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## An Examination of the Key Features of Salman Rushdie's Historiographic Metafiction: A Possible Worlds Theory Approach

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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE KEY FEATURES OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S  
HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION: A POSSIBLE WORLDS THEORY APPROACH**

by

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## ABSTRACT

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE KEY FEATURES OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION: A POSSIBLE WORLDS THEORY APPROACH

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Old Dominion University, 2018  
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This investigative study is informed by Ursula Kluwick's contention that Salman Rushdie's novels – *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* – written within the postcolonial context, need to be approached and conceptualized differently from the magical realist fiction produced by Latin American novelists such as Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, and Laura Esquivel due to the fact that the relations between the realistic and magical/supernatural codes in Rushdie's texts are not harmonious and are, for the most part, antithetical in ways that manifest and highlight the friction between the twin codes, which render them 'contingent' and 'provisional,' but beyond that destabilize the narrative text as fictional versus realistic. As Kluwick notes with respect to Rushdie's works, "Definitions of magic realism as a harmonious combination of supernatural and realist representational codes ignore the productive tension created by epistemological incompatibilities and clashes." (202)

What has set my study apart from Kluwick's approach, however, is my contention that Rushdie's texts evince other salient features such as 'spatialization' and 'metanarration' that are inextricably intertwined and work in tandem with the magical realist elements in his fiction by creating highly political and ostentatiously self-conscious possible histories which aim at critiquing the actual socio-political geography and politico-historical trajectory of the Indian subcontinent. As such, throughout this study I have argued that Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction need to be studied through a multipronged approach that not only

analyzes their magical-realist recreation of the politico-historical trajectory of India-Pakistan's postcolonial history through the lens of *Dolezel's four-dimensional system* of possible worlds theory, but also uses that theory to analyze their seminal 'spatialization' and 'metanarration' features, which distinguish his works from other magical realist authors and are instrumental to Rushdie's critical engagement with the politics of India-Pakistan. As such, I have endeavored to make the case that a multipronged approach, which analyzes the 'magical realism,' 'spatialization' and 'meta-narration' components in Rushdie's texts is warranted to critique the multidimensional possible worlds/histories that are narrativized, spatialized and foregrounded with the insertion of meta-narratorial comments and episodic interventions.

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For my family – James, Ealsen, Daniel, Jenny, and Teresa – whose love and support has  
sustained me throughout my tumultuous life,  
and for Aileen who shone in my life like a star.

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I am also grateful to my committee members – Delores B. Phillips, Kevin Moberly, and Brian McHale – for their input and support. Dr. McHale introduced me to the work of Amy Elias, whose ideas on spatialized narrative and parataxis proved instrumental to my analysis of spatialization in Salman Rushdie’s works of historiographic metafiction in chapter three.

In the end, I would like to thank the professors whose classes I was privileged to take, which made me a better critical thinker and thoughtful writer: in particular, Louise W. Phelps, Joyce Neff, and Kevin DePew. I am also indebted to all the students in the English Ph.D. program for their contributions and interactions that have enriched my overall experience at Old Dominion University beyond measure.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
Chapter		
1.	1.1. OBJECTIVES .....	12
	1.1. METHODOLOGY .....	12
	1.3. CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS.....	21
2.	MAGICAL REALISM IN RUSHDIE’S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION	
	2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	24
	2.2. OBJECTIVES.....	36
	2.3. MAGICAL REALISM IN <i>MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN</i> .....	37
	2.4. MAGICAL REALISM IN <i>SHAME</i> .....	64
	2.5. CONCLUSION.....	79
3.	SPACE AND PARATXIS IN RUSHDIE’S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION	
	3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	83
	3.2. OBJECTIVES.....	86
	3.3. THEORIES OF SPATIALIZATION.....	88
	3.4. PARATAXIS, HETEROGLOSSIA, AND SIMULTANEITY.....	93
	3.5. SPATIALIZATION IN <i>MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN</i> .....	101
	3.6. SPATIALIZATION IN <i>SHAME</i> .....	128
	3.7. CONCLUSION.....	149
4.	METANARRATION IN RUSHDIE’S HISTORIOGRAPHI METAFICTION	
	4.1. INTRODUCTION.....	153
	4.2. OBJECTIVES.....	159
	4.3. THEORIES OF METANARRATION.....	161
	4.4. METNARRATION IN <i>SHAME</i> .....	165
	4.5. METANARRATION IN <i>MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN</i> .....	197
	4.6. CONCLUSION.....	217
5.	CONCLUSION.....	221
	WORKS CITED .....	231
	VITA.....	236



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The term “historiographic metafiction” was introduced and defined by Linda Hutcheon as “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages.” (5) In fact, texts of historiographic metafiction such as those of Salman Rushdie and Garcia Marquez written in the context of postcolonial history and politics, are essentially postmodernist novels that engage with socio-historical material while relying on textual play/intertextuality, parody and irony, as well as self-conscious historical (re-)narrativization. As Umberto Eco observes, “The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently.” (67)

Considering the fact that texts of historiographic metafiction offer (re)constructions of historical events and periods via alternative, possible, and counterfactual worlds that depart from the logic of daily life and documented historiography to various degrees by operating under different types of logic, *possible worlds theory* provides the most apt theoretical framework to account for the manner in which these metafictional works portray socio-historical events, characters, and periods in order to defamiliarize, subvert, and critique the actual politics of the postcolonial nation-states (i.e. what Fraser, Elias, and others call “the politics of internal dissent,” one of the six stages of colonialism and its aftermath and one that historiographic metafiction especially tends to represent). In fact, possible world theorists such as Lubomir Dolezel, Thomas Pavel, Umberto Eco, and Marie-Laure Ryan have articulated the necessity of conceiving of the

narrative text “as a set of instructions according to which the fictional world is to be recovered and reassembled.” (Palmer 179)

‘Possible World Theory’ has its roots in semantics and philosophy of language, particularly the modal constructions that afford possibilities that have not been materialized or actualized yet. Its origins go back to the philosophers of the analytic school (Kripke, Hintikka, Plantinga, and Rescher) as a means to solve problems in formal semantics related to “the truth conditions of counterfactual statements...and of sentences modified by modal operators expressing necessity and possibility (hence the close relation between possible worlds theory and modal logic).” (Ryan 1) As Herman and Vervaeck note, “the theory of possible worlds starts from the simple insight that certain historical situations could have developed differently or, to put it plainly, that the world could have been different.” (150) In the 1970’s, possible worlds theory was retrofitted and “adapted to the fictional worlds of narrative by the philosopher David Lewis, as well as by a number of literary theorists, including Eco, Pavel, Dolezel, and Ryan.” (Ryan 1) As Ryan cogently argues, the possible worlds theory is based upon the assumption “that reality – conceived as the sum of the imaginable rather than as the sum of what exists physically – is a universe composed of a plurality of distinct worlds.” (Ryan 1)

Given the fact that works of historiographic metafiction are complex in their portrayal of multiple worlds in the narrative text at various levels of distance from the actual/empiricist world, in my estimation, possible worlds theory provides the apt framework for the analytical discussion of the fictional micro-universes within the storyworld. *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, which focus on the postcolonial nation-states of India and Pakistan, narrativize their ‘politics of internal dissent, and combine actual/documented historical events and figures with possibilities, counterfactuals, and distortions, are particularly amenable to the analysis afforded

by Dolezel's four-dimensional model that allows for the analysis of these alternative possible worlds in terms of the four dimensions of *alethic*, *deontic*, *epistemic*, and *axiological*.

Dolezel has met the postmodernist challenging of historiography, which denies history's claim to any historical and factual claims to truth outside the text. Dolezel contends that the postmodernist approach is erroneous by focusing on formalistic aspects of narratology (i.e. its use of 'metaphor' and 'rhetoric'), which exist in both fictional and historical accounts to varying degrees, thereby leading to conflation and fuzziness of the two. Dolezel's contribution lies in his attempt to treat historiography and fiction as interdependent with fuzzy and permeable borders. He reasserts the foundational difference between fiction and historiography "to shift the argument from the formal level (narrative and poetic devices) to the semantic and pragmatic levels, that is, from narrative and poetic devices to possible worlds and illocutionary characteristics." (Dolezel 269) Dolezel posits that historical writing (historiography) "has to be truth-functional in order to construct possible worlds that serve as *models* of the past." (Dolezel 262) This historical truth is by and large established by consensus among historians and academicians in the field. Dolezel makes the following distinction: "While fictional poesis constructs a possible world that did not exist prior to the act of writing, historical noesis uses writing to construct models of the past that exists (existed) prior to the act of writing." (Dolezel 262) This latter distinction is critical since it clarifies the distinction between historiography, which is constative and has truth value based on what has transpired historically (based on documents/evidence and scholarly consensus), and fictional writing, which is performative, and in the case of historical fiction is based on past historical events.

In the context of Rushdie's depictions of postcolonial nation-states and their politics of internal dissent, adopting Dolezel's four-dimensional system affords an evaluation of texts of his

historiographic metafiction as subversive (re)constructions that hover between history and fiction. Thus, *possible worlds theory* proves instrumental in explicating and evaluating the diegetic depiction of some of the key themes and elements of Rushdie's texts such as "the instability and indeterminacy of social identity, the volatility and perspectivism of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history, the ineluctable subjectivism of memory and experience, the violence implicit in the universalist discourse of the nation, the corresponding need to center analysis on the notions of migrancy, hybridity, 'in-betweenness', 'translation, and blasphemy (as antihegemonic forms of transgression)" via constructions of alternative worlds that are constituted at various distances from the actual historical world/documentated historiography and the narrative mode of realism (Lazarus 22).

This project investigates Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* as prominent texts of historiographic metafiction, written from a postcolonial liminal/interstitial perspective, by applying key terms and concepts from *possible worlds theory*, particularly Dolezel's four-dimensional system, in an attempt to analyze their defining features – 'magical realism,' 'spatialization,' and 'metanarration' – as subversive renditions of politico-historical events that question official historiography and promulgated truth. It aims to explicate how Rushdie's texts – as narratological (re)constructions of postcolonial historiography – critique and deconstruct the actual politics of the postcolonial nation-states via construction of possible worlds and alternative spaces. Rushdie's texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction selected for this analysis are concretizations of the second-generation hybrid model of postcolonial cultural theory, which "identifies the hybrid character of the national state ... [within which] the importance of the margin to the center, of the colonized to the colonizer's own world or identity construction ... is underscored" (Elias 200).

As noted above, I have focused on *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* as texts that centrally fictionalize and narrativize the modern history of India and Pakistan in the aftermath of their independence from Great Britain. While this is a limitation, it has allowed for a tighter grip on those Rushdie novels that focus on postcolonial nation-states in the “politics of internal dissent” phase (as one of the six stages of colonialism described by Frazer) as opposed to other postcolonial stages and rendered the generalizations and comments I have made more accurate though at the expense of limiting them to two novels. Rushdie’s other novels that deal with other issues such as the plight of immigrants in the United Kingdom in *The Satanic Verses* or international terrorism in *Shalimar the Clown* or the author’s reading of US politics in the aftermath of the real-estate mogul become President Donald Trump in *The Golden House* have been excluded from this study. But what this limitation suggests is that possible worlds theory is especially germane to Rushdie’s novels of ‘internal dissent’ as a specific postcolonial situation or juncture.

*Midnight's Children* traces the trajectory of India’s modern history from the cusp of independence in August 1947 as a predominantly Hindu nation (though with a significant Muslim minority as well as other religious and ethnic groups) and its division from Pakistan as a predominantly Muslim nation. It reflects the nation’s euphoric optimism at the birth of modern India as an independent country coupled with the establishment of democratic institutions such as the Constitution guaranteeing civil rights and liberties, the Congress, parliamentary elections, freedom of religion with all religious groups having equal rights, equality before the law, division of powers between the central government and the states, and the reorganization of states, all under the leadership of Prime Minister Nehru. But the novel also includes periods of turmoil such as the language marchers and efforts to divide states along linguistic and religious

fault lines. However, the direction of the nation's trajectory underwent a seismic change with Indira Gandhi's ascension to power as Prime Minister of India and especially the emergency period, a twenty-one-month period during which the government of Indira Gandhi was given near absolute power over the populace during which democratic safeguards and civil liberties were significantly curtailed. It is also during this period (1975 - 1977) that forced sterilizations were carried out to limit the growth of India's ever-increasing population. As BBC correspondent to Delhi Soutik Biswas notes, "Sanjay Gandhi, son of ...Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, began what was described by many as a 'gruesome campaign' to sterilize poor men." (1) To sum up, *Midnight's Children* fictionalizes the early history of post-independence India as a period of internal dissent and of tension between the forces of democratization (represented by democratic institutions and safeguards) and the forces of authoritarianism and repression as well as the ensuing friction and clashes between the forces of centralization/central authority and the forces of division and dissent that challenge the authority of the central government and pull it to different directions due to linguistic, ethnic, religious, and indigenous differences in the variegated nation.

In *Shame*, Rushdie narrativizes the modern history of the neighboring Pakistan but especially focuses on the reigns of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia ul-Haq. Bhutto came to power after General Yahya Khan held elections in which Bhutto won but refused to form a government with the Awami League, an East Pakistan-based party that had campaigned for Eastern Pakistan's autonomy. The turmoil and the war that ensued between West Pakistan and East Pakistan that was supported by India led to the creation of the new country of Bangladesh. During the elections in March 1977, Bhutto won but was charged with electoral fraud by the opposition. "On July 5, 1977, after about 350 people had been killed in riots over

the four months and negotiations between the Government and the Alliance had become hopelessly deadlocked, General Zia staged the coup and imposed martial law...” (Hevesi 1) The accusation provided General Zia ul-Haq with the pretext to seize the government. Bhutto was subsequently tried and found guilty of ordering the assassination of a political opponent and was executed despite international cries for clemency by world leaders in 1979. General Zia ul-Haq ruled Pakistan heavy-handedly until his death in a suspicious plane crash in 1988.

Considering the fact that the two novels narrativize the early postcolonial history of India and Pakistan in a spatialized, asynchronous manner, I have adopted Amy Elias’ approach in which historiographic metafiction “seems to offer an alternative way of looking at history that potentially avoids (or at least, defers) a model of ‘linear history’ while it defers objectification of the other and deconstructs the relation between center and margin.” (Elias 200-201) Within this model, the notion of border (in the wake of mass immigrations, multinational corporations, socio-cultural hybridization, global telecommunications...) has been replaced with that of *difference*, which “is unremittingly different and ceaselessly differed from the present.” (201) In this context, “History is the marginalized center, the place where we think we set out from, but really the place that is never reached, that is always before us and always deferred in the operation at the hermeneutical border.” (201) Historiographic metafiction suggests that history can only be (re)constructed as perspectivized narrative that is essentially and irrevocably self-conscious of its own constructivism and perspectivism as contingent and is riddled with irony. There is an inherent paradox at the heart of historiographic metafiction: these texts engage with actual documented history by citing historical events and figures while simultaneously undermining and questioning them through irony and juxtaposition of actual historical events and personages alongside fantastic and mythical elements while according these metafictional

inventions the same ontological status as the actual elements, which destabilizes the whole historiographic project and renders it provisional and contingent.

Postmodernism's concerns with historiography and ontology have significantly impacted historiographic metafiction written in the postcolonial context and become some of its major concerns. Fredric Jameson, in his *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, contends that postmodernism is the "attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (3). In Rushdie's postcolonial historiographic metafiction, there are often historical references with the paradoxical purpose "not only to situate their texts in a particular context, but also to bring into question already existing historical assumptions" and contexts (Bowers 76-77). Notwithstanding the incorporation of historical references into postmodernist works, postmodernism paradoxically "emphasizes the lack of absolute historical truth and casts doubt over the existence of fact by indicating its link with narrative and stories." (77) Similarly, Rushdie's historiographic metafiction's engagement with historiography and postcolonial politics is conflated and intertwined with a critical concern with ontological issues by questioning historiography and its ability to arrive at historical knowledge and truth at the foundational level. As such, historiographic metafiction offers the opportunity, according to Jameson's characterization of postmodernism, "to think historically in an age when authoritative history is forgotten or mistrusted." (Bowers 80)

As in postmodernist fiction, Rushdie's postcolonial historiographic metafiction deals with ontological issues and employs a variety of strategies to foreground them. In fact, in postmodernism – of which historiographic metafiction is a subgenre – "it is the ontological dominant which explains the selection and clustering of the particular features; the ontological dominant is the principle of systematicity underlying these otherwise heterogeneous catalogues."



(McHale 10) The dominant in postmodernist fiction may well be ontological, but crucially, in historiographic metafiction, it is geared toward questioning history and its ability to arrive at historical knowledge. Nevertheless, the concern with ontology in historiographic metafiction has a political thrust and is aimed at questioning, contesting and undermining official versions of truth and historiography either by altering them through the construction of alternative, possible worlds and spaces or by juxtaposing them with their fictional, fantastic counterparts and affording them similar ontological status, which in effect undermines their claims to truth and authenticity and renders them contingent and provisional.

Moreover, as Hutcheon observes, in order to capture the specificity of historiographic metafiction as a subgenre of postmodernism, we need *tools* to describe the epistemological aspects of its “equally self-conscious dimension of history.” (Hutcheon 3) Rushdie’s texts of historiographic metafiction discussed and analyzed in this critical study are situated within the postcolonial context; thus, they engage with socio-historical issues from a postcolonial perspective by altering documented historical accounts/events and offering alternative storyworlds that diverge from documented historiography in ways that question and critique colonial policies and practices of the newly independent nations and of the postcolonial (or neocolonial) governments that act more in their own self-interest to maintain their grip on power than the interests of the people they purport to govern.

As Elias posits, “the past as past maybe sublime History, unspeakable or outside representation, but it also presents *difference*, its identity or essence both unremittingly different and ceaselessly deferred from the present.” (60) In other words, the historical past can never be completely accessible and comprehensible to us at the present because the socio-historical, cultural, political and material conditions on the ground have changed significantly since their

actual occurrence. Most notably, Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* reformulates Althusser's description of history "as an absent cause" and articulates that 'history' is available to us only via prior narrativization and textualization, which is fundamental to postmodern historiographic conceptualizations and renditions of history:

We would therefore propose the following revised formulation: that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious (35).

As such, authors of historiographic metafiction textualize and narrativize historical accounts by constructing alternative possible worlds, which are foregrounded as contingent and provisional in order to concretize their perspectivized readings of the postcolonial history of the nation-states under consideration.

Given that the historical past is elusive and the establishment of historical truth is problematic and uncertain, the construction of 'possible worlds' offers Rushdie viable alternative for engaging with the historical past in ways that liberate history from the confines of official, hegemonic historiography and spheres of colonial influence, which he suggests typically adopt a realistic approach to historiography and offer their authoritative version of socio-historical events while ignoring and silencing the colonized, the oppressed, and the marginalized as well as concealing their own narrativization and emplotment strategies. Rushdie's own comment is revealing in this regard:

History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as our perceptiveness and knowledge. The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration [in *Midnight's Children*] might be, I believed, a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to 'read' the world (*Imaginary Homelands* 25).

Historiographic metafiction straddles both history and fiction by creating fictional worlds, which engage with real historical issues and events from a particular postcolonial vantage point.

According to Hutcheon, “postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological” (209). Thus, Rushdie deliberately alters certain recorded historical facts “in order to foreground the impossible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error.” (Hutcheon 294) Through these distortions, Rushdie’s historiographic metafictional texts underline the provisionality and unknowability of history, which transcends epistemology and becomes ontological in the postcolonial context while engaging with the history that it questions and renders as flawed or unreliable to begin with.

Considering the complex intermingling of history and fiction in historiographic metafiction, there is an acute, palpable need for approaching the historiographic texts from a *possible worlds theory* perspective. However, this focus on possible worlds does not forestall the use of concepts from classical (and cognitive) narratology when the use of those terms enhances critical understanding of the texts under consideration. The use of structural/classical narratology is due to the fact that it provides some useful terms/concepts such as *focalization*<sup>1</sup>, *extra/intradiegetic narrator*<sup>2</sup>, *prolepsis*<sup>3</sup> (which appears frequently in some of these texts such as Rushdie’s *Shame* and *Midnight’s Children*), and *analepsis*<sup>4</sup> that have become not only useful, but in some respects indispensable to the analysis of fiction and allow for a richer, more nuanced,

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<sup>1</sup> Focalization, a term coined by Genette ([1972] 1980), may be defined as a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld.” (Niederhoff 2011)

<sup>2</sup> According to Genette, “narrative levels...are extradiegetic (narrative act external to any diegesis), intradiegetic or diegetic (events presented in the primary narrative) ... (Coste and Pier 1)

<sup>3</sup> “designating as *prolepsis* any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later,” (Genette 40).

<sup>4</sup> “designating as *analepsis* any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment,” (Genette 40).

and multifaceted analysis of metafictional texts such as those authored by Salman Rushdie in terms of how the constructed possible worlds express a postcolonial politics and sensibility.

### 1.1. OBJECTIVES

In brief, this study aims at addressing the following questions:

1. How can Dolezel's four-dimensional system, as his *possible worlds theory* approach, be utilized to evaluate and account for the specific ways Rushdie's texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction intermingle historical events and characters with alternative, possible events and fantastic elements in order to question, deconstruct, and critique postcolonial politics and practices?
2. How are seminal postmodern themes such as "the volatility and perspectivism of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history...the violence implicit in the universalist discourse of the nation..." concretized and represented in the possible, constructed worlds of Salman Rushdie's postcolonial historiographic metafiction? (Lazarus 22)
3. How can classical narratology, in conjunction with possible worlds theory, help to define and specify the ways Rushdie's historiographic metafiction uses narrative form to make the mentioned postcolonial critiques of the nation-states and censure their politico-historical trajectory?

### 1.2. METHODOLOGY

Within possible worlds theory, David Lewis is one of the most influential theorists of the ways that fiction should not be simplistically treated as counterfactual simply because of the make-believe element associated with it (what Coleridge called the "willing suspension of disbelief"). Lewis regards fiction as stories "told as true" but this fictional world is a separate world from what we regard as actual and operates as a (semi)autonomous system in its own right

and operating with its own set of internal rules and norms. In this respect, fictional stories are different from counterfactual accounts:

They [fictional stories] are told from the point of view of an APW [actual possible world] which readers regard as the actual world in make-believe, while counterfactuals describe an APW ... from the point of view of AW [actual world], acknowledging the alternative status through markers of irreality such as if...then operators, or the conditional mode (Ryan 2).

First, Lewis' approach treats the fictional world "as capable of truth and falsity," since the fictional world has its own internal system of norms and criteria according to which events and actions are to be assessed in terms of whether or not they conform to the internal criteria/norms. Second, "it assumes that the real world serves as a model for the mental construction of fictional storyworlds;" (Ryan 3) Nonetheless, the storyworld is not conceived as a mere imitation of reality/actual world of verities; rather, readers approaching fiction "imagine fictional worlds as the closest possible to AW [actual world], and they only make changes that are mandated by the text." (Ryan 3) Marie Laure-Ryan has called this interpretive rule "the principle of minimal departure," which Walton calls "the reality principle." The principle is concerned with the various ways that fictional worlds are related to the actual world outside the text. Ryan conceptualizes these relations via a typology of accessibility relations that establishes the extent to which fictional worlds are similar to or different from the actual world in which we live. The fictional world that most resembles the actual world is founded on the principle of minimal departure – first introduced by John Searle. It pertains to the fundamental property of an imaginary world that is minimally different from the familiar world in which we live. This appears to be the default position readers take vis-à-vis fictional texts. In other words, readers typically approach a fictional text with the assumption that it would operate on a logic similar to that of daily life and the actual world (or the germane historical period under consideration) unless informed explicitly by the text otherwise (i.e. the text's instructions can overrule this

principle that there is a different set of operating rules at play in the storyworld), which is often the case in historiographic metafiction. As Herman and Vervaeck put it, “fictionality is then conceived as the result of the interplay between the system constructed by a literary text and the system available to authors and readers in the form of knowledge of the existing world.” (151) When readers construct fictional worlds, they fill in the gaps ... in the text by assuming the similarity of the fictional world to their own experiential reality.” (Ryan 2).

The crucial distinction between the actual world and ‘truly’ possible worlds depicted in historiographic metafiction and other postmodernist texts “lies in the so-called accessibility relation” by which alternative, possible worlds “have access to the existing worlds: they could at one point become real.” (Herman and Vervaeck 151) As Herman and Vervaeck note, despite their differences on how accessibility to the real/actual world is determined and made possible, possible worlds theoreticians typically utilize “the laws of logic and time ... as criteria to decide whether the literary world can gain access to the real world or not.” (151) One such crucial logical law is “the logical law of the excluded middle” – a subtype of the principle of non-contradiction – that in its ontological version suggests “It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect” (with the appropriate qualifications) which Aristotle stipulated as one of the necessary conditions for thought (*Metaphysics* IV 3 1005b19–20). As a case in point, in Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Jose Arcadio Buendia kills a man who keeps returning to his house after death! As such, the logical law of the excluded middle is violated in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* since the dead man is known to be dead and yet keeps visiting the Buendia household; thus, the dead man appears to have a middle status of being dead and undead simultaneously which is counter to the logic of our actual world by violating the law of the excluded middle.

Events such as this contribute to the establishment of the magical environment in Garcia Marquez's monumental novel. Similarly, Saleem Sinai's encyclopedic knowledge and acute telepathic awareness of and connectivity to the midnight's children and the nation of India defy the logic and expectations of our actual world and establishes "the magical" in *Midnight's Children*.

The shift from the actual, real world to another possible world is often triggered by verbal cues, subsumed under the *deictic shift theory*, which accounts for the transitions between the juxtaposed historical layers and possible worlds. *Deictic shift theory* is, indeed, needed to account for the sudden shifts from one possible world into another or for redefinitions of the laws of the current possible world since there is frequently a multiplicity of possible, satellite worlds at various levels of possibility and probability from documented historical narratives.

The term 'deixis' (which comes from a Greek word, meaning "pointing" or "indicating") is now used in linguistics to refer to the function of personal and demonstrative pronouns, of tense and of a variety of other grammatical and lexical features, which relate utterances to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the act of utterance. (Lyons 636)

Notwithstanding Lyons' explication of deixis, the deictic center (DC) of a narrative does not come from "the spatio-temporal coordinates of the author at the time of writing, nor of the reader at the time of reading. Instead, there is a *narrative DC* consisting of a narrative WHO, and a narrative WHERE, which the reader must keep track of... (Rapaport et al. 2). As Zubin and Hewitt cogently argue, "storytelling involves a shift of deictic centers, whereby narrators prompt their interlocutors to relocate from the HERE and NOW of the act of narration to other space-time coordinates – namely, those defining the perspective from which the events of the story are recounted." (Herman 271) In Ryan's words, by means of the linguistic cues, readers "are prompted to make a deictic shift to an alternative possible world (Herman 271). This means that by employing linguistic devices and verbal cues "expressing information about the participant

structure, object structure, and temporal structure of the narrative events, the narrative opens a conceptual window through which the storyworld can be glimpsed” and entered as a possible but internally consistent or ‘truly’ possible world (Zubin and Hewitt 131).

Umberto Eco characterizes the narrative text as a “machine for producing PWs [possible worlds]” (246). Lubomir Dolezel alludes to postmodernist theorists’ critique of history as in part fictional and refers to the challenge that postmodernist theorists such as Roland Barthes have posed by questioning the capacity of language and other symbolic systems of signification to refer to anything outside themselves. As such, he argues, “the only kind of worlds that human language is capable of creating or producing is *possible worlds*.” (Dolezel 253) Dolezel describes possible worlds as cognitive constructions that “are constructed by the creative activities of human minds and hands.” (254) In fact, the *possible worlds theory* not only allows for more permeability and interaction between the worlds of history and fiction, but it also affords possible and counterfactual possibilities. Dolezel contends, “neither fictional nor historical worlds are inhabited by real, actual people, but by their possible counterparts.” (257) This distinction is, for example, useful in analyzing the differences between Pakistan and Peccavistan in *Shame*. As noted, the possible worlds created in historiographic metafiction not only depart from the logic of daily life and realism to various degrees, but they do so to advance the text’s/author’s politico-historical critique of postcolonial politics that need evaluation on multiple fronts.

Dolezel has developed a four-dimensional system, which by specifying the axes/dimensions on which difference and accessibility of possible worlds can be gauged, provides a theoretical framework for the “historical layers [that] emerge in these novels, levels comprising elements of myth, legend, historical fact, and fiction that layer into one historically



and ahistorically true moment in time,” which Joseph Frank has called “mythic simultaneity” (Elias 117-118). Dolezel’s four-dimensional system proves instrumental to the explication, analysis, and evaluation of these constructed, alternative worlds. In his model, four different modalities operate to define the internal logic of all possible worlds: alethic, deontic, axiological, and epistemic. Each modality affords three kinds of narrative laws.

The *alethic* modality encompasses the world of possibilities in historiographic metafiction in non-realistic ways. Alethic modality is concerned with “everything that is necessary, possible, or impossible according to the laws of nature and logic. Necessity, possibility, and impossibility constitute the decisive criteria for alethic modality.” (Herman and Vervaeck 152) In postmodernist fiction, the laws of logic such as “non-contradiction” and “the excluded middle” are challenged by setting new operational norms that are consistent in terms of the inner logic of the narrative at hand (Ryan 1).

As Herman and Vervaeck note, “causality and spatio-temporal specificity” are prime examples of this modality. There are certain events that are either physically impossible or highly unlikely in the actual world; however, they make sense within the fictional, make-believe context of a novel. For example, in *Shame* Naveed Hydar’s (Good News) innumerable pregnancies defy our sense of what is possible in realistic terms; however, they parody Pakistan’s booming population. Also, Bilquis’ eyebrows, after she loses them in the conflagration that burns her father’s movie theater, never grow back even though it violates the laws of physics, but it still fits into the logic of Rushdie’s narrative. Similarly, in *Midnight’s Children* Saleem Sinai’s telepathic omniscience that connects him not only to the one thousand and one midnight’s children but the entire nation of India. Moreover, his physical (though symbolic) disintegration defies realism and the logical rules of causality of the actual world as

we experience it. Sanjay Gandhi's ability to replicate himself is another instance in which Rushdie exploits alethic possibilities (the fantastic or the magical) in order to portray and critique the oppressive environment in India during the emergency rule of Indira Gandhi. Such events border on the impossible, but are conceivable from a *possible worlds* standpoint since they constitute a coherent alethic system for a narrative world with its own internal norms in which the unlikely becomes the new norm within the storyworld.

The second modality, dubbed *deontic*, is concerned with norms and deals with "prohibition, obligation, and permission" within the fictional world; thus, coping primarily "with norms." For instance, within the fictional/possible world, "certain things are prohibited, others are obligatory and yet others are permitted." (Herman and Vervaeck 153) In Dolezel's account, "the deontic marking of actions is the richest source of narrativity." (qtd. in Herman and Vervaeck 153) Often the site of the conflict is the struggle that takes place between personal aspirations and ambitions of the protagonist (or another character) and the norms in the possible world of the narrative. In Rushdie's political novels that are set in the postcolonial nations of India and Pakistan, the deontic mode is key since it sets the stage for what is permitted or prohibited or obligatory in the storyworld in socio-political terms. In *Shame*, for instance, the military is portrayed as the ubiquitous and powerful arbiter of norms and standards, particularly with respect to what is permissible or prohibited. Thus, Iskander Harappa's slashing of the military's budget and his subsequent confrontation of General Raza Hydar is perceived by General Raza Hydar as a transgressive act since it violates the established norm for the military's budget size and establishes a new norm set by Mr. Harappa as President (deontic). The key change that takes place in texts of historiographic metafiction has to do with the shift in the deontic mode; for instance, the change with respect to what is permitted and what is not (e.g.

procreation, marches and demonstrations...) in *Midnight's Children* is pivotal since it has enormous bearing on the tone and thrust of the novel's critique, that is, whether Rushdie's text is critical of the trajectory of the postcolonial nation and the path it is on in politico-historical terms.

Dolezel's *axiological* modality is concerned with "moral judgment" within the possible world. "In this case as well, there are three possibilities: good, bad, or indifferent." (Herman and Vervaeck 153) The axiological modality is indirectly related to the desire or motivation of characters to do what is right according to the established norms within the established possible world and community or to go against it either to fulfill their own desires or ambitions or because they do not agree with the established norms within the possible world of the narrative. Since the texts of historiographic metafiction offer critiques of both the colonial practices (vis-à-vis the newly independent nations such as India, Pakistan) and the postcolonial governments in control, the axiological modality proves instrumental to the critical analysis of these texts and the extent to which they construct a conflict between the ethical standards of readers' real world and the Machiavellian, self-serving morality that governs the colonial powers and their interests regardless of the results for their own citizenry.

The fourth is the *epistemic* modality, "which consists of three possibilities: knowledge, ignorance, and belief. The latter refers to presuppositions of characters that are not based on the real state of affairs in the story." (Herman and Vervaeck 154) In fact, the uneven distribution of knowledge is a vital and fertile source for generating and motivating actions throughout the storyworld and defining how much it is a possible world that departs from the real world of readers. Knowledge is empowering and is usually the first step to the populace and the readers becoming aware of exploitative policies and detrimental practices in postcolonial nations; as

such, the epistemic modality becomes a rich source for the critical investigation into how postcolonial historiographic metafiction uncovers the propaganda that governments engage in to subjugate and control their populations in what Engels has called ‘false consciousness’ [which] would constrain the masses from recognizing and rejecting their oppression (Heywood 85). As a case in point, Saleem’s telepathic omniscience of all Indians in *Midnight’s Children* is an axiom of knowledge and an epistemic asset that enables him to see the sinister reality behind the government and media propaganda and to become the center of an alternative community, which is precisely why he is apprehended and penalized toward the end.

All in all, the *alethic* dimension (necessity, possibility, impossibility), which Delaney has called “levels of *subjunctivity*” (i.e. could have happened versus could not have happened), is the central dimension with respect to magical realism since it is the alethic difference between the empirical world and the storyworld that is definitive for magical realism (Bould 232). Although the other dimensions are incidental to the possible worlds in magical realist texts, I would argue that the *deontic*, *axiological*, and *epistemic* dimensions/axes are also useful to the analysis of postcolonial novels that aim at critiquing the politico-historical trajectory of postcolonial nations in the aftermath of their independence from colonial powers since ethical considerations (axiological) and issues related to knowledge and dissemination of information (*epistemic*) appear in these texts and need to be evaluated as part of the storyworld in a systemic way.

In brief, to analyze and account for the construction of alternative worlds in texts of historiographic metafiction, Dolezel’s *four modality possible worlds theory* in conjunction with *deictic shift theory* (Zubin and Hewitt; Ryan) explains how the shift from the deictic center of the narrative to the possible world is prompted through the use of linguistic devices and verbal cues that open a “conceptual window through which the storyworld can be glimpsed” as a new

possible world defined by its alethic, deontic, axiological, and epistemic differences from the actual world (Zubin and Hewitt 131). In *Story Logic*, Herman lists the various types of spatial reference that may be used to cue the readers to move from one spatio-temporal context into another. For the purposes of this analytic study, however, a simple distinction between spatial and temporal references will suffice. As Herman observes, “reference assignment is made possible when narrative texts cue readers to activate contextual frames, that is, knowledge representations that store specific configurations of characters located at specific space-time coordinates in the storyworld” that mirror or are what Dolezel calls possible world “counterparts” to places and times in readers’ actual worlds (270). As such, “whole contextual frames” are evoked in the reader’s mind, which in historiographic metafiction pertain mainly to socio-historical events and historical (transworld) characters. In this regard, deictic shift theory and Dolezel’s four modalities are crucial to understanding how these possible worlds evoked and depicted in historiographic metafiction articulate Rushdie’s critique of actual colonial and postcolonial events, places, and characters.

### **1.3. CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS**

Chapter 2 addresses the employment of “magical realism” in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* and explicates how, with its admixture of realistic and magical elements as Steven Slemon argues, it is particularly suitable to the deconstruction of colonial hegemony and critique of postcolonial politics as a subversive narrative mode since “due to its dual narrative structure, magical realism is able to present the postcolonial context from both the colonized peoples’ [the magic] and the colonizers’ perspectives [realism] through its narrative structure as well as its themes.” (Bowers 97) More importantly, in this chapter, I explain how the magical elements and improbable possible worlds in Rushdie’s historiographic metafiction contribute to

the text's/author's deconstruction, interrogation, and critique of colonial influence and neocolonial politics of the postcolonial nation-states he depicts in the aftermath of their independence from colonial powers. I also demonstrate how magical realism is the apt narrative mode "to produce a text which reveals the tensions and gaps of representation in such a context" as well as "a means to fill in the gaps of cultural representation in a postcolonial context by recuperating the fragments and voices of forgotten or subsumed histories from the point of view of the colonized." (Bowers 97) It is my contention that Dolezel's four-dimensional system (*alethic, deontic, epistemic, and axiological*) proves instrumental to the analysis and evaluation of these possible worlds, which contain various improbable and magical elements, by arguing and demonstrating how these magical elements contribute to the critique and deconstruction of colonial and postcolonial politics. In particular, I contend, the magically realistic events in historiographic metafiction exploit the alethic modality to show how changes in the laws of (meta)physics might have changed the deontic, epistemic, and axiological realities of the actual postcolonial worlds Rushdie fictionalizes.

Chapter 3 focuses on *spatialization* and explicates how the various uses of *space* – *concrete* and *conceptual* – in Rushdie's works of historiographic metafiction equips these texts with the toolkit to articulate the author's critique of actual postcolonial politics of the represented nation-states through the construction of alternative, possible spaces/worlds that are juxtaposed via *parataxis*. This parataxis results in the layering of these spaces and inducing the reader's simultaneity of perception in ways that call into question the inevitability and value of the alethic, deontic, and axiological 'laws' of actual colonial/postcolonial worlds that Rushdie references. The paratactic juxtaposition of the colonizer/neo-colonist possible spaces alongside the colonized Other spaces/spatialized histories in effect results in the concretization of the

second stage postcolonial hybridity in which the ideological struggle between the heteroglossic centripetal forces of unification and nationalization and the centrifugal forces of democratization and multiculturalism is captured and accentuated in Rushdie's imagined postcolonial nation-states.

Chapter 4 focuses on the self-conscious, metafictional dimension of historiographic metafiction through the *metanarration* of a narrator that straddles the narrating and narrated possible worlds of the historiographic metafictional text in order to question, deconstruct, and problematize the truth claims, biases, and pretensions of official historiography, and especially of colonial historiography, neocolonial nationalism and their realist modes of narration, through explicit and implicit criticism but mostly through *parody* and *irony* of historiography and realism. Rushdie's critique of postcolonial politics of the nation-state is accomplished through the provision of critical and self-reflexive meta-comments as well as the foregrounding of the "enunciative situation – text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context – which renders the narrated world as constructed and provisional. Such metanarration, I argue, exploits the epistemic modality especially to create a Brechtian "alienation effect" in the reader that is aimed at questioning the promulgated truths about postcolonial worlds by interrupting and interspersing the narrated possible world with the narrator's various diegetic interventions and meta-comments, which constitute a paratactic possible world and invite readers to understand the contingency of the alethic, deontic, and axiological 'laws' of the actual postcolonial worlds from which the narratives diegetically shift. In his 1985 interview, Rushdie acknowledged the need to construct possible worlds for recreating India as such:

You must use language in a manner which permits God to exist – the divine to be as real as the divan I am sitting on...Realism can no longer express or account for the absurd reality of the world we live in – a world which has the capability of destroying itself at any moment (qtd. in Faris 100).

## CHAPTER 2

### MAGICAL REALISM IN RUSHDIE'S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-Francois Lyotard describes postmodernism as “that which searches for new presentations...in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.” (81) In historiographic metafiction, “the unrepresentable” is history with its records of human oppression, traumatic failures, and catastrophes of great magnitude that realism ideologically will not represent. With its oxymoronic name, ‘magical realism’ has become the apt narrative mode to represent the unrepresentable history, especially in postcolonial contexts, by combining the antithetical modes of realism and fantasy (Rushdie’s “the divine” and “the divan”), or in Saleem’s words, “so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane!” (*Midnight’s Children* 4)

In order to understand the ways magical realism juxtaposes and blurs different postcolonial possible worlds, some understanding of the term(s) and practices are useful, especially to highlight the uniqueness of Rushdie’s magical realism and its amenability to postcolonial politics. The term ‘magical realism’ or its original in German – *Magischer Realismus* – was coined by the art critic Franz Roh in 1925 in his discussion of European art works and painting in terms of their realistic portrayal of the mysteries and the magic of life. Roh invented the term to describe the new art and paintings that were being produced during the Weimar republic, a very shaky transition period in the aftermath of Germany’s catastrophic defeat in World War I with the concomitant high inflation, socio-political instability, and widespread disillusionment. He used the term “to capture the mystery of life behind the surface



reality.” (Bowers 2) Faris opines that the term “carries burdens from visual history that its verbal embodiments cannot well bear.” (Faris 39) Despite the fact that it “has migrated from continent to continent and has suffered from inexact definitions...it seems that the term *magical realism*, while confusing, hybrid, imprecise, will not go away.” (Faris 39) This is due to “its hybrid nature, originating between painting and literature, describing European and third world literatures, suiting the mixture of genres, perspectives, and cultures in postcolonial writing.” (Faris 39) As such, the term is an apt narrative mode for narrativizing politico-historical issues within postcolonial contexts.

The second related term is *lo real maravilloso* in Spanish or ‘marvelous realism’ in English – introduced by Alejo Carpentier to make a distinction between Latin American and European literature and specially to distinguish it from avante garde artistic and literary movements like surrealism and to underscore its independent character, as well as “the unique aspects of America” per se (Bowers 15). Kluwick makes the important argument that the prominence of magical realism in Latin America made a significant contribution to postcolonial literature – by stressing the indigenous character of magical realism as American, Carpentier and Latin American magical realism made the margin important, which had significant ramifications in postcolonial fiction. As Kluwick points out, by arguing that “Europe and its literature are old and tired and that rejuvenation needs to come from without,” Carpentier makes “the case of reversed influence between center and margin, or between Europe and its former colonies.” (9)

It is ironic that although Carpentier advocated for the term “marvelous realism” and argued against the term magic realism “in the 1950s in relation to Latin American fiction but [magical realism] has since been adopted as the main term used to refer to all narrative fiction that includes magical happenings in a realist matter-of-fact narrative.” (Bowers 2) As such, “the

supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence – admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism.” (Zamora and Faris 3) The magic in magical realism “can be a synonym for mystery, an extraordinary happening, or the supernatural and can be influenced by European Christianity as much as by, for instance, Native American indigenous beliefs.” (Bowers 5)

A key aspect of magical realism that merits discussion is the relationship between the natural and supernatural codes, which has divided critics into two major camps: the first, larger group comprises the critics who have described the relationship between the twin codes in magical realism as ‘harmonious’ and ‘nondisjunctive,’ which entails the “coexistence of the natural and the supernatural in a narrative that presents them in a nondisjunctive way, in which the natural appears strange, and the supernatural pedestrian.” (Camayd-Freixas 15) Ursula Kluwick cites Amaryll Chanady as “probably the most prominent representative of the theory which presents the interaction of the natural and the supernatural codes of magic realism as harmonious...” (Kluwick 13) Chanady’s main argument is that “the magical realist narrator does not present the supernatural as problematic, the reader does not perceive irrational occurrences as unsettling and accepts the coexistence of contradictory codes without questioning their (in)compatibility.” (Kluwick 16)

The second camp includes such scholars as Stephen Slemon and Ursula Kluwick who have underlined the ‘antithetical’ relationship between the natural and supernatural codes. Kluwick, for instance, indicates that Chanady’s observation of the harmonious relationship between the realist and magical codes is representative of Latin American magical realism (e.g. Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel) in which narrators rarely engage in metanarratorial moves in which Rushdie specializes that I discuss in chapter 4. Kluwick argues

against such universal description of magical realism as ‘harmonious’ and instead advocates for a spectrum of possible relations between the twin codes that may vary from one socio-political context to another. It is in opposition to Chanady that Kluwick argues for a more restrictive and context-specific approach to magical realism; in particular, she points out that in Rushdie’s magical realist texts there is constant friction and sporadic clash between the realist and magical codes. As Kluwick observes, “the construction of ambivalence is not a side-effect but a central component of some magic realist texts...” (202) She highlights “the significance of magic realist incompatibilities by focusing on the manner in which ambivalence is created on an intratextual level.” (202) As a case in point, in *Midnight’s Children* two explanations are provided for Ahmed Sinai’s whitening: first, Dr. Narlikar’s sudden death (he is killed by a mob of protestors) is said to have such a dramatic impact on him that he turns white. Second explanation concerns the whole business sector in India who turn white in large numbers (which, as I explain later in this chapter) is a literalized metaphor signifying the business sector’s adoption of the practices of their colonial predecessors (turning white metaphorically – magical literalization of metaphor). Thus, there is friction and ambivalence between the two competing accounts of Ahmed Sinai’s whitening process.

In Garcia Marquez, however, there are rarely multiple accounts offered to explain a supernatural or unlikely event. For instance, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* when an insomnia epidemic sweeps across the town of *Macondo* along with its corollary amnesia, to combat the ensuing insomnia and help residents remember the various items they need in their daily lives, Aureliano Buendia comes up with the plan of writing down the name of every conceivable and necessary item as well as its use so that the residents of the village will not succumb to a complete amnesia that may paralyze their day-to-day activities:

At the beginning of the road into the swamp they put up a sign that said *MACONDO* and another larger one on the main street that said *GOD EXISTS*. In all the houses keys to memorizing objects and feelings had been written. But the system demanded so much vigilance and moral strength that many succumbed to the spell of *an imaginary reality, one invented by themselves* [Italics mine], which was less practical for them but more comforting. Pilar Tenera was the one who contributed most to popularize that mystification when she conceived the trick of *reading the past in cards* [Italics mine] as she had read the future before. By means of that recourse the insomniacs began to live in a world built on the uncertain *alternatives* [Italics mine] of the cards, where a father was remembered faintly as the dark man who had arrived at the beginning of April and a mother who wore a gold ring on her left hand, and where a birth date was reduced to the last Tuesday on which a lark sang in the laurel tree (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* 52).

Both the attempt at writing everything down so as to remember every single item and how to use it as well as Pilar Tenera's attempts as a card reading fortune teller, who starts exploiting the insomnia (and amnesia) of the residents of Macondo by conceiving "the trick of reading the past in cards as she had read the future before," are narrated in a matter-of-fact tone without being questioned or contested as Rushdie's narrators often do.

