Conclusion

The aims of this thesis were focussed on the following five areas of intersecting scholarly interest: firstly, the borders and frontiers of Rushdie's literary project as evident in selected examples of his imaginative treatment of identity, culture and celebrity in *Fury* and *Step Across This Line*; secondly, the distinguishing features of his technique as explicated through various forms of comparative analysis; thirdly, the intellectual, theoretical and analytical basis of the interdisciplinary field of politics and literature; fourthly, the borders and frontiers of Rushdie's literary project; and lastly, the challenges that emerge from this study.

In addressing the last of the thesis' aims, it is apparent that this thesis has inspired a series of questions that may warrant further investigation. For example, the analysis in chapter two of the tension between the artistic position and the cultural or geopolitical profile of the so-called exiled writer suggests that the concept of the exile (particularly in relation to writers like Rushdie, Said, Kundera, and Sarup) is a highly contested and potentially fruitful area of study. Similarly, the issue of academic paradigm suppression and related debates concerning the scholarly merits, or otherwise, of interdisciplinary study discussed in chapter three could also be further examined. Additional discussion could also be drawn from the analysis in chapter five of the apparent blurring of celebrity and political spheres. A critical reading and re-evaluation of Rushdie's work "post 9/11" could also be engaged. This potentially mammoth task is beyond the direct aims of this thesis; yet it may be viewed as an issue of some importance when one considers, for example, the prevailing East-West thematic paradigms apparent in much of Rushdie's work. Finally, the controversy provoked by Rushdie's knighthood in June 2007 offers further avenues for study. Such an investigation could also countenance the comparable circumstances of the 1989 *fatwa*. While these questions and others are open to future study, the remaining aims addressed throughout this thesis will now be discussed.

6.1 Perspectives of identity, culture and celebrity

The examples of Rushdie's treatment of identity, culture and celebrity presented throughout this thesis can broadly be described as humanist perspectives. By using the term humanist, I mean that his engagement with these themes is primarily centred upon the individual - for example: Solanka's scaled-down Puppet Kings identity project; the shame-shamelessness cultural dichotomy of the "broken doll" S&M murder victims; or, Rushdie's own "godlike" subject-object transition with U2's Bono. Regardless of the analytical tone of the various perspectives he presents, or of the imaginative, fictional or non-fictional literary vehicle through which he constructs this analysis, he uses the individual as the focal point - and indeed, the starting point. This humanist focus is then typically progressed in accordance with relevant environmental factors, such as the competitive ethos of the integrated global economy, and subsequently a representational context as exemplified by the irreconcilable identity binaries of the Puppet Kings allegory. To illustrate the humanist dimension of Rushdie's literary project and the relevant environmental and representational progressions, I now address his treatment of identity, culture and celebrity in the order in which they are engaged in this thesis.

6.1.1 Identity: In accordance with the structural dictates of *bildungsroman*, Rushdie's examination of identity in *Fury* follows Solanka's transformative identity process through a specified period of intense personal crisis. The gravity of this crisis allows Rushdie to engage various theoretical dimensions of identity processes through a magnified perspective.[1] His approach can be described as magnified because it is perhaps not typical for an individual to experience the extreme level of emotional upheaval and personal loss endured by Solanka in the space of the novel.[2] However, whilst particular aspects of Solanka's fictionally

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[1] This magnified perspective offers an interesting contrast to the miniature (microcosmic) perspective of the Puppet Kings allegory. A similar contrast is evident in the micro-meta paradigm discussed in chapter five of this thesis concerning the "flawed giants" of celebrity and the miniature scale of Rushdie's identity project.

[2] Within the limited timeframe of the novel Solanka leaves his wife, child, career and country; he also experiences the death of two close friends (Krysztof and Rhinehart) and a lover (Neela Mahendra); in addition, he launches the world famous Puppet Kings franchise and [continued.../]

constructed experiences may be extreme and, at times, difficult for some readers to identify with, his various emotional responses to these magnified experiences are plausible, and indeed, a possible source of empathy for the reader.

Solanka's impulse to retreat, his wish to define himself through difference, his reflexive questioning of his sanity, his cynicism towards the competitive ethos of the integrated global economy, and his emotional reaction to the breakdown of his personal relationships are intensely real examples of the emotive, humanist dimension of what is essentially a fictional construct. It is Rushdie's complex depiction of the tension between the permeable frontiers of, imagined experience, real and imagined events, and real emotion that humanises his treatment of the identity processes employed in a comparative context throughout chapter four of this thesis.

