

Ethical Treason: Radical Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's *Fury* (2001)*

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While one reviewer sarcastically comments that *Fury* “sounds more interesting in synopsis than it actually is to read” (J. Leonard 36), Rushdie’s novel resists a coherent outline. The novel revolves around Malik Solanka, a 55-year-old former Cambridge professor of ideas turned doll-maker. Solanka creates a beautiful and smart doll named Little Brain, who becomes the host of a BBC talk show featuring philosopher dolls such as Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Galileo. After Little Brain becomes an unprecedented global hit and “tawdry celebrity” (Rushdie 98), Solanka becomes disillusioned by Little Brain’s sellout to global consumerism, develops a murderous fury toward his English wife and the world, and exiles himself to Manhattan. Two major events occur while he is there. First, Solanka starts an affair with the traffic-stopping Indian beauty Neela Mahendra. A cosmopolite from the imaginary island of Lilliput-Blefuscu, loosely based on Fiji, Neela is modelled after Padma Lakshmi, a real-life Indian model and Rushdie’s fourth ex-wife; she is also the dedicatee of this novel. Second, Solanka launches an Internet saga on PlanetGalileo.com, relating a galactic battle between cybernetic Puppet Kings and their human master. The digital story of the “PKs” becomes an entrepreneurial success worldwide. In the novel’s last chapter, however, Solanka returns to London, howling “the cry of the tormented and the lost” (Rushdie 259), after Neela kills herself in a political coup on Lilliput-Blefuscu, and he witnesses the revolutionary puppets of his creation being misinterpreted by fanatical nationalists in the fictitious island nation.

By criss-crossing the boundaries of the real/fictional/virtual, national/global/planetary, and textual/intertextual/extra-textual, Rushdie’s novel condenses disparate themes, settings, and tones deemed incompatible and extravagant by many critics even for a Rushdie novel. Reviewers

have received the novel with furious criticism. According to some, *Fury* “signif[ies] nothing” (“Signifying Nothing”; Mendelsohn; Patterson and Valby), is written by a “trivial monster-ego” (qtd. in Tonkin), and “exhausts all negative superlatives” (Wood). Amitava Kumar notes that Rushdie is “utterly complicit in what he wants to lampoon” (35), pointing to Rushdie’s lack of critical distance in portraying Manhattan’s cultural politics—the culture of “celebrification” (Brouillette 154)—that this novel condemns and reinforces simultaneously. In other words, Rushdie’s satire of the culture of celebrification remains powerless, insofar as the author seems to take too much pleasure in describing what he purports to denigrate.¹

Other critics find it difficult to pin down *Fury*, and label it a “failed” postcolonial novel because it abandons the centre versus margin distinction assumed in postcolonial discourses, or a “failed” postmodern novel, an example of “junk lit” adorned with superficial exuberance (Gonzalez, “The Aesthetics” 126). Anuradha Bhattacharyya’s essay exemplifies the first reading frame as it reproduces the duped Indian versus the manipulative Western paradigm. Bhattacharyya brands Rushdie/Solanka as an “Indian adopting a western theory as a garb” (153). Deploring Rushdie/Solanka’s “unconscious attraction towards the West,” Bhattacharyya argues that Rushdie/Solanka “wears a mask” because of a “lack of confidence in his Indianness” (153, 154).² From a postmodern perspective, Madelena Gonzalez argues that the “celebratory aesthetics of magic realism” in Rushdie’s early work has given way to the “rampant technophilia of postrealism” in *Fury* (*Fiction After Fatwa* 189). While the meaning of “postrealism” is unclear, Gonzalez critiques Rushdie’s novel as mimicking “the trashy technobeat of contemporary McCulture” (“Artistic *Fury*” 767).³

Perspectives I find more fruitful for the purpose of this paper come from another group of critics who read *Fury* as representing an “American cosmopolitanism.” If *The Satanic Verses*, arguably Rushdie’s greatest contribution to postcolonial and world literature, mediates the discourse of “the *trans* and the *post*,” the postmodern valorization of “mobility, mutability, and newness,” and a discourse of the “*re*,” “return and restoration” (Gane 26) valorizing continuity, stability, and identity, these critics note

that *Fury* has lost sight of the tension between these two discourses. Instead, Rushdie “has written himself into the center ... the multicultural mainstream of the US” in *Fury*; hence, an “Americanization of Rushdie” has occurred (Kunow 369). Yet this narrow notion of cosmopolitanism as an Americanization of global elites, like the postcolonial and postmodernist interpretations, cannot fully illuminate the novel’s ambivalence toward America, what a frustrated critic calls the “equivocation” of *Fury* (Keulks 162).