Overall my contention is that Rushdie's highly political and ostentatiously 'metafictional' texts manifest considerable 'friction' not only between the antithetical codes of realism and fantasy but also between the possible worlds created via the twin codes. As such, I concur with Kluwick in that "Rushdie's magic realism can best be understood as the site of a [ontological and epistemic] clash between two representational codes" with postcolonial implications (2). Rushdie highlights the clash between the twin codes, via metanarration, in order to advance his socio-political reading of the Indian subcontinent. As Kluwick puts it, "If one brings this clash into dialogue with Rushdie's socio-political objectives, it becomes apparent how fruitfully the postmodern and the postcolonial can be combined." (Kluwick 2) Rushdie's texts, in fact, both embody and foreground the tension between the twin codes through "structural disjunction" by setting up the realistic – what is conceivable, probable, and mundane according to the logic of

daily life, documented historiography, and the actual world – against the magical and the supernatural to present diegetically the author’s politico-historical critique within the postcolonial context by exploiting especially differences and disjunctions in the *alethic* mode of possibilities. Thus, Rushdie’s texts are ‘liminal’ by self-consciously foregrounding – through metanarratorial interventions – the fraught relationship between the realist and magical codes and their possible worlds, especially by underlining the *alethic* mode and how one alethic instantiation morphs into another in ways that advance the author’s critique of colonial/neocolonial policies and practices from a liminal vantage point.

What is often underestimated in discussions of magical realism in general and Rushdie’s novels in particular is the significance of the realist code in the narrative structure of the text. In his interview with Max Miller, Rushdie underscores the necessity of describing the magical and the supernatural in realistic terms to render them acceptable and believable (at some level) to the reader:

The moment you decide you’re going to have a rug that flies through the air is you must immediately ask yourself realistic questions about it. What would that be like if you were standing on a carpet and it levitated? Would it be difficult to keep your balance? Would the carpet be rigid or would the movement of the air under the carpet make the carpet undulate? If you flew very high, wouldn’t it get very cold? How do you keep warm on a flying carpet? And I think the moment you start asking yourself those kind[s] of practical, real-world questions the flying carpet becomes believable. It becomes a thing that might exist and if existed, it would function like this.

Rushdie’s statement draws attention to the kind of practical issues that an author has to grapple with to render an event or episode realistic and believable regardless of how improbable or fantastic it may appear. Barthes addresses this issue and calls it “effet de reel” or “reality effect,” which is achieved through the use of “concrete details” and references to the outside reality (such as references to historical characters and events) by creating the illusion of that reality that is outside the speech act and to which paradoxically the speech act cannot lay claim

(Barthes 147-148). As Kluwick puts it, there are concrete details “to which structural analysis cannot assign any function, and which from a structural perspective can hence be regarded as ‘futile’” (35). In other words, certain details such as Rushdie’s description of Doctor Aziz’s height, Saleem’s grandfather in *Midnight’s Children*, are superfluous in the sense that they do not denote anything substantial or significant; rather they collectively impart or “signify” the very idea of “the real,” which Barthes dubs “the *referential illusion*” (Barthes 147-148): “I record that Doctor Aziz was a tall man. Pressed against a wall of his family home, he measured twenty-five bricks...or just over six foot two.” (8) As such, the reality effect is achieved through the conscious, selective use of sensory data and various other references to the outside world and documented historiography. One should add that the description of Dr. Aziz’s height also foregrounds the self-conscious metanarration and the metanarrator’s role as the one who is in charge of the narrative and molds it to his narratorial purposes.

In the postcolonial context, magical realism, due to its dual, hybrid nature, has the wherewithal to deconstruct and undermine realism as the entrenched, dominant narrative mode in Western fiction and historiography employed by colonial, European powers for hundreds of years to advance their socio-political agenda of colonization and stabilization in their colonial spheres of influence. In “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction,”

Wendy Faris explains this link thusly:

That realism has been a European, or first world, export in conjunction with its mimetic program, its claim to fashioning an accurate portrait of the world, has in some instances tended to ally it with imperialism – Spanish, English, French, Russian, U.S. – endowing it with an implicitly authoritarian aura for writers in colonial situations (180).

Similarly, in *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson contends that “the gradual reification of realism in late capitalism” suggests *romance* that has once again become a “place of narrative heterogeneity and freedom from that reality principle to which a now oppressive realistic

representation is the hostage.” (104) And Jameson defines the romance precisely as what we might call a magically realistic genre in which the world or the setting acts in ways reserved for characters in realistic narrative. Jameson’s description of romance is noteworthy and needs to be quoted here:

As for romance, it would seem that its ultimate condition of figuration, on which the other preconditions we have already mentioned are dependent – the category of worldness, the ideologeme of good and evil felt as magical forces, a salvational historicity – is to be found *in a transitional moment in which two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development coexist*. Their *antagonism* is not yet articulated in terms of the struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of *a nostalgic (or less often, a utopian harmony* (Italics mine) (Jameson 148).

As the above quotation suggests, Jameson considers “the ultimate condition” for romance on which all “the other preconditions...are dependent” – much as in magical realism – as the coexistence of the “two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development [which] coexist.” (Ibid) However, Faris points out that unlike romance in which the resolution between “two different modes of production, or of socioeconomic development...is projected as a nostalgic, or a utopian harmony and hence is ultimately not politically progressive,” the harmonic world is not created in magical realism; on the contrary, “the conflicts of political systems are more in evidence.” (180-181) As such, “it is that ‘now oppressive realistic representation’ that magical realism as a descendent of romance disrupts.” (Faris 180) In fact, magical realism challenges realism, colonialism, and Euro-centrism by employing some of the same narrative techniques as realism, yet paradoxically extricating the narrative from the rigid confines of realism by utilizing the magical/supernatural code, which subverts the ‘reality effect’ and destabilizes the entire narrative by giving the same ontological status to the natural and supernatural elements (events, characters, etc.) through their juxtaposition in the narrative text. This subversive destabilization of the narrative is achieved by

crossing epistemic and ontological boundaries and using the twin codes of realism and fantasy within the same narrative text. As Bowers puts it, the magical realist narrative “crosses the [ontological and epistemic] borders between the magical and the realistic to create a further category – the magical real.” (Bowers 67)

The root of this transgressive and subversive aspect lies in the fact that, once the category of truth has been brought into question and the category of the real broken down or overturned, the boundaries of other categories become vulnerable. The reader becomes aware that if the category of the real is not definite then all assumptions of truth are also at stake (Bowers 67-68).

In the same vein, Rushdie’s novels are subversive by transgressing first *alethic* and then *epistemic*, *axiological*, and *deontic* boundaries in ways that foreground the parallel between the alethic tension at the heart of magical realism and the alethic tension of postcolonial contexts. As a ‘liminal’ narrative mode, magical realism encompasses “differing world views and approaches on what constitutes reality,” which in the postcolonial context takes on socio-political significance (Bowers 16) While engaging with historiography and through the selective use of magical details that are incorporated into porous possible worlds, magical realism brings about the disruption and subversion of hegemonic realism by employing some of the same narrative techniques in high realism (and naturalism) that Jameson describes succinctly in *The Political Unconscious* – “the threefold imperatives of authorial depersonalization, unity of point of view, and restriction to scenic representation,” to call into question the social systems, official historiography, and socio-politics of the nation being narrativized (Jameson 104). In the words of Wendy Faris, “magical realism has mastered the European discourse of realism and now uses it not to curse, exactly, but to undermine some of its master’s assumptions.” (28) This is due to the liminality of magical realism since “the extent to which one should accept the real as the version of events is continuously undermined by the existence of the other version in the text [which



receives the same realistic treatment].” (Bowers 67) As Faris notes, magical realism challenges the underlying assumptions of “realistic representation but is enraptured with its practices.” (28) It is through the amalgamation of the realist and the magical along with the different cultural contexts from which they emanated that a ‘liminal’ (in-between) perspective is forged.

Slemon explicates the *modus operandi* of magical realism as a hybrid narrative mode wherein the opposition between the realist and the magical codes is not resolved. It is, in fact, the unresolved opposition and constant tension between the natural and supernatural codes that “is often considered to be a disruptive narrative mode” which authors such as Rushdie exploit to narrativize and critique the postcolonial politics of the nation under consideration (Bowers 4) In “Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse,” Slemon explains it thusly:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, *a battle between two opposing positional systems takes place*, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since *the ground rules* of these two worlds are *incompatible*, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, *locked in a continuous dialectic with the “other,”* a situation which creates *disjunction* within each of the separate discursive systems, *rendering them with gaps, absences, and silences* [Italics mine] (409).

Slemon underscores the oppositional and disruptive potential of magical realism which is due to the antagonistic relationship between the magical and the realist codes that is harnessed and exploited by authors writing in postcolonial contexts by tapping into the subversive and transgressive potential of magical realism. As Slemon notes, the “continuous dialectic” between the two antithetical modes of narration – the realist and the magical – is disruptive and subverts realism along with the colonial spheres of power and influence that realism has historically served by glossing over epistemic gaps and the marginalized Other as well as imposing its self-serving restrictions on narration and historiography. The disruption, as Slemon suggests, is due to the different fictional (possible) worlds with different types of logic that are created via the

realist and the supernatural codes operating side-by-side while neither code becomes dominant, thereby destabilizing the narrative text. In Rushdie's metafictional novels, the clash between the realist and magical codes and their possible worlds is ostentatiously highlighted via metafictional commentary, which renders the narrative self-consciously "contingent" by drawing attention to its constructedness and provisionality. As such, magical realism has become the apt narrative mode for critiquing and deconstructing colonial/neocolonial politics and practices within the postcolonial context. In brief, the inclusion of the realist and magical codes in the same narrative destabilizes the whole project.

Dolezel's four-dimensional system, as I explained in chapter one, proves instrumental in evaluating these possible worlds in terms of their *alethic* possibilities, *deontic* permission-prohibition-obligation, *epistemic* knowledge, and *axiological* ethicality. In Rushdie's highly political texts, the *alethic* possibilities for events open a critical window onto the *deontic* codes used to judge and evaluate those events. As such, the *alethic* mode plays the key role in unleashing various possibilities in the positive direction (e.g. midnight's children's magical capabilities through deontic permission with the birth of independent India) or leading to negative possibilities (e.g. Sufiya Zinobia's monstrous murders in *Shame* due to the *deontic* prohibition and oppression of the populace, particularly women). My contention is that Rushdie's early magical realist texts – particularly *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* – encompass possible worlds in which the magical world is created to accentuate the attributes and features of the actual, historical world – positive or negative – by extending them through the utilization of the magical realist techniques such as hyperbole, metaphoricalization, literalization, animation, and reification (to be explained while analyzing Rushdie's texts) that question the realist possible

world by opening it to interventions of a magical/other possible world which result in disjunction and liminality.

In short, as Faris explains, Slemon's argument regarding the clash between the realist and magical codes in magical realist texts suggests that the "two-way streets weave a complex fabric connecting the material and the nonmaterial, the very fact that they weave it out of those different yarns means that they are constantly recalling the disjunctions between them." (Faris 120) As such, through its discursive heterogeneity, "that combination of realistic and fantastic narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions [from which the twin codes emerge], means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society." (Faris 1) In fact, as Slemon posits, through its use of fantastic elements and creation of possible worlds, magical realism is able "to fill in the gaps of cultural representation in a postcolonial context by recuperating the fragments and voices of forgotten or subsumed histories from the point of view of the colonized," which has increasingly become hybrid and liminal within the postcolonial context. (Bowers 97)

*Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are prime examples of what Slemon describes as the "battle between two opposing positional systems," which Rushdie utilizes to critique the trajectory of the postcolonial nation-states of India and Pakistan in these novels (409). Kluwick perceptively observes that Rushdie is able to tap into the clash between the twin codes and possible worlds to present diegetically his subversive and liminal postcolonial critique of (neo)colonial governments that ascended to power in the aftermath of India's and Pakistan's independence. In his commingling of the fantastic and the realistic, Rushdie not only renders the magical believable by presenting it through matter-of-fact realistic narration including accumulation of sensory data and historical anchoring, but also through infusion of magical and

fantastic elements, he offers alternative worlds for viewing history that are transgressive and subvert hegemonic historic accounts of the Indian subcontinent. According to Sangari, “Rushdie’s narratives play provocatively with disparate ways of seeing,” that are personal and provisional, and more importantly, undermine official accounts of historical events and periods through their self-conscious narrativization (176).

## **2.2. OBJECTIVES**

In this chapter, I advance the following arguments on the role of magical realism in Rushdie’s texts under consideration:

First, I contend that Rushdie’s texts are different from their Latin American magical realist counterparts (e.g. Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, and Laura Esquivel) due to their strong metanarration that foregrounds the friction and tension, engendered through the “sustained opposition” of the “two opposing discursive systems of realism and fantasy, which are locked in a continuous dialectic with [each] other...reveal[ing] a particularly intense dynamics of alterity” that is subversive and transgressive within the socio-historical context of Rushdie’s highly political narratives (Slemon 409). As such, Rushdie’s texts, reminiscent of Jameson’s description of the modus operandi of romance, foreground the layering of different generic modes of production – realism and fantasy, which ties into what Slemon suggests: because of its hybrid “dual narrative structure, magical realism is able to present the postcolonial context from both the colonized peoples’ and the colonizers’ perspectives through its narrative structures and its themes.” (Bowers 97)

Second, through their engagement with history via historical anchoring and accumulation of sensory data that produces the ‘reality effect’ as well as use of selective magical elements (e.g. techniques, characters, explanations), Rushdie’s magical realist texts narratively create new

possible worlds that are ‘liminal’ in their postcolonial context – “a new decolonized space for narrative, one not already occupied by the assumptions and techniques of European realism,” thereby critiquing and deconstructing the actual politics of the postcolonial nation-states and colonial spheres of power and influence through what Faris has dubbed “a poetics of subversion.” (Faris 135)

Third, the analysis and evaluation of magical realist events in Rushdie’s texts of historiographic metafiction when done systematically through the framework of Dolezel’s four modalities of possible worlds theory reveals how the *alethic* ambiguity of these magically realistic worlds “are used to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath,” especially in their *deontic* (political) permission-prohibition-obligation, *epistemic* knowledge, and *axiological* ethicality presumptions and, moreover, to suggest the alethic possibility of how it could have been or might have been different. (Bowers 97). In fact, magical realism, due to its paradoxical and dual nature, is poised to traverse and transgress boundaries, thereby undermining and subverting the demarcation between what is real and what is magical or fantastical by including both in the same narrative and affording them the same ontological status as possible worlds.

### **2.3. MAGICAL REALISM IN *MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN***

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie rewrites the first thirty years of India’s modern history, which encompasses independence, partition, the Indo-Pakistan war, Indira Gandhi’s emergence and consolidation of power during the Emergency, famine, and sterilization – all of which are diegetically presented through the juxtaposition of the magical and the realistic “to question the colonial paradigms so that the constructed ‘Other’ may give India...a decolonized identity.” (Benny 38) As Benny indicates, Rushdie’s metanarrator acknowledges “his history or a major part of it ‘ends in fantasy’ because in a situation where reality ceases to exist, or is subverted or

made invisible, where truth is manufactured, fantasy is the only means of uncovering what is hidden.” (23-24)

To narrativize India’s postcolonial history and interpret its complex, multifaceted reality from Rushdie’s socio-political vantage point, the novel portrays the lives of three generations of the Sinai family that are historically situated in different periods of India’s modern history by combining the realist code via ‘historical anchoring’ (referencing of historical characters, dates, and events), sensory data, and concrete details with magical elements through the *alethic* mode to create a magical possible world that critiques the actual world of Indian politics. Thus, in *Midnight’s Children* the *alethic* is the key mode that drives all the other modes – the *deontic*, *axiological* and *epistemic* to create new possible worlds in which India’s modern history is reexamined and its failings are recorded and critiqued. In this created possible world, Rushdie endeavors “to relate the reality of the individual life to that super-ordinate, all-encompassing reality” at the politico-historical level by “handcuffing” Saleem Sinai to India literally, metaphorically, and magically (Benny 23).

Magical realism is employed throughout the novel to create what Homi Bhabha has described as “a place of hybridity” and Faris described as “the indeterminate zone of the colonial encounter” – wherein the newly independent India struggles against the colonial legacy the British left behind after nearly 200 years of colonization (Faris 134). As such, the narrative mode of magical realism proves instrumental to Rushdie’s depiction of “the intense dynamics of alterity” by creating possible worlds within which *alethic* possibilities are stretched and exploited to critique the actual neocolonial policies and practices of India’s government and the country’s socio-political trajectory in the aftermath of independence as the nation progresses from her promising beginnings under Nehru to the Emergency period of Indira Gandhi (Faris 134).

Rushdie reconstructs India's postcolonial history through critical, thematic engagement with Indian politics as well as deconstruction of that history through structural, narratological means including the juxtaposition of realist and magical possible worlds, which destabilizes the whole text and erodes the possibility of the establishment of any hierarchy between the twin codes and their possible worlds as they are afforded the same ontological status in the text; hence interpretive closure is denied. Nevertheless, the structural destabilization, the consequence of the clash between the two oppositional codes – the realist and the magical – conveys the political message that no narrative can claim exclusive, all-encompassing access to truth by problematizing narration itself, but also personalizes that message through Saleem's personal views and meta-commentary.

Equally important is the fact that the real and the fantastic are presented not merely in oppositional terms but also as interchangeable along a continuum, which plays a pivotal role in what Kluwick has described as “the construction of highly unstable textual universes.” (18) This instability is due to the constant oscillation and alteration of the possible world and the changing of its logic and foundational rules that result in ‘ambivalence’ since neither the realist nor the magical code could be deemed central to the interpretation of the events unfolding in the narrative text nor is there a stable implied author established. As such, ambivalence is a key aspect of Rushdie's fiction, which is an outcome of the “battle between two oppositional systems” in the novel (Slemon 409).

The way ambivalence operates in *Midnight's Children* is by challenging the boundaries between what constitutes the real versus what is deemed unreal or magical; as Kluwick notes, “binary oppositions are deconstructed.” (77) The deconstruction is achieved by eroding and collapsing the dichotomy between binary oppositional terms as well as the manner in which

narrative elements move from one end of the spectrum – the realist – to the opposite end – the magical. In fact, *Midnight's Children* explores the whole spectrum between the realist and the magical possible worlds by foregrounding how the distance is traversed when an event or character moves from one end of the spectrum to the opposite end.

To explore the spectrum between the natural and supernatural codes, Rushdie utilizes a number of 'poetic devices' that trigger the supernatural code and contribute to the construction of a magical possible world. Among the techniques used are "reification, literalization and metaphoricalization, hyperbole...repetition, and the creation of unstable signifiers..." but I would argue that the 'magical alethic literalization of metaphor' is the main magical realist technique used in *Midnight's Children*; moreover, the *alethic* drives the other possible world modes in the novel (Kluwick 77). These techniques are used throughout the novelistic text to create what Kluwick, through analogy to Barthes' 'reality effect,' has dubbed the "unreality effect" that "might be described as a specific atmosphere in magic realist literature, an atmosphere that facilitates the implementation of magic in the stories" and thereby questions realist, historical narrative in the postcolonial context of the novel (Kluwick 59).

I commence with the key poetic devices of metaphoricalization and literalization, which are interrelated for the most part and play seminal roles throughout the novelistic text. Marguerite Alexander has dubbed the literalization of metaphor "*magic realization of metaphor* in which the text presents a metaphor literally that is then enacted in the narrative [*Italics mine*]." (Alexander 5; Kluwick 81) The literalization of metaphors is, in fact, used extensively in *Midnight's Children* wherein a metaphor is initially presented literally and described in literal terms; subsequently, it is implemented and integrated throughout the narrative as a literalized metaphor that defies the logic and norms of our actual realistic world and operates magically and



supernaturally. This kind of “literalized metaphors,” as Faris notes, poses “the question whether words reflect or create the world.” (*Enchantments* 115) Faris has called the continuum of interchangeability between the magical (metaphorical) and the real (literal) “a two-way-street phenomenon”:

The interchange in magical realism between different worlds and kinds of discourse is embodied on a larger scale than that of linguistic magic in what we might call *a two-way-street phenomenon*. This verbal traffic maneuver arranges events or objects in the text along *an imaginary spectrum* running from the improbable to the impossible, or in other words, from the uncanny to the marvelous, and back again, *concentrating its energies near the mid-point*. The spectrum ranges from events that are not impossible but so improbable as to be nearly magic to magical occurrences that are nearly real, so that the effect is to blend those two worlds...but the *transformation* of one into the other is magical, so that the line of the discourse leads *from metaphoric realism to magical realism* [Italics mine] (115-116).

The earliest example of metaphoricalization occurs in the novel’s opening with the simultaneous births of Saleem Sinai, the narrator-protagonist of the novel, and his newly independent India. At the outset, Saleem is metaphorically “handcuffed to history” in the sense that his fate is inextricably and irrevocably intertwined with that of his country: “because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously *handcuffed to history*, my destinies *indissolubly chained to those of my country*.” [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 3) As such, the personal and the politico-historical are linked metaphorically with the births of the 1001 midnight’s children (the number is an intertextual allusion to Scheherzade’s 1001 fantastic tales/nights in *Arabian Nights*) with their various magical capabilities that coincide with India’s independence all of which contributes to the ‘unreality effect’ and the construction of the magical possible world of the novel. Nevertheless, the magical is couched within the realistic politico-historical context of modern India’s history with the marking of her independence on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947, as the ‘historical anchoring’ situates the narrative within India’s modern history by subsequent referencing of independence, the Constitution, and major

political figures such as Nehru and Gandhi, thereby engendering Barthes' "reality effect." The reappearance and integration of the 'handcuffing metaphor' throughout the narrative has thematic significance as it is linked to language and to the weaving as metaphor of national/personal identity.

Later in the narrative, the 'handcuffing metaphor' – in the sense of Saleem's identity and destiny being linked to his country via language and the weaving as metaphors of national/personal identity – is magically realized as Saleem, at age nine, discovers his clairvoyance and telepathic omniscience which magically link him to all the other midnight's children born at or close to India's independence as well as the entire nation of India:

Let me sum up: at a crucial point in the history of our child-nation, at a time when Five Year Plans were being drawn up and elections were approaching and language marchers were fighting over Bombay, a nine-year-old boy named Saleem Sinai acquired a miraculous gift. Despite the many vital uses to which his abilities could have been put by his impoverished, underdeveloped country, he chose to conceal his talents, frittering them away on inconsequential voyeurism and petty cheating... (*Midnight's Children* 196)

In the above quotation, the mature Saleem narrates his nine-year-old self's discovery of his telepathic powers and his ability to tune in to what others including students and teachers at his school think silently and uses his newly-discovered powers to cheat on his exams. Nevertheless, the paratactic juxtaposition of the socio-political events of great magnitude such as the government's "Five Year Plans," "elections" and "language marchers" alongside the petty, insignificant acts of Saleem cheating on his school tests and in his voyeurism, is subversive by disrupting and undermining the gravity of the socio-political events unfolding throughout India. Gradually, Saleem is able to fine-tune the voices in his head as the "handcuffing" metaphor gives way to the magical metaphor of the "radio receiver" that accentuates the magical nature of the possible world and buttresses the *unreality effect* in the novel:

By sunrise, I had discovered that the voices could be controlled – I was a *radio receiver*, and *could turn the volume down or up*; I could select individual voices; I could even, by an effort of will, switch off my newly-discovered inner ear. It was astonishing how soon fear left me; by morning, I was thinking, “Man, this is better than all-India Radio, man; better than Radio Ceylon!” [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 186)

The magic of telepathy and clairvoyance that Saleem is endowed with allows Rushdie to narrate events intradiegetically through Saleem while having the kind of omniscient knowledge typical of extradiegetic narration, which Gerald Prince has called “zero focalization.” Saleem’s telepathy literalizes the narratological metaphor of omniscience. His magical telepathy affords the narrator to critique and comment on the politico-historical events of collective import transpiring throughout India while experiencing them firsthand as a character inside the storyworld. Moreover, Saleem’s connection to history becomes more nuanced and is commented upon later: “I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively...actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically and passively-literally, I was inextricably entwined with my world.” (*Midnight’s Children* 272-273) As mentioned, the chaining is linked to language and to the weaving as metaphors of national/personal identity links that are intertwined throughout the novel.

However, this extraordinary link between Saleem and his nation, which has been magical up to this juncture (through his telepathy), becomes quite ‘literalized’ and equally magical and bizarre a few pages later in the narrative:

Please believe that *I am falling apart*.

I am not speaking metaphorically; nor is this the opening gambit of some melodramatic, riddling, grubby appeal for pity. I mean quite simply that *I have begun to crack all over like an old jug* – that *my poor body*, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history...*has started coming apart at the seams*. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of acceleration. I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that *I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust* [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 36).

Saleem's iteration of his physical disintegration, which is simultaneously literal and magical as with the ambivalent "handcuffing metaphor," has become literal as another instance of metaphorical literalization. Saleem's corporeal disintegration is to be interpreted as proleptically signifying the emerging schism and the gradual, incremental breaking apart of India as the forces of disunification and multiculturalism move the country to different directions and threaten the national unity. As such, the *alethic* disruption as manifested in Saleem's physical disintegration drives the *deontic/axiological* evaluation of the reconstructed postcolonial India in the aftermath of independence. The literalization of the metaphor of Saleem's body and, in particular, his subsequent disintegration, affords a new possible world in which the trajectory of India as a promising postcolonial nation-state is critiqued in Rushdie's text as Saleem, her magical poster child, literally falls apart.

Saleem's repeated assertions of the veracity of his claim of physical disintegration – he is literally "falling apart" – also underscores the narrator's acute awareness of the incredible nature of his assertion and the fact that the reader may be incredulous and hesitant in accepting his account, which is hard to swallow even by Saleem's narratee – Padma – who accepts his narrative for the most part. After narrating such an improbable event, Saleem exclaims, "There, now I've said it," which suggests that he is acutely conscious of how improbable his tale will sound to Padma – a stand-in for the reader (200). Padma's reaction clearly shows her incredulity: "Padma is looking as if her mother had died – her face, with its open-shuttering mouth, is the face of a beached pomfret. 'O, baba! She says at last. 'O, baba! You are sick; what have you said?'" (200) As Kluwick concludes, such instances of disbelief suggest, "the coexistence of the two codes [realism and fantasy] is anything but harmonious." (21) Such instances point to "narratorial unreliability...a typically postmodern gesture"; however, in *Midnight's Children* the

clash between the realist and magical worlds destabilizes the whole narrative and goes beyond conveying “the impossibility of uncovering any definite ‘truth’ since “the narrator’s unreliability contributes to the disintegration of the very fabric of the magic realist text itself.” (Kluwick 96) As such, the magical realist world is created through the change of the *alethic* mode via magical realist techniques – especially through the ‘magical alethic literalization of metaphor’ – which then raises new *deontic* and *axiological* options, thereby affording new avenues in which the magical and the improbable are evaluated and judged in terms of their *deontic* (socio-political) permission/obligation/prohibition as well as *axiological* ethicality within the socio-political context of the possible historiographic reconstruction of postcolonial India.

As it is discussed in chapter 4, the instability of the text is highlighted through the metafictional foregrounding of the act of narration – including offering alternative explanations of such events in rational and magical terms – which disrupts mimesis and engages the reader at the metafictional level of storytelling reminiscent of Brechtian *alienation effect*. This self-conscious foregrounding of the *alethic* mode, which drives the magical realist code, is done through the use of a number of metafictional techniques – chief among them are the narrator’s repetitive assertions of the veracity of his tale, and the questioning of the plausibility of the unfolding narrative either by his addressee – Padma – who is a stand-in for the reader – or by the narrator occasionally offering competing accounts or explanations for the same event that differ in terms of their *alethic* distance from the realistic code/actual world. In the context of postcolonial India, such metanarration strategies highlight the constructivism and perspectivism of historical narration that is aimed at subverting official accounts of India’s modern history.

Saleem's magical identification with his countrymen and literal disintegration, as Faris notes, extends and culminates "at the end of the novel as he joins 'crowds without boundaries' into which he literally disappears..." (112):

The crowd, the dense crowd, the crowd without boundaries, growing until it fills the world, will make progress impossible... I am being buffeted right and left while *rip tear crunch* reaches its climax, *and my body is screaming, it cannot take this kind of treatment anymore*, but now I see familiar faces in the crowd, they are all here... they throng around me pushing shoving crushing, and *the cracks are widening, pieces of my body are falling off... cracking now, fission of Saleem, I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode, bones splitting breaking beneath the awful pressure of the crowd, gag of bones falling down down down... only a broken creature spilling pieces of itself* into the street, because I have been so many too-many persons... and at last somewhere the striking of a clock, twelve chimes, release. Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust... [Italics mine] (*Midnight's Children* 533).

The literalized metaphoricalization of Saleem's disintegrating body at the end of the novel symbolizes the gradual division and disintegration of the country along religious and linguistic fault lines as the once promising nation-state at the cusp of independence gives way to schism and chaos. It signals a complete reversal of the promising beginnings of the novel; as such, the magical world is turned on its head. Unlike the opening of the narrative where the *alethic* mode leads to *deontic* permission and hope for the newly independent India (with the establishment of civil liberties and democratic safeguards such as the Constitution, the Parliament, parliamentary elections) correlating with *axiological* goodness (i.e. as morally tenable), here in the end, the literalization of the 'disintegration/fission metaphor,' as Saleem's body starts cracking and exploding, has negative *deontic* and *axiological* implications. The 'fissure metaphor' as a figure for the explosion of the nation specifically critiques the factionalism and tribalism that followed the nation's promising beginnings in the aftermath of independence.

With the ratification of the Emergency, the *alethic* mode, primarily through 'literalization of metaphor' provides a new possible world for depicting the oppression and the curtailment of

civil liberties via *deontic* prohibition that results in the apprehension, interrogation, and sterilization of the remaining midnight's children as well as the shut-down of possibilities and elimination of hope for the young nation-state – symbolized through the sterilization of midnight's children which corresponds with *axiological* badness, thereby critiquing and indicting the untoward socio-political trajectory of the young nation from independence and establishment of democratic institutions to the oppressive reign of Indira Gandhi and the Emergency.

In short, Saleem's journey from telepathic possibilities to physical disintegration mirrors that of his country and is to be interpreted as the magical literalization of the metaphor of schism, due to linguistic, religious, and socio-political differences, which are leading to factionalism, chaos, and violence at the national scale as the forces of national unification and centralization clash with the forces of disunification, multiculturalism, and the A bomb as India becomes a nuclear power! In Bowers' words, *Midnight's Children* depicts India that “in the space of fifty years moved from a new confident nation full of promise of its diverse gifts to a nation conscious of its own failings and on the verge of breaking down into a multiplicity of conflicting factions.” (54) Hence, the narrative needs to be viewed holistically and in terms of the politico-historical trajectory of India's early postcolonial history.

Another noteworthy instance of ‘literalization’ starts with Dr. Narlikar's death, which in the narrative is reported to have a significant impact on Saleem's father, Ahmed Sinai:

As for Ahmed Sinai: I swear that it was after Narlikar's death and arrival of the women that he began, literally, to fade... gradually his skin paled, his hair lost its color, until within a few months he had become entirely white except for the darkness of his eyes... Circumstantial evidence indicates that the shock of Narlikar's death was responsible for giving me a snow-white father to set beside my ebony mother... (*Midnight's Children* 204)

In the above quotation, “Rushdie almost seems to acknowledge the spectrum we have been examining [the spectrum from the real to the magical], providing alternate explanations of a

phenomenon, as we might find one more plausible than another.” (Faris 119) Saleem attributes the dramatic transformation in his father, his literalized paleness/whiteness, to the death of the family’s close friend and confidant Dr. Narlikar, which in the realistic *alethic* code can be logically attributed to the grief and sadness one would experience at the loss of a friend or a loved one. As such, the physical transformation due to the grief and shock of losing a close friend is alethically realistic though unlikely. Subsequently, the narrator ventures to offer a completely different explanation for his father’s physical changes in the very next paragraph:

But (although I don’t know how much you’re prepared to swallow) I shall risk giving *an alternative explanation*, a theory developed in the abstract privacy of my clocktower...because during my frequent psychic travels, I discovered something rather odd: during the first nine years after Independence, a *similar pigmentation disorder* ...afflicted large numbers of the nation’s business community. All over India, I stumbled across good Indian businessmen, their fortunes thriving thanks to the first Five Year Plan, which had concentrated on building up commerce...businessmen who had become or were becoming very, very pale indeed! *It seems that the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British and becoming masters of their own destinies had drained the color from their cheeks...*in which case, perhaps my father was a late victim of a widespread, though generally unmarked phenomenon. The businessmen of India were turning white [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 204).

The second explanation, the ‘whiteness’ syndrome, which applies not only to Saleem’s father, but to “large numbers of the nation’s business community,” is far-fetched and should be considered as operating in a different possible world from the actual/realistic world. Despite Saleem’s explanation, which attributes the Indian businessmen’s discoloration to “the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British,” a different explanation is warranted: the “pigmentation disorder” and discoloration (turning pale/white) of the businessmen’s skin is a magical literalized metaphor for their adoption of the business practices of the British whom they have replaced by practicing the very same exploitative practices as their colonial predecessors. Put simply, the Indian businessmen have become as white as their colonial precursors: neocolonialism succeeds colonialism seamlessly. Once again, the *alethic*



mode is utilized to literalize metaphors in order to critique the business elite in the postcolonial context in terms of *axiological* ethicality. Rushdie plays with the *epistemic* mode by providing two competing accounts for the changes in Ahmed Sinai's hair and skin, which leads to 'ambivalence' as the reader vacillates between the competing explanations for Ahmed Sinai's physical transformation, but the overall purpose is to use alethic literalization in order to question deontically and axiologically whether neo-postcolonial business is 'white.'

An instance of 'liminality' that highlights the traffic between the literal and the magical ends of the magical spectrum in the novel occurs when Saleem's grandfather Doctor Aziz, after graduating with a medical degree from Heidelberg, Germany, goes out to pray as a Muslim on an early morning in Kashmir. Rushdie's description of Doctor Aziz is realistic and replete with descriptive details and sensory data:

So he had risen in *the bitter cold of four-fifteen, washed himself in the prescribed fashion, dressed and put on his father's astrakhan cap; after which he had carried the rolled cheroot of the prayer-mat into the small lakeside garden in front of their old dark house and unrolled it over the waiting tussock. The ground felt deceptively soft under his feet* and made him simultaneously uncertain and unwary. "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful..." the exordium, spoken with hands joined before him like a book..."...Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Creation..."...*My grandfather bent his forehead towards the earth. Forward he bent, and the earth, prayer-mat-covered, curved up towards him. And now it was the tussock's time...it smote him upon the point of the nose. Three drops fell. There were rubies and diamonds. And my grandfather, lurching upright, made a resolve. Stood. Rolled cheroot. Stared across the lake. And was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a hole [Italics mine] (Midnight's Children 5-6).*

The preponderance of hyper-realistic and sensory detail, which I have Italicized in the above quotation – "the bitter cold of four-fifteen, washed himself in the prescribed fashion, dressed and put on his father's astrakhan cap..." renders the picture of Dr. Aziz quite believable and realistic until the moment he starts to pray as a Muslim. As Dr. Aziz bends his forehead, "towards the earth...and the earth...curved up towards him...it smote him upon the point of the

nose.” (6) The curving and rising of the earth and hitting him on the nose render the earth animate – as if the earth has a will of her own like a human being. Subsequently, “three drops fall.” (6) The next sentence contests the literal nature of the “three drops” as “rubies and diamonds.” (6) The sudden transition from the literal, matter-of-fact description of the three drops of blood, which follows Doctor Aziz hitting the ground during his prescribed Islamic prayer as realistic, to the magical world of drops of blood as “rubies and diamonds” creates a ‘liminal’ space between the magical and the realistic codes of the narrative. As Slemon argues, it attests to “the hybrid nature of magical realism [which] reveals a particularly intense dynamics of alterity.” (Faris 134) As such, the “sustained opposition” between the “two opposing discursive systems” of realism and fantasy, which “are locked in a continuous dialectic with [each] other” is reflected not only in the language employed but also in the thematic content of the novel at this point when Dr. Aziz is depicted as caught between the realistic, secular, scientific world of his European education in Heidelberg, Germany, and the supernatural, religious world of the Islamic Kashmir where he is currently residing:

“Priase be to Allah, Lord of the Creation...” – but now Heidelberg invaded his head; here was Ingrid, briefly his Ingrid, her face scorning him for his Mecca-turned parroting; here, their friends Oskar and Isle Lubin the anarchists, mocking his prayer with their antiideologies – “...The Compassionate, the Merciful, King of the Last Judgment!...” But it was no good, *he was caught in a strange middle ground, trapped between belief and disbelief...*” [Italics mine] (6)

In short, Dr. Aziz’s (and Saleem’s) status can best be described as ‘liminal’ (as previously noted) which characterizes the whole narrative as neither completely realistic/European nor entirely magical/Eastern but an amalgamation of both possible worlds that lead to the creation of a liminal space that is unstable since the reader is unsure as to which code/possible world is in play/operative at any given point in the narrative.

As the narrative progresses, increasingly *repetition* plays an important role in the structure of the narrative by establishing and re-appropriating the metaphors in new contexts. For instance, on the night that Dr. Aziz marries Ghani's daughter and consummates his marriage, "three drops of blood" appear on the sheet underneath the bride: "That night my grandfather placed the perforated sheet [literally] beneath his bride and in the morning it was adorned by three drops of blood, which formed a small triangle." (28) The three drops of blood appear as literal and realistic at this point whereas previously they were described as "rubies and diamonds"; as such, the appearance of the three drops of blood in the new context – Dr. Aziz's consummation of his marriage to Naseem Ghani – leads to uncertainty on the reader's part as to whether the "three drops of blood" is literal in the realistic code or a literalization of metaphor in the magical code, which contributes to the establishment of the scenes as 'liminal' thereby destabilizing the narrative.

Moreover, "the hole" that was created inside Dr. Aziz because of his state of agnostic unbelief as a result of his Western education (in Germany) and hitting his nose on the ground during the prayer is later filled by Naseem Ghani, the landowner's daughter with whom he falls in love through the perforated sheet since he is only allowed to examine her behind the sheet by viewing and examining the specific body part/organ that the young girl is having trouble with. "So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams." (*Midnight's Children* 22)

In short: my grandfather had fallen in love, and had come to think of the perforated sheet as something sacred and magical, because through it he had seen the things which had filled up the hole inside him which had been created when he had been hit on the nose by a tussock and insulted by the boatman Tai (23).

The perforated sheet, which appears as a literal sheet with a large man-made hole through which the young Doctor Aziz examines Naseem Ghani, subsequently appears and becomes a spatial metaphor for the fragmentary, non-linear and episodic structure of the narrative (this is analyzed in detail in chapter three on spatialization) for the way Rushdie spatializes India by focusing on one city or region of the Indian subcontinent at a time, thereby suggesting the way to narrativize the multifaceted history of India is by focusing on her various states and regions, one at a time. In short, readers have to grapple with these questions: Are the three drops of blood literal or metaphorical? Does the ground really rise up? Does Saleem really think the sheet is magical and people exist in parts (literalized metaphor) or is the sheet an apt spatial metaphor to represent the manner in which the complex, multicultural subcontinent of India is represented throughout the novel?

Interestingly, Rushdie parodies this piecemeal, fragmentary approach (of focusing on parts to arrive at the whole) through ‘magical alethic literalization’ of the metaphor by having Aunt Amina deliberately try to fall in love with her second husband Ahmed one part/organ at a time as if such a thing were ever possible in the realistic modality, which defies credulity and would be deemed improbable but not necessarily fantastic – to fall in love with someone deliberately and piece by piece, which is her strategy to forget the man that she cared about – Nadir Khan – and instead try to fall in love with her current husband:

She began to train herself to love him, mentally, *into every single one of his component parts, physical as well as behavioral, compartmentalizing him into lips and verbal tics and prejudices and likes...* in short she fell under the spell of her own parents, because she resolved *to fall in love with her husband bit by bit.*

Each day she selected one fragment of Ahmed Sinai, and concentrated her entire being upon it until it became wholly familiar; until she felt fondness rising up within her and becoming affection and, finally, love [Italics mine] (*Midnight's Children* 73).

As such, the *alethic* mode is used to parody self-consciously the text's spatialized approach to narrativization, which contributes to what Faris has called "two-way streets" that destabilize the narrative by creating uncertainty as to which code – the realistic or the magical – is applicable. As Faris puts it, "Like the snakes and ladders that embody the progressions and reversals of fortune, in *Midnight's Children* these two-way streets run everywhere, from the uncanny yet possible dream of Saleem's mother" to other more improbable, even impossible events and phenomena and result in a liminal, decolonized space (Faris 119).

Another notable instance of 'metaphor literalization' that exemplifies the two-way traffic between realism and magic/rational and supernatural codes concerns the freezing of assets when the Indian government decides to freeze the assets of Muslims in India – "only well-off Muslims are selected, naturally" – something extraordinary takes place:

"everything," Ahmed Sinai [the father] is saying, "bank accounts; savings bonds; the rents from the Kurla properties – all blocked, frozen. By order, the letter says. By order they will not let me have four annas, wife – not a chavanni to see the peepshow!"... "Not ten pice for a twist of channa," Ahmed Sinai adds, "not one anna to give alms to a beggar. *Frozen – like in the fridge!*" [Italics mine] (*Midnight's Children* 153)

At the outset, it seems that the freezing refers only to the freezing of Ahmed Sinai's financial assets when the assets and funds of affluent Muslims are blocked. However, Ahmed soon experiences the freeze in a more literal sense: the freezing of his genitalia (a literalized metaphor) that borders on the magical accompanies the realistic freezing of Ahmed's assets. When he calls his wife by saying, "Amina! Come here, wife! The bastards have shoveled my balls in an ice-bucket!" the reader is likely to take his statement metaphorically and interpret his comment as suggesting the chilling effect the freezing of his financial assets is having on him by using very colorful language – initially his wife also assumes that her husband is using language figuratively. However, after the couple go into their bedroom and his wife tries to console him

and touches his genitalia, she is shocked to feel their coldness: “Oh, my goodness, janum, I thought you were just talking dirty but it’s true! So cold, Allah, so cooold, like little round cubes of ice!” (154) The narrator Saleem sums it up: “Such things happen; after the State froze my father’s assets, my mother began to feel them growing colder and colder.” (154)

Interestingly, this is consistent with the logic of the possible world of the narrative in which the collective decisions made at the socio-political level impact individuals both literally and supernaturally: The freezing of Ahmed’s financial assets results in the freezing of his assets and testicles, just as earlier the simultaneous births of modern India and midnight’s children links them magically in a radio signal/chain. As such, the boundary between the realistic and magical possible worlds is crossed in order to critique the heavy-handed governmental decision to freeze the assets of an entire segment of the Indian society, in this case (affluent) Muslims. Thus, in this case at least, the *deontic* prohibition (freezing of Muslims’ assets) leads to the unleashing of *alethic* possibilities in the negative direction by having magically literalized effects such as the literal, magical freezing of Ahmed Sinai’s testicles! However, the main violation of the real world/code through ‘the principle of minimal departure’ is as with the opening of the novel that political decisions made in a realistic deontic world – since governments act that way in the actual world/real life – is placed within a magically *alethic* world where metaphors like freezing or fissure become literalized.

In the next magical instance, the *alethic* mode is employed via *reification* to critique and indict the policies and practices of the Indian government and the body politic as a whole in terms of the *axiological* modality. A key instance of magic contributing to the ‘unreality effect’ that advances the text’s politico-historical critique of India’s postcolonial history is the assassination of Nadir Khan’s friend Mian Abdullah at the University of Agra campus for his

stance against the partition of India that violates the *deontic* prohibition on criticizing the government-sanctioned partition. Nadir's humming not only stirs hummingbirds to sing but also a large number of dogs in the town:

At this point...*the Hummingbird's hum became higher*. Higher and higher, yara, and the assassin's eyes became wide... Then – Allah, then! – *the knives began to sing and Abdullah sang louder, humming high-high like he'd never hummed before*. His body was hard and the long curved blades had trouble killing him; one broke on the rib, but the others quickly became stained with red...and all the time *Abdullah was humming, humming-humming, and the knives were singing*. And know this: suddenly *one of the killers' eyes cracked and fell out of its socket*. Afterwards pieces of glass were found, ground into the carpet! [Italics mine] (*Midnight's Children* 48)

The assassination of Abdullah, who speaks against India's partition, is described in realistic detail while blending in the magical, fantastic elements such as the incredible humming of Abdullah under duress, which attracts hummingbirds and “two thousands of these” dogs which end up attacking the assassins, and more importantly, the reification of the assassin's eye ball – as it “cracked and fell out of its socket” – solidifies the magical realist effect of the scene (48). Thus, the forces of nature are mustered – in diametric contrast to the passivity of men who do nothing – to countervail and prevent the assassination carried out by the forces of political oppression and violence in the narrative (though they are unable to change the outcome). As demonstrated, the utilization of the magical elements and creation of a possible world in which dogs are lured to attack the assassins (when men do not lift a finger) by the humming of the victim – soon to be murdered – has political purpose behind it and accentuates and indicts the vicious act of assassinating the man by exploiting the *alethic* modality. As the dogs attack the assassins, Saleem, the metanarrator, addresses the *epistemic* mode on the escaping of Nadir Khan, Abdullah's associate: “If you don't believe me, check. Find out about Mian Abdullah and his convocations. Discover how we've swept his story under the carpet...” (49). As such, the metanarrator Saleem insists on the veracity and authenticity of his claim.

Subsequently, Nadir Khan takes refuge in Doctor Aziz's house and Aziz accepts him in his home against his wife's wish. When the couple argue over the issue of Nadir staying in their house, "my grandfather bellows, "Be silent, woman! The man needs our shelter, a hard cloud of determination settles upon my grandmother, who says very well You ask me whatsitsname, for silence. So not one word, whatsitsname, will pass my lips from now on." (55) This becomes the start of a three-year silence that is not completely impossible but it certainly involves *hyperbole* by stretching the reader's credulity along the possible-impossible continuum. More importantly, the silence takes on the new feature of becoming odorous, which is a fantastic addition: "The smell of silence, like a rotting goose-egg, fills my nostrils, overpowering everything else, it possesses the earth..." (56) The grandmother's silence is also contagious and affects others at least in one instance. When she is trying to communicate with the staff,

once the cook Daoud had been staring at her, trying to understand her somnolently frantic signaling, and as a result had not been looking in the direction of the boiling pot of gravy which fell upon his foot and fried it like a five-toed egg; he opened his mouth to scream but no sound emerged..." (61-62)

The cook's inability to scream takes the silence to a whole new level in terms of *alethic* possibilities and reinforces the efficacy of grandmother's silence, thereby consolidating the possible world as truly magical.

