijras’ preference for feminine names pronouns for themselves.

the novel, Biplab narrates much of Tilo's life, including her mysterious past. The novel also includes a section on Revathi, a Naxalite woman who is the mother of Tilo's adopted daughter, Miss Jebeen the Second. A letter written by her reveals that Miss Jebeen, whom she had named Udaya, was born to her after a police-rape and that she was forced to abandon her in Delhi. Despite the dark imagery of the graveyard, border-conflicts, corrupt politics, violence and social injustice, the novel ends on a happy note with Tilo contentedly settled in Anjum's flourishing graveyard-community with the little Udaya Jebeen by her side.

Anjum's fortitude in coming to terms with her social, emotional, and physical alienation from society as a transgender sets the tone of resilience in the text. The novel opens with a scene at a graveyard where Anjum – a Hijra or transgender – lives. Born as Aftab to Muslim parents, Anjum struggles during her early days at the graveyard. For company, she only had the bats, the crows, and the vultures in the beginning. Small boys threw stones at her and people called her names such as “clown without a circus, [and] queen without a palace” (Roy 2017a: 3). However, Anjum's misery goes beyond the egregious ridicule people around the graveyard subjected her to: even her name and its English translation compounded the ambiguity surrounding her gender. For instance, “the Man Who Knew English” tells Anjum, in one of the early passages in the first chapter, that her name spelled backward means Majnu, the lover of Laila, and the Eastern equivalent of Romeo. Anjum sardonically remarks to this interpretation of her name as a *khichdi*, that is, a confused admixture. Given her self-identification as a *hijra* – a transgender – the name Laila, meaning the beloved, would have been a more appropriate for her, instead she is called Majnu, the legendary lover of Laila. Ironically, while Anjum

tries to dissociate herself from the gender of her birth because she always felt like a woman, her name – when written backwards in English – identified her with a lover and not with a beloved. Even worse, the man who knew English later explains to her that he had made a mistake in spelling her name backwards in English, and that when correctly done, it read ‘Mujna,’ “which wasn’t a name and meant nothing at all (ibid 4). Through this farcical incident Roy suggests that Anjum was subjected to an identity crisis right from her childhood and that social conventions unnecessarily complicated her gender identification. These instances also highlight the social, physiological, and emotional alienation Anjum feels as a transgender. Nevertheless, Roy immediately allows Anjum to express a strong sense of pride and freedom she feels in her namelessness. For instance, Anjum replies to the man who knew English saying:

[i]t doesn’t matter. I’m all of them, I’m Romi and Juli, I’m Laila and Majnu. *And* Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I’m not Anjum, I’m Anjuman. I’m a *mehfil*, I’m a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone’s invited. (4)

In a few short sentences, Roy instantly transforms Anjum’s social handicap into her strength and the means of becoming a cosmopolitan – a person who rejects the narrow definitions of identity and reaches out to all with goodwill and openness. To disown the meaninglessness of her name, then, becomes an act of suffusing it with a universal meaning for Anjum. In becoming a nobody in the eyes of the traditional society, Anjum elevates herself to becoming an ‘everybody’ and ‘everything.’ Through her characterization in the novel, Roy shows how the dialectics of social dehumanization and cosmopolitan re-humanization plays out in Anjum’s life and mission. At the beginning of

the story, Roy clearly contrasts two realities: the mainstream society deprives Anjum of any identity as male or female, but her self-identification with the transgenders and subsequent acceptance by a small group of committed friends, such as Saddam, Ustad Hameed, and Tilo, enables her to establish a thriving community of the marginalized in a graveyard.

The ability to find creative solutions to overcome challenges in life enables Anjum to transform the space and people around her. Named Aftab by his parents, Anjum was born as the eldest son of a Muslim hakim, Mulaqat Ali, “a doctor of herbal medicine,” whose family traced their lineage “directly back to the Mongol Emperor Changez Khan through the emperor’s second-born son, Chagatai” (12-13). However, his realization that he was “a Hijra – a female trapped in a male body” leads him to join the house of a hijra-community against the wishes of his father because “[h]e wanted to be her” (16, 18). Anjum’s flagrant defiance of her parents and her acceptance of herself as a hijra allowed her to find happiness at Khwabgah, the House of Dreams – the residence of a hijra community in Delhi. There were other creative solutions, too, that Anjum found to defeat the challenges in her way. For instance, when no one came forward to claim a three-year-old girl abandoned near a mosque, she not only adopted her and gave her name – Zainab – but also taught her to call her ‘Mummy’ and other members of the Khwabgah as ‘Auntie,’ ‘Senior Granny,’ ‘Junior Granny,’ and so forth. With her astute social sense, Anjum turned the girl’s tragedy into a happy-story for everyone around her. Then again, a similar creativity and indefatigable spirit leads her to leave Khwabgah and take shelter in a city graveyard. As the text indicates, Anjum’s incomprehensible act of leaving the safety and security of the transgender community was both the result of her

disagreement with Ustad Kulsoom Bi, the head of the community, as a strong desire to return to the world after her harrowing experience of communal violence in Ahmedabad – in which her travelling companion, Zakir Mian, was brutally killed by a Hindu mob and she herself barely escaped with her life, thanks to her cursed-status as a hijra. “She tried to tell [Zakir Mian] that she had fought back bravely as they hauled her off his lifeless body” (61). Anjum’s courage to face life without surrendering to hostile circumstances was the key to her fighting back. The gradual transformation of herself and her new dwelling-place, the graveyard, provides ample testimony to it. In a short time, the graveyard offered services such as a guest house and a funeral home; it also became the location for tuition classes and music lessons for neighborhood children as well as a shelter for abandoned stray animals – all due to Anjum’s charismatic personality and tireless efforts. Indeed, Roy presents Anjum as the personification of an alternative vision of a utopian community for the marginalized wherein the transformation of people and places is achieved from within and in spite of the relentless opposition from without.

Similarly, Saddam Hussein, a Dalit young man earlier known as Dayachand, represents the revolutionary potential of the socially oppressed communities in India. As one of the earliest members to join Anjum’s guest house, Saddam Hussein plays a major role in the graveyard community’s organization and development. In fact, it was Saddam who introduced the idea of establishing a funeral home in the graveyard for those whom no one else would offer a decent burial. Anjum readily approved it but the only criterion was that “Jannat Funeral Services would only bury those whom the graveyards and imams of the Duniya had rejected” (80). In a way, Saddam played a leading role in expanding the guest house’s social outreach because he had greatly suffered violence and

oppression as a Dalit – a fact he had concealed successfully behind his chosen name of Saddam Hussein. However, his own confession to Anjum reveals that his “real name was Dayachand. He was born into a family of Chamars – skinners – in a village called Badshahpur in the state of Haryana, only a couple of hours away by bus from Delhi (85-86). He also reveals that his father was lynched by a Hindu mob in front of his eyes because he was caught carrying a dead cow for skinning. He further confesses to Anjum that he changed his name to hide his identity and to find and kill the policeman Sehrawat to avenge his father’s murder. It was Sehrawat who had stopped and arrested his father’s Tempo as he rode with the cow carcass that day. Judging Saddam by his confessions to Anjum, he represents millions of other Dalits in India who become victims of systemic violence on a regular basis both in rural and urban India. However, Roy does not portray Saddam as just another unfortunate Dalit victim of mob violence and social discrimination. Little by little, Saddam acquires a determination to join the nation-wide movement against Dalit atrocities after witnessing the wave of Dalit protests across India in the aftermath of his father’s lynching. Encouraged and transformed by the unprecedented Dalit demonstrations against centuries of atrocities, presently ignited by the incident which claimed his father’s life, Saddam abandons the plan to murder Sehrawat and declares triumphantly: “my people have risen up! They are fighting! What is one Sehrawat for us now? Nothing!” (406-407). Indeed, the fighting-spirit displayed by the protesting Dalits, who dared to oppose their oppressors openly and furiously, inspires Saddam to suppress his suicidal plan of committing a murder and forfeiting his own life. He instead joins the revolution and plans for a life of family happiness with Zainab, Anjum’s first adopted daughter. Admittedly, Anjum’s graveyard community also plays a

pivotal role in changing his thinking but, in the final analysis, Saddam reflects the changing mentality of the Dalits in India who now rise against injustice and oppression in solidarity and ferocity uncharacteristic of them. Roy's portrayal of Saddam, then, hints at the optimism she feels both as writer and activist about the recent Dalit unity movements in India.