In this essay I attempt to broaden the discourse of cosmopolitanism in order to make room for what I call “radical cosmopolitanism.” I define radical cosmopolitanism as a type of non-allegiance that deconstructs a utopian rendition of cosmopolitanism and refuses to commit to either cosmopolitanism or nationalism. *Fury*’s chronic ambivalence and equivocation, then, do not stem from the lack of critical positioning, but indicate a strategic complication of the issues of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as valid critical and practical discourses. That is, rather than mediating “migrant and national” as Rushdie’s earlier works do, this novel illustrates the extent to which discourses of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism are saturated by media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed cultural politics (Spivak, “Reading” 219). I argue that *Fury*, a novel about Manhattan’s celebrity culture, is a cosmopolitan novel par excellence not because it endorses American cosmopolitanism, but because it reveals cosmopolitanism and nationalism as false ideologies concocted by an American empire and, in renouncing allegiance to both, embodies a radical cosmopolitanism instead.

If postcolonial, postmodernist, and elitist cosmopolitan readings turn out to be ineffective in explaining *Fury*’s “inexplicable” (9) contradictions, it is because this novel is less interested in negotiating positions between margin and periphery, postmodernist and realist, and cosmopolitan and nationalist, than it is dedicated to questioning such binaries per se. Rushdie’s emphasis on “contradictions,” “excess,” and “uncertainties”—some of the words reiterated most often in *Fury*—earns him the name of traitor and accusations of having become an elite liberalist and assimilationist who shows less interest in committing to meaningful global or national causes than in chasing his personal success. As

Rebecca Walkowitz argues, however, Rushdie's seemingly insincere style, which includes irreverent thinking, flirtation, and mixing-up are "ethical or subversive" for they "extend perception, make it more various," and "offer an alternative to the opposition between accommodation and antagonism" (18, 133). Similarly, *Fury's* play with contradictions does not aim at judgment or resolution, but creates room for the new and "better" by shaking up existing categories. Herein lies an ethic of betrayal inspired by *Fury's* act of treason against both cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

In place of the prior criticism of *Fury* in the light of American cosmopolitanism, the first part of this essay draws on Fredric Jameson's dystopian vision of a "world culture" dominated by the American market in order to illustrate the detrimental workings of celebrity culture, which turns both cosmopolitanism and nationalism into political commodities in *Fury*. Rushdie's novel is a felicitous portrayal of the world culture fostered by the American empire. The latter part of this paper demonstrates how *Fury* challenges this cultural empire of America using two examples, Solanka's eloquent defence of "messy humanity" (Rushdie 74), and Neela's recantation of her ethnic loyalty. In *Other Asias*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cogently remarks, "The ethico-politico task of the humanities has always been rearrangement of desires" (3). An embodiment of a treasonous yet trans-valuating desire in defiance of the American empire, *Fury's* betrayal of (inter)national loyalty constitutes an ethical project that looks forward to political transformation.

I. Cosmopolitanism *Post-Festum*

If the postcolonial and the postmodern critics of *Fury* lament Rushdie's desertion of the postcolonial and his crossing over to a "tabloid celebrity" (Kumar 36), other critics deprecate Rushdie's novel as an endorsement of "American cosmopolitanism" (Mondal 181). Rüdiger Kunow argues that *Fury* epitomizes a carefree cosmopolitanism with a non-committal view from above. Less a victim suffering from globalization than a member of the global elite profiting from it, Rushdie has left the diaspora and has integrated with mainstream America. Similarly, Anshuman Mondal states that Rushdie's aesthetics of excess has become

an aestheticization of hyperbole in *Fury*. Rushdie's style aptly describes today's "fragmented cultures" and its "obsession with surfaces where style is more important than substance" (176). Given Rushdie's own status as global literary celebrity sustained by popular US media, Mondal notes that his hyperbole causes *Fury* to be complicit with "the vacuous empire of signs" rather than critical of it (176). In consequence, Rushdie's novel vacates the political in favour of the aesthetic: "What had been a political act now becomes an existential fact ... a species of cosmopolitanism, more philosophical, a world without frontiers" (181). If Mondal indicates that *Fury*'s philosophical turn to cosmopolitanism signifies the loss of transformative power in the socio-political field, my contention is that *Fury* struggles to find new ways of changing society in a post-political age. When the division between nationalists and cosmopolites, Right and Left, and "us" and "them" is not clear-cut, and when both parties are guided by self-interests and capital (hence the "post-political"), Rushdie's novel destabilizes postmodern America by tackling its ethos, shown in Manhattanites' avid pursuit of "hip-isms" as lifestyle choices. From this perspective, Rushdie's turn to cosmopolitanism has less to do with a blind celebration of it than with a deconstruction of it—its fascination and perilousness.⁴

According to Mondal, an American cosmopolitanism embraced by *Fury* glorifies "non-belonging" as "broad-minded global pluralism," and disparages "belonging" as "narrow chauvinism" (181). Kunow's and Mondal's use of American cosmopolitanism, however, reflects an outdated view of it as a privileged position of non-belonging and mobility. Since the 1990s, cosmopolitanism has resurfaced as an area of academic inquiry following the lost causes of multiculturalism and globalization. Recent cosmopolitan theorists are distinguished from earlier cosmopolitan critics insofar as they are wary of the conventional notion of elitist cosmopolitanism and emphasize the need to be attentive to the local and the national as well. In other words, be it founded upon a philosophical ideal of "a spaceless cosmopolitanism of the mind" (Fine and Cohen 158) professed by the Stoics, or in Kantian social theory striving for global democracy and alliance-making, the core achievement of today's cosmopolitanism lies in its presumed ability to negotiate two

opposite sets of values: identity, homogeneity, and unity, and difference, heterogeneity, and hybridity.