Another instance that mingles the realistic with the improbable and the fantastic is when Saleem's grandfather Dr. Aziz goes to what he is told is "a peaceful protest" in Amritsar. As he arrives at the alley where a meeting is being held in defiance of the martial law in the area, "he is...feeling very scared, because his nose is itching worse than it ever has [his premonition of what is to unfold], but he is a trained doctor, he puts it out of his mind, he enters the compound. Somebody is making a passionate speech." (*Midnight's Children* 33) "As the fifty-one men march down the alleyway a tickle replaces the itch in my grandfather's nose." (34) The itch and



the tickle alert Aadam Aziz to the impending danger, which he is ignoring to serve the people who may need his services as a physician. What ensues is an amalgamation of the real and the improbable:

*As Brigadier Dyer issues a command the sneeze hits my grandfather full in the face. “Yaaaakh-toooo!” he sneezes and falls forward, losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life. His “doctori-attache” flies open; bottles, liniment and syringes scatter in the dust... There is a noise like teeth chattering in winter and someone falls on him. Red stuff stains his shirt. There are screams now and sobs and the strange chattering continues. More and more people seem to have stumbled and fallen on top of my grandfather. He becomes afraid for his back. The clasp of his bag is digging into his chest, inflicting upon it a bruise so severe and mysterious that that it will not fade until after his death, years later, on the hill of Sankara Acharya or Takht-e-Soleiman... The chattering stops and is replaced by the noises of people and birds. There seems to be no traffic noise whatsoever. Brigadier Dyer’s fifty men put down their machine guns and go away. They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 34).*

The shooting massacre of unarmed people who have gathered for a political speech is described in hyper-realistic detail and sensory data while, at the same time, it is combined with the uncanny and the improbable typical of the magical realism narrative mode. For instance, the incessant sound of the machine guns firing on “the unarmed crowd” that is likened to “teeth chattering in winter,” the mentioning of the number of rounds fired as well as the falling of bodies one on top of the other are examples of realism par excellence. Nevertheless, the itching and tickling nose of Dr. Aziz as a telling sign of the impending massacre, and most importantly, his sneezing at the opportune moment that the soldiers start shooting into the crowd resulting in the miraculous saving of his life – the magical coincidence that saves Dr. Aziz’s life – borders on the impossible and the fantastic! This combination of the realistic and the magical within such a political context is typical of Rushdie’s magical realist narration – his amalgamation of “the improbable and the mundane” – in order to critique and subvert the policies and practices of the neocolonial governments in charge. The fact that Dr. Aziz’s magically sensitive nose (and his

sneeze) saves his life miraculously at the precise moment when the soldiers are ordered by Brigadier Dyer to shoot into the crowd suggests that nothing short of a miracle could have rescued the innocent people gathered to listen to the political speech (as Dr. Aziz is the only one who escapes the shooting massacre with his life); as such, it is a magical-realist indictment of the violence and intolerance exhibited toward dissenting voices as manifested in the crack-down on the political opposition. Similarly, in the example of the freezing of assets, for instance, the magical serves a direct socio-political purpose by highlighting the impact the government's freezing of Muslims' assets had on the families of those impacted; as such, the text offers an indictment of such governmental decisions and the detrimental effects they have on the people affected by those decisions.

A notable instance that links the magical/the fantastic with the socio-political problems facing India is encapsulated in Saleem's participation in the Midnight's Children Congress, particularly his description of its disintegration, which mirrors India's Congress, and the country at large with its factions, prejudices, and divisions.

The gradual disintegration of the Midnight's Children's Congress – which finally fell apart on the day the Chinese armies came down over the Himalayas to humiliate the Indian fauj – was already well underway. When novelty wears off, boredom, and then dissention, must inevitable ensue. Or (to put it another way) when a finger is mutilated, and fountains of blood flow out, all manner of vilenesses become possible...whether or not the cracks in the Conference were the (active-metaphorical) result of my finger-loss, they were certainly widening (*Midnight's Children* 291).

The factionalism and dysfunction at the Midnight's Children's Congress is described in both magical and realistic terms. For instance, each of the children described has some type of magical ability that is unique to that individual and different from the other midnight's children – symbolizing the various and diverse talents of India's diverse population, but these talents, instead of contributing to the Congress and the nation, become the source of rivalry and division

among the children. Thus, through *alethic* possibilities the children represent the incredible diversity of the populous nation-state post-independence, but as *Midnight's Children's Congress* illustrates, the alethic possibilities are largely squandered. Moreover, Saleem's attempt at linking the ensuing division in *Midnight's Children's Congress* to the mutilation of his finger reinforces the connection between Saleem's body as India's historiographic narrator and the body politic as a whole. Saleem makes another argument and attributes the gradual disintegration of the children's congress to the untoward influence of their parents, which is a more plausible and credible explanation:

Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents, and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian "blackies"; there were religious rivalries, and class entered our councils. The rich children turned up their noses at being in such lowly company; Brahmins began to feel uneasy at permitting even their thoughts to touch the thoughts of untouchables; while, among the low-born, the pressures of poverty and Communism were becoming evident...(*Midnight's Children* 292).

The *Midnight's Children's Congress* is presented not simply as a magical alternative to India's congress but as a possible world that mirrors and magnifies both the potentials and pitfalls (divisions) that the young nation has to contend with. The narrator zeroes in on Saleem (the nose) and his rival and nemesis, Shiva (the knees). The clash between the two symbolically represents the clash between idealism and belief in ideas to make the world better against hard-nosed pragmatism and propensity for violence represented by Shiva. Saleem, for instance, pleads with *Midnight's Children* to cohere: "Do not let this happen! Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital and labor, them-and-us to come between us! We, I cried passionately, "must be the third principle..." But Shiva counters Saleem's plea: "there is no third principle; there is only money and poverty, and have-and-lack, and right-and-left... The world is

not ideas, rich boy; the world is no place for dreamers or their dreams; the world, little Snot nose, is things.” (*Midnight’s Children* 293)

An episode, which illustrates the spectrum between the realistic and the fantastic is the description of the demolition of the slums in Bombay by Saleem:

The vans and bulldozers came first, rumbling along the main road; they stopped opposite the ghetto of the magicians. A loudspeaker began to declare: Civic beautification program...authorized operation of Sanjay Youth Central Committee...prepare instantly for evacuation to new site...this slum is a public eyesore, can no longer be tolerated...all persons will follow orders without dissent.” And while loudspeakers blared, there were figures descending from vans: a brightly-colored tent was being hastily erected, and there were camp beds and surgical equipment...and now from the vans there poured a stream of finely-dressed young ladies of high birth and foreign education, and then a second river of equally-well-dressed young men: volunteers, Sanjay Youth volunteers, doing their bit for society...but then I realized no, not volunteers, because all the men had the same curly hair and lips-like-women’s-labia, and the elegant ladies were all identical, too, their features corresponding to Sanjay’s Menaka, whom news-scrap had described as a “lanky beauty.” And who had once modeled nighties for a mattress company...standing in the chaos of the slum clearance program, I was shown once again that the ruling dynasty of India had learned how to replicate itself... “They are doing nasbandi – sterilization is being performed!”...Molotov cocktails are magically produced and hurled, bricks are drawn out of conjurers’ bags, the air is thick with yells and missiles and the elegant labia-lips and lanky-beauties ...and at this moment a new and more formidable assault is unleashed upon the slum: troops are sent in against magicians, women and children...and Russian guns are trained on the inhabitants of the ghetto (*Midnight’s Children* 494)

The above quotation renders the description realistic through the detailed description of the ghetto residents, their hurling of Molotov Cocktails and bricks on the Sanjay youth and the government troops with their “Russian guns trained on the inhabitants of the ghetto.” (Ibid.)

Even Sanjay’s wife Menaka is described in minute and superfluous detail: “who had once modeled nighties for a mattress company.” (Ibid.) But as the narration progresses, the realistic details become increasingly symbolic and supernatural as the Sanjay youth are described as replicas or clones of Sanjay Gandhi and his wife Menaka, suggesting symbolically and magically that the youth operating at the behest of Sanjay Gandhi act as clones or robots and have

essentially become instruments in the hands of the Gandhi family without any thought or volition of their own.

The example below, which appears toward the end of the novel, is a good illustration of the ways the ‘magical alethic literalization of metaphor’ makes it difficult to read scenes in the middle of the *alethic* spectrum with *epistemic* certainty.

...and it is said that the day after the bulldozing of the magicians ghetto, a new slum was reported in the heart of the city, hard by the New Delhi railway station. Bulldozers were rushed to the scene of the reported hovels; they found nothing. After that the existence of the moving slum of the escaped illusionists became a fact known to all the inhabitants of the city but the wreckers never found it. It was reported at Mehrauli; but when vasesectomists and troops went there, they found the Qutb Minar unbesmirched by the hovels of poverty. Informers said it had appeared in the gardens of the Jantar Mantar, Jai Singh’s Mughal observatory; but the machines of destruction, rushing to the scene, found only parrots and sun-dials (*Midnight’s Children* 496).

Here the vacillation between different accounts of the appearing and disappearing ghetto and the conflict between the realistic and magical codes leads to textual instability, which is politically ‘subversive’ especially in the above context where the government forces are sent to chase the phantom ghetto without any tangible success.

Midway through the narrative, Saleem uses the literalized metaphor of the cinema screen for perspective, which is explained in the novel as such:

REALITY IS A QUESTION of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves – or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality...we have come from 1915 to 1956, so we’re a good deal closer to the screen...(*Midnight’s Children* 189)

As Ferreira Sa and Alves Olalquiaga have noted, “Saleem establishes here a parallel between the viewing of a film and the telling of his story.” (311) For Rushdie, in fact, reality is “hard to get without spatial distance, and ‘perspective is impossible’ when one is too close to

happenings...” (Lohani-Chase 36) As such, he employs the cinema screen metaphor, a spatial metaphor concerned with distance from the object of attention, in order to illustrate the problem of being too close to the scene as the action unfolds and there is a close-up of the atrocities of war as Saleem takes us to the India-Pakistan war of 1971 in which the Indian military under the command of Sam Manekshaw defeated the Pakistani army on the Eastern front under the command of Tiger Niazi, the Pakistani troops committed atrocities that are recounted by Saleem Sinai in Dhaka:

And so I returned to that city in which, in those last hours before reunions, Shaheed and I saw many things, which were not true, which were not possible, because, our boys would not could not have behaved so badly, *we saw the intelligentsia of the city being massacred by the hundred*, but it was not true because it could not have been true, the Tiger was a decent chap after all, and our jawans were worth ten babus, we moved through *the impossible hallucination of the night* hiding in doorways while fires blossomed like flowers...and Shaheed began his, “No, buddha – what a thing, Allah, you can’t believe your eyes – no, not true – how can it –buddha, tell, what’s got into my eyes? And at last the buddha spoke, knowing Shaheed could not hear: “O, Shaheeda,” he said, revealing the depths of his fastidiousness, “a person must sometimes choose what he will see and what he will not, look away from there now.” But Shaheed was staring at a maidan in which *lady doctors were being bayoneted before they were raped, and raped again before they were shot*. Above them and behind them, the cool white minaret of a mosque stared blindly down upon the scene [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 432).

This scene is a close-up of the violence of the partition and portrays the atrocities committed by Pakistani troops in the Eastern Pakistan that later achieves independence and become Bangladesh. It includes the massacres of the opposition intelligentsia and the rape and murder of the female doctors are so horrendous that they defy credulity and resemble being close to the cinema screen mentioned previously in the novel. As the narrator Saleem comes closer to the action, as he moves closer to the screen, the point at which the meaning is to be discovered and extrapolated, he realizes that the meaning eludes him since there is no logical explanation he can find for the atrocities committed during the Bangladesh war.

The purpose for the hyper-realistic description of the atrocities committed by Pakistani soldiers in Bangladesh is to concretize one of Rushdie's themes, that is, the actual world is sometimes so outrageous and unbelievable that it borders on the fantastic; as such, there is no need to construct an alternative world since the actual world is incredible enough given the extent of the violence and human depravity depicted in such scenes: "what a thing, Allah, you can't believe your eyes – no, not true – how can it – buddha, tell, what's got into my eyes?" (*Midnight's Children* 432)

To reiterate, in terms of the *alethic* dimension, the violence and carnage have become very possible and real; in fact, they have become so real that there is no need for the construction of an alternative possible world since what was deemed as impossible or unlikely has already transpired. The violence is depicted as morally reprehensible in terms of *axiological* ethicality, yet crucially that condemnation is amplified by the *alethic* literalization of metaphors elsewhere in the narrative such as the freezing of Ahmed Sinai's testicles, the discoloration of the merchant class, and so on throughout the novel.

All in all, Saleem's narration of India's history from the cusp of independence to the 1970's deconstructs India's official historiography through his narratological construction of the country's history that renders it contingent and provisional through the conflation of the realistic, documented history and magical details that create a liminal world in which metaphors are quite literalized while retaining some of their figurative/metaphorical suggestiveness. As Christy Penny notes, "By synchronizing the national history and the personal history, Rushdie narrates India's colonial past and postcolonial present." (45). Moreover, "Saleem's position as...creator of his familial history brings up the idea that history may be created, just as a family history may be embellished and exaggerated," which in turn, draws attention to the constructiveness of

history that inevitably reflects the prejudices and interests of its creators (Penny 41). As we shall see in chapter 4, this construction of history, which shatters the mimetic illusion, is foregrounded by the metanarrator repeatedly throughout the novelistic text to disturb the mimetic illusion through various intrusions and cause a Brechtian *alienation effect* to cause the reader to think about the failures of human history. But the key point is that in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs the magically realistic technique of 'literalization' in order to create a possible world that magnifies the effects of all acts, especially governmental ones, and hence forces readers to reexamine realistic history through new *axiological* and *deontic* modes of thinking and conceptualizing.

#### **2.4. MAGICAL REALISM IN *SHAME***

In its dual structure and strong metafictional and episodic interventions that intersperse the narrative text, *Shame* occupies a unique position among Rushdie's novels. In fact, more than any other novel in Rushdie's oeuvre, *Shame* engages with the modern history of post-independence Pakistan in dual modes of engagement via the narrative codes of realism and fantasy, which contribute to the creation of different possible worlds – the constructed magical world of 'Peccavistan' and the actual world of 'Pakistan' respectively. In the realistic metafictional sections and episodic interventions discussed in more detail in chapter 4, the text engages with the actual history of modern Pakistan through the successive governments of Prime Minister Ali Bhutto and General Zia ul-Haq, and is, more or less, an explicit critique of Pakistani politics and the society that supports and enables such oppressive and tyrannical governments. As such, the metafictional sections set the stage by providing the rationale for the created world of Peccavistan, which is created to enhance and accentuate the follies and atrocities of actual Pakistani politics by stretching them in terms of *alethic* possibilities that reinforce and accentuate



the same *deontic* prohibitions and obligations operative in actual, historical Pakistan which are critiqued and indicted by the quasi-authorial metanarrator in the metafictional text. As such, both possible worlds are adversely evaluated and indicted in terms of their *axiological* ethicality since both worlds violate basic human rights and civil liberties that the novel and its author espouse.

Unlike *Midnight's Children* that commences with a newly independent promising India in which the *alethic* mode leads to new *deontic* and *axiological* consequences, the world of *Shame* is repressive from the outset and is dominated by *deontic* prohibition enforced by repressive governments which oversee a society with various socio-cultural problems, restrictions, and prejudicial practices – Islamic fundamentalism, rampant corruption, political oppression, and patriarchal relegation of women to second class citizens, to name a few. To circumvent the repressive environment of Peccavistan/Pakistan, Rushdie creates an isolated mansion, an enclave/micro-world that is separate from and immune to the outside world's *deontic* prohibitions in the aftermath of the patriarch Mr. Shakil's death. To enact the realistic and the magical codes and their respective possible worlds, the text begins with the description of the town Q. and quickly moves from the description of the Shakil residence to Mr. Shakil's three isolated daughters who have been sequestered from the Islamic society and its moral codes and live in a kind of cocoon or parallel universe, an isolated possible world, which sets the stage for the future birth of their unusual son, Omar Khayyam Shakil. The death of the old patriarch Mr. Shakil gives the daughters a sense of liberation from their tyrannical and controlling father and makes them masters of their own destiny overnight. Subsequent to the banquet that the three sisters have in their secluded mansion, the sisters get pregnant; or rather, one of them is impregnated but all three play their roles so perfectly that no one can tell who the expecting mother is. The description of the three sisters is overstated through 'hyperbole' to such an extent

that it triggers the supernatural code (in conjunction with the isolation of the mansion) by stretching the grounds for credulity:

But who was pregnant?

Chhunni, the eldest, or Munnee-in-the-middle, or ‘little’ Bunny, the baby of the three? – Nobody ever discovered, not even the child that was born. *Their closing of ranks was absolute*, and effected with the most meticulous attention to detail. Just imagine: they made the servants swear loyalty oaths on the Book. The servants joined them in their self-imposed captivity, and only left the house feet first, wrapped in white sheets, and via, of course, the route constructed by Yakoob Balloch. During the entire term of that pregnancy, no doctor was summoned to the house...the sisters, I repeat, displayed the uniquely passionate solidarity that was their most remarkable characteristic *by feigning – in the case of two of them – the entire range of symptoms that the third was obliged to display* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 12).

The lengths that the three sisters go to in order to conceal the identity of the biological mother including “feigning – in the case of two of them – the entire range of symptoms,” as noted, constitute such extreme dissimulation that defies credulity and qualifies for magical ‘hyperbole’; as such, it contributes to the creation of the ‘unreality effect’ essential to the construction of the magical world of *Peccavistan* that incrementally departs from the realistic world we know of and paves the way for the more fantastic events and grotesque characters that subsequently and increasingly populate the narrative text of *Shame*.

The unreality effect and the constructed possible world is sustained a few pages later when Omar Khayyam’s childhood escapades are described in exaggerated details, which stretch imagination. The hyperbolic exaggerations are of a historical and mythological nature:

First things first: for twelve years, he had the run of the house. Little (except freedom) was denied him. A spoiled and vulpine brat...and after the nightmares began and he started giving up sleep, he plunged deeper and deeper into the seemingly bottomless depths of that decaying realm. Believe me when I tell you that *he stumbled down corridors so long untrdden that his sandaled feet sank into the dust right up to his ankles*, that *he discovered ruined staircases made impossible by longago earthquakes which had caused them to heave up into tooth-sharp mountains and also fall away to reveal dark abysses of fear*...in the silence of the night and the first sounds of dawn *he explored beyond history into what seemed the positively archeological antiquity of ‘Nishapur’, discovering in almirahs the wood of whose doors disintegrated beneath his*

*tentative fingers the impossible forms of painted Neolithic pottery in the Kotdiji style...*[Italics mine] (*Shame* 25)

The house in which Omar Khayyam Shakil has been confined to since birth becomes a magical and mythical space – an archeological site for him to explore as a way to spend his time during his sleepless nights as an insomniac because of the nightmares he has been having. As mentioned, the antiquity of the house is stretched to the limits of human credulity; moreover, it is geographically/spatially impossible for the young Omar to wander for days without repeating his steps in the labyrinthine house. Young Omar’s feelings toward the ancient house is one of “fear”; after all, he has been imprisoned in that house ever since his birth and views the house as his enemy that has limited and curtailed his activities and denied him freedom. In fact, at one point in the narrative, he sets out to vandalize and destroy the secluded house:

...Omar Khayyam took his revenge ...on his unnatural surroundings. I wince as I record his vandalism: armed with broomstick and misappropriated hatchet, he rampaged through dusty passages and maggoty bedrooms, smashing glass cabinets, felling oblivion-sprinkled divans, pulverizing wormy libraries; crystal, paintings, rusty helmets, the paper-thin remnants of priceless silver carpets were destroyed beyond all possibility of repair (*Shame* 26)

As the quotation clearly demonstrates, the young Omar Khayyam considers the house and his environment by extension as his enemy, which is why he picks the hatchet to destroy it.

As the Italicized portion of the quoted paragraph below demonstrates, the magical realist device of ‘animation’ is used to trigger the supernatural code and render the house ‘animated’; in fact, the house is depicted as a place that tantalizes, challenges, and frustrates young Omar’s efforts to retrace his steps and escape his restrictive environment to attain freedom. As a case in point, as Omar searches and digs deeper and deeper into the ancient artifacts and remnants of antiquity, the house becomes animated and takes on animate characteristics including a will to frustrate

Omar at every turn. On one of his searches in the house, Omar Khayyam encounters an opening in the wall that leads to the outside world and freedom:

He was perhaps ten years old when he had this first glimpse of *the unfettered outside world*. He had only to walk through the shattered wall – but the gift had been sprung upon him without sufficient warning, and, taken unawares by the shocking promise of the dawn light streaming through the hole, he turned tail and fled, his terror leading him back to his own comforting, comfortable room. Afterwards, when he had had time to consider things, *he tried to retrace his steps, armed with a purloined ball of string; but try as he might, he never again found his way to that place in the maze of his childhood where the minotaur of forbidden sunlight lived* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 25).

As the quoted paragraph illustrates, the distinction between animate/inanimate is collapsed here – one of the telltale signs of a magical world – since the house is depicted as an animate being with a will to thwart and frustrate Omar Khayyam’s attempts to flee his confining environment in which he has been imprisoned up to that juncture. The house is also able to change and morph toward that purpose. As Kluwick observes, the house tantalizes Omar Khayyam while ultimately refusing him access to freedom: the house, in fact, “is his willful enemy; bent on confusing and fooling him by continuous expansions and contractions, tempting him further and further into its labyrinthine self and granting him glimpses of liberty only refuse to release him.” (79) All in all, the house and its animation is an *alethic* departure from the realistic code which introduces the theme of entrapment/oppression that both worlds of the novel (Peccavistan and Pakistan) center around.

The tug of war and vacillation between the natural and supernatural codes is also evident early on when Omar Khayyam persuades the old Hashmat Bibi, the head mistress, to undergo hypnosis that he has learned from his father’s library, the origin of his magical abilities to hypnotize that become magical or liminally so later:

Hashmat Bibi also agreed to ‘go under’. Omar made her imagine she was floating on a soft pink cloud. ‘You are sinking deeper,’ he intoned as she lay upon her mat, ‘and deeper into the cloud. It is good to be in the cloud; you want to sink lower and lower.’

These experiments had a tragic side effect. Soon after his twelfth birthday, his mothers were informed by the three loving manservants, who stared accusingly at the young master as they spoke, that Hashmat Bibi had apparently willed herself into death... (*Shame* 28).

In the quotation above, the narrator suggests that Hashmat Bibi's death has been "a tragic side effect" of the young Omar's hypnotic experimentation. However, a few pages later, as the narrator describes the three sisters' decline in their physique, he haphazardly says: "They became soft, there were knots in their hair, they lost interest in the kitchen, *the servants got away with murder.*" [Italics mine] (*Shame* 30) The last italicized phrase poses a semantic and *epistemic* interpretative challenge: should the statement be interpreted literally or metaphorically? The immediate context favors a metaphorical reading; in other words, because the sisters have lost interest in the house, the servants take advantage of the situation by not doing their job properly. However, in light of Hashmat Bibi's death, as Kluwick has suggested, the statement alters the interpretation of the whole section: that the servants may have, in fact, murdered the old Hashmat Bibi so that they would be free and could do as they pleased by shirking their responsibilities without being cited and held accountable by the scrupulous and fastidious Heshmat Bibi. This set of events creates 'ambivalence' by activating the realistic and supernatural codes without supporting one interpretation or explanation over the other. As Kluwick notes,

The implementation of the realist code here depends, of course, on the question of whether the phrase 'to get away with murder' should be understood literally or metaphorically, and as we have seen, the borderline between the literal and the metaphorical is far from fixed in magic realism." (101)

Once the magical world is set in motion, the characters are endowed with a similar admixture of realism and fantasy, which transforms them into magical-realist characters with grotesque and unusual characteristics. What is crucial to note, however, is the fact that the

characters are not life-like since the fantastic and supernatural elements render them quite unrealistic and even grotesque; in fact, they are depicted as ‘anti-realistic.’ As Arun Mukerjee has suggested, due to their subversion of realistic conventions and verisimilitude, “Rushdie’s characters ought to be viewed as types rather than fully rounded characters.” (Kluwick 107) She has called his characters “‘gestic or ‘stylized’” (Mukherjee 116). However, as Kluwick notes, such a categorization “neglects the fluidities and indeterminacies which characterize not only Rushdie’s texts as such, but also his portrayal of characters” who have psychological depth in many cases as with Omar Khayyam or Sufiya Zinobia, but also an *alethic* depth insofar as they are between the realistic and magical codes (107).

The underlying reason for the construction of these highly-stylized characters is socio-political critique. At the outset, however, an important distinction needs to be made between the ‘oppressors’ and the ‘victims’ in the characters that populate *Shame*. The former group comprises characters with power who have positions of authority and privilege such as Iskander Harappa, General Raza Hyder, Talvar Ulhaq, and Omar Khayyam Shakil that are deformed morally and psychologically by the power they exercise – while remaining physically human – because they recklessly and shamelessly wield it without *deontic* prohibitions. As a case in point, Omar Khayyam’s physique remains human throughout the narrative since, unlike his wife, he does not transform into a monster literally; however, he becomes monstrously obese and behaves like a monster by selfishly pursuing pleasure to the detriment of others. As the illegitimate child of a British officer and a Pakistani woman who is reviled by the Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan (embodied by Mulana), Omar becomes excessively obese and shameless. In fact, early on in the narrative, ‘shamelessness’ becomes Omar’s defining characteristic since he disregards societal/moral considerations and does what he likes – Farah Zoroaster’s rape under hypnosis

being his worst act until he marries Sufiya and becomes subservient to Raza Hyder and those in power – a neocolonial pawn.

The oppressed/victimized characters, on the other hand, are presented in ways that their physical traits hyperbolically and magically express their psychological oppression and shaming, deformed in a supernatural sense in terms of the *alethic* modality to highlight their hostile environment and the autocratic system that has oppressed them and deprived them of their fundamental rights as human beings, thereby transforming them into *alethic*, supernatural monsters such as the character of Sufiya Zinobia.

A related technique that Rushdie employs in the portrayal of his characters in the magical realist text of *Shame* is “his use of shorthand characteristics,” that is, “one or more idiosyncratic features which are highlighted throughout.” (Kluwick 109) Especially in his portrayal of characters that are oppressed or victimized, Rushdie utilizes one or more distinguishing features or trademarks that distinguish the particular character from the other characters in the narrative. “Bilquis’s penciled eyebrows which give her an air of perpetual fear and uncertainty” are concrete remnants of her past when she was with her father Mahmoud at the time his movie theater was torched and blown into smithereens – a victim of socio-political prejudice and intolerance (Kluwick 109). Moreover, these idiosyncratic characteristics reinforce the narrated possible world as a magical world, which differs alethically from the actual world because in these characters psychological traits or scars manifest physically or supernaturally, as most pointedly with Sufiya. As such, the spectrum or continuum for the various improbable and magical phenomena in *Shame* extends to characters as well. In the most extreme instances, the characters turn into freaks and monsters. Kluwick calls them “freaks in a freakish world.” (109)

Another notable example of the indexing of a victimized/oppressed character by a particular trait of characteristic is Naveed Hyder whose extraordinary fertility (whose name means Good News), through the course of the narrative, results in the birth of no less than 27 children! Naveed Hyder's incredible fertility is a textual ploy to satirize Pakistani government's emphasis on high childbirth as a way to make the nation more populous with more men to serve in her military as well as to critique the Islamic stance against family planning and contraception.

The text is revealing:

Good News gave birth to fine, healthy *twin sons*, and the General was so delighted that he forgot all about Sindbad Mengal. *Exactly one year later* Good News became a mother again; this time *she produced triplets*. Raza Hyder was a little alarmed and joked nervously to Talvar Ulhaq: 'You said you would be the perfect son-in-law, but, baba, five grandsons is enough, maybe you are overdoing your duty.' *Precisely twelve months later* Good News *brought forth a beautiful quartet of baby girls*, who Hyder loved so much that he decided not to express his concern about the growing numbers of cradles and comforters and washing lines and rattles clogging up the house. *Five more granddaughters turned up one year later to the day*, and now Hyder had to say something. 'Fourteen kids with the same birthday,' he told the couple as sternly as he could manage, 'what do you think you're up to? Haven't you heard of the population problem? You should take, perhaps, certain steps, but at that Talvar Ulhaq drew himself up until his whole body was as stiff as his neck and replied, 'Sir, I never thought to hear you say such a thing. You are a devout man, I thought. Mulana Davoud's ghost would blush if it heard such Godless procedures.' So Hyder felt ashamed and shut his mouth, and in the fifth year *Good News's womb released six more new lives, three male, three female*, because Talvar Ulhaq in the pride of his manhood had chosen to ignore Hyder's remark about too-many-grandsons; and in the year of Iskander Harappa's fall the number rose to twenty seven children in all ... [Italics mine] (*Shame* 218-219).

Naveed's superhuman fertility defies credulity not only because of the number of consecutive pregnancies she has but also due to the ascending number of births – twins, triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, sextuplets – and their precise timing: the dates of all the deliveries and births matching precisely and falling on the same exact date. What is even more incredible is Talvar Ulhaq's "clairvoyant talents [due to which] he always knew which nights were best for conception" as well as his ability to select and determine the gender of his future offspring as he



starts to have only girls when his father-in-law General Hyder tells him that “five grandsons is enough” (218). However, after the second admonition, Talvar decides to ignore the General’s remark and has both boys and girls in equal numbers! The hyperbolic number of births and their ascending order along with their precise timing and Talvar’s clairvoyance and ability to choose his offspring’s gender all contribute to the construction of the fantastic possible world of ‘Peccavistan’ in which Rushdie exploits the *alethic* modality to critique Pakistan’s booming population. In fact, the country’s overpopulation is attributed to the Islamic prohibition on contraception and preventative measures which Mulana Dawood – General Hyder’s spiritual mentor – embodies. The constructed possible world shares the same *deontic* prohibition on contraception as the actual world of Pakistan with its conservative Islamic prohibitions on contraception; as such, the *alethic* possibilities are stretched to critique and indict such attitudes in terms of *axiological* ethicality by showing how conservative Islamic socio-cultural values prevent family planning in a developing country and how this is a supernatural sized problem, in the possible world of Peccavistan, that ultimately leads to Naveed’s suicide. As such, Naveed is portrayed as the representative victim of patriarchy whose suicide is, in fact, a magical *alethic* realization of patriarchy that is built on the bodies of women. Her name in Urdu and Farsi literally means ‘Good News’ and is used to indict the country’s patriarchal culture since a woman is viewed as subservient to her husband and is expected to provide him with as many children as he wishes, which is precisely the reason that she feels compelled to commit suicide; as such, her suicide is a damning critique of the patriarchy in Peccavistan/Pakistan.

Pointedly absent from the conversation between General Hyder and Talvar Ulhaq is Good News: Here are the father and son-in-law discussing the number of pregnancies Good News should have in her absence. She is the person, who undergoes all these pregnancies,

deliveries, and births, and yet she is not even included in the conversation and her views or wants are completely ignored. This section depicts how the patriarchy exploits women and the impact that such treatment has on them:

He came to her once a year and ordered her to get ready, because it was time to plant the seed, until she felt like a vegetable patch whose naturally fertile soil was being worn out by an overzealous gardener, and understood that there was no hope for the women in the world, because whether you were respectable or not the men got you anyway, no matter how hard you tried to be the most proper of ladies the men would come and stuff you full of alien unwanted life (*Shame* 218).

Naveed's older sister, Sufiya Zinobia, is endowed with even more magical attributes that tie her, like Saleem Sinai, to her nation. At the center of the narrative is the character of Sufiya that is completely removed from the realistic world by enacting the supernatural code. As Rushdie's metanarrator suggests, Sufiya literally, metaphorically, and magically embodies "the shame" throughout the possible world of *Peccavistan* which signifies the author's critique of Pakistan's body politic including its governmental oppression and violence but also the patriarchal culture and societal practices that support discriminatory acts and policies. Because her father blames her for being female, from birth, Sufiya experiences patriarchally-imposed 'gender shame' by blushing profusely, which is overstated through hyperbole, but within the context of the narrative, it appears as excessive and contributes to the 'unreality effect.' As a case in point, Sofia's blushing, through the *alethic* extension, leads to the boiling of the water in which she is bathed as an infant by the family servant, thereby contributing to the unreality effect.

As explained so far, the oppressed characters' encounters with the oppressive socio-political forces operative in Peccavistan/Pakistan are manifested in their grotesque physique as victims, which directly ties to the supernatural code and its possible world in *Shame*. The indictment of such a world in terms of the *axiological* ethicality is the main thrust of the novel.

The victims, via *alethic* transformations, are transformed into monstrous sub-human beings. As a consequence of all the shame Sufiya Zinobia is compelled to experience on behalf of her nation, in a reversal of the fairytale transformation, the beauty is metamorphosed into a beast, as the young girl becomes the adult monster that haunts Pakistan's countryside and decapitates young males in a 'literalization' of violent feminist revolt against patriarchal shame and relegation of women to second-class citizens in the Islamic Pakistan. Unable to bear the enormous shame of the family and the country in which she is born including her father's oppressive regime, Sufiya's transformation becomes complete when she is transformed into a vampire-like monster that decapitates her victims and devours their internal organs: "'What animal' a six-foot Frontiersman asked Omar Khayyam with the innocent awe of a child, 'can tear a man's head off his shoulders and drag his insides out through the hole to eat?'" (*Shame* 269) The murders and decapitations are initially attributed to "the white panther" that haunts the countryside, but gradually Omar Khayyam comes to the stark realization that it is his wife Sufiya who has been transformed to this man-eating monster:

Then he was angry with himself, remembering that she was no longer Sufiya Zinobia, that nothing was left in her which could be recognized as the daughter of Bilquis Hyder, that the Beast within had changed her for all time. 'I should stop calling her by her name,' he thought; but found that he could not. *Hyder's daughter. My wife. Sufiya Zinobia Shakil* (*Shame* 270).

But this transformation, as Kluwick perceptively observes, is in response to the societal and political pressures that Rushdie's characters have to contend with, which transforms them from the inside and through hyperbolic manifestations of psychological effects in the physical world, into monsters. As such, Sufiya's physical transformation, including her incessant blushing, is the physical expression and manifestation of her psychological derangement in response to the oppressive environment in which she lives. Sufiya is merely a victim of Pakistani

politics and the society that enables oppression and violence of many kinds, which turn her into a supernatural/alethic monster.

To generalize, the world of Peccavistan/Pakistan is an antagonistic and hostile one that is run by autocratic governments headed by dishonest politicians and power-grabbing generals that have usurped power in the internal power-struggles in the country; the deprivation of large segments of Pakistani society, especially women, of fundamental human rights and civil liberties, corruption, and Islamic fundamentalism turn the victims into physical monsters (e.g. Sufiya Zinobia) while the perpetrators of crimes such as Raza Hyder, Iskander Harappa, Talvar Ulhaq, and Omar Khayyam remain physically human while evincing psychological and moral monstrosity.

Viewed holistically, *Peccavistan* – the magical world of *Shame* – is a world that is constructed to accentuate and highlight the atrocities, violence, and oppression of the socio-politics of Pakistan and how it subjugates and oppresses its people, especially women. In this possible world, the *deontic* prohibitions in the form of curtailment of basic human rights and civil liberties unleashes a frightening *alethic* world that is populated by decapitating monsters such as Sufiya Zinobia and a Talvar Ulhaq who impregnates his wife a total of 27 times – an instantiation of the patriarchal culture that disregards a woman’s wish and acts selfishly. Thus, the negative evaluation of such an oppressive world in terms of *axiological* ethicality leads to an absurd world and absurdity of life experienced in such a world: “A world of which one cannot make sense is a grotesque world, and in Rushdie’s fiction this grotesqueness is highlighted throughout.” (Kluwick 110) As Kluwick puts it, “the grotesque corporeality of Rushdie’s [victimized/oppresed] characters mirrors both their precarious situation in an unintelligible,

grotesque, and hostile world, as well as their encounters with national and colonial stereotypes which seek to construct them as inferior.” (111)

Throughout the novel, the characters are presented as fluid and heterogeneous which defies their categorization into any clear-cut entities. In fact, “a crossing of gender barriers is highlighted in *Shame*, in which Bilquis is surrounded by characters whose gender becomes confused in various ways...” (Kluwick 107) As a case in point, Mahmoud, Bilquis’ father and a widower, is known as “Mahmoud the woman” in the community in which he lives (*Shame* 58). Moreover, Bilquis’ husband and son-in-law both find themselves in such circumstances that compel them to dress as women. Thus, the novel underlines the crossing of gender barriers (as Saleem similarly crosses class barriers in *Midnight’s Children* due to the fact that he is switched as an infant by Mary Perieta). As for female characters taking on masculine characteristics, Arjumand, Iskander Harappa and Rani Humayun’s daughter whose nickname is Ironpants, is a prime example and a quasi-magical one: Her very name suggests her masculine characteristics. Such emphasis on the crossing of gender and class categorizations, which are socially constructed, underlines their transgressive and subversive significance.

In short, the characters pursue different paths and resort to different strategies to come to grips with the antagonistic, hostile world in which they live. To reiterate the two key axiological and critical points, the characters in the novel are divided into two distinct groups based on their relation to power: The first group comprises those in positions of power, authority, and privilege such as Raza Hyder, Iskander Harappa, Talvar Ulhaq, and Omar Khayyam that are not physical monsters but rather monstrous in a moral sense. Omar Khayyam, for instance, pursues pleasure as the ultimate good in his life, and when this is exhausted, he begins to serve the authorities and, in fact, marries into power – he works for Raza Hyder and the entrenched power in the country.

The second group is comprised of those that are the victims of the societal problems of patriarchy and socio-political oppression such as Sufiya Zinobia who is a supernatural, *alethic* monster exacting vengeance for the axiological and deontic monstrosity or inhumanity of the patriarchy and those in power that subjugate and shame women like her. As such, power defines the characters in the novel: characters with power are deformed by it because they act recklessly and shamelessly without *deontic* prohibitions while those oppressed as victims of the power structure are deformed in a more magical sense via the *alethic* modality as their physical traits and actions hyperbolically express their psychological oppression and shaming, and, in Sufiya's case, her monstrosity signifies her rebellion/vengeance against the patriarchal oppression and mistreatment of women.

Thus, Rushdie's characters exhibit grotesque and abnormal features in a variety of ways and means including supernatural grotesqueness and moral degeneration. Kluwick attributes the grotesqueness of Rushdie's characters to the crisis in postcolonial identity since the characters are faced with an antagonistic and hostile world that they cannot decipher. She contends that the postcolonial identity crisis is traceable to "the contradictions between the Indian centuries beneath its Pakistani present and the myth of newness which is propagated by its leaders in their attempts to suppress the Indian history of the new nation." (110) As such, their condition mirrors that of the postcolonial subject, which is faced with the task of asserting itself in a world highly contradictory and difficult to negotiate." (Kluwick 110)

Toward the end of the novel, there is a glimpse of the future possible world when Omar Khayyam falls ill at his mothers' home, and in the midst of his hallucinations he has a proleptic phantasmagoria, a vision of the future of his country, which is both similar and different from the deictic present of the narrative:

During recessions in the fever he remembered dreaming things that he could not have known were true, *visions of the future*, of what would happen after the end. Quarrels between three Generals. Continued public disturbances. Great powers shifting their ground, deciding the Army had become unstable. And at last Arjumand and Haroun set free, reborn into power, the virgin ironpants and her only lover taking charge. *The fall of God and in his place the Myth of the Martyr Iskander*. And after that arrests, retribution, trials, hangings, blood, *a new cycle of shamelessness and shame* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 294).

The vision resembles a news brief with the headlines capturing the events and players at the sociopolitical level in the future. However, what is most striking about the surreal vision is that the world of *shame* will remain oppressive and will continue to produce deceptive myths that will engender monsters in the foreseeable future. The above quotation offers a glimpse of the future of Pakistan – one in which Arjumand and Haroun emerge as the new rulers and Iskander's memory, signifying nationalism, replaces Islam as the national myth. The *prolepsis* instantiated achieves simultaneity of vision as readers are enabled to see future events with the present and have a glimpse of the untoward trajectory of the politics of the nation as a series of “arrests, retribution, trials, hangings, blood a new cycle of shamelessness and shame.” (*Shame* 294) In other words, more of the same, or in Rushdie's words, “a new cycle of shamelessness and shame” that will continue to produce freaks, monsters, and other types of grotesque characters, which reflect the violence and repression of Pakistan's socio-political landscape in their (corporeal) bodies (294). The political players have changed, but the practices are precisely the same under new guises and with new justifications. In the end, Rushdie's censure of the route Pakistan has taken could hardly be overstated, but crucially he magnifies it by alethically stressing the violence perpetrated by *deontic* shamelessness throughout the novelistic text.

## 2.5. CONCLUSION

I have argued throughout this chapter that Rushdie's texts are highly political and engage with the various socio-political issues of the nation-states of the Indian subcontinent through the

hybrid narrative mode of magical realism. To narrativize the politico-historical trajectories of India and Pakistan, Rushdie offers possible worlds that encompass a spectrum of possibilities from the solidly real to the probable to the unlikely to the impossible/magical, but in doing so, he also foregrounds the bridging transition from one (possible) world into another (more so in *Midnight's Children* as a way to highlight the constructedness and provisionality of the narrative), thereby shifting the framework for the evaluation of the possible world at hand and destabilizing the whole text as a consequence. As Kluwick suggests, what sets Rushdie's magical realist texts apart from their Latin American counterparts (e.g. the novels of Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and Laura Esquivel) is that there is a certain amount of "friction" (rather than harmony) between the competing realist and magical codes and possible worlds in Rushdie's texts: "such frictions possess the power to astonish, and out of this power grows a subversiveness that cannot – and should not – be ignored or denied." (Kluwick 188)

The differing possible worlds and versions of events, however, lead to "ambivalence" on the part of the reader vacillating between competing versions of the same events that differ in terms of their *alethic* possibilities even though they have similar *deontic* and *axiological* modalities (for instance, the differing accounts and explanations offered for Ahmed Sina's turning white). Moreover, this vacillation has a destabilizing effect on the text, which qualifies the narrative's desire to convey politico-historical truth and renders it contingent, provisional, and context-specific. And precisely by questioning the truth of all possible worlds, I would argue that this vacillation allows more avenues for the text to critique and deconstruct the socio-politics of the nations of India and Pakistan via the different possible worlds. As Kluwick observes, "Rushdie's novels display a virtually constant oscillation between realist and magic perceptions



of reality, and explanations in tune with either of these world views are favored in different moments in his texts.” (95-96)

As I have suggested here, the strong metafictional component in Rushdie’s novels also contributes to the self-conscious provisionality of his texts. In fact, “ambivalence” is engendered as the reader is confronted with differing possible worlds and competing explanations none of which lays authoritative claim to truth. As Kluwick stipulates, “the productive tension created by epistemological [and ontological] incompatibilities and clashes” is a hallmark of Rushdie’s novels (202).

Given the political bent in Rushdie’s novels, magical realism is utilized as the apt narrative mode to critique and indict the oppressive policies and practices of successive neocolonial governments that came to power in the aftermath of independence in the Indian subcontinent, yet the postcolonial governments adopted some of the same oppressive policies and repressive measures as their colonial predecessors. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, through the use of magical-realist techniques such as metaphoricalization, literalization, animation, reification, hyperbole, repetition, and the creation of grotesque characters whose corporeal bodies reflect or index the violence they are subjected to, Rushdie creates possible worlds that stretch the *alethic* possibilities in order to critique and indict Indira Gandhi’s government during the Emergency in *Midnight’s Children* and the successive governments of General Ayub Khan, Prime Minister Ali Bhutto, and General Zia ul-Haq in *Shame* on ethical grounds, that is, in terms of the *axiological* modality. In *Midnight’s Children*, for instance, the very notion that “government agencies are run by clones powerfully conveys the effects of the abandonment of democratic principles such as freedom of opinion during Indira Gandhi’s

Emergency: the clones are a potent sign of the inhuman self-granted supremacy of Indira Gandhi's regime." (Kluwick 183)

Notwithstanding the magical realist and political components of Rushdie's novels, the diegetic presentation and critique of politico-historical events takes place in possible worlds that are positionally juxtaposed to other possible spaces irrespective of their sequential chronology in a narrative world that may best be described as 'spatialized' in terms of its overall organization as well as its use of 'concrete' and 'conceptual' spaces that are highly political in their postcolonial contexts. As such, spatialization plays a seminal role in organizing these possible spaces in ways that advance Rushdie's critique of colonial and postcolonial politics of the Indian subcontinent. As a key aspect of Rushdie's historiographic metafiction, then, spatialization needs to be discussed and analyzed as a technique for constructing and juxtaposing possible worlds, which brings us to the next chapter.

“A model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern.” (Jameson 89)

“The space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns ... itself has a history.” (Foucault 330)

## CHAPTER 3

### SPACE AND PARATAXIS IN RUSHDIE’S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Due to developments in postmodern architecture, arts, and the media over the last few decades, space has increasingly become a defining feature and organizing principle of postmodernist novels, especially texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction, which engage with politico-historical material and (transworld) characters. In *Postmodern Geographies*, for instance, Edward Soja advocates “a recombinant historicism that engages with spatial models of thought.” (Elias 105) In Soja’s words, “posthistoricism is a struggle between history, geography and society in which ‘the reassertion of space arises against the grain of an ontological historicism.’” (Soja 61)

Space plays a prominent role in texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction, which since the independence of former colonies and transition into nation-states, have been concerned with space and its various aspects and manifestations, not in the abstract or merely as a container for the unfolding events, but as an essential component of the narrative with socio-historical ramifications. In particular, postcolonial historiographic metafiction offers spatial concretizations of second stage postcoloniality:

the hybrid character of the national state or the androcentric or heterosexist standard that wants to position and imagine itself as coherent, whole, or pure. The importance of the margin to the center, of the colonized to the colonizer’s own world or identity

construction ... is underscored, as empire is shown to be ineluctably shot through with difference and crucially dependent on the Other it renders silent in both its own cultural unconscious and in its public mythology (Elias 200).