Similarly, the novel valorizes the Kashmiri separatist movement through the character of Musa Yeswi, who at once symbolizes the innocence of the Kashmiris as well as their fierce determination for political freedom. In the text, Biplab introduces Musa based on his personal impressions of him. In Delhi, Musa "was a quiet, conservatively dressed boy" who "had a way of being in the company without drawing any attention to himself" (Roy 2017a: 156). Although by Biplab's confession, Musa and Tilottama – the character seemingly modelled after Roy herself – were in love, "[s]ometimes they seemed more like siblings than lovers" (ibid). That Musa turns into a dreaded terrorist after returning to Kashmir emphasizes the point that most freedom fighters or terrorists – depending on one's perception – are ordinary men and women with ordinary looks and ordinary dreams. It is the extraordinary circumstances of political oppression and exploitation that metamorphoses them into fierce killers. Not surprisingly, then, Musa the terrorist shares little or no similarities with Musa the young architecture student in Delhi: He obliterates every trace of inborn gentleness and timidity to lead a fierce freedom struggle against the Indian army in Kashmir. Nevertheless, his fight is doomed to fail against the might of a nation's military infrastructure as the text makes it clear that he returned to Kashmir once last time to carry on the struggle, and that this time "he would not return" (437). Still, Roy portrays a defiant picture of Musa who remains steadfastly

hopeful of winning their freedom struggle – some day in the future. For instance, to Biplab’s observation that “you may be right [about the Kashmiri’s right to a separate state], but you’ll never win,” Musa replies that “[w]e may turn out to be wrong, but we have already won” (431). The narrator supports Musa’s optimism about the Kashmiris’ political struggle by observing that even if Musa may die as “a faceless man in nameless grave... younger men who would take his place would be harder, narrower and less forgiving,” and for the same reason, they might stand a better chance of winning (437). Unlike, Saddam Hussein (Dayachand), Musa represents both the human and cultural cost of a political struggle as well as the optimism that sustains the struggle through generations.

Likewise, Revathy, the Naxalite woman, offers valuable insights into the Maoist struggle for justice in India. While Revathy herself rarely appears in the novel, Roy allots a considerable space to a story that emerges out of her letter to Dr. Azad Bharatiya, at whose feet she had abandoned her infant daughter, Udaya, in Delhi. According to her letter, Revathi is “a Telugu woman... working as a full-timer with Communist Party of India (Maoist)” and predicts that by the time Dr. Azad receives the letter, she “will be already killed” (417). The grim prediction, coupled with her condemnable act of abandoning her new-born daughter in Delhi, set the tone for the defeatist narration of the Maoist struggle in southeast India. Her letter pitifully describes how she was raped by six policemen and made pregnant because she worked for Mahila Sangham, the women’s conscientization group in southern India. Moreover, it happened in the background of the Indian Government’s “War against People” wherein the police and the paramilitary killed thousands of adivasis, the tribals, and burned their villages. Yet her letter also underlines

the resilience and hope the Maoists hold for their armed resistance against the Indian government. For example, in spite of the police brutalities awaiting her, Revathi joins the PLGA – People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army – to participate in her people’s political struggle. She gives birth to Udaya against the party’s rules for women fighter, spares her life, and leaves her near Azad Bharatiya’s camp to afford her a better chance of surviving. In addition, her last act of returning to the forest to “live and die by [the] gun” reflects the Maoist belief in their armed struggle (426). Anjum’s revolutionary graveyard-community commemorates Revathy in two ways: one, by holding a symbolic funeral for her, “her letter was interred in the grave”; two, by renaming Miss Jebeen as “Miss Udaya Jebeen” to affirm the hope Revathy had placed in her by that name, which meant “sunrise” in Telugu (426, 417). Whereas Revathy-the-Maoist symbolizes the self-destructive tendencies of politically oppressed communities, Revathy-the-mother communicates hope and optimism. Predictably, Roy supports both in the text, but seems to embrace the latter. This is evident in the way the novel projects Miss Udaya Jebeen as the hope for the graveyard community: the novel ends with Anjum adopting Jebeen and playing a doting mother to her – an act which fulfills Revathy’s hope for a happy and secure future for her infant daughter. Through Miss Udaya Jebeen, Roy not only celebrates the power of motherhood, but also the enduring power of reaching out to others in need.

Yet, in the final analysis, even Roy fails to represent the subaltern Revathy sufficiently. In her famous essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” Gayatri Spivak raises this question whether the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed can ever be sufficiently represented in the academia and public discourses by those claiming to speak on their

behalf. Through *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy seems to provide another example of the intellectuals' failure to provide a platform to the subaltern themselves. For instance, unlike all other major characters in the text, Revathy does not have a voice, and readers learn about her mostly through Tilo's discussion of the letter she had written to a social activist in Delhi. It suggests that Revathy has to be represented by someone in the mainstream even to be represented in a fiction. Roy makes little effort to allow Revathy to speak and reveal her subaltern story in the first person, apart from piecing a few details of her last days from a letter she had painstakingly written in English, a language she was so little familiar with. Revathy's silence in the text lends renewed importance to Spivak's question about the complicated relationship between the subaltern and the public intellectuals and activist like Roy.

In general, however, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* celebrates the spirit of perseverance in the face of a violent oppression – a spirit that generates steadfastness among the oppressed communities. The common trait among the different minority and antagonized groups in the novel – such as the *hijara* community, the Kashmiri separatists, and the Naxalites – is their resilience. Roy imbues each of these communities with an extraordinary will to survive, to overcome the challenges, and to live to fight another day. For the transgender community, Anjum displays a determination to make a positive difference in the world by setting up an alternative community in the graveyard, thus reversing the symbolism of the graveyard from that of 'a place of the dead' to 'a place of life and hope.' Musa, the Kashmiri commander of the insurgents exhibits an astonishing tenacity by surviving several attempts on his life by the Indian military forces. Similarly, Revathi, the Naxalite fighter and mother of Miss Jebeen, shows her

doggedness while facing a certain death by leaving her new-born daughter at Jantar Mantar in Delhi with the hope that the revolution will survive through her infant daughter, who would be saved by someone on that famous ground – the home of national protests in India. Insofar as Anjum, Musa, and Revathi represent their communities, they also epitomize their ‘steadfastness’ against the powers that seek to alienate them from their groups and communities in order to destroy their resilience. Nonetheless, Roy also seems to suggest that steadfastness and resilience ultimately end in death and destruction if not supported by social solidarity. In the text, the Kashmiri separatists and the Naxalites are portrayed fighting a losing battle, in spite of their steadfast faith in their struggles. Anjum, on the other hand, is presented as winning her struggle against the mainstream society because of the companionship and support she receives from friends and strangers alike.

If *The God of Small Things* relied heavily on Roy’s childhood memories of Ayemenem in Kerala and displayed clearly autobiographical elements in an otherwise fictional text, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* continues that trend, although with significant variations. Roy’s debut novel concentrated on Rahel’s reminiscences about the events that shaped her childhood and the history of the Ipe family in her native Ayemenem; the story becomes an emotional journey into the past for adult Rahel. In that sense, *The God of Small Things* is a novel of returns. As Mullaney claims, “[r]eturn journeys are an organizing theme of the novel through which Roy explores a matrix of social and cultural anxieties” (Mullaney 29). Rahel’s physical, emotional and psychological return to Ayemenem and its past creates literary strands for Roy to comment on the larger social and political issues prevalent in the late twentieth-century