In accordance with the humanist borders and frontiers of Rushdie's treatment of identity within *Fury*, his resolution of Solanka's *bildungsroman* at the close of the novel maintains the emotional tone apparent throughout the text. It exemplifies the humanist quality of Rushdie's project. Solanka's enacting of his identity project is highly idiosyncratic and unconventional – it is an unquantifiable *human* response. Upon his return to the U.K. Solanka finally seems to reconcile his position on the ambiguous frontiers between the impossible binaries of the logic of identity. He repels the "head-busting [fury] of the third millennium" (the unbearable intrusion of the public sphere into his private sphere), by inverting the process.[3] His shrieking "flight" on the children's jumping castle in the final moments of the text, his earth shattering "yawp" represents his distinctly human and erratic intrusion into the cold, competitive logic of the public sphere.[4] Like the defiant speaker in the Walt Whitman poem "Song to Myself" Solanka is expressing his independence: "I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, / I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world".[5] Finally, Solanka has silenced the

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becomes embroiled in a revolutionary counter-coup in the fictional nation of Lilliput-Blefuscu; and finally, returns to the U.K. to achieve a partial resolution of his identity dilemma.

[3] Rushdie (2001). op. cit., p. 48.

[4] ibid., p. 259.

[5] W. Whitman, "Song of Myself"(lines: 1332-1333), *University of Toronto English Library* (online), http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/2288.html, 2004 (accessed 19 July 2006).

furies, yet not in the manner he originally anticipated. Rather than achieving a feeling of "peace", he has drowned out the shrieking "assent" of the furies with a resounding leap of his own making.[6] Catching sight of his estranged son Asmaan (whose name in *Urdu* means "sky"), Solanka conjures up "all his lost love and [hurls] it up into the sky like a white bird plucked from his sleave".[7] His illogical, childlike and "untranslatable" defiance ensures that it is a playfully asinine human noise and not cold logical inhuman fury that envelops his world. With his symbolic leap, the positive-negative binaries of the logic of identity have not been erased but perhaps momentarily inverted. This example is indicative of the contribution Rushdie's imaginative treatment of identity makes to existing theoretical models; he inverts the typically generalist focus of theoretical accounts of identity processes by restoring the emotive, unpredictable and individually orientated humanist perspective.

6.1.2 Culture and celebrity: As with his treatment of identity, Rushdie's engagement with culture and celebrity is presented within the context of the individual. As I will show later in this conclusion, Rushdie's reading of culture refers to particular aspects of existing culture industry theory; however, his focus is distinctly human. Without critically reviewing every aspect of the multi-faceted account of culture and celebrity presented in chapter five, one example in particular illustrates the humanist dimension of Rushdie's perspective of these themes. As I indicated, in *Fury*, he examines the consequences of the culture industry's inversion of personal values and self-worth through Solanka's narrative of the "broken doll[s]" murders.[8] To briefly summarise these events, the trio of "S&M" killers (economically accomplished men identified as consumerist icons) were unable to reconcile their non-"possession" of their "formidably accomplished" female peers.[9] The unquantifiable value of love and personal relationships, the immeasurable humanist value of merely being, is crudely *de*valued by an inhuman culture that prizes competitiveness and economic

[6] Rushdie (2001). op. cit., p. 184.
[7] ibid., p. 259.
[8] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 72.
[9] ibid.

"virtues" above all else. As Rushdie states:

> These three young men, for whom love had become a question of violence and possession, of doing and being done to, had gone to the frontier between love and death, and their fury had worn it away, the fury they could not articulate, born of what they, who had so much, had never been able to acquire: lessness, ordinariness. Real life.[10]

Rushdie's description of the questions behind these quasi-"honour killings" unmasks the dynamics of the drastically distorted perspectives of the culture industry. Whilst Rushdie's account engages fundamental aspects of existing culture industry theory concerned with the culturally sanctioned promotion of a link between personal worth and economic possession, he makes important progressions on this theory through his portrayal of the potentially devastating and destructive human impact of such a link.[11] He does so in a manner that again inverts dominant contemporary cultural values by identifying that which cannot be possessed in a consumerist sense – "Real Life". Rushdie captures additional facets of the artificiality of the consumerist values of the culture industry through his representational depiction of the murder victims as "broken doll[s]".[12] Again, the reader is confronted with an original account of the dehumanising dynamics of the culture industry.

Of course the fictional basis of Rushdie's treatment of culture and celebrity in *Fury* affords him considerable imaginative license. However, it must be noted that his *non*-fictional reading of these themes is not without a comparable imaginative dimension. For instance, as I have shown, the readings of culture and celebrity he presents in *Step Across This Line* are characterised by an imaginative transition he identifies as occurring at the figurative subject-object frontier. For instance, in his discussion of celebrity in the context of mythology, Rushdie employs distinctly fictional imagery to construct an insightful reading of the cultural codes and signs that drive an individual's

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[10] ibid., p. 202.
The processes of objectification experienced by the murder victims and the mechanical ("doing and being done to") aspect of "love" as understood by the murderers can also be read as a magnified reference to the dehumanising and objectifying properties of pornography. With reference to my earlier discussion on potential avenues of further study arising from this thesis, it is evident that pornography, as a by-product of the culture industry, could also be investigated.
[11] Marcuse, op. ct., pp. 8-9.
[12] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 74.

transition from subject to object.[13] Some aspects of his account of this transition are, however, problematic.