Some of the terms, as conceived by major scholars of the field, illuminate the need for such mediation. Kwame Anthony Appiah's "partial cosmopolitanism" eliminates "an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial" (xiii). Stuart Hall's "vernacular cosmopolitanism" underscores "the importance of community and culture . . . [while] acknowledging the liberal limit on communitarianism" (30). Walter Mignolo polarizes "global designs," the "managerial" globalization from above "driven by the will to control and homogenize," and a "critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism," which can be "dissenting or complementary" ("The Many Faces" 157, 179). A list of the terms that redefine cosmopolitanism in light of the local is ongoing.⁵ While the mediation between global and local, universal and specific, and identity and difference proves an undisputable task of cosmopolitanism, the question of how to achieve it in reality remains unresolved. Pheng Cheah argues that despite people's increased sense of belonging to the world, cosmopolitanism has not "resulted in a significant sense of political allegiance or loyalty to the world" (107). In contrast to a "notoriously nonphilosophical or underintellectualized" nationalism, cosmopolitanism lacks "a mass base of loyalty" that the nation has (Cheah 108). To borrow the words of Ulrich Beck, patriotism is "one-sided and petty" but is "practical, useful, joyous and comforting," whereas cosmopolitanism is "splendid, large, but for a human being almost too large" (1). Cosmopolitanism's ambition to reconcile the global and the local may be "in the end just a beautiful idea" (Beck 1).

Cosmopolitanism's "beautiful" idealism presents itself in the idyllic concept of culture shared by different cosmopolitan theories. On the one hand, Kant defines cosmopolitan culture as a "universally normative ideal" a priori (Cheah 83). On the other, theories of postcolonial hybridity asserted by James Clifford and Homi Bhabha oppose Kant's canonical view of culture. If Kant assumes that culture is "an organic and coherent body, a process of ordering, and a bounded realm of human value determinable by and coextensive with human reason," for Clifford and Bhabha, culture is nothing but "syncretism and parodic inven-

tion"; hence the Bhabhaian terms "mimicry and ambivalence" (83, 84). "Hybrid, inorganic, and indeterminate," culture has been constructed in the permanent encounters between the histories of local and global, which are best demonstrated by "the diasporic and migrant cultures" of servants, guides, and translators (Clifford and Bhabha 84, 87). Yet, as Cheah points out, the attempt of hybridity theorists to "recosmopolitanize postcolonial studies" repeats the utopian notion of culture suggested in Kant's cosmopolitan world order (89). If Kant's view of culture as "the promise of humanity's freedom from or control over the given" underpins his normative cosmopolitanism, hybridity theorists' placement of migrant culture in "the human realm of flux and freedom from the bondage of being-in-nature" is as idyllic as Kant's (Cheah 97, 89).

This utopian concept of culture shared by a wide range of cosmopolitan theorists is diametrically opposed to Jameson's dystopian vision of "world culture." If scholars of cosmopolitanism distinguish globalization and cosmopolitanization as "affecting different spheres of life (economic vs. sociocultural)" (Schoene 1), Jameson highlights "the becoming cultural of the economic, the becoming economic of the cultural." The inseparableness of the cultural and the economic is what Jameson articulates as the logic of the world culture controlled by an American "ideology" called "free market" ("Notes" 60, 63). Under the rubric of world culture, allegedly democratic yet highly discriminatory, "all the cultures around the world ... placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism" are soon to be followed by "the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into ... a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale," becoming a "world-system from which 'delinking' is henceforth impossible and even unthinkable." For instance, Jameson argues that exported North American television programs and the Hollywood film industry make a "cultural intervention ... deeper than anything known in earlier forms of colonization or imperialism, or simple tourism" ("Notes" 57, 58). For this cultural neo-imperialism, which obliterates the boundary between the cultural and the economic through the commodification of *every* cultural production, resorts to the rhetoric of freedom, not only of free trade but also of "the free passage of ideas and intellectual 'proper-

ties,” such as copyright and patent, thus turning “ideas” into “private property ... designed to be sold in great and profitable quantities.” In the current global “free” market of culture, it is within the American system that the world culture emerges by incorporating “exotic elements from abroad—samurai culture here, South African music there, John Woo film here, Thai food there, and so forth” (“Notes” 60, 61, 63).