India – the caste system, the power politics among political parties that wooed socially-segregated voters along caste lines, the enduring colonial legacy among the Indian elites, and the desire for a change among the socioeconomically oppressed. Rahel's narration encompasses many of these themes, but the novel also relies on the third-person omniscient narrator to reflect on details not directly connected with Rahel's memories such as the political and religious history of Kerala and their current manifestations across the state, India's turbulent relationship with its neighbors and growing unrest among its people within the borders. Much as these commentaries connect the novel's 'small' incidents with the 'big' events in India, both historically and contemporarily, they compel Rahel to disappear from these larger contexts. In a way, she remains relevant mainly to the events she recreates out of her memory. On the contrary, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, S. Tilottama, the character resembling Roy, prominently remains in the foreground of almost all major storylines in the text. Unlike Rahel, Tilo actively participates in the events that shape the novel and comes to identify with the other main characters more intimately. Because of her close contacts and affinity with characters such as Anjum the transgender, Musa the Kashmiri separatist, Saddam the Dalit young man, and Revathy the Maoist rebel, Tilo is able to generate empathy for them more readily than Rahel does for Velutha, Ammu, and Estha through her narration in *The God of Small Things*. The major difference between the two novels, then, is about telling a story from memory and describing one as it unfolds in the present. It is the difference between a storyteller and a participant-narrator. In light of Roy's remarkable turn to activism since the publication of *The God of Small Things*, the distinction between a storyteller and a participant-narrator becomes crucial in understanding small

cosmopolitanism. Since her first novel, Roy has deliberately used her literary fame to conscientize the global community – especially, her readers – about India’s social justice issues. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* at once allows Roy to tell a story and report the ground realities concerning the violation of human rights in the twenty-first century India. The ubiquity of human-rights related issues, the presence of thinly-veiled current Indian political figures, and an open condemnation of the national government for its many failures transforms the novel into Roy’s most powerful appeal to the global community for attention and intervention. Tilottama, in this regard, becomes Roy’s fictional self in the text.

S. Tilottama, the architect-turned-social-activist, is able to empathize with the socio-politically marginalized characters in the text because of her past as well as her present. While the narrator introduces the main characters from each of its main storylines in detail, comparatively very little is revealed about Tilottama, the character who shares autobiographical similarities with Arundhati Roy herself. However, whatever is made known about Tilo’s personal and family background readily relate her with both the actual and fictional history of Roy. One of Tilo’s three lovers in the text, Biplab, shares the following personal details with the readers after making certain conjectures about her on the basis of her South-Indian looks:

[i]t turned out that I was right about that. About the rest – I learned that she wasn’t being evasive; she genuinely did not have answers to those ordinary college-kid questions... From stray wisps of conversation I gathered that her mother was a single woman whose husband had left her, or she had left him, or he was dead – it was all a bit of a mystery. Nobody seemed to be able to *place* her. There were rumors that she was an adopted child. And rumors that she was not. Later I learned – from a college junior, a fellow called

Mammen P. Mammen a gossipmonger from Tilo's home town – that both rumors were true. Her mother was indeed her real mother, but had first abandoned her and then adopted her. There had been a scandal, a love affair in a small town. The man, who belonged to an 'Untouchable' caste (a 'Paraya', Mammen P. Mammen whispered, as though even to say it aloud would contaminate him), had been dispensed with in the ways high-caste families in India – in this case Syrian Christians from Kerala – traditionally dispense with inconveniences such as these. Tilo's mother was sent away until the baby was born and placed in a Christian orphanage. In a few months she returned to the orphanage and adopted her own child. Her family disowned her. She remained unmarried. To support herself she started a small kindergarten school which, over the years, had grown into a successful high school. She never publicly admitted – understandably – that she was the real mother. That was about as much as I knew. (Roy 2017a: 154)

With brilliantly mixed fact and fiction, Roy presents Tilo as the grown-up avatar of both Rahel, the lead narrator of *The God of Small Things*, and herself – the writer who grew up in Ayemenem in Kerala, studied in Delhi, and became social-activist. While the autobiographical nature of Rahel's characterization emerges more strongly in *The God of Small Things* – for instance, the fact that she grew up in Ayemenem in her maternal grandfather's house as the daughter of Mariam Ipe, a Syrian Christian woman who had married a Bengali in Calcutta and subsequently returned to Kerala with her twins – that of Tilottama in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* remains somewhat obscure. This is perhaps because Roy attempts to project Tilo as Ammu and Velutha's love-child who grew up with the trauma of rejection by her own mother. At the same time, acknowledging Mariam Ipe to be her real mother allows Roy to make Tilo her fictional self in a novel that itself fictionalizes much of her social activism. That said, by deliberately obscuring Tilo's past, especially the circumstances surrounding her birth and

upbringing, Roy facilitates an easy emotional connection with the other marginalized characters in the text such as Anjum, Saddam, Musa, and Revathy. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Tilo empathizes so tenderly with them, and advocates so fiercely for them. In light of her past, Tilo's solidarity with these diverse individuals and their communities explains Roy's own long-term involvement in the various social justice movements in India.

The ability to transcend sociocultural, political, and spatial boundaries with ease enables Tilottama to highlight the common characteristics of the different human rights movements in contemporary India. Although described in the text as a plain-looking girl from South India with a "complete absence of desire to please, or to put someone at ease" that "came across as a kind of reckless aloneness," S. Tilottama gradually becomes the binding force between individuals and groups that strove for human dignity, social justice, political freedom, or simply, a chance to survive and thrive (154). If Anjum needed someone to run the tuition classes for children at her Jannat Guest House, Tilo volunteered; if Musa needed someone to document and publicize the Kashmiris' freedom struggle, Tilo accepted that responsibility; if Revathy was hoping to find someone who would raise her infant daughter with love and care, Tilo adopted her instantly at Jantar Mantar. Whereas these unfortunate individuals largely remain unaware of their respective struggles against the forces of injustice and oppression, Tilo crosses several boundaries to participate in their struggles. For example, she leaves Delhi and travels to Kashmir to accompany Musa on his campaign against the Indian army; she also crosses a religious boundary by marrying him. Similarly, she joins Anjum's Jannat community in the graveyard, thus obliterating the boundaries between the place of the living and the place

of the dead as well as the barriers between the hijras – the Indian transgender eunuchs and ordinary men and women. Likewise, Tilo challenges the general Indian perception of the Maoists as blood-thirsty terrorists by honoring Revathy with a symbolic burial of a martyr. In the same way, her act of according proper burials to both Saddam’s father and her own mother, Mariam Ipe, at the Jannat funeral home also suggests crossing religious and cultural boundaries to celebrate the heroism of victims of social violence and discrimination. Obviously, then, in her quest to immerse herself in the lives of those on society’s margins, Tilo comes to inhabit a life on the frontiers – both literal and metaphorical. In doing so, she erases the differences isolating various social reform and human rights movements, much in the same way, the novel blurs borders... “between

gender, between castes, between human and animals” (Roy 2017c npg). The happy-ending of the novel, portrayed through the laughter, love, and hope permeating out of Anjum’s graveyard community, and Tilo’s prominent role in it, supply a fitting tribute to her endeavors in that regard. Through Tilo’s boundary-crossing acts, Roy presents a challenge to her readers. She seems to ask, if a fictional character with a heightened cosmopolitan sensitivity towards others can contribute immensely to the local social movements through solidarity and active participation, how much more the cosmopolitan individuals in the global community, with their enhanced sensitivity towards all human beings, can contribute in terms of creating a more just society, founded the principles of equal rights and dignity to all?

In spite of the novel’s largely sociopolitical critique, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* Roy she critiques the capitalist structures that seek to perpetuate conditions of

inequality and injustice, and examining it from the perspectives of ‘racial capitalism’ and ‘partition’ expand our understanding of Roy’s opposition to the neoliberal capitalist structures that perpetuate injustice and equality in the globalized world. Once again, Roy makes this critique through Tilottama. By reaching out to the socially handicapped characters such as Anjum the transgender, Revathy the Maoist rebel, Musa the Kashmiri separatist, and Saddam the Dalit youth, Tilo challenges the socioeconomic system that excludes them. Even though, in the context of the novel, the mainstream Indian society with its rising nationalist fundamentalism as an antagonistic force to cosmopolitan individuals such as Anjum and Tilo, Roy also targets the neoliberal capitalist structures that exploit several fringe groups, such as those represented by the characters mentioned above, in order to render them othered and alienated. In order to analyze the political dimension of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, I wish to relate Tilottama’s solidarity-driven activism with two interrelated concepts: ‘racial capitalism,’ and ‘partition.’ Racial capitalism refers to the concept that capitalism by nature is racial in that “it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups” and by perpetrating dispossession and inequality in society (Melamed 77). Moreover, racial capitalism relies on an unequal differentiation of human value to achieve its ends. Partition, on the other hand, serves racial capitalism to maintain forms of neoliberal infrastructure by restricting people’s interactions only to ways that benefit it. As defined by Ruth Gilmore, partition is a state mechanism “to control who can relate and under what terms” (quoted in Melamed 78). Partition operates in subtle ways to promote “discreteness, distinctness, and discontinuity...between the political and economic, the internal and the external, the valued and the devalued” (ibid 79). Viewed

in light of these two critical concepts, Tilo's actions directly challenge the state's blatant attempt to consolidate power and wealth through inequality and social separateness among people with similar socioeconomic and political challenges. For example, while the state and international media only focus on the "a tubby old Gandhian, former-soldier-turned-village-social-worker, who has announced fast to the death to realize his dream of a corruption-free India" at Jantar Mantar because he had managed to capture the nation's attention with his aggressive rhetoric against corruption, the same media completely ignore another Gandhian, a woman activist, who was on a fast-unto-death-strike against the Indian government's proposed plan to allocate poor farmer's agricultural land to a multinational corporation (101). Through Tilo's presence at Jantar Mantar grounds, Roy highlights precisely that. The narrator observes:

