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FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
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GRADE / DEGREE

Department of English

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

*Postcolonializing Deleuze: Transnationalism and Horizontal Thought in the British South Asian
Diaspora*

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**“Postcolonializing” Deleuze:
Transnationalism and Horizontal Thought in the British South Asian Diaspora**

Summer Pervez

**Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the PhD degree in English**

**Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa
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395 Wellington Street
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Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34141-4
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34141-4

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
<i>Introduction. Deleuze and Identity in the British South Asian Diaspora.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter One. “Hybridity Is Heresy”: Bhabha, Deleuze, and Salman Rushdie’s</i>	
<i>Satanic Verses.....</i>	12
<i>Chapter Two. “Different/ciating” the Hybrid Male: Sexual, Religious, Racial</i>	
<i>and National Lines of Flight in Hanif Kureishi’s Novels</i>	39
<i>Chapter Three. Deleuzean Feminisms: Transgression and Self-Possession in the</i>	
<i>Novels of Meera Syal and Monica Ali.....</i>	70
<i>Chapter Four. Queering the Diaspora: The Lesbian-Feminist Geographies of</i>	
<i>Suniti Namjoshi</i>	106
<i>Chapter Five. South Asian Filmmakers in/and Contemporary British Cinema.....</i>	147
<i>Conclusion. Towards a New Cultural Poetics.....</i>	184
Notes.....	190
Bibliography.....	208

Abstract

This dissertation is about the need to re-examine South Asian British literature and film from the perspective of “horizontal” thought. Writers and filmmakers of the British Asian diaspora offer a new model of thinking about identity, one that is “Deleuzian” in nature. Artists such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Meera Syal, Monica Ali, Suniti Namjoshi, and Gurinder Chadha reveal a concern with showing both celebrations of and resistance to pluralism and possibility in a transnational world. Furthermore, their work also illustrates the need and desire to create a new cultural poetics in Britain, one that is more inclusive of diaspora literature and film. When applied to Asian British texts, Deleuzian philosophy reveals the complex intersections of migrancy, ethnicity, postcoloniality, and (homo)sexuality in the diasporic identities of contemporary South Asian writers, filmmakers, and their characters. In contrast to models of hybrid identity espoused by postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha (vertical thinkers), Gilles Deleuze’s model of horizontal thought escapes hierarchism, binarism, and idealism when analyzing transnational, liminal identities as represented in and by the creative work of British Asians. This shift in thought to horizontality is necessary because the literature and film themselves exemplify the following three concerns: (1) the need and quest for plural identities, (2) an examination of the pros and cons of being a migrant/ transnational/ diasporic figure in England, calling for a consideration of both transnationalism’s advantages and its discontents, and (3) and the need to create a unique cultural poetics that operates as a “minor” literature that forms a significant part of the larger grouping of English literature and cinema.

Acknowledgements

Along with the University of Ottawa, I would like to thank the following libraries where significant research was conducted: the D.B. Weldon library at the University of Western Ontario, Robarts Library and the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, the British Library, and the Bradford Public Library for a copy of their collected news material on the Salman Rushdie Affair. I would also like to thank the following institutions for their financial assistance: the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS) and the Association of Part-Time Professors (APTPUO) at the University of Ottawa, as well as the Ontario graduate Scholarship Program (OGS).

I would also like to thank three individuals without whom this dissertation would have taken an altogether different shape: Suniti Namjoshi, for generously inviting me to her home in Devon for a personal interview, Monica Ali for answering questions at the Canadian book launch of her novel *Alentejo Blue*, and Gautam Malkani for putting up with my endless stream of questions during our meetings at the International Writer's Festival, and for the interview conducted at the Canadian book launch of *Londonstani*.

I also thank the following friends and colleagues for reading chapter drafts, engaging in heated debates with me, or assisting with the shape of the dissertation more generally: Moazzam Sheikh, Chelva Kanaganayakam, David Rampton, Nicholas von Maltzahn, Sean Moreland, Marwa Awad, George Higinbotham, Roxane Rix, and Huwaida Pervez. A special thanks to Diana Brydon and David Jarraway, in whose courses this dissertation was inspired.

And finally, I would like to express a very special thanks to Robin Finney, for reading every word of each draft, and for his encouragement throughout the writing process. This dissertation would not have been completed without his unwavering support.

Introduction: Deleuze and Identity in the British South Asian Diaspora

The frontier is an elusive line, visible and invisible, physical and metaphorical, amoral and moral... None of us are who we would have been if that line had not stepped across our land.
~ Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line* (352, 369)

With its emergence from the shadows since World War II, South Asian literature as a whole is increasingly being viewed as significant to late modernity's drift toward globalization and transnationalism (Lal 29). This emergence has led to an abundance of studies concerning the literary diaspora by scholars such as James Clifford, Paul Gilroy, Rey Chow, Stuart Hall, and Homi K. Bhabha. However, the postcolonial models that are currently being used to look at diasporic and transnational literature – specifically theories of hybridity and liminality surrounding identity – need revision, for the literature and film that have emerged within the last quarter-century can no longer be called immediately “post(-)colonial.” Beyond the time frame of oppositional colonialism, such literature and film constitute a unique diaspora culture in today's age of globalization and cosmopolitanism, concerned with issues of hybridity, nomadism, and transnationalism, that have emerged as a result of postcolonial migration. As Robin Cohen has argued in *Global Diasporas*, the contemporary world offers a new scope of “multiple affiliations

and associations” that have gone beyond the nation-state; this postmodern world also allows having a “diasporic allegiance” to be possible and acceptable (Cohen 174). As a result, there is “no longer any stability in the points of origin, no finality in the points of destination and no necessary coincidence between national and social identities,” for such identities can no longer be territorialized; instead, they are reterritorialized as “transnational,” unable to be “contained in the nation-state system” (175).

The term “diaspora” comes from Greek and means a scattering or dispersion. While the term’s classical usage refers to the historical event of the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine to other countries, postcolonial and cultural critics use the term broadly to refer to any group of people that has, either through forced or voluntary migration, taken up residence in a place other than their original home. A broader term than “immigrant,” a label often used to describe these groups, “diaspora” encompasses a much “wider range of people and experiences” (Selvadurai 5). While “immigrant” problematically invokes a sense of being a perpetual newcomer or outsider due to its emphasis on the act of arrival itself, “diaspora” implies constant mobility, with its emphasis on processes of becoming, changing, and “dynamic cultural mixing” (5). As diasporic writer Shyam Selvadurai explains, as a result of migration, “one cannot but be transformed in the new land. The emphasis must shift to a sense of cultural identity that is eclectic and diverse... transforming itself, making itself new over and over again” (5). The sense of transformation inherent in this definition of diaspora suggests that the diasporic identity can be regarded as a “continuous work in progress” (5). More precisely, it implies a sense of subjectivity that takes into account points of similarity, but more importantly, points of difference such as class, gender, and sexuality. Such a subjectivity, stressing

“not just who one was in the past, but who one might be in the process of becoming” (5), tends towards a certain fluidity or nomadism that is characteristic of the notion of identity as espoused by Gilles Deleuze. As an alternative model to traditional conceptions of identity based on fixed categories, Deleuze’s model of horizontal subjectivity escapes hierarchies, binaries, and idealism, thereby allowing for greater degrees of complication and difference. This increased complexity is because horizontal identities are never complete or fixed (what Deleuze calls “molar”), but function as incomplete assemblages that are, much like diasporic subjectivities, “molecular” – always in process or production, engaged in perpetual becomings (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 308).

While migration from the Indian subcontinent to Britain dates well back to the 1600s, a wave of major literary and cinematic South Asian interventions into mainstream culture has begun to surface within the last half-century.¹ Contemporary South Asian writers and filmmakers in Britain offer a new model of thinking about identity, one that is horizontal and Deleuzean in nature. These artists reveal a concern with showing both celebrations of and resistance to pluralism and possibility in a transnational world. Complex and intersecting “lines of flight” – among them sexual, religious, national, and ethnic – develop thematically in the literature and film of this diaspora. Moreover, certain British Asian writers and filmmakers combine these issues in a systematic attempt to collapse and reimagine their thematic boundaries (Kumar 2002). However, while much work continues to appear on individual British Asian artists and their specific concerns, no attempt has yet been made to theorize the body of work in a manner that has accounted for the presence of horizontal constructions of subjectivity across its whole. In response to this lack, this dissertation is an application of “Deleuzeanism,” or horizontal

thought, to contemporary British literature and film of the South Asian diaspora. Through my readings of select texts and films in the subsequent chapters, I argue that since the mid-1980s, South Asians in Britain have been consistently offering new ways of conceptualizing diasporic subject positions that are not based on essences and purities, but operate by heterogeneity and diversity. Throughout their creative works, writers and filmmakers such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Meera Syal, Monica Ali, Suniti Namjoshi and Gurinder Chadha successfully employ what I term “Deleuzeanism,” a system of philosophy based on horizontal becomings and the subsequent pluralization of identity, to reflect their unique visions of overlapping identities in the contemporary transnational world. Such a shift to horizontal thought is necessary because contemporary British Asian poetics itself exemplifies the following three concerns: (1) the quest for plural identities which go beyond the binary, accounting for multiple differences in class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and nationality; (2) the need to delineate the pros and cons of being a migrant/diasporic figure in England, calling for a consideration of both transnationalism’s advantages as well as its discontents; and (3) the urge to create a unique cultural poetics that manifests itself significantly within British culture as a whole.

In Chapter One, “ ‘Hybridity Is Heresy:’ Bhabha, Deleuze, and Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*,” my central aim is to show how Deleuze’s philosophy, or system of thought, becomes a useful extension of Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial and cultural theory when it comes to the study of identity in literature. Using Bhabha’s own analysis of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988) as a base, I argue that while viewing the two theorists side by side may reveal key points of intersecting thought common to them,

such a comparison also reveals the limited binarism and hierarchy of Bhabha's model of postcolonial identity when applied to transnational subjectivities. In other words, Bhabha's theoretical ideas on the hybridized migrant consistently fail sufficiently to reveal the complex intersections of migrancy, ethnicity, postcoloniality, and (homo) sexuality in the diasporic identities of South Asian writers, filmmakers, and their characters. While Bhabha presents a limited number of identity options arranged hierarchically along a liminal stairwell, Deleuze offers endless possibilities of "becoming" in his model of subjectivity, one that escapes all binaries and hierarchies due to the flattening of "Identity" (deliberately capitalized) into "identities," or plural multiplicities. Additionally, Deleuzian philosophy takes into account that the transition to experimental identity, while often considered ideal, can also be problematic and challenging: while certain protagonists in British Asian literature and film willingly collapse boundaries and embrace the in-between spaces of plurality to become "molecular," many characters are more concerned with remaining "molar," or resisting cultural translation and preventing the attainment of mixed and plural identities. In other words, due to a fear of change, complication, or the unknown Deleuzian abyss, British Asians often exhibit a preference to cling passively to the familiar and fixed in the place of becomings, or "virtual and coming" identities (Bernstein 127-28). Such a resistance to complexity and pluralism – largely ignored by Bhabha – is demonstrated by both Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses*, ultimately indicating that the "third space" is not always, voluntarily or otherwise, selected as the ideal position to be in. This resistance to the space of the hyphen is further indicated by the controversial reception of the novel within the Islamic community. The notorious Rushdie Affair highlights how the

fictional reshaping or rewriting of a religion by a transcultural migrant can be resisted – or in this case, seen as blasphemous – by its original culture. In this light, Bhabha’s interstitial position cannot be universally accepted as the best position to be in, for communities can resist such figures as Rushdie who threaten the essence of their religion or culture with “translation.” Hybridity, therefore, becomes heresy to those for whom the diasporic’s transnational vision is not at all ideal, thus compelling them to adhere to more fixed definitions of cultural identity.

In the three chapters that follow, I demonstrate that while some British Asian diasporic writers and filmmakers choose to emphasize the failures of hybridity as Rushdie has, others engage equally with the celebration of such plurality – most notably Hanif Kureishi, Meera Syal, Suniti Namjoshi, and Monica Ali. Hanif Kureishi’s work is unique in this regard, for he addresses both the positive and negative aspects of hybridity in the portraits of urban life presented in his novels. In Chapter Two, “ ‘Different/ciating’ the Hybrid Male: Sexual, Religious, Racial and National Lines of Flight in Hanif Kureishi’s Novels,” I tease out the further implications of what it means to be hybrid through an analysis of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995), and *The Body* (2002). In all three novels, Kureishi presents London as a place that exemplifies Deleuzean possibility for the protagonist, with all its offerings of sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll. With thematic emphasis on the multiple and interconnected complications of race, religion, and sexuality under Thatcherism, the multiplicity of London is initially celebrated in each novel. However, while at first Karim, Shahid, and Adam are unquestioning in their acceptance of the possibilities of becoming that London offers, eventually each protagonist recognizes that such freedom cannot be had without some

adherence to a sense of ethical responsibility. On the whole, Kureishi presents a range of hybrid positions in these novels that is realistic and diverse; offering a multitude of options in between South Asian and British, he takes into account not only the successes but also the limits and failures of hybridity.

In Chapter Three, “Deleuzian Feminisms: Transgression and Self-Possession in the Novels of Meera Syal and Monica Ali,” I discuss the relationship between Deleuzianism and feminism. The protagonists of Syal and Ali’s novels depict feminist protagonists who all undergo certain gendered traumas of displacement that result in similar struggles for self-possession across geographic, national, and cultural borders. These struggles may simply be seen as expressions of transnationalism’s discontents; however, in light of recent appropriations of Deleuzian philosophy within feminist theory, alternate interpretations of Syal and Ali’s fiction can be arrived at through a discussion of the “positivity of difference” highlighted in the novels (Braidotti 2001). Rather than sources of discontent, the protagonists’ struggles can be regarded as assertive lines of flight – sexual, racial, and national – constructed as part of the process of “becoming-woman.” Over the course of her story, each protagonist moves from molar constructions of the self toward a more fluid and molecular identity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 248). In *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) and *Brick Lane* (2004) in particular, transgression becomes an event, or line of flight: Chila, Sunita, Tania, and Nazneen all manage to overcome the discontents of being culturally hybrid by forming molecular strategies of becoming as women *in process*. Ultimately, in my comparison of Syal and Ali’s novels, I highlight precisely where feminism meets Deleuze, and why this meeting is of utmost importance to the development of Asian British women’s writing.

Their protagonists' willful acts of crossing boundaries, erected by patriarchal definitions of female identity and belonging, call for a redefinition of diasporic theory's emphasis on the ready availability and acceptance of multiple identities for transnational women.