Rushdie's reflections regarding Bono's salutatory invitation to switch spectacles onstage at a U2 concert suggest that, in certain instances, he may be too close to this transitory frontier to maintain a sufficient level of critical objectivity.[14] Rushdie enthusiastically admits that he is enthralled by the momentarily positive identity-swap such a high-profile expression of solidarity affords him. He describes himself as freely crossing "artistic borderlines" from the "uncool" staidness of the literary world into the "godlike" visage of popular culture.[15] He is comfortable in the momentary guise of a lauded popular entertainer, a role that briefly overshadows the stereotypically serious intellectual connotations of the literary world and the oppressive realities of the *fatwa*. Yet his comments elsewhere in *Step Across This Line*, specifically his critique of the detrimental aspects of the blurring of the subject-object frontier, may render certain aspects of his argument for the permeability of cultural frontiers problematic. For instance, as I indicated, Rushdie's account of Princess Diana's demise and the contributory role of the paparazzi (and the voyeuristic public) is critical of the manner in which contemporary culture reduces the subject to an object, human to commodity ("public property"). Despite, and perhaps even because of, the imposition of his own experiences he does, however, identify the fact that the imagined image of celebrity within the *real* cultural landscape of the integrated global economy is dominated by the crucial question of image control. However, the increasing prevalence of practices of image control is but one contemporary cultural phenomenon explained through the many comparative politics and literature perspectives employed throughout this thesis.

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[13] Similarly, Rushdie's writings in *Step Across This Line* on the emotional fidelity and reflexive capacity of photography rely on the employment of dark and light imagery typical of imaginative fiction.

[14] Additional questions of perspective are apparent here, as Rushdie's view of celebrity through Bono's "godlike" sunglasses could be colloquially described as a "rose coloured" view.

[15] Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 103.

6.2 Rushdie's imaginative treatment of identity, culture and celebrity in the context of the comparative methodology utilised in this thesis

The diverse array of comparative literary resources employed throughout this thesis in many ways reflect the diversity of Rushdie's imaginative literary voice; a diversity exemplified by his versatility across different literary forms and his resistance to categorisation. Indeed, it is this versatility that allows him to be broadly understood as an imaginative writer, rather than being one-dimensionally categorised as, for instance, an essayist, novelist, theorist or critic. As discussed in chapters two and three, given the fact that Rushdie views the figurative frontiers of traditional literary genres as being permeable, it is suitable that the methodology of this thesis was devised to respond to that view. The comparative literary resources used in this study contribute significantly to my account of the contribution Rushdie's imaginative treatment of identity, culture and celebrity makes to existing readings of these themes.

6.2.1 Imaginative writers: In order to introduce and explain the technical characteristics and thematic preoccupations of Rushdie's writing it was necessary to construct an account of the distinctive qualities of imaginative writers. As a consequence of the subject matter and the structural and stylistic features of particular literary process, imaginative writers – for instance, those in the mould of Zwicky, Said, Sarup, Grass and, of course, Rushdie – occupy contentious positions on the creative frontier. As indicated in chapter two of this thesis, the perspectives of challenging and imaginative writers are often contextualised in accordance with arguments concerned with their personal circumstances. This is especially the case with so-called migrant or exiled writers. This thesis' analysis of the creative positions of the these writers rather than their respective personal positions revealed that the inclusionary-exclusionary dynamics attendant to the label of exile were best approached in terms of creativity rather than the geopolitical circumstances of these writers. The "adversarial" behaviour of the imaginative writer bucks the unimaginative and one-dimensional behavioural conventions of frontier crossings.[16] It is precisely this type of challenging behaviour that enables

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[16] Zwicky, op. cit., p. 234.

personally-focussed, psycho-biographical criticism of writers deemed to be exiles (simply as a consequence of his or her geo-political circumstances) to be read as examples of the "unifying Other" principle.[17] In terms of borders and frontiers, the truly exiled writer is generally reconciled as being so as a consequence of the challenge their writing presents to traditional understandings of mainstream cultural and socio-political convention. Indeed, the literary dimension of this thesis is directly concerned with challenges to traditional forms both in an interdisciplinary sense and in relation to literary conventions; a challenge that is clearly evident in Rushdie's imaginative writing. This is also the spatial logic from which the ideas presented in this thesis are developed.