As a sub-genre of postmodern fiction, postcolonial historiographic metafiction is characterized by its “rejection of linear models (of time, history, positivism, progress) for other spatial models such as flatness, roundness, circularity, or pendulum motion.” (Elias 105) But as Robert Zacharias correctly notes, “scholars of postcolonialism have long argued that the geographic, linguistic, and cultural displacements that characterize the colonial experience mean that their field has always already been about space.” (Zacharias 208) Similarly, in their collection on postcolonial studies, Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone underline the “inherent spatiality of postcolonial studies” and assert that “space in all its forms” is “integral to the postcolonial experience.” (6)

Throughout this engagement with space, a central concern has been “the spatialization of postcolonial history.” (Zacharias 218). In “Space and the Postcolonial novel,” Zacharias provides an overview of the colonial and postcolonial engagements with space from both “concrete” and “conceptual” standpoints. He cites Soja’s articulation of the binary division and differentiation in the field: the *concrete* work that “tends to sublimate its overtly spatial emphasis, eschews metaphorical flair, and strives for solid materialist exposition of real politics and oppression,” from the independence of the nation-state with her geopolitical demarcations, establishment of government and democratic institutions, and consolidation of power to the successive governments that have come to power since independence, which Soja contrasts with the *conceptual* work that “thrives on spatial metaphors like mapping, location, cartography, and landscape, and excels at literate textual analysis.” (Teverson and Upstone x)

At the “conceptual” level, there are various issues that come into play in postcolonial novels. For instance, in “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault underlines “the colonial temporalization of space,” with its emphasis on the linear progression of history that relegated space to its invisible background in the master narratives of the colonizing West that turned out to be “the great obsession of the nineteenth century.” (330). As such, “in the privileging of time over space that dominated the colonial period, geography itself was understood through the lens of a teleological temporality that worked to justify the expansion of empire as the forward march of civilization.” (Zacharias 217)

Consequently, in the postcolonial context, the focus on concrete/conceptual space, and spatialized narrative via parataxis and simultaneity is perceived as a corrective measure to foreground *space* in its various manifestations and by approaching it through political and socio-historical lenses. Nonetheless, the distinction between postcolonial novels that may fit one or the other of the aforementioned categories for representing space may not be as clear-cut as Soja’s bifurcation suggests. Rather, I would contend that there is an acute, palpable need to conceive a continuum along which a novelistic text may be positioned closer to one or the other pole (i.e. concrete or conceptual) depending on the nature of its engagement with space. For instance, a novel may be placed closer to the concrete or the conceptual/metaphorical pole, but this engagement with space could by no means be exclusively categorized as “concrete” or “conceptual”. My position is congruous with Zacharias’ observation, “the most recent work in the field...is interested in overcoming the field’s concrete/conceptual divide to consider how postcolonial space – of whatever kind – is produced in the first place.” (Zacharias 221) Soja concurs by arguing that what is needed is a “Thirdspace perspective,” one that simultaneously engages with “real and imagined” “nature of lived social space.” (Zacharias 222)

Thirdspace perspective, in fact, encapsulates my approach to space in postcolonial historiographic metafiction. In this chapter, I explore how Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction are incorporated with both *concrete* and *conceptual* configurations of space and how the adopted spatialization techniques effectuate the spatial, non-linear organization of socio-historical material in these texts with the aim of critiquing the politico-historical trajectory of the postcolonial nations under consideration. In other words, I explain how these spatial conceptualizations and techniques are utilized in Rushdie's historiographic metafiction via construction of alternative, possible worlds, unfettered by the limitations of documented historiography and realistic conventions, to advance the critical agenda and postcolonial politics of the novelistic texts by critiquing and deconstructing the policies and practices of postcolonial governments, colonial influence, and hegemonic historiography.

These are the novels of "internal dissent" written subsequent to achieving independence as the anticolonial nationalism, celebrated and conceptualized by such figures as Franz Fanon, was gradually, yet irrevocably replaced by neocolonial nationalistic governments that gradually scaled back democratic institutions and severely curtailed civil liberties and human rights in the postcolonial nation-states. As Fraser puts it succinctly, "following independence the critical gaze once trained unflatteringly on the *imperium* redirects itself towards a succession of national governments." (Fraser 33)

### **3.2. OBJECTIVES**

To recapitulate, the purpose of this study is twofold: First, my contention is that spatialization – concrete and conceptual – equips historiographic metafiction with the toolkit to articulate the author's/text's critique of actual postcolonial politics through the construction of alternative, possible spaces that are juxtaposed via *parataxis*; thus, resulting

in the layering of the colonial/neocolonial and colonized spaces and inducing the reader's simultaneity of perception. Thus, spatialization and representations of concrete and conceptual space create a layering or centripetal *heteroglossia* through paratactic juxtaposition of different spaces and spatialized histories set as different possible worlds. The paratactic juxtaposition of the colonizer/neo-colonist possible spaces alongside the colonized Other spaces/spatialized histories results in the concretization of the second stage postcolonial hybridity (i.e. hybridization) in which the dialogical, ideological and socio-political struggle and tension between the heteroglossic centripetal forces of unification and nationalization and the centrifugal forces of democratization and disunification is captured in the postcolonial nation-state. In other words, spatialization techniques hybridize the possible spaces by juxtaposing the oppressor/colonizer spaces and events to the spatialized histories and events of the colonized Other in order to critique and deconstruct the actual possible worlds of colonialism and through politics of internal dissent.

Secondly, *possible worlds theory*, particularly Dolezel's four-dimensional system, is instrumental to a spatially informed exegesis of historiographic metafiction for the analysis of possible spaces of "an alternative history," equipped with "a counter rhetoric of subversion" (Fraser 34). These alternative spaces, with an ontology that challenges realism and hegemonic historiography, are explicated and evaluated via Dolezel's four modalities in which the *deontic*, *alethic* and *axiological* prove especially useful and offer analytical dividends ("Narrative Worlds" 544).

It is my argument, however, that in Rushdie's highly political novels the *deontic* modality plays the key role by distinguishing the possible spaces in terms of what is and is not politically permitted in each possible space, which in turn correlates with the *alethic* world of possibilities

as well as *axiological* ethicality. In other words, political permission at the deontic level opens up the world of freedom and possibilities in alethic terms, which in turn correlates with axiological goodness (according to the ethics that the text/author espouses) while deontic prohibition and curtailment of rights is typically registered as axiologically bad and morally untenable. This is due to the fact that postcolonial historiographic metafiction critiques the policies and practices of colonial/neocolonial repressive governments that fall short of the ideals and aspirations the newly independent nation-states were founded upon, for instance, India and Pakistan in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. This is traced to the postcolonial author's ethical imperative – Dolezel's axiological modality – and the novel's political horizon, deemed “the dimension of internal political and social critique that writers and critics feel themselves obliged to undertake on behalf of their people.” (Quayson 5) Lazarus “identifies this impulse as partly due to an unacknowledged messianism that draws on the heady dynamics of decolonization struggles and the disillusionment with internal political conditions that were their aftermath.” (Cited in Quayson 5) These postcolonial works that engage with the socio-historical material of newly independent nations contribute to “a larger social struggle in the quest for absent or vanishing agents of democratic social change.” (Quayson 5)

Through spatialization, postcolonial historiographic metafiction has been instrumental to the diegetic portrayal of postcolonial themes such as “the volatility and perspectivism of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history...the violence implicit in the universalist discourse of the nation...” (Lazarus 22) All in all, this chapter will be addressing spatiality in historiographic metafiction as bearing specifically on its postcolonial context and politics.

### **3.3. THEORIES OF SPATIALIZATION**



In his 1945 examination of modern literature by such writers as Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Proust, Joseph Frank argued “their works could be considered spatial forms rather than temporal narratives because these works disrupted the linear flow, juxtaposed sections of text, suspended time progression, and repeated image patterns.” (Elias 116) He stated that modern literature “was moving in the direction of spatial form” and that “all these writers ideally intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence.” (Frank 8-9) According to Frank, the spatial form is achieved by certain spatialization techniques such as *reflexive reference*, which captures a reader’s process of reading a modernist text “by cross-referencing and juxtaposing word groups, attending to puns and metaphors, and letting the sections of the work reverberate in mental suspension until finally grasping the work’s significant form in a simultaneous, spatial ‘fitting together’ of the work’s components.” (Cited in Elias 116)

Elias observes that many of the postmodern works of historiographic metafiction, which she calls *metahistorical romances*, “also reassign spatiality from the thematic or conceptual level to the level of narrative form in Frank’s sense.” (Elias 116-117) Moreover, works of historiographic metafiction, especially those engaging with postcolonial history, spatialize history itself. As Elias puts it, “The return to history combined with a longing for Truth (or at least its grounding) leads the metahistorical romance to spatialize not form but history itself.” (Elias 122) These novels challenge the traditional frameworks for representing history by critiquing and deconstructing linear, sequential historiography, which implies progress and a marching forward of civilization, into “postmodernist spatialized history.” As Elias observes,

Historical levels emerge in these novels, levels comprising elements of myth, legend, historical fact, and fiction that layer into one historically and ahistorically true moment in time. It is a geological method of historical perception which allows no “layer” to be more true than any other (Elias 117).

Thus, fragmentation and *heteroglossia* in the basic sense of the admixture of different social voices into one speech act or text emerge from the cacophony of myriad and dissonant voices, historical layers and conflicting accounts, which result in the construction of a multidimensional, panoramic historical consciousness that lends itself to a postcolonial vision, critical of hegemonic practices by official historiographers and raconteurs who would construct univocal, linear narratives that ignored and marginalized large segments of the population (i.e. their stories, issues and concerns).

Of relevance is Jameson's notion of *cognitive mapping* (as an alternative to fragmentation), which entails the construction of "contingent perspectival starting points, sociological orientations, and political alliances that form a kind of *hermeneutical landscape* [Italics mine] where the subject can relocate herself within a new, postmodern physical and political geography." (Elias 106) In sum, Jameson proposes *cognitive mapping* as an alternative to postmodernist fragmentation and superficiality. "It is a way of approaching history that allows for new and politically efficacious historicism and a reintegrated (if contingent) subjectivity." (Elias 107)

Jameson's cognitive mapping of the hermeneutical landscape is concerned with possible worlds of alternative historiography. Utilizing Umberto Eco's view of narrative text as "a machine for producing possible worlds," a historiographic metafictional text is comprised of possible worlds that reflect the "physical and political geography" of postcolonial nation-states, albeit fictionalized, as they are perspectivized and organized through the author's socio-political prism. Spatialization techniques (e.g. *parataxis* and *simultaneity*) in conjunction with *heteroglossia* are employed to offer a purposeful critique of the depicted politico-historical developments through their multidimensional, spatialized diegetic (re)constructions. As such,

these possible spaces, which form the “hermeneutical landscape” of postcolonial nations, prompt the reader to adopt a new ontological perspective, which as I argue, needs to be evaluated through the adoption of possible worlds theory; in particular, Dolezel’s four-dimensional system to demonstrate how they are utilized to advance the text’s critique of actual colonial and postcolonial politics.

These constructed possible worlds, “which are situated at a greater or lesser distance from, but cannot be identical with, the actual world,” operate according to their own internal rules that are interpreted by readers according to the *principle of minimal departure*. (Weber 16) Although each possible world is autonomous and operates according to its own internal set of rules, there is permeability between these possible worlds, for instance, between the actual world of documented historiography and the constructed possible world(s) of the novel. As Pavel perceptively observes, “it is the possibility of varying the reference world of propositions that enables fictions to make relevant statements about the actual world”; thereby “providing insights about our world.” (Cited in Ryan 3)

These alternative spaces, with an ontology that challenges realism and hegemonic historiography, are concerned with various socio-political issues from an ethical standpoint; thus, in my estimation, they are best explicated and evaluated via Dolezel’s four modalities – *alethic*, *deontic*, *epistemic* and *axiological* – defined as “global restrictions imposed on the possible courses of narrated actions.” (“Narrative Worlds” 544) The *alethic* captures the world of possibilities and the extent to which the events and characters depart from realism, the logic of daily life, and documented historiography while in the *deontic* “the narrated actions are governed by the modalities of permission, prohibition and obligation.” (“Narrative Worlds” 544) As such, the deontic that is concerned with the establishment and challenging of the socio-political norm –

permission and prohibition – plays a seminal role by setting the scene for freedom or curtailment of actions within the novelistic text. The *axiological* modality, concerned with the ethics of possible worlds, also plays an important role in evaluating actions undertaken in them in terms of their ethicality, which reflect the author's/text's politico-historical perspective and ethical horizon vis-a-vis the narrated events and characters.

Zoran observes that spatiality or “a spatial pattern is any pattern perceived solely on the basis of the connection between discontinuous units in a text, demanding, therefore, a perception of the whole text or part of it as given simultaneously in space...” (Zoran 311) The word “simultaneously” is the key term; in fact, the notion of *simultaneity* or *simultaneous history* is of paramount significance in postmodern historiographic metafiction since it affords “multiple, coexisting historical planes. It creates a new fictional universe in which historical epochs, characters, or events appear together, thus challenging the entire notion of linear historical reconstruction.” (Elias 139) *Simultaneity* is characteristic of geometrical, spatial spheres and is usually achieved by utilizing spatialization techniques like *parataxis*, *analepsis*, and *prolepsis* that disrupt the linear progression of events and compel the reader to consider what has transpired prior to that point in the narrative (i.e. *analepsis*<sup>5</sup>) or hinting and providing verbal cues as to what may be occurring later in the novelistic text (i.e. *prolepsis*<sup>6</sup>); thus bringing about a holistic perception of the entire text at a given juncture in the narrative. The text comprises of a set of possible worlds, which are juxtaposed and each operates according to its own logic and the extent to which it departs from realism and verisimilitude according to the “principle of minimal

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<sup>5</sup> In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette defines *analepsis* as “any evocation after the fact that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment.” (40)

<sup>6</sup> Genette defines *prolepsis* as “any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later...” (40)

departure.” What is key here is the relationship between these possible worlds; in other words, how these possible worlds are connected to one another has seminal ramifications in reading the novelistic text.

David Herman’s term *storyworld* suggests, or at least, implies the spatialization of the narrative form since a world, even a fictional one, is to be conceived as having geographical shape and occupying some kind of three-dimensional space. As Elias notes, the entire text takes on aspects of geometrical space through the use of narrative techniques such as *simultaneity* and *parataxis* (to be explained later). This type of space construction is pivotal in many colonial and postcolonial works of fiction where space allocation and *mapping* become central concerns of political and historical significance.

Some of these novels “spatialize history by juxtaposing the past and the present in a manner similar to parataxis, a rhetorical strategy.” (Elias 122) As noted, the utilization of space and its construction has increasingly replaced and disrupted chronological sequentiality through the use of spatializing strategies in historiographic metafiction. Though most fiction employs anachrony to various degrees, historiographic metafiction does it more self-consciously and ostentatiously by foregrounding, flaunting, and parading spatialization techniques of narrative construction through its frequent use of *prolepsis* (which has resulted in the ubiquity of *prolepsis* compared to *analepsis*) but also *analepsis*, *parataxis* and *simultaneity* to bring about a spatialized, simultaneity of vision wherein the reader can form a holistic conception of the narrative at a given juncture in the narrative; hence contributing to the (re)construction of a new socio-historical vision in the postcolonial context. By alluding to various events and occurrences in both the past and the future, from the deictic center of the narration, the spatial, configurational dimension of the narrative dominates over its sequential, temporal dimension.

### 3.4. PARATXIS, HETEROGLOSSIA, AND SIMULTANEITY

*Parataxis*, which *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED online) defines as a syntactic term denoting “the placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (of coordination or subordination) between them...,” is a key strategy linked to spatialization in postmodern narratives. It “is a rhetorical term denoting a coordinate arrangement of words, clauses, phrases, or sentences with or without connectives (‘I left. She cried.’)” (Elias 123) Parataxis is enacted in novels on two levels: “Formal narrative level” and “thematic, conceptual level.” At the formal level, texts of historiographic metafiction have non-linear “plots that deviate from straight-line development”; nevertheless, since their subject matter is historiography – the construction and narrativization of history – “they end up constructing different spatial historical models as well.” (Elias 122) The construction of these “spatial historical models,” which depart from realism and the logic of daily life and documented history, is accounted for by the possible worlds theory as distinct possible worlds with their spatiotemporal coordinates, which are juxtaposed via parataxis and simultaneity.

The paratactic juxtaposition of these different spaces and spatialized histories contributes to the provision of a state of hybridity, which Bhabha calls a “third-space.” Bhabha utilizes Benedict Anderson’s ideas “to theorize nations as ‘imagined communities’ that sought to suppress cultural differences in the construction of oppressively homogenizing narratives, rather than as the natural culmination of decolonization movements.” (Zacharias 220) According to Bhabha, in the aftermath of cosmopolitanism and globalization, the hybrid migrant occupies a “third space” wherein the colonial and the native identities meet and contest and are simultaneously asserted and subverted. Narratives of such “third spaces,” where rootlessness and migrancy are valorized, and the myth of purity and homeland are undermined as “occupying

imaginary spaces”- are exemplified in the works of diasporic writers such as Rushdie and Ondaatje. Hybridity is a metonymy of presence and opens up a figurative space where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the colonizer nor the Other, defies our political expectations. Hybridity is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once, which makes the presence of colonist authority no longer immediately visible but real nonetheless. Moreover, the paratactic juxtaposition of possible spaces and spatialized histories leads to simultaneity of vision (on the reader’s part) that is instrumental to the provision of the hybrid state of “in-betweenness” and “double-consciousness” wherein the reader can view two or more possible spaces at one juncture or simultaneously instead of encountering a single, homogenous space/world/history.

*Parataxis* is contrasted with *hypotaxis*, “in which words, clauses, phrases, or sentences appear in subordinate constructions (‘When I left, she cried.’)” (Elias 123). In *parataxis*, there is no overarching connection or explanation provided as the link or rationale for the juxtaposition of the various elements. In *hypotaxis*, on the other hand, the relations between the various plot elements are made clear and incorporated into a coherent, unifying whole (centripetal forces and tendencies), thereby the narrative assumes (authorial/narratorial) hegemony over truth and reality and purports to confidently and authoritatively convey its version of events in fiction or historiography (“The Culture of Criticism” 69). In classical historical novels (e.g. Walter Scott), there is a cause-and-effect relationship that links the recounted historical events and characters into a coherent socio-historical vision (i.e. hypotaxis). In this respect, *hypotaxis* plays a crucial role in linking the events and creating an overarching narrative within which the heterogeneous pieces of the historical puzzle (characters, events, episodes) come together by establishing relations between the various elements within the narrative.

This, however, does not seem to happen, at least not to the same extent, in texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction wherein, through parataxis, the various layers of history are often juxtaposed without sufficient provision of the connecting relations, reasons, and rationalization that impart the notion of postcolonial history as one of mindless repetition of violence, exploitation, corruption, despotism, colonial influence, and erosion of democratic institutions and safeguards. As such, parataxis “serves to critique stable notions of *historical causality*.” (Elias 123) It has been linked to postmodernism by a number of prominent theorists such as Ihab Hassan who argues that “modernism appears hieratic, hypotactical, and formalist, while postmodernism strikes us by contrast as playful, paratactical, and deconstructionist” (*The Postmodern Turn* 91). It distinguishes texts of historiographic metafiction from their classical forebears in realist, historical novels (e.g. Walter Scott) by “(employing juxtaposition, linear disjunction, deperspectivized space) thus [historiographic metafiction] has deeply embedded political implications that precisely identify the postmodern agenda of destabilization.” (Elias 123) Hayden White considers *parataxis* a political strategy of the avant-garde art by arguing, “parataxis threatens the humanist tradition of artistic realism perhaps more than any other avant-garde activity.” (Elias 123)

In historiographic metafiction, parataxis is used “to spatialize time and interrogate disciplinary models of history.” (Elias 122) It has been instrumental to the construction of *paratactic history* by shattering the mimetic illusion and imparting a sense of randomness, senselessness, even futility of history as devoid of any uplifting, unifying theme or meta-comment that may account for humanity’s catastrophic failures. This is due to the fact that characters, events, and entire historical periods are juxtaposed without being subordinated to a unifying, explanatory principle or by becoming part of a coherent narrative. Nevertheless, works



of postcolonial historiographic metafiction utilize parataxis to critique and comment about hegemonic, officially sanctioned accounts of the history of nation-states, which employed the conventions of realistic writing by hiding their perspectives, biases, and self-interests.

Closely aligned with parataxis is *simultaneity*. The notion of simultaneous history is employed in historiographic metafiction in stark contrast to linear progression of events in classical historical novels and traditional historiography “since the Enlightenment has configured the passage of historical time as a line...this kind of structure limits a line of sight to a (logical) Point and encourages single events to take place along the line.” (Elias 137) As Elias points out, the linear chronological approach has its advantages since “it allows for historical narrativization and duplicates the way time conceptually unfolds for most people”; however, it can be excessively restrictive because it constrains the number of perspectives and vantage points in the unfolding of any historical event with numerous players, stakeholders, recipients, layers of influence on both the productive and receptive ends of the narrativization process (Elias 138). Thus, in historiographic metafiction, a close connection is established between *parataxis* and *simultaneity* by juxtaposing various past and present events and periods on the same plane and achieving simultaneity (of vision) whereby past and present come together as simultaneous co-existents (i.e. replacing chronology with spatiality), thus offering the reader multiple *vitas* of socio-historical vision/perception whereby the contradictions and the (untoward) trajectory of politico-historical events and epochs within the postcolonial context become available to the reader as alternative possible worlds that need to be examined in terms of Dolezel’s *alethic* and *axiological* modalities.

The practice of paratactic narrativization of history, as exemplified in texts of historiographic metafiction authored by writers who situate their texts within the postcolonial

context suggests the notion that “we can never leave the past in the past [especially the past traumatic history]... Just as our past life experience forms who we are now, and always flashes upon us in the present in the form of memories, the historical past too is alive and informing our present in myriad ways.” (Elias 135) Within the context of recent history, late twentieth-century postmodernist, historiographic metafiction, through its paratactic renditions of history and its constant forays into the historical past and the back-and-forth, “incorporates a culture’s desperate desire to come to terms with the past, its recognition that this is impossible, and its frenzied denial of that final limit to knowledge,” especially the violent history of postcolonial nation-states in the aftermath of their independence (Elias 136). However, the use of parataxis does not aid in coming to terms with that history so much as complicating it as contingent.

By employing spatialization techniques such as *parataxis* and *simultaneity* a broadening of vision is attained through access to multiple dimensions at one juncture, which has proved instrumental to tackling past historical events and traumas as part of “a post-traumatic consciousness” (such as the holocaust or World War II nuclear bombings of Japan) and enunciating a postcolonial politics through the construction of a multidimensional vision that deconstructs any univocal narrative by juxtaposing inconsistencies and contradictions via parataxis. In particular, in historiographic metafiction written in the postcolonial context, the preoccupation with space and spatiality, especially through the use of *parataxis*, becomes indispensable to critique postcolonial politics and practices by providing the multidimensional, heteroglossic view wherein multiple socio-historical planes and angles of vision appear side-by-side through paratactic juxtaposition; thus resulting in *simultaneity* of vision and perception by rendering past and future events accessible to the reader at once. Elias puts it eloquently:

The notion of simultaneous metahistoricity is... a common narrative strategy for novels by writers who situate themselves outside the Anglo-European literary tradition

[postcolonial context]. Both paratactic and simultaneous history release images from the repressed (the culturally repressed as well as libidinal and mythic unconscious) into the world, to walk among real people, creating a mythical world where different kinds of reality and time interact with one another or exist simultaneously on the same plane, the same historical moment (Elias 147).

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, there is a preoccupation with space and its various aspects and metaphors in texts of historiographic metafiction, especially those that focus on the postcolonial context. These authors favor spatialization for two reasons: First, the spatialization of history through *parataxis* and *simultaneity* aims at extricating the repressed and the unspeakable history trapped in historiography's (and historical fiction's) linear model; hence narrativizing the historical narratives of the marginalized within the postcolonial context. Secondly, spatial demarcations, topographic and mapping metaphors and images – both concrete and conceptual – have turned into central concerns and have far-reaching socio-political ramifications in the postcolonial context such as the partition of India in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*.

*Parataxis* and *heteroglossia* work in tandem to create a heterogeneous, fragmented amalgamation of “characters, time periods, ideologies...[that] may even combat one another, but synthesis, by definition, is impossible.” (Elias 127) The author seems to offer “only parataxis as a hermeneutic for understanding his world.” (Elias 127) In *Discourse in the Novel*, Bakhtin defines *heteroglossia*<sup>7</sup> as encompassing various discourse practices and centrifugal tendencies,

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<sup>7</sup> Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward... the processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance...Every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces) (Bakhtin 272).

which resist unification processes, and together constitute its verbal repertoire and culture, which are utilized in the novel:

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of the speech types [raznorecie] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [raznorecie] can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (as always more or less dialogized). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the novel (Bakhtin 263).

There is a dialogical dynamic at work within the *heteroglossia*, which comprises diverse voices, perspectives, language variations/registers and even socio-historical episodes at work. On the one hand, there are the centripetal, unifying forces of the text to approach a unifying theme; for instance, the valiant endeavor to come to terms with the perpetrated traumas of history (e.g. the violence perpetrated in the name of nationalism at the birth of nation-states). However, this process is checked by the *centrifugal* forces within the linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions of the fictional text at hand.

In historiographic metafiction, the historical layers are an amalgamation “of myth, legend, historical fact, and fiction that layer into one historically and ahistorically true moment in time.” (Elias 117) As such, the different layers compete for the reader’s attention and no layer seems “to be more true than any other.” (Elias 117) “Through its support of syntagmatic over paradigmatic modes, avant-gardist metahistorical romance rejects a dialectical conception of history in favor of *heteroglossia*.” (Elias 127)

Historiographic metafiction suggests that the best one can do in revisiting past historical events and traumas is to capture the dynamic social and ideological clash and tension between

the centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (diverging) forces and tendencies in history, which plays out in the actual utterances utilized in these novelistic texts and has socio-political ramifications as the sociopolitical and ideological forces of unification and centralization clash with the forces of disunification and democratization. A spatialized conceptualization of historical past becomes necessary in order to capture or, at least, strive to come to terms with the “confused and entangled” past that contains many possible worlds, voices and perspectives.

All in all, spatialization has given texts of historiographic metafiction “a new angle of historical vision” by offering a spatialized multidimensional view of the various socio-historical periods under consideration, which has, in turn, replaced linear models in historiographic narration by allowing for paratactic, “lateral coexistence.” Thus, they afford a richer and more accessible vision of postcolonial politics and practices at a given time (Elias 104). Each of these layers has its own time and operates within its own internal chronology and logic (at various levels of possibility and probability, which necessitate *possible worlds theory* as its theoretical framework) while it is juxtaposed to the other layers without having an all-encompassing coherent narrative to provide cause-and-effect linearity within historiographic metafiction. The paratactic juxtapositions of the different space-time coordinates often lead to a parodic or ironic postcolonial vision wherein the present is contrasted with the past (or the future) and its inconsistencies are exposed in socio-political terms within the postcolonial context. This is accomplished by foregrounding the act of narration, as well as by underlining and drawing attention to the rhetorical tropes and other narratorial tools employed in historiography.

### **3.5. SPATILZATION IN *MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN***

*Midnight’s Children* is a watershed in postcolonial fiction and a natural starting point in my examination of *space* in the rendition of socio-historical material and political events in

historiographic metafiction. Throughout the novel, spatialization strategies (*parataxis* and *simultaneity*) as well as conceptual configurations of space are utilized to construct the diegetic possible world of India's postcolonial trajectory and to deconstruct official, hegemonic accounts of the nation-state's modern history, including her violent partition, which took place against a backdrop of Hindu-Muslim religious differences and has been presented in official accounts as a regrettable, yet inevitable byproduct of nationalism that led to the ensuing conflict between the two groups (i.e. Jackson; Chatterjee).

In particular, space configurations are employed to advance Rushdie's critical reading of the postcolonial politics of India's successive governments from Nehru at the cusp of independence to Indira Gandhi in the 1970's through his postmodern, imaginative appropriation ("politically contingent invention") of the unfolding events and construction of alternative, possible worlds (Lazarus 123). As I argue, in its employment of concrete and conceptual spaces and through spatialization and *heteroglossia*, the novel narrativizes the politico-historical trajectory of modern India from the celebratory surge of anticolonial, Fanonian nationalism at independence to neocolonial nationalism under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi. Thus, in its development the novel captures the "disillusionment and despair in light of the hopes ignited by national independence in the postcolonial worlds of ... India ...and elsewhere [that] give away to cynicism and social breakdown." (Varma 196) In conjunction with specialization, *heteroglossia* plays a seminal role in capturing the dynamic, ideological and socio-political clashes and struggles at the heart of the narrative between the centripetal forces of unification and centralization and the centrifugal forces of democratization and disunification as the centripetal forces gain the upper hand and reign supreme under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi.

Unlike other novels such as J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which refuses to provide a specific locale in a recognizable colonial context and instead focuses on abstract space, *Midnight's Children* commences with the birth of modern India as a promising postcolonial nation-state with concrete borders and geography occurring at the precise moment of Saleem Sinai's birth:

I WAS BORN in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And outside the window, fireworks and crowds (3).

The opening of the novel, which establishes the spatio-temporal coordinates of the simultaneous births of Saleem and India – Bombay, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947 – is an ingenious narrativization strategy that inextricably binds the birth, fate, and identity of the infant Saleem, as the intradiagetic narrator-protagonist of the novel, with that of his country: “thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country.” (Rushdie 3)

This monumental commingling of the personal and the socio-historical is achieved by the construction of an alternative, possible world within which the moment of India's independence, indicated by citing the date, is characterized with euphoria and optimism at the birth of the nation: “There were gasps. And outside the window, fireworks and crowds.” (3) In this possible world, the simultaneous births of the nation-state and midnight's children result in “magic” in various forms and manifestations in the one thousand and one children who are born at or close to the midnight of India's independence. Thus, both Saleem and India (and the other 1,001 children) are portrayed as beneficiaries of the extraordinary coincidence of simultaneous births

and endowed with magical powers and fantastic potential to share each other's thoughts, making them an alternative micro-world, a metaphor for the possibilities of the newly born India as a unified country that is conscious of her diversity and heterogeneity; the latter represented by the diverse backgrounds, interests and talents of the one thousand and one children.

From a postcolonial standpoint, the coterminous births portend a promising world for the newly independent nation, with a prime minister as head of state and new democratic institutions such as the Parliament in place, replete with possibilities and set as a backdrop for the unfolding events. At the outset, a seminal correlation is established in this possible world between *deontic*, *alethic* and *axiological* modalities: freedom and liberation from oppression under the colonial rule in terms of what is "politically permissible" under the *deontic* modality has led to the world of "possibilities and magic" – Dolezel's *alethic* modality – and what is ethically tenable, commendable and "good" in *axiological* terms. The birth of the one thousand and one children, and especially Saleem, endows this possible world with potential, possibility, magic and optimism. As the narrative progresses, however, the promising world is repeatedly tested and increasingly undermined with violence and repression. This is achieved through the construction of a tour-de-force, spatial alternative historiographic narrative of the postcolonial nation-state, an amalgamation of her postcolonial history and authorial imagination, which as Zacharias notes, "shows utopian possibilities initially projected onto the nation, but this celebration is deeply undermined as the novel progresses." (219)

The optimism and euphoria are captured in Nehru's congratulatory letter to baby Saleem upon his auspicious birth:

"Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own." (*Midnight's Children* 139)



The above statement underscores the interrelated parallelism between Saleem's life and that of his country as a nascent, promising nation-state with one and the same intermingled trajectory. It sets up the narrative with the ideal of a free, independent and democratic India that is gradually undermined as the narrative progresses and ultimately leads to oppression and violence under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi, Nehru's own daughter! This link further reinforces Saleem Sinai's role as "the mirror" of the nation whose identity and subjective experiences reflect that of his multitudinous nation in the sense that (adverse) events in the life of one are reflected in the other, which also rather menacingly makes him the object of panoptical surveillance by "we" the readers. Rushdie confirmed the interrelationship between the individual and the political history in both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* in his interview, "It seems to me that everything in both books has had to do with politics and with the relationship of the individuals and the history." (Wise 59)

The spatial possible world constructed in the novel is an amalgamation of history and authorial imagination or, as Saleem articulates it proleptically in the opening chapter, "so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane." (10) As suggested earlier, applying Dolezel's four-dimensional system to the possible world set at the opening of the novel, particularly the *alethic*, *deontic*, and *axiological modalities*, offers analytical dividends by assessing the manner in which the possible worlds portrayed advance and concretize the author's reading of the politics of the postcolonial nation, especially his reading of the socio-historical trajectory of modern India from her independence and bifurcation into the independent countries of India and Pakistan to her gradual regression into repression and forced emasculation under the Emergency rule.

To begin with, the *alethic* modality, which encompasses what “is necessary, possible, or impossible according to the laws of nature and logic,” is at play since the birth of the newly-independent nation-state has opened up new possibilities and given material and political reality to what had been imagined and yearned for so long, namely, the emergence of independent, democratic India out of the avaricious grasp of the colonial Great Britain (Herman and Vervaeck 152). What was once impossible, imagined or unlikely has turned into political reality with India’s emergence as a viable and independent nation-state, which is mirrored by the alethic possibility of magically shared consciousnesses, a departure from realism into the world of possibilities. As such, the simultaneous births trigger and set a seminal correlation between the alethic (possible) and axiological (moral) modalities that operate throughout the text with far-reaching consequences: In general, the world of possibilities, freedom, and optimism envisioned in the opening is conceived as axiological “goodness” according to the ethics of the novel – Fanon’s anticolonial nationalism – whereas limitations, lack of possibilities, and oppression are construed as axiologically “bad” and morally untenable – neocolonial nationalism. This duality is complicated by the challenges of a democratically governed India with her variegated, multitudinous population and diverse regional differences, ethnicities, religions, languages, and socio-cultural mores, which pull the country to different directions and render the celebratory optimism at the birth of the nation seem rather utopian. Nevertheless, in my estimation, the novel’s general ethics in imparting the need to respect diversity and to work out differences through dialogue and negotiation holds throughout the text and withstands scrutiny.

The alternative, possible world is established at the very opening of the novel with the coterminous births of Saleem and India, which allows the intradiagetic narrator to be endowed with “telepathy” and a spatial consciousness as the one who simultaneously experiences the ups

and downs of the nascent nation by being cognizant of what is transpiring throughout the country primarily through his connection to the other one thousand and one children. As the narrative progresses, the storyworld becomes logically coherent in terms of its own internal laws and logic with respect to what is possible since it operates consistently according to a set of internal rules. For instance, Saleem is possessed of telepathy while he resides in India since his felicitous birth in Bombay has tied his fate to his country as the land of possibilities and democratic institutions. However, once he departs for Pakistan, his prophetic powers cease to operate: "...I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." (*Midnight's Children* 3)

However, once Saleem's family moves to Pakistan where there is oppression, fake propaganda, and lies that permeate the Pakistani body politic, there is no possibility of magic, prophecy, or regeneration. As such, the correlation of the deontic, alethic, and axiological modalities differentiates the possible worlds that are diegetically presented in India and Pakistan respectively. It suggests the existence of possibility and hope of regeneration for India, as a young democracy (with the exception of "a twenty-month eclipse during the mid-1970s"), while for Pakistan with its current socio-political trajectory of oppression and mendacity, there is to be no hope in the foreseeable future as manifested in her *alethic* shutdown of possibilities (as Saleem's telepathic powers cease to operate in Pakistan). The key to differentiating the twin possible worlds is the *deontic* modality in terms of what is and is not permitted politically in Pakistan. Historically, Pakistan's successive governments of Ayub Khan, Ali Bhutto, and Zia ul-Haq curtailed the civil liberties and freedom of expression under penalty of torture, imprisonment, and death to the extent that it led to self-censorship and the shutting down of possibilities in *alethic* terms. The oppressive government of Pakistan with its repressive

measures shuts down the possibilities (for socio-political reform, exercising of civil rights), which are replaced by what people have to do – what is necessary – in order to survive such as self-censorship and disengagement from politics. This is to be construed as *axiologically* bad in terms of the novel's ethics. The correlation is plausible in the sense that repression and prohibition at the *deontic* level results in restrictions on the human potential and possibilities and the overall potential of a civilization to progress in socio-political terms since freedom is the prerequisite for progress in society. This is precisely why Saleem, though “good” in axiological terms, is powerless in using his telepathic powers in Pakistan thereby symbolizing the oppression that shuts down possibilities. As Neil Lazarus astutely observes, “the Indian state is in fact to be distinguished from the vast majority of postcolonial states in having preserved at least its formal commitment to democratic governance.” (Lazarus 68) As such, the possible worlds of India and Pakistan are differentiated with regard to their potential for prophecy, magic, and various possibilities, which are made possible through the *deontic* – what is politically permissible in India is not permitted in Pakistan. Thus, the deontic permission opens the door for possibilities in India at the birth of the nation under Nehru. However, the *deontic* prohibition/denial of political permission in Pakistan leads to the curtailment of possibilities in *alethic* terms.

Saleem's telepathic powers, established early in the narrative, become the (internal) norm along with the supernatural powers and magical attributes of the other one thousand and one children in India. The spatio-temporal norm of being at one place and having the kind of knowledge that is limited to that place is replaced by Saleem's telepathy, which makes him aware of what is transpiring throughout India (as well as the other midnight's children with their various supernatural talents and abilities). The alternative possible world is designed so that the narrator-protagonist would have the wherewithal to be cognizant of what is occurring throughout

India and is able to comment on the country's socio-political events and to critique the social and governmental policies and practices throughout the variegated nation.

As previously noted, Saleem's auspicious birth, which endowed him and the other one thousand children with magical powers, has a moral corollary, and is to be evaluated through the *axiological modality*, concerned primarily with "moral judgment." (Herman and Vervaeck 153) On the axiological axis, the birth of the nation and Saleem, as mentioned in Prime Minister Nehru's congratulatory letter, are presented as good and "auspicious" events, presenting the new independent India as a world of possibilities, magic and potential. However, as the events unfold, the initial optimism and euphoria are followed with cynicism and move from good to "bad" along the axiological axis. In fact, the alethic, deontic and axiological modalities all work in tandem: India is presented early on as the place of possibilities and magic (as the norm) with potential as a young democracy; however, toward the end of the novel the possibilities and magic are stifled and optimism is replaced with matter-of-fact cynicism, repression, and autocratic rule as the democratic potential of the newly-minted nation under Nehru is succeeded by the Emergency rule when civil liberties are curbed under Indira Gandhi. Hence, ensuing limitations in the opening *alethic* and *deontic* modalities increasingly point to the axiological modality with the aim to censure the trajectory of the politics of the postcolonial nation away from democracy and toward heavy-handed governance and oppression.

The correlation between the alethic and axiological modalities comes full circle when, some 300 pages after his birth, Saleem finds himself in the midst of the Emergency. He is apprehended and interrogated and, under pressure from the police, confesses and reveals the names of all the remaining midnight's children, who are arrested and sterilized one by one. Saleem undergoes the vasectomy himself, which symbolizes the shutting down of any possibility

for regeneration and revival of the nation in alethic terms (i.e. the vasectomy symbolizing the emasculation of the nation's progeny and future potential). As such, the utopian optimism and celebratory nationalism at the inception of the nation as a progressive, burgeoning democracy give way to autocratic rule and despotism and are registered as axiologically bad. Saleem's reflection captures this unfortunate reversal and its deleterious impact on the nation:

When the Constitution was altered to give the Prime Minister well-nigh-absolute powers, I smelled the ghosts of ancient empires in the air...in that city which was littered the phantoms of Slave Kings and Mughals, of Aurangzeb the merciless and the last, pink conquerors, I inhaled once again the sharp aroma of despotism. It smelled like burning oily rags (*Midnight's Children* 488).

In the above quotation, paratactic history is constructed in which two possible worlds and spaces are juxtaposed: The Emergency with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that bestowed her with "well-nigh-absolute powers" and the Mughals and Aurangzeb, the merciless, known for his extreme enforcement of the Islamic Sharia and oppression of Hindus. The purpose of this juxtaposition is to compare the current state of India with that of ancient oppression and absolute monarchs in terms of axiological badness. This "paratactic history," that is, the paratactic juxtaposition of India's past – ancient despots – alongside a modern, democratically elected but still despotic Prime Minister is to be construed as reversal and regression in terms of socio-historical and political development, which is reflective of the novel's clearly-stated critical view of the Emergency period as a scaling back of democratic governance and curtailing of civil liberties "during the winter of 1975 – 6" under Indira Gandhi (488).

As a novel that traces India's trajectory from the moment of independence to the Emergency rule in the 1970's, the text is interspersed with seminal concrete and conceptual spaces that are instrumental to narrativizing and imparting the author's interpretation of the politics of the nation-state and the direction it has taken up since its inception. A key 'concrete

space' in the early part of the novel is Methwold's Estate, the multi-housed mansion that the English owner William Methwold sells to Mr. Sinai with two stipulated conditions: "that the houses be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15<sup>th</sup>." (*Midnight's Children* 105) The above conditions, especially the fact that the actual transfer occurs at midnight of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947, India's independence, as well as the seller being a departing Englishman (who sets the conditions) while the buyer is a native Indian, make it crystal clear that Methwold's Estate is, in fact, a concrete space, a literalized metaphor of colonial India as it passes hands from the colonizing British to the indigenous Indians. Thus, both the estate as a space and the process through which it passes hands are highly suggestive and symbolize the process of India's independence and her colonial legacy.

In addition, "the four identical houses built in a style befitting their original residents (conquerors' houses! Roman mansions...)" later named by William Methwold "after the palaces of Europe, [the historical seats of European power]: Versailles Villa, Buckingham Palace, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci," act as metonymical representations of the major colonial powers of Europe: France, Britain, Spain, and Prussia/Germany respectively (*Midnight's Children* 104). This symbolic nomenclature expands the novel's allegorical reach beyond Great Britain and her colonial legacy to the European continent and its numerous colonial interventions across the globe. The first condition of the transfer: "that the houses be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners" symbolically signifies the colonial heritage that the English (and, by extension, colonial powers everywhere they colonized) left to the Indians including the laws, the English language, the rail roads, but also all the ways and means of hundred and fifty years of colonial exploitation and oppression, which

could not be quickly erased or forgotten. Thus, Methwold's estate spatializes the historical process of India at the moment of independence while also symbolizing her colonial legacy through the furniture, pictures and other paraphernalia that are to remain in the estate. The latter is an apt conceptual symbol for the colonial legacy that will bedevil India in the decades to come.

The narrative is structured through *parataxis*, at the formal, structural level, by juxtaposing the lives of three generations of a family along with the socio-political events unfolding in the country during their lifetimes. The first chapter, entitled "The Perforated Sheet," provides an apt *spatial metaphor* for the manner in which the variegated, heterogeneous nation-state of India is spatialized and narrativized with all her diverse languages, religions, cultures, and ethnicities through *parataxis*. In order to parody and deconstruct the official, hegemonic history of the newly independent India, Rushdie comes up with an ingenious spatializing metaphor, "the perforated sheet," which he weaves into the overall fabric of his narrative seamlessly.

The genesis of the perforated sheet is in the opening chapter when the young Doctor Aziz, Saleem's grandfather, visits the landowner Ghani's daughter Naseem who keeps having ailments in various parts of her body apparently as a ruse to bring the young doctor to her father's house. However, due to the family's conservative Islamic beliefs, Dr. Aziz is only allowed to examine the specific ailing body part from behind a perforated sheet. The following exchange between Mr. Ghani, Naseem's father, and Dr. Aziz in response to his request to see the patient, is revealing:

"You will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there. And so, in this fashion the thing may be achieved."  
 "But what in any event does the lady complain of?" – my grandfather, despairingly.  
 To which Mr. Ghani, his eyes rising upwards in their sockets, his smile twisting into a grimace of grief, replied: "The poor child! She has a terrible, a too dreadful



stomach-ache.”

“In that case,” Doctor Aziz said with some restraint, “will she show me her stomach, please.” (*Midnight’s Children* 19)

As it soon becomes apparent, Naseem contracts a large number of ailments, too many to be construed as real ailments, which suggest that she is interested in the young Doctor. Naseem’s scheme to lure Dr. Aziz pays off as he falls in love with her before being able to see either her face or her entire body!

Besides satirizing the conservative Islamic mores of the indigenous Muslims, these examinations behind the perforated sheet serve two interrelated, yet distinct purposes: First, the perforated sheet and the single organ examinations from behind the sheet become apt spatial metaphors for the manner in which Rushdie narrativizes the nation of India with her various cultures, languages and provinces by juxtaposing them through parataxis and focusing on one at a time. “The seven-inch diameter hole in the sheet through which Aadam Aziz examined his future wife’s bodily contours becomes a metaphor throughout the novel.” (Lohani-Chase 41) Thus, the geography of the nation-state is superimposed on Naseem Ghani’s body that is to be examined one organ/region at a time:

So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This *phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him* [Italics mine], and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination, she accompanied him on all his rounds, she moved into the front room of his mind... (*Midnight’s Children* 22)

Just as the “phantasm of a partitioned woman” haunts Doctor Aziz, Saleem’s grandfather, Saleem is similarly and ineluctably haunted by the subsequent partition of India and Pakistan’s separation through “the moth-eaten partition.” In fact, the partition is proleptically and metaphorically suggested by the partition of Naseem Ghani’s body examined by the young Dr. Aziz one organ at a time. Two generations later, Saleem with his uncanny “telepathy” is able to

focus on the various parts and regions of the Indian subcontinent in his narrative: India (and her 14 provinces and the territories), Pakistan, and Bangladesh with their various cities, towns and regions waiting to be examined, spatialized and narrativized.

The “perforated sheet” also symbolizes the perforation and porous connectivity between the interrelated, yet distinct possible worlds in the novel: India at the cusp of independence led by Prime Minister Nehru in the opening of the novel and India under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi (not to mention the possible world of Pakistan after Saleem’s family moves there). In the possible world enacted in the opening, the alethic-deontic-axiological correlations are established as Saleem’s telepathic powers become operational and work seamlessly by connecting his consciousness to that of the variegated nation (alethic) with the independence of modern India and establishment of democratic institutions and safeguards, which is deemed positive in the novel’s ethical terms (axiological) and permits political activity such as demonstrations and free expression to the variegated nation (deontic). In the later sections in India (and in Pakistan), however, Saleem’s powers of divination cease to function (alethic), political activities are severely restricted and civil rights curtailed under the Emergency (deontic prohibition); as such, the reversal in Saleem’s telepathic powers becomes tantamount to a critique and indictment of the path India has taken under the Emergency and Pakistan from almost the very beginning (according to the text’s/author’s axiological ethicality).