In Chapter Four, "Queering the Diaspora: The Lesbian-Feminist Geographies of Suniti Namjoshi," I continue to consider the multiple layers of oppression and concurrent Deleuzian lines of flight undergone by women. Perhaps the most notable and also the most understudied line of flight in the British South Asian diaspora is the emergence of a burgeoning homosexual discourse within the literature and the cinema. The chance to write about this particular theme – one that is notably absent in both classical and contemporary writing from South Asia itself – has surfaced as a direct result of the movement of such writers to diasporic locations within well-established queer communities across Europe and North America. My focus in this chapter is on Suniti Namjoshi, a transnational feminist writer known not only for her lesbian poetry but also her literary experiments with layered narrative forms of the revisionist myth, fable, and fairy tale (in verse and prose), atypical stories for children, the mythic autobiographical novel, and the collaborative form of the hypertext. As a Deleuzian writer, Namjoshi defies conventional categorization, describing herself not as a poet, novelist, or satirist, but as a mythmaker or fabulist – a figure that inhabits the in-between spaces of conventional categories. Having lived in India, Canada and England, Namjoshi's ability to speak from in-between categories and locations is advantageous to her writing as it generates new ways of understanding the world. But rather than lament lost homelands when addressing the tensions inherent within her own complex identity, Namjoshi generates unique narrative strategies with which to create new fictive mental spaces,

thereby allowing her both to question heterosexism and racial stereotyping as well as deconstruct patriarchal models of femininity (Weedon 224). On the whole, Namjoshi's writing is deeply engaged with a certain Deleuzian methodology of fracturing that reveals the central aims in her work to be rhizomatic, feminist, and queer. Through distinctive and creative modes of postmodern and postcolonial writing, Namjoshi deconstructs the category "woman," ultimately liberating her from patriarchal constraints. Instead, she calls for a female subjectivity that is in constant formation, in eternal process, and in engagement with "rhizomatics, multiplicity, and becoming" (Grosz 1994, 197). When applied to Namjoshi's work, the concept of "the intensive Deleuzian subject" opens up a range of what Braidotti has, in another context, termed "possible configurations of a variety of subject positions that are post-metaphysics of gender, or beyond sexual difference" (Braidotti 2001, 162).

In the fifth chapter, "South Asian Filmmakers in/and Contemporary British Cinema," I consider developments in film parallel to the developments discussed in British Asian literature. The focus in contemporary films by members of this particular diaspora has also involved debates surrounding hybrid, liminal, and transnational identities; here also, we witness how central characters transform themselves by taking Deleuzian lines of flight. In this final chapter, I bring together all of the lines of flight already discussed in the previous chapters – sexual, racial, religious, and national – to illustrate the treatment of these themes on the cinematic screen. The theoretical base for this chapter stems from Deleuze's work on cinema theory, particularly his classification of cinematic images and signs in *Cinema I*, the dynamism of the time-image in *Cinema 2*, as well as his ideas on collaboration interspersed throughout his work. I consider a range

of British Asian cinematic interventions in the chapter, including Meera Syal and Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and Ayub Khan-Din and Damien O'Donnell's *East is East* (1999). My primary focus, however, is on Hanif Kureishi's cinematic collaborations with various directors, beginning with his pioneering films with Stephen Frears in the mid-1980s, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), and ending with his latest collaborations, *Intimacy* (2001) and *The Mother* (2004), with Patrice Chéreau and Roger Michell, respectively. Ultimately, I argue that the films of contemporary South Asian filmmakers operate as lines of flight, or "events" that intervene within mainstream British cinema. As such, these films function as a type of "minor literature" (a term defined more fully in Chapter 5) that is engaged in actively and politically redefining the English nation-state through its subversion of British culture as a whole (Deleuze and Guattari 1986).

Postcolonial scholars are still struggling to develop adequate terms for the "profound socio-cultural dislocations" expressed in diaspora literature. Significantly, all of these scholars have a common aim to "better appreciate how historically disenfranchised peoples have developed inventive tactics for transforming even the most sinister experiences of dislocation into vibrant and revolutionary forms of political and cultural life" (Chariandy 1). Revolution is thus an inherent aspect of all diasporic identities, "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 1990, 235). Ultimately, the multiple literary and cinematic interventions of the Asian British diaspora can be viewed as a "minor literature" that, in a revolutionary and transformative movement, disturbs the borders of mainstream British culture (defined by the interests of a prevailing white middle class) by

subverting it from within. When considered collectively, this grouping of minor artists reflects the desire and need for the creation of a new cultural poetics in Britain, one that is inclusive of South Asian fiction and film. Mainstream literature and cinema in Britain can thus be seen as having taken significant lines of flight themselves due to the presence of the Asian cultural minority at their various borders.

Chapter One

“Hybridity Is Heresy”: Bhabha, Deleuze, and Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*

Where God lived inside of me, there is now a hole. I am no longer a practicing Muslim. And this hole is what I wanted to explore. And exploration, isn’t that suitable for a novel?
 ~ Salman Rushdie, *L’Express*, 1989 (Pages 88-9)

A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the creator’s role, according to one way of seeing things; he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations.
 ~ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (49)

My central aim in this initial chapter is to show how the ideas of postmodern philosopher Gilles Deleuze become a useful extension of Bhabha’s postcolonial and cultural theory when applied to the work of South Asian diaspora writers and filmmakers in England. Viewing the two theorists side by side not only shows how they are complementary but also reveals the limited binarism of Bhabha’s model of postcolonial identity, one in which there are no more than three options of being that are arranged hierarchically along a liminal stairwell – South Asian, English, or a combination of the two “in-between.” Bhabha describes this stairwell, an image he lifts from Renée Green’s *Sites of Genealogy*, as follows:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference *without an assumed or imposed hierarchy*. (Bhabha 1994, 4; my emphasis)

However, rather than allow for non-hierarchical difference, it is precisely an “imposed hierarchy” and binary “polarities” that result here. The first problem with Bhabha’s vision of identity is that on the liminal stairwell, the in-between always has an option both above and below it, creating a hierarchy of clearly defined floors, or a demarcated identity at each floor. Even if the stairwell consists of a single staircase or a single flight of stairs (thus creating two floors rather than multiple levels) a hierarchy of identity still remains, as do binaries of “upper and lower,” of the stairwell. In his philosophy, Deleuze goes beyond Bhabha’s binarism by allowing for the transformation of verticality into horizontality, consequently truly privileging the plurality of the postcolonial identity in a non-hierarchical manner. These two models of identity can be visually contrasted: while Bhabha’s model relies upon what is possibly a single stairwell with only two options, one at each end, Deleuze’s model operates more as a finely nuanced wheel with criss-crossing lines and points (allowing for multiple options and intersections) but one that has been flattened in a manner that de-centres the centre, creating what he calls a “plane of immanence.” Because it is modeled on a horizontal plane with intersecting lines, the

Deleuzean model of subjectivity allows for the discussion of truly transnational identities crossing *multiple* nations in a way that Bhabha's model does not permit. Such a postmodern form of identity, akin to but also more complex than Bhabha's postcolonial model of hybridity, is prevalent within South Asian diasporic writing and film from the British diaspora. In this body of work, identity increasingly ceases to be a singular mode of being as the possibilities of identity, or what Deleuze terms "becomings," are revealed to be endless.

When applied to select British Asian texts and films, Bhabha's theoretical ideas on the hybridized migrant fail sufficiently to reveal the complex intersections of migrancy, ethnicity, postcoloniality, and (homo)sexuality in the diasporic identities of South Asian writers, filmmakers, and their characters. In this chapter, through my reading of *The Satanic Verses*, I offer an alternative model to Bhabha's "vertical" conception of identity with which to understand the novel: a Deleuzean model of horizontal subjectivity that escapes hierarchy, binarism, and idealism, allowing for a greater degree of complication and difference. When one begins to "trace the lines" that make up the South Asian diasporic identity, Bhabha's liminal stairwell becomes a Deleuzean Aion, situated on a plane of immanence akin to a desert, complete with varying and rearrangeable "lines" ("tribes, flora, and fauna"), from where multiple lines of flight or new facets of identity emerge (Deleuze and Parnet 11). This desert, or "experimentation on oneself," is for Deleuze and Parnet "our only identity, our single chance for all the combinations which inhabit us" (11). The figure of the migrant on this desert becomes the nomadic subject: "a strange subject, without fixed identity... being defined by the share of the product it takes for itself, garnering here, there, and

everywhere a reward in the form of a becoming or an avatar, being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 16). As a diasporic figure, rather than being defined as one who is in a fixed or perpetual state of arrival (similar to the definitions of terms such as “migrant” or “immigrant”), the nomadic subjectivity is constantly in production or process as it pluralizes itself through becomings.

The transition to experimental identity, however, while often considered ideal, is usually presented as problematic and challenging in postcolonial novels. While English-born Asian protagonists of some of these works often willingly collapse boundaries and embrace the third space of plurality, many of the South Asian-born immigrant characters presented are more concerned with resisting cultural translation and preventing the attainment of mixed and plural identities. This resistance to becoming-hybrid and the desire for molarity represent what American theorist Charles Bernstein calls a “postmodern paranoia” with regard to the experimentation with and exemplification of pluralism in modern writing (Bernstein 127-28). This paranoia occurs because becoming “something else” on a Deleuzian line of flight, or in the in-between space of Bhabha’s liminal stairwell, changes our molecular lines of being by placing them in a process of continual flux and change: one has to lose one’s own identity, “lose one’s face,” to disappear, to “be unknown at last” (Deleuze and Parnet 45). Bernstein would describe this fear as one of “complication, evasion, or erasure of identity” (Bernstein 127). Due to such a fear of change and complication, or the unknowable Deleuzian abyss, South Asian immigrants to England often tend to prefer the more familiar passive condition of “molarity” in the place of becomings: they fall back into “rigidly territorializing

clannishness and paralyzingly depoliticizing codicity” rather than heading toward “a virtual and coming identity” that is “molecular” (127-28).

Homi Bhabha claims that precisely such a problem of molarity, or resistance to hybridity in favour of the rigidly bound and familiar, has occurred with Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* – the only novel that in *The Location of Culture* that has an entire chapter devoted to it. Throughout the theoretical work, Bhabha insists that “a transnational, ‘migrant’ knowledge of the world is most urgently needed” (Bhabha 1994, 214), and that such a world vision can be attained from the “truest eye” on the world, belonging to the “migrant’s double vision” (5). For Bhabha, this double vision (possessed by Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta in Rushdie’s novel) comes from the migrant’s position of “in-between-ness,” positioned on the liminal space of the stairwell, one that can be seen as akin to Deleuze’s “vague” space from which becomings emerge (3-4). Such a position allows the migrant a simultaneous vision of both the West and the East, and allows for movement *in between* the binary. For both Bhabha and Deleuze, it is from this third terrain of liminality that wholly new strategies and signs of selfhood, both singular and communal/societal/ national (1-2) come into view. In other words, the construction of this space is “what enables other positions to emerge” through the displacement of the histories that constitute strategies of selfhood, as well as the subsequent setting up of “new structures of authority, new political initiatives” (Bhabha 1990b, 211). Furthermore, being in this in-between space, a place which is “neither the one nor the other” but “something else besides” (Bhabha 1994, 25; 219), allows for the formation of new non-fixed, plural, and variable identities that have the potential to create a similarly fluctuating or “migrant” world of hybridity that reflects Bhabha’s ideal vision.

In their own ways, both Bhabha and Rushdie speak of a similar and particular postcolonial migrant world-view based on doubleness and hybridity. A comparison of the two texts, showing both where Bhabha and Rushdie are in agreement about the condition of the migrant and where they differ, can be useful when theorizing the concept and function of the migrant in the postcolonial, postmodern world. But while applying Bhabha's concept of the migrant condition to Rushdie's novel quite usefully shows the theory's validity when put into practice, at the same time, Rushdie's novel indicates that he has a different, less optimistic view than Bhabha as to the consequences of this double vision. The novel's ambiguous ending insists that being in the "third space" also has its drawbacks: the migrant/hybrid condition is not always wholly positive for the migrant himself because of the intense identity crisis it creates. The negative consequences of being a hybridized migrant are highlighted in the final chapters of *The Satanic Verses*, as both protagonists ultimately reject the third space of the hyphen that Bhabha privileges. The resolutions of Saladin and Gibreel's identity crises as well as the novel's controversial reception usefully point to certain limitations in Bhabha's view that he himself fails to acknowledge. For example, although he extensively discusses concepts of mimicry and the uncanny in relation to the colonial subject in several novels he considers in *The Location of Culture*, in his analysis of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* Bhabha fails sufficiently to analyze the *anxiety* undergone by both Saladin and Gibreel in the face of their hybridizations. Gibreel's story in particular is neglected in this regard, generating an argument about the controversial novel that is unusually idealized in its celebration of the hybrid condition. Such limitations in Bhabha's analysis can be overcome when the entirety of the novel is reconsidered from a Deleuzian point of view, for such a

horizontal perspective escapes binary thinking, allowing for more variable movement and degrees of difference within the interstitial spaces of identity while at the same time taking into account the limitations and negative effects of becoming-hybrid.

To demonstrate how Rushdie's novel represents the transnational migrant condition, we must first consider the useful connecting points between Bhabha and Deleuze's theories of hybrid identity, as well as the manner in which Deleuze's thought extends "beyond" Bhabha. Bhabha's ideas on the migrant condition are grounded in his theory of hybridity, in which his definition of hybridity is structured around ideas of "doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self" (143-44). It is through the splitting and doubling of the self, defined by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* as occurring along the Aion (border or edge), that disorientation and dislocation occur (the negative effects of the split), but it is also from the "in-between" space resulting from this dividing that the possibility of "newness" emerges. For both Bhabha and Deleuze, to encounter newness one must engage with the border that results from the split, for it is from the third space of the boundary that "something begins its presencing" and disturbs both sides of the border (Bhabha 1994, 7; 4-5). In their similar concept of "becoming" and plural selfhood as outlined in *Dialogues II*, rather than molarizing our identities Deleuze and Parnet propound the need to keep options open by moving away from molarity and toward becomings. This constant movement involves a perpetual process of taking molar assemblages, or territories, and defamiliarizing them so that new and varied assemblages can be recreated through the act of reterritorialization. Both Bhabha's hybridity and Deleuze's pluralism, therefore, can be seen as "problematics of representation" associated with identity: in each case, with an acknowledgement of the "newness" that emerges,

what “begins its presencing” in the context of identity formation will become a new, hybrid, and plural vision of the self (Sanga 81).

Forced to go through identity revisions from a third space “in-between” two or more nations, the figures of the migrant in Bhabha and the nomad in Deleuze are representative of hybridity. For both Bhabha and Deleuze, the hybridization of the migrant, or the creation of the nomadic subject, results in the opening of a third space of negotiation from which the reworking of nations becomes possible. According to Bhabha, “a range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most valuable lessons for living and thinking” (Bhabha 1994, 172). For him, as one who has suffered the “sentence of history” in terms of diaspora and displacement, the in-between figure of the migrant becomes crucial to the reshaping of a nation. The “boundary that marks the nation’s selfhood” (148) is interrupted by the arrival of such a subject in the form of an intervening “supplementary” discourse that adds to and alters the nation (155). Consequently, the signification of the nation’s identity and the signification of its people as homogeneous is disrupted. From this space of liminality, due to the existence of a “minor” presence at the nation’s borders, certainty comes to a collapse and a nation is forced to revise itself; it no longer remains “the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society” (149).

Having lived in India, Pakistan, England, and the United States, Rushdie is a true transnational whose writing reflects a unique “double vision” – as both an insider and outsider to the East and the West – that allows him to “communicate experiences from

disparate worlds” (Sanga 15). Jaina C. Sanga argues that his work does not fully ascribe to either world (East or West) and that Rushdie’s sense of himself as a nomad offers him the ability to shift perspectives and see and present the world from new angles (15, 17). In line with Bhabha’s argument that the hybridity of the migrant can provide a new world view, in his 1982 essay, “Imaginary Homelands,” Rushdie explains the value of the diasporic writer’s “stereoscopic” perspective in literature, in very Deleuzian terms:

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us such angles.... Indian writers are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same insiders and outsiders in this society. This stereoscopic vision is perhaps what we can offer in place of ‘whole sight.’ (Rushdie 1991, 19, 16)

Rushdie also points out that works of art and entertainment “do not come into being in a social or political vacuum”; the “way that they operate in a society cannot be separated from politics, from history” (92). In other words, for Rushdie, “politics and literature... are inextricably mixed, and that mixture has consequences” (100), simply because “the production of any literary work is culturally conditioned” (Malak 183).