[i]t was the nineteenth indefinite hunger strike of her career. Even though she was a good-looking woman with a spectacular plait of long hair, she was far less popular with the TV cameras than the old man. The reason for this wasn't mysterious. The petrochemicals corporation owned most of the television channels and advertised hugely on the others. So angry commentators made guest appearances in TV studios denouncing her and insinuating that she was being funded by a 'foreign power. (106)

The government-corporate-nexus actively seeks to stifle the voice of the activist so as to make the poor farmers of West Bengal landless laborers, who would then become cheap labor for the capitalist company that replaced their farms. Roy's direct and unsparing criticism of the government's unethical support to the multinational companies in India, as expressed through Tilo, provides strong evidence in support of Roy's stand against racial capitalism and partition. In the Jantar-Mantar scene, for instance, Tilo identifies

protesters and movements who were agitating against injustices and atrocities committed by the state in the name of national interest, national security, and declares solidarity with the disempowered and vilified groups such as ‘Manipuri Nationalists,’ ‘Tibetan refugees,’ and ‘the Association for Mothers of the Disappeared,’ “whose sons had gone missing, in their thousands, in the war for freedom in Kashmir” (114). Interestingly, while political showmen like the old Gandhian and Gujarat ka Lalla – an allusion to the current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi – capture the imagination of millions, these fringe groups evoke their ire as anti-national and secessionist. Therefore, even though Roy’s opposition to partition-politics in the Gilmorian sense stresses more the political side of the resistance dynamics, it also seeks to challenge the divisionary tactics that both the political and the neoliberal capitalist systems deploy.

Cosmopolitanizing the Local through Empathetic Fiction

Given the nature of Roy’s writing, the need to cosmopolitanize narratives of local struggle informs both her fiction and nonfiction. A common characteristic between Roy’s fiction – *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* – and nonfiction – such as *Power Politics*, *The Cost of Living*, and *The Doctor and the Saint* – is a stark depiction of the suffering poor and the marginalized as victims of unjust social structures.¹⁶ If the author links the oppression of the Dalits in *The God of Small Things*

¹⁶ *Power Politics* (2001), in Roy’s own words, deals with “the privatization and corporatization of essential infrastructure like water and electricity” (10). While the main essay in the text, “Power Politics: The Reincarnation of Rumpelstiltskin,” comments on the Indian government’s decision to build a massive dam on the Narmada river in Gujarat and its insidious effects on both the local residents and the surrounding environment, *The Cost of Living* (1999) narrates the economic and social hardships of the people

with the love-laws more ancient than the arrival of Christianity in Kerala, she relates the ongoing persecution of the religious minority – such as Kashmiri Muslims – with the Indian mindset of discriminating against the minorities. To a large extent, Roy's nonfiction takes up the issues of injustice, exploitation, violence against marginalized groups – such as the tribal, the religious minorities, or the Naxalites – face on a daily basis in the twenty-first century India. The passionate advocacy evident in Roy's writing often brings opposing discourses in conversation with each other. For instance, *The God of Small Things* challenges the discourse of social cohesion through a discourse of subaltern revolt against social oppression; *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* confronts the discourse of sovereignty with the discourse of human rights. Similarly, antagonistic discourses also inform Roy's nonfiction, especially the texts mentioned earlier on. The important point to note here, however, is that Roy always approaches an issue from a local point of view; that is to say, she reflects on the national and global impact of a phenomenon in light of its manifestations at the regional level. Often that involves citing fictional or real examples of people whose lives have been drastically affected by socioeconomic and political forces beyond their control. Thus, it could be Velutha, the Dalit, in *The God of Small Things*, Musa or Anjum in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, or Surekha Bhotmange – a real-life Dalit victim of caste-based violence in India – in *The Doctor and the Saint*. Just as Roy connects the specific incidents concerning her fictional characters to major social or political issues of our times, she relates Surekha's despicable rape and murder to India's failure to sufficiently address caste-based discrimination and

displaced by the same project, The Sardar Sarovar Yojana. Her latest on fiction *The Doctor and the Saint* (2017) contains a powerful commentary on Dr. Ambedkar's *The Annihilation of Caste* in light of the recent incidents of atrocities on Dalits across India.

to publicize and make available the text, *Annihilation of Caste*, which contains the greatest Indian Dalit leader Bhimrao Babasaheb Ambedkar's revolutionary views on caste. While Roy's ability to relate local incidents to global issues of human rights and social ills raises awareness among readers, her strategy to portray the plight of those on the receiving end of human rights violations generates empathy among readers. Thus, by globally sharing the local stories of oppression and victimization through her fiction and nonfiction, Roy directly appeals to the empathetic power of human experience that encourage readers to feel the pain and suffering of the characters or real-life people.

Roy juxtaposes two sets of characters in her fiction to emphasize the need for cultivating cosmopolitan connections among global audiences and local communities. One group represents a compromised point of view that inhibits any recognition and acceptance of others as fellow human beings. Another includes the victims of socioeconomic and political oppression in a traditional Indian society. While the inhuman treatment meted out to the victims becomes glaringly clear to readers, its perpetrators remains shockingly impervious to it on account of their compromised social awareness. For instance, in *The God of Small Things*, characters such as Baby Kochamma, K. N. M. Pillai, and the Police Inspector Thomas Mathew remain shockingly indifferent to Velutha's suffering leading to his violent death. Not only they fail to grasp Velutha's pain, they act collectively to inflict it on him. Similarly, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the frenzied Hindu mobs in Gujarat and Delhi, the Indian Army general Amrik Singh, and the general public at Jantar Mantar ground exhibit no compassion towards the victims such as Anjum's travelling companion to Gujarat, Zakir Mian; Saddam's father; the Kashmiri freedom-fighter, Jalib Qadri; and the hundreds of

Kashmiri mothers whose sons were killed in police encounters. In fact, Roy portrays the first group of characters actively seeking to unleash violence on their victims. The main reason for their apathy, Roy seems to suggest, is the closed world-view they inhabit. Their localized, politicized, and distorted values render them incapable of rising above the prejudice that guides them. In contrast to these characters, Roy places global readers, who retain the capacity to recognize the pain and suffering of others owing to a cosmopolitan sensibility. The vastness and openness of global readers' worldview is the key here. In bringing her localized fiction to them, Roy hopes that the global readers' non-compromised and universal outlook would inspire them to react with an empathetic solidarity. It is in this respect that her fiction becomes cosmopolitan through both a writerly and a readerly act of reaching out. The local remains the focus and objective of Roy's fiction, but the global readers' empathetic response to it enriches it with an added cosmopolitan dimension.