The discussion of postmodern literature presented in chapter two – as explicated through "points of departure" theoretical perspectives and relevant example-based accounts – was designed to identify particular structural features apparent to the form.[18] Ultimately, however, as Cobley states, there are no "steadfast" rules or conventions governing the execution or classification of this dynamic literary genre.[19] There is an unresolved tension attached to the postmodern literary form. As Kundera asserts, the postmodern novel is not beholden to absolutes, rather it excels if it can inspire the reader to "comprehend the world as a question".[20] My consideration of the postmodern form's strident challenges to traditionally formulaic and rigid literary borders and frontiers serves to contextualise the broader analysis of Rushdie's literary project offered throughout this thesis. Despite the supposed ambiguities of Rushdie's literary style, it is plainly evident that he too strives to engage the world as a question.

6.2.2 Identity: Given that so much of Rushdie's construction of Solanka's identity dilemma is concerned with his struggle to identify himself by his opposition to or rejection of dehumanising cultural values, the account of relational identity

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[17] Therborn, op. cit., p. 3.
[18] Quinones, op. cit., p. 13.
[19] Cobley, op. cit., p. 101 (footnote: 1) Indeed, postmodern literature is often identified as such as a result of the challenge it presents to traditional understandings of the structural limits of literary borders and frontiers.
[20] Kundera (1986), op. cit., p. 237.

processes offered in chapter four provided a theoretical framework for this thesis' wider analysis of Rushdie's perspective. In line with Connolly's use of the conjoined term "identity/difference", relational identity was found to be central to identity processes.[21] This thesis' broader discussion of relational processes of identity (both subtle and pronounced processes of "association" and "disassociation") emphasised that identity is indeed a work-in-progress and not a complete or static phenomenon. The pivotal influence of comparison in identity processes also confirmed that these processes, by their very nature, are profoundly influenced by cultural, political and social factors. To illustrate the rationale behind my use of comparative analysis in relation to Rushdie's treatment of identity, I will begin by briefly evaluating two theoretical models used in this thesis: firstly, the integrated global economy, and secondly, the logic of identity.

My reading of Paehlke's account of "the game" within the "integrated global economy" and Sennett's complementary study of the corrosive effects of this contemporary socio-political environment provided the basis for my analysis of Solanka's identity crisis.[22] Paehlke's description of the personally demoralising effects of the game indicated that there is little account of human expressions of, for example, altruism, benevolence or compassion within the dominating economic ethos of competition.[23] In this instance, identity as expressed by those who, like Solanka, reject the game, is defined in accordance with their dissociative impulses. Regardless of an individual's possible identity-affirming reasons for disassociating themselves from "the game", mainstream culture labels this retreat as a sign of weakness. The fundamental comparative processes of identity are reduced to crude rationales dictating one's associative or dissociative impulses towards solely economically focussed "virtues".[24] As political scientist Denis

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[21] Connolly, op. cit., p. 64.
[22] Paehlke, op. cit., p. 229.
[23] Solanka's all consuming "anger, fear and pain" gives a humanist voice to Paehlke's description. Rushdie (2001), op. cit., pp. 44-45.
[24] D. Chong, Rationale Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000, p. 3.

Chong observes, these "virtues" are incompatible with the unquantifiable behavioural fluxes of humanity. "In the economic view", he argues,

> individuals show no sentiment in discarding existing norms and practices when they cease to serve their interests, whereas in the sociological view, changing behaviour requires changing underlying values and dispositions.[25]

The so-called "economic view" is not in itself problematic, yet when this view usurps sociological perspectives and maintains an inordinate level of cultural dominance, as Sennett, Paehlke and Rushdie in various ways assert to be the case, then the consequences can be dire. Chong's account of the limited field of the "economic view" is played out by the progressive changes in Solanka's "underlying values and dispositions". Through Solanka we see how an individual's unwillingness to compete, to consume or to adapt, by implication renders their identity incompatible with the ethos of the integrated global economy. As Sennett indicates, a person's "character" – their sense of self, their "ethical value" – is *de*valued by the dominant culture of economically themed values.[26] This is the personally corrosive paradox that, when comparatively applied to Solanka in *Fury*, subsumes and threatens to obliterate an individual's sense of self.[27] The identity affirming experiences of stability, compassion and permanence can never be attained within a culture that relentlessly promotes change, indifference and adaptability.

It would seem, from Solanka's sense of utter despair, that the present state of so-called unprecedented economic prosperity has, for some, exacted a terrible price on notions of personal worth. Without the provision of comparative analysis, the environmental triggers for Solanka's identity dilemma are difficult to quantify. The inclusion, in chapter three, of an account of the integrated global economy and the associated "economic view" enabled Solanka's reaction to be explained in a

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[25] ibid.

[26] Sennett, op. cit., p. 10.