In the context of the consequences of literature, it has been argued that Rushdie’s writing, as both social and political, offers a new world vision and a “reconception of history” in terms of postcolonialism. As Sanga explains,

the border is the only reliable consistent home because he [Rushdie] can never fully settle on either side. Through his writing, Rushdie's project is to expand this border, give it an authority of its own. It is from such an interstitial position, then, that Rushdie calls for a reconception of history from a postcolonial perspective so as to generate new and alternate sites of representation. Rushdie's stance is that the Western metropolis must contend with its postcolonial history as told by migrants and incorporate this voice into the national narrative. As Bhabha suggests, "the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis" [(Bhabha 1990a, 6)]. (Sanga 17)

With *The Satanic Verses*, then, Rushdie operates as a marginal figure rewriting the English nation by entering from the nation's periphery with an intervening minority discourse that displaces the centre. Bhabha explains that this "supplementary" discourse comes after the "original," or "in addition" to it (Bhabha 1994, 55). The advantage of the supplementary is its "secondariness" or belated entry into the structure of the original that disturbs the calculation of the original. As a supplement, the writer of the minority discourse does not negate the origin, but rather provides a "plus" that "compensate[s] for a minus in the origin" (155). As a writer of what Deleuze and Guattari call a "minor literature," Rushdie functions as a supplement that disrupts the one and the homogeneous as something "less-than-one" in order to re-negotiate the boundaries of the origin (Deleuze and Guattari 1986b; Bhabha 1994, 155). For both Bhabha and Deleuze, nations need to keep this supplementary space open for the "articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct" to the original or dominant (163).

If Rushdie functions as a supplement or a minor writer at the nation's borders, then *The Satanic Verses* functions as a counter-narrative to England. Demonstrating a concern with a crisis of culture, the novel can be said to typify both Bhabha and Deleuze's definitions of a counter-narrative or minor literature that forces into revision certain ideological visions of the nation and nationhood. To Bhabha, the function of counter-narratives is to "continually evoke and erase its [the nation's] totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (149). For example, Timothy Brennan has argued that what Rushdie's work calls into question is "the government's increasingly hostile and restrictive anti-immigration laws, the growth of the National Front, and the 'feel-good' ideology of empire in the speeches of Margaret Thatcher," as well as the issue of racism itself (148). In "The New Empire Within Britain" (1982), Rushdie recognizes and addresses the fact that "Britain is undergoing the critical phase of its post-colonial period. This crisis is not simply economic or political. It is a crisis of the whole culture, of the society's entire sense of itself" (Brennan 148-9). Thus, in its questioning of the nation's essence, the counter-narrative has a specific goal: the borders of a nation, and consequently national identity, are forced into revision by the existence of what lies just outside those borders – in this case, the diasporic or nomadic writer who wants "to redefine the nation" (Spivak 1993, 235). In this way, the arrival of a counter-narrative or minor literature puts the very essentializing of the people "as one" into question (Bhabha 1994, 153).

In *The Satanic Verses*, this act of arrival is specifically represented by two nomadic characters: as "others," Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are not

accounted for within the imagined essence of England and must work their way into it by altering it to include themselves. Reflecting a “migrant’s-eye view of the world” (Rushdie 1991, 394), the novel serves as a supplement/minor discourse that opens up a new cultural space where diasporic characters must resolve inner tensions by negotiating differences within (Bhabha 1994, 218). In the first chapter of the novel, “newness enters the world” in *medias res* (227), in the form of the literal fall from the sky of the transformed and reborn Gibreel and Saladin. As migrants, both characters are already double within themselves: each encompasses an Indian side and a British side, albeit Gibreel affiliates himself more with India and Saladin more with England. This difference between the two is articulated from the start of the novel in their singing competition: as they fall, Gibreel sings the multicultural Hindi film song “Mera Joota Hai Japani,” a song about having an Indian heart, and Saladin contrasts it with a British song of his own by James Thompson (Rushdie 1988, 5-6). In the course of the novel, the Indian-privileging Gibreel will be forced into Britishness while the British-privileging Saladin will be forced to kindle relationships with the London Indian diaspora. Both men exist in a third space in between their two cultures, the Indian and the British; it is from this in-between position that each man must negotiate his self as a supplement into the dominant culture – Gibreel into the British, and Saladin back into the Indian (via a “re-negotiation”) – each from his own hybrid perspective.

Already hybrid as migrants, Gibreel and Saladin are further pluralized as they undergo a Deleuzean “becoming” while they fall from the literally cracked *Bostan* (4).¹ Already reconstituted through past experiences of migration, their identities are additionally complicated by being further hyphenated, thereby escaping all binaries and

becoming-plural (Sanga 22): one migrant becomes the archangel Gibreel (Gabriel) and the other, Saladin, is metamorphosed into the archangel Shaitan (Satan) (Rushdie 1988, 33). While falling, Saladin is aware of his own metamorphosis and becoming-hybrid, and Gibreel also senses a rebirth occurring (3, 7-8). At one point during this fall, Saladin and Gibreel are shown two halves of one coin – “Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha” (5) – united in an embrace (7). Angel juxtaposed with devil, this suggests a further hybridization and “the possibility of interchangeability” in terms of identity (Sanga 33), for each man carries traits of the other within him as well: Gibreel is said to have always encompassed a devilish side, and Saladin will be shown to have angelic qualities. An indication of hybridity, this interchangeability is clearly evident in both characters throughout the novel. For example, Gibreel’s multiple identities include, but are not limited to, the original Ismail Najmuddin, Gibreel the actor (his various god-becomings are a sub-example), the prophet, the angel, and the evil spirit, and the lover of Alleluia Cone. Likewise, Saladin is born Salahuddin Chamchawalla, has consciously become British in profession and sound, and also has a profession as voice-over actor which allows him to engage in various British becomings – all before his metamorphosis into Shaitan. Here, despite their tight physical conflation as they undergo their simultaneous metamorphoses, Saladin and Gibreel have starkly opposing reactions to their reformulated state of becoming. While Gibreel, we are told, has “the rebirth bug” (Rushdie 1988, 15) and has his arms open wide in order to embrace the fact that he is “cracked” (85), Saladin displays a certain “restraint” by wrapping his arms around his body (5).

In Chapter 11 of *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha moves to a specific discussion of hybridity, migrancy, and cultural translation in *The Satanic Verses*. As “neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between,*” Bhabha argues that it is from a performance of “differential identities” that Gibreel and Saladin negotiate spaces, re-open and re-make boundaries (Bhabha 1994, 219, his emphasis). Bhabha focuses on Saladin Chamcha’s position of hybridity in detail, examining his role as a “‘borderline’ figure of a massive historical displacement – postcolonial migration – that is not only a ‘transitional’ reality, but also a ‘transnational’ phenomenon... for Chamcha stands, quite literally, in between two border conditions” (224). Saladin has on his one side a representative of India – Hind – and on the other a “‘colonial’ metropolitan” who “understands the fate of the migrant” by the name of Sufyan (224). Bhabha is in agreement with Rushdie’s claim in his 1990 essay, “In Good Faith,” that Saladin’s division is “secular and societal: he is torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West” (Rushdie 1991, 197).

However, in his discussion of the novel, Bhabha focuses only on the positive effects of the migrant as a hybrid figure whose advantageous position allows him to present us with a true “migrant” world view. Even though he acknowledges that the splitting and hybridization of the self is an uncanny process that can result in disorientation and dislocation (Bhabha 1994, 143-44), Bhabha does not fully acknowledge the significance of these negative effects on Gibreel and Saladin as presented in Rushdie’s novel. The issue of identity, and re-making identity, is a central theme in the novel, and the question “Who am I?” (Rushdie 1989, 4) is the crisis-inducing question that Gibreel and Saladin must come to resolve. Ultimately, the process

of hybridization is not accepted as a positive act by either protagonist; for each, this is a painful crisis of identity that has come about *as a result* of their hybrid position on Bhabha's liminal stairwell. Hybridity is, therefore, a crisis to both men; after all, according to the narrator/God/Satan, "a man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations" (Rushdie 1998, 49).

This crisis of hybridity is best articulated by Sufyan – one who "understands the fate of the migrant" (Bhabha 224) – in his discussion of "mutability of the essence of the self" (Rushdie 1998, 276):

"Question of the mutability of the essence of the self," he began awkwardly, "has long been the subject of profound debate. For example, great Lucretius tells us, in *De Rerum Natura*, this following thing: *quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante*. Which being translated, forgive my clumsiness, is 'Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers,' – that is, bursts its banks, – or, maybe, breaks out of its limitations, – so to speak, disregards its own rules, but that is too free, I am thinking... 'that thing,' at any rate, Lucretius holds, 'by doing so brings immediate death to its old self.' " (276-77)

This Lucretian view of identity over time is then compared with Ovid's:

"However," up went the ex-schoolmaster's finger, "poet Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, takes diametrically opposed view. He avers thus: 'As yielding wax' – heated, you see, possibly for the sealing of documents or such, – 'is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, yet is

indeed the same, even so our souls,' – you hear, good sir? Our spirits! Our immortal essences! – 'Are still the same forever, but adopt in their migrations ever-varying forms.' ” (276-77)

Sufyan explains to Saladin that in the case of the migrant, one must adopt Ovid's view and not lose sight of the immutable essence of the self, represented by the unchanging soul: “ ‘For me it is always Ovid over Lucretius,’ he stated. ‘Your soul, my poor dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form’ ” (277).

Bhabha comments on this passage, fittingly stating that Sufyan's contrasting of Lucretius and Ovid results in a revelation concerning the identity problem of the migrant:

[F]or the existential guidance of postcolonial migrants, the problem consists in whether the crossing of cultural frontiers permits freedom from the essence of the self (Lucretius), or whether, like wax, migration only changes the surface of the soul, preserving identity under its protean forms (Ovid). (Bhabha 1994, 224)

He adds that “this liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the ‘survival’ of migrant life” (224). Saladin reacts to Sufyan's declaration in much the same way as Bhabha; he too concludes that a choice cannot be made between Lucretius and Ovid, and there is no resolution to the problem:

“This is pretty cold comfort,” Chamcha managed a trace of his old dryness.

“Either I accept Lucretius and conclude that some demonic and irreversible mutation is taking place in my inmost depths, or I go with Ovid and concede that everything now emerging is no more than a manifestation of what was already there.” (277)

Saladin later resolves this crisis by choosing Lucretius's Deleuzian, non-essential mutability over Ovid's essentialism, for mutability exemplifies his true condition as a migrant: "He chose Lucretius over Ovid. The inconstant soul, the mutability of everything, das Ich, every last speck. A being going through life can become so other to himself as to *be another*, discrete, severed from history" (288). By making a choice to accept his newness and hybridity, Saladin frees himself from having an "essence of the self" and instead chooses to accept the "inconstant soul," which is more representative of his hybrid, "migrant" identity (288). This decision signals Saladin's acceptance of hybridity (the end of his "nightmare-fear-of-cracking" [Rushdie 1988, 131]), and as a result, his mutation stops and he resumes his original human form. Saladin can now be seen as, in the narrator's words, "a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* re-invention" who has "*preferred* revolt against history" (Bhabha 1994, 427).

Gibreel, on the other hand, is unable to accept "the inconstant soul" (Rushdie 1988, 288), despite his initial embracing of the idea of "rebirth" (15). Eventually craving "clarity" above all else, Gibreel, the narrator tells us, wants to embrace and maintain Ovid's concept of a constant, essential self (353):

Gibreel, for all his stage-name and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses; – has wished to remain, to a large degree, *continuous* – that is, joined to and arising from his past; ... his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as 'true'. (427)

However, Gibreel's multiple becomings in the novel – chiefly as a Bollywood actor – indicate that the Lucretian/Deleuzian view of hybridity, incorporating single consecutive versions of the self, applies far better to his condition than the Ovidian. Gibreel,

however, remains in a difficult limbo between the two positions: he is unwilling to accept the plurality and hybridity Lucretius offers, but is also unable to recognize his own Ovidian unchanging essence. His resistance to his own hybridity is presented most tormentingly in the form of dreams, where he is engaged in a constant struggle between faith and doubt. The Ayesha sections of the novel best exemplify Gibreel's lack of blind faith: all of the pilgrims believe in the cracking/parting of the Red Sea, so they collectively undertake a long pilgrimage led by Ayesha to be part of this event. In the end, however, all of the pilgrims perish due to one man, Mirza Saeed, and his lack of faith in the new monotheistic religion of Islam (a psychological reflection of Gibreel's own doubts). Ultimately, Gibreel's "bhaenchaud [sisterfucking] nightmares" (109, my translation) are a reflection of his confusion in terms of his multiple personality as well as his inability to maintain a self that is "true." These nightmares eventually lead to Gibreel's self-destruction in the form of suicide: "His divided personality tortures him. He shoots himself," deciding to end his schizoid "world of ambivalence" (DuVernet 79, 57). Thus, Gibreel's severe identity crisis and molar resistance to the "third space" of fluidity leads to his downfall.

At the same time, the narrator insinuates that Saladin's choice to embrace plurality was not necessarily the right one either (Rushdie 1988, 427). At Mishal's wedding, Saladin begins to feel free; witnessing the traditional ceremony exorcises his English past with Pamela Lovelace and prepares him for his rebirth in India with Zeeny Vakil (DuVernet 78-79). By the end of the novel, Saladin comes to recognize this himself. When he returns to India, Saladin begins to understand Sufyan's preference for Ovid's continuous self over Lucretius' plural selves:

Saladin felt hourly closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins – or rather Salahuddins – which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices, but which had apparently continued to exist, perhaps in the parallel universes of quantum theory. (Rushdie 1988, 523)

While previously Saladin wished to forget his “Indianness,” embracing his essential identity as Salahuddin, Saladin now wishes he had maintained his essence all along: “*If only he could have been this person all his life*, Saladin (who had begun to find the sound of his full, un-Englished name pleasing for the first time in twenty years) found himself wishing” (524, his emphasis). Preferring to “revive his Indian roots” over his old Anglophile desires, Saladin makes a clear choice to abandon any other identity he may have had (Aravamudan 14-15).