Through *parataxis*, the reader is enabled to form a comprehensive picture of the paratactically dispersed India by putting the pieces of this spatialized jig-saw puzzle together, one piece at a time. The perforated sheet symbolizes his approach in tackling the monumental and challenging task of narrativizing, spatializing, and critiquing the extremely diverse and heterogeneous postcolonial nation. Moreover, the paratactical structure of the novel is “an

obvious and successful attempt to disrupt linear reading patterns and politicize the narrative.”

(Elias 130) The alternating chapters between Saleem and his grandfather Dr. Aziz offer a spatialized narrative history of the postcolonial nation, unhindered by the linear, sequential progression of events (as narrated in official hegemonic accounts of the nations’ modern history), which lead to the *simultaneity* of vision and enables the reader to grasp the untoward trajectory of India’s history from a promising democracy to despotism, repression, poverty, and mass emasculation under the Emergency rule. The impact on Saleem, and the reader, is one of disillusionment and poignant loss.

By juxtaposing the various events and elements of the narrative side by side without an overarching rationale, the “paratactical structure” also depicts the staggering *heretoglossia* and cacophony of numerous languages, dialects, religions, and traditions with their centrifugal, divergent forces pursuing autonomy (at the local, provincial level) as well as the centripetal forces of unification (i.e. Central government in New Delhi) that operate within the variegated nation. As Gora puts it, “*Midnight’s Children* is an allegory of the political history of post-colonial India in which...both India’s extraordinary diversity and the concomitant centrifugal force of its national form in the very structure of Saleem’s narrative itself” are captured (Gora 117).

In fact, *parataxis* at the formal, organizational level of the narrative accomplishes what *heteroglossia* does at the linguistic-ideological level to depict the disparity and lack of an all-encompassing unity amidst the variegated nation by capturing the ever-present conflict between the centripetal forces of unification emanating from the central government against the centrifugal forces of the teeming masses, “the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification” as reflected in the conference of midnight’s children with their various views,

affiliations, and concerns mirroring the provinces, territories, with their local interests and foci (Bakhtin 272). The latter are often at odds with one another, yet are coerced into the central government's rule during the Emergency period under Indira Gandhi.

Secondly, throughout the novel, there is a conceptual play with the spatial homonyms "hole" and "whole." Doctor Aziz is initially obsessed with discovering the whole of Naseem, which he is permitted to do solely through the hole at first. Nevertheless, once Dr. Aziz is able to view Naseem's whole body, he seems to lose interest in the *whole* Naseem and his focus turns to *the hole*, which is suggestive of incompleteness, fracture, and fragmentation throughout the text. This is instrumental to Rushdie's postmodern spatialization of postcolonial India in symbolizing her fragmentation, that is, the fault lines and the schism that exist in the multitudinous, variegated nation with her staggering number of cultures, religions, languages, and other socio-cultural and political differences (symbolized by the midnight's children and their various capabilities and interests), and that these differences need to be respected and negotiated through a democratic process and civil debate rather than having people coerced and brutalized into submission as Indira Gandhi's heavy-handed government does later. As Lohani-Chase puts it,

Full of irony and sarcasm, Rushdie plays with the idea of reaching the "whole" through the "hole," as Aadam does with Naseem. However, the end result is every "whole" is a cracked "w/whole," and the desire to find something "whole" might not be possible or even a good idea after all (41).

While the aforementioned centrifugal forces propagate instability and fragmentation by pulling the country to different directions, the stage is set for the nation to be brought under the central government's restrictive control through repression and totalitarian measures at a significant cost. Thus, just like Naseem the whole of India is formed while holes, fragments and fissures still exist in the variegated nation-state. Additionally, Naseem Ghani, just like Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who became widowed prior to her ascension to the prime minister

position and became known as the Widow, becomes a widow subsequent to Dr. Aziz's death. As such, the correlation between Naseem Ghani and India led by Indira Gandhi, the Widow, comes full circle (through correlation on two levels: the perforated sheet and widowhood). The symbolism contributes to the "parody of form and wholeness" through the use of the perforated sheet in critiquing "the politics of Indira Gandhi at the national level, the Widow, as he [Saleem] calls her in the 70s during her term as prime minister of India." (Lohani-Chase 42)

Another spatial term is "partition," which operates mainly as a 'conceptual' term in the novel, and some 200 pages after the opening, the partition of India is described in the following terms:

It is a matter of record that the States Reorganization Committee had submitted its report to Mr. Nehru as long ago as October 1955; a year later, its recommendations had been implemented. India had been divided anew, into fourteen states and six centrally-administered "territories." But the boundaries of these states were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words (*Midnight's Children* 216).

In the above paragraph, the partition of India is described as a process; it was assigned to a committee comprised of a number of individuals to mitigate any outside influence or corruption issues so that a recommendation would be made collectively to Prime Minister Nehru. This paragraph captures the early stages of the independent nation when democratic processes and collective decision-making are the norm, which are in stark contrast to what occurs later with Indira Gandhi's consolidation of power during the Emergency. What is striking, however, is the last sentence that alludes to the formation of modern India as a *conceptual space* whose "boundaries ... were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words (*Midnight's Children* 216). In other words, at its inception, modern India is presented as socio-cultural construct (rather than a geographical construct) in which the language spoken plays a key role in the cohesiveness of the group and its demarcation

from other peoples; as such, India proves to be as much a conceptual construct as Rushdie's imaginary (re)construction of the country.

Despite the above-cited demarcations of states due to language differences, “nothing was done with the state of Bombay” which leads to the formation of the two political parties along the language lines of Marathi and Gujarati, each advocating their own language and demanding the formation of a state based on the language that they converse and identify with:

the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (“United Maharashtra Party”) which stood for the Marathi language and demanded the creation of the Deccan state of Maharashtra and the Maha Gujarat Parishad (“Great Gujarat Party”) which marched beneath the banner of the Gujarati language and dreamed of a state to the North of the Bombay City, stretching all the way to the Kathiawar peninsula and the Rann of Kutch... (*Midnight's Children* 216).

The partitions, both real and imagined, are along linguistic (Indian states and territories) and religious (Pakistan) fault lines:

Language marchers demanded the *partition* of the state of Bombay along *linguistic boundaries* – the dream of Maharashtra was at the head of some of some processions, the mirage of *Gujarat* led the others forward. Heat, gnawing at the mind's divisions between *fantasy and reality*, made *anything seem possible* [Italics mine] ... In 1956, then, languages marched militantly through the daytime streets; by night, they rioted in my head (*Midnight's Children* 191).

In the above paragraph, Rushdie's narrator alludes to “the mind's divisions between fantasy and reality, [which] made anything seem possible.” (191) Both fantasy and reality are mentioned and commingled throughout the novel. India is portrayed as the land of fantasy that started as a promising nation/dream, thus representing axiological goodness, but has increasingly been mired in a host of issues such as assassinations of high profile politicians (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi), high taxes, divisions along linguistic and religious fault lines, and assertive and repressive governments all of which are woven into the narrative. In fact, India is presented as a set of possible, alternative worlds within which new possibilities are to be either realized or thwarted while the nation is still divided by linguistic, religious and socio-political interests of

the people who inhabit her various regions and are represented by the midnight's children. From a possible worlds standpoint, new possibilities and spaces have opened up. After a long history of colonial rule over the Indian subcontinent, the new independent nation has emerged with democratic elements such as the Constitution and parliamentary elections and has the potential of a promising future that is challenged and undermined at every step of the way. Arundhati Roy, the renowned Indian author, registers the disillusionment with Indian politics and institutions in bringing about meaningful social change for ordinary people in the following terms:

Over the past fifty years ordinary citizens' modest hopes for lives of dignity, security and relief from abject poverty have been systematically snuffed out. Every "democratic" institution in this country has shown itself to be unaccountable to the ordinary citizen, and either unwilling or incapable of acting in the interests of genuine social justice (Roy 18).

Thus, as the narrative progresses, the *axiological* modality, concerned with "moral judgment," becomes increasingly relevant. With respect to the *alethic* modality, the violence and carnage have become very possible and real; indeed, they have become so real that there is no need for the construction of an alternative, imagined world since what was deemed as impossible or unlikely has already materialized. In fact, the violence has become permissible as the new norm – in terms of the deontic modality – in the Eastern uprising against Pakistan (that leads to the defeat of Pakistani military and the ensuing independence of Bangladesh), and is depicted as morally repugnant. The violence is so atrocious that it defies credulity: "what a thing, Allah, you can't believe your eyes – no, not true – how can it – buddha, tell, what's got into my eyes?" (*Midnight's Children* 432) There is, indeed, a convergence of all the modalities here including the *epistemic* since the witnessing of the massacres and rapes by Pakistani troops in what later becomes Bangladesh is a new revelation to Shaeed, Saleem's companion who represents all

those who were unaware of what was transpiring at the front lines. This scene is a close-up of the violence of the partition.

In India, the once imagined postcolonial land, Saleem's prophetic powers of divination and telepathy are operational up until his emasculation (and that of the other one thousand and one children) while in Pakistan, they cease to function from the outset. This discrepancy has moral significance with respect to the axiological modality: In India, at least in its early days, there is hope and potential for possibilities and positive developments as a new democracy. In Pakistan, however, right from the beginning there is little hope for the formation of a functioning democracy due to misinformation, propaganda, widespread corruption, and autocratic rule. The alethic and axiological modalities are inextricably interconnected in this regard. Saleem, who has no prophetic powers in Pakistan, has difficulty adjusting to his new home:

After my sixteenth birthday, I studied history at my aunt Alia's college; but not even learning could make me feel a part of this country devoid of midnight children, in which my fellow-students took out processions to demand a stricter, more Islamic society – proving that they had contrived to become the antithesis of students everywhere else on earth, by demanding more-rules-not-less. My parents, however, were determined to put down roots; although *Ayub Khan and Bhutto were forging an alliance with China (which had so recently been our enemy)* [Italics mine], Ahmed and Amina would listen to no criticism of their new home; and my father bought a towel factory (*Midnight's Children* 355).

In the quoted paragraph, Saleem is shown as a misfit in the space he finds himself in (Pakistan), which is “devoid of midnight's children” that symbolize various types of diversity (e.g. religious, linguistic, cultural, political, etc.) and any possibility for progress and regeneration. Thus, Saleem is totally incapable of forming any enduring bond with his parents' adopted homeland due to his antipathy toward the religiosity/Islamization of Pakistan at the socio-cultural level as well as the rigidity, duplicity and hypocrisy manifested by politicians such as *Ayub Khan*. Saleem's meta-comment on Pakistan's shady politics is revealing in this respect:



The Combined Opposition Party, you will not be surprised to hear, was a collection of rogues and scoundrels of the first water, united only in their determination to unseat the President and return to the bad, old days in which civilians, and not soldiers, lined their pockets from the public exchequer, but for some reason, they had acquired a formidable leader. This was Mistress Fatima Jinnah, the sister of the founder of the nation... (*Midnight's Children* 368)

In the above paragraph, by focalizing on the supporters of President Ayub Khan in the 1965 presidential election and using their language in exaggerated satirical fashion, Rushdie is able to undermine and parody their support for the President and his military rule by inserting contradictory and revealing statements that allude to the gullibility of Ayub Khan's supporters as well as the propaganda that lionizes Ayub-Khan and demonizes his opposition. For instance, the members of the Combined Opposition Party are labeled as "a collection of rogues and scoundrels of the first water," and yet they are led by "a formidable leader... Fatimah Jinnah, the sister of the founder of the nation." (368)

The different factions and their politicians are depicted as avaricious, corrupt, and power grabbing. After the leaders of the Mader-i-Millat (the mother of the nation) Combined Opposition Party are put under house arrest, the President and his party through their propaganda machine win the rigged election. Saleem ends the chapter with the following comments:

*And we all lived happily...at any rate, even without the traditional last-sentence fiction of fairy-tales, my story does indeed end in fantasy; because when Basic Democrats had done their duty, the newspapers – Fang, Dawn, Pakistan Times – announced a crushing victory for the President's Muslim League over the Madir-i-Millat's Combined Opposition Party; thus proving to me that I have been only the humblest of jugglers-with-facts; and that, in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case; and maybe this was the difference between my Indian childhood and Pakistani adolescence – that in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disoriented, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies [Italics mine]... (*Midnight's Children* 373).*

In the above paragraph, there is a stark contrast between India and Pakistan conceptually, which is presented through Saleem's perceptive consciousness: "that in the first, there is an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disoriented, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies." (373) Saleem, who is able to marshal his prophetic powers, is a match for the multitudinous nation-state of India where he is able to tap into these powers to study and critique the linguistically and socio-culturally diverse nation.

However, in Pakistan, Saleem is powerless and loses his telepathic powers, but this is because he is "disoriented, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies" and is no match for the state-sponsored "unrealities and lies." (373) The meta-comment engages with the alethic and axiological modalities, which are inextricably intertwined since (from a postcolonial, socio-political standpoint) Pakistan is portrayed as a land in the autocratic grip of her rulers, who without any moral compunction, use misinformation and propaganda to advance their political agenda whereas India is the multitudinous country with "an infinity of alternative realities," which is narrativized throughout Rushdie's heterogeneous plot. In other words, India is portrayed as "an infinity of alternative realities," which can be approached from the angle of the *alethic modality* and the possibility of the various events transpiring throughout the land. Pakistan, on the other hand, is depicted as "an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies," which are to be approached and assessed through the axiological modality, since Rushdie's narrator is explicit in denouncing them as fabrications and lies employed by Pakistani politicians (Ayub Khan, Zia ul-Haq) to deceive the public and satisfy their own unquenchable thirst for power.

As the narrative progresses, Rushdie's narrator turns his censorious gaze to India as a possible world in which things go awry. The *deontic* and *axiological* modalities become

increasingly pertinent to the unfolding events and essential to their interpretation. In fact, toward the end of the novel, there is a deontic shift or reorientation wherein the promising beginnings of the nation-state under Prime Minister Nehru are replaced with and degenerate into despotism, oppression and cynicism under Indira Gandhi. Thus, there is a palpable decline along the axiological axis in India as the civil liberties are curtailed during the twenty-one-month Emergency period and basic human rights; in particular, the right to procreation are suspended. The latter part of the novel encompasses the shady period of “the state of emergency” and sterilization/birth control programs during the 1970’s and Sanjay Gandhi’s role in it:

On the four hundred and eighteenth day of my stay, there was a change in the atmosphere of the madhouse. Someone came to dinner: someone with a plump stomach, a tapering head covered with oily curls and a mouth as fleshy as a woman’s labia. I thought I recognized him from newspaper photographs. Turning to one of my sexless ageless faceless cousins, I inquired with interest, “Isn’t it, you know, Sanjay Gandhi?” But the pulverized creature was too annihilated to be capable of replying... was it or wasn’t it? I did not, at the that time, know what I now set down: that certain high-ups in that extraordinary government (and also certain unelected sons of prime ministers) had acquired the power of replicating themselves... a few years later, there would be gangs of Sanjays all over India! No wonder that incredible dynasty wanted to impose birth control on the rest of us... so maybe it was, maybe it wasn’t; but someone disappeared into my uncle’s study with Mustapha Aziz; and that night - I sneaked a look - there was a locked black leather folder saying TOP SECRET and also PROJECT M.C.C.; and the next morning my uncle was looking at me differently, with fear almost, or with that special look of loathing which Civil Servants reserve for those who fall into official disfavor (*Midnight’s Children* 454-455).

In the above paragraph, Saleem’s uncle, the civil servant who is supportive of Indira Gandhi’s governmental policies, is what Franz Fanon dubbed the “national bourgeoisie” of postcolonial countries; that is, the class of administrators and politicians that “mimics the Western bourgeoisie in its negative and decadent aspects,” which ultimately “turns its country virtually into a bordello for Europe.” (Fanon 101) From Homi Bhabba’s perspective, however, Mustapha Aziz and others within the postcolonial nation with a long history of colonial rule and influence, the critical issue becomes one of “colonial subjectivity” since it “outlives the legal structure of

the colonial project.” (Zacharias 212) Its prime example in the novel is Saleem’s uncle Mustapha Aziz.

The above paragraph also links the events transpiring in Saleem’s personal life with events and figures from the political domain as Sanjay Gandhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s son, spearheads the compulsory sterilization program to curb population growth throughout India. As Sanjay Gandhi makes a visit to Saleem’s uncle Mustapha Aziz, a civil servant, his uncle’s demeanor changes and he has Saleem subsequently removed from his house. At this juncture, the narrative has not reached the forced mass sterilization program that was announced by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the Emergency in 1976; nonetheless, the narrator proleptically leapfrogs to those events so as to provide the reader with *simultaneity* of vision in terms of what was occurring in India during the Emergency and how it was impacting people on a personal level. In other words, the use of prolepsis leads to a simultaneity of vision where the reader can not only see the sinister event of Saleem’s uncle turning against him due to Sanjay Gandhi’s visit, but it also provides the reader with a glimpse of what is to come at the national level with mass sterilization, the Emergency rule along with its consequences of autocratic rule, repression, and torture.

At the *axiological level*, the forced sterilization and the state of Emergency are presented as morally repugnant. Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi’s son, who was quite effective in the forced sterilization program, has acquired the uncanny power of replicating himself: “that certain high-ups in that extraordinary government (and also certain unelected sons of prime ministers) had acquired the power of replicating themselves...a few years later, there would be gangs of Sanjays all over India!” (*Midnight’s Children* 454-455) The *alethic modality* comes into play and is closely aligned with the axiological mode: Sanjay is endowed with the fantastic power to

replicate himself, but within the political logic of the narrative, this replication alludes to the actual politics of India and the decisive role Sanjay Gandhi played in mobilizing his supporters and agents to implement the sterilization program; as such, each of those agents is treated in the narrative as a replica of Sanjay himself! Hence, the alethic and axiological modalities work in tandem since the world of possibilities (and impossibilities) is utilized in order to critique and censure inhumane and oppressive measures such as the forced sterilization of the poor and the dispossessed in postcolonial India during the 1975 Emergency where “an astonishing 6.2 million Indian men were sterilized in just a year, which was "15 times the number of people sterilized by the Nazis", according to science journalist Mara Hvistendahl (Biswas 1).

Overall, the plot is spatialized through conceptual spatialization and parataxis to provide the reader with a complex, multifaceted and spatial view of the socio-historical events unfolding throughout the novel, which lends itself to critique and parody by juxtaposing the utopian ideals on which the nation-state was founded with her increasingly violent and repressive measures in subsequent parts of the novel. By employing these strategies, the author is able to create a poignant picture of India as a promising postcolonial nation at the moment of its independence, which is paratactically contrasted with the violence and oppression that unfold later in the novel as during the state of Emergency as well as the clearing of the slums. The narrativization and spatialization strategies offer a trenchant critique of the nation-state as it departs from the ideals and utopian vision at its inception.

One of the key uses to which parataxis is put in the novel is to depict the social division and violence that the government’s policies and actions are having on the lower and working classes of the Indian society. Here is an example of the paratactic juxtaposition of the personal and the socio-political/collective:

...I was half dead of starvation while elsewhere in the city the Supreme Court was informing Mrs. Gandhi that she need not resign until her appeal, but must neither vote in the Lok Sabha nor draw a salary, and while the Prime Minister in her exultation at this partial victory began to abuse her opponents in language of which a koli fishwife would have been proud, my Parvati's labor entered a phase in which despite her utter exhaustion she found the energy to issue a string of foul-smelling oaths from her color-drained lips... (*Midnight's Children* 480-481)

The utilization of *parataxis* above broadens the vision by juxtaposing the personal with the political, socio-historical events. Even though the spatial juxtaposition of Saleem and Indira Gandhi seem to be disjointed with no apparent connection, they serve three distinct, yet interrelated purposes: First, they provide the reader with a bird's eye view of what is transpiring throughout the nation at the larger socio-political level. Secondly, and more importantly, the paratactic spatial juxtapositions of the collective and the personal show how the political events impact the lower classes across the country; hence, they critique and implicitly denounce the government's actions, policies, and foci by showing the injurious effect those misguided decisions and misplaced actions are having on the people, especially the poor and the most vulnerable. For instance, in the paragraph, Indira Gandhi's challenges with the Supreme Court and her government's internal issues are placed alongside Saleem's starvation and his wife's labor before their triplets are born. Third, Pavarati's attempt "to issue a string of foul-smelling oaths," through paratactic juxtaposition is set alongside Indira Gandhi's attempt "to abuse her opponents in language of which a koli [gypsy] fishwife would have been proud"; thus, satirizing and undermining the prime Minister's vulgar language. The *parataxis* here is political and is tantamount to an indictment of the Indira Gandhi's government by not so subtly suggesting that the authorities' priority/focus is on the wrong issues; for instance, consolidation of power rather than attempting to alleviate the poverty, starvation, and daily challenges that the lower classes of the society, the poor, downtrodden, and working class people have to wrestle with on a daily

basis. This is congruent with Lazarus' observation that "postcolonial writing is centrally and vitally concerned with the representation of class: in broad terms, as a key determinant (or even *the* key determinant) of social relations, practices, and forms of identity; more narrowly, as a primary source, and site, of social division and violence." (Lazarus 40)

All in all, throughout the novel, the personal and the collective (the socio-historical, the economic, and the political) are paratactically juxtaposed in order to advance the author's reconstruction of the trajectory of India's modern history since her independence and to critique the governmental policies and practices of India's central government under Indira Gandhi. In fact, throughout *Midnight's Children* the seedy government policies and practices in both India and Pakistan are spatialized and filtered through Saleem's consciousness. This is all done in order to deconstruct and dismantle the hegemonic, official historical accounts of India's independence and partition, which dismissed the ensuing violence as the necessary by-product of nationalism. Indeed, the novelistic text through its unflinching, yet imaginative portrayal of the violence, oppression, and religious fundamentalism that replace the initial optimism of the nation's independence, presents Rushdie's "political perspective that encompasses the need for freedom of expression, local cultural hybridity as an enabling concept, and secularism instead of communism and fundamentalism." (Lohani-Chase 45)

By employing spatialization strategies and concepts throughout the novel, a new version of history is constructed which, unlike traditional historiography that "is logical, imposes patterns, a chain of cause and effect, is seemingly objective, definitive, unitary, repressive and closed," offers instead a version that is "fragmented, provisional, openly subjective, plural, unrepressive, a construct, a reading." (Dwivedi 520-521) In brief, *Midnight's Children* is a personal and critical account of India's tumultuous, violent independence and postcolonial

history that is presented through the author's/metanarrator's socio-historical prism suffused with disillusionment and moral outrage. This is accomplished at the narrative level by constructing the newly born India and the later India under the Emergency as well as Pakistan as different possible worlds/spaces, wherein the original "magical" possibilities in the *alethic* mode are gradually curtailed or challenged in ways that are linked to the *deontic* constriction, which narratively censures and condemns, in axiological terms, the sacrifice and curtailment of possibilities brought by the birth of new nations and people with all their potential at the altar of political power and consolidation that stifles those very possibilities and stymies socio-historical progress as a consequence.

### **3.6. SPATIALIZATION IN *SHAME***

In *Shame*, a key text in the postcolonial fiction of the 1970's and 1980's, Rushdie constructs an alternative fictional universe, a storyworld that departs from its documented historical parallels of Pakistan's postcolonial history as well as the logic of daily life and what is conceivable in human terms. His objective is to articulate a specific postcolonial politics that is critical of Western influence, but even more so of the repressive national governments that came to power in the aftermath of the death of Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The critique within the novelistic text, however, goes beyond censuring the policies and practices of successive Pakistani governments and western influence on them and encompasses the Pakistani society at large including its patriarchal culture, its relegation of women to second-class citizens, its ultraconservative Islamic mores, and its penchant for Western products as a vestige of colonial influence, all of which are narrativized and satirized throughout the possible worlds and spaces of Peccavistan and Pakistan.



Before explicating the role of spatialization in the novel, however, exegesis of the novel's dual agenda is in order since it impacts the "paratactical structure" of the text and its underlying purpose. The dual agenda is crystalized in the theme of *shame* (or its Urdu equivalent *sharam*), which is central to the book's "dual agenda" and bears its title:

This word: shame. No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write...*Sharam*, that's the word....A short word, but one containing encyclopedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also *embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world* [Italics mine] and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts...What's the opposite of shame? What's left when *sharam* is subtracted? That's obvious: shamelessness (*Shame* 33).

As noted above, the novel's dual agenda of critique and parody encompasses the twin possible worlds/spaces of Pakistan (the purported actual world/geo-political referent) and Peccavistan (the fictional counterpart): First, the metanarratorial sections, which directly engage with Pakistani politics and society in a quasi-authorial voice and are subsumed under the term "shame", present an earnest critique and indictment of the Pakistani body politic that is decried as morally bankrupt and socially injurious along with the colonial interventions reflected in the English language: "this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write." (*Shame* 33) Secondly, the novel's serious stance and critique is satirized through the construction of the alternative, possible world of Peccavistan; as such, the textual sections that spatialize and narrativize it are suffused with irony, parody, and exaggeration. Overall, the novel is replete with instances and episodes for which the proper feeling would be one of "shame" with its various connotations and nuances including moral outrage and embarrassment. The theme of shame runs throughout the novel and reflects the author's indictment of the Pakistani government as well as

certain socio-cultural practices, Islamic prejudicial attitudes, and traditions that are counter to basic human rights, transparency and people's right to self-determination in a professed democracy.

Given the centrality of shame in both possible worlds/spaces, Dolezel's modalities, particularly the *axiological* modality proves instrumental to the evaluation of the narrative on ethical grounds as it revolves around the pivotal issue of shame or "Sharam" with its connotations of "embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness," and so forth (Rushdie 33). As in *Midnight's Children*, the axiological mode is closely aligned with the *alethic* and *epistemic* modalities of this world that "is and is not Pakistan" albeit in different ways than in *Midnight's Children*.

Peccavistan is portrayed as the alternative possible space in which realism and documented history of Pakistan are deconstructed and challenged via the *alethic* and *deontic* modalities. In particular, the secluded and immured Shakil residence where Omar Khayyam is raised by his three mothers, is depicted as a possible space set apart the society with its conventional Islamic ethics and mores; as such, the young Omar Khayyam becomes immune to feeling shame, and is, in fact, a walking parody of it. Thus, "shame" sets the novel's ethical focus – Dolezel's axiological modality – while undermining it through parody and its opposite "shamelessness": "the title itself thus becomes a model of Rushdie's subversive dual ethical design which is simultaneously moral and self-mocking." (Carey-Abrioux 67) The purpose of this satiric, dual agenda is to mock and undermine the Pakistani body politic and to suggest the extent to which Pakistan has distanced herself from democracy and basic human rights and values that the metanarrator/author endorses.

To advance his postcolonial politics, Rushdie employs specific spatialization strategies such as *parataxis*, *simultaneity*, and *anachrony* through which the possible worlds of Pakistan and Peccavistan are paratactically juxtaposed in order to present an overall parodic, postcolonial indictment and critique of Pakistan through the diegetic depiction of the country's modern nationalistic history of the successive governments of General Ayub Khan, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and General Zia ul-Haq through their fictional counterparts in the alternative, possible world of "Peccavistan." Thus, the novel's dual agenda critiques the Pakistani politics on two fronts and is implemented through the "paratactic narrative structure" of the text in which the metanarratorial sections, which explicitly critique Pakistan's politics and society in a quasi-authorial voice speaking in the actual world, are set alongside the constructed, imagined possible world of Peccavistan without any attempt to integrate the two into an all-encompassing hypotactic whole. This *parataxis*, which "blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy within these alternating chapters," allows the novel to present a parodic, constructed narrative (Peccavistan) by highlighting Pakistan's socio-political problems through exaggeration, while simultaneously affording the enunciation of meta-comments that explicitly critique Pakistan and her political leaders; in particular, General Ayub Khan and General Zia Ul-Haq (Elias 130).

Early in the novel, Rushdie's narrator enunciates the ontology of his constructed possible country "Peccavistan" and contends that it is not Pakistan, but that it is based on the modern country of Pakistan: his most significant and encompassing meta-comment on the construction of the semi-fictitious *Peccavistan* is the following:

The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off centering to

be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan (22).

The above-cited meta-comment on Peccavistan, as the fictional counterpart of Pakistan, is revealing since it foregrounds its similarity to Pakistan in ontological terms by “occupying the same space” as well as the difference between the two spaces by utilizing important meta-language with respect to the relationship between Peccavistan (the fictional signified) to Pakistan (the geo-political referent), which “exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality.” (*Shame* 22)

This “off centering,” as Rushdie puts it, allows the narrative to depart from the restrictions of a realistic/classical historical novel (such as one by Walter Scott) that would have to be bound by its accurate representation of known, documented historical events and figures. Instead, as a postcolonial narrative, the author creates a fictional space (e.g. Peccavistan) that is unfettered by the restrictions of modern Pakistan’s history (the *alethic* modality), while simultaneously allows the author to fictionalize and critique the country freely, as he sees fit, so as to advance his critical agenda and censure the hybrid postcolonial nation with her amalgamation of traditional chauvinism, patriarchal culture, and predilection for Western consumer products. Even though the twin possible worlds/spaces of Pakistan and Peccavistan are equally invested in critiquing the Pakistani politics and socio-cultural practices in axiological terms, they differ as possible worlds through the *alethic* possibility for magical, improbable and unrealistic events: Pakistan is constructed as a realistic world in which verisimilitude and the logic of daily life and realism are dominant. Peccavistan, on the other hand, departs from realism and daily logic, in terms of the *alethic* modality, according to the “principle of minimal departure” since the various magical and fantastic events and characters take center stage (e.g. the three mothers, Omar Khayyam Shakil, Sufia Zenobia, etc.) within this possible world. Moreover, the epistemic conditionality is set

forth by the meta-commentary throughout the text: “the country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite.” (*Shame* 22)

*Pakistan* is also shown to be a construction (just like *Peccavistan*) since its geography and borders are constructed along socio-cultural fault-lines after the departing British came up with her arbitrary borders. At the larger geopolitical level, then, the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan as well as the subsequent establishment and independence of Bangladesh are central to both *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*. In her essay on *Shame* Carey—Abrioux perceptively observes, “geography, and especially cartography, relating to land claims, disputed territory, boundaries, is a further, urgent postcolonial concern,” which are both underscored and questioned throughout the text (Carey-Abrioux 69).

Conceptual spatialization is utilized to depict the socio-political rift in the Indian society between Hindus and Muslims who, long before the partition, seemed to live in different socio-cultural spaces/realities by living and acting according to differing cultural and religious norms albeit living in the same country. As such, the *partition* itself is utilized as a metaphor and woven into the thematic structure of the narrative by symbolizing the rift and hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims via the films they were watching prior to the partition of Pakistan from India. The partition is described in vintage Rushdie prose, which is satirical:

This was the time immediately before *the famous moth-eaten partition* that chopped up the old country and handed Al-Lah a few insect-nibbled slices of it, some dusty western acres [Pakistan] and jungly eastern swamps [Bangladesh] that the ungodly were happy to do without. (Al-Lah’s new country: two chunks of land a thousand miles apart. *A country so improbable that it could almost exist.*) But let’s be unemotional and state merely that *feelings were running so high that even going to the pictures had become a political act.* The one-godly went to these cinemas and the washers of stone gods to those; *movie fans had been partitioned already, in advance of the tired old land.* The stone-godly ran the movie business, that goes without saying, and being vegetarians they made a very famous film: *Gai-Wallah*. Perhaps you have heard of it? An unusual fantasy about a lone, masked hero who roamed the Indo-Gangetic plain liberating herds of beef-cattle from their keepers, saving the sacred, horned, uddered beasts from the slaughterhouse. The stone-

gang packed out the cinemas where this movie was shown; the one-godly riposted by rushing to see imported, non-vegetarian Westerns in which cows got massacred and the good guys feasted on steaks. And mobs of irate film buffs attacked the cinemas of their enemies...well, it was a time for all types of craziness, that's all [*Italics mine*] (Rushdie 57-58).

The Hindu and Muslim spaces, as contiguous possible worlds, are analyzable and distinguishable via Dolezel's modalities, particularly through the *deontic* modality of "permission and prohibition" according to each group's cultural/religious edicts as their socio-cultural norm: The Hindus, who have a "prohibition" against eating beef, were watching a film named *Gai-Wallah*, in which the hero rescues cows set to be butchered while Muslims, who, on the other hand, have "permission" to eat beef as a staple of their diet and resent any prohibitions to be placed on their food whatsoever, were watching Western movies in which cowboys would capture cows and send them to be slaughtered. Thus, the two groups (Hindus and Muslims) are at odds in deontic and axiological terms as each group's deontic norm is sanctioned by their religion, the repository of their ethical and moral standards. However, it is worth noting that the ethical values of the two groups do not coincide with the those of the postcolonial text; in fact, Rushdie's text critiques and condemns both groups for their strict adherence to their prohibitive practices and their intolerance for others who do not share or espouse the same set of values and prohibitions. As such, both Hindu and Muslim extremists are depicted as axiologically bad in terms of the text's ethics.

Mahmoud the Woman, the owner of a movie theater, who is tolerant and decides to show both films on the same day (hence morally good in terms of the axiological ethics of the text), violates the deontic norms/prohibitions of both groups with his imprudent act. As a result, he is punished when his theater is first boycotted (by Hindus and Muslims) and subsequently set on fire, which shows the strength of their prohibition and the severity of the punishment they are

willing to exact on the violator. As such, the diegetic depiction of the two possible spaces and the socio-political rift between Hindus and Muslims prior to the establishment of the physical, political border between India and Pakistan, attests to the socio-cultural constructedness of the twin possible spaces and the fact that the powerful and entrenched socio-cultural/religious barriers and prejudices had existed long before the political and geographical border between India and Pakistan was erected. The socio-political schism that is illustrated by going to the movies/watching certain films is narrated in such a manner as to both condemn the ensuing rift and intolerance and to satirize it.

Moreover, the partition is depicted as the arbitrary dividing and breaking up of the newly independent India-Pakistan, which Rushdie's narrator satirizes and mocks with the phrase "the famous moth-eaten partition..." (57) In this case, Rushdie combines the two types of spatialization – concrete and conceptual – in his narrative by first evoking the geographic, spatial coordinates of Pakistan "some dusty western acres" and Bangladesh "jungly eastern swamps" (concrete spatialization) and, then, reverses the chronological order and through *parataxis* juxtaposes the partition of the old country alongside the division and hostility among the populace that preceded it (conceptual spatialization). This spatial configuration is achieved through backtracking and paratactic juxtaposition of the future partition with what preceded it, that is, the religious, sociocultural schism in the old India's population between the Hindus and Muslims as manifested in the films that they were watching in the same concrete and conceptual space of the movie theatre prior to the partition: "But let's be unemotional and state merely that feelings were running so high that even going to the pictures had become a political act." (Rushdie 57)

The latter depiction of the rift within the Indian population results in a sort of “hermeneutical map” that affords the reader a more encompassing politico-historical perspective of the events and the conditions in India prior and leading to the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, the spatial arrangement of events brings about the effect of *simultaneity* by making the linear future available through the spatializing strategy of *parataxis*: the partition is mentioned when the metanarrator’s main focus is on the rift that existed between Hindus and Muslims prior to the partition. This paratactic juxtaposition affords the reader a fuller perspective on the socio-political events leading up to the partition of India. As Rushdie depicts in *Shame*, India was partitioned along religious and cultural fault lines long before the actual partition occurred.

As noted, *parataxis* is utilized by juxtaposing the asymmetrical metafictional comments alongside the fictional, possible world events Rushdie constructs. The meta-narrator’s meta-fictional comment on his version of Pakistan is quite informative since it divulges his dual attitude toward Pakistan:

If this were a realistic novel about Pakistan, I would not be writing about Bilquis and the wind; I would be talking about my younger sister. Who is twenty-two, and studying engineering in Karachi; who can’t sit on her hair anymore, and who (unlike me) is a Pakistani citizen. On my good days, I think of her as Pakistan, and then I feel very fond of the place, and find it easy to forgive its (her) love of Coca-Cola and imported motor cars (66).

In the quoted paragraph, Rushdie’s metanarrator explains his attempt at constructing a fictional narrative that departs from realism (i.e. the logic of daily life) and the world, as we know it, verisimilitude, to a significant extent. Moreover, he describes his ambivalence toward Pakistan by associating the country with his sister (the association is one of affection) while at the same time he criticizes “its (her) love of Coca-Cola and imported motor cars,” which are Western products that solidify the West’s economic and socio-cultural hegemony over the



former colonies and alludes to the hybrid nature of the postcolonial nation that asserts her independent, separate cultural identity from the West, and yet is still influenced by the West and the proliferation of Western products in its market. Indeed, in the quoted paragraph, both the purpose and the means of the novel are mentioned.

Throughout the text, Rushdie employs conceptual spatialization in order to symbolize the twin axes of power within Pakistan's political history: the politicians and the military respectively. His descriptions of the concrete spaces of "the new city" and "the old city" symbolically reflect his critical view of Pakistan and its various institutions, culture, and politics that have failed the country in axiological terms. The following quotation is vintage Rushdie prose in its satirical and censorious thrust:

The politicians and diplomats were in charge of *the new city* but the army dominated *the old town*. The new capital was composed of numerous concrete edifices which exuded an air of philistine transience. *The geodesic dome of the Friday Mosque had already begun to crack*, and all around it the new official buildings preened themselves as they, too, fell apart. *The airconditioning broke down, the electric circuits shortened, flush water kept bubbling up into washbasins to the consternation of the plumbers...* O vilest of cities! Those buildings represented the final triumph of a modernism that was really a kind of pre-stressed nostalgia, form without function, the effigy of Islamic architecture without its heart... The new capital was in reality the biggest collection of airport terminals on earth, a garbage dump for unwanted transit lounges and custom halls, and maybe that was appropriate, *because democracy had never been more than a bird of passage in those parts*, after all... the old town possessed, by contrast, the confident provinciality of its years [Italics mine] (*Shame* 215).

The suggestive descriptions of the twin cities (the new and the old) and which group controls them, coupled with other comments on the failing of the facilities and infrastructure, are examples of conceptual spatialization. They provide a censorious lens through which the reader views the Pakistani body politic by providing symbolic space for the two groups that have historically controlled the twin cities and the politics of the nation: the politicians and the military respectively. For instance, his description of the new city with all its "numerous concrete

edifices,” and facilities, which are dysfunctional, suggest the inefficiency of the new city and incompetence of its residents, “politicos and diplomats.” The new city is presented as a sham, imposing in its Islamic architecture and appearance but dysfunctional: “form without function, the effigy of Islamic architecture without its heart.” (*Shame* 215) As such, the failure of the new city and its crumbling infrastructure symbolizes the utter inefficiency of democratic institutions and politicians and the utter failure of successive national governments that have formed since the nation’s independence while they are contrasted with the relative confidence of the old town, which is controlled by the military and has “the confident provinciality of its years.” (*Shame* 215) Thus, the history of modern Pakistan is spatialized through the twin cities as conceptual spaces that are equally critiqued in terms of the *axiological* ethicality while operating under different *deontic* norms and prohibitions based on who is in charge – the politicians or the military.

The novel commences with a description of the physical setting, where most of the actions unfold in the early part of the narrative from the patriarch Mr. Shakil’s death, through his three daughters’ dancing and cavorting with the “suited and booted” British officers at their party up until their son Omar Khayyam’s departure from home to attend school. It begins with a concrete aerial/bird’s-eye-view – spatial and geographical – description of the town: “In the remote border town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumb-bell, there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters.” (Rushdie 3) Subsequently, the focus shifts from the town to its dying patriarch Mr. Shakil who expresses his anticolonial sentiments by denouncing “the cool whitewashed smugness of the Cantonment district.” (Rushdie 4) Here is the town description at some length:

These were the two orbs of the town’s dumb-bell shape: old town and Cantt, the former inhabited by the indigenous, colonized population and the latter by the alien colonizers,

the Angrez, or British, sahibs. Old Shakil *loathed both worlds* [Italics mine] and had for many years remained immured in his high, fortress-like, gigantic residence, which faced inwards to a well-like and lightless compound yard. The house was positioned beside an open maidan, and it was equidistant from the bazaar and the Cantt. Through one of the building's few outward-facing windows Mr Shakil on his death-bed was able to stare out at the dome of a large Palladian hotel, which rose out of the intolerable Cantonment streets like a mirage, and inside which were to be found golden cuspidors and tame spider-monkeys in brass-buttoned uniforms and bellhop hats and a full-sized orchestra playing every evening in a stuccoed ballroom amidst an energetic riot of fantastic plants, yellow roses and white magnolias and roof-high emerald-green palms – the Hotel Flashman, in short, whose great golden dome was cracked even then but shone nevertheless with the tedious pride of its brief doomed glory; that dome under which the suited-and-booted Angrez officers and white-tied civilians and ringleted ladies with hungry eyes would congregate nightly, assembling here from their bungalows to dance and to share the illusion of being colourful... The old man heard the music of the imperialists issuing from the golden hotel, heavy with the gaiety of despair, and he cursed the hotel of dreams in a loud, clear voice (Rushdie 4).

As the above quotation from the opening chapter of *Shame* demonstrates, the setting goes beyond a concrete physical description and establishes the demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized in spatial terms as concretized and symbolized by the Cantt (the colonizing British space) including the “large Palladian hotel” and the old town (the space of the colonized people). The fact that the “great golden dome was cracked” is symbolically proleptic and portends the postcolonial era with the crumbling British Empire, as it was gradually losing its grip over the Indian subcontinent, and subsequent independence of India and Pakistan. Additionally, the fact that Mr. Shakil's house “was equidistant from the bazaar and the Cantt” is thematically significant by giving spatial representation to the two structures, which the reclusive Mr. Shakil “[equally] loathed both worlds and had for many years remained immured in his high, fortress-like, gigantic residence which faced inwards to a well-like compound yard.” (*Shame* 4) As such, Mr. Shakil's house, which rejects both the colonial and the native, literally becomes a secluded fortress and a space where alethic magical possibilities open up in the aftermath of the patriarch's death; for instance, the three mothers, Omar Khayyam's wanderings through the

labyrinthine house, and his hypnosis and rape of Farrah Zoroaster to name a few instances where the *alethic* world of possibilities takes center stage and becomes dominant in the narrative.

Consequently, the house is a ‘concrete’ space within the storyworld and a metaphor for a space outside the binary colonial-native divide, which epitomizes the author’s “interstitial or liminal” positionality, which is in-between the twin worlds of the colonial West and the postcolonial East/Pakistan: “an ambivalent mode of self-fashioning that is neither First World nor Third World, neither securely and smugly metropolitan, nor assertively and combatively Third Worldist.” (Jeyifo 53-54)

The above concretization of space is indicative of the second stage postcoloniality, especially in its hybrid portrayal and antipathy toward the colonial powers (along with their exploitative policies and practices) and the new postcolonial, post-independence government and instituted body politic, which continued many of the same policies and practices of its colonial predecessor, albeit in new forms and under new guises. As such, the description of the town Q, quoted above, introduces the three paramount spaces throughout the novel: the colonial space and sphere of influence, the native space with its share of indigenous prejudices and flaws, and the self-isolated Mr. Shakil residence whose owner’s antipathy toward both the Western colonizers and the Pakistani politics are consistent with (and mirror) the metanarrator’s own liminal and critical stance and separation from both worlds/spaces: the colonizer and the colonized.

In fact, the liminal theme/stance of antipathy toward colonial domination and indigenous (postcolonial) narrow-mindedness and/or mismanagement, which is central to *Shame*, is concretized by the Shakil residence, which is separate and equidistant from both areas in the town in spatial and topographic terms. This spatialized equidistance of the Shakil residence from

the Cant and the bazaar also concretizes and symbolizes the novel's equally critical stance and indictment of both possible spaces in terms of *axiological* ethicality, that is, the Western/British colonial domination/exploitation and the indigenous corruption and prejudices (e.g. patriarchy, mistreatment of women, and Islamic fundamentalism) represented by the bazaar: the bazar traditionally and symbolically espouses the dominant cultural values and Islamic beliefs, attitudes and prejudices of the Pakistani society.

The space of the mansion is enclosed by mountains, which adds to its sense of isolation and *marginality* (an important postcolonial theme) from the outside world: "By the age of ten young Omar had already begun to feel grateful for the enclosing, protective presence of the mountains on the western and southern skyline." (Rushdie 16) This seclusion is made complete by the "strange, external elevator," which the sisters order to be constructed "in such a way that it could be operated without requiring the mansion's inhabitants to show themselves in any window..." (Rushdie 10)

Thus, the Shakil home is a spatial concretization of the theme of *marginality* and *isolation* as a crucial organizing postcolonial theme throughout the novel since it is the space where the three daughters/sisters, whom the patriarchal Mr. Shakil has effectively isolated from the rest of the town, are imprisoned in "the zenna wing," the women's section of his mansion: "The three girls had been kept inside that labyrinthine mansion until his dying day; virtually uneducated, they were imprisoned in the zenna wing..." (Rushdie 5) The Shakil home exerts tremendous influence in the early part of the narrative since it is the space of Mr. Shakil's stern patriarchal rule and, following his death, is transformed into a zone free of the Islamic morality where Omar Khayyam Shakil grows up under the influence of his three free-spirited mothers! As such, it is worth noting that once the Shakil residence, as a space, is freed from patriarchy and

the postcolonial divide (Shakil's loathing and distance of both the colonial and native worlds) with old Mr. Shakil's death, the *alethic* world of possibilities opens up inside his residence, which begs comparison (and contrast) with *Midnight's Children* in which the alethic world of possibilities is in full swing with the birth of the one thousand and one children (including Saleem) from the very opening of the novel since there is freedom, democracy, and civil rights at the birth of modern India in the early sections of the novel. However, in *Shame*, the world of possibilities begins with the old Shakil residence in a more delimited fashion since the repression, patriarchy, misogyny, prejudice, and religious fundamentalism are prevalent throughout Peccavistan and shut down the alethic world of possibilities throughout the narrativized Pakistan/Peccavistan from the outset; hence the alethic mode has to start in a contained and secluded space like the Shakil residence subsequent to old Mr. Shakil's demise. Thus, there is a correlation between the *alethic* possibilities and the *axiological* ethicality in the sense that the opening up of possibilities in this conceptual space, which is really a free zone, is construed as "axiological goodness" while the opposite also holds true, that is, repression and lack of possibilities in Peccavistan, which tie into *deontic* norms and prohibition, register as bad and morally untenable in *axiological* terms.