[27] The effects of this paradox are clearly evident in Krysztof's downfall. The visage of success, in an economic context, masks the dispossession of self that can concurrently occur on a sociological level; so much so that, as Krysztof despairs, "you wake up one day and you aren't a part of your life... your life doesn't belong to you". [Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 27.] When the only sources of identity-related comparison are found within the public sphere; however "successful" they may appear, the private sphere can seem devoid of meaning and purpose. Despite his considerable professional achievements, Krysztof loses sight of the public-private frontier and, as such, is unable to form a tolerable personal narrative.

manner that reaches beyond the immediate concerns and events of the novel. Similarly, Rushdie to some extent relies on the reciprocally imaginative impetus of theory to imbue the ideas he presents in *Fury* with the necessary level of intellectual rigour. For instance, Rushdie's construction of the consequences of Ali and Solanka's encounter can in part be understood as an intertextual discourse with a range of established theoretical perspectives of identity and reflexivity.

This thesis' description of Solanka's development of the Puppet Kings tale as his "identity project" also depended upon the provision of certain forms of comparative theory; most prominently, Iris Marion Young's account of "the logic of identity".[28] Young rightly identifies the pivotal role of difference in identity processes; however, she also highlights the manner in which the "logic" of Western culture demands that "difference" is defined through certain "binary oppositions".[29] The discussion of Solanka's identity dilemma presented in chapter three illustrated how these binaries present the individual with irreconcilable and ironically illogical "choices". The reality is, there *is* no choice. As Young observes, the "good/bad, normal/deviant" binaries of the logic of identity eliminate difference to ensure the primacy of culturally dominant processes of "enforced sameness".[30] However, the inhuman aspect of these binaries only becomes apparent to Solanka through his creation of the Puppet Kings tale.

In "The Puppet Kings", Rushdie affords the logic of identity its full possibilities and it follows that Solanka's prophetic musings regarding the so-called "mechanization of the human" seem to be the inevitable outcome of the integrated global economy's cultural doctrine of enforced sameness.[31] Identity too becomes disposable, changeable and adaptable in accordance with the demands of this doctrine. In the Puppet Kings fable we see the positive-negative binaries of the logic of identity equated with the "value systems" Kronos grants his self-serving creations.[32] In upholding their creator's values, the puppets inevitably (logically) pursue the so-called virtuous options, supplanting compassion and empathy with

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[28] Young, I. M., op. cit., p. 98.
[29] ibid., p. 99.
[30] ibid.
[31] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 182.
[32] ibid., p. 164.

the superior "values" of competition and single-mindedness. As a consequence of granting his minions what he interprets as a "degree of ethical independence", Kronos finds that he too is eventually considered dispensable in the "ethical" context of puppet logic; a logic that seeks only to promote the "endless" reproduction of inhuman "virtues".[33] The identity logic of the integrated global economy is based on the "let the fittest survive" doctrine espoused by the Puppet Kings.[34] Despite its pessimistic message, Solanka's identity project, his miniaturised (representative) rendering of his crisis restores his perspective, giving him the means to culturally contextualise his plight and eventually, meaningfully address it. Again, the representative properties of the Puppet Kings tale would be difficult to identify and explain without the provision of comparative theoretical material.

In addition to employing theory as a comparative device, this thesis also presented a discourse with comparable imaginative literature. A considerable proportion of Rushdie's treatment of Solanka's identity dilemma is constructed through the use of various forms of imagery; for example, his reference to the intrusive and debilitating "noise" of the integrated global economy.[35] Much of our understanding of the analytical possibilities of literature depends on our ability to recognise the meaning of often-ambiguous structural features or "signs".[36] The linking, in chapter four of this thesis, of Kundera's account of "hideous racket" of contemporary culture to Rushdie's comparable description of the "unbearable head-busting volume of the third millennium" illustrated that a level of shared meaning and structural purpose exists between the two authors. Both Kundera and Rushdie utilise the imagery of intolerable noise as a sign to describe the unrelenting intrusion of the public sphere into the private.[37] While the subject matter addressed by both writers differs, the meaning behind their literary signs, in this instance, converges. Kundera and Rushdie both seek to highlight the

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[33] ibid.
[34] ibid., p. 167.
[35] ibid., p. 47.
[36] Cobley, op. cit., p. 107.
[37] Solanka directly comments on the personal consequences of this intrusion: "The city was teaching him a lesson. There was to be no escape from intrusion, from noise. The noise was inside him now". Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 47.

manner in which this "noise" fractures and distorts the comparative processes of identity by leaving no respite for contemplative self-reflection. As Rushdie asserts, there is apparently no room for "messy humanity" amidst the precise and all-enveloping clamour of inhumanity.[38] As I have shown, my occasional use of Kundera (an imaginative writer) as a comparative resource complements the theoretical material employed elsewhere in this thesis.

6.2.3 Culture and Celebrity: As with the engagement with the theme of identity presented in chapter four of this thesis, the analysis of Rushdie's treatment of culture and celebrity offered in chapter five also relied on the use of relevant theoretical and imaginative comparative readings. Without seeking to rationalise every source of comparison utilised in this study, the following two examples illustrate, firstly, areas of theoretical convergence, and secondly, comparable imaginative perspectives.