As with Gibreel’s inability to accept hybridity, Saladin’s acceptance of one side of his identity – his essence – can be seen as a refusal to be in Bhabha’s privileged space of the hyphen: Saladin simply chooses one side (either/or), and rejects the space of the hyphen (both/and). To Sanga, the rejection of the third space as privileged points to a problem in Bhabha’s notion of the hyphen itself:

Bhabha suggests that this interstitial space becomes the site of overlap and displacement of cultural difference so that issues of identity are constantly contested and remapped. What is perhaps problematic in Bhabha’s description of the hyphen is that in attempting to equalize both positions around the hyphen, *the hyphen itself becomes the privileged phenomenon*. Bhabha assumes that both positions around the hyphen exist in neutral equality. (Sanga 82, my emphasis)

Gibreel's desire for fixity as well as Saladin's ultimate preference for one side of the hyphen rather than the third space itself indicates that not all migrants are willing to accept the postmodern middle position as ideal. Rushdie acknowledges in his novel what Bhabha does not: "the positions around the hyphen are not only in constant flux but also hierarchically constructed" (82) – they are not fixed and equal – and it is *not* essential that the migrant remain in the third space of the hyphen or even see it as the most desirable position to be in.² Deleuze articulates the reason for rejecting this space as "molarity," a condition which incites the fear of change or flux, especially when it comes to the rigid boundaries of selfhood. Both Saladin and Gibreel's choices reflect their desire to be molar: for example, rather than continue "becoming," Saladin makes a final choice that privileges only one side of his identity and thereby fixes it in a familiar form. Likewise, fear of more newness leads Gibreel to give up on making the decision altogether; he chooses to end his crisis by opting for death instead.³

Rather than aid his decision-making process and help resolve his crisis, Gibreel's dreams play a crucial role in shaping the fears of complexity that lead to his suicide. Many scholars of *The Satanic Verses* have argued that these dream-sequences (the even-numbered sections of the novel, making up half of its length) are only peripherally related to the novel's central plot, having only the "slightest connections" to it (Pipes 54); however, an analysis of this dream content is crucial to an understanding of Gibreel's crisis of hybridity and final inability to accept a hybrid sense of self. Particularly significant are the sections called "Mahound" and "Return to Jahalia," where Gibreel's subjective understanding of Islam and Islamic history is presented in a two-part dream-narrative. It is important to bear in mind that this dream-narrative is essentially presented

as Gibreel's subjective *version* of the story of Islam's rise as a religion in western Saudi Arabia, likely one that has been acquired by filtering through fragments of this story told to him as a child chiefly by his own parents. Ultimately, this dream-sequence reflects how Gibreel's own crisis of faith has emerged due to the troubling of his understanding of Islamic history by the presence of the so-called "satanic verses" incident within it. A true story in Islamic history, this incident has often been suppressed due to the possibility that it might cast doubt over the historical accuracy and general validity of the Quran; as Daniel Pipes explains, because the religion's "irreducible core" lies in the Quran as the "exact Word of God," accepting the incident implies that the "entire Islamic faith is premised on a fraudulent base" and that the text itself may be errant (56). As the angel who receives these possibly "satanic verses" in the Jahalia dream-narrative, Gibreel's sense of faith is undoubtedly shaken, for to be a good Muslim includes never questioning the authenticity of the Quran or raising doubts concerning the validity of the religion itself.

Gibreel's understanding of hybridity is further problematized by the fact that religious plurality is ultimately presented as *heretical* in these dream sequences: the arrival of Islam in Jahalia calls for an end to the polytheistic worship of female goddesses in favour of embracing the "one." Monotheism wins in what was formerly the multiplicitous, duplicitous, pantheistic Jahalia (meaning "ignorance" in Arabic), the fictional city of Islam's origin. As the narrator explains, "this is the world into which Mahound has brought his message: one one one. Amid such multiplicity, it sounds like a dangerous word," for "it is the notion of multiplicity which denounces... the One"

(Rushdie 1988, 103; Deleuze, 1995a, 203). Baal's satirical verses in the novel reveal Jahalia's resistance to the One and its people's desire to retain its multiplicity:

*Messenger, do please lend a
careful ear. Your monophilia,
your one one one, ain't for Jahalia,
Return to sender. (Rushdie, 1988, 106)*

This embrace is in stark contrast to the rejection of Mahound's new Islam, of which Baal writes the following:

*What kind of idea
Does 'Submission' seem today?
One full of fear.
An idea that runs away. (126)*

Ultimately, the coming of the new religion of Islam in Jahalia, of which the "satanic verses" incident is an important part, marks a transition to anti-Deleuzianism because it signals a move from pluralism to oneness. In this context, multiplicity then becomes an "enticing and dangerous thought" because "fragmentation implies overturning" of the One (204). If he is indeed the narrator, God wickedly decides to subvert polytheism – and, by extension, plurality – in this dream sequence through the creation of a new monotheistic, restrictive religion that Rushdie so effectively satirizes: "one one one."

As the history of the Rushdie Affair has shown, no "translation" of the Quran is possible in Islam, whether that be through a literal linguistic translation or a fictional recreation, without the label of apostasy, for any such attempt raises doubts about the text's authenticity. Significantly, this is not just a question of religious blasphemy

(making whores of the prophet's wives is just one symbolic representation of this) but of a staunch fundamentalist resistance to any type of interpretation of Islam, whether fiction or non-fiction. As both Daniel Pipes and Shabbir Akhtar explain in their books on the *Satanic Verses*, the Quran is regarded by Muslims to be a static text, not a fluctuating assemblage. Alternate readings of the Quran are not possible, nor are any translated versions considered authentic, for these are potentially full of errors that could reterritorialize the very course of Islam's fixed history. By suggesting that the Quran's verses were dictated by anyone other than God, in his novel Rushdie not only suggests that the text is erroneous but also redefines the religion's very origins as being vague and satanic in nature.

To Bhabha, the reaction of the Muslim community to Rushdie's novel reveals how the "crossing of cultural frontiers" exhibited by diasporic writers can be seen as a threat to the original culture. For him, the novel's blasphemy lies in the "transgressive act of cultural translation" (Bhabha 1994, 226). Bhabha uses Sara Suleri's discussion of *The Satanic Verses* to support his view: in *The Rhetoric of English India*, Suleri argues that Saladin represents cultural heresy, and it is his acts of "historical or cultural severance" that become the "blasphemous moments that proliferate in the narrative" (Suleri 192). Bhabha defines blasphemy as the moment "when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation"; as such, blasphemy "goes beyond the severance of tradition and *replaces its claim to a purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription*" (225). For him, in Rushdie's reinscription what is attacked is not a misrepresentation of Islam, but a *misnaming* of it. Significantly, the writer's fictional reshaping of his religious

community's cultural boundaries is seen as threatening by the majority of Muslims, who have asserted – often in the form of violent riots and book burnings – a rigid adherence to their fixed definition of Islam in response to the alternate religious history offered in *The Satanic Verses*.⁴ The “blasphemy” of the novel, then, lies in its disturbance of the authenticity and continuity of a particular culture, or the Islamic tradition itself, through “the ambivalent process of splitting... that marks the identification with culture's difference” (224).

In light of its label as blasphemous, Rushdie's fictional account of Islamic history as presented in *The Satanic Verses* can be seen as a supplementary or minor discourse existing at the edge of the “original,” disturbing its authenticity. As Bhabha tells us, the entrance of foreign elements destroys the original's “structures of reference and sense communication” not by simply negating them but “by negotiating the disjunction” itself (Bhabha 1994, 227). This results in a splitting of the original – in this case, Islamic history as outlined in the Quran – and its opening up to multiple possibilities. The Muslim diaspora's controversial reaction to the novel, however, indicates that this particular “original” does not want to be “decanonised” and fragmented (228); hence, that threatening possibility is closed by banning and burning the book itself. The opening up and re-negotiation of originals, or the making of the One into many (as highlighted by the controversial sections of Rushdie's text), is a process British Muslims find threatening to their wholeness and cultural supremacy. Within this context, Bhabha concludes that “hybridity is heresy” (225), suggesting that the process of hybridity itself is seen as heretical in Islam.

Bhabha's discussion of the blasphemy of the novel reveals the difficulty of the process of translating any culture across linguistic or religious frontiers: this is not necessarily always, if ever, a smooth transition. Sometimes, as in the case of *The Satanic Verses*, the receiving community is not consensual and will not welcome the rewriting of the transcultural, migrant experience into the original culture (226). In other words, reshaping via the supplement, into plural conceptions of religion or selfhood, can be resisted. Along with the protagonists' choices themselves, the novel's controversial reception – a regressive Islamic resistance to hybridity and cultural translation – reveals resistance to Bhabha's idealistic vision of an “international” hybrid culture (38, Bhabha's emphasis); clearly some Islamic communities are resistant to such figures as Rushdie who threaten their culture with “translation.” The fact that Bhabha's world vision is considered blasphemous to some indicates that such a “migrant” and true vision of the world is not possible, or at least not universally available, in light of the novel's controversy. At the same time, the fact that a controversy, or resistance to hybridity, exists at all supports Bhabha's claim that a “migrant” world vision is urgently needed, for those who argue hybridity is blasphemous are denying the cultural fluxes, particularly in terms of identity, inherent in today's age of global diasporas. Nonetheless, the novel's reception reveals that such a world-view may not be possible in a world where notions of fixed religious and cultural identity are still staunchly adhered to by certain communities.

Taking a rather elitist position, Bhabha has insisted in *Location of Culture* that the migrant, or hybrid “in-between figure,” has an advantage in his positioning on the borderline “third space” in that he/she can offer a new way of constructing singular/communal/ national identity. However, while *The Satanic Verses* has effectively

demonstrated this theory and also displayed some lacks within it, the novel ultimately reveals that Bhabha's interstitial position is not universally accepted as the best position to be in: clearly some Islamic nations are resistant to such figures as Rushdie who threaten their culture with "translation." The novel's protagonists' lack of desire to be in the "third space," as well as the regressive Islamic resistance to hybridity and to cultural translation as indicated by the controversial reception of the novel, suggest that Bhabha's vision for a world composed of an articulated and true cultural hybridity that is accepted universally by all – an "international culture" (38, his emphasis) – is unfortunately too idealistic. By accentuating only the positive aspects of migration in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha incorrectly implies the migrant condition to be wholly positive; nomadism, however, or a "wandering, unsettled condition...without any certain abode" can also be seen as a "punishment" by certain members of the South Asian diaspora (Rushdie 1988, ix).

By failing to discuss the negativity inherent in Rushdie's representation of hybrid identity throughout the various sections of *The Satanic Verses*, Bhabha reveals certain limitations in his view of diasporic identity. As I have demonstrated in my reading of the novel, Deleuzean thought is a stronger lens through which to understand Rushdie's complicated text, for such a multiple lens not only considers the problem of molarity – the resistance to plural forms of identity – but allows for a certain complicating of identity in his model of nomadic, or truly "migrating" subjectivities. Both Saladin and Gibreel engage with multiple complications in the interstitial spaces of identity, issues that are more readily addressed in light of Deleuze than Bhabha: while the latter, despite arguing against them continues to use binaries and hierarchies that do not allow for

effortless overlap between differing thematic lines (for example, the stairwell image employed implies a static and clearly differentiated hierarchy of “levels” of identity), in Deleuzian philosophy all concepts and planes interconnect and thus take on “new contours” (Deleuze 1994, 18). Deleuze thus proffers a model more useful for the study of diasporic works, one that employs a “plane of immanence” of “conceptual linkages with ever increasing connections” on which lines of flight are engaged in a “certain free-play of codetermined intensities” (37, 66).

Chapter Two

“Different/ciating” the Hybrid Male: Sexual, Religious, Racial and National Lines of Flight in Hanif Kureishi’s Novels

In the sixties the idea was to fit in here. Then through the seventies and eighties there was a sense of holding on to your own culture, whatever that was. Then in the nineties there’s also a sense that by holding on to their own culture here, people here are getting left behind.
~ Hanif Kureishi (Kaleta 17)

You a Paki, me a delinquent... How does it feel to be a problem for this world?
~ Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (154)

I come from two worlds... I wrote all those books to make sense of it.
~ Hanif Kureishi (Leith 8)

Rather than focusing exclusively on the failures of hybridity, Hanif Kureishi’s protagonists also have a tendency to engage in the celebration of plurality, or the complex, multiple complications of identity’s interstitial spaces. Such issues can be readily addressed in light of Deleuze’s philosophy, especially his notion of “different/ciation,” or the process of identity’s actualization over time. Biographer Kenneth C. Kaleta describes Kureishi as a cinematic writer, one who breaks “glass barriers” or “liquid windows” and whose work possesses a “fluid mutability” (Kaleta 4-5).¹ Bhabha’s retention of binaries and hierarchy does not allow for an effortless overlap between the differing thematic lines of flight in Kureishi’s novels: sexual, religious,

racial, and national. In contrast, all concepts and planes interconnect in Deleuze, taking on “new contours” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 18). These interconnections serve as Kureishi’s subjects in his portraits of urban and suburban life in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995), and *The Body* (2002). In these novels, Kureishi explores hybridity’s double edge – both its celebratory nature as well as the impediments it might face – by examining the various combinations or intersections of race, religion, sexuality, class, and nationalism under the hegemonies of Powellism and Thatcherism in early 1970s and late 1980s Britain. In particular, the city of London plays a significant role as a “plane of immanence” on which each protagonist is given a chance to fully differentiate and explore the possibilities of his identity. Both Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Shahid in *The Black Album* make conscious choices to move to London for this very purpose. Deleuzian becoming is taken to its limit, however, only in Kureishi’s recent short novel, *The Body*, in which the protagonist Adam rids himself of his aging body for a much younger “brown” and “hybrid” body (Kureishi 2002a, 27), in order to live out his fantasy of an eternal life of possibility, or “desert experimentation” (Deleuze and Parnet 11).

It is significant precisely how much of his own differentiated identity Kureishi invests in his novels and constantly reinvents. For example, in his oft-discussed seminal autobiographical essay “The Rainbow Sign,” Kureishi discusses how his miscegenated identity and his current status as an “almost” Englishman has influenced his work (Kureishi 1990, 1). He discusses how the labels “black” and “Pakistani” have worked not only to oppress him, but also radicalize him: “I found it difficult to get along with anyone. I was frightened and hostile... I became cold and distant. I began to feel I was

very violent” (Kureishi 1992, 7). Rather than cause him to become a Muslim extremist, as many youths he knew did, such concerns fuel Kureishi’s writing and prompt his Deleuzian outlook that he could “join” elements of himself together to create his own version of self: as he states, “being British isn’t what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements” (36). As such, Kureishi’s work does not merely signal that a minority exists in Britain that has a right to equal citizenship; more than this, it “emphasizes how these ‘new elements’ are transforming what it means to be British, contesting monocultural constructions of British identity” (Ranasinha 2). From his own hybrid launching point then, Kureishi formulates and explores multicultural and “different/ciated” fictional identities such as his own within his novels, insisting that “there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain... a new way of being British” (Kureishi 1992, 36).

But to begin our consideration of Kureishi’s protagonists, it is essential to define what Deleuze means by his complex notion of a “different/ciated” identity, a significant part of the “systematic philosophy of difference” that he weaves in *Difference and Repetition*. In contrast to the vertical orientation of naturally upright thought that represents most of Western philosophy and its concepts of identity, the model of identity representing horizontal thought is fractal, larval, and differentiated, thereby allowing for the inclusion of more complex notions of difference. For Deleuze, any idea, multiplicity, or problem contains within it “all the varieties of differential relations and all the distributions of singular points coexisting in diverse orders ‘perpllicated’ in one another” (Deleuze 1995a, 206).² Such ideas or problems are synthesized in a differential field of relations and singularities, off of which identity is produced as an *effect* or *product* of

these differences. In this context, Deleuze suggests a double-layered process of “different/ciation” that employs a two-part understanding of difference: (1) the determination of an Idea’s virtual content (the “problem”), called differentiation, with a “t”, and (2) the actualization of that virtual content “into species and distinguished parts” (the “solution”), known as the process of differentiation, with a “c” (207, 209). In the overall process of different/ciation, or the constant actualization of identity over time, communication always remains intact with the virtual multiplicity that is actualized; this makes identity itself a continuous process that finds its limits only in exhaustion. All of Kureishi’s protagonists engage in such a limitless process, in search of “solutions” and actualizations of their identities, via significant processes of “becoming” (xi).