As a narrative technique, Roy endeavors to evoke readers' empathy for her fictional and nonfictional characters by describing their suffering at length. Paying attention to details is Roy's strength as narrator; she uses it to great effect in order to draw readers' attention to the physical and psychological predicaments of her characters. As both her fiction and nonfiction indicate, Roy employs the technique of graphic description to allow readers to feel the horror of victimization felt by her characters. Thus, in *The God of Small Things*, it is the shockingly gruesome account of Velutha's injuries, after he was beaten up by six policemen on the bank of the river Meenachal near his house, that evokes horror and pity. As witnessed by the terrified Rahel and Estha, Velutha's "[s]kull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were

smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile” (*TGST* 294). The full description of Velutha’s injuries, as quoted earlier in the text, in fact, renders a graphic picture of him that simultaneously evokes terror and sympathy. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy employs a similar strategy of detailing the victim’s physical and psychological suffering to call readers’ immediate attention to it. For instance, Roy devotes considerable space to describing the tragic lynching of Saddam’s father in the text. In Chapter Two, Dayachand, better known by his chosen name of Saddam Hussein, relates the horror of witnessing his father’s murder in broad daylight by a frenzied Hindu crowd because he was found carrying the carcass of a dead cow in a Tempo. This is how Saddam describes his father’s and three other Dalit men’s murders in broad daylight in a village in Haryana, “only a couple of hours away by bus from Delhi” (86):

[t]hey began to beat them, at first with their fists, and with shoes. But then someone brought a crowbar, some else a carjack. I couldn’t see much, but when the first blows fell I heard their cries...I have never heard a sound like that...it was a strange, high sound, it wasn’t human. But then the howling of the crowd drowned them. I don’t need to tell you...Everybody watched. No body stopped them. (89)

Then the narrator adds:

[h]e described how once the mob had finished its business the cars switched their headlights on, all together, like an army convoy. How they splashed through puddles of his father’s blood as if it were rainwater, how the road looked like a street in the old city on the day of Bakr-Eid. (89)

The sheer blood-lust of the frenzied mob, the pitiable helplessness of Saddam, and brutality accompanying the lynching make it impossible for readers to forget the incident, in spite of the fast-paced narrative of this sprawling text. Perhaps the message Roy wishes to convey her readers through this episode is that when the identities of the poor and socially marginalized are effaced by unspeakable violence, the humanity of the perpetrators also rigidifies into indifference. That is, when a blood-thirsty mob stops seeing the victims of its violence as fellow human beings, the oppressors also lose their human sensitivity. Not surprisingly, Roy's epigrammatic phrase, inserted in the middle of the lynching scene, "it wasn't human," haunts readers for the horrifying violence and accompanying apathy it captures.

Roy does not hesitate to depict violence in her nonfiction if it is required to garner support for her activism from the international community. For instance, in her recent nonfiction *The Doctor and the Saint*, Roy narrates in chilling details the incident of the rape and murder of a Dalit woman, Surekha Bhotmange, who had incensed some members of a powerful community by filing a police complaint against them for driving "their bullock carts through her fields" and for letting "their cattle loose to feed on her standing crop" (Roy 2017: 3). According to Roy the incident took place on the day the accused were released on bail, almost immediately after they were arrested:

[a]t about six in the evening of the day they were released (29 September 2006), about seventy incensed villagers, men and women, arrived in tractors and surrounded the Bhotmanges' house. Her husband Bahiyalal, who was out in the fields, heard the noise and ran home. He hid behind a bush and watched the mob attack his family... The mob dragged Surekha, Priyanka and the two boys, one of them partially blind, out of the house. The boys were ordered to rape their mother and sister; when they refused, their genitals were mutilated, and eventually they were lynched. Surekha

and Priyanka were gang-raped and beaten to death. The four bodies were dumped in a nearby canal, where they were found the next day. (ibid)

The horrifying incident narrated by Roy here refers to the well-documented Khirlanji massacre in Maharashtra, India.¹⁷ Roy's re-telling of it indicates not only her anger and anguish at this tragedy but also her ability to capture the dark realities of the caste-based, Indian society in the twenty-first century India. Along with evoking readers' empathy through a powerful depiction of the character's suffering, Roy strives to raise awareness of the unjust structures in society by writing about them with an impassioned tone. Roy articulates her social concerns quite convincingly through her prose. Through her powerful nonfiction, Roy seeks support for social activism, and to succeed in appealing to the collective conscience of her readers, she establishes equivalences between the isolated incidents of social injustice recorded or depicted in her writing and the historical and grave injustices in the wider world. For instance, in *The God of Small Things*, she links Velutha's brutal murder to the age-old "Love Laws...that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much" (33). Tracing the origin of these love-laws to a time more ancient than much of the recorded history of Kerala, Roy transforms Velutha's death into a question of historic inequality the untouchables have faced in India, and the marginalized communities continue to face today across the world. Therefore, the short-lived love-affair between Velutha and Ammu and its tragic consequences for the former becomes a powerful case in point for Roy to draw her readers attention to the ongoing forms of historical ills. In the same way, she connects the barbarous murders of the

¹⁷ For a detailed report on the Khirlanji Massacre, see "Dalit Blood of Village Square," available at <http://www.frontline.in/social-issues/dalit-blood-on-village-square/article6808442.ece>.

Saddam Hussein's father and his three friends by a communal mob near Delhi to the traditional Hindu celebration of Dussehra, the day of Lord Ram's victory over Ravana, the king of Lanka, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. According to the text, historically Hindus have observed this day as the victory of the Good over Evil, but as Roy points out:

[a] few audacious scholars had begun to suggest that the Ramlila was really history turned into mythology, and that the evil demons were really dark-skinned Dravidians – indigenous rulers – and the Hind gods who vanquished them (and turned them into Untouchables and other oppressed castes who would spend their lives in service of the new rulers) were the Aryan invaders. They pointed to village rituals in which people worshiped deities, including Ravan, that in Hinduism were considered to be demons. In the new dispensation however, ordinary people did not need to be scholars to know, even if they could not openly say so, that in the rise and rise of the Parakeet Reich, regardless of what may or may not have been meant in the scriptures, in saffron parakeet-speak, the evil demons had come to mean not just indigenous people, but everybody who was not Hindu. (Roy 2017a: 86-87)

Going by the logic inherent in the above argument, then, Saddam's father and his friends were the representation of the evil for the frenzied mob on account of their status as Untouchables. Therefore, killing them was not only justified but also necessary; what is more, the mob was dispensing with the four Dalits in defense of their most sacred animal, the cow. Interestingly, Roy inserts the above-quoted insightful commentary on the mythological, historical, traditional, and contemporary connotations of Ramlila, or the celebration of Lord Ram's extermination of Ravana, in the middle of Saddam's first-person narration of his father's lynching by a blood-thirsty mob on Dussehra. That is how, Roy politicizes another isolated incident of Dalit atrocity in India by associating it

with the larger pattern of caste-based atrocities in contemporary Indian society, whose roots go back in ancient history and even mythology. She also warns the international community against ignoring such incidents as local disturbances of no universal relevance. In this regard, the most worrying point Roy makes through her interjected commentary on Ramlila is that in the twenty-first century India, the evil represented by Ravana, the demon king, has come to include not only the Dravidians and the Dalits but all non-Hindus, notably, the Muslims – a fact affirmed in the text by Anjum's fearful reaction to Saddam's narration of the Ramlila celebration in Delhi.

Recognizing that Roy employs similar strategies of evoking readers' empathy in her nonfiction is crucial to understanding her cosmopolitanism. With a view to inspiring her readers to an empathetic action in favor of the victims of systemic and political injustice in traditional societies, such as those in the third-world countries, Roy follows a two-step strategy in her nonfiction, which is easily discernible in her fiction as well. First, she introduces the characters and narrates their struggles or victimization at the hands of powerful individuals or lobbies that seek to oppress, exploit or alienate them in specific circumstances. Next, Roy demonstrates how these instances are manifestations of systemic and structural violence that cannot be tolerated in a cosmopolitan world as expressions of internal dissent. That is to say, Roy endeavors to argue for an international intervention in cases that clearly exemplify a violation of human rights, no matter how small or isolated they may be. Their very occurrence undermines any vision of a global community based on cosmopolitan values. To be cosmopolitan for Roy, then, necessarily demands a mediation on behalf of the socioculturally, economically, and politically marginalized in anywhere in the world. To illustrate this point, once again, Roy's analysis

of Surekha Bhotmange's rape and murder case deserves attention. Establishing a directly link between the Khirlanji massacre to India's failure to raise sufficient awareness among the masses about the inherent moral weakness of the caste system that encourages people to practice inequality and injustice in the name of social and religious conventions, Roy berates the Indian government for its failure to promote a healthy debate on Dr.