As discussed, in *Fury* Rushdie depicts culture and celebrity as burgeoning generators and perpetuators of similarly offensive and defensive dualisms concerned with clinically delineated processes of "definition, exclusion, revision and persecution".[39] This is a confronting, somewhat absolutist account. However, the greater argument Rushdie presents in *Fury* and *Step Across This Line* could not be seen as overtly critical of these processes; rather, as I argued, he seems more concerned with the disproportionate influence these processes hold over other areas of contemporary socio-political life.

One area of disproportionate influence to emerge from my analysis of Rushdie's account of the subject-object frontier was the increasing prevalence of image and image-control techniques in politics. As illustrated in chapter five, this is a point he discusses throughout various literary forms with reference to political figures such as Lieberman (concerning the projection of "religiosity") and Clinton (regarding his "tarnished legacy"). To contextualise my analysis of Rushdie's views it was necessary to provide a broader account of the role of image in contemporary political culture. This involved a comparative study of the

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[38] ibid., p. 74.
[39] ibid.

considerable influence of celebrity-type public relations techniques within the subject-object paradigms of the political sphere. My examination of the pivotal role of image within Michael Howard's 2005 U.K election campaign provided a clear example of Rushdie's view that image control techniques are increasingly overriding policy substance to become the primary markers of difference between many contemporary political protagonists. As discussed, the "Theatre of Masks" allegory Rushdie employs in *Fury* illustrates the duplicity of contemporary political images in which the frontiers delineating political image and policy substance are blurred.

Further engagement with Rushdie's account of contemporary culture's obsession with image introduced the notion of "self creation".[40] My employment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Gatsby as a comparative foil enabled me to expand fundamental aspects of Rushdie's Machiavellian account of the political image-control techniques employed by Lieberman and Clinton. The character construct of Gatsby and other comparative devices provided the necessary foil to explain the historical and cultural basis of the U.S orientated appeal of self-creation and thus rationalise Rushdie's claim that it is increasingly the case that the conviction of belief rather than the integrity of belief is prized within the political culture of the integrated global economy. This is the spatial logic of self-creation as Rushdie imaginatively applies it to the real setting of his novel.

Analysis of Rushdie's views concerning the inordinate primacy of image within contemporary culture highlighted the centrality of questions of perception. Through his use of a Shakespearian allegory, Rushdie explain facets of contemporary culture that skew and invert identity processes rendering them artificial and unsustainable. Iago, Othello's duplicitous foil, declares in a dastardly aside: "I am not what I am".[41] The figures of comparison Rushdie attaches to this thespian parable – namely the S&M killers – initially seem to embody a similar level of duplicity. By seeking their soul in their possessions, as Iago seeks his soul in an illusive level of status, these gruesome incarnates of a cultural ethos that

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[40] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 79.
[41] Shakespeare, op. cit., Act V. ii. 338.

champions possession above all else are not ultimately able to reconcile their status through ownership; thus, like Iago, they destroy that which they cannot own. In the mould of Iago, the deeds of the S&M killers became little more than asides, incisive, yet impersonal and representational commentaries on the egregious by-products of the culture industry. Again, Rushdie can be seen as framing his examination of this aspect of the culture industry in the context of micro and macro intertextual perspectives. He amplifies the consequences of the murders – they are "an attack on pax America itself" – yet downplays the significance of the perpetrators, affording them little detail in the space of his novel. My discussion of concurrent subject-object binaries in *Step Across This Line* shows how Rushdie argues that we, as lethal voyeurs, are all at various levels culpable in the cultural process that de-humanises these women. Indeed, Solanka, for a considerable portion of *Fury*, is uncertain of his own connection to these murders. The imaginative scope of the political novel allows Rushdie to test his Othello thesis, to apply the spatial logic of Shakespearean tragedy to the frontiers of contemporary culture.

Comparison is a vital aspect of interdisciplinary research. Just as Rushdie likens his literary stylings to the impressionist painters and their technique of juxtaposing close-up detail with long-distance abstraction, the use of comparative methodology applies comparable perspectives to a work of fiction that may otherwise be read as having no relationship whatsoever to real events and circumstances. As I explain in the following section, this is precisely the type of potentially insightful comparative license afforded to proponents of the interdisciplinary filed of politics and literature.

6.3 The intellectual, theoretical and analytical basis of the inter-disciplinary field of politics and literature

Many of the arguments presented throughout this thesis relied on the employment of various forms of analytical methodology fundamental to the interdisciplinary field of politics and literature. Chapter three of this study highlighted the challenges interdisciplinary study presents to mainstream academic disciplines. This also included an account of the manner in which the imaginative structural tensions and stylistic features of the postmodern literary

form embrace this challenge. By briefly reviewing the analytical devices of "the leap of imagination", magical realism, and political narratives, I will now explain how the field of politics and literature addresses the challenge of imagination.