In exploring different/ciated identity, Kureishi essentially redefines “Englishness.” He himself has often been classified as part of the English tradition, but also a significant shaper of what has long been termed “black” British writing.³ But what precisely makes his work, in his own words, “soaked in Englishness” (Kaleta 3)? Critics first point out that Kureishi’s novels are part of that tradition in English writing of satire and critique, in which satire is used as a means to critique “what it means to be British” (Nasta 174); in Kureishi’s own words, “the comic tradition... is probably English, the mixture of seriousness and humour” (Kaleta 3). Second, biographer Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that with a plethora of references to pop culture – some of which work as cultural revolutions against the Labour Party – and the use of both London and its suburbs “Kureishi’s *oeuvre*, at one level, can be understood as a record of the decline of what his novel *The Black Album*... calls ‘the whole Orwellian idea of England’ [based on effortless belonging]... In this respect, Kureishi belongs to a tradition of inquiry into the

‘state of the nation’ and the meanings of ‘Englishness’ which reaches back well into the nineteenth century” (Moore-Gilbert 2001, 2-3; 8-11).

On the other hand, Susheila Nasta has argued persuasively in *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* that in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi redefines the literary concept of the traditional English *bildungsroman* in a significant way: he “disrupt[s] the seamless pattern of social integration typical of the genre, while simultaneously posing a need to invent an alternative means of inscription and identification” (Nasta 195). In the context of this and other similar acts of cultural disruption, Kureishi has also been said to have created “new kinds of (cultural) politics” (Moore-Gilbert 2001, 9). His work, then, calls for a redefinition not only of “Englishness” but also of what it means to be a diasporic or minor writer in England. By calling essentialist notions of minority identity into question, in his novels Kureishi reveals a certain Deleuzian skepticism about traditional fixed, non-relational categories of (self-) identification such as gender, sexuality, and ethnicity – as well as “absolutist conceptions of race, class, and nation” (10). In contrast to this absolutism, “Kureishi’s vision of identity is...anti-foundational: the self is always seen as mobile, fissile, and plural” (11). In fact, this vision is Deleuzian: Kureishi’s thought is horizontal, and his protagonists different/ciated.

Take, for example, the protagonist of Kureishi’s novella *Intimacy*: depressed and over-cautious Jay is on the verge of a significant becoming. Over the course of the novel, Jay outlines the process by which he comes to a decision to leave his wife Susan and their two sons. In his discussion with his therapist, he declares that “all that matters is the hinge!... The hinge of one’s mind! Whether it opens inwards or outwards. Let it be

outwards. Let it be – out!” (Kureishi 2001, 79). But Jay is plagued with shame at his desire to live on what Deleuze would term the Aion, the hinge of all becomings, in-between any and all fixed notions of selfhood:

I fell back in the chair, ashamed of my desire, of all I wanted. That I couldn't want my life with Susan – which should have been enough – was inexplicable and cruel. The therapist, surely seeing the point of the hinge, would help me with this.
(79)

Yet, despite his initial shame – and also Asif's warning that one cannot run about without responsibility in the face of the “new restlessness that is about” (105) – Jay is desperate to flee the monotonous repetition of his home life. Although with Nina he learns of the possibilities of both intimacy and love (106), it takes the cracking of his face – he is literally punched (117-8) – for Jay to finally walk away from his house in the story's final pages: “I shut the door behind me and walk away... I can't say that I have learned more in this crucible than I've learned anywhere: the education of a heart, slightly cracked, if not broken in places” (121). Significantly, the focus of the novella is on that decision-making *process* rather than the event itself; for 120 of the 123 pages, Jay oscillates between leaving and staying.

While Jay spends his time heading towards the Deleuzian Aion, Karim Amir, from the first page of the *Buddha of Suburbia*, is already on it. Karim, of self-proclaimed indeterminate race and sexual preference, claims he is “ready for anything” (Kureishi 1990, 3). He moves from the suburbs to London, a city that serves as a “plane of immanence” of limitless desires, to find people who do not bore him with “deadness and [false] repetition” (Deleuze 1990, 287). The city makes Karim feel alive with its endless

possibilities for becoming, causing him to engage in multiple lines of flight in his identity quest. In essence, Karim steps outside and “walks the streets” of labyrinthine London with the aim of “revisioning and redefining the ethnic geographies” of his life (Nasta 192); much like young Stephen in the classic British novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Karim, too, is hungry for worldly experience. After all, in Avtar Brah’s view, “at the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of the journey” (Brah 182).

The oft-quoted opening paragraph of the novel is worthy of brief consideration not only in the context of this journey motif and the novel’s categorization as *bildungsroman*, but also in relation to Homi K. Bhabha’s idealistic theory of hybridity. Nasta is correct to question whether this opening paragraph is a celebration of hybridity as many critics have seen it (Nasta 199):

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don’t care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it. (Kureishi 1990, 3)

Wondering whether Karim Amir is truly the embodiment of Bhabha’s “vernacular cosmopolitan,” Nasta points out that Karim’s seemingly bold assertions and apparent confidence are undercut with his use of equivocations: he is “*almost English*,” a “*funny sort of Englishman*,” moving “*here and there*” (Nasta 199, my emphasis). For Nasta, the presence of such qualifications erodes expectations, causing the reader to wonder how far

Karim has really progressed by the novel's end. To Nasta, Karim is thus a "thwarted" protagonist, stuck in a "spiral" (199) – or perhaps a self-propagated Deleuzean abyss. Having emerged from a space between "two old histories" (Kureishi 1990, 3), Karim represents the "new breed" that refuses to commit to any absolutist notion of identity, preferring instead to look for "trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest" or any type of line of flight, that takes him "somewhere else" – any place where, in Karim's own words, "security and safety" are not the "rewards of dullness" (3, 5, 8).

For the suburbs are initially characterized as precisely that: dull. Karim describes his suburban family life in Bromley as "gloomy, so slow and heavy"; it is not his hybridity alone that causes boredom, restlessness, and homelessness: "perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it" (3). According to Sukhdev Sandhu (*London Calling*), this characterization of the suburbs as static and suspended is reflected throughout Kureishi's work. Associated with "social screens" and "curtains drawn," Kureishi's suburbia is a linear, "proper," and homogenous space, where the "white suburbanites instinctively shudder at the idea of sharing the same environment with people of different races" (Sandhu 2003, 235; 244). In Sandhu's view, this type of ideology and behavior (represented comically and ironically in the novel by the Great Dane scene, in which Helen's dog dry-humps Karim on her father Hairy Back's front lawn) is what generates the desire in Kureishi's characters to move away: "every one of the adolescent and idealistic [South] Asians Kureishi creates comes to learn that they [sic] must move away or, inevitably, be fucked over" (235-36). Sandhu further points out that anti-suburbanism has a particular "resonance" for young South Asians:

Their parents have traditionally seen the suburbs as a promised land, light at the end of the industrial tunnel. It is a reward for decades of economic frugality, an escape from the sound and mental fury of frontline living. Their children, brought up cushioned and cosseted, often view things differently: in [Kureishi's play] *Borderline*, set in Ealing, an area with a high concentration of [South] Asians, Haroon becomes tired of the constant appeal by ethnic elders to tradition, family and religious morality: 'This place and the past, it's like an octopus.' (236).

Like Haroon, Karim similarly characterizes suburbia as stifling, molar, and unproductive, labeling its inhabitants the "miserable undead" (Kureishi 1990, 10) because they are fearful of change:

In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness. I clenched my fist under the table. I didn't want to think about it. It would be years before I could get away to the city, London, where life was bottomless in its temptations. (8)

But while Karim insists that the suburbs are dull and molar, suburbia also has another function in the novel. In particular, Karim's experiences in Eva's home in Beckenham (the gathering that launches his father as the "buddha of suburbia") introduces the idea of possibility to Karim within a *local* space, well before he has a chance to enjoy the "disorderly and heterotopian possibilities of metropolitan life" (Sandhu 2003, 240). His intense sexual experience with Charlie, along with witnessing his father having sex with Charlie's mother Eva in the garden, reveal that "the sexual mores of suburbia are changing" while also managing to "precipitate Karim's own

personal and social transformation” (Felski 37). Karim has “an extraordinary revelation” as he sits in the bathroom and “takes it all in” (Kureishi 1990, 15). He expresses his desire to live in a space containing more options:

I could see my life clearly for the first time: the future and what I wanted to do. I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs. I hadn't come upon it all like this before, and now I wanted nothing else. The door to the future had opened: I could see which way to go. (15)

And the way to go is London: “a place so bright, fast, and brilliant [that it makes] you vertiginous with possibility” (127). Yet the door to this city is, significantly, located on the edge of suburbia. In this context, the suburbs can be seen to function as “a border landscape” (Procter 126), or a type of Aion or edge from which Karim leaps into the Deleuzian abyss of London. James Procter (*Dwelling Places*) has shown how, as a “location” of contemporary black British writing, the space of the suburbs has recently been understood as being a third space in its own right, as a “mutant zone, lacking in organic consistency” (126). This does not imply that suburbia is reimagined as a cosmopolitan space; rather, novels such as Kureishi's, according to James Procter, are about “becoming local, about a turn away from cosmopolitan versions of migrancy” (126). To Procter, the novel is paradoxically “contaminated by the suburban culture it would appear to repudiate, a culture that localizes itself even as it tries to move beyond the local” (149). Hence, the suburbs function for Karim as a “leaving place” (117), or a significant platform from which to launch his own version of migrant identity; as he states upon his return from Beckenham, “I'd glimpsed a world of excitement and

possibility which I wanted to hold in my mind and expand as a template for the future” (19).

As Karim begins the exploration of his identity, the first model he encounters and embraces is that offered by his own father, the so-called “buddha of suburbia.” At first glance, it appears that Haroon simply serves as a Deleuzean model that provides Karim with the opportunity for sexual exploration, occurring parallel to his own with his mistress, Eva. However, in what appears a desperate move to fit in, Haroon adopts a particular stereotype of the Indian man to generate his identity: “Keen to cash in on the marketability of a new, prepackaged identity,” Haroon “commodifies” himself to survive (Nasta 191) – he becomes the “buddha of suburbia.” For Karim, Haroon is simply a model of identity that he can choose to imitate or reject. Karim clearly, and problematically, chooses imitation when he takes on the role of Mowgli in Shadwell’s play. Karim’s role throughout the novel is to be exoticized, to fit Eva’s mould: “you are so exotic, so original!” (Kureishi 1990, 9); here, as Mowgli, he is asked to cover himself in “shit-brown cream” and work on his Indian accent to create an “authentic” image (147, Nasta 196). Like his father’s choice to become the “buddha of suburbia,” Karim’s naïve choice perpetuates yet another orientalist stereotype: that of the wild “native.” Also like his father, Karim appears relatively unconcerned about this perceived image of his becoming; after all, one must remember that he has displayed a similar lack of concern about his nickname, “Creamy,” indicating his willingness to be exoticized by “well-meaning [white] liberals” such as Shadwell (196).

It is only when he has already racially exploited Anwar and is considering covertly treating Changez in a similar manner that Karim finally realizes the significance

of what others have been telling him – that hybridity is a double-edged sword involving moral and political dilemmas:

As I sat there I began to recognize that this was one of the first times in my life I'd been aware of having a moral dilemma. Before, I'd done exactly as I wanted, desire was my guide and I was inhibited by nothing but fear. But now, at the beginning of my twenties, something was growing in me. Just as my body had changed at puberty, now I was developing a sense of guilt, a sense not only of how I appeared to others, but of how I appeared to myself, especially in violating self-imposed prohibitions. (Kureishi 1990, 186)

His experience of being “fucked over” (Sandhu 2003, 236) by Hairy Dane’s Great Dane solidifies his convictions that the hybrid condition is not as ideal as it is cracked up to be. While in-between spaces have, until now, offered an exhilarating limitless possibility, fear begins to set in as Karim recognizes that in England, this process necessarily involves deeper complexities of not just ethics but also politics and its relations with race, history, class, and nationalism – all embedded in an old, entrenched, imperial binary:

As we pursued English roses we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard – into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day? (227)

Here again, as with Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, hybridity is acknowledged as being only partly celebratory; Karim’s sense that he is both an insider and an outsider reveals his

awareness that he is living on the border of an imaginary community from which some want him to be evicted. To the representative Powellian in the novel, Hairy Back (“we’re with Enoch”), immigrants function as “postcolonial symptoms” or Derridean supplements that threaten to invade the British nation if they are not kept at bay (Smith 129). In the context of Powellism, Hairy Back’s Britain is a thoroughly imagined one:

Powell’s representation of the English nation as the self-sustaining, invulnerable, eternal, and essential source to which Britain can always return operates as a phantasmatic construction. Like all fantasies, his image of England is a purely non-contradictory space which is absolutely purified of all subversions and interruptions... Powell’s phantasmatic representation of Britain drew upon various organic racist traditions to promote a racially exclusionary concept of Britain which masked the traumatic experience of decolonization. (135-36)

Through his two experiences (participating in ethnic exploitation in the theatre and being “fucked over”), Karim learns that a such a view of homogeneous England, an “absolutely purified” and “non-contradictory space,” does not include fluctuating and constantly changing Deleuzean identities based on intensities and difference (Deleuze 1995a, 254). Even being properly “packaged” into expected stereotypes for palatable white consumption (Buddha, Mowgli) does not ensure that these “invaders” might somehow fit into the central, desired model of nationhood that is composed of a white “essence” of British identity (Smith 26, 1-2). The problem, as Karim puts it, is this: “The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it” (Kureishi 1990, 53).

While such revelations about his racial identity might have prompted Karim to leave the theatre (Nasta 186), thereby freeing him of the brown man's "burden of representation" (Moore-Gilbert 2001, 18), Karim feels compelled to try on one more identity before he can learn to create his own: that of his part-time lover, friend, and rock-star musician Charlie Hero. Karim's ultimate rejection of Charlie's line of flight is significant: Karim won't stay in America with Charlie because he sees potential for self-destruction on that particular line of flight. Like Haroon's orientalized pose, or Karim's own role as Mowgli, Charlie's is yet another identity that is defined, packaged, and clearly labeled – in short, made marketable for public consumption. Without Karim as his audience Charlie's pose is meaningless, just as without his participation (he lapses into Cockney) the authenticity of Mowgli cannot be generated. Rather than continue to engage in Charlie's becoming, Karim recognizes that what he has previously admired in Charlie is just another form of an essential identity he could choose to adopt or not: "it didn't seem of his essence, but a temporary, borrowed persona" (Kureishi 1990, 246).

Although he acknowledges the need to embark on his own lines of flight, as indicated by his move to New York to be with Charlie, Karim paradoxically returns to London, thereby signaling that his own Deleuzianism has limits. Karim willfully ends his nomadic life by choosing to locate "home" for himself; this home, he decides, is determined by his location and is not linked to questions of race or origin, but is rather "where you start from" (Nasta 191). To make his choice, Karim has first had to open up his options, escape binaries, and create more possibilities. Initially, this has meant settling permanently neither in the suburbs nor the city, but, in nomadic fashion, "perpetually journey[ing] between the two" (Procter 150); now it means having to choose

between New York and London. Despite the recognition that New York is more varied and libertine than London, Karim is not yet ready to make the ultimate Deleuzian choice (Kureishi saves that for the protagonist of *The Body*), for the “sheer extravagance” of New York life threatens to overwhelm him (15): “This was a dream come true. All the same, my depression and self-hatred... went on and on... I knew I wouldn’t go mad, even if that release, that letting go, was a freedom I desired. I was waiting for myself to heal” (Kureishi 1990, 249-50). Just before he leaves New York, as he walks around the city one final time, an alienated Karim contemplates the mess he has made of his life and realizes he has inherited from his father a certain responsibility to what Changez calls his “own people” (136):

I began to wonder why I was so strong – what it was that held me together. I thought it was that I had inherited from Dad a strong survival instinct. Dad had always felt superior to the British: this was the legacy of his Indian childhood – political anger turning into scorn and contempt. For him in India the British were ridiculous, stiff, unconfident, rule-bound. And he’d made me feel we couldn’t allow ourselves the shame of failure in front of these people. You couldn’t let the ex-colonialists see you on your knees, for that was where they expected you to be. They were exhausted now; their Empire was gone; their day was done and it was our turn. (250).