Jameson’s notion of world culture, shored up by America’s financial encroachment on national cultures, exposes cosmopolitan theorists’ utopian belief that cosmopolitan culture can be free from the American market. My argument is that Rushdie’s *Fury* depicts this American Empire of world culture, a version of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s “empire” that denotes a postmodern global rule. Without segregating centre and margin, or the colonizer and the colonized as modern European empires did, Hardt and Negri’s empire commands a new hybrid rule that has no visible centre-government, but reorganizes the world under the fluid and heterogeneous sovereignty of global capitalism. To put it differently, if Spivak defines the colonizer as an alien nation that “establishes itself as ruler, impresses its own laws and systems of education, and re-arranges the mode of production for its own economic benefit” (*Other Asias* 6), the American Empire in *Fury* does not have to “establish itself as ruler.” Far from forcing its system on other cultures through military might as past empires did, America entices the world with attractive, consumer-oriented commodities which it has ransacked from global cultural archives, so that people from all over the world *voluntarily* move to America for better living or education without being “impressed”; therefore the terms “neo-colonialism” or “cultural imperialism” are used for what appears to be the “optional” worldwide rule of the American system. *Fury* manifests this contradiction inherent in American imperialism, its seduction and damage. Solanka is at once captivated and repelled by Manhattan, its opulence, its overloaded atmosphere and speed, and its voracious simulation and jumbling of foreign cultures to revamp them as “American” products. Then, a question poses itself: if there is no “beyond” or “outside” of this American Empire, how would one find a location where a rebellion against the Empire can be undertaken?

II. Radical Cosmopolitanism: On Abandoning Allegiance

Fury's rebellion against the American Empire starts with Rushdie's portrayal of it. That is to say, how is New York City, the life-altering and death-inducing city "boiled with money" (Rushdie 3), described in *Fury*? What would be the core, if extricable, of such a topsy-turvy metropolitan culture with "its hybrid, omnivorous power" (44)? Manhattan as painted by Rushdie incarnates late-capitalist superfluity and velocity. Exhibited in the breathless cataloguing of "things," such as "limited-edition olive oils, three-hundred-dollar corkscrews, customized Humvees, the latest anti-virus software [and] waiting lists for baths, doorknobs, imported hardwoods, antiqued fireplaces, bidets, marble slabs," America's wealth and decadence matches past empires, although the current imperium is more "undeserving" and "crass" than those of the past (3, 87). Solanka opines that America is not entitled to the name of empire because America, as the "melting pot or *métissage* of past power," bases its might on "plundering and jumbling of the storehouse of yesterday's empires" (43). Abounding in examples of these jumbles, the city's cultural scene is ruled by "Caesar Joaquin Phoenix's imperial Rome," if only in "the computer-generated illusion of the great gladiatorial arena" (6). This "most transient of cities' eternal imitation game" culminates in the "Viennese *Kaffeehaus* ... the city's best simulacrum." Solanka calls Manhattan a "city of half-truths and echoes that somehow dominates the earth" (44).

While Rushdie's criticism of America is scathing and astute, his profuse use of American pop culture references in *Fury* has been belittled by critics as evincing the author's attraction to, rather than his disgust with, American culture. For example, Solanka's doll Little Brain is made a real-life celebrity, moves to "Brain Street" in "Brainville," has a movie star "John Brayne" for a neighbour and a lab called "Brain Drain," stars in "*Brain Street*," "out-Hurley[s]" every starlet (an allusion to model Elizabeth Hurley), and becomes "the Maya Angelou of the doll world" (Rushdie 96, 98, 97). Little Brain is attacked by Andrea Dworkin for degrading women and by Karl Lagerfeld for emasculating men. Gonzalez calls Rushdie a "word junkie" for exhausting "all of the toys ... crass puns, tasteless word-play, sick jokes" ("The Aesthetics" 125).

Kumar derides Rushdie, noting that the “difference between a tabloid celebrity and a serious writer is not so much worth addressing” although he fails to clarify what he means by a “serious writer” (36). In contrast to these critics, however, I would argue that *Fury*’s seemingly unscrupulous mixing of high(brow) and low(brow) comprises a “serious” investigation of the dissipation of high culture. In other words, *Fury* displays the process whereby the dissolution of high culture is replaced by an “aestheticization” of commodities (Jameson, “Globalization” 53).

In the words of Jameson, if the aesthetic was “very precisely a sanctuary and a refuge from business and the state, today no enclaves—aesthetic or other—are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme” (“Notes” 70). Not only is the field of high culture (the aesthetic and the academic) deeply predicated on consumer capitalism but also “the commodification of politics, or ideas, or even emotions and private life” aims at aestheticization as well. In short, the commodity is now “aesthetically’ consumed” (“Globalization” 53). Without glorifying or denouncing high art, or exclusively adopting a “serious” or “tabloid” writing style, what *Fury* shows remarkably well is the readiness with which intellectuals refashion their tastes for the aestheticization of glamorous yet unnecessary commodities. Sara Jane Lear, Solanka’s first ex-wife, serves as a prime example. Representative of the 1970s “serious life,” an “outstanding university actress” who wrote a thesis on James Joyce, Sara was “slightly shameful” about working in advertising because “[s]elling things was *low*” and “nakedly capitalist (a horrible thought in that era)” (Rushdie 31, 33). After twenty years, Sara’s huge success as an ad executive and ex-wife of a late billionaire in Manhattan discloses the “absolute victory of advertising” (33).