Ambedkar's views on the despicable caste-system, Roy argues that not publishing and distributing his *Annihilation of Caste* "helps...to keep the very shameful practice of caste, India's own form of social apartheid, off the international radar" (Roy 2017: viii). Her argument is clear: If caste-based segregation in the Indian society is treated with the same seriousness and disapproval at the international level, and especially in the West, as racism, there will be fewer Khirlanjis. Further, Roy observes that "[o]ther contemporary abominations like apartheid, racism, sexism, economic imperialism and religious fundamentalism have been politically and intellectually challenged at international forums" (ibid 6). A succinctly pointed rhetorical question, then, sums up Roy's bafflement at the international community's indifference to the ill of caste-based discrimination that has plagued the lives of millions in India, and continues to prevail in the twenty-first century: "How is that the practice of caste in India – one of the most brutal modes of hierarchical social organization that human society has known – has managed to escape similar scrutiny and censure?" (ibid). Further, to highlight the importance of turning local atrocities into global human-rights issues, Roy compares Surekha Bhotmange with the Pakistani teenage social activist and Noble Prize winner Yousafzai Malala. Roy argues that, being women of extraordinary courage and resilience, who refused to surrender to social oppression and resisted injustice single-handedly, both

Malala and Surekha had “committed several crimes” in the eyes of the traditional societies that sought to eliminate their voices (ibid). However, a big difference separates the two women of exceptional courage: while Malala received instant international fame, protection, and recognition, Surekha and her brutally murdered children did not even make the national headlines, let alone receive timely help to survive the deadly attack. For her part, Roy has given Surekha Bhotmange the recognition and empathy they deserve as victims of caste-based atrocities in India. Her nonfiction has accomplished it in a small measure.

The elements of social justice and advocacy contained in Roy’s fiction, in a way, contribute to compromising the literary quality of her writing as noticeable in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. While seeking to generate empathy in her readers by politicizing plot and characters, Roy has, however, generously intermingled facts with fiction in her second novel. For instance, the main storyline of the text is purely fictional, but many subplots contain episodes and individuals easily identifiable in contemporary Indian politics. Perhaps that is why the novel has failed to generate the same response as her debut novel, and critics have expressed disappointment at its literary quality. For example, citing the long list of sociopolitical issues raised in the novel – such as the Emergency in 1976, Indira’s assassination and the resultant Sikh massacre in 1984, Babri Masjid demolition in 1992, the World Trade Center attack, the Iraq invasion, the Godhara incident and Gujarat riots in 2002, Anna Hazare’s anti-corruption movement in 2011, Narendra Modi’s rise as the India’s Prime Minister in 2014, and the Dalit atrocity-related Una incident in 2016 – Sukumaran C. V. claims that merely putting together sociopolitical views and making the characters a conduit to express the author’s views

“won’t make a good novel.” C. V. concludes that *The Ministry* has “turned out to be something else that is neither creative nor fiction” because the author speaks through every character and “almost everything she has written in the ‘novel’ we have read in her essays!” (C. V. npg). Along the same lines, another reviewer Eileen Battersby discredits the novel as a poor imitation of Rushdie: “It becomes apparent that Roy is gamely striving for a Rushdie-like concoction while failing to replicate his trademark bombastic flourish” (Battersby npg). Claiming that “Roy’s polemical instinct is far more developed than her art,” Battersby offers a sobering appraisal of the novel: “Roy’s new book resonates with the confidence of a writer aware she can now get away with anything, and has, so the narrative slides between the two-dimensional characters and stark factual anecdotes” (ibid). While these reviewers’ views hold some merit, they seem to overlook the literary richness inherent in the text. They fail to notice, for example, the imagery of death within life and life within death so powerfully juxtaposed in the novel through the metaphors of the graveyard and Kashmir. Despite the rapidity of narration and abundance of characters and events, it is easy to notice how Roy turns the graveyard into a paradise even as Kashmir, known as India’s paradise on earth, slowly turns into a graveyard for the Kashmiri Muslims. It is also conspicuous that love and tenderness triumph over the shadows of death and destruction – as highlighted by Anjum, Saddam, and Tilo, each of whom find a new meaning and purpose in life through love. Having said that, Roy’s attempt to fictionalize all facets of her activism creates a truncated novel which demands a careful reading for appreciation.

In a way, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* captures the prevalent sociopolitical unrest in different parts of India through its formal complexity and chaos. It is fair to state

that notwithstanding its literary shortcomings, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* demonstrates Roy's cosmopolitan outlook that involves politicizing through fiction. In fact, to make the novel cosmopolitan Roy needed to compromise its literary cohesion; as a work of pure fiction, the text would have lacked its power to appeal global readers. Roy is aware of this tension, which, critics have claimed, contributes to the somewhat disorganized narrative in the text. In a recent interview, Roy acknowledged this criticism but responded saying, "I know a lot of people describe it as chaos, but that chaos is constructed" (*Daily Sabhah* n.p.). The novel's chaos reflects a big city like Delhi for Roy. In a broader sense, it mirrors the chaotic twenty-first century India where the traditional and the modern, religious and secular, nationalistic and liberationist ideologies clash with one another on a daily basis. Trying to capture the confusion arising out of this clash has resulted in the novel's loosely-constructed plot. Therefore, insofar as this strategic chaos empowers Roy to convince her readers of the urgent need to examine it more carefully and, perhaps, intervene to reduce it, the novel's compromised literary quality serves its purpose. In his recent intervention in literary cosmopolitanism, Berthold Schoene derides novels that showcase "great craftsmanship with regard to character and plot development," but regrettably "lack in imaginative scope and inquisitive rigour" – the two main characteristics of the cosmopolitan novel (Schoene 185). Considered in this context, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* passes the test as a cosmopolitan novel; for even though it lacks the literary intricacies of Roy's first novel, it certainly displays a remarkable level of imagination and inquiry. Therefore, what the text sacrifices in terms of craftsmanship, it recuperates through globalizing dissent. In other words, the novel privileges social context above its aesthetic dimension in order to convey the message

that the latter may not always translate into great literature, even when written by great literary artists. Roy's novel, then, is a valuable contribution to postcolonial cosmopolitan literature. To elaborate on this statement, Robert Spencer's understanding of postcolonial literature and cosmopolitanism might prove useful. In *Postcolonial Criticism and Postcolonial Literature*, Spencer describes postcolonial fiction as "works [that] dramatize imperialism's violence and divisions" and promote "cosmopolitan forms of relationship" that denounce imperialism (Spencer 3). Likewise, he defines cosmopolitanism in terms of "transnational solidarities aimed at transcending the divided and unequal present by creating and maintaining cosmopolitan institutions" (192). Insofar as *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* rejects violence and divisions perpetrated by systems of oppression and injustice, and imagines cosmopolitan communities, grounded in and sustained by solidarities – the Jannat Guest House community, for instance – the novel becomes a contemporary example of postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction. Perhaps the greatest characteristic that makes the novel truly cosmopolitan is its powerful appeal to readers to empathize with the characters in the story. Turning to Spencer again, it is worth noting that great postcolonial cosmopolitan fiction naturally inspires "readers to self-reflection and to the moral and ultimately political convictions associated with cosmopolitanism" (Spencer 4). Roy's novel certainly makes a conscious and concerted efforts at achieving these effects. To what extent it succeeds will depend on the extent to which the readers embrace the cosmopolitan ideals of equality, inclusion, and justice defended by it.

Conclusion

A subtle difference explains the divergent paths Roy and Rushdie have taken to develop their visions of cosmopolitanism. Considering that both Rushdie and Roy published their latest novels – *The Golden House*, and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* respectively - within a few months of each other in 2017, it is proper to examine this difference based on these texts.¹⁸ Situated in New York, Rushdie's novel revolves around the story of an Indian immigrant family, Nero and his three sons: Petronius alias Petya, Lucius Apuleis or Apu, and Dionysus, also known as D. Narrating the changing fortunes of Nero's family through a minor character called Rene Unterlinden, Rushdie essentially reflects on an immigrant Indian family's quest for identity in the twenty-first century United States of America. However, like Rushdie's other recent novels such as *Fury* and *Two-Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, his latest also novel enters the debate on the contemporary American society, caught in a struggle to uphold its cosmopolitan character in the face of a rising populism in the country. Thus, Rushdie places the Indian migrant in the cosmopolitan New York to offer two interrelated critiques: one, on the migrant's condition in a cosmopolitan society, and, two, on the cosmopolitan community's ever-evolving self-understanding in contemporary globalized world. Roy the writer-activist, on the other hand, has largely remained focused on India. However, her latest novel, too, evolves out of a concern to highlight the contemporary sociopolitical and economic realities in the world. Yet, unlike Rushdie, Roy takes the story to cosmopolitan readers because her subject is stories of the situated, localized Indians, not of the mobile, urban, and educated migrants. Therefore, the basic contrast between the two authors is this: Rushdie employs the migrant Indian to analyze a local

¹⁸ According to Wikipedia, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* was first published on 6 June 2017, whereas, *The Golden House*, on 5 September 2017.

context from a cosmopolitan perspective; whereas, Roy invites global readers to understand India's sociopolitical realities from a cosmopolitan perspective.