Despite Charlie’s warning that England will “bring you down” (249), Karim ends his nomadism by returning home, to messy, multiplicitous London, the city he claims “blew the windows of [his] brain wide open” (126).

But while Karim might have come to an ethical responsibility not to “leave [his] people behind” (136), he still does not commit to anything politically, sexually, or racially. There are no clear resolutions for Karim; his anxieties and ambivalences, from the very first page of the novel are all still very present at its end. To Nasta, this is a “somewhat pessimistic” ending in which Karim has “not really progressed” because he is still “sitting on the fence” (104). Indeed, Karim’s “sitting on the fence” is precisely the point: the novel has a deliberately paradoxical ending, as Karim’s return to the theatre in the final chapter indicates. Upon his return to London, Karim agrees to take on a soap opera role as “the rebellious student son of an Indian shopkeeper” because it “tangles with the latest contemporary issues” that are involved in being hybrid (Kureishi 1990, 259). If we are following the conventional pattern of a *bildungsroman* based on character development and growth, then in his acceptance of the soap opera role Karim has made an educated decision: rather than continue to accept theatre roles blindly that orientalize the Indian as a post-imperial commodity, he will no longer exploit his own ethnicity. In other words, he will repair the “mess” he has made by no longer “wear[ing] his difference like a costume” in comic portrayals of Indian stereotypes (Nasta 204). Yet, a few pages later, Kureishi once again subverts expectations of the *bildungsroman* by displaying Karim’s lack of understanding concerning the significance of the role. Karim’s response to Allie’s enthusiasm at hearing the news (as well as the thought of how much money he could make) signals that perhaps the reader has expected too much political awareness from him: “I couldn’t understand it: Allie went on and on about it as if it meant something” (Kureishi 1990, 267).

This deliberate subversion may be seen as an illustration of Kureishi's pessimism concerning the state of contemporary Britain, reflected in Charlie's comparison of America and England: "This country gives me such optimism. People here believe you can do stuff. They don't bring you down all the time, like in England" (247). In a twist of irony, Kureishi simultaneously allows his protagonist to grow and, at the same time, holds him back – perhaps as a reflection of both Powell and Thatcher's strategy of simultaneously including and excluding black immigrants by both inviting them into the English nation as workers, but also keeping them out of that very nation as "invaders."⁴ Kureishi suggests that while Karim's idealism may have been shattered and replaced by greater ethical awareness, he has not progressed enough: it may be the state of England itself that has held (and may continue to hold) Karim back. The condition of hybridity is, indeed, double-edged and "messy." If Nasta is correct in her characterization of this protagonist as stuck in a sort of "spiral" (Nasta 199), then this is perhaps because *acting* is all he can handle for now. As his toothache might indicate, he is not yet ready – or able – to play out in life the new roles he will act onstage.

At the same time, however, Karim's choice to remain an actor can be regarded as enabling: as an actor, he will continue to project himself in a continuous process of becomings. Acting becomes his particular mode of self-different/ciation, for, as Kureishi believes, "you can avenge yourself on the world by rearranging it in a way that suits you" (Appleyard 44). From his position as actor, Karim is freely able to "choose and change, to dissolve and rematerialize," for "difference is never entitative, but finds itself moulded and remoulded in a continual ontological flux" (122). Thus, fully prepared to take the necessary leaps as an actor, Karim remains poised on the edge of the Aion, defined by

Deleuze as the “unlimited past and future,” gathering “incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects” (Deleuze 1990, 61). In essence, Karim’s decision reveals that he is “herald of hybridity, a carrier of cultural potential based on... individual being-in-flux rather than communal stereotyping or (self-)oppressive role-play” (Schoene 117-18).

In the end, Karim returns full circle to the beginning of the novel as we arrive once again at a protagonist full of equivocalty:

I could think about the past and what I’d been through as I’d struggled to locate myself and learn what the heart is. Perhaps in the future I would live more deeply.

And so I sat in the centre of this old city that I loved, which itself sat at the bottom of a tiny island. I was surrounded by people I loved, and I felt happy and miserable at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn’t always be that way. (283-84)

Yet we return not to the same point, for according to Deleuzian philosophy, in a world of flux and repetition one can never return to the same place twice and “nothing ascends to the surface without changing its nature” (Deleuze 1990, 165). Karim is once again “sitting on the fence” – or usefully suspended on the Aion – looking both backwards and forwards, but this time at a significant tangent: he is no longer an “almost” Englishman, but a Londoner and an aspiring actor. Simultaneously “happy and miserable” (Kureishi 1990, 284), as Karim contemplates his past and future, he both “retreats and advances ... being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What just happened?” (Deleuze 1990, 63). Kureishi offers here an ending that is “pure event,”

where “a future and past divide the present at every instant and subdivide it ad infinitum into past and future, in both directions at once” (Deleuze 1990, 164).

As in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, in *The Black Album* Kureishi also questions the possibility of finding a home for an immigrant, a liminal identity of the third space, via another “urban nomad” (Nasta 207). Here, too, we have a portrait of modern London life with all its offerings of sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll – this time set in Thatcher’s 1980s – as exemplifying Deleuzian possibility for the protagonist, Shahid Hasan, a young Pakistani student who has immigrated to England. Thematically and theoretically, London serves once again as a plane of immanence – now for Shahid’s exploration of the interconnections or nuances among love, gender, politics, race, and religion. Shahid’s central desire is to have “a new start with new people in a new place. The city would feel like his; he wouldn’t be excluded; there had to be ways in which he could belong” (Kureishi 1995, 24). Once he has become “more established in London,” or “old England,” Shahid plans to “hit New York with a high ‘rep,’ or reputation” (63).

Like Karim, Shahid’s fundamental crisis is also one of homelessness: he is torn between a love affair with his college professor, Deedee Osgood, and a life of Islamic political work fighting racism with his friends. While Karim is prompted to enter London out of boredom and restlessness, Shahid’s tensions are of a more complex nature: “It wasn’t mere boredom he feared; the questions he dreaded were those that interrogated him about what he had got into with Riaz on one side, and Deedee on the other” (Kureishi 1995, 157). Shahid is unsure that either path will resolve the “deep uncertainties” of being raised British, while at the same time being ethnically sited as

South Asian (Harris 182). He expresses his identity crisis, or his multiple “warring selves,” in terms of a broken mirror:

His own self increasingly confounded him. One day he would passionately feel one thing, the next day the opposite. Other times provisional states would alternate from hour to hour; sometimes all crashed into chaos. He would wake up with this feeling: who would he turn out to be on this day? How many warring selves were there within him? Which was his real, natural self? Was there such a thing? How would he know it when he saw it? Would it have a guarantee attached to it?

Lost in a room of broken mirrors, with jagged reflections backing into eternity, he felt numb. His instinct was to escape, to seek someone out to talk to. Even Chili would have been better than nothing. (157)

Like Saladin in *The Satanic Verses*, Shahid also questions whether there is an essential identity he must choose (a “real” self), or whether multiple possibilities of selfhood might exist. In the latter case, a certain fear or anxiety is associated with choosing to tread a Deleuzian terrain of identity: in this process, one must deterritorialize completely, or deconstruct one’s notions of any fixed or essential self, in order to reterritorialize one’s identity as a subjectivity that is molecular, or in a continuous process of becoming. Shahid expresses his anxiety with a reference to Prince, his naïve model of a completely positive and idealistic hybrid identity: “surely Prince, for whom music gushed without respite, never felt like this?” (158).

Despite this confusion, however, over the course of the novel Shahid does make some very clear choices for himself. At first, he attempts to fix his identity as a member

of a young Asian Muslim fundamentalist group. However, when he refuses to go to Bradford for a mass demonstration against Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, he is accused of disloyalty by these friends because of his lack of religious faith, and also for his general embrace of all things plural and possible. After discussing the fatwa at length with Riaz and Chad, Shahid realizes that his own freedom of expression, "the freedom he had come to London for[,] was being snatched away from him. He was being dragged back into an earlier self and life, one he had gratefully sloughed off" (201). Despite such feelings, Shahid takes part in the demonstration with his friends," but states afterwards, "This isn't right... What's happening to our community?" (236). He then suddenly realizes he wants to take no further action and "reclaim himself":

He wanted to crawl back in his room, slam the door and sit down with a pen; that was how he would reclaim himself. This destruction of a book – a book which was a question – had embodied an attitude to life which he had to consider... He would get out. He had left the posse. He hadn't made a decision: the alliance terminated the moment Hat soaked the book in petrol. (238)

Ultimately for Shahid, this climactic scene highlights his central crisis: in light of the Rushdie Affair, Shahid realizes he must choose whether to continue supporting his extremist friends (he does not wholly agree with their ideology) or seek more secular solutions. By the novel's end, Shahid elects to remove himself from all political and religious entanglements, instead embracing a secular life based on love, desire, sexual exploration and freedom.

Shahid's engagement with sex itself is what finally allows him to enter fully into a fluid, Deleuzian space. With Deedee, Karim opens up to sexual exploration and freedom

to the point that he is able to engage in significant lines of flight; in fact, both Shahid and DeeDee undergo Deleuzian gender-becomings, subverting the categories of masculinity and femininity through their performative lovemaking. Becoming-woman in particular is a necessary act for Deleuze: as Braidotti states, “all the lines of deterritorialization go necessarily through the stage of ‘becoming-woman,’ which is not just any other form of becoming minority, but rather is the key, the precondition and the necessary starting point for the whole process of becoming” (Braidotti 2001, 393). The presence and variety of the sex scenes in the novel is no accident: these crucial scenes of gender bending symbolically represent Shahid and DeeDee’s adoption of fluidity as a way of being. This fluidity reflects transgenderism as defined by Tim Dean in *Beyond Sexuality*: the term does not encompass only cross-dressing, but includes “all ‘gender outlaws,’ all those who remain unwilling or unable to conform to the norms attendant on either side of the gender divide” (Dean 62). Shahid and Deedee’s sexual encounters reveal that neither of them passes as a “regular heterosexual member of the male or female sex” who represents “normal” masculinity or femininity; rather, they represent one of the nearly infinite number of sexualities in the category of transgenderists (among others, this category includes “feminists... lesbians, gays, bisexuals...the intersexed, and their political supporters”) (62). Ultimately, sex in the novel reveals how identity itself is constantly created and recreated through Shahid and DeeDee’s sexual performances, through the subversion of gender expectations:

[G]ender reality is created through sustained social performances. [This] means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s

performative character, [as the] performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations [lie] outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (Dean 141)

Shahid expresses his comfort with such a way of being, in which gender itself becomes a performance, indicating that he finds a certain freedom within it:

She [Deedee] knew what she wanted; he let her take over; it was a relief. For now she refused him a mirror, but he liked the feel of his new female face. He could be demure, flirtatious, teasing, a star; a burden went, a certain responsibility had been removed. He didn't have to take the lead. He even wondered what it might be like to go out as a woman, and be looked at differently. (Kureishi 1995, 127)

Possessing fluidity in terms of identity is, after all, the very ability Shahid has admired in his musical icons, Prince and Madonna, both of whom are known for gender-bending performances.

According to Kaleta, in Shahid's turn to Deedee, Kureishi offers love as the prevailing theme to conquer the "mindless violence of the riots" (Kaleta 137). But while Shahid's choice to live a life with Deedee offers a clear rejection of political activism, this decision does not imply that the relationship is any kind of solution to the racial and national issues with which he has to contend; after all, Shahid makes the final choice to leave politics only after, and in reaction to, his friends' racial targeting of Deedee. In short, while Shahid continually renegotiates his sexuality throughout the novel, issues of religion, race and nationality remain unresolved at the novel's end. While Shahid does feel anxious about his own lack of faith (Kureishi 1995, 106), rather than hiding behind dogmatic fundamentalism and political activism like his friends (the bombing of Victoria

Station reflects the extreme dangers of this path), Shahid finds a more peaceful and secular solution to his inner discontent: he will express the currents of life through writing, an act that will allow him to pose the very “questions and ideas” that Brownlow declares as being the “enemy of religion” (109):

There was, too, something that he was sure of, even as his life shifted daily: everyone had their story; and what went on in his mind occurred in others’, too, the current of life flowing through it all. Writing could be as easy as dreaming, except the dreams spread in concentric circles, one coloring another. When it dried up, he found it best to wait, and it would begin again. (Kureishi 1995, 158)

Shahid’s push to engage with the questions and problems (the virtual content itself) rather than search for solutions (the actualization of the virtual content) is a shift to horizontal thought: according to Deleuze, problems are “Ideas themselves” and should not be “traced from the corresponding propositions” or “be evaluated according to the possibility of their finding a solution” (Deleuze 1995a, 162; 160). “On the contrary,” writes Deleuze, “‘solvability’ must depend upon an internal characteristic: it must be determined by the conditions of the problem, engendered in and by the problem along with real solutions” (162). Unlike Riaz and Chad, who engage in only desperate and violent “solutions” such as soaking Rushdie’s book in petrol, Shahid will reclaim himself through writing by reconstituting the problems themselves – here, the problem of identity generated by the complex interrelations of race, religion, and nationality in England. Just as Karim’s medium of expression becomes the theatre, Shahid’s method of exploring his subjectivity is the act of writing. We leave Shahid with unresolved issues, but with the

promise that the problems themselves will be necessarily “constituted and invested in their proper symbolic fields” before they lead to solvability (159).

Unlike the “somewhat pessimistic” and cyclical ending of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the final few pages of *The Black Album* are far more open-ended and forward-looking. By this point, Shahid has rejected his friends’ essentialist ideas and stepped beyond those categories and into the spaces between them. Shahid’s new fluid sexuality, involving the significant process of “becoming-woman” (a concept I will elaborate in the next chapter), sets him up for future becomings, indicating that in other unresolved areas of his life a similar investigation of problems will occur that will involve further and similar deterritorializations. His affair with Deedee allows him to see London anew, as a city that undulates just below the surface:

[T]oday, although the secrets of desire were veiled, sexual tension was everywhere. He couldn’t doubt its circulating tangibility. Beneath the banality and repetition of this ordinary day there ran, like the warm inhabited tube tunnels under the city, flirtation, passion, and the deepest curiosities. People dressed, gestured, moved, to display themselves and attract. They were sizing each other up, fantasizing, wanting to desire and be adored... People yearned for romance, desire, feeling... The platform of Baker Street Station was Arcadia itself... She had turned the key on his feelings. (134-35)

In this city, with Deedee’s help, Shahid ultimately finds a new and fluid mode of living based on desire that is antithetical to Riaz’s pure Islamic life where he *has conquered* desire. He cannot afford to be molar, “bitter” and “disillusioned,” as his friends have tended to make him feel (140). Shahid encounters difficulties in reconciling the purity of

the mosque with the bustling diversity of the city. Ultimately realizing that attaining an identity that can simultaneously embrace Islam and popular Western culture is not possible within such a group of Muslims, for its members are more destructive than enabling in their attitude to difference, Shahid chooses to leave London altogether:

They would go away.... He had to find some sense in his recent experiences; he wanted to know and understand. How could anyone confine themselves to any one system or creed? Why should they feel they had to? There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily? There had to be innumerable ways of being in the world. He would spread himself out, in his work and in love, following his curiosity. (285)

In the end, “in the face of risk, change, movement and undecidability... Shahid finally open[s himself] up to the chaos of life, embracing new situations” (Degabriele). He decides to live a new life that consists of exploring his newly fractured and different/ciated self since, according to Deleuze, it is within the fracture itself that “Ideas swarm... constantly emerging on its edges, ceaselessly coming out and going back, being composed in a thousand different manners” (Deleuze 1995a, 169). The final image of the novel is a powerful and appropriately Deleuzean one, reflecting the choice Shahid has made: he looks out of the train window and thinks about “nothing” as he and Deede stream into the distance, wondering what “new adventure” lies in the future (Kureishi 1995, 287). Yet while he has clearly stepped beyond political and religious categories into a secular “abyss,” from this abyss Shahid must *continue* to negotiate unresolved issues of identity: race and nationality. Reflecting this lack of resolution, the final pages of the novel are open-ended and full of possibility. While Shahid may not have found all

the answers, the final image of the train tearing across the English landscape offers clear direction for where to find them. The optimism underlying both this image and the love scenes in the novel suggests that from his new secular position, Shahid will likely find Deleuzian solutions in other contested areas of identity as well.