If “everybody, as well as everything, was for sale” (Rushdie 33), as Sara’s materialistic success attests, who could be free from this mercantile world and be critical of it? If “everyone was an American now, or at least Americanized” (88), where was the site *outside* America from which a detached criticism could be made? Instead of concocting a utopian space left intact from the American empire, *Fury* redirects the question: what would a critical position *within* such a market look like? Just as Hardt and Negri’s multitude, the agent of an ethical rebellion against

the empire, takes on its task *within* the empire, *Fury* accepts the status quo as given (and as pleasurable to a degree), and attempts to de-centre, rather than leave, the American Empire. As Hardt and Negri's multitude evacuates, rather than demolishes, the locus of imperialist power by channelling it elsewhere, Rushdie's novel sabotages America's might not by trying to wipe it out, which would be impossible, but by shifting focus to the disruptive power of fury and other cruxes of human life. That which Solanka calls "messy humanity"—"excess," "uncertainties," "contradictions," and "the inexplicable" of the human—disturbs such omnipotence. Using examples amply found in works of Shakespeare, the Shiva tradition of Hinduism, and Greek mythology, Solanka's *fury/Fury* makes a turbulent receptacle for the essences of what it is to be human, which defy the itemization and compartmentalization exacted by consumer culture.

Solanka's life in Manhattan illustrates such contradiction. His exile to New York in 2000 does not dispense with an \$8,000-per-month "duplex and credit card," and appears to be a quest for stardom and sport in place of flight and peace. Still, Solanka claims that "he would be that contradiction" and pursue "the power of flight" in his own way (Rushdie 82). If there is no fleeing from the American empire, Solanka would flee *into* the centre of the empire and remain as critical as he can by *glutting* it. As the creator of Little Brain who ironically has less presence than his creature, Solanka lives a contradiction in which he is both a beneficiary (wealth and fame) and victim (fury and frustration) of celebrity culture. In the sense that Solanka's existence is already implicated in the "brilliant, brittle, gold-hatted, exemplary American life," a challenge Solanka can pose to America is not to do away with it, but to push it to the extreme and problematize it by constantly revealing the contradictions and excesses uncontainable within it (82). Solanka's determination to live an "exemplary American life," therefore, is not to validate the culture of celebrification. Rather, Rushdie's half-taunting and half-relishing attitude throughout the novel elucidates that "[t]here is no such thing as non-involvement and the only option one has is to be complicitous with celebrification while constantly questioning the nature and implications of that involvement" (Brouillette 154).⁶

Observing that “uncertainty is at the heart of what we are” (Rushdie 115), Solanka highlights an indispensable human desire for excess, in a tone reminiscent of *The Satanic Verses*:

We are made of shadow as well as light, of heat as well as dust. Naturalism, the philosophy of the visible, cannot capture us, for we exceed. We fear this in ourselves, our boundary-breaking, rule-disproving, shape-shifting, transgressive, trespassing shadow-self, the true ghost in our machine. (128)

Rushdie’s love of messy humanity and his sometimes extravagant yet always fluent defence of it have not become rusty in *Fury*. For Solanka, to suppress the human need for excess, the “Gangetic, Mississippian inexorability” that enthalls him as well as overwhelms him, amounts to, “in the matter of desire, agreeing to be dead” (178, 179).

The rupturing power of the inexplicable human is demonstrated in the lives of the cosmopolites populating *Fury* as well. Manhattan at the turn of the third millennium offers a perfect vessel for all kinds of cosmopolitans. No matter what reasons they have for their enforced or chosen world-travelling and relocating, they fill the city with their vivid “back-story” (Rushdie 51). In addition to main characters such as the green-eyed Serbo-Croatian Mila Milo (née Milosevic), Polish-British Krzysztof Waterford-Wajda, and Neela, American of Indian and Lilliput-Blefuscu descent, *Fury* follows twists and turns of other cosmopolitan lives. An old, grumpy plumber, Joseph Schlink, who is “a transplanted German Jew” from the Second World War, “annoys Solanka with his war memories,” but eventually wins a contract for a movie to be called *Jewboat*, starring Billy Crystal (47). Ali Majnu, a cab driver, blasphemes America in Urdu. Another Pole, Bronisława Reinhart, and the English Sara Jane Lear are ex-wives of celebrities and participants in “the Divorce Olympics” who fiercely compete for alimony and fame (213). From Solanka himself, “a born-and-bred metropolitan of the countryside-is-for-cows persuasion,” to “Jamaican troubadour-polemicists . . . in Bryant Park” (6, 7), *Fury*’s portrait of Manhattan stands for ultimate urbanity, the seething site of freedom and opportunity criss-crossing the boundaries of elite and underclass, the nation and the world.