Another notable instance of 'concrete' spatialization, which also symbolizes the paratactic structure of the novel and the politico-historical trajectory of Pakistan, is Rani Harappa's weaving of the eighteen shawls in which she concretizes and materializes her reading of the various phases in her famous husband Iskander Harappa's private and public life as the Prime Minister of Pakistan (the fictional counterpart of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto):

Rani Harappa, rocking on her veranda, completed in six years, of embroidery a total of eighteen shawls; but instead of showing off her work to daughter or soldiers, she placed each shawl, on completion, in a black metal trunk full of naphthalene balls and fastened the lock...Eighteen shawls locked in a trunk: Rani,

too, was perpetuating memories. Harappa, the martyr, the demigod lived on in his daughter's thoughts; but no two sets of memories ever match, even when their subject is the same... Rani never showed her work to anyone until, years later, she sent the trunk to her daughter Arjumand as a gift... The eighteen shawls of *memory* [Italics mine]...the slapping shawl, Iskander a thousand times over raising his hand, lifting it against ministers, ambassadors, argumentative holy men, mill-owners, servants, friends, it seemed as if every slap he ever delivered was here, *and how many times he did it, Arjumand, not to you, to you he would not have, so you will not believe, but see upon the cheeks of his contemporaries the indelible blushes engendered by his palm;* (*Shame* 200).

As the above quotation demonstrates, by transcribing the various phases and events in his life, the eighteen shawls not only spatialize Iskander Harappa's life and character (Butto's fictional counterpart in *Shame*) by transmuting something temporal, sequential, and abstract (Iskander Harappa's life) into "Eighteen [corporeal] shawls locked in a trunk," but they also concretize certain periods and aspects of Pakistan's political history under Ali Bhutto and beyond. The eighteen shawls appear in sequential order as follows: the badminton shawl, the slapping shawl, the kicking shawl, the hissing shawl, the torture shawl, the white shawl, the swearing shawl, the shawls of international shame (3 shawls), the election shawl, the allegorical shawl – Iskander and the Death of Democracy shawl, the autobiographical shawl, the shawl of the fifteenth century, Pinkie's shawl, the shawl of hell, and Little Mir Harappa respectively. The shawls are spatial concretization of Iskander Harappa's life as Prime Minister and, by extension, of the politico-historical trajectory of Pakistan as a postcolonial nation. As such, they trace the philandering Iskander in his personal life (the badminton shawl captures his playing badminton and cavorting with the women) to his political life as Prime Minister seated in his office (the hissing shawl), to how he runs the country through espionage and torture (the torture shawl), to his obeisance to and collaboration with dictators such as Mao Zedong of China, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran, and the Russians (the international shawls), to rigging and

manipulating the election in his own favor (the election shawl), and the list goes on. Here is a description of “the hissing shawl”:

and the hissing shawl, Iskander seated in the office of his glory, its details accurate in the most minute degree, so that one could almost smell that awesome chamber, the place of pointed concrete arches with his own Thoughts framed upon the wall, and the Mont Blanc pens like black alps in their holders on his desk, even their white stars picked out by her scrupulous needle; *that room of shadows and of power, in which no shadow was empty, eyes glinted in every area of shade, red tongues flicked, silver-threaded whispers susurrated across the cloth*: Iskander and his spies, *the head spider* at the heart of that web of listeners and whisperers, she has sewn *the silvery threads of the web*, they radiated out from his face, in silver thread she revealed the arachnid terror of the days, when men lied to their sons and angry women had only to murmur to the breeze to bring a fearsome revenge down upon their lovers... [Italics mine] (*Shame* 202).

In the hissing shawl quoted above, the Prime Minister’s office is described as an intelligence headquarters with Iskander as the master spy “the head spider – whose webs are spun throughout the country. The extended metaphor of spiders and webs for espionage depicts how the Prime Minister monitors the nation by having an elaborate network of spies who are well paid to monitor the people and officials; hence “the silvery threads of the web.” (Ibid.) The hissing shawl is followed by “the torture shawl”:

and the torture shawl, on which she embroidered the foetid violence of his jails, blindfolded prisoners tied to chairs while jailers hurled buckets of water, now boiling hot (the thread-steam rose), now freezing cold, until the bodies of the victims grew confused and cold water raised hot burns upon their skin: weals of red embroidery rose scarlike on the shawl... (*Shame* 202).

The shawls not only provide vignettes into Iskander’s private life, but, more importantly, they depict how he runs the country through espionage, torture, collaboration with the world’s dictators and communist leaders (e.g. Shah Pahlavi of Iran, Mao Zedong of China, Dada Amin as they appear on “the shawls of international shame”). Another significant shawl, highly suggestive, is “the allegorical shawl, Iskander and the Death of Democracy”:

and the allegorical shawl, Iskander and the Death of Democracy, his hands around



her throat, squeezing Democracy's gullet, while her eyes bulged, her face turned blue, her tongue protruded, she sat in her pajamas, her hands became hooks trying to grab the wind, and Iskander with his eyes shut squeezed and squeezed, while in the background the Generals watched, the murder reflected by a miracle of the needlewoman's skill in the mirrored glasses they all wore, all except one, with deep black circles around his eyes and easy tears on his cheeks, and behind the Generals other figures, peeping over uniformed shoulders, through epaulettes, under armpits, crew-cut Americans and Russians in baggy suits and even the great Zedong himself, they all watched, they didn't have to lift a finger, *no need to look beyond your father, Arjumand, no need to hunt conspirators, he did their work for them ...but he took off that cloak and turned into something else*, Iskander the assassin of possibility, immortalized on a cloth on which she, the artist, had depicted his victim as a young girl, small, physically frail, internally damaged... (*Shame* 202).

The allegorical shawl, described above in detail, takes the criticism of Iskander even further by having the Prime Minister suffocate democracy personified "as a young girl, small, physically frail, internally damaged" in order to depict the fragility of democracy in Pakistan (Ibid.) What is interesting, however, is the description of the uniformed Generals who, with one notable exception, wear "mirrored glasses" that reflect "murder" (Ibid.) Also, with the Americans and Russians behind the Generals "peeping over uniformed shoulders" the allegorical portrait of the postcolonial nation's politics becomes complete: Civilian leadership represented by the Prime Minister at the helm of power; the military represented by the Generals; and finally the foreign powers represented by the American and Russian diplomats and politicians in Rani's allegorical shawl, which allegorizes Pakistan's diachronic history during the reign of her executed husband, the fictional counterpart to Prime Minister Bhutto. Thus, taken together, the eighteen shawls are tantamount to an indictment of not only Prime Minister Bhutto but also the military and the colonial powers who have been influencing the country from its inception.

The shawls replace temporality with spatiality since they can be rearranged and organized in any random order. As such, the shawls are a corporeal metaphor of the novel's spatialization strategy, *parataxis*, by juxtaposing the various phases of Iskander Harappa's life. The shawls

spatialize Iskander's life as each shawl encapsulates an episode or period in his tumultuous life. The shawls, taken together, act as a 'mise-en-abyme' by representing and reflecting the paratactic structural configuration of the whole narrative. This is due to the fact that the shawls are paratactically juxtaposed and looked at as coterminous and coexistent phases; thereby resulting in *simultaneity* of vision through the provision of instantaneous access where all the eighteen shawls, signifying the eighteen phases in Iskander Harappa's life, can be perceived together all at once. Thus, each shawl is semi-autonomous paradigmatically and can be taken and studied separately, while syntagmatic relations are manifested through the sequence of the shawls, which can be rearranged and repositioned. But they do more than this: the shawls provide a countering, critical and feminist hermeneutical landscape by presenting his wife's reading of the events, which is diametrically opposed to Iskander's own patriarchal and duplicitous public persona as well as Arjumand's view of her father whom she idolizes:

*yes, I know you have made a saint of him, you swallowed everything he dished out, his abstinence, his celibacy of an oriental Pope, but he could not do without for long, that man of pleasure masquerading as a servant of Duty, that aristocrat who insisted on his signeurial rights, no man better at hiding his sins, but I knew him, he hid nothing from me, I saw the white girls in the village swell and pop (Shame 201-202).*

This is precisely why the mother sends her shawls to her daughter, who has dutifully accepted her father's (patriarchal) version of events, as the concretized representation of her experiences, memories, and ordeals during all the years that her husband was at the helm of power: "Rani never showed her work to anyone, until, years later, she sent the trunk to Arjumand as a gift." (*Shame* 201)

Indeed, by retelling the life of Iskander Harappa, the shawls not only concretize and spatialize the narrative of his life, but they also depict his wife's (and by extension women's

voice and perspective) critical and censorious stance toward her husband's private and public life, which coincides with Rushdie's view of Harappa:

Rani would put a piece of paper inside the trunk before she sent it off to her newly powerful daughter. On this piece of paper she would write her chosen title: 'The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great.' And she would add a surprising signature: *Rani Humayun*. Her own name, retrieved from the mothballs of the past. (*Shame* 201)

Rani's decision to use her maiden name is the ultimate act of feminist defiance on her part to reclaim and assert her own identity and dignity apart from her famous executed husband. Rani's shawls, and especially her signing her maiden name, taken together, are a key example of how spatialization in historiographic metafiction uniquely expresses second stage postcoloniality since Rani Humayun's shawls and her orthographic use of her maiden name both defy and simultaneously imply the patriarchal regime, which sets the rules and defines the national culture of the country; hence Rani resorts to the age-old creative means to tell her side of the story through the shawls. The shawls are a corporeal manifestation of her husband's autocratic and oppressive rule over Peccavistan/Pakistan: "the slapping shawl, Iskander a thousand times over raising his hand, lifting it against ministers, ambassadors, argumentative holy men, mill-owners, servants, friends, it seemed as if every slap he ever delivered was here..." (*Shame* 200)

The shawls portray Iskander Harappa as dictatorial, violent (as epitomized by his slap in the quotation) and philandering. Rani's shawls tell Iskander's story from his wife's censorious, critical perspective and give the marginalized women in the narrative a voice that is often suppressed and denied in the postcolonial context of the independent nation-state. Rushdie's metanarratorial comment on the significant role that women play within postcolonial Pakistan despite the restrictive cultural norms is revealing:

Once upon a time there were two families... I had thought, before I began, that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale, a saga of sexual rivalry, ambition, power, patronage, betrayal, death, revenge. But the *women* seem to *have taken over*

[Italics mine]; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories, comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and 'female' side (*Shame* 181).

An important space in the novel is the space in which Rushdie's extradiegetic metanarrator lives and from which he speaks, which is outside the narrated possible world of Peccavistan, but it cannot be consigned to Pakistan either. In fact, the metanarrator's space is to be designated as liminal, interstitial or cosmopolitan since he lives in England and travels to Pakistan sporadically. From a politico-historical standpoint, the metanarrator is critical of both colonial policies and practices vis-a-vis Pakistan as well as the policies and practices of the postcolonial governments that have come to power in Pakistan since her independence.

From a possible worlds perspective, the world/space from which the narrator speaks is closely aligned with the actual world as we experience it; as such, his extradiegetic space comes across as especially strong and authoritative. The dual construction of the novel is congruous with Dannenberg's observation that "in alternative history...counterfactualty invites the reader to make a comparison between the fictional world and the actual world that precludes total immersion in the fictional world, since the reader must keep an eye on actual history." (Cited in Ryan 7) Similarly, readers of *Shame* are prompted to keep an eye on Pakistan as they engage with Peccavistan where the unlikely take center stage. However, in the metanarrator's possible world the *alethic* possibilities are confined to what would conform to logical probabilities and what is conceivable in terms of realism and verisimilitude. The key modality that sets the metanarrator apart from both Peccavistan and Pakistan is the *deontic* since as a cosmopolitan author/migrant residing in England, the metanarrator is politically permitted to opine on Pakistani politics and the restrictions and consequences that apply to indigenous Pakistani authors who live in that country do not apply to Rushdie. What links all the aforementioned

spaces is the text's/author's critique of Pakistani politics and socio-cultural practices that is verbalized by a strong extradiegetic metanarrator.

### 3.7. CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, from the partition of India, Methwold's estate, and the "perforated sheet" in *Midnight's Children* to the reconstruction of Pakistan as Peccavistan, the conceptual spatialization of old and new town, the Shakil residence and Rani Harappa's "eighteen shawls" in *Shame*, I aimed to demonstrate how space in its complexity (i.e. concrete, conceptual, spatialization strategies) is incorporated into Rushdie's major texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction, and how and for what purposes it is employed within the postcolonial context. This may be construed as conflation of the various aspects of space and pertinent concepts; however, as Zacharias argues, "colonialism itself relied on the collapsing of spatial categories for its function." (Zacharias 224) In a similar vein, Daniel Coleman opining on the related "national-racial-ethnic terms" and literary studies, has made the case that a certain type of "genealogical sloppiness" is actually "central to its [colonialism's] operations." (Coleman 225)

I have adopted Zacharias' approach in tackling space in its "generative sloppiness...[which] is to work to disaggregate its various forms and concerns without losing sight of the ways in which they operate together." (Zacharias 224) I have focused on the various types and aspects of space and how they are utilized to advance postcolonial politics without losing sight of how these different conceptualizations work together to achieve the desired effect or advance the socio-political critique within the postcolonial context. Nevertheless, I have

maintained that there are also significant commonalities such as the spatialization of alternative possible spaces that critique the actual possible worlds of colonialism and through internal dissent.

Postcolonial novels deconstruct the notion of space either “as a stable, empty container for history” or as a linear march toward progress by demonstrating how space and related spatial concerns constitute the very center of politico-historical strife. In fact, Rushdie’s texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction discussed in this chapter engage with space and problematize it in a historical sense to critique the policies and practices of colonial/neo-colonial powers and the postcolonial governments that adopted many of the same policies and practices under new guises and with new justifications. I have argued that this is accomplished primarily through spatialization strategies (parataxis and simultaneity) but also by maintaining a concrete focus on geographical space, which was a point of contest as the postcolonial nations achieved their independence as fledgling nations (e.g. India, Pakistan...). Either way, space in postcolonial historiographic metafiction is conceptualized and time is spatialized via “metafictional” techniques that paratactically juxtapose different possible worlds, one generally more ideal and remote from our world of verities than the other, “actual” one.

In line with Joseph Frank’s view on spatiality in modern fiction that through spatialization, there is the “attempt to reveal everything at once,” sequentiality in postmodern fiction moves toward simultaneity (Zacharias 215). But to what end? As I have illustrated in this chapter, authors such as Rushdie – who write in the postcolonial context – contest official, hegemonic accounts of politico-historical events (or their literary representation), which gloss over or suppress spatial issues of the Other (e.g. lower social classes, women, the oppressed) in their narrative’s linear, sequential organization. As such, spatiality in its various forms becomes

an instrument for postcolonial authors to counter the neocolonial attempt at suppressing such contested spaces through spatialization techniques such as parataxis and simultaneity. Thus, the colonial temporalization of space is countered by the postcolonial spatialization of time and socio-historical material in these novels.

What emerges out of this chapter is an appreciation of the “complex spatiality” of postcolonial historiographic metafiction as illustrated in Rushdie’s texts, which is challenging in the sense that no single conception of space/spatiality can adequately account for the complex manner in which these texts engage with space and its various manifestations. As Quayson puts it, “The challenge [is] how to assemble reading practices that allow us to read the rhetorical, the historical, and the spatial all at once.” (Quayson 347) Again, as I have argued in this chapter, reading and engaging with space in historiographic metafiction in its complexity – concrete, conceptual, and through spatialization strategies – can be realized as readers engage with its various aspects and conceptualizations “as active participants in a more complex spatiality that emerges through and across their intersections.” (Zacharias 224)

Although I have touched on the notion of individuals caught in the wide web of socio-political and cultural forces beyond their control, it has not been my central focus in this chapter. As mentioned earlier, Homi Bhabha has noted the “broader critical shift in postcolonial studies away from direct considerations of concrete geographic space” and toward a preoccupation with (post)colonial subjectivity since “colonial subjectivity outlives the legal structure of colonial project.” (Zacharias 213) In fact, part of the agenda of postcolonial novels is to connect individual lives to larger politico-historical forces in society, or in Quayson’s words, “tied to the wider set of significances beyond oneself,” over which they have no control other than a resistant consciousness for which they may pay a heavy price; Saleem’s sterilization in *Midnight’s*

*Children* and the metanarrator's isolation and exile in *Shame* are prime examples of this (236). As such, the narrative is told by a metanarrator through whose consciousness the "tragic recognition" of one's predicament in this "wider set of significances" (e.g. political, social, historical) is filtered, which brings us to the next chapter on the roles of the metanarrator and the construction and development of postcolonial subjectivity in historiographic metafiction. The storyworld, which is diegetically constituted and narrativized, transcends spatialization and entails the existence of a metanarrator from whom the narrative discourse is perceived to originate and to whom the narrative is ascribed as its textual originator. Metanarrator's pivotal role in historiographic metafiction warrants specific focus and critical examination; it merits a chapter devoted to its various roles in historiographic metafiction, which brings us to the next chapter.



By now, if I had been writing a book of this nature, it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart (*Shame* 68).

## CHAPTER 4

### METANARRATION IN RUSHDIE'S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter, as its title suggests, is particularly concerned with the narrator's act/function of 'metanarration' in Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction and, in particular, the construction of possible worlds through the words uttered by the narrators as they conjure up the possible worlds through the sheer force of their words. Before setting out to propound and analyze the roles and functions of narrator vis-à-vis metanarration in historiographic metafiction, however, it is imperative to define the term 'narrator': *narrator* "designates the inner textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates and from which references to the entities, actions and events that the discourse is about are being made." (Margolin 1) The narrator, in a fictional text, is "a linguistically indicated, textually projected and readerly constructed function, slot, or category whose occupant need not be thought of in any terms but those of a communicative role." (Margolin 1) One of the key capacities/functions of the narrator is metanarration in which the act of narration is foregrounded and highlighted. As Nunning explains, metanarration is "self-reflexive" and "refers to the narrator's reflections on the act or process of narration; [while] metafiction concerns comments on the fictionality and/or constructedness of the narrative." (1)

According to Margolin, utilizing Jacobson's insights in the aspects of narration would be instrumental in explicating the roles of narrator in historiographic metafiction. In his verbal communication model, Jacobson enumerates six functions:

The *expressive function* is concerned with the speaker's *self-reference*, self-characterization, and expression of *emotions and attitudes*. The *conative or appellative functions* may create *the illusion of face-to-face communication* where *the addressee* is urged to listen, understand, sympathize, etc., not only with respect to the narrated but also regarding the narrator and his current activity. *Metalinguistic references* to the medium employed (oral or written) and its limitations again highlight the narrator's present act of telling... [Italics mine] (Margolin 6)

Among Jacobson's listed functions, the *expressive function*, the *conative or appellative function* and *metalinguistic references* are pertinent to my discussion of metanarration in historiographic metafiction. In addition to the expressive function, *conative/appellative function* is used by writers such as Rushdie to simulate "the illusion of face-to-face communication" in their fiction while *metalinguistic references* are tapped to foreground the act of narration by drawing attention "to the medium employed (oral or written) and its limitations..." (Ibid.) According to Hutcheon, metafiction incorporates all kinds of reflections on its own constructed, factitious identity as fiction. "The term [metafiction] is a hypernym denoting all kinds of self-reflective utterances and elements of a fictional narrative that do not treat their referent as apparent reality but instead induce readers to reflect on the textuality and fictionality of narrative in terms of its artifactuality." (Wolf 224)

In postcolonial historiographic metafiction, there is the unresolved demarcation and distinction between the constructed, narrative sections on the one hand and the metafictional intrusions and episodic interventions on the other (where the comments about historical context are made), which, as Hutcheon points out, "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here –just unresolved contradiction..."

(106). This “unresolved contradiction” is due to the lack of integration of narrative and meta-sections; nevertheless, it affords the text to operate at two distinct, yet interrelated, hermeneutical levels. This dual signification is also suggestive by putting forth the notion that both modes of signification are “mediating the world for the purpose of introducing meaning,” and it is this meaning-making through emplotment that postmodern fiction in general and historiographic metafiction in particular aim at (Doctorow 24).

One could argue that in historiographic metafiction such as Rushdie’s texts, “the binary opposition between fiction and fact is no longer relevant: in any differential system, it is the assertion of the space *between* the entities that matters.” (de Man 106) In other words, instead of resolving this contradictory dichotomy, historiographic metafiction shifts the focus on the act of enunciation and narrativization (and its underlying rationale) ascribed to the narrator as well as the “enunciative situation – text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context – [which] reinstalls a kind of (very problematic) communal project” and to the ways that meta-narration blurs the status of the narrator’s possible world with the world he constructs/ narrates. (Hutcheon 115)

Making a similar argument, Quayson states “that in the literary history of the postcolonial novel the emphasis has always been to combine the explication of historical and political contexts with exploration of the rhetorical dimensions of the novels in question.” (Quayson 3) Following up on Quayson’s observation, I contend that one of the narrator’s key roles in historiographic metafiction is to foreground the “enunciative situation” (e.g. the text, the producer/narrator, the narratee/receiver), and to combine them with the critique of socio-historical context, all of which aim at interrogating and deconstructing officially sanctioned historiography and hegemonic versions of truth, which are typically realistic, positivistic, and

linear in their renditions of official versions of truth and historiography by concealing their narratological machinations and emplotment.

Thus, metanarration contributes to the construction of contingent alternative possible worlds in ways that express a postcolonial politics, which is self-conscious of its own constructivism and perspectivism in political and socio-historical terms by laying bare its operational and narratological machinations while critiquing colonial interventions and postcolonial politics and practices – erosion of civil rights, democratic institutions and safeguards, political oppression of dissenters, repression of women and minorities and censorship – in the aftermath of independence of former colonies into nation-states. As Quayson observes, the critique of socio-historical issues is “fed by an ethical imperative...this is the dimension of internal political and social critique that writers and critics feel themselves obliged to undertake on behalf of their people.” (Quayson 5)

Narrator acts as “a primary global narrator” within the metafictional text; in Margolin’s words, “the discourse as a whole can be viewed as its macro speech act.” (5) In Rushdie’s historiographic metafiction, however, I would contend that the narrator is the originator of two distinct types of macro speech and possible worlds: the purported fictional universe (Herman’s storyworld) and the meta-sections, typically spoken from within a separate possible world where the narrator lives and writes, which foreground the fictionality and narrativity of the text. The two types of macro-speech constitute separate possible worlds, which are paratactically juxtaposed and each operates according to its own internal logic though there is a tenuous relationship between the two (as, for instance, Pakistan and Peccavistan in *Shame*). Thus, there is both a marked distinction and a tenuous relationship between the two possible worlds: the possible world from which the narrator speaks, which I christen the “narrating possible world,”

and the alternative possible world, henceforth to be called the “narrated possible world.” My proposed terms, which replace the classical narratological terms ‘extradiegetic narrator’ and ‘intradiegetic narrator,’ draw attention to the tenuous/amorphous relationship that exists between them since as Mas’ud Zavarzadeh has pointed out, such “bi-referential” narratives “form open dynamic systems in active tension with the experiential world outside the book” (58). As Hutcheon observes, “postmodernist fiction, while not denying the existence of that experiential world, contests its availability to us: how do we know that world? We know it only through its texts.” (154) The twin possible worlds get blurred in historiographic metafiction in ways that question the truth of colonial, hegemonic historiography and realism as factual or disinterested. My proposed terms – ‘narrating possible world’ and ‘narrated possible world’ – are amenable to the discussion of magical realist texts such as Rushdie’s since they highlight the differing possible worlds that operate according to different types of logic while allowing for porousness and permeability between the intra and extra-textual worlds which historiographic metafiction tends to problematize. As such, I would argue that, compared to the classical terms of ‘intradiegetic’ versus ‘extradiegetic,’ the terms I have introduced are more suitable to the analytical discussion of magical realism and historiographic metafiction.

The pragmatic question arises as how the two types of macro speech/possible worlds can be accounted for theoretically and evaluated within the same fictional text while operating under different internal rules or types of logic. Dolezel’s four-dimensional system for defining possible worlds becomes especially useful in evaluating the differences and interactions of these narrating worlds and narrated worlds through the frame of the four modalities: alethic, deontic, epistemic, and axiological. Applying Doelzel’s four modalities proves instrumental to evaluating these possible worlds as politically contingent alternative reconstructions of the nation(s) being

narrativized in a way that will express the text's specific postcolonial politics and socio-historical perspectives.

As a case in point, the “narrating possible world” where the narrator utters his meta-comments can be typically distinguished from the “narrated possible world” through the *alethic* and *deontic* modalities: The *alethic* encompasses what is possible and conceivable based on the logic of daily life, human experience, and understanding of documented history through the “principle of minimal departure” (as explained in chapter 1). The *deontic* is concerned with the establishment of norms (and what is deemed the norm) within a possible world in which individual acts usually conform to the norm and occasionally deviate from it. The “narrating possible world” is typically, though not always, closely aligned with real life, verisimilitude, and documented history with minimal departures from realism, but significantly in historiographic metafiction it is also often only minimally different – mainly in the alethic and deontic modalities – from the narrated world, which in historiographic metafiction often includes magically realistic and counterfactual events.

The “narrated possible world,” however, is created with the aim of offering an alternative critical world, which typically moves away from realism, the logic of daily life, and documented historiography into the realm of possibilities (*alethic* modality) in order to concretize freely the author's postcolonial politics and critique official historiography, colonial interventions, and successive postcolonial governments with their repressive policies and practices. Moreover, due to the ethical thrust of postcolonial historiographic metafiction, the *axiological* modality is instrumental to the discussion and evaluation of the constructed alternative, possible worlds that critique colonial and neo-colonial policies and practices.

There is, thus, an inherent paradox in texts of historiographic metafiction, namely, the fact that they depict, critique, and comment on collective, socio-historical events and political issues by blending two or more possible worlds: the historical, the metafictional, and occasionally a third, the narrator's own possible world. As such, the metanarration is given a certain perspectival angle that is often censorious and critical of the socio-cultural norms and mores as well as policies and practices of the political establishment, which it purports to undermine through the use of parody and irony and explicit criticism. According to Elias, in historiographic metafiction, "the personal and the cultural, or subjectivity and history, reflect and shape one another." (182) But to what end? What is the ultimate purpose of this commingling of the collective, national, socio-cultural and political topics and enterprises with the individual consciousness of the narrator within texts of historiographic metafiction? I would argue that, in historiographic metafiction, it is to question the legitimacy of realistic historiographic narratives of the postcolonial situation that typically conceal their perspectivism and constructivism through self-avowed realism and verisimilitude that purports to be objective.

#### **4.2. OBJECTIVES**

To recapitulate the objectives in this chapter, I will be advancing the argument that 'metanarration' serves two interrelated purposes in postcolonial historiographic metafiction: First, the metanarration questions, deconstructs, and problematizes the truth claims, biases, and pretensions of official historiography, and especially of colonial historiography, neocolonial nationalism and their realist modes of narration, through explicit and implicit criticism but mostly through *parody* and *irony* of historiography and realism. To this end, the narrator's comments on both the narrative and the history behind it are suffused with irony and parody and offer ample opportunities for the narrator to interrogate and critique the socio-cultural and

political fabric of the postcolonial body politic and its various aspects. *Irony* has become an indispensable part of texts of historiographic metafiction, and its use is replete with “ideological and institutional analysis, including analysis of the act of writing itself.” (Hutcheon 91) One key element of this irony is the foregrounding and problematizing of history/historiography, which undermines the objectivity of historical writing. As Benveniste observes, “historical statements, be they in historiography or realist fiction, tend to suppress grammatical reference to the discursive situation of the utterance (producer, receiver, context, intent) in their attempt to narrate in such a way that the events seem to narrate themselves (206-8), whereas in historiographic metafiction there is a deliberate attempt to conflate what Benveniste calls the historical and the discursive. As such, meta-comments, by foregrounding the *enunciative situation* and its components (e.g. text, producer, receiver, socio-historical context), play the key part of “deliberate contamination of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements, thereby challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation,” and replacing them with constructivism, provisionality, and perspectivism (Hutcheon 92)

Second, metanarration produces an “alienation effect” that is aimed at questioning the promulgated truths about postcolonial worlds by interrupting and interspersing the narrated possible world (the storyworld) with the narrator’s various diegetic interventions and meta-comments, which constitute a paratactic possible world and engage the reader on a different hermeneutical level. By interrupting the narrative flow and foregrounding narrative construction, meta-sections – uttered by the narrator – create an effect reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht’s *alienation effect* in epic theater in order to defamiliarize, subvert and interrupt the linear,



positivistic progression of events by disrupting the *mimetic illusion* of reality/verisimilitude and unity of action, place and time.

#### 4.3. THEORIES OF METANARRATION

My analytical study of the roles and functions of metanarration in historiographic metafiction is informed by Nunning's assertion "that metanarration is a distinct form of narratorial utterance," and on his typology, "based on four basic aspects, which in turn give rise to subsidiary distinctions: (a) formal; (b) structural; (c) content-related; (d) reception-oriented types of metanarrative." (Neumann and Nunning 6)

With respect to the *structural* aspect, metanarratorial comments "are differentiated according to the criterion of quantitative and qualitative relations between metanarrative expressions and other parts of the narrated text as well as the syntagmatic integration of such metanarrative passages." (Neumann and Nunning 6) In other words, the amount of metanarrative comments and their quality as well as how they are positioned in relation to the narrative are of critical importance in examining the metanarrative comments attributed to a metanarrator.

With respect to *content*, different kinds of metanarration are to be distinguished. A crucial aspect in relation to content is "the reference point of metanarrative expressions." (Neumann and Nunning 7) For instance, determining whether the metanarrative reflections are *auto-referential* by referring to "the narrator's own act of narrating" or "thematize the narrative style of other authors and texts, or they can refer to the process of narration in general." (Neumann and Nunning 7)

Nunning's fourth aspect or mode of metanarrativity is *reception-oriented* and is concerned with "the potential effects and functions of metanarration" on the reader (Neumann and Nunning 7). It addresses the amount of meta-comments and their overall effect upon the

reader; however, Nunning does not provide a detailed heuristic on positionality with respect to how narrators take positions by positioning themselves vis-a-vis the reader or others in the meta-commentary section. Since the narrator takes positions locally in relation to the reader, the characters, and even himself throughout the narrative, an explanation of the term *positioning* and its different types that appear in narrative is in order.

In “Positioning Between Structure and Performance,” Michael G. W. Bamberg espouses the view that “the act of telling – or ‘representing’ at a particular occasion in the form of a particular story – [is] to intervene, so to speak, between the actual experience and the story.” (335) This approach places the onus on the act of performing/telling, and as such, “the audience is much more of a factor that impinges on the shape of the narrative and its performance.” (Bamberg 335) Although Bamberg’s focus, very much like that of William Labov, is on narrative construction occurring in natural, daily conversations between speakers and their interlocutors, given the oral foundations of storytelling, it would be advisable to cautiously apply Bamberg’s ideas on position-taking in conversational narrative to historiographic metafiction (applying similar logic, David Herman has employed *positioning* to analyze Hemingway’s short story “Hills Like White Elephants”).

According to Davies and Harre, positioning is a discursive practice, “whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and intersubjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (48). In a typical conversation, the participants take on positions in relation to one another that are often referred to as *roles*. Bamberg postulates that the process of *positioning* takes place at three distinct levels:

1. *How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?* At this level, we attempt to analyze how characters within the story world are constructed in terms of, for example, protagonists and antagonists, or as perpetrators and victims...

2. *How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience?* At this level, we seek to analyze the linguistic means that are characteristic for the particular discourse mode that is being employed...
3. *How do narrators position themselves to themselves?* (Bamberg 337)

I will be utilizing Bamberg's tripartite heuristic on *positioning* to determine and analyze the narrator's specific positions vis-à-vis the reader and characters as they are useful in discussing and analyzing the specific positions the metanarrator takes throughout the postcolonial texts at the *local* textual level.

In addition to the types and functions of metanarration, the amount of meta-comments seems to matter. As meta-comments accumulate in the text, they tend to have a cumulative effect on the reader's perception and reception of the text. Fludernik, whose argument I have utilized in this chapter, proposes that "an accumulation of metanarrative commentaries not only contributes to the foregrounding of the narrative act, but it is also instrumental to creating the illusion of being addressed by a personalized voice or a 'teller'" (Fludernik 278). Nunning concurs with Fludernik by asserting, "the plethora of metanarrative enhances the 'mimesis of narrating.'" (Neumann and Nunning 7) Thus, while employing Fludernik's cogent argument of the creation of "a personalized voice or teller," that contributes to the creation of mimetic illusion, I argue, as previously mentioned, that the narrator also serves the purpose of engaging with the reader at a different hermeneutical level by foregrounding and disrupting the narrative flow and breaking its mimetic illusion through diegetic meta-comments that induce *alienation effect* in the reader. Thus, the meta-sections serve the paradoxical purpose of inducing "alienation effect" in the reader by breaking the mimetic illusion of the narrative and foregrounding its fictionality and constructivism through the act of narration while, simultaneously, contributing to the creation of "mimetic illusion" of narration since their repeated and sustained use, not to mention their staggering amount and frequency, leads to the perceived existence of a narrator in the reader's

mind, which is really a textual construct. In short, I am applying Nunning's typology (the formal, structural, content-related, and reception-oriented aspects) of meta-comments and sections to the analysis of the texts of Rushdie's historiographic metafiction to stress the ways metanarration blurs the ontological borders between the narrator's "narrating possible world" and the historiographic "narrated possible world."

First, as noted, the metanarration in texts of historiographic metafiction goes beyond the intermingling of "subjectivity and history" to question historiography and "the grounds on which it has been epistemologically and politically established," which Elias dubs "a metahistorical imagination." (Elias 188) This questioning of official historiography is due to the foregrounding of "contending positions [on history] and their corresponding dilemmas between the "textualist position" that favors textual analysis of history on formalist principles, and the "contextualist position" that privileges the historicity of texts, placing them in relation to society, culture and politics." (Oppermann 13) Historiographic metafiction, as Hutcheon points out, tackles both the textuality and the historicity of past historical events and periods since it is "at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past." (Hutcheon 1989) This affords historiographic metafiction the opportunity to problematize historiography and "offer critiques of teleological history by foregrounding the theoretical problems of factual versus fictive representation." (Oppermann 14) Thus, the machinations and techniques employed in "the textual reconstruction of the past" are foregrounded in the meta-sections that are uttered by meta-narrators in these historiographic metafictions. This foregrounding lays bare the narratological constructedness of history and encompasses both the "textualist and contextualist positions in interpreting the past." (Oppermann 16) The foregrounding also highlights the deliberate constructivism and the pivotal role that narration plays in the construction and emplotment

(Hayden White's contention) in historiography, which are often skipped over and disguised in official historiography and realist writing.

#### 4.4. METANARRATION IN *SHAME*

*Shame* is the quintessential metafictional novel due to its significant amount of metanarrative comments that intersperse the novelistic text (e.g. Nunning's *structural aspect*); in fact, the text comprises various types of metanarration that foreground its narrativity and fictionality and play with its construction. According to Prince and Nunning, "the greater number of signs of the narration compared to those of the narrated, the more marked the narrator and his activity become." (Margolin 6) In the same vein, *Shame* is particularly marked and notable for its strong and extensive extradiegetic interventions where entire chapters and sizable sections of the text are allocated to the narrator's anecdotal experiences, views, and readings of Pakistan's politics and socio-historical issues that are spoken from outside the narrated possible world. In fact, the "narrating possible world" where the narrator is located and from which he speaks includes a variety of anecdotes, comments, self-references and metalinguistic references, most of which critique various aspects of Pakistan's body politic largely through irony and parody but also through criticism and commentary; as such, the narrating possible world (i.e. an extradiegetic narrator) is closer to the actual world with less minimal departure, that is, since Peccavistan is constructed at "a slight angle from" Pakistan.

The interpolated meta-comments that intersperse the novelistic text, through their paratactic juxtapositions, intermittent interruptions, and metalinguistic references to the narratorial act, disrupt the flow of the "narrated possible world" by commenting on the self-conscious construction of the narrative and its limitations as well as a host of socio-historical issues in a separate possible world. As such, they induce *alienation effect* in the reader at the

disrupting juncture of narratorial intervention and interruption of the ‘mimetic illusion’ in the narrated world. Specifically, they question Pakistan’s official narrative and deconstruct the linear positivistic progress of the country’s historiography, which conceals its own constructivism and perspectivism by advancing a narrative of national progress with the corollary effect of ignoring other dissenting arguments of repressed societal groups (e.g. women, dissenting political voices, lower classes, religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities) and their concerns and issues, whereas these metanarratorial moves to a different possible world open up possibilities for difference on an existential/ontological level.

Throughout the novel, the reader is engaged with the text at two distinct, yet interrelated hermeneutical levels, the “narrating possible world” and the “narrated possible world.” The twin possible worlds are occasionally separated into different chapters, but sometimes inserted into each other, structurally manifesting the author’s professed identity as mohajir (migrant). The two worlds are paratactically juxtaposed without integration for the most part (on occasion, however, they are integrated, for instance, the comments on Sufiya Zinobiya are based on a real character in London). Thus, the two possible worlds interact both via chapter breaks – where entire chapters and large sections are comprised of meta-commentary and create the “mimetic illusion” through their sheer amount that is without interruption – and via sporadic injections of the narrating world into the narrated world – which induce the “alienation effect” through narratorial interruption and the abrupt, disruptive shifting of the possible world’s ontology. This dual paratactic engagement with socio-political and historical events in Pakistan (and its fictional counterpart Peccavistan) is distinctly postcolonial in its construction of a perspectivized and politicized narrative of the country’s oppressive history by capturing the postcolonial fragmentation of different possible worlds experienced in the context of living under repressive

neocolonial governments, societal pressures, prejudicial cultural and religious practices as one of disjointed consciousness. The dual organization of the text suggests that integration into an overarching scheme is, by definition, impossible given the fragmentary nature of postcolonial experience, which requires paratactic juxtaposition rather than the specious solace of integration.

The significant amount of extradiegetic meta-comments that intersperse the narrative create a kind of a parallel plot, which corresponds to the outside world of verities and Pakistan's documented history. As such, possible worlds theory, and in particular Dolezel's four-dimensional system proves instrumental in accounting for the paratactically juxtaposed possible worlds of Peccavistan and Pakistan with different types of logic and reference points and explaining how they operate as interrelated, yet distinct systems with their own internal logic. Applying Dolezel's four modalities to *Shame* helps distinguish and account for its twin possible worlds and how they operate within the same text under different systems of logical probabilities primarily in terms of the *alethic* modality. There is, in fact, a clear distinction to be drawn between the twin possible worlds in the novel: The "narrating possible world" from which the narrator speaks (i.e. extra-diegetic narrator), which is closely aligned with Pakistan where his family lives and to which he sporadically travels from England, and is rendered realistically through verisimilitude. Nonetheless, the author's position as a "diasporic" and emigrant (mohajir) author does not align entirely with Pakistan within the narrating possible world and could best be described as *interstitial/liminal* or cosmopolitan, "which is neither First World nor Third World" since he lives and writes in England and simply travels to Pakistan occasionally; hence the emphasis on migrancy, in-between, and hybridity throughout the novel (Jeyifo 53-4). It is also important to note that most of the meta-sections are overtly or implicitly narrated from

England subsequent to the narrator's visit to Pakistan even when the visit to Pakistan is mentioned as in the relaying of the narrator's conversation with the poet in Karachi.

The "narrated possible world" of Peccavistan, however, is presented diegetically as a critical alternative world within which actions and events, which are alethically impossible, do happen (e.g. Naveed Hyder's numerous pregnancies, which satirize Pakistan's booming population and child birth rate or the clairvoyance of Captain Talvar Ulhaq or Sufiya Zinoby's macabre decapitation of her victims). The "narrated possible world" of Peccavistan departs from the documented history of Pakistan and the logic of daily life and realistic probabilities according to the "principle of minimal departure"; as such, its own internal logic takes precedence over verisimilitude depending on the nature and extent of the deviation from realism in each case and leads to the establishment of new (internal) norms, the domain of the *deontic* modality. However, in the "narrating possible world," the possibilities are closely aligned with Pakistan's documented history from the presidency of General Ayub Khan to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution and General Zia ul-Haq's ascendancy to power viewed through Rushdie's censorious prism. Given the novel's consistent ethical focus and vociferous and relentless criticism of the moral failings of Pakistan's society and repressive governments, as perceived by Rushdie's narrator, and the shame and grief he feels as a consequence, the *axiological* modality proves indispensable to evaluating the characters and their actions in both possible worlds in ethical terms. In fact, the *axiological* mode is the one modality that crosses the two possible worlds in the novel as Rushdie's narrator condemns the same societal and political evils in both the narrated and narrating possible worlds albeit in different forms and contexts.

The meta-comments in the novel are to be categorized into two distinct, yet interrelated types: *the critical*, which expose, defamiliarize and critique numerous problematic aspects and



moral failings of Pakistan's body politic (i.e. politics, society, and culture) as perceived by Rushdie's censorious narrator, and *the self-reflexive*, in which the narrator discusses various aspects of his narrative construction including his reason/motivation to create the narrative as well as his precarious situation as an emigrant author. Moreover, as previously explained, a further distinction is needed between "structural meta-commentary" where a separate chapter or large sections are dominated by the narrating world from which the narrator speaks, and the "interpolated meta-comments" throughout the chapters that are otherwise dominated by the narrated world.

In his self-reflexive meta-comments, the narrator foregrounds and problematizes narration by discussing his narratorial and fabulation choices in creating the narrated possible world of Peccavistan. The meta-comments stress, through diegesis, such postcolonial themes as the constructedness, provisionality, and perspectivism of truth and historiography, their reconstructions through self-conscious *emplotment* as well as the themes of translation, migrancy (mohajirat), in-betweenness, governmental oppression including repression of women, rampant corruption, and perhaps the necessity/problematic status of choice in human affairs as when he asks why he had to make Sufiya Zinobia an idiot (she is born with developmental issues and embodies shame) or tries Omar Khayyam for his crimes.

Commencing with *the critical* meta-commentary, Rushdie's critique of Pakistan's politics and society is captured by the title "shame" that epitomizes the narrator's censorious view of Pakistan, including his personal feelings such as "embarrassment, discomfiture," and moral outrage at its sociopolitical makeup and corrupt practices, which permeate the text, and are given various manifestations and nuances as illustrated and reified through his anecdotal experiences. The narrator's comments on the word *shame* – interpolated in the narrated world – bring the

word into central focus and underline its pivotal significance throughout the novel. The narrator argues that he “must write the word in its original form” in Urdu with its various connotations, thus assuming the role of the consummate linguistic and cultural interpreter vis-à-vis his purported audience, his Western English-speaking readers:

*Sharam*, that’s the word. For which this paltry ‘shame’ is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shin re mim* (written naturally from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also *embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world*, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts [Italics mine] (*Shame* 33).

The two types of meta-commentary (the critical and the self-reflexive), which together constitute the “narrating possible world” of the novel, are conjoined by the word “shame” that encapsulates the “dual agenda” of the text (explained in chapter 3 on space): criticism through censorious meta-comments epitomized by the word “shame” along with its connotations of moral outrage – Dolezel’s axiological modality – and their undermining through playful irony and parody, captured by its opposite “shamelessness”: “What’s the opposite of shame? What’s left when *sharam* is subtracted? That’s obvious: shamelessness.” (*Shame* 33) This duality of critical seriousness and satirical playfulness is reflected in the dual construction and operation of the text, comprised of two distinct, yet interrelated possible worlds: “narrating possible world” in which “shame” captures the narrator’s critical reading of Pakistani politics and society and “narrated possible world,” which affords the parody of Pakistan’s body politic through “Shamelessness.” In brief, the narrating possible world presents the author’s critique and indictment of the Pakistani society and politics while complementing it with the discussion and explication of his narratorial and metafictional choices to construct his “narrated possible world” of Peccavistan.

The focus on the word “shame” in its original “sharam” also underlines the interrelated postcolonial themes of translation and migrancy (mohajir status) through which a word or a person both loses and gains something by crossing borders and moving from one language/country to another – and indeed from one possible world to another – which is specifically conducive to the narrator’s claim to opine on Pakistan’s politics and history both as an outsider (especially given the negative reception of some of his works, especially *The Satanic Verses* in large parts of Asia and the Islamic world) and an insider since he has family there and has repeatedly traveled to Pakistan. Moreover, the poet Khayyam brings up the issue of the author’s positioning as an emigrant outside the “narrated possible world” and outside his purported subject – Pakistan. Nonetheless, even this does not capture the complexity of the narrator’s positioning since he is, in a sense, both outside and inside, a state of in-betweenness, an intermediary state, which some have dubbed “cosmopolitan.”

I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will). And I have a theory that the resentments we *mohajirs* engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown (*Shame* 84).

He is, in fact, the migrant author, the *mohajir/émigré*, who despite residing in England (or in the US more recently) has local knowledge, family and connections in Pakistan that most British or Westerners do not possess. As such, the translated Rubaiyat of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam is the perfect metaphor to capture the postcolonial position of intermediate and liminal status, that is, of being both inside and outside a country, of having the inside knowledge while being somewhat distant from the focus on one’s critique and writing both physically and psychologically. The distance provides him with more objectivity by not being too closely involved or entangled by the daily events of living life in Pakistan or affected by the repressive

measures of its government that may curtail the author's ability and willingness to take on critiquing its politics, religion, and society while also providing another frame of reference for socio-political evaluation and comparison, namely that of England and the West.

The critical meta-comments also become the impetus for *narrative construction* including plot manipulation and character development to highlight the crucial, yet unacknowledged role they play in historiography and narrative construction to bring about the desired socio-political effect upon the reader. A seminal instance of this type of meta-comment concerns the author's (metafictional) decision to name his protagonist after the renowned Persian poet Omar Khayyam, thereby engaging the reader in the construction of his character and narrativization of his fabula. Rushdie taps into his reader's presumed intertextual knowledge of the poet Omar Khayyam whose famous Rubaiyat were known to English readers in their translated version in English by Edward Fitzgerald, which many English readers thought to be better than the original. The author rationalizes and justifies his intertextual decision to select Omar Khayyam as his protagonist (or anti-hero) in order to capture the interrelated postcolonial concepts of "translation" and "migrancy" (being a mohajir) both of which are concerned with crossing borders and undergoing transformation (losing and gaining something) as a consequence.