Deleuzian becoming is finally taken to its limit in *The Body*. Here, Kureishi presents London in the 1990s, a decade in which the postmodern world has taken the possibilities of becoming to the extreme. Excitement mixed with fear (for Deleuzian possibility is both exciting and fearful), sixty-five year old Adam learns to let go of fixed, essentialist notions of self as he considers the possibility of becoming: “Why can’t I become someone else?” (Kureishi 2002a, 12; 19) and “How would I feel? Who would I be?” (30). At the novel’s start, at a dinner party an old friend offers Adam the possibility of exchanging his old and aging body with a younger one through a brain transplant – a procedure that has become possible in Kureishi’s futuristic and science fictional world. As he scans the room full of “NewBodies” and makes his selection, Adam considers both woman-becoming and black-becoming before he realizes he is attracted to a “new combination” (44) that lies on the edge of the others, a “neither white nor dark but lightly toasted” hybrid body (26-27). After all, he knows that “hybrids are hip” (44). In true Deleuzian fashion, Adam rejects the options logically offered to him by Ralph, and instead makes a selection based on attraction.

Adam quickly realizes he has made the right choice, for his hybrid body is fully able to accommodate the range of his desires. His old identity having “emigrated” (33), Adam’s new body reminds him he is capable of feeling desire, and this desire moves him from vertical and linear conceptions of the self towards horizontal thought that is “anti-

structure” (48). He tells us, “I had always taken for granted that I was a person, which was a good thing to be. But now I was being reminded that first and foremost I was a body, which wanted things” (35); however, as Ralph reminds him, “[o]ne learns that identities are good for some things but not for others” (27). As Adam is already painfully aware, the limits of a “person” extend only as far as an aging body will allow. Desire does not cease as one ages, but is “in itself an immanent revolutionary process” because “it always wants more connections and assemblages” (Deleuze and Parnet 96, 79). Adam decides to continue to make new connections, or “become,” by letting go of his old body and adopting a “new skin” (Kureishi 2002a, 21). In short, he embraces the possibilities of continuing evolution. Appropriately, this evolutionary process unrolls in a “body without organs,” defined as the “*field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency)” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 154, their emphasis). As Deleuze explains with both Guattari and Parnet, such a body is “made up of different lines which cross, articulate, or impede each other and which constitute a particular assemblage on a plane of immanence” on which “particles are emitted and fluxes combine” (Deleuze and Parnet 97; 89). Contrary to what its name may suggest, the body without organs does not suggest a body that *lacks* organs; rather, the enemy of the body without organs is the organism itself, or the “*organization* of the organs called the organism” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 158, my emphasis). In other words, by rejecting the fixed and defined assemblage of his old body, Adam makes an active choice to dissolve the borders of the self in order to reconstitute it. Eager to follow the pull of his “forceful and strange” desire in his new body, Adam embarks on a sexual journey on the streets of London (and

eventually all over Europe) that he describes as “a chaos” that is difficult to contain (Kureishi 2002a, 55).

However, as a writer who is now in his late 40s, Kureishi is even less eager to embrace wholly positive notions of desire and hybridity than he was in the 1980s or '90s; in fact, many scholars have observed that Kureishi has never been interested in creating only “positive” images of ethnicity (Moore-Gilbert 2001, 45). Eventually, the protagonist of *The Body* decides that he enjoys “making himself up” and would prefer to keep his new body in order that he might continue the process of becoming (Kureishi 2002a, 47). However, Adam is bound to Ralph by contract: when selecting his new body, he was told that he must return his new body after a period of six months. Once that period of time has elapsed, Adam claims that he is “in limbo, a waiting room in which there [is] no reality but the plane of anxiety” (127). Having encountered anxiousness and fear in the interstitial spaces of identity, Adam’s desperate reaction to having to sacrifice his new body without organs is to threaten to torch it and ultimately flee into exile. We leave Adam still in this new body, pursuing a nomadic life of constant movement that is pleasurable but also very solitary: “I was a stranger on the earth, a nobody with nothing, belonging nowhere, a body alone, condemned to begin again, in the nightmare of eternal life” (149).

While Karim and Shahid also engage in celebrations of the complex interstitial spaces of identity, Adam’s case differs slightly. As an aging man whose early proclamations are that he has started to cling to himself (3), Adam makes a far riskier voluntary decision to embrace plurality than either of Kureishi’s previous protagonists. When faced with the threat of losing the “multiplicity” of his new life (64), his choice to

flee and adopt a nomadic lifestyle can be seen as a drastic measure to avoid once again falling into molar patterns due to the limitations of his aging body. Additionally, the older protagonist comes to recognize that the positive process of becoming is not always ideal, as it can be isolating: “my ‘transformation’ had isolated me. As Ralph could have pointed out, it was the price I had to pay” (84). Yet in a desperate move to preserve his place on the Deleuzian edge, Adam makes the dangerous decision to go well “over it” by not upholding his contract, and it is this disregard for ethical concerns that isolates him in the end. As Rosi Braidotti has pointed out, “[b]ecoming is an intransitive process; it’s not about becoming anything in particular – only what one is capable of and attracted to and capable of sustaining its life on the edge, but not over it. ... It’s an ethical and political sensibility that begins with the recognition of one’s limitations as the necessary counterpart of one’s forces or intensive encounters with multiple others” (Braidotti 2001, 397). In this context, while the desire to engage in horizontal thought remains a powerful one throughout *The Body*, it is not presented without the necessary message of ethical caution: while the boundaries of the self do manage to dissolve for Adam, this initially positive and enabling process quickly becomes dangerous as he transgresses his own limits and makes an unethical choice.

Like his precursor Salman Rushdie, Kureishi problematizes the “literary inscription” of hybridity in his novels; unlike Rushdie, however, Kureishi also “stresses the dangers of writing only from one location” (Nasta 193-94). In his engagement of hybridity’s both positive and negative aspects, Kureishi illustrates that within the hybrid condition itself there exists a range of different positions. For instance, both Karim and Adam are forced to become less idealistic about their own hybridity as they acknowledge

the need to confront certain ethical dilemmas inherent in living a Deleuzian life. However, while Karim-the-actor ultimately remains sitting on the fence, ready for any dilemmas that await him, Adam rashly flings ethical concerns aside when tempted by the possibility of a life of continued potentiality. Like Karim, Shahid also chooses to tackle the questions themselves as he leaves London, as indicated by his choice to pursue a life of unceasing becomings as a writer. In the exploration of their identities, each of these protagonists engages in horizontal thought in a similar manner by first differentiating monocultural constructions of race, religion, sexuality, and/or nationalism before arriving at their respective liminal positions. Ultimately, Kureishi's creation of Deleuzian protagonists "provide(s) a means by which reductive stereotypes of a static ethnicity [can] be ironically subverted and destabilized" (Nasta 195). As a reflection of such destabilization, Kureishi's novels function as various actualizations, or throwings, of the same thematic dice. These dice necessarily land in a different combination each time, thereby creating a true "perplication" of identity that allows us to see all the possibilities, complexities, combinations, and differences contained within its hybrid condition (Deleuze 1995a, 200-201).

Chapter Three

Deleuzean Feminisms: Transgression and Self-Possession in the Novels of Meera Syal and Monica Ali

Any movement of utopianism or any politics of the future is perhaps best thought of through a Deleuzean notion of becoming, a becoming that refuses to know what or where it is, a becoming that embraces all those questions and problems that have precluded thought from being at home with itself – including the thought of woman.

~ Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (17)

There were many ways to harvest a woman's body. Eventually, she must learn to liberate herself.

~ Samina Ali, *Madras on Rainy Days* (23)

Different worlds, and in each I was a different woman unrecognizable even to myself.

~ Samina Ali, *Madras on Rainy Days* (70)

In recent work on transnationalism and diaspora, the act of transcending national borders has been defined as advantageous because it leads to multiple and fluid identities that offer a unique perspective on the world. Dalia Kandiyoti, however, in her essay “Multiplicity and Its Discontents: Feminist Narratives of Transnational Belonging” (2003), suggests that the concept of transnationalism needs to be revised to stress *disconnection* rather than continuity, for displacement itself involves struggle. She insists that what is overlooked in definitions of transnationalism are “divisions within

communities of origin and migration” as well as the “cultural schizophrenia” migrants and their children undergo in terms of identity formation (Kandiyoti 2, 39). In particular, women who attempt to belong to two or more nations and cultures often find themselves “evicted” from both sides of every border (4). In other words, rather than find easy acceptance of their newly created multiple belongings, transnational women often face sentiments of exclusion from each culture involved in their process of pluralization: while any new culture may not be easily accepting of diasporic interventions, the original culture(s) may also disapprove of women who willfully choose to disconnect themselves from the original community, particularly in regards to essential constructions of femininity.

It cannot be denied that multiple layers of oppression are undergone by women of South Asian origin who live in Britain. According to Prathiba Parmar, “the question of identity has taken on colossal weight particularly for those of us who are post-colonial migrants inhabiting histories of diaspora. [Black women have been] cast into the role of the Other, marginalised, discriminated against, and [are] too often invisible” (Parmar 298). Meera Syal’s and Monica Ali’s novels depict such women as protagonists: Syal’s Meena (*Anita and Me*, 1996), Chila, Sunita, Tania (*Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, 1999), and Ali’s Nazneen (*Brick Lane*, 2004) all undergo certain gendered traumas of displacement that result in similar struggles for self-possession across geographic, national, and cultural borders. However, rather than being seen as portraits of transnationalism’s discontents, these struggles can be seen as assertions both of “individual and collective identit[ies] as black women” that are part of a “necessary historical process” that is “both empowering and strengthening” (298). Reinterpreted in

light of Deleuzean philosophy and its intersections with feminist theory, these assertions become lines of flight – sexual, racial, and national – that are part of the process of “becoming-woman” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 248). Each female protagonist can be seen as moving away from essential, or molar, constructions of the self toward a more fluid and molecular subjectivity that is in constant development. But while for Meena the performance of rebellious acts allows for a temporary escape from the discontents of being a female member of the third space, in both *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* and *Brick Lane*, acts of transgression are more than simply expressions of transnationalism's discontents. In these novels, such acts actually serve as positive catalysts for becoming-woman. Transgression thus becomes an event, a line of flight, an act of molecularization. Accordingly, Chila, Sunita, Tania, and Nazneen manage to overcome the discontents of being culturally hybrid by forming molecular strategies of becoming as women in *process*.

In light of recent appropriations of Deleuzean philosophy by feminist theory, alternate interpretations of Syal's and Ali's fiction can be arrived at through a discussion of the positivity of difference highlighted in the novels. The link between Deleuze and feminism itself, however, cannot be posited without qualification, for the concept of becoming-woman, as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), has been received controversially. Feminist critics such as Rosi Braidotti, Luce Irigaray, and Elizabeth Gosz have all pointed out that Deleuze's “nomad, his smith, his warrior-in-chief area are all seemingly masculine constructs, armoured, aggressive, moving in a high velocity, sometimes a high-tech environment,” implying the question, “[i]s ‘Deleuzean feminism’ an oxymoron?” (Flieger 39).¹

The central issue at stake, as posed by the editors of *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, is whether “molecular” thought and its emphasis on the valuation of difference can be a useful tool for looking at female subjectivity, or whether it might be more “tactical” for women to have a “molar politics” (Colebrook 1). To some feminists, Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that the women’s movement ought to generate an endlessly becoming female subjectivity (one that is continually in process) implies that female subjectivity never actually arrives – thus nullifying the key aims of the feminist movement. To others, however, this is a misreading of the argument. What Deleuze and Guattari call for in their “double politics of the molar and the molecular” is the treatment of the female subject not as a ground but as an effect. Here, two types of movement are at play:

Deleuze and Guattari produce two dynamic senses of movement: a political movement as the organisation of a ground, identity or subject; and a molecular movement as the mobile, active, and ceaseless challenge of becoming. Any women’s subjectivity, they argue, must function, not as a ground, but as a “molar confrontation” that is part of a “molecular women’s politics” (Colebrook 1)

In light of this qualification, “the molar politics of identities and the molecular politics of becoming are not opposed; but the latter must be thought and confronted as the possibility and mobilisation of the former” (13-14).

Feminism encounters Deleuze in its third wave, or “poststructuralist” phase: it is in this phase that female identity begins to be seen as “constituted rather than given, and multiple rather than simple” (1). In “Black Feminism: The Politics of Articulation,” Pratibha Parmar argues that in feminism’s third wave, any simple or essentialist notion of

“identity politics” was challenged by black feminists, leading to an acknowledgement of differences within feminism (293). She pinpoints the political fragmentation of the white women’s movement, coinciding with the simultaneous rise of black feminism in Britain, to the 1970s: “The brunt of the emerging ‘new racism’ was being keenly felt by the black communities and by black women in particular. Black women were busy campaigning and creating autonomous organisational structures through our new-found collective self-confidence” (296).² However, in its challenge to “eurocentric theories and practices of white feminism” (296), black feminism still needed to take into account the emergence of differences within itself. These and further sentiments of exclusion, argues Parmar, “made many of us look elsewhere, in particular to other black women, for collective strength... partly to locate subsequent challenges historically” (297). Parmar implies here the urgent need for women to articulate subjective experiences: rather than accumulate a collection of oppressed identities, the “destructive, divisive, and immobilising” hierarchy of oppression must be eliminated to enable women to “work across” all their differences (298).

This desire to break the essentialism that prevents the feminist movement from moving forward is also reflected in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan’s argument for transnational feminist practices:

If feminist political practices do not acknowledge cultural flows, feminist movements will fail to understand the material conditions that structure women’s lives in diverse locations. If feminist movements cannot understand the dynamics of these material conditions, they will be unable to construct an effective opposition to current economic and cultural hegemonies that are taking new

global forms. Without an analysis of *transnational scattered hegemonies* that reveal themselves in gender relations, feminist movements will remain isolated and prone to reproducing the universalizing gestures of dominant Western cultures. (Grewal and Kaplan 17, my emphasis)

To prevent such reproduction of “universalizing gestures,” Grewal and Kaplan argue that feminists cannot operate according to a constructed “theory of hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender”; rather, they compare “multiple, overlapping, and discrete oppressions” (17-18). But to be able to link these diverse feminisms, these oppressions must be approached in a manner that eliminates hierarchy and does not replicate “cultural and economic hegemony” (19). It is in this light that Deleuze and Guattari’s horizontal philosophy might serve as a significant point of access when analyzing women’s fiction, for what is needed here is a collaborative method that allows for the ready formation of “transnational feminist alliances” across differing cultural planes (1, 20). As Elizabeth Grosz has argued, while Deleuze is “no feminist,” he is “one of the few philosophers committed to the task of thinking the new, of opening up thought and knowledge to the question of the future while nonetheless contesting and providing alternative readings, positions, and goals to those of philosophical orthodoxy” (Grosz 216).