The effervescent cosmopolitan lives in *Fury* illuminate the inexplicable, intractable, and paradoxical human desires for life and death, marriage and true romance, fame and quietus, and uprooted roots. *Fury*'s exhibition of cosmopolitan characters, however, does not merely add to the democratized variety of urban cosmopolites, which designates a harmonious coexistence of heterogeneous people(s). If the American Empire disseminates a kind of conflict-free diversity transcending class, race, and nationality for its economic and political gain, Rushdie's novel uncovers that the metropolis, oftentimes a site of mirth and enrichment, makes an equally powerful site of forgetting and burying of individuals. Via Schlink's movie deal and Krysztof's suicide in particular, Rushdie's novel reveals how the (hi)stories of immigrants are often erased, (re)created, or distorted in the service of a commodified metropolitan culture.

Whereas Schlink's dramatic turn of life is unpredictable, problematic, and hilarious, the life and death of Krysztof, also known as "Dubdub," exemplifies the tragedy of an elite cosmopolitan. Solanka's Cambridge friend and former colleague, Dubdub is an "unlikely hybrid, English Kafka," whose "upper-class grin, his [English] mother's hockey-captain grin which no shadow of pain, poverty, or doubt had ever darkened," sits "so incongruously below his paternal inheritance, the beetling, dark eye-brows reminiscent of untranslatable privations endured by his ancestors in the unglamorous town of Łodz" (Rushdie 19). When Dubdub arrives at Princeton University for a chaired position "invented" for him, he becomes an academic celebrity in the new "industry of culture replac[ing] that of ideology" (24). Given his hybridity and popularity, Dubdub is expected to readily adapt himself to "the world's new secularism, [whose] new religion was fame" (24). But this "globe-trotting ... Derridada" is too good-hearted and conscientious to ignore the truth that "the more he became a Personality, the less like a person he felt" (27). In a society where individuals are both consumers *and* objects of consumption, the difference between the life of a Jewish plumber and an internationally eminent scholar means little as long as a niche market can be found for each.

Fury uses treason, a brave rejection of loyalty, in order to expose the pernicious sides of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism. While the

lives of varied cosmopolites in Rushdie's novel provide sources of gleeful urbanity, they can be easily forgotten or falsely rejuvenated in the cultural Empire of America. Dubdub's suicide and Sara Jane Lear's success imply, respectively, an act of treason against and an assimilation to the culture of celebrification. In the last section of the novel, it is Neela who commits another act of treason, against nationalism this time, by abandoning her loyalty to the nationalist coup in her native Lilliput-Blefuscu. Just as Rushdie's treatment of cosmopolitanism in *Fury* is neither entirely deferential nor uniformly satiric, a belief in one's ethnicity or nostalgia for one's homeland is described as both dangerous and enviable in this novel. For instance, Solanka understands that Jack Reinhart, his African-American journalist friend, has been a victim of "the brutalities of blacks against blacks" and has stopped "hyphenating himself and has become simply an American" (Rushdie 57). At the same time, Solanka "almost env[ys]" Neela for her attachment to Lilliput-Blefuscu, her "paradoxical desire to be part of what [she] left" (247). What elevates Neela's betrayal of her people, traditionally a morally stigmatized act, to an ethical treason springs from her courage to act against conventional morality. Neela's treacherous act of killing herself and Babur, the despotic leader of the coup who craves to be a global political celebrity, betrays how a "good" nationalist cause can be manipulated to justify the "wrongs" of the extreme Indo-Lillian nationalists who mindlessly imitate Solanka's best-selling digital story of the Puppet Kings' revolution. In choosing to become a "traitor, betraying the only cause she ever believed in," Neela achieves an ethical rebellion against nationalism, which has been diminished to a mere means of pursuing the culture of celebrification (253).

Toward the end of *Fury*, Solanka's inquiry on "the heart of what it means to be human" converges with what he calls the "Galileo moment" (Rushdie 188).⁷ Borrowed from Galileo's recantation of the truth after being coerced by the Catholic Church to state that "the earth moves," the Galileo moment constitutes an ultimate test of the courage to say yes to obvious truth, overcoming the terror induced by the powerful. One of the most significant passages in *Fury*, Neela's "Galileo moment" epitomizes "the impossible situation" of every human being, be she cosmopolitan or nationalist, living in the American Empire today (249). On

the surface, Neela embodies an ideal cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world who never forgets her roots. A “Cosmopolitan”-sipping Manhattanite, Neela has made New York City “a home away from home,” but her “uprooted roots are pulling hard” (157, 248). On hearing the news of Babur’s starting a coup on the other side of the world, Neela is torn between two equally undesirable choices: remaining a rootless cosmopolite by giving up her roots, or fighting for justice for her people, only to ruin another people. What Neela does not yet know is the fact that both choices are manoeuvred by the culture of celebrification, Solanka’s Puppet Kings in this case.