6.3.1 The leap of imagination: In chapter three of this thesis I identified a link between the imaginative properties of political theory and literature. Both pursuits, I argued, seek to engage the reader and convey a message through the employment of various divergent and occasionally shared imaginative techniques. As analysis of Archer's account of the "leap of imagination" confirmed, political ideologies are based on certain imagined possibilities and ideals.[42] Similarly, political theorists engage in an imaginative exercise; a fact that is, for instance, evident in my engagement with the border and frontier motif in political theory. I identified Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an example of a political dystopia – it is a text that exists in tension with the utopian imaginings of perfectionist political ideologies. Despite their oppositional nature, dystopian and utopian imaginative processes both engage real or actual circumstances. By the very nature of its real setting – contemporary New York – *Fury* is also partially contextualised by actual circumstances. However, *Fury*, by virtue of its imaginative literary form, punctuates the reality of its subject matter and setting with a distinctive type of fictional imagining. Like political theory, it is a text that asks the reader to imagine certain possibilities; as such it can be identified as a novel that exhibits a level of political purpose. However, it differs from more theoretically aligned texts primarily as a consequence of the manner in which its leap of imagination is enacted.

6.3.2 Magical realism: In discussing the leap of imagination in the context of *Fury*, Rushdie's use of magical realism must be addressed. It is through the literary trope of magical realism that Rushdie negotiates the tension between the fictitious and the real. The reality of the novel's setting and the associated socio-political circumstances is clear. Indeed, throughout *Fury*, Rushdie overtly refers to real places and events. However, his employment of magical realism allows him to test

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[42] Archer, op. cit., p. 214.

the figurative borders and frontiers of the reality he engages. He presents certain distorted abstractions of reality, as is evident in, for example, the Puppet Kings tale or the broken dolls murders. As I have shown, both of these abstractions have substantial analytical properties; indeed, both scenarios can be interpreted as inspiring a myriad of representational or allegorical readings, yet Rushdie is deliberately non-prescriptive as to what those readings are. The borders and frontiers between the real and the imagined are purposefully blurred. Magical realism is a technique that nominally has a basis in a particular reality (for example, the integrated global economy), yet the parameters of that reality are rarely defined. In a Kafkaesque sense, the spheres of the actual and the possible are obscured and the reader is left to question where reality ends and imagination begins. Again, as Kundera attests, the novel asks us to question. Rushdie's treatment of identity, culture and celebrity can be approached in the context of the academic field of politics and literature because it is a treatment that relies upon, and potentially inspires this questioning impulse.

6.3.3 Political narratives: Theoretical texts need not be seen as divorced from imagination; similarly, the political novel need not be dismissed nor crudely categorised as incredulous or hopelessly subjective because of its typically overt use of imagination. As is the case with certain academic disciplines that engage in intersecting themes, the traditionally separate "categories" of theoretical writing and imaginative fiction also "overlap".[43] This is a point that Horton and Baumeister illustrate through their linking of the imaginative process of story telling with theory. It is this permissive view of the narrative possibilities of theoretical literature that enables them to describe the manner in which "theories are cast in the form of stories".[44] Indeed, the range of comparative material employed throughout this thesis is testament to the diverse array of imaginative narratives apparent in theory; narratives that complement and inform Rushdie's literary project. For example, just as Rushdie's construction of the Puppet Kings tale can be interpreted as an allegorical (imagined) account of the irreconcilable

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[43] Wilding, op. cit., p.1.
[44] Horton & Baumeister, op. cit., p. 15.

binaries of the logic of identity, Marion Young's reading of this binary similarly asks us to *imagine* the personally destructive effects of this form of oppositional logic. As my analysis of identity processes revealed, we articulate our own lives in the form of stories. It follows then that our articulation of the theoretical challenges, possibilities and questions we encounter throughout our lives is also expressed in the form of stories. By seeking out the political purpose in stories as they are told through various imaginative literary forms, the interdisciplinary field of politics and literature is a form of inquiry that acknowledges the imaginative and distinctly humanist aspect of theory. It is an academic pursuit that, as Said suggests, recognises the truism that intellectual work is human work.[45] As I explain in the following concluding section, Rushdie's literary project, by virtue of its challenge to all manner of dehumanising limits, abides by Said's claim.

6.4 The borders and frontiers of Rushdie's literary project

As Rushdie attests, "the crossing of borders" is at the "heart" of his "literary project".[46] This fact is evident throughout this thesis' engagement with the thematic preoccupations of the selected Rushdie texts and the imagery, symbols, structure and narrative techniques he employs in his imaginative and sophisticated treatment of those themes.