Omar Khayyam's position as a poet is curious. He was never very popular in his native Persia; and he exists in the West *in a translation* that is really a complete reworking of his verses, in many cases very different from the spirit (to say nothing of the content) of the original. I, too, am a translated man. I have been *borne across*. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion – and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam – *that something can be gained* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 23).

In the above paragraph, the decision to name his protagonist after the Persian poet reflects the narrator's own transformation as an immigrant/mohajir due to migration from India via Pakistan to England, thereby employing "translation" as a metaphor (by comparing migration of literary

texts/poetry to the migration of real people) to signify such change along with its merits and demerits: “that something is always lost in translation” while “something can be gained.” (*Shame* 23) As such, the meta-comment reinforces the author’s position as an outsider who has lived most of his life outside Pakistan, yet he brings something valuable to the discussion by opining and writing about Pakistan due to his different experiences and knowledge base. Just like Khayyam’s rubaiyat (poetry), Rushdie claims that he has “gained” some new perspective on his family’s home country as well as the West. “I, too, am a translated man. I have been *borne across*. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion – and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam – that something can also be gained.” (*Shame* 23)

In brief, the Khayyam-Fitzgerald translation metaphor buttresses the author’s right to opine about Pakistan against skeptics who question his status as a writer who has lived in the West for the greater part of his adult life while focusing almost exclusively on the Indian subcontinent and its socio-political trajectory. This whole section on translation and emigration, in fact, has political and personal significance for Rushdie since it justifies and affirms his right, as an immigrant author residing in England, to write about Pakistan.

Beyond the critique of misogyny and patriarchy, most of the critical meta-comments are directed toward Pakistan’s repressive governments and the societal values and practices that allow the neocolonial government to continue its repressive and restrictive measures; however, there is the occasional criticism leveled directly against the colonial powers. For instance, at one point early in the narrative, the author relays his experience in London directly to the reader:

As to Afghanistan: after returning to London, I met a senior British diplomat at a dinner, a career specialist in ‘my’ part of the world. *He said it was quite proper, ‘post-Afghanistan’, for the West to support the dictatorship of President Zia ul-Haq.* I should not have lost my temper, but I did. It wasn’t any use. Then, as we left the table, his wife,

a quiet civil lady who had been making pacifying noises, said to me, ‘Tell me, why don’t people in Pakistan get rid of Zia in, you know, the usual way?’ Shame, *dear reader*, is not the exclusive property of the East [Italics mine] (*Shame* 22).

The above quotation is revealing since it provides a glimpse into the West’s politics vis-à-vis the government of General Zia ul-Haq after the coup d’etat, which toppled Prime Minister Ali Bhutto and resulted in his execution. Applying Jeyifo’s terms, I would argue that the author’s postcolonial status is “intersitional/liminal” since he is positioned against the oppressive and undemocratic take-over of government by General Zia ul-Haq, but he is equally critical of the Western colonial interventions and support of the tyrant’s rule in Pakistan. In fact, the British diplomat’s support of General Zia epitomizes the colonial power’s (Great Britain’s) self-serving interests and exploitation of Pakistan, and how those interests outweigh any human rights and ethical considerations by the British government. Thus, western powers may pay lip service to democratic principles and human rights, but when it comes to ensuring their interests the human rights concerns are pushed aside. As such, Rushdie makes sure that the West is not exonerated and bears responsibility since the Western countries, represented by the senior British diplomat in the narrator’s reported exchange with him, appease and cooperate with the unlawful government of General Zia-ul-Haq, thereby legitimizing it in the aftermath of General Zia’s coup d’etat. The episode ends with the author’s address to the reader (conative function) “dear reader” in which he indicts both the colonial powers and the postcolonial governments that receive their support.

In the narrated possible world of *Peccavistan*, the Shakil residence, isolated and sequestered from the rest of society, becomes an autonomous entity in which Omar Khayyam does not experience shame since he has been brought up in this maternal oasis impervious to the moral codes of the society and is unable to feel any shame as a consequence. At the age of

twelve, however, Omar Khayyam exits his maternal house and realizes, in his voyeuristic experiences, that people who condemn him as illegitimate such as the mailman have extramarital affairs with multiple women and are thus hypocritical. In other words, society with its dose of hypocrisy reinforces his “shamelessness” instead of reconditioning him by instigating and prompting him to feel shame.

What is of paramount significance is the link established between the two possible worlds – the narrating and the narrated possible worlds – in this regard. In fact, Omar Khayyam’s “shamelessness” in the narrated possible world of Peccavistan both reflects and parodies the “shame,” that is, all the various issues and problems that prompt the narrator to experience shame in the narrating world in the first place. As such, both possible worlds are deemed “bad” in terms of the axiological modality since there are egregious violations of the moral code in both worlds; for instance, Farah Zoroaster’s rape by Omar Khayyam and the extramarital affairs of Ibadalla with two women in Peccavistan that result in triple murders. In brief, in the narrated possible world of Peccavistan, the possibilities are harnessed to stress and exaggerate the moral violations by taking them to the extreme and without shame. As such, a correlation is established between the alethic and axiological modalities to highlight the ethical violations and moral failings of Pakistan’s society, government and culture, which are reflected, exaggerated, and parodied in the nation-state’s fictional counterpart *Peccavistan*.

A significant amount of meta-comments critique various aspects of Pakistani society and politics. A notable example of *the critical* meta-commentary, which displays how the novel’s dual agenda of earnest criticism and parody/irony works, is found in the opening of chapter 2, in which the narrator turns his censorious gaze on the Defense, “a fashionable part of Karachi,” where his parents and sister live. He explains how “few of the soldiers who were permitted to

buy land there at rock-bottom prices could afford to build on it. But they weren't allowed to sell the empty plots either." (*Shame* 19) As such, an ingenious plan is hatched to circumvent the law:

To buy an officer's piece of 'Defense' you had to draw up a complex contract. Under the terms of this contract the land remained the property of the vendor, even though you had paid him the full price and were now spending a small fortune building your own house on it to your own specifications. In theory you were just being *a nice guy, a benefactor* who had chosen to give the poor officer a home *out of your boundless charity*. But the contract also obliged the vendor to name a third party who would have plenipotentiary authority over the property once the house was finished. This third party was your nominee, and when the construction workers went home he simply handed the property over to you. Thus *two separate acts of goodwill* were necessary to the process. "Defense" was almost entirely developed on this *nice-guy* basis. *This spirit of comradeship, of working selflessly towards a common goal, is worthy of remark* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 19-20).

The detailed explanation, which is provided in a second-person address that epitomizes the author's intermediary status as a mohajir/migrant both in and outside Pakistan and Peccavistan, concerns the complex legal arrangement between the officer, the middle man and the buyer in the form of the contract, suffused with irony and parody, lays bare the scheme for all three to get a piece of the proverbial pie. It showcases the collusion between the military and other sectors of money and power in Pakistani society in which all parties involved benefit and remain satisfied with the status quo. Thus, the maintenance of the military's powerbase and influence is assured through such ingenious arrangements. But the narrator goes further and makes his criticism of such a charade more explicit:

It was an *elegant procedure* [Italics mine]. The vendor got rich, the intermediary got his fee, you got your house, and nobody broke any laws. So naturally nobody ever questioned how it came about that the city's most highly desirable development zone had been allotted to the defense services in this way. This attitude, too, remains a part of the foundations of 'defense': the air there is full of unasked questions (*Shame* 20).

The phrase "elegant procedure" is ironical in the context given the text's censorious postcolonial perspective on such corrupt societal practices that contribute to the maintenance of military's grip on Pakistan and the status quo. The arrangement showcases the way Pakistan's military



keeps its rank and file rich off people by selling the prized land to officers at very low prices, which they turn around and sell or rent to the rich at exorbitant prices. The whole scheme not only attests to the military's influence and role in the Pakistani body politic, but it also illustrates how the military has, in fact, found a way to keep the bourgeoisie satisfied. In fact, this whole process of getting people from different sectors of society involved contributes to the stability and control that the military exerts throughout the country. In its explication of how the Defense operates, this section both defamiliarizes and critiques the whole process by exposing its modus operandi through explicit description and criticism of its operation, but also through irony. The use of words and phrases that are employed to ironic effect and mean precisely their opposites in the given context such as "elegant procedure," "nice guy," "nice-guy basis," "spirit of comradeship," "out of your boundless charity," "working selflessly towards a common goal," can hardly be overlooked since it parodies and censures the unspoken motive in all this, that is, greed and materialism. Thus, the irony foregrounds the distance between the narrating and narrated possible worlds in terms of the *alethic* and *deontic* modalities (i.e. what is not politically permitted to be stated explicitly in the narrating world can be suggested through irony in the narrated world), but also highlights their similarity in terms of *axiological* ethicality.

Another critical meta-comment that diegetically relays the widespread and systemic corruption in Pakistan is the instance that criticizes the rampant corruption in the public sector as exemplified by a customs officer named Mr. Zoroaster Farah's father, who is ironically named after the ancient Persian prophet by the same name to symbolize the duplicitous religiosity and hypocrisy, which is widespread among the people.

A customs officer depends, for a decent income, on traffic. Goods pass through, he *not unreasonably impounds them*, their owners *see reason*, an *accommodation is reached*, the customs man's family gets new clothes. *Nobody minds this arrangement*; everyone

knows how little public officials are paid. Negotiations are *honorably* conducted on both sides [Italics mine] (*Shame* 47).

In the above paragraph, Rushdie's narrator lays bare the machinations of the bribery of public officials and how such duplicitous acts have turned into common practices through disingenuous justification. Again, there is explicit description and explanation, which is undermined and parodied by the ironic use of the Italicized words in the bribery context, but the sanctimonious words also suggest how people think and justify such acts even to the extent of believing them: "everyone knows how little public officials are paid"; therefore, the fact that an official demands a bribe to carry out his duty is justified and explained away! Indeed, the use of such words as "reason," "accommodation," and "honorably" in the context of *bribery* undercuts the explanation and reveals the level of corruption and hypocrisy existing in Pakistan's government and public sector. In fact, a good portion of the text mounts its critique of Pakistani society and government through such ironic use of language that undercuts the serious tone of the words in the text.

So far, the critical meta-comments discussed were interpolated in the narrated world. The next meta-comment, however, is part of the "structural meta-commentary" in *Shame* where the narrator leaves the narrated world and speaks from the narrating possible world for the greater part of the chapter. The critical meta-comment illustrates the reach and extent of governmental control extending into people's homes in the Orwellian sense and really showcases how Pakistan's neocolonial government of General Zia ul-Haq monitors people and nips any political opposition or questioning of the status quo in the bud is when the author visits his friend, the poet (anonymously identified by his vocation), at his residence:

His house was full of visitors as usual; nobody seemed interested in talking about anything except the cricket series between Pakistan and India. I sat down at a table with my friend and began an idle game of chess. But I really wanted to get the low-down on

things, and at length I brought up the stuff that was on my mind, *beginning with a question about the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. But only half the question got past my lips; the other half joined the ranks of the area's many unasked queries, because I felt an extremely painful kick on my shins and, without crying out, switched in mid-sentence back to sporting topics* [Italics mine] (*Shame* 20).

It turns out that there is a spy planted in the poet's house, which explains the incessant talk of sporting topics such as cricket as a cover until the purported spy has exited the poet's residence. Subsequently, the poet is detained, tortured, and released but he never tells the narrator what happened to him during the incarceration probably due to the fact that the poet is apprehensive about the consequences of sharing his experiences with others given the extent and level of espionage and control exerted in the society during General Zia ul-Haq's presidency. So far, the critique is directed toward the government.

A few lines down the page, however, the narrator exclaims: "Wherever I turn, there is something of which to be ashamed. But shame is like everything else; live with it for long enough and it becomes part of the furniture... But nobody notices it any more. *And everyone is civilized* [Italics mine]." (*Shame* 21) The meta-comment suggests an interesting fact about living in a totalitarian society, that is, people are obliged to live with Orwellian-like state control and the ensuing shame and hypocrisy to such an extent that over time it becomes the routine and it ceases to offend them anymore, which is precisely why Rushdie's narrator attempts to defamiliarize shame and hypocrisy in their various guises and on different occasions by describing in detail the sinister and clandestine ways they operate in society, which is why the last statement is not only ironic but sarcastic as well: "And everyone is civilized" (Ibid.) One can easily replace the ironic word "civilized" with the literal word "hypocrite" in the last sentence. The most serious effect of living under such a government is the fear and self-censorship

imposed on the people as exemplified by the narrator's friend, the poet, who refuses to share his horrendous experiences in prison with his friend out of real fear for retribution.

In *Fabulation*, Robert Scholes has astutely observed, "postmodern fabulation is characterized by an extraordinary delight in design that asserts the authority and control of the designer, an implicit didacticism shaped into ethically controlled fantasy, a propensity to allegorize, and a rejection of realism" (Elias 186). In the same vein, *the self-reflexive* meta-comments, as part of the "narrating possible world," serve two interrelated purposes based on which they are subdivided into two distinct, yet interrelated groups depending on their primary purpose in the text: First, they establish and explicate the author's right to opine about Pakistan's history and politics as an outsider or émigré (mohajir), which ties into the rationale for creating the possible world of *Peccavistan* as a critical alternative possible world instead of a realistic engagement with the socio-historical trajectory of Pakistan to avert the backlash. Secondly, they engage the reader by explicating the various fabulation/fiction making decisions and *emplotment* choices Rushdie's narrator makes including his genre selection as well as his thematic foci on such postcolonial themes as migrancy, hybridity, in-betweenness, translation, political oppression, and repression of women. Thus, the self-reflexive meta-commentary foregrounds the constructivism, provisionality, and perspectivism of the narrative by foregrounding how the narrativization strategies employed to tell the narrated world are, in fact, construction/narrativization choices, rather than mere realistic reporting of undisputed facts as in realistic fiction and official historiography, which conceal their narrativization strategies and machinations.

The most important, yet atypical self-reflexive meta-comment, which explains the author's inspiration and reason for creating the novel, belatedly appears in the opening of chapter

7 entitled “Blushing” where the author shares his metafictional motivation and rationale for creating the narrative around the theme of “shame” in Pakistan by telling of a tragic incident that occurred thousands of miles away from Pakistan in East London where a Pakistani father killed his daughter whom he believed was having an illicit relationship with “a white boy.” Rushdie’s words tell it all:

...a Pakistani father murdered his only child, a daughter, because by making love to a white boy she had brought dishonor upon her family that only her blood could wash away the stain. The tragedy was intensified by the father’s enormous and obvious love for his butchered child, and by the beleaguered reluctance of his friends and relatives...to condemn his actions. The story appalled me...But even more appalling was my realization that, like the interviewed friends etc., I, too, found myself understanding the killer. The news did not seem alien to me. We who have grown up on a diet of *honor and shame* can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy: that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride (*Shame* 117-118).

The above-explanation is socio-cultural in the sense that the author takes the mantle of the cultural interpreter/translator for Westerners by explaining how a young girl’s sexual relationship without being married to her boyfriend violates the concept of family honor in a society in which the shameful act of one member (sex outside marriage is considered an unethical and shameful act) is perceived to stain the honor of the entire family. Therefore, it needs to be justified and avenged through an honor killing. Rushdie’s narrator cites this tragic incident as his impetus to write about Pakistan from which the family in East London had emigrated: “...I realized that to write about her, about shame, I would have to go back East, to let the idea breathe its favorite air.” (*Shame* 118) The author deconstructs and decouples “shame” from “honor” (as is the case in large parts of the Near East) and suggests that such honor killings are the real shameful acts, which is precisely why he decides to write about Pakistan where shame in its distorted form and associated with a man’s honor originated. As such, the critical and constructive functions of the meta-narration are conjoined here since it is the outrageously shameful act of killing one’s own

child in East London that becomes the underlying reason for the author to write creatively about Pakistan where such honor killings originate based on misguided, culturally sanctioned notions of honor and shame. All this explanatory meta-commentary foregrounds the author's creation of Sufiya Zinobia as a woman with developmental issues (as a child, she does not develop mentally beyond that of a child) in the narrated possible world in order to symbolize the shame and disorder in the Pakistani society. In fact, Sufiya becomes an embodiment of shame and dysfunction in the Pakistani body politic with its admixture of patriarchal culture, repression of women, Islamic fundamentalism, and political dictatorship. Sufiya's decapitation of her victims also symbolizes her rebellion and revenge against the patriarchal society that represses women and strips them of basic human rights; thereby further linking the critical and self-reflexive dimensions of the narrative.

Rushdie is acutely aware of his position as an immigrant (*mohajir*) writer and the criticism levied against him. The *position(s)* the author takes throughout the metafictional text, which is part of the textual identity constructed through verbal and linguistic cues and in relation to other elements in the text, are foregrounded in the novel to an unprecedented degree. The resentment toward emigrants is shown vividly through the interaction the author has with his Pakistani detractors. In a conversation with his critics in Pakistan, he defends his right to write about Pakistan while residing in England and writing in English. Thus, there is a sudden transition from the narrated world to a conversation that the author is having, presumably in Pakistan, with his critics who are critical of his status as an outsider and question his legitimacy as a writer to opine on the country's socio-political affairs from which he has separated himself by becoming a citizen of the United Kingdom. The text reads as follows:

*Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!... I know: nobody ever arrested Me. Nor are they likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with*

*your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies?* I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? (21-22)

In the above quotation, the author becomes a participant in the conversation he is having with his critics in Pakistan and a rare conflation/overlapping of all the three positions propounded by Bamberg takes place. The author's language appears in regular type-set and his critics' language appears in Italics. He is positioned as an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator (since he does not participate in the narrated action throughout the novel), suddenly engages in a dialogue with his critics in Pakistan who question his right and credibility as an outsider to write about Pakistan's tumultuous history and politics. As such, there is the sudden insertion of the narrating world into the narrated world in which the narrator engages in a heated exchange with his prototypical critics. This extradiegetic exercise in reciprocity via the medium of dialogue makes the author appear as acutely conscious of his critics and detractors who question his right and credentials to opine on Pakistan's history and politics and is willing to respond to their queries and accusations.

In the narrating world, which is based on the actual world of Pakistan (with minimal distance) in terms of her politics and socio-political sensitivities/attitudes towards foreign/migrant writers, the author engages in a contentious dialogue with his critics who seem to be Pakistanis resenting Rushdie's critical writings and comments on their country. He employs a set of rhetorical questions to defend himself and to stake his claim to writing on Pakistan's history. His last rhetorical question – "Can only the dead speak?" is the last and the most powerful punch in his defense since it sheds light on the restrictions put in place on freedom of expression with respect to history and politics in Pakistan as well as its dire consequences such as imprisonment and/or death. Thus, the author positions himself as someone who is open-

mindful and unhindered by the restrictions in place in Pakistan and thinks it is perfectly within his rights to write about the history and politics of the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan in particular.

The author's defense of his right to write about Pakistan not only positions him against his detractors and critics, but also explains his position to his readers. Furthermore, this positioning, enacted through the quoted dialogue, contributes to his self-promulgated global image as a cosmopolitan writer, with "interstitial or liminal" status, "a hybrid cosmopolitan sensibility" that is not deterred by the restrictions and harsh criticism coming from Pakistan. (Quayson 5) His critics, on the other hand, are not only positioned against him by questioning and denying his credentials as a western author writing in a foreign language (e.g. English) and removed from the country he is writing about, but they are also portrayed as very harsh and fanatical in their views by using highly charged, insulting language and questioning his legitimacy, which in a way undermines their legitimacy as well since they appear as prejudiced against him (e.g. *Poacher! Pirate! ...*).

The most astonishing aspect of the novel's construction, which breaks the mimetic illusion of the narrated sections and induces the *alienation effect* in the reader concerns the narrator's confession and explanation as to why he has selected the unrealistic genre of the novel (i.e. historiographic metafiction) as opposed to a realistic novel. The author concludes his metafictional comments by speculating on the political fallout that would ensue in the following terms:

By now, if I had been writing a book of this nature, it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart (68).



In the above quotation, the author is acutely conscious of the reception of his book in Pakistan and imagines the political aftermath of the publication of his novel, were it realistic, by considering the backlash it would have received in Pakistan: “The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned.” (*Shame* 68) The author’s reflections evince a concern with the book’s reception and how that factors into the choices the author makes such as genre selection. It proleptically anticipates the kind of reception and opposition his other novel, *The Satanic Verses* received upon publication in 1988, especially in the Islamic world in the aftermath of Ayatollah Khomeini’s fatwa. Thus, the above quotation and especially the following two quotations foreground the possibility of choices which metafictional/cross-cultural/cross-possible worlds identity allows.

In terms of narrative construction, the author is concerned with his genre selection (i.e. selecting magical realism) as politically motivated within the postcolonial context of writing under repressive and difficult circumstances and considers the alternative by speculating on what he would have had to include in his novel, had he decided to write a realistic account of Pakistan with her rampant corruption, nepotism, cronyism, coup d’états and repressive governments which have ruled that country almost from the time of its formation. It is quite ironical that even though the author elaborates on his reasons for not dealing with Pakistan directly and realistically to avoid the anticipated backlash to his book; nonetheless, he does specify some of the major issues he would have had to contend with were he to pen a realistic account of modern Pakistan. Hence, this section, which is primarily metafictional and concerns comments on the fictionality and/or constructedness of the narrative, allows the author to critique the various socio-political practices in Pakistan while shielded and protected by the artistic license of writing a novel! (Neumann and Nunning 1) Indeed, he goes through a litany of societal, political and cultural

problems and thorny, fundamental issues that afflict Pakistan and he would have to include in his book were he to write “a realistic novel” as evidence of his anti-realistic, historiographic slant of the self-reflexive meta-commentary:

But suppose this were a realistic novel! Just think what else I might have to put in. The business, for instance, of the illegal installation, by the richest inhabitants of ‘Defense’, of covert, subterranean water pumps that steal water from their neighbors’ main – so that you can always tell the people with the most pull by the greenness of their lawns (such clues are not confined to the Cantonment of Q.) – And would I also have to describe the Sind club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading ‘Woman and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point’? Or to analyze the subtle logic of an industrial program that builds nuclear reactors but cannot develop a refrigerator? ...and the teacher who once docked two marks from my youngest sister’s geography essay because it differed at two points from the exact wording of this same textbook... how awkward, dear reader, all this could turn out to be (66).

In Nunning’s typology, this meta-section would be “reception-oriented” in terms of its function since it is primarily concerned with educating and informing the reader as to why the author has decided to forgo writing a realistic account of Pakistan (despite his engagement with Pakistan’s history and politics throughout the meta-commentary). The thrust of these meta-comments is critical since they provide a list of a host of socio-political issues in Pakistan that is fairly broad in its coverage of various aspects of the public life in Pakistan. However, the critique is linked to the construction of the narrative as genre selection is purportedly done based on the political realities of writing a book in a repressive, undemocratic society that is averse to criticism. The meta-sections bring the postcolonial context of Pakistan into sharp focus by drawing attention to the inept and corrupt system, which has been established by the collusion of the media, government ministries, and the military junta running the post-independence Pakistan:

How much real-life material might become compulsory! – About, for example, the long-ago Deputy Speaker who was killed in the National Assembly when the furniture was flung at him by elected representatives; or about the film censor who took his red pencil to each frame of the scene in the film *Night of the Generals* in which General Peter O’Toole visits an art gallery, and scratched out all the paintings of naked ladies hanging on the walls, so that the audience were dazzled by the surreal spectacle of General Peter

strolling through a gallery of dancing red blobs; or about the TV chief who once told me solemnly that pork was a four-letter word; or about the issue of *Time* magazine (or was it *Newsweek*) which never got into the country because it carried an article on General Ayub Khan's alleged Swiss bank account...or about the recent preferential awards of State scholarships, to pay for postgraduate studies abroad, to members of the fanatical Jamaat party; or about the attempt to declare the sari an obscene garment; or about the extra hangings – the first for twenty years – that were ordered purely to legitimize the execution of Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; or about why Bhutto's hangman has vanished into thin air, just like many street-urchins who are being stolen every day in broad daylight; or about anti-Semitism, an interesting phenomenon, under whose influence people who have never met a Jew vilify all Jews for the sake of maintaining solidarity with the Arab states which offer Pakistan workers, these days, employment and much-needed foreign exchange; or about smuggling, the boom in heroin exports, military dictators, venal civilians, corrupt civil servants, bought judges, newspapers of whose stories the only thing that can be confidently be said is that they are lies... (67)

The meta-comments are of a staggering variety, and include comments, observations, and critique of the government as well as culture, traditions, and daily practices and events in Pakistan. The strong, extradiegetic section includes detailed socio-political issues of Pakistan that the author would have to include were he to write a realistic account of the events and practices in that country. This is aimed at foregrounding the constructedness of the narrative within the postcolonial context by highlighting the construction and genre selection of the novel, which directly engage with the politics and societal practices of the postcolonial nation that are viewed through the author's critical lens. The meta-comments are numerous and censure and indict various aspects of the Pakistani society and a broad swath of the political spectrum. They commence with fairly specific acts, or rather crimes that have been perpetrated such as the killing of the Deputy Speaker at the National Assembly, which points to the lack of civility and barbarism in the political arena, the heavy-handed censorship as exemplified in the covering of all the paintings of nude women in Peter O'Toole's film *Night of the Generals*, the censorship imposed on the press by not allowing any magazines that criticize Pakistani leaders to enter

Pakistan, or even worse, the carrying out of executions after a hiatus of twenty years “to purely to legitimize the execution of Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto” and the list goes on and on!

As the quoted section amply demonstrates, the metafictional comments go beyond a damning critique and indictment of successive Pakistani leaders (such as General Ayub Khan, Zolfikar Ali Bhutto, and General Zia ul-Haq), and the military and indict the whole Pakistani body politic along with its socio-cultural practices/traditions, its mistreatment of women, its self-serving anti-Semitism, its fanatical, fundamentalist approach to religion (Islam), violence, corruption, its skewed concepts of honor and shame, and a slew of societal issues. In other words, the root of the problem is shown to be not the government per se but the society and culture with all the hypocrisy, duplicity, and prejudice that enable such repressive and corrupt governments to acquire and maintain power, and this critique is reinforced by the self-reflexive meta-comments, which move between the narrated and narrating worlds but find the same problems in both.

In particular, the mistreatment of women and their relegation to second class citizens is pointed out in the quoted paragraph: “And would I also have to describe the Sind club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading ‘Woman and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point’?” (*Shame* 66) But this motif goes beyond an occasional mention and is woven into the fabric of Rushdie’s novel since women’s mistreatment appears time and again in both the narrative and metanarrative sections of *Shame*. Indeed, the novel’s very title is closely aligned with a man’s sense of honor with respect to the women in his family (e.g. wife or daughter) and how he would feel if that honor were besmirched and violated were she to have carnal knowledge with someone other than her lawful spouse, and how that needs to be avenged. For instance, Omar Khayyam Shakil’s rape of Farah Zoroaster under hypnosis results in her

dismissal from the school she is attending as well as her father's refusal to allow her to stay in his house since she has stained the school's/family's reputation through her indiscretion and violation of the religious/cultural code.

A key self-reflexive meta-comment, which is reception-oriented (Nunning's fourth type), concerns the construction of the narrated possible world of Peccavistan by sharing the rationale for the constructed factitiousness of the narrative (e.g. Peccavistan) as a way to avoid dealing with the reception of his work in Pakistan and the anticipated, but almost certain, political fallout of his attempt to deal realistically with that country's unseemly modern history, which encompasses successive autocratic regimes (ruled by autocratic generals or ineffective, corrupt statesmen), rampant corruption, patriarchal culture/relegation of women to second class citizens, and Islamic fundamentalism. The author is, in fact, attempting to use artistic license and putting poetic distance between himself and the subject of his writing by inventing fictitious characters, such as Bilquis, who defy the conventions of realistic writing and disrupt the mimetic illusion by departing from the probabilities, the logic of daily life, and the world of verities so that he may be viewed as a writer of fantastic tales rather than realistic fiction or historiography that is critical of Pakistan's socio-political trajectory from General Ayub Kahn to the execution of Ali Bhutto and the ascension to power of General Zia ul-Haq.

If this were a realistic novel about Pakistan, I would not be writing about Bilquis and the wind; I would be talking about my younger sister. Who is twenty-two, and studying engineering in Karachi; who can't sit on her hair anymore, and who (unlike me) is a Pakistani citizen. On my good days, I think of her as Pakistan, and then I feel very fond of the place, and find it easy to forgive its (her) love of Coca-Cola and imported motor cars (66).

As the above paragraph illustrates, to use Zavarzadeh's term, the novel is "bi-referential" by referring to both Pakistan and Peccavistan throughout the novelistic text. This bi-referential aspect of the text allows the author to engage with postcolonial historiography of Pakistan at two

distinct hermeneutical levels: the metafictional “narrating possible world” and the fictional “narrated possible world,” which, as noted earlier, are occasionally separated into different chapters, but typically inserted into each other, structurally manifesting the author’s professed identity as mohajir. At the metafictional level, Rushdie comments and critiques various aspects of Pakistan’s body politic while the fictional Peccavistan affords his politically-contingent appropriation of Pakistan’s repressive history and neocolonial governments through exaggeration, irony, and parody. This bi-referential aspect is typical of postcolonial historiographic metafiction due to the fact that the meta-comments frequently cross ontological borders by referring to the world outside the narrative in order to foreground the constructivism of narrative and historiography and perspectivism of truth.

The previous two quotations on the author’s reasoning to deal with Pakistan’s political history in fictional terms pave the way for the seminal self-reflexive meta-comment in the novel that defines and characterizes the “narrated possible world” of “Peccavistan,” which though not Pakistan, is based on modern Pakistan: “The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space.” (22). The meta-comment foregrounds the construction of Peccavistan by utilizing important meta-language in terms of how it is constructed and drawing attention to the relationship between Peccavistan (the signified) to Pakistan (the socio-political referent), which “exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality.” (22) Thus, what Rushdie “does is to reinstall the signified through its metafictional self-reflexivity about the function and process of meaning-generation while at the same time not letting the referent disappear.” (Hutcheon 149) However, as Hutcheon observes, postmodernist fiction “also refuses to allow the referent to take on any original,

controlling function...” (149). Hence, the novel becomes concerned with Peccavistan, which is Rushdie’s fictional counterpart to Pakistan, while keeping Pakistan in the background.

The author provides the rationale and justification for his fictionalization of Pakistan to the extent that it departs from realistic and documented accounts of Pakistan’s history while still maintaining the general contours of the major events and occurrences in that country from the establishment of Pakistan to General Ayub Khan’s ascension to power as President, to Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s assuming the prime minister role and his tenure and subsequent execution, to General Zia Al Haq’s coup d’e tat, and ultimately to General Zia’s demise. Thus, the novel draws “attention to the process of textualization [i.e. the creation and fabulation of the narrative at hand] as much as to the historical reality behind the text.” (Oppermann 17)

Nonetheless, as previously noted, the metanarration is also concerned with “content” since the author often refers to his own personal experiences such as his trips from England to Pakistan, which influence the way he experiences the country of Pakistan (e.g. in slices), and also provides experiential support for his spatialization of the narrative he purports to tell. Hence, the meta-comments in this instance provide an explicit rationalization for the author’s choices with respect to bending or violating the realistic conventions and fidelity to the documented history of Pakistan in order to be able to present and depict his interpretation of the tumultuous history of Pakistan without being impeded.

Another instance of *self-reflexive* meta-commentary foregrounds the extradiegetic narrator’s perception of Pakistan by explaining how the narrative is constructed as a result of it. It falls under Nunning’s “formal” type of metanarration and occurs when the author intimates to the reader how he has “learned Pakistan [and its history as the novel reveals] in slices” since he has traveled there many times but has “never lived there for longer than six months at a stretch.”

(*Shame* 66) Hence, there are a lot of missing pieces and gaps in the narration: “I think what I’m confessing is that, however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect the world in fragments of broken mirrors...I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits.”

(66)

This last statement is metafictional since it foregrounds the author’s limitations in (re-) constructing and narrating the modern history of Pakistan as “fragments of broken mirrors” (while also suggesting and implying its spatiality and asynchronicity) and he is resigned to “the inevitability of the missing bits” as opposed to realistic writing and historiography that gloss over and conceal the purported gaps (Ibid.) The act of referring to the author’s own trips from England to Pakistan is *auto-referential* (and falls under Nunning’s *content* type) and links the auto-referential narration in “narrating possible world” to the non-sequential, spatial, and planar “narrated possible world” discussed at length in chapter three, which Elias characterizes as “one that broke up linear reading patterns, upset readers’ expectations of sequentiality, and disrupted progressive story development.” (115). Indeed, these meta-comments explicate the fragmentary design and incomplete structure of the narrative by accounting for the spatial/planar structure of the fabula through the author’s own experiences. Hence, the asynchronous progression and development of the narrative solidifies the author’s persona as one who has control over the narrative by shaping and molding it. In this manner, the *formal* and *content* aspects of metanarration become inextricably intertwined, and in turn, foreground the act of narration as much as the narrative.

The purpose of all the emphasis on the piecemeal narratorial design and fragmentary structure of the novel is to convey the fragmentation of the postcolonial experience, that is, the fact that one can understand history, culture, and other sociopolitical concerns only partially and



through fragments for which the broken glass is employed as an apt metaphor both in terms of its discontinuity (gaps/missing pieces) as well as its slanted angles for perceiving and relaying historical material shaped by the author's slanted views as well as insufficient knowledge/information due to the government's grip and restriction of access to essential information of socio-political import and sensitivity as well as limitations to human knowledge and objectivity. In other words, any pretension to knowing the whole of anything is dismissed; hence, the broken glass aptly symbolizes not only the structure of Rushdie's narrative and its construction, but also serves as a critique of historiography which is pretentious and misleading by having unacknowledged missing pieces and concealed gaps. It also self-reflexively crystallizes the ways the paratactic juxtaposition and blurring of the narrated and narrating worlds in the novel capture the problematics of choice within the postcolonial situation.

Another noteworthy instance of the postmodern fascination and interest in fabulation in *Shame* concerns the author's explication of his use of the Islamic Hegiran calendar, which is based on prophet Mohammad's historic migration from Mecca to Medina. The meta-comment is made presumably to caution the reader that the fourteenth century in this case does not comport to the Middle Ages and should be construed as recent history.

All this happened in the fourteenth century. I'm using the Hegiran calendar, naturally: don't imagine that stories of this type always take place longlong ago. Time cannot be homogenized as easily as milk, and in those parts, until quite recently, the thirteenth-hundreds were still in full swing (6).

Such interventions interrupt the narrative and its "willing suspension of disbelief" by drawing attention to the very act of narration itself. The explanatory meta-comment on the Hegiran calendar interrupts the narrative flow and induces "alienation effect on the reader by breaking and defamiliarizing the narrated possible world. It also reinforces the author's liminal role as a

linguistic and cultural interpreter of Pakistan and its socio-cultural practices and norms to the western reader.

The meta-sections add another cognitive layer, which directly engages with socio-historical material (e.g. events and trans-world characters/historical figures) by dealing with the incomprehensibility and recalcitrance of history to interpretation and rationalization through a multilayered hermeneutical approach, which utilizes both fiction and non-fiction. These sections engage with socio-historical, cultural and political material in various ways. For instance, following the anti-Islamic marches and demonstrations of women yearning for freedom – “the women of the country began marching against God” – the author tackles the sensitive and contentious issue of Islam as “a unifying force” in Pakistan (e.g. he compares Pakistan with Iran under Khomeini). Then, Rushdie postulates his theory as to why Islam has become such a dominant force in Pakistan in the following terms:

*So-called Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited. Disenfranchised, mocked. But the ramming-down-the-throat point stands. In the end you get sick of it, you lose faith in the faith, if not *qua* faith, then certainly as the basis for a state. And then the dictator falls, and it is discovered that he has brought God down with him, that the justifying myth of the nation has been unmade. This leaves only two options: disintegration, or a new dictatorship...no, there is a third, and I shall not be so pessimistic as to deny its possibility. *The third option is the substitution of a new myth for the old one. Here are three such myths, all available from stock at short notice: liberty; equality; fraternity.* I recommend them highly [Italics mine] (266-267).*

The author makes the socio-political assertion that Islam “does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above.” (*Shame* 266) He calls Islam a mythology and continues by asserting that “few mythologies survive close examination, however. And they can become very unpopular if they’re rammed down people’s throats.” (266) He is critical of the use

of Islam as an empowering myth to reinforce dictators and silence their critics “by encircling them with words of power, which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked.” (266) He goes on to explain that when religion is hijacked to shore up autocratic regimes, people ultimately rebel against the coercive “ramming-down-the-throat,” because they perceive and detest the political exploitation behind the sanctimonious facade of religion. The criticism of Islam as a means for justification and protection of autocratic regimes is to be viewed through axiological ethicality. Subsequently, Rushdie contemplates the fall of the dictator who “has brought down God with him, that the justifying myth of the nation has been unmade, which leaves the options of “disintegration, or a new dictatorship... The third option is the substitution of a new myth for the old one...liberty, equality, fraternity,” which he recommends “highly.” (267) and Islam as his empowering myth, which leads to its substitution by a new myth – democracy “liberty; equality; fraternity,” which Rushdie’s narrator “highly” recommends.

Metanarratorial comments, such as the one quoted above, provide the reader with the hermeneutical frame of reference that may assist the reader in interpreting the narrative. For instance, how Peccavistan/Pakistan is governed is laid bare through power, intimidation, censorship and the mythologies of Islam and patriotism as potent forces to unite the various ethnic groups in that country. For instance, the espousal of the Islamic religion by autocratic regimes in the Middle East makes a great deal of political sense since, as Rushdie’s narrator observes, people are reluctant to oppose Islam if the government has Islamic legitimacy through rhetoric and by forming a symbiotic relationship with the clergy.

In brief, the meta-sections in *Shame*, which are narrated by an extradiegetic narrator located outside the narrated possible world of Peccavistan, include both critical and self-reflexive

meta-comments, which not only interrogate and critique the policies and practices of successive neocolonial governments in the aftermath of Pakistan's independence (Ayub Khan, Ali Bhutto, Zia-ul Haq), but they also deconstruct (official) historiography by foregrounding its narrative strategies and machinations. Throughout this section, I have argued that the critique, interrogation, and deconstruction of Pakistan's politics, society, and culture is done through a *dual organization* of seriousness and playfulness, which reflects the *dual agenda* of the novel by leveling direct criticism at various sociopolitical issues of the nation-state, illustrating them through anecdotal experiences and examples while undermining it through irony and parody.

The author not only makes self-referential comments, but he also discusses the construction of his narrative in explicit terms. With respect to Nunning's four-tiered typology, the metanarratorial sections are located outside the narrative at the discourse level; hence formally extradiegetic. With respect to content, the meta-comments include auto-referential comments on the narrator's own act of narrating, but they also refer to the narration process itself. There are also the ones that are located outside the narrative's own possible world, Peccavistan, and these are the most distinctive ones in the novel. Furthermore, the total accumulation of the metanarratorial and metafictional comments made throughout *Shame* "contributes to the foregrounding the narrative act and to creating the illusion of being addressed by a personalized voice or 'teller.'" (Fludernik 278) However, given the content of meta-comments throughout the novel, for instance, those explaining the decision to write a fictional book (due to the perceived/anticipated level of resistance to a realistic account of Pakistan), or describing the incident in East London as the author's impetus to write a novel set in Pakistan, the meta-commentary forms a parallel plot (a non-fictional section) that engages the reader at a second hermeneutical level by explicating and amplifying what the fictional narrative is aimed

at. The cumulative effect of these meta-sections is to foreground the act and process of socio-historical and political narration that includes the gaps, the choices, and the very deliberate process of narration and emplotment; thus, underlining the constructivism and perspectivism of historiography and official versions of truth.

All in all, *Shame* illustrates and concretizes Rushdie's liminal postcoloniality as typical of "postcolonial novelists who, though defining a subject matter critical of the colonial heritage, simultaneously critique their own nation-states [Pakistan] that to them reproduce oppressive frames of reference on the excuse of nationalist sentiment." (Quayson 6) As I have argued throughout this section, the dual agenda of the novel is primarily critical of Pakistan's society and politics, and the dual organization of the novel reflects its dual agenda via the narrating and narrated possible worlds that differ in *alethic* and *deontic* modes, but are united by the axiological ethicality of "shame" that permeates the postcolonial nation; thus, the novel is deemed as one of "internal dissent." In fact, the word "shame" is employed, with its ethical denotations and connotations, to critique not only Pakistan's politics but the society that supports and helps maintain oppression and the status quo for the foreseeable future as each government that ascends to power simply replicates the previous government in terms of repression, corruption, and mendacity alternatively by exploiting the myths of Islam and nationalism.

#### **4.5. METANARRATION IN *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN***

In *Midnight's Children*, through metanarration and diegesis, Salman Rushdie reconstructs "India's modern history as heterogeneous and diverse, replete with stories, images and ideas- a multifarious hybrid history" in order to narrativize and critique the country's postcolonial trajectory from her promising birth and independence as a nation-state to the curtailment of civil rights, oppression and emasculation under the Emergency rule (Sahli Rejeb 710). Rushdie, as

other postcolonial novelists, “though defining a subject matter critical of the colonial heritage, simultaneously critique their own nation-states that to them reproduce oppressive frames of reference on the excuse of nationalist sentiment.” (Quayson 6)

Unlike *Shame* whose strongly extradiegetic narration comes from a possible world separate from that of the narrated world (which reinforces the narrator’s global position as interstitial and cosmopolitan), Saleem Sinai, the narrator-protagonist of *Midnight’s Children*, is ultimately part of the narrative he recounts to his narratee Padma; thus, he is both intradiegetic and autodiegetic. In the possible world(s) of *Midnight’s Children*, as a consequence of his simultaneous birth with that of his nation, Saleem acquires prescient omniscience and telepathic connectivity with the one thousand and one children and throughout India, which endows him with the omniscient knowledge to comment on the variegated nation. As such, telepathic Saleem, as a narrator, is similar in terms of the scope and extent of his knowledge to an omniscient extradiegetic narrator, reminiscent of the omniscient narrators of Victorian novels. The telepathy with which he is endowed renders him narrator par excellence with the needed omniscience and acute cognizance of what is transpiring throughout the country. One could argue that the telepathy motif literalizes the narratological metaphor of omniscience. His inextricable and miraculous handcuffing to that of his country at the outset creates a possible world and a deictic center of consciousness within the narrative and establishes seminal parallels with far-reaching consequences between Saleem’s identity and his subjective experiencing of the historical and socio-political events unfolding in newly independent India with her diverse and multitudinous populace. Thus, as a possible world, the constructed India is both different from and similar to the actual new India: Different in terms of the *alethic* modality since the possible world created at the inception of the novel, to which Saleem is handcuffed, has magical and counterfactual

possibilities, such as Saleem's uncanny omniscience, that set it apart from the actual new India. However, the two possible worlds are similar (but not identical) in terms of *deontic* permission (e.g. civil rights, democratic institutions such as the Constitution, the Parliament, political activities such as marches and demonstrations, etc.) and *axiological* ethicality.

In *The World, The Text, and the Critic*, Edward Said observes, "the point is that texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society – in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly." (35) In the same vein, a key aspect of *Midnight's Children* as postcolonial historiographic metafiction is its constant focus and ostentatious display of the "enunciative situation – text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context" with the resulting foregrounding of its various elements, which Hutcheon describes as a "(very problematic) communal project." (Hutcheon 115) As the intradiegetic narrator, Saleem relishes and takes pleasure in the act of narration and the construction of his possible world, his personal account of India's modern history filtered through memory, by stressing its various components, all of which convey the postcolonial themes of "the volatility and perspectivism of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history, the ineluctable subjectivism of memory and experience, the violence implicit in the universalist discourse of the nation..." (Lazarus 22) Yet, Saleem also underlines the shortcomings and problematic, yet communal nature of narration as a complex multifaceted communicative act with its inevitable gaps, limitations, historical specificity, and audience reaction that need to be taken into consideration as part of the communicative process. As such, Saleem, in his construction of India as a possible world, underlines the *epistemic* modality by discussing and highlighting the ways in which his account is not comprehensive, has gaps and inaccuracies, and is filtered through his selective memory as exemplified by Saleem's following confession:

Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time.

Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I'm prepared to distort everything – to re-write the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role? Today in my confusion, I can't judge. I'll have to leave it to others (198).

As a “narcissistic narrative” (Hutcheons’ term) that underscores the creative process of narration and does so with an awareness of that process, the components of the “enunciative situation” (i.e. the producer/narrator, receiver/narratee, text, and socio-historical context) and narratorial strategies such as anachrony (i.e. analepsis and prolepsis) and metanarratorial constructions of symbols are foregrounded to convey and reify the constructivism and provisionality of the narrative and the problematic and communal nature of historiographic narration. Saleem as the narrator/producer of the narrative, Padma as the narratee/receiver, the narrative text and its emplotment, as well as the socio-historical context of the postcolonial nation-state from the aftermath of independence to the premiership of Indira Gandhi and the twenty-two-month Emergency period are all brought into central focus at various points. All of this foregrounding is done within the alternative possible world of the narrative, which is set in motion with Saleem’s extraordinary birth and his telepathic prescience and omniscience enacted at the moment of India’s independence, which distance this possible world from the actual world via the alethic possibility of omniscience. Thus, the vision of *Midnight’s Children* is historical in the sense that, through diegesis, it depicts the individual in relation to the larger socio-historical forces that influence and condition his life. In an interview by Gordon Wise, Rushdie indicated that everything in the novel “has had to do with politics and with the relationship of the individual and history.” (59) As such, Saleem’s reading of the history of his country is presented, through meta-comments and diegesis, as a very personal account that is marred by inaccuracies



and errors and is molded by “memory.” In his conversation with Padma, Saleem declares:

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

In the above quotation, the key transformative role that “memory” plays in the process of selection, alteration, and exaggeration of socio-historical material is foregrounded. Moreover, its reality for the individual who experiences the societal and historical events that are retained, altered, and exaggerated through memory is underlined. The meta-comment is, in fact, an apt description of the way Rushdie’s narrator selects, alters, deletes, and exaggerates the politico-historical material presented throughout the novel in order to diegetically depict and critique the nation’s trajectory from her promising and celebratory independence to oppression and repression of men and women’s reproductive right during the Emergency.