It is not until Neela returns to her fatherland to join the coup, is enslaved and humiliated by Babur, and is presented with a Galileo moment by Solanka, that she realizes the danger of such grandiose causes as “history,” “justice,” and “my people.” Meanwhile, Solanka’s transglobal journey to Lilliput-Blefuscu to rescue Neela showcases the worldwide effect of his fictitious Puppet Kings, uniting the realms of the literary, the commercial, the political, and the geographical under “the superlative force of a real American hit” (Rushdie 224). Not only does Babur wear the mask of Akasz Kronos, the cyberneticist hero and creator of the Puppet Kings, modelled after Solanka himself in his Internet epic, but Babur also forces all the Indo-Lillian rebels to wear masks from the Puppet Kings. Instead of remaining the author of his story, Solanka has completely lost control over his creation in the process of becoming a global celebrity, and cannot help but witness the grotesque distortion of his well-intended, philosophical-minded Puppet Kings. Looking at the deranged Babur wearing the mask of “his [Solanka’s] own guilty face,” Solanka, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, declares that wherever he travels, he discovers “a personal Hell” (246). While Solanka is held captive in a cell, he is visited by Neela hidden behind a mask of Zameen, a female puppet. The following pivotal speech made by Solanka leads to Neela’s “Galileo moment” in the sense that it asks her an evident question, an answer to which necessitates a radical deconstruction of conventional morality:

You are convinced that your people, if I can use so antiquated a term, have been done down by history, that they deserve what Babur has been fighting for.... You thought this was a struggle

for human dignity, a just cause, and you were actually proud of Babur for teaching your passive kinsmen and kinswomen how to fight their own battles. In consequence, you were willing to overlook a certain amount of, what shall we call it, illiberalism. War is tough, and so on. Certain niceties get trampled. All this you told yourself, and all the while there was another voice in your head telling you in a whisper you didn't want to hear that you were turning into history's whore. (Rushdie 248)

When a national revolution is handled by American popular culture and is subject to political commodification, an ethical choice between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is impossible to make. Babur in the Akasz mask demonstrates this point. For the sake of the "justliness" of justice, Babur has "come off at the hinges" and has become "a servant of the Good" which, ironically, transforms him into berserk nationalist ideologue *and* international political celebrity: two extreme faces of nationalism and cosmopolitanism (246). In order to uncover the violence of the absolute Good propagated by these ideologies, Neela must answer the paradoxical questions that compel a repudiation of traditional morality. Solanka continues to ask, "Neela, here's your Galileo moment ... Can right be wrong? Is the wrong thing right for you?" (249). Neela's final view of herself as a traitor right before she kills both Babur and herself thus connotes an ethical treason. Rather than renouncing one ideology in order to commit to another, her treason professes an ethical desire to relinquish oppressive political ideologies disguised as moralities altogether. This deconstruction of right/wrong and of national/global binaries through treason signals what I call a radical cosmopolitanism. An ethical principle in a globalized world ruled by the American Empire, radical cosmopolitanism endorses non-allegiance, even treason and betrayal, as an ethical strategy that continually problematizes its imperialist, moral law *within* the empire. Rushdie's novel is an apotheosis of this poststructuralist mode of cosmopolitanism.

In *Fury's* tragic and baffling last chapter, Solanka appears mad with grief over Neela's suicide and is bouncing in a bouncy castle in Hampstead Heath, London, as if attempting to reach for the sky. The elusive ending of the "bouncing" Solanka, its abrupt turn from Neela's grim death on a

battlefield to Solanka's zany moment on the playground, has been curiously dismissed by commentators.⁸ If cosmopolitans are those who feel "at home in all countries of the world" (Beck 4), Solanka feels homeless everywhere, literally with no "ground beneath his feet" in the bouncy castle at the end. The "sound and fury" that Solanka never stops producing in Rushdie's *Fury* is a rebellion against the American Empire that compartmentalizes and commodifies, and an assertion of the inscrutable yet liberating dimension of human desires. While Solanka's treacherous and ethical struggle against the empire sentences him to death—not physical death, but social banishment—his final bouncing exudes Dionysiac exaltation verging on poignant insanity.⁹ This is because Solanka's constant bouncing toward the unreachable sky is not an escape to a transcendental heaven but is a symbol for unfathomable yet tenacious human yearning, which is left untouched regardless of his equally constant falling. In this sense, Rushdie's treason against the American Empire in *Fury*, for all its futile bouncing—its tragic rise and fall—confirms his "will to cosmopolitanism," disclaiming any other commodified "isms."