My conceptual analysis of borders and frontiers resolutely confirmed the contested nature of a diverse series of figurative and literal understandings of these superficially limiting descriptors. The provocative nature of Rushdie's literary project, his rallying call to the reader to "step across this line", suggests that he is acutely conscious of the finite nature of such perspectives; however, it also confirms that he views borders and frontiers as protean, orientating devices rather than static or restrictive barriers. Rushdie argues that we need not be beholden to: the restrictive confines of unimaginative, socio-economically delineated borders; the crude inclusive-exclusive political rhetoric of the Other; the violence-inspiring "security" semantics of connecting or separating walls; nor the

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[45] Said (2001), op. cit., p. 375.
[46] Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 434.

muted behavioural conventions of literary frontier crossings. Rushdie is an imaginative exile, an exile not as a consequence of his personal circumstances, but because he opposes rigid, absolute and impenetrable constructions of borders and frontiers. In challenging these constructions, he champions his "true language, the language of literature" because he is aware of the manner in which language is often subverted to give borders and frontiers socio-political legitimacy or prejudicial meaning.[47] A significant part of his literary project could be identified as a reclamation of language, seeking to give humanist meaning to language through the creative and imaginative dynamics of literature.

Rushdie's claim that imaginative literature resists the formulaic or purist categories of fiction, non-fiction, creative and theoretical writing suggests that he views the borders and frontiers of his own literary project as being beyond, and intrinsically resistant to rigid forms of classification. From this thesis' direct and comparative study of the thematic and structural dynamics of the Rushdie texts in question, it would seem that, to varying degrees, the language of his literature seeks to give figurative voice to the notion that "categories overlap".[48] His ability to successfully achieve this level of versatility has, as I have shown, at times exposed him to criticism. In particular his use of magical realism is often alternatively identified as a literary strength or a point of weakness. In seeking to blur the frontiers of the real and the surreal Rushdie may risk excluding readers more readily attuned to the timbre of a realist literary voice, thus potentially undermining the desired border-defying impact of his literary project. In promoting such a criticism, one could argue that Rushdie's notion of imaginative writing is governed by the potentially restrictive borders and frontiers of his own distinct understanding of imagination. However, given the cultural, social and political diversity of Rushdie's subject matter and the permissive, non-dictatorial tone of his writing I would suggest such a criticism is difficult to substantiate.

Rushdie's construction of Solanka's identity project follows the dictates of his broader literary project. In *Fury* he employs many of the imaginative literary devices discussed throughout this thesis to illustrate the nature of identity

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[47] ibid., p. 293.
[48] Wilding, op. cit., p. 1.

processes within the integrated global economy. Through his depiction of the potentially dehumanising dichotomies attendant to the logic of identity Rushdie shows how an individual can find meaning outside of these economically focussed success-failure binaries. Solanka's identity project is not wholly realised yet nor does it utterly fail; rather, Rushdie again emphasises the manner in which the borders delineating the contemporary identity-affirming choices between, for example, the supposedly incompatible "values" of competition and compassion, or loyalty and adaptability, need not be viewed as impervious. Through eschewing these borders and frontiers Solanka finds a way to exist, a way to construct a version of self in the amorphous regions in between, with all of the uncertainty, imperfection, joy and sadness this humanistic state brings.

Rushdie's commentary on the "church of celebrity" and the "industry of culture" is presented in a typically provocative manner, one that illuminates much of the dynamics of his literary technique in general.[49] Many of the assessments he presents of celebrity and cultural spheres, throughout *Fury*, are deliberately amplified and, at times exaggerated; a point exemplified by the sci-fi Puppet Kings allegory or the bizarre twists of the broken dolls killings. Similarly, many of the varied readings of culture and celebrity he offers throughout *Step Across This Line* could also be seen as extreme; for instance, his discussion of the unbridgeable emotional gulf between Karachi and Bombay or the "Godlike" omnipotence of Bono's sunglasses. Much of Rushdie's literary project pivots upon fluctuating real-surrealist perspectives of the extreme, the incredible, the abhorrent and the exceptional. As he states, his project concerns "the permeable frontier between the universe of things and deeds and the universe of the imagination".[50] To suggest that this frontier is permeable is to admit that both the universes he refers to have shared characteristics. Rushdie's literary project embraces this imaginative perspective, as exemplified through perspectives of identity culture and celebrity drawn form *Fury* and *Step Across This Line*.

Rushdie's literary project is directly concerned with borders and frontiers yet ironically it is not a project that can be figuratively defined within these

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[49] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 74.
[50] Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 434.

confines. As this thesis has shown, his project is best understood by the nature of the challenge he presents to traditionally understood limits. This is not to suggest that this literary challenge is merely a reactive enterprise. It is an imaginative project that recognises both the transience and the permanence of ideas. As Rushdie observes, "the journey creates us. We become the frontiers we cross".[51] It is a project that also recognises the fragilities and complexities of these journeys and the tension that spurs the endless reconfiguration of the borders and frontiers of both our imagined and our real experience of humanity.

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[51] ibid., p. 410.