In the final analysis, Rushdie and Roy's current locations influence the cosmopolitanisms they promote. Since the turn of the millennium, Rushdie has re-located to New York; Roy, in the meanwhile, has continued to reside in India. From his position in one of world's most cosmopolitan cities, New York, Rushdie perceives India differently from Roy on account of both his geographical and emotional distance from the country. Roy, on the other hand, retains the benefit of a lived-experience of contemporary rural as well as urban India. Rushdie's location allows him to see India from a more cosmopolitan perspective than Roy's; whereas, Roy's day-to-day experiences in contemporary India equip her to portray the country more accurately than Rushdie, who still largely relies on magical realism and imagination to relate to India. For the same reason, in Rushdie's literary cosmopolitanism India figures from a migrant's perspective, which a perspective of distance and detachment. In Roy's cosmopolitanism, however, India represents the space that challenges cosmopolitans to expand their cultural, emotional, and ethical horizons to promote equality and justice for all on the basis of a shared humanity. Bishnupriya Ghosh puts it succinctly: "[f]or Roy, the world comes to roost at home" (Ghosh 2004:127). More importantly, it is from this home that Roy attempts to transcend the geographical, cultural, and political boundaries to expand her world to include those – victims of injustice, oppression, and discrimination – who have neither place nor voice in the globalized world. Through her activism and writing, she persistently urges others to expand theirs.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESOURCEFULNESS OF POSTCOLONIAL COSMOPOLITANISMS

In When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel, Bishnupriya Ghosh spells out the tension this dissertation has tried to understand: the postcolonial cosmopolitan writers’ “canny play to emergent global and local markets...and a cosmopolitical intervention into stable national-global cultural dialectics through privileging...local contexts” (Ghosh 2004: 8). As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, it is a balancing act, wherein cosmopolitan writers produce literature that attracts a global publishing industry, on the one hand, and endeavor to speak to global audiences on behalf of the Third World through that same literature, on the other hand. If celebrity status and visibility among cosmopolitan circles enable Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy to perform the latter with some ease, their financially motivated involvement with the literary marketplace challenges the authenticity of the postcolonial discourses they initiate. Nevertheless, these writers continue to write critiques of economic globalization and neoliberal capitalism from a Third-World perspective. They also censure aggressive nationalism, currently on the rise among many postcolonial nations. Historically, the turbulent nature of Independent India in the latter half of the twentieth century—i.e., the Emergency and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in the 1970s—persuaded Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy to address globalization and nationalism as interrelated issues facing the global South in the first place. They have fulfilled the task admirably well through forms of literary cosmopolitanisms as demonstrated in this dissertation. Moreover, the projects of envisioning specifically postcolonial cosmopolitanisms have also enabled these

authors to respond to some challenges laid out by prominent theorists Timothy Brennan, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said to writers and intellectuals in general. Since these challenges primarily concern literary cosmopolitanism, the following discussion is restricted to a brief appraisal of Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy's cosmopolitan fiction.

A Cosmopolitanism Worthy of the Name

Claiming that many parts of the world are still untouched by the processes of globalization, Timothy Brennan challenges writers and intellectuals "to build a cosmopolitanism worthy of the name" (Brennan 1997: 309). Brennan basis his demand for a more relevant cosmopolitanism for the contemporary world on two premises: one, there is no way to escape globalization, so we must transform it to suit our social needs; two, the existence of non-globalized parts of world in India, Africa, or Latin America necessitates envisioning a cosmopolitanism that accounts for them in global discourses. Brennan insists that a new cosmopolitanism should emphasize not "a global cultural outlook that respects autonomy and contestatory values" but a method that shows "*how to do it*" (ibid). The contribution of cultural theorists in the development of such a method will become vital, and the process of evolving a new cosmopolitanism will require "the symbolic meditations of intellectuals writing on mass culture, cultural studies, and literary cosmopolitanism," Brennan suggests (ibid). In this context, a caveat from Brennan concerns "preserving the sense of a system of competing nation-states" so as not to allow neoliberal capitalist forces to dominate the world unhindered (ibid). Because of the category 'literary cosmopolitanism,' I believe, the challenge extends to writers who

produce cosmopolitan fiction, and because Brennan's call urges a consideration of the nonglobalized parts of the world, such as those in the Third World, it applies to postcolonial writers also. Therefore, it is interesting to examine how Rushdie, the most iconic contemporary postcolonial cosmopolitan writer, has responded to this challenge of conceiving a cosmopolitanism worthy of its name.

Through his critical cosmopolitanism, Rushdie succeeds not only in addressing the two aspects demanded by Brennan – globalization and the non-globalized Third World – but also in constructing a theoretically powerful response to him. So far as globalization is concerned, Rushdie does not shy away from it; rather, he engages it vigorously. For instance, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) critique the effects of globalization on both India and the West. The economic, sociocultural, and psychological struggles Rushdie's cosmopolitan characters face in these texts affirm the author's awareness of globalization's grasp on modern society as well as the urgent need to explore ways to counter it. In line with Brennan's thinking, then, Rushdie's tendency to make the protagonists of these texts victorious against the forces of globalization can be interpreted as his attempt to subdue globalization to serve our social purposes. For instance, in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the last act of the Moor is to write a paean to the enduring power of love in a world darkened by material greed and violence. Similarly, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie portrays Vina Apsara as defying her objectification at the hands of the fashion industry by appearing in myriad ways in multiple locations to confound all who sought to reduce her to an exotic Other in the glamor industry. For the second aspect in Brennan's demand, Rushdie's texts such as *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), and *The Satanic Verses* (1988) provide

evidence. These texts mainly focus on postcolonial nations' challenge to maintain a healthy nationalism in the face of political authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism. Yet, these texts also highlight the non-globalized regions and cultures of the Third World where superstitions, magic, and rigid social conventions dominate social life. In a sign of further evolution of his cosmopolitanism, Rushdie has combined the two areas – globalization and the non-globalized democracies around the world – in his fiction since the turn of the millennium. In particular, *Fury* (2001) displays this trend. At one level, the text engages with some of the most economic and consumerist aspects of expressions of globalization in the world through a reflection on life in downtown New York; at another level, the novel represents a concern with the fierce political unrests still faced by several postcolonial nations in the twenty-first century. To a lesser extent, another New-York-based novel, *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, also captures humanity's struggle to save the world from destructive anti-cosmopolitan forces such as authoritarianism and material greed. Rushdie's cosmopolitanism, then, is not only new but also immensely relevant to both the West and the East. It offers literary interventions that recommend a combined effort to oppose globalization while maintaining a respect for the cultural diversities and political distinctiveness of the non-globalized parts of the world.

Lived Cosmopolitanism in the Twenty-First Century

Similar to Brennan's challenge, Gayatri Spivak urges cultural theorists and writers to think of cosmopolitanism in terms of a structure of world-governance capable

of challenging the homogenization and abstractions of globalization. In her essay, “Foreword: Cosmopolitanisms and the Cosmopolitical,” Spivak strongly recommends perceiving the idea of the cosmopolitical in terms of a world government and suggests using the concept to define “how you are going to think about the world” (Spivak 2012: 109). ‘Lived cosmopolitanisms’ must reckon with “[the] existence of a capital-intensive world governance system,” symbolized by world organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, and the World Economic Forum as well as insurance firms, pawn shops, and micro-loan organizations, Spivak insists (ibid). To find alternatives to “globalization that makes North and South fluid,” Spivak recommends taking into account “cosmopolitanisms ignored by official history” as well as “to look at...shorelines as the crossroads of the world” and to show that “our contemporary globalized world was not just produced by Europeans or simply through bilateral connections between imperial nation states and their colonial positions” (ibid 109-110). In other words, Spivak challenges cultural theorists to conceive a cosmopolitanism that reflects the sociopolitical and economic realities of the contemporary world from a postcolonial perspective.