Notes

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1 In a manner similar to Kumar's, Mendelsohn observes that Solanka's "cynical satire is, if anything, symptomatic of the problems he's lampooning," and Boyd Tonkin notes that the novel "mimics our current condition of frantic over-stimulation as much as it explains it." For hostile reviews of Rushdie's novel, see Allen, Caldwell, Cowley, Eder, Gates, Hooper, Kakutani, and Steinberg. For relatively generous reviews, read Rosett, Rubin, Tonkin, and Sutherland.

2 In "Postethnicity and Postcommunism," Banerjee argues that Rushdie's *Fury* promotes a "new kind of cultural exoticism" disguised as hybridity, thus merely showing postcolonial studies' return to conservatism (309). Banerjee calls "the brave new world of postcolonial studies ... the brave old world of the Western mainstream," and Rushdie "the Tony Blair of postcolonial studies" (320, 321). For another postcolonial reading, see Stephens.

3 See Keulks and Deszcz for other postmodern readings. Despite his perceptive reading of *Fury*, Keulks concludes that the novel is an "illuminating, instructive failure" (152).

4 Brennan's writing represents the view of cosmopolitanism as a worldwide Americanization. Brennan coined the term "convenient cosmopolitanism" in

- order to condemn “Third-World” intellectuals’ political non-commitment. See his *At Home* and *Salman Rushdie*. For another cosmopolitan reading of *Fury*, see C. Leonard.
- 5 Some of the recent studies of cosmopolitanism exemplifying this trend include: Mignolo; Breckenridge, Bhabha, Chakrabarty, and Pollock, eds.; Vertovec and Cohen, eds.; Benhabib; and Fine.
 - 6 Brouillette’s insightful words show why it is difficult, even pointless, to discern the “authentic” literary Rushdie from the celebrity Rushdie. A LexisNexis academic database search (of US and major international publications in English, including newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters) using the search term “Salman Rushdie” pulls up approximately 1,000 entries. Some recent titles are: “And the Prize for Pomposity, Titanic Conceit and Turgid Novels Goes to ... As Salman Rushdie is Tipped to Win the Booker Again” (Wilson); “Now He’s Only Hunted by Cameras” (Cohen); “And Good Riddance, Rushdie (You Have Cost Us GBP 10M and You Can’t Even Say Thank you); “As the *Satanic Verses* Author Spurns ‘Backbiting, Incestuous’ Britain” (Hudson); “Lost in Distraction; Salman Rushdie’s Take on *Scarlett* Was the Talk of His Recent Visit” (Govani); and “Letter: What Message in Making Rushdie a Sir?” (Ahmedi). All of these articles deal with Rushdie’s private life more than focusing on his writing. It is more productive for us to examine the degree to which Rushdie’s entertaining description of celebrity culture in *Fury* impinges on his ability to criticize the same culture. For an essay on Rushdie’s status as literary celebrity, see Ommundsen.
 - 7 Rushdie’s metaphor of the Galileo moment, his emphasis on the need to pursue what he believes to be true fearlessly in front of the terrifying enemy, appears to be based on his own experience of a Galilean recantation (and the recantation of *that* recantation) in the whirlwind of the *fatwa*. In a short document, “Why I Have Embraced Islam,” Rushdie makes the first recantation by claiming that he accepts Muhammad and that he will “not authorize any new translations of [*The Satanic Verses*] and will block the publication of the much awaited paperback edition of [it]” (Al-Azm 57). The next year, at a lecture at Columbia University, Rushdie recants for the second time his “surrender” in “Why I Have Embraced Islam,” stating that “I have never disowned my book, nor regretted writing it,” and “I was wrong to have given way on this point” (qtd. in Al-Azm 59). Al-Azm remarks that if “Rushdie’s first recantation was as insincere, coerced and utilitarian as Galileo’s,” his recantation of the recantation exhibits his surviving of “the terror of the ‘fatwa’” as well as his courage in never ceasing to “write satirically, critically and creatively, particularly about the sacred” (64).
 - 8 While Gonzalez, C. Leonard, and Caldwell comment on the childishness of Rushdie’s coda, they fail to recognize the tragic power of *Fury*’s ending which, far from being simple and infantile, conjures up the ultimate challenge to the American Empire. In another comment on *Fury*’s ending, Tandon finds it interesting that Rushdie uses “another imperiled father-son reconciliation” for the

finale of *Fury* (pg#). Right before Neela leaves for Lilliput-Blefuscu, Solanka tells her a secret about himself: when he was ten years old, his stepfather dressed him up as a girl and touched him until their neighbour, Mr. Venkat, stopped it permanently. Although the traumatizing story of childhood sexual abuse should be conducive to the main plot of the novel, this story comes and goes very quickly, and ends up as one of many fleeting episodes in the novel. This is why I focus more on the metaphor of Solanka's bouncing than on his barely existent relationship with his father and his three-year-old son Asmann in interpreting the coda. 9 I am not the first in detecting the Nietzschean philosophy in *Fury*. See Sankaran.

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