As a component of the *enunciative situation*, the socio-historical context of India is foregrounded within the alternative possible world of the narrative as the unlikely and the fantastic take center stage while the characters and events become distant from realism in terms of the *alethic* modality that allows magical telepathy as a result of which a new internal norm of the value of community via telepathy is established in terms of the *deontic* modality. Moreover, as explained in chapter three, a seminal ethical correlation is established at the narrative inception between the *alethic* and *axiological* modalities: the birth of the democratic India, replete with possibilities and miracles, symbolized through the midnight’s children’s magical capabilities, corresponds with “good” while their subsequent apprehension and emasculation during the Emergency signifies a setback with the curtailment of possibilities and freedoms corresponding with “bad” in axiological terms, all of which signifies the untoward trajectory of

the nation from her celebratory beginning and democratic promise under Nehru toward repression and restriction of basic human rights (such as the right of procreation) under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi.

As the narrator, I have already mentioned Saleem's telepathic omniscience that links him to that of his nation and constitutes the deictic center of the narrative. His position as the unreliable raconteur – who is rash, impulsive, megalomaniac, confused, and self-doubting – looking back at his lived experiences and the unfolding events of his country, provides the reader with a panoramic, all-encompassing view of India in all her diversity and multiplicity, as viewed through the prism of Rushdie's censorious, self-conscious gaze. The narrative is filtered through the narrator's consciousness, which is explicitly compared to Scheherazade, the narrator of *The Arabian Nights*:

Now, however, time...is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, overused body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning. I must admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity. And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and showing inside me... (*Midnight's children* 3-4).

The image projected of the narrator is of one who is concerned about the shortness of time and life and he is eager to tell of all the various stories he has kept inside him, which is why the commas between the words have been deliberately omitted to suggest their over-brimming abundance and interconnectedness – “an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane” ready to come out of him (Ibid.) Saleem is about to construct his possible worlds of India and Pakistan in which the *alethic*

mode of possibilities, “the improbable,” and the *axiological* (ethical) focus on meaning and purpose – “to end up meaning” – are communicated at the outset.

Saleem’s telepathic powers position him well to comment on the historical events that constitute the nation’s politico-historical trajectory. His ability comes into fruition at the collective, societal level when he “at last sought refuge from grown-up voices, I found it in a clocktower...in the solitude of rusting time, I paradoxically took my first tentative steps towards that involvement with mighty events and public lives from which I would never again be free...” (*Midnight’s Children* 197) The following quotation depicts how “through the random processes of my mind-hopping,” the young Saleem “discovered politics” mainly by taking the persona of different characters: (198)

At one time I was a landlord in Uttar Pradesh, my belly rolling over my pajama-cord *as I ordered serfs to set my surplus grain on fire ... at another moment I was starving to death in Orissa, where there was a food shortage as usual: I was two months old and my mother had run out of breast-milk.* I occupied, briefly, the mind of Congress Party worker, *bribing a village schoolteacher to throw his weight behind the party of Gandhi and Nehru in the coming election campaign;* also the thought of a Kerala peasant who had decided to vote Communist. My daring grew: one afternoon I deliberately invaded the head of our own State Chief Minister, which was how I discovered, over twenty years before it became a national joke, that Moraj Desai “took his own water” daily...I was inside him, tasting the warmth as he gurgled a frothing glass of urine. And finally I hit my highest point: I became Jawarharlal Nehru, Prime Minister and author of famed letters: I sat with the great man amongst a bunch of gapped-toothed, stragglebeard astrologers and adjusted the Five Year Plan to bring it into harmonic alignment with the music of the spheres... [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 199)

The text quoted above is an apt illustration of Saleem’s role as the narrator par excellence and the critical axiological effect of his uncanny powers to infiltrate the minds of people from all walks of life in India and to report of their actions. The paratactic juxtaposition of their actions, seemingly random, offers a panoramic view of India and the discrepancy between haves and have-nots, the powerful and the downtrodden. Saleem is able to infiltrate the minds of high-level officials and wealthy landowners as well as the poor and the lower classes. In particular,

Saleem's infiltration of the consciousness of the landlord in Uttar Pradesh whose "belly rolling over my pajama-cord as I ordered serfs to set my surplus grain on fire" is juxtaposed, ironically, to the infant who "was starving to death in Orissa, where there was a food shortage as usual: I was two months old and my mother had run out of breast-milk." (199) Thus, the paratactic juxtaposition of the excesses and insensitivity of the wealthy who burn their grain surplus alongside the starving dispossessed becomes a powerful indictment of postcolonial India and the flagrant disparity that exists between the upper and lower castes/social classes in the newly independent nation with her rampant inequality existent as colonial legacy in her state of hybridity. As such, the effects of British colonial rule and exploitation of the masses are manifested in the disparity between the social classes as a quintessentially postcolonial theme. But importantly, this paratactic juxtaposition is enabled in this possible world by the alethic possibility of telepathy, and not by narratorial omniscience.

The collective events and political figures of national import such as Nehru are filtered through Saleem's consciousness as he feels to be a participant in those events and lives. Again, Rushdie's language is revealing in this regard:

Because the feeling had come upon me that I was somehow creating a world; that the thoughts I jumped inside were *mine*, that the bodies I occupied acted at my command...I was somehow *making them happen*...which is to say, I had entered into the illusion of the artist, and thought of the *multitudinous realities* [Italics mine] of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift. "I can find out any damn thing!" I triumphed, "There isn't a thing I cannot know!" (*Midnight's Children* 199)

The text quoted above has double significance, that is, it acts on two distinct, albeit interrelated, levels: On the one hand, it describes Saleem's realization of his telepathic powers, which become instrumental to the narration and creation of his narrated possible world; thus the comments acquire the added meta-dimension since they are concerned with the narratorial act as Saleem becomes empowered through the discovery of his extraordinary telepathic powers to be

connected and knowledgeable about the diverse nation with her “multitudinous realities.” The telepathy connects him with the lives of so many characters as well as the collective consciousness and socio-political concerns throughout the nation, which become inextricably intertwined with Saleem’s subjective experiences of the politico-historical trajectory of the newly independent nation. On the other hand, it functions as an artistic manifesto, a description of Rushdie’s literary art and role as an author/raconteur in shaping and molding “the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift” while departing from the logic of daily life and documented history at various points throughout the narrative.

Closely related to the narrator is his purported narratee Padma; in fact, the narrative is interspersed with meta-comments that not only underscore Saleem’s position and abilities as narrator/producer but they also address his purported narratee/receiver Padma, who does not seem to agree with some of Saleem’s narratological decisions throughout the novel, thereby foregrounding, hedging, and relativizing the narratorial act and bringing the construction and contours of the narrative into central focus as well:

So that now, nine months later, Wee Willie Winkie joked about his wife’s imminent baby and a stain appeared on an Englishman’s forehead.

“So?” Padma says. “*So what do I care about this Winkie and his wife whom you haven’t even told me about?*”

Some people are *never satisfied*; but Padma will be, soon.

And, now, *she’s about to get even more frustrated*; because, pulling away in a long rising spiral from the events at Methwold’s Estate – away from big toes and tiled roofs – I am flying across the city which is fresh and clean in the aftermath of the rains; leaving Ahmed and Amina to the songs of Wee Willie Winkie, I’m winging towards the Old Fort district, past Flora Fountain, and arriving at a large building filled with dim fustian Light and the perfume of swinging censers...*because here, in St. Thomas Cathedral, Miss Mary Pereira is learning about the color of God* [Italics mine] (114).

Rushdie’s employment of Padma as Saleem’s interlocutor primarily serves the purpose of foregrounding the reader’s reception of the narrative mostly through Padma’s reactions to Saleem’s narratorial choices (i.e. Nunning’s fourth type) including her dissatisfaction and

frustration with Saleem for introducing new characters into the narrative and breaking its coherence and unities of action, place, and time. Through his interactions with Padma, Rushdie's narrator highlights the narratorial choices he makes and occasionally his reason for making these choices, which stress the narrative construction and lead to *alienation effect* and disengagement from the narrative, which is conducive to the portraying of how narration suits the narrator's/author's perspective and agenda. However, in *Midnight's Children* in which the narratorial interventions occur in the same possible world as that narrated, the alienation effect is not as extreme as in *Shame* in which the meta-sections appear in another possible world with a different ontology.

Saleem's on-and-off interactions with Padma simultaneously highlight the narrator and his acute awareness of his narratee, which index the dialogical nature of the communicative act in a Bakhtinian sense: although Saleem tries to persuade Padma of his narratorial decisions and offers explanations aimed at persuading her of the soundness of his narratorial decisions, Padma's doubts and resistance actually undermine Saleem's authority and, in fact, model the reader's doubt and resistance. As Saleem takes on the mantle of raconteur, at different points throughout his lengthy narrative, he advises his narratee to be patient and wait for certain events and characters to appear at their designated and appropriate place and time. Here is an illustration of Padma and her reaction:

While I, at my desk, *feel the sting of Padma's impatience. (I wish, at times, for a more discerning audience, someone who would understand the need for rhythm, pacing, the subtle introduction of minor chords which later rise, swell, seize the melody* [Italics mine]; who would know, for instance, that although baby-weight and monsoons have silenced the clock on the Estate clocktower, the steady beat of Mountbatten's ticktock is still there, soft but inexorable, and that it's only a matter of time before it fills our ears with its metronomic, drumming music.) Padma says: "I don't want to know about this Winkie now; days and nights I've waited and still you won't get to being born!" But I counsel patience; everything in its proper place... (*Midnight's Children* 112-113)

Again, in the Italicized portion of the quotation, the narrator articulates the logic of his narrative configuration by mentioning, “the subtle introduction of minor chords which later rise, swell, seize the melody...” (112) This quotation directs the reader’s attention to the narration and how it is constructed and takes his focus off the narrative per se. Meta-comments such as this one induce *alienation effect* by interrupting the mimetic illusion of the narrative and bringing the narrator, the reader, and the narrative construction into central focus. This is achieved by specifying the various elements in the narrative such as “rhythm, pacing, the subtle introduction of minor chords which later rise, swell, seize the melody...” (112). The shift to the narratee in the above quotation is indirect since the narrator simply comments on Padma’s impatience, whereas at other times the narrator directly addresses his narratee: “Padma, it’s true: you’ve never been there, never stood in the twilight watching straining, resolute, furry creatures working at the stones, pulling and rocking, rocking and pulling, working the stones...” (*Midnight’s Children* 93) Padma’s impatience and questioning of Saleem’s narrational choices underline the epistemic modality of the narrated possible world in terms of what is and is not revealed about certain characters and events as well as introduction of new characters and events that she does not approve of. The highlighting of the epistemic mode points to the constructedness and contingency of the narrative at hand since it reinforces and reifies Saleem’s molding of the narrative as the raconteur. Saleem’s interactions with Padma also invite comparison with the narrator’s critics in *Shame*. In *Midnight’s Children*, Padma does not comprehend and is impatient about some of Saleem’s narratological choices; she is a willing narratee nonetheless. The narrator’s critics in *Shame*, however, do not even concede his right to write and opine about Pakistan.

While drawing attention to the act of narration, the producer and the receiver, these meta-comments tie different strings and afford the possibility of commenting on the Indian nation, her socio-political apparatus, as well as the culture on a large, collective scale. The quotation below illustrates this:

PADMA CAN HEAR IT: there's nothing like a countdown for building suspense. I watched my dung-flower at work today, stirring vats like whirlwind, as if that would make the time go faster. (And perhaps it did; time, in my experience, has been as variable and inconstant as Bombay's electric power supply. Just telephone the speaking clock if you don't believe me – tied to electricity, it's usually a few hours wrong...no people whose word for "yesterday" is the same as their word for "tomorrow" can be said to have a firm grip on the time.) (*Midnight's Children* 118)

Sections of the text such as the one quoted above accomplish multiple tasks: They draw attention to Saleem's narratee and her impatience with the gradual building of suspense as a way to simulate and address reader expectations throughout the narrative; thus laying bare the act of narration by foregrounding it at the opening of the chapter, appropriately introduced with the onomatopoeic title "Tick Tock." But it also allows the narrator to make a philosophical comment on the notion of time and describe it as "variable and inconstant," while, at the same time, comparing it with the unreliable "electric power supply" of Bombay, which is construed as a critique of the city authorities who are in charge of Bombay's power grid. The criticism levied at the city authorities is a diegetic portrayal of Rushdie's postcolonial perspective and critique of the inefficiency of the democratically instituted government in India at providing basic services to the people let alone alleviating poverty or ensuring a fair, equitable society. In fact, the inefficiency of Bombay's electrical supply becomes a symbol of the government's inefficiency in running the country at the national scale; hence, solidifying Rushdie's narrative as one of internal dissent.



Rushdie's narrator employs a number of strategies, other than addresses to the narratee Padma, to foreground the act of narration and his role as narrator in shaping the narrative at each step. Strategies of "anachrony" such as *prolepsis* and *analepsis* are chief among them. Saleem draws attention to his omniscient knowledge and disrupts the linearity of the narrative by endowing himself with proleptic foreknowledge of the events about to happen:

...And now I, Saleem Sinai, intend briefly to endow myself-then with the benefits of hindsight; destroying the unities of action and conventions of fine writing, I make him cognizant of what was to come [Italics mine], purely so that he can be permitted to think the following thoughts... But the loss of my finger (which was foretold by the pointing digit of Raleigh's fisherman), not to mention the removal of certain hairs from my head, has undone all that. (*Midnight's Children* 270)

The quotation above sounds like an artistic manifesto due to its purported self-important language: "I, Saleem Sinai..." the old, mature Saleem endows his younger self with the benefit of hindsight that he has now. As such, he muses over events that have not happened yet such as the loss of his finger or the removal of his hair (which will be occurring later in the novel; hence instance of *prolepsis* within the narrative). He ostentatiously addresses the compositional aspect of the narration by pointing out the "destroying of the unities of action" and the diegetic effect this has in terms of shattering the mimetic illusion, which creates *alienation effect* by alluding to narrator and the act and principles of "fine writing" and how his narrative does not adhere to the unities of action in its postmodern configuration. The purpose of the induced alienation effect here, as in the narrator's addresses to Padma, is to foreground the constructedness and provisionality of all narratives along with the choices for action included in the narrative.

As part of the enunciative situation, the "socio-historical context" is foregrounded through *analepsis* and *parataxis* as Saleem recollects the events in the Summer of 1956, and with his telepathic knowledge, he paratactically juxtaposes the events in his own immediate family to the body politic; in particular, the effect that the government and her policies had on the

individual is underscored through the parataxis. It is an effective metafictional strategy to commingle the socio-historical with the individualistic and the personal:

In the summer of 1956, when most things in the world were still larger than myself, my Sister the Brass Monkey developed the curious habit of setting fire to shoes. *While Nasser sank ships at Suez, thus slowing down the movements of the world by obliging it to travel around the Cape of Good Hope*, my sister was also trying to impede our progress (*Midnight's Children* 171).

The above quotation illustrates the technique of *parataxis*, in which the bizarre, personal events in Saleem's family life are juxtaposed to the politico-historical events of collective import. In cases such as the one above, parataxis has an anticlimactic impact on the reader since the improbable and bizarre events of a small scale are juxtaposed to the collective historical events of great magnitude, thereby undermining them through the creation of a humorous and bizarre antidote. Thus, parataxis is employed within the postcolonial context to undermine and comment on official (hegemonic) historiography, which typically focuses on grand historical events (e.g. the blocking of Suez Canal) and world leaders (e.g. former Egyptian President Nasser) to the detriment of ordinary people. Rushdie uses irony and parody by paratactically juxtaposing the strange and improbable events in ordinary people's lives with important politico-historical developments and their actors in order to undermine the reported socio-historical events of seemingly great import in historiography. This is in tune with the text's postcolonial politics that aims at deconstructing and undermining the spheres of power and authority through irony and parody.

Another metafictional function of the narrator is his attempts at foregrounding the "text" as part of the enunciative situation and narrative configuration: his role in bringing the various characters, events, strings and motifs into a whole by connecting the dots and extrapolating their significance in a kind of narratorial summary, which foregrounds and highlights what Ricoeur

calls *configurational* dimension by bringing together the various interrelated narrative/cognitive units. This is part of Ricoeur's *theory of emplotment* in which he elaborates how the plot works dynamically through the twin temporal dimensions of *episodic* and *configurational* by allowing the reader to follow the sequence of events and occurrences sequentially (episodic dimension) while, at the same time, affording their comprehension as conjoined and interrelated narrative/cognitive units (configurational dimension). The *episodic* dimension is linear and chronological while the *configurational* dimension is not, "thanks to which the plot transforms the events into a story." (Ricoeur 66) Thus, narrative configuration is reminiscent of an all-inclusive geometrical shape by treating and envisaging the entire narrative as a spatial configuration that can be conceived and made sense of as one integrated, interconnected whole.

Here is one of those occasions, which appears one-third through *Midnight's Children*:

Thirty-two years before the transfer of power, my grandfather bumped his nose against Kashmiri earth. There were rubies and diamonds. There was the ice of the future, waiting beneath the water's skin. There was an oath: not to bow down before god or man. The oath created a hole, which would temporarily be filled by a woman behind a perforated sheet. A boatman who had once prophesied dynasties lurking in my grandfather's nose ferried him angrily across a lake. There were blind landowners and lady wrestlers. And there was a sheet in a gloomy room. On that day, my inheritance began to form – the blue of Kashmiri sky which dripped into my grandfather's eyes; the long sufferings of my great-grandmother which would become the forbearance of my own mother and the late steeliness of Naseem Aziz; my great-grandfather's gift of conversing with birds which would descend through meandering bloodiness into the veins of my sister the Brass Monkey; the conflict between grandparental skepticism and grandmaternal credulity; and above all, the ghostly essence of that perforated sheet, which doomed my mother to love a man in segments, and which condemned me to see my own life – its meanings, its structures – in fragments also; so that by the time I understood it, it was far too late (*Midnight's Children* 118-119).

The above quotation provides a summary of the events and actions taken by the main characters in the novel since the events and occurrences are linked and explained through the meta-commentary; however, it does much more than that. The "metanarrative summary" affords the opportunity to comment on the significance of past events and endow/infuse them with new

meaning. By summarizing seemingly irrelevant events and their interrelated meanings, which requires a detailed and nuanced comprehension of the narrative unhampered by the sequential order of the events, the focus shifts to the narrator with his omniscient knowledge of the narrative and the implicit relations between the various events, thereby foregrounding the act of narration and violating the *mimetic illusion*. Thus, meta-comments such as the one quoted above fall under “the process of narration in general,” as opposed to “metanarrative reflections... restricted to auto-referential comments on the narrator’s own act of narrating which Fludernik calls “general metanarration” since they encompass the various aspects of narrative and are not simply restricted to the act of narration itself or to the narrator per se (Neumann and Nunning 7).

In the above summary, it is not just the objects that interconnect the events and their significance through intertextuality; characters from different generations are also interconnected by the narrator’s tracing of their character traits: “my great-grandfather’s gift of conversing with birds which would descend through meandering bloodiness into the veins of my sister the Brass Monkey” since the behavior of both the grandfather (Dr. Adam Aziz) and his granddaughter (the Brass Monkey) is considered to be outside the realm of normalcy (e.g. what is viewed as normal behavior).

Thus, the intertextually connected characters and objects, which take on new significance in the light of new developments unfolding in the narrative, have a function similar to Ricoeur’s configurational dimension “according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events...” (*Narrative Time* 10) In the same vein, the quoted paragraph compresses and summarizes history into a configurational whole that highlights the interrelationships between the apparently “scattered events” into an all-encompassing whole available at one juncture as opposed to the sequence of events that is followed in a linear fashion. Moreover, the disruption

of the linear narrative history of the Aziz family – Ricoeur’s episodic dimension – with the configurational, interrelated summary of the family’s history, creates a tension between the twin narrative levels. As in Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in *Midnight’s Children*, the “double narrative structure introduces a self-reflective element to the narration which makes the reader aware that the narrator is conscious of the way in which the narrative is constructed.” (Bowers 80)

As a case in point, the “perforated sheet” from which Saleem’s grandfather, as a young physician, was able to see his grandmother in fragments is interwoven into the narrative fabric as a metaphor for its construction: “which condemned me to see my own life – its meanings, its structures – in fragments also; so that by the time I understood it, it was far too late (*Midnight’s Children* 118-119). The perforated sheet, first appears as the sheet with man-made holes Adam Aziz’s future father-in-law uses in order to allow the young Doctor Aziz to see and examine only the ailing part of his daughter due to socio-cultural and religious restrictions and concerns associated with the hijab (i.e. the covering of women in front of men outside their immediate family). It allows the young Dr. Aziz to see his future wife in fragments literally, but later on it also becomes symbolic of Saleem’s spatial and fragmentary account in *Midnight’s Children*. Years later, the young Saleem, who is about to play a ghost part in a play reenactment, finds that same “perforated sheet” and is met with “roars of grandparental rage.” (*Midnight’s Children* 215)

And that was the time when I was cast as a ghost in a children’s play, and found, in an old leather attache-case on top of my grandfather’s almirah, a sheet which had been chewed by moths, *but whose largest hole was man-made*: for which discovery I was repaid (you will recall) in roars of grandparental rage [Italics mine] (*Midnight’s Children* 215).

This same sheet is interpreted by the older, mature Saleem as influencing the way he perceives the world since the perforated sheet, as explained in chapter three, becomes a “spatial metaphor” for the paratactic organization of the text within which different sections and lives of three generations of the Sinai family in different space-time coordinates are juxtaposed: “which condemned me to see my own life – its meanings, its structures – in fragments also” (*Midnight’s Children* 119). Thus, the comments via *anachrony* have the meta-dimension because they draw the reader’s attention not only to the spatial and fragmentary organization of the narrative as a whole but also to the narrator who describes and explains these relations and their significance within the overall scheme of the narrative. The perforated sheet becomes *polysemic* since it takes on new significance and nuances through repetition and intertextual referencing throughout the narrative. This results in a spatial, global perspective of the narrative due to the fact that the metanarratorial comments result in the interconnectedness of the various objects and events in *Midnight’s Children*, which is achronological and a case of dynamic intertextuality.

Toward the end of the novel, another type of meta-commentary is employed that induces alienation effect in readers – “Metanarratorial construction of symbol” – that configures the whole history as an idea or figure: Saleem utilizes “chutnification” to symbolize his transformative reconstruction and narrativization of India’s tumultuous history, “a culinary metaphor to give a message that history has undergone a process of confusion and alterations.” (Sahli Rejeb 714) Rushdie’s narrator describes what is needed in the following terms:

What is required for chutnification? Raw materials, obviously – fruit, vegetables, fish, vinegar, spices. Daily visits from Koli women with their saris hitched up between their legs. Cucumbers aubergines mint. But also: *eyes, blue as ice, which are undeceived by the superficial blandishments of fruit – which can see corruption beneath citrus skin; fingers which, with featheriest touch, can probe the secret inconstant hearts of what-must-be-pickled*, its humors and messages and emotions...at Braganza Pickles, *I supervise the production of Mary’s legendary recipes; but there are also my special blends, in which, thanks to the powers of my drained nasal passages, I am able to include*

*memories, dreams, ideas*, so that once they enter mass production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans... believe don't believe but it's true. Thirty jars stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation.  
(*And beside them, one jar stands empty.*) (Italics mine) (*Midnight's Children* 531)

In the above quotation, two of the narrator's attributes in making pickled chutney are underlined: "his eyes, blue as ice" that can see the corruption beneath and his nose, which "thanks to the powers of my drained nasal passages, I am able to include memories, dreams, ideas." (Ibid.) Thus, Saleem's eyes symbolize his perceptiveness in delving beneath appearances to recognize "corruption" at individual and societal levels while his "nasal passages" symbolize his creative abilities to combine the various human elements with history – "humors and messages and emotions" (Ibid.) As Saleem declares, "I am able to include memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans... believe don't believe but it's true. Thirty jars stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation." (*Midnight's Children* 530)

The "Thirty jars [that] stand upon a shelf" symbolize the narrator's imaginative rendition of India's modern history via construction of possible worlds and meta-commentary and through the transformative process of "chutnification," which is coined by the author. Thus, by utilizing the chutnification metaphor, Saleem symbolically comments on the construction of his narrated possible world, which both preserves and transforms the raw materials of documented history as symbolized by the thirty jars that are prepared for "the amnesiac nation" – the actual Indian nation – that seems to have forgotten the lessons of her tumultuous history from colonization and independence up to the present. The meta-comment also addresses the need for constant revision of history in light of new developments and revelations. After all "beside them, one jar stands

empty,” kept for future constructions and revisions of history. The narrator contends that “the process of revision should be constant and endless; don’t think I’m satisfied with what I’ve done!” (Ibid.)

Commenting on the spices to be used in the pickling process, Rushdie’s narrator exclaims:

There is also the matter of the spice bases. The intricacies of turmeric and cumin, the subtlety of fenugreek, when to use large (and when small) cardamoms, the myriad possible effects of garlic, garam masala, stick cinnamon, coriander, ginger...not to mention the flavorful contributions of the occasional speck of dirt. (Saleem is no longer obsessed with purity.) In the spice bases, I reconcile myself to *the inevitable distortions of the pickling process*. To pickle is to give immortality, after all: fish, vegetables, fruit hang embalmed in spice-and-vinegar; a certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste, is a small matter, surely? *The art is to change the flavor in degree, but not in kind*, and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and form – that is to say, meaning. (I have mentioned my fear of absurdity.) (Italics mine) (*Midnight’s Children* 531)

If we interpret “– fruit, vegetables, fish, vinegar, spices” as the raw materials of history that are utilized in its narrativization, then the pickling process encompasses those elements in emplotment and narratology that, in the narrator’s words, “change the flavor in degree, but not in kind.” (Ibid.) In other words, these narrational elements alter events, exaggerate character traits, and even alter the ontology and logic of the “narrated possible world” in alethic and deontic terms as the narrated world becomes incrementally distant from realism while maintaining its axiological focus in critiquing the politics of neo-colonial governments in the alternative possible worlds (e.g. politics of internal dissent), which Rushdie’s narrator describes as “the inevitable distortions of the pickling process.” (Ibid.) Again, the words of the narrator tell it all:

One day, perhaps, the world may taste *the pickles of history*. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth...that they are, despite everything, acts of love (*Midnight’s Children* 531).



In the paragraph quoted above, the narrator is concerned with the reception of his imaginative rendition of history as a possible world – Nunning’s fourth type. He is acutely conscious of the fact that his alterations and exaggerations that are interwoven into his alternative, possible world “may be too strong for some palates.” (Ibid.) As such, the whole paragraph foregrounds the narrator’s/author’s cognizance of the kind of reception, even backlash, his “*pickles of history*,” that is, his transformative (re)construction of India’s history may receive.

Overall, the narrative that is diegetically presented is provisional, which the narrator qualifies by foregrounding its process of construction and revision, its gaps and lapses in memory, and by laying bare the enunciative situation with its various components (i.e. producer, receiver, text, and socio-historical context) throughout the novelistic text. Saleem’s account, as narrated by the mature Saleem in a pickling factory, is presented as a very personal account of revision and construction of India’s modern history, which is variegated and inclusive, but without integration into a unified all-encompassing account that reflects the multitudinous nations with its heterogeneous admixture of languages, ethnicities, religions and cultures, marred and influenced by memory, so as to address the socio-political issues that have bedeviled the young democracy since its inception.

#### **4.6. CONCLUSION**

As I have argued in this chapter, metanarration fulfills the twin purposes of *critique* and *self-reflexivity* in Rushdie’s historiographic metafiction, which are inextricably intertwined since the ultimate purpose of Rushdie’s novels is socio-political critique. The meta-commentary foregrounds, propounds, and lays the rationale for the construction of alternative possible worlds to past historical accounts which aim at defamiliarizing, subverting and critiquing the politics of

the actual worlds of India and Pakistan in the texts by departing from realism. Thus, the metanarration critiques the actual politico-historical worlds of India and Pakistan via construction of alternative possible worlds in which the *alethic* and *deontic* modalities operate, but have a different and better axiological system in which the moral failings of politicians and their people are highlighted and undermined largely through irony and parody.

In Rushdie's texts, the constructed possible worlds become distant from the actual worlds of India and Pakistan in *alethic* terms by incorporating magical and counterfactual elements that challenge verisimilitude, the logic of daily life, and human experience. Nevertheless, the purpose of critiquing both possible worlds (the actual and the alternative worlds) on grounds of *axiological* ethicality remains central and is achieved by establishing a correlation between the deontic, alethic and axiological modalities in both the narrating and narrated possible worlds. As I have argued, the deontic modality plays the key role since it is the deontic (political) permission that opens the door to the alethic world of possibilities and magic that, in turn, correlates with axiological goodness while deontic prohibition leads to the alethic curtailment of possibilities and civil rights that correlates with axiological badness. Overall, the self-reflexive meta-commentary constructs the alternative world as only one possible world in ways that critique and deconstruct the actual socio-political world and forward an alethic-axiological alternative that "could have been."

In addition to constructing alternative possible worlds that critique the politics of postcolonial governments on grounds of axiological ethicality, as noted throughout the chapter, meta-sections directly engage with the reader at a different hermeneutical level by foregrounding and disrupting the narrative flow and breaking its mimetic illusion through diegetic interventions that induce *alienation effect* in the reader. To do so, the narrated possible world is interrupted

time and again through various types of meta-commentary including anachrony (analepsis and prolepsis), addresses to the narratee, discussion of textual emplotment, metanarratorial construction of symbols (e.g. chutnification, perforated sheet) and discussion and explication of socio-historical context (e.g. politics, Islam, socio-cultural practice). This is achieved by drawing attention to the act of narration and positioning the rhetorical and discursive aspects of the novel front and center to foreground the constructivism, perspectivism, and provisionality of historical narration by flaunting and parading the various self-reflexive and construction aspects of narration in the historiographic metafiction. Thus, metanarration achieves the paradoxical goal of reinstalling “historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in doing so, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge” by foregrounding the various discursive and narratorial choices that are made during the whole process of narrativization (Hutcheon 89).

Overall, history is revisited in Rushdie’s texts through critical lenses with the *axiological* ethicality as a central determining concern in both the narrating and narrated possible worlds in order to censure and critique colonial intervention and postcolonial governments that have forsaken the ideals upon which the nation-state was founded upon. However, both the explicit meta-comments uttered by the narrator in *Shame* and *Midnight’s Children* as well as the reconstruction of historical periods and events through alternative possible worlds are wrought with irony and parody.

In the postcolonial context, in fact, there is the double purpose of bringing the history of the nation (e.g. India, Pakistan, etc.) into central focus by revisiting it through historiographic metafiction while critiquing, questioning, and deflating that (official) history through the intertextual use of parody and irony. Metanarration plays the key role in questioning, deconstructing, and problematizing official, hegemonic accounts of history that adopt a realistic

writing style and gloss over epistemic gaps to serve repressive governments and institutions of power and influence that adopt them within the postcolonial context. The critique in Rushdie's texts is done largely through irony and parody, but also through explicit criticism that is leveled at the various socio-historical components and agents of the postcolonial nation-state and colonial influence.

Even though historical events are revisited and foregrounded, they are, nonetheless, approached provisionally by enunciating and propounding the act of writing and emplotting history; thus, the historical is conflated with the discursive in order to acknowledge the perspective the author/text adopts vis-à-vis the purported subject/history as well as to foreground the discursive means to realize that particular perspective. Indeed, historiographic metafiction, through the use of meta-comments, while imposing meaning on historical events and characters, consciously foregrounds the provisionality and context-specificity of its narrativization of the past or, in the words of Hutcheon, "in its challenging self-consciousness of that imposition that renders it provisional." (97)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This investigative study has been informed by Ursula Kluwick's contention that Salman Rushdie's novels – *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* – written within the postcolonial context, need to be approached and conceptualized differently from the magical realist fiction produced by Latin American novelists such as Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, and Laura Esquivel due to the fact that the relations between the realistic and magical/supernatural codes in Rushdie's texts are not harmonious and are, for the most part, antithetical in ways that manifest and highlight the friction between the twin codes, which render them 'contingent' and 'provisional,' but beyond that destabilize the narrative text as fictional versus realistic. As Kluwick notes, particularly with respect to Rushdie's works, "Definitions of magic realism as a harmonious combination of supernatural and realist representational codes ignore the productive tension created by epistemological incompatibilities and clashes." (202)

What has set my study apart from Kluwick's approach, however, is my contention that Rushdie's texts evince other salient features such as 'spatialization' and 'metanarration' that are inextricably intertwined and work in tandem with the magical realist elements in his fiction by creating highly political and ostentatiously self-conscious possible histories which aim at critiquing the actual socio-political geography and history of the Indian subcontinent. As such, throughout this study I have proposed that Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction need to be studied through a multipronged approach that not only analyzes their magical-realist recreation of the politico-historical trajectory of India-Pakistan's postcolonial history through the lens of *Dolezel's four-dimensional system of possible worlds theory*, but also uses that theory to

analyze their seminal ‘spatialization’ and ‘metanarration’ features and have proven instrumental to Rushdie’s critical engagement with the politics of India-Pakistan. To reiterate, Rushdie’s texts are highly political and engage with the postcolonial history of the nation-states of the Indian subcontinent that came into independence after the contraction of the British empire in a self-avowedly spatialized and self-consciously metanarratorial fashion. As such, I have endeavored to make the case that a multipronged approach, which analyzes the ‘magical realism,’ ‘spatialization’ and ‘meta-narration’ components in Rushdie’s texts is warranted to critique the multidimensional possible worlds/histories that are narrativized, spatialized and foregrounded with the insertion of meta-narratorial comments and episodic interventions. Considering the highly political nature of Rushdie’s novels, magical realism is utilized as the apt narrative mode to critique and indict the oppressive policies and practices of successive neocolonial governments that came to power in the aftermath of independence in the Indian subcontinent and adopted some of the same oppressive policies and repressive measures as their colonial predecessors.

To advance an efficacious critique of the actual socio-politics of the newly independent nations of India and Pakistan, Rushdie creates alternative possible worlds via ‘magical realism,’ which, as I explain in chapter 2, are highly self-conscious by foregrounding the tension and friction between the realist and magical codes through metanarration in ways that point to the “structural disjunction” between the two antithetical codes, thereby highlighting the realistic code’s epistemic gaps that are filled self-consciously through the construction of alternative, magical possible worlds and histories. As the phrase ‘structural disjunction’ suggests, the overall effect of Rushdie’s use of magical realism is to deconstruct and subvert hegemonic, official

accounts of India and Pakistan's history by offering alternative accounts that are provisional and personal and use 'magic' to link politics to the personal.

In this study, moreover, Rushdie's magical realist texts instantiate what Chris Warnes has dubbed 'the *irreverent* approach' in which "the supernatural event or presence... which is not rationalized or explained away, nonetheless stands in place of an idea or a set of ideas, say, about the ways language constructs reality, or about the incapacities of binaristic thinking." (Warnes 14-15) As I illustrated in chapter 2, through the use of magical-realist techniques and poetic devices such as magical alethic realization of metaphor/metaphor literalization, animation, reification, hyperbole, repetition, and the creation of grotesque characters, Rushdie creates possible worlds that stretch the *alethic* possibilities in which new *deontic* prohibitions and obligations are instantiated, evaluated and critiqued. These possible worlds are juxtaposed and linked to the realistic/historical world through 'historical anchoring' and references to the various socio-political events and figures in the history of the aforementioned countries. The net effect of such spatialized juxtaposition of real/historical and alternative, magical worlds is to destabilize the narrative text by offering different possible worlds alongside each other and affording them the same ontological status without presenting either world as the dominant one for the interpretation of the narrative. As Zoe Norridge has articulated, "the literary depictions of reality...by... Rushdie, grapple with the boundaries of the real and unreal not solely because of a rich cultural tradition of such blurring, but also a reflection of ongoing political unease, manifest in descriptions of the Amritsar massacre, the Bangladesh war, and Indira Gandhi's emergency." (74) In fact, as I demonstrated in chapter 2, Rushdie utilizes a host of magical-realist devices to highlight the difficulty of ascertaining the reality of politico-historical events when the reality turns out to be stranger than fiction as is the case in repressive measures and violent occurrences

such as the Bangladesh war and the sterilization program carried out during the Emergency. As such, Rushdie's employment of 'magical realism' has a liberating effect by extricating the history of the Indian subcontinent from the rigid confines of an oppressive, official hegemonic historiography that glosses over epistemic gaps; it allows for a more productive engagement with that history that lays bare its biases, lacunae, and deliberate omissions.

Following Kluwick's lead, I have argued that Rushdie's magical realist texts both exploit and highlight the "productive tension" between the realist and the supernatural codes "created by epistemological incompatibilities and clashes." (Kluwick 202) I have demonstrated that Rushdie's texts foreground the incompatibilities and clashes between the realistic and magical accounts by actuating the 'spectrum of possibilities' through the provision of multiple accounts and explanations for the same events/episodes that are often at odds with one another without necessarily privileging one account over the other(s). The friction and clashes between the twin narrativization codes transcend epistemological considerations and are, in fact, 'ontological' since the differing accounts and scenarios activate different *alethic* codes – each with its own distinctive, autonomous logic – which result in 'ambivalence' and destabilize the narrative text at hand. As such, the construction of ambivalence is not a side-effect of these texts; rather, it is an essential component of Rushdie's magical realist texts that renders the narrative 'contingent' and 'provisional.'

The imaginative reconstruction and narrativization of India and Pakistan's history, as noted, is achieved through the construction of alternative possible worlds that depart from realism to various degrees, and are evaluated by applying Dolezel's *four-dimensional system of possible worlds theory*. The analytical study of Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction reveals how the *alethic* extension and ambiguity in constructing new magical realist worlds



result in new *deontic* (political) permission-prohibition-obligation that “are used to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath” in terms of *axiological* ethical considerations (Bowers 97). In other words, the constructed histories suggest the alethic possibility of how it could have been or might have been different, thereby opening new possible world avenues for *axiological* evaluation and *deontic* permission-prohibition-obligation.

The juxtaposition of the realistic and magical possible worlds also contributes to the creation of a *liminal/interstitial* outlook since the narrativized events are presented in a hybrid narrative mode that encompasses both the colonial/neocolonial perspective via the realistic code and the postcolonial critical perspective via the magical code. In fact, Rushdie’s texts highlight the spectrum between the realist and magical renditions of events by juxtaposing them without favoring one over the others, all of which destabilize the text, rendering the narrative provisional and contingent.

In chapter 3, I argue how Rushdie’s texts of postcolonial historiographic metafiction engage with ‘space’ and problematize it in a historical sense to critique the policies and practices of colonial/neo-colonial powers and the postcolonial governments that adopted many of the same policies and practices under new guises and with new justifications. The juxtaposition of different possible worlds and representational codes is done through spatialization prominently, especially through the techniques of *parataxis* and *simultaneity* but also by maintaining a ‘concrete’ focus on geographical space, which was a point of contest as the postcolonial nations achieved their independence as fledgling nations (e.g. India, Pakistan...). Thus, space in postcolonial historiographic metafiction is conceptualized and time is spatialized in ways that paratactically juxtapose different possible worlds, one generally more ideal and remote from our

world of verities than the other, ‘actual’ one. As Elias has noted, these spatialization techniques prove instrumental in interrogating and problematizing “disciplinary models of history” (122).

Overall the realistic/magical possible worlds and metafictional sections are organized through *spatialization* techniques – concrete and conceptual. In fact, spatialization and representations of concrete and conceptual space create a layering or centripetal *heteroglossia* through the paratactic juxtaposition of different spaces and spatialized histories set as different possible worlds. The paratactic juxtaposition of the colonizer/neo-colonist possible spaces alongside the colonized Other spaces/spatialized histories results in the concretization of the ‘second stage postcolonial hybridity’ in which the dialogical, ideological and socio-political struggle between the centripetal forces of unification and nationalization and the centrifugal forces of democratization and multiculturalism is captured in the postcolonial nation-state. In other words, spatialization techniques hybridize the possible spaces by juxtaposing the oppressor/colonizer spaces and events to the spatialized histories and events of the colonized Other in order to critique and deconstruct the actual possible worlds of colonialism and through politics of internal dissent. As such, my contention is that postcolonial authors, and especially Rushdie, counter the neocolonial attempt at suppressing such contested spaces by utilizing spatialization techniques such as *parataxis* and *simultaneity*. The simultaneous accessibility to multiple space-time coordinates through the paratactic juxtaposition of the various histories and possible worlds liberates postcolonial historiography from the rigid confines of official, hegemonic history and affords a new, spatialized perspective on different possible worlds that is particularly amenable to Rushdie’s subversive and transgressive agenda. Rushdie is not alone among postcolonial authors who contest official, hegemonic accounts of politico-historical events (or their literary representation), which gloss over or suppress spatial issues of the Other

(e.g. lower social classes, women, the oppressed) in their narrative's linear, sequential organization. However, especially in Rushdie, spatiality in its various forms uniquely interacts with 'magical realism' and 'metanarration' in order to contest the notion that the historically 'real' world is or was the only possible one.

Another seminal feature of Rushdie's texts, discussed in chapter 4, is their strong 'metanarration' that allows Rushdie's novels to engage with the actual politics and history of the Indian subcontinent on a separate hermeneutical level. In fact, Rushdie's texts such as *Shame* depict, critique, and comment on collective, socio-historical events and political issues by blending two or more possible worlds: the historical, the metafictional, and occasionally a third, the narrator's own possible world. As such, the narrator is given a certain perspectival angle that is often censorious and critical of the socio-cultural norms and mores as well as policies and practices of the political establishment, which it purports to undermine through the use of parody and irony as well as explicit critical commentary. The narrator's meta-comments on both the narrative and the history behind it are suffused with 'irony' and parody and interrogate and critique the socio-cultural and political fabric of the postcolonial body politic and its various aspects. Unlike historical accounts that "tend to suppress grammatical reference to the discursive situation of the utterance (producer, receiver, context, intent) in their attempt to narrate in such a way that the events seem to narrate themselves," in Rushdie's texts of historiographic metafiction there is a deliberate attempt to conflate what Benveniste calls 'the historical' and 'the discursive' (Benveniste 206-8). As such, Rushdie's texts foreground the *enunciative situation* and its components (e.g. text, producer, receiver, socio-historical context), thereby rendering the narrative both 'self-conscious' and 'contingent.'

I have argued, moreover, that the ‘metanarration’ in Rushdie’s texts produces an ‘alienation effect’ that is aimed at questioning the proclaimed truths about postcolonial worlds by interrupting and interspersing the narrated possible world with the narrator’s various diegetic interventions and meta-comments, which constitute a paratactic possible world and engage the reader on a different hermeneutical level from the constructed narrative. By interrupting the narrative flow and foregrounding narrative construction, meta-sections – uttered by the narrator – create an effect similar to *alienation effect* in Brecht’s epic theater in order to defamiliarize, subvert and interrupt the linear, positivistic progression of events by disrupting the *mimetic illusion* of reality/verisimilitude and unity of action, place and time, thereby contributing to the spatialized contours of the possible histories.

As I explained in the introduction, in this study I have focused on *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* as texts that centrally fictionalize and narrativize the modern history of India and Pakistan in the aftermath of their independence from Great Britain. While this is a limitation, it has allowed for a tighter grip on those Rushdie novels that focus on ‘postcolonial nation-states’ and rendered the generalizations and comments I have made more accurate. Generalizing about postcolonial historiographical metafiction generally would, on the contrary, have committed me to overgeneralization and also been unmanageable in practical terms. Thus, Rushdie’s other novels that deal with other issues such as the plight of immigrants in the United Kingdom in *The Satanic Verses* or international terrorism in *Shalimar the Clown* or the author’s reading of US politics in the aftermath of the real-estate mogul become President Donald Trump in *The Golden House* have been excluded from this study. Due to similar practical considerations as well as the unique features of Rushdie’s texts that distinguish his works from other works of historiographic metafiction written in the postcolonial context – his strong ‘metanarration’ and the friction

between the two representational codes in his version of ‘magical realism’ – I have refrained from analyzing other authors of historiographic metafiction (e.g. Garcia Marquez, Michael Ondaatje, and Isabel Allende) and instead focused on Rushdie’s works.

In fictionalizing and narrativizing the histories of India and Pakistan, as Neil Ten Kortenaar writes, *Midnight’s Children* “explodes the notion of the nation having a stable identity and a single history,” but it still “invites a skeptical, provisional faith in the nation that it has exploded.” (41-42) In both *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, Rushdie engages with concrete and imaginary spaces to recreate the hybrid dynamics of colonization and its effects in the postcolonial nation-states. Homi Bhabha’s use of Benedict Anderson’s theorization of “‘nations as ‘imagined communities’ that sought to suppress cultural differences in the construction of oppressively homogenizing narratives” explains and legitimizes the hybridization of such postcolonial narratives as “an unavoidable and powerful extension of the processes of hybridization that always constitute the construction of culture.” (Zacharias 220) Though Rushdie focuses on the hybrid nation and ‘third space,’ he approaches it from a liminal perspective that captures his experience as a migrant author, writing in the language of the colonizer.

All in all, in terms of their overall perspective, Rushdie’s novels form a hybrid amalgamation of the colonial and postcolonial outlooks that Jeyifo has designated as “interstitial or liminal” postcoloniality, “which is neither First World nor Third World, neither securely and smugly metropolitan, nor assertively and combatively Third Worldist.” (Jeyifo 53-54) His constructed possible worlds are narrativized and hybridized in ways that defy and challenge official, hegemonic and nationalistic conceptualizations of postcolonial nation-states as what Anderson and Bhabha have dubbed “‘imagined communities’ that sought to suppress cultural

differences in the construction of oppressively homogenizing narratives, rather than as the natural culmination of decolonization movements.” (Zacharias 220) Rushdie’s texts of historiographic metafiction challenge such nationalistic homogenization through their juxtaposition of realist and magical codes, through their ‘spatialization’ of postcolonial narration and geography, and their intrusively liminal ‘metanarration.’ Instead, when analyzed through possible worlds theory, these techniques that work in tandem, transcend the limitations of colonial and postcolonial perspectives through the provision of a ‘hybrid cosmopolitan sensibility,’ an amalgamation of colonial and indigenous cultures and attitudes that are brought together via the juxtaposition of different possible stories to be told about the same events and places. Overall, I have endeavored to demonstrate how ‘magical realism,’ ‘spatialization’ and ‘metanarration’ work together in Rushdie’s texts of historiographic metafiction to express a postcolonial critique of promulgated truth and official historiography as well as how *Dolezel’s four-dimensional system* of possible world theory proves instrumental to the systemic analysis of these spatialized magical worlds that are rendered self-consciously contingent and provisional through metanarration.

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