To a great extent, Amitav Ghosh’s literary cosmopolitanism meets Spivak’s challenge of making a lived cosmopolitanism politically relevant to the twenty-first-century globalized society by transforming it into an alternative vision of the world. In his attempt to challenge Euro-centric versions of colonial history and to expose the contemporary Western cosmopolitanism’s historical connection with imperialism through a literary cosmopolitanism, Ghosh unmasks the contemporary manifestations of capitalist re-colonization of the global South by the global North. For instance, his reflection on the imperial roots of the current Free-Trade-based capitalist system, recorded in the *Ibis*

trilogy. This political dimension of Ghosh's cosmopolitanism echoes Spivak's call to develop historically grounded and politically relevant cosmopolitanisms. Admittedly, by celebrating a family-centered littoral cosmopolitanism, Ghosh valorizes the peripheral cosmopolitanisms that thrived on the 'shorelines' and the 'crossroads' in Asia in precolonial and colonial eras, but his purpose in promoting it is to supply a literary vision of a world community that addresses the economic and political challenges currently faced by the entire world. In a recent essay, Ghosh highlights the need for a lived-cosmopolitanism even as he stresses the necessity to dwell on the past for useful lessons for the present. In "Confessions of a Xenophile," Ghosh writes that the sole purpose of looking back on the past is to appreciate a universalism of "face-to-face encounters, of everyday experience." (Ghosh 2012: 41). However, he also acknowledges that "it would be idle to pretend that solutions could be found by looking backwards in time (ibid). More importantly, Ghosh suggests that any postcolonial conception of a contemporary universalism must include the West because "in matters of language, culture and civilization, their heritage, like ours, is fragmented and incomplete" (ibid). With this assertion, Ghosh seems to agree with Spivak that since globalization has blurred the boundaries between North and South, we ought to respond globally, not regionally. Ghosh's final comment in the same essay echoes Spivak's call to "train our imaginations to go into a different epistemological performance" to construct cosmopolitanism differently (Spivak 112). For his part, Ghosh recommends producing visions that "embody the work, the pain, the laughter, and the yearning that comes from this incompleteness [of the world]" so that they become "a true mirror of the world we live in" (Ghosh 2012: 41). As we have seen while examining Ghosh's fiction and his familial-

littoral cosmopolitanism, such a vision relies on the past but relates to the present and looks forward to the future on the strength of literary imagination. Ghosh's cosmopolitanism, like Spivak's recommendation, is then lived, situated, global, and politically viable.

The Postcolonial Intellectual and Representation

Similar to Brennan and Spivak, Edward Said challenges postcolonial cosmopolitan thinkers and writers, encouraging them not to shy away from representing the voiceless and the marginalized and from denouncing the powers that oppress them. In "From Silence to Sound and Back Again: Music, Literature, and History," Said reflects on the artists, writers, and cultural theorists' role in society that promotes a culture of life and expression against the forces of death and silence. In particular, Said highlights the postcolonial scholars' responsibility to become the voice of the voiceless. According to Said, the postcolonial intellectuals' writing should flow from their "affiliation with movements, revolutions, classes, and indeed whole peoples condemned to silence in the regimes of authority and power" (Said 2000: 523). It is only through speaking or writing on their behalf that the culture of silence they live in can be eradicated. Said further suggests that even if the task requires confronting and exposing oppressive authorities and structures, the postcolonial intellectuals and writers should fulfill it. Essentially, it is a choice between remaining silent and speaking out on others' behalf. Said writes:

[t]here are then alternatives either of silence, exile, cunning, withdrawal into self and solitude, or...that of the intellectual whose vocation it is to

speak the truth to power, to reject the official discourse or orthodoxy and authority, and to exist through irony and skepticism, mixed in with the languages of the media, government and dissent, trying to articulate the silent testimony of lived suffering and stifled experience. There is no sound, no articulation that is adequate to what injustice and power inflict on the poor, the disadvantaged and the disinherited. But there are approximations to it, not representations of it, which have the effect of punctuating discourse with disenchantment and demystifications. (526)

Clearly, Said considers representing the injustice and inequality suffered by the oppressed a paramount duty of postcolonial intellectual.

Not surprisingly, Arundhati Roy's fiction fulfills Said's expectations remarkably well. Through *The God of Small Things*, Roy made her international reader base aware of the social oppression and caste-based discrimination of the Dalits in India. Through *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she has once again reached out to Western readers with a story of unspeakable atrocities committed on the marginalized communities in modern India. In her latest novel, Roy also powerfully conveys the message that these atrocities are committed and justified in the name of caste, religion, gender, and nation. More specifically, Roy's second novel is an activist-writer's impassioned protest against the social, economic, religious, and political oppression of the transgender, Dalits, Kashmiri Muslims, and Naxalites, presented through strands of interwoven narratives. To capture the actual suffering of these victimized groups, Roy depicts horrifying bloodshed, lynching, torture, cold-blooded murders, and rape. Even then, what she portrays offers only a glimpse of the reality. Yet, the price Roy has had to pay for her courage to speak in representation of the victims is enormous: she has been jailed, indicted for contempt of the court, branded as antinational by the government, and continuously hounded by

nationalist goons. At the literary level, too, Roy has paid a price for writing representative fiction. She has faced scathing criticism of her latest novel for its underwhelming literary quality – viewed by many as a frantic overlapping of fiction and facts, politics and stories, narrative and polemics. It has disappointed Roy’s global admirers who expected a novel in the mold of *The God of Small Things* – replete with lyricism, linguistic experimentation, and veiled eroticism.¹ However, having consciously created her second novel as chaotic, political, and multi-layered to mirror the inequalities and injustices in contemporary Indian society, Roy does not regret it in the least. “I would find it very hard to live with myself in this country if I didn’t talk about what was going on,” she claims in a recent interview (*Daily Sabah* npg). Admittedly, Roy places her avocation to highlight the imperfections of the local to the global – in order to conscientize readers about the need to create a cosmopolitan world of justice and equality – over the fame and fortune of a celebrity writer. Through her fiction and nonfiction Roy, then, easily passes the challenge Said poses to all postcolonial intellectuals – that of becoming channels of representation for the voiceless – and, in so doing, proves the worth of her writing.

Looking Forward

¹ See, for instance, the following reviews of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*: Eileen Battersby, “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy review: All Too Obvious,” *The Irish Times* 3 June 2017. Npg. Available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness-by-arundhati-roy-review-all-too-obvious-1.3096344>, and Sukumaran C. V., “The Ministry of Utmost Happiness: A Novel That is Neither Creative Nor Fiction,” *Counter Currents* 18 June 2017. Npg. Available at <http://www.countercurrents.org/2017/06/18/the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness-a-novel-that-is-neither-creative-nor-fiction/>.

In light of the preceding discussion, it is appropriate to state that postcolonial literary cosmopolitanism is a promising field in postcolonial studies – one that offers new avenues for further research. Besides Rushdie, Ghosh, and Roy, other prominent and emerging postcolonial cosmopolitan writers such as Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, and Arvind Adiga present a wide-ranging array of postcolonial fiction for in-depth analyses. The novels of these authors can be examined through the lens of literary cosmopolitanism from feminist, ecological, and subaltern perspectives. Among these, studying cosmopolitanism in relation to feminism has found currency with postcolonial scholars such as Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty; they believe that charting cosmopolitical genealogies from feminist perspectives can undermine the authority of some key terms in Western cosmopolitan theories such as “universal,” “theoretical,” “abstract,” and “conceptual” (Breckenridge et al. 7). A feminist cosmopolitanism can decenter these “implicitly masculine” terms that contain “properties of mastery, distance from experience, indifference to specifics, and concern for absolutes in human life” (ibid). It is hoped that notwithstanding the fame and fortune of postcolonial cosmopolitan writers, literary scholars will continue to recognize the global relevance of postcolonial fiction as an indispensable critical voice in the twenty-first century.

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