An actress, writer, novelist, singer, comic, playwright and film director, English-born Meera Syal has actively worked to “think the new” while “finding [her] voice” as a South Asian woman in Britain.³ Along with notable achievements in both theatre and film, Syal’s first novel, *Anita and Me*, won the Betty Trask Award, was shortlisted for the 1996 Guardian Fiction Award, and was made into a major motion picture in 2002; her

second, *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, has recently been made into a successful BBC drama, in which Syal herself plays the role of Sunita.⁴ In her 2003 essay, "Finding My Voice," Syal outlines the difficulties she has had when confronting the question of her hybrid identity, and how these difficulties motivated her to pursue a career in acting from a young age:

When I confessed a secret longing to become an actress no-one was very surprised. Experience had taught me that performing as the class clown prevented me being forcibly cast as the class coon. My most effective form of self-defence was not physical but mimicry, joke telling and face pulling. And it proved to be a fundamentally theatrical talent. Moreover, an adolescent split uncomfortably between my attention grabbing displays at school and a lovingly protective though enclosed existence at home had endowed me with a schizophrenic ability to role swap which any actor would admire.

... Being now older and hopefully wiser I can understand how my desire to act was inevitably connected to my growing awareness of my identity as an Asian woman in this country. After all, both processes encouraged the development of a positive, individual voice and it was only with time that I realised both my voices were speaking the same language.

Had I waited for the education system to provide me with vocalisation I would be silent still. (Syal 2003, 253)

Once Syal left home at the age of eighteen to pursue an English and Drama degree at Manchester University, she was quickly forced to consider "not so much *how* [she] was

performing but *who* exactly was up there on stage” (253, her emphasis). The political awareness that permeates all of Syal’s work was thus formulated:

It was the old schizophrenic role swapping of my adolescence only this time it did not take place on the private stage of teenage fantasy but on the very real and public stage where I had to take responsibility for the statements being made through this apparent playacting.

I began to understand the crucial connection between my creative capacities and my political awareness. (253)

Political theatre was not new in Britain when Syal wrote her first play, *One of Us*, while in college, nor were novels that dealt with the Asian woman’s experience in particular when she published her first novel in 1996 (consider, for example, Ravinder Randhawa’s *A Wicked Old Woman*, published in 1987, and Farhana Sheikh’s *The Red Box*, 1991).⁵ Syal’s work, however, is revolutionary in its articulation of “the problem of [cultural] schizophrenia” inherent in these women specifically in the *comic* mode (254). In the previous chapter, left sitting on the fence of possibilities, Karim’s decision to become an actor at the end of *The Buddha of Suburbia* was seen as enabling, although his resorting to comedy as Mowgli and his depiction of Anwar’s character indicated the need for greater political awareness. Like Karim, Syal has expressed a similar but perhaps greater hesitation at having her performances “reduced... to that of a didactic mouthpiece” (254). But while Syal suffuses all her work with humour, parodying “the areas of her life in which this pull of two cultures has its most painful consequences” (255), it is crucial to note that in her novels this laughter is ambivalent: it does not remain straightforwardly comic (or even comically stereotypical) for long. Rather, Syal chooses

to pull back comic aspects and maintain a necessary distance when confrontations reach their painful climactic points; in her own phrase, “the humour dies down” (255). This distance is necessary, for as Bakhtin explains,

[a]s a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical it must be brought close. Everything that makes us laugh is close at hand, all comical creativity works in a zone of maximal proximity. Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. (Bakhtin 1981, 23)

Thus, Syal employs a particular comic strategy in her novels in which she plays with the ideas of proximity and distance to achieve her desired effects: she succeeds in making her audience laugh with her characters up close, but also calls upon her readers to pity their conditions from a distance when necessary.

The link between the rise of black British feminism and the proliferation of black women's comedies is not accidental. In fact, many women of African, Afro-Caribbean, and South Asian origin living in Britain have turned to comic modes, whether in literary texts or in film, over the past thirty years (most famously Meera Syal, Gurinder Chadha, Zadie Smith, Monica Ali, Simi Bedford, and Suniti Namjoshi). These women authors and filmmakers, all of whom are usually labelled “black” in Britain but who often occupy differing economic and cultural positions within British society, have been seen as using comic modes for community-building or to speak to a wider audience, perhaps even to a

global audience. Yet critical responses to both Syal and Ali's work have questioned these writers' use of the comic mode: the use of comic cultural stereotypes in their novels has led to the accusation that South Asian communities are being represented too negatively.⁶ To Kobena Mercer (*Welcome to the Jungle*, 1994), such responses reflect how the arts, particularly cinema, have become

a crucial arena of cultural contestation today – contestation over what it means to be British; contestation over what Britishness itself means as a national or cultural identity; and contestation over the values that underpin the Britishness of British cinema [and the arts by extension] as a *national...culture*. (Mercer 73, his emphasis)

From this view, to contest fully what it means to be British, it is necessary, as Salman Rushdie famously has argued, to provide a “warts and all” representation of South Asian communities within the fiction itself (Rushdie 1988, 40). For such a “free investigation” of an object to occur, laughter must not operate as a reductive strategy, but as a constructive one:

Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically. (Bakhtin 1981, 23)

Such “free investigation[s]” are particularly important to women writers of colour; according to Parmar, “critical self-evaluation is a necessary prerequisite for *all of us* engaged in political struggle if there is to be any movement away from intransigent

political positions to tentative new formulations, and such self-evaluation has already begun in some black women” (Parmar 297).

As writers who are both British and Asian, Syal and Ali “deliberately inhabit a range of differently staged identities along a shifting spectrum which defines the particular histories of their individual lives” (Nasta 186). *Anita and Me*, *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, and *Brick Lane* abound with various and multiple characters who – as a reflection of the varied spectrum of the British South Asian diaspora – inhabit a varied range of comic positions. Significantly, each of the four protagonists of these novels – Chila, Sunita, Tania, and Nazneen – becomes molecular as she moves towards a positive sense of difference. However, Meena’s particular case is unique in two ways: perhaps because she is an adolescent child, in *Anita and Me*, not only does laughter consistently operate as a clear survival strategy, but Meena does not achieve full potentiality despite her transgressive nature. Discussing this novel, however, is crucial to an understanding of how Syal’s ideas surrounding South Asian identity have evolved to become Deleuzian by the publication of *Life* in 1999.

Arguably one of the first South Asian novels in Britain written in a fully comic mode, *Anita and Me* is narrated from a British Asian child’s point of view. At the start of the novel, Meena is very well-aware that she resides in a third space between two cultures. Her childlike naivety in the first half of the novel allows her to see this “grey area between all areas... [as] increasingly like home”; it is an unequivocally positive space, a “gap” from which she can choose options relatively freely in order to be who she wants (Syal 1996, 150; 10). Transgression is an important feature of this gap. Making up fictions helps Meena feel more “complete,” and lying becomes her strategy for survival:

I've always been a sucker for a good *entendre*. The gap between what is said and thought, what is stated and what is implied, is a space in which I have always found myself. I'm not really a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong. (10)

Meena's lying can be seen as a transgressive act that allows her to create "a differently mirrored space, a space which ... enable[s] the ironic possibilities of 'double-entendre' and comedy to explode prevailing stereotypes" (Nasta 188). Such a characterization of Meena is evident from the following review, in which she is called Tollington's "firecracker":

Little Meena Kumar is trapped between two cultures. The English-born child of Punjabi immigrants, she belongs to the only Indian family in the tiny town of Tollington, and it's a constant source of embarrassment to her. While her parents wish she could be like her cousins Pinky and Baby – sweet, docile, school-loving Indian girls – Meena's hyperactive imagination spurs her toward a life of drama, danger, blue jeans, garden gnomes and fish fingers. In other words, a life spent with neighborhood terror Anita Rutter. In this smart and hilarious debut novel from Meera Syal, best known as an actress and screenwriter (*Bhaji on the Beach*) [sic], we follow this young firecracker through Tollington's dirt yards, abandoned mines and slimy alleys as she lies, steals candy, affects a "yard" accent, worries her family sick and eventually comes to find comfort in her bicultural identity. (Muhlke)

The novel, however, is not an unequivocal celebration of hybridity, despite its comic mode. Over time, Meena learns that the third space in which she resides is not without problems and discontents. These disturbances come to a focus as Meena grows over the course of one year in the 1960s. Several key events help Meena come to acknowledge her non-English side, the first of which is her father's singing:

Papa's singing always unleashed these emotions which were unfamiliar and instinctive at the same time, in a language I could not recognise but felt I could speak in my sleep, in my dreams, evocative of a country I had never visited but which sounded like the only home I had ever known. The songs made me realise there was a corner of me that would be forever not England. (112)

In addition, there are significant effects of Sam and Anita's betrayals on Meena.

According to the prophecy she is given by the fortune-teller, her friendship with Anita in particular must be "deterritorialized," or be dismantled completely, in order for Meena to chart her own territories:

She nodded to herself and began, "You hef to watch your momma's health, is not good. But there will be help soon. Help from over the seas, yes? ... Success is written here, darlink, a good mind and a strong heart, but sacrifice too, you see, and guilt. You are under a bad influence, but you cannot break free. Soon you will hef to choose, darlink, and you will lose everythink before you can begin again. But it is for the best. Only you know what is the right think to do, you see?"

A bad influence; that sounded like a curse. Maybe she had looked right through my eyes like a telescope and seen the wicked thoughts and easy lies and

bitter frustration that sometimes seemed to fill my head until it felt like it would burst. (185).

Meena realizes that she must also “break free” of Sam when, during a town discussion of what to do with the money raised from the Spring Fete, she discovers that he is a racist:

Sam interrupted, a sly grin curling at the corners of his mouth: “Yow don’t do nothing but talk, ‘Uncle.’” And give everything away to some darkies we’ve never met. We don’t give a toss for anyone else. This is our patch. Not some wogs’ hangout.”

I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. My legs felt watery and a hot panic softened my insides into mush. It was as if the whole crowd had turned into one huge eyeball which swiveled slowly between me and papa. I wished I had stood next to papa; I could feel Anita shifting herself beside me, I knew she would not hold me or take my hand.... There must have been some mistake. (193-94)

Anita displays similar racist sentiments in response to this incident, indicating to Meena that their friendship is also over, and that “life isn’t all ha ha hee hee with your friends” (150). Meena eventually concedes that her difference is what has caused her to be misunderstood by those she thought were her friends: “I needed someone to talk to. I needed to talk about Sam. Anita, being my best friend, should have been with me. But I knew, as I thought this, that she would not have understood that there were some things that we would never be able to share” (274). Meena’s position as a misunderstood outsider is then emphasized in a key scene: when the much anticipated Nanima finally

arrives from India, she is exoticized in front of Meena, causing the latter to respond with a discomfited, ambivalent laughter and lapse into comedy. As Meena explains,

It was a strange kind of compliment they paid Nanima, wanting to touch and feel her like an imported piece of exotica... I felt confused... I did not know whether to swat the ladies away or say thank you. I knew they were being friendly, but it was not somehow a meeting of equals. I felt like we were suddenly the entertainment, so I concluded I might as well put on a jolly good show. (220)

Ultimately, it is her own horse-riding accident that finally causes the humour to die down for Meena, and she decides to “heal” herself, “both in body and mind. It was time... and I would always tell the truth” (284).

Meena’s idea of healing is to de-fragment herself and achieve wholeness and unity in terms of identity; in essence, as a result of the difficulties of being a member of the only South Asian family in Tollington, her goal becomes *anti*-Deleuzean by the novel’s end. As with Karim, however, Meena also remains in an intermediary position at the conclusion of her story. While she has initially embraced transgression, she ultimately does not achieve full Deleuzean potential despite all her efforts to remain squarely in the middle of the two sides of her identity. Kureishi suggests at the end of *The Buddha of Suburbia* that it is the condition of England itself (specifically rigid attitudes towards racial difference) which causes Karim to regress. This idea can be applied to Meena as well, but with significant qualifications: for her, identity is problematized not only by the question of her race or her ethnic allegiances, but also her gender. Furthermore, while we leave Karim ready to explore his problems further through acting, Meena is unequivocally happy in what she perceives as *solutions* at the end of *Anita and Me*. For

her, the aim shifts from acquiring a transgressive identity to fixing identity, for she is content in her acquired unity at the novel's end and wants nothing more to do with "bodies and breakdowns" (328). Her newly achieved sense of wholeness is indicated in her new perception of the world as borderless:

I saw that Tollington had lost all its edges and boundaries, that the motorway bled into another road and another and the Barlett estate had swallowed up the last cornfield and that my village was indistinguishable from the suburban mass that had once surrounded it and had finally swallowed it whole. It was time to let go and I floated back down into my body which, for the first time ever, fitted me to perfection and was all mine. (326)

It is significant that despite her discontents in the interstitial spaces of identity, Meena, like Karim, is also left in a paradoxical state: neither protagonist progresses far enough due to the onset of fear, but both exhibit clear signs that they are capable of becoming-molecular.

Anita and Me is the novel in which Syal begins to chart the meaning of the phrase "third space" for women of the South Asian British diaspora, albeit she is unable to go far enough with issues of gender with adolescent Meena. If the ending of this novel can be labeled pessimistic (Meena is thwarted in terms of possibilities and holds back in fear), then Syal's next novel ends on a more optimistic and open-ended note. In *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, as women in process, Syal's three protagonists are left anything but thwarted: Chila, Tania, and Sunita must each learn what it means to be a South Asian woman living in Britain, and while each moves into a third space of fluidity by the novel's end, each arrives at and negotiates that space differently.

Syal opens her second novel, and introduces her three protagonists, with a specific event: Chila and Deepak's wedding. In the book's initial chapter, the author's aim is not simply to describe the bonds of friendship between three women, but also to set up the unwritten socio-cultural codes of the British South Asian diaspora that these friends will come to question. These codes consist of the system of laws, rules, and regulations that help fix and demarcate cultural identity (in short, "molarize" it) within clear boundaries; and the most important code in Syal's South Asian community is presented as being arranged marriage. Significantly, because the novel is told in a polyphonic manner, with a multitude of narrative perspectives and positions often in the form of monologues, the extent to which the female protagonists adhere to or break cultural codes is also multiple. As the omniscient narrator cinematically sweeps across the scene, he/she is able to enter the mind of several characters (including the groom himself) all of whom are in a state of questioning.

While Tania appears to be rebellious from the outset, Chila and Sunita are both presented as having adhered to the rules of arranged marriage, but with reservations and opposing transgressive desires. In fact, throughout the first half of the novel (all building to Tania's climactic film at the novel's centre), both Chila and Sunita express the desire to break out of what they perceive as inherently molar, or fixed, patterns. For example, at her own wedding Chila keeps her head "bowed submissively" ("just in case anyone might suspect she was looking forward to a night of rampant nuptials") and feels "a strange sense of dread" as she considers her husband's unkempt toenails (Syal 1999, 11). And, as she holds her young daughter Nikita and observes the wedding rites, Sunita's

thoughts indicate that marriage has not worked out ideally for her; she feels “a green stab of envy” at what she perceives to be Chila’s unqualified joy:

This is where it starts, thought Sunita, a little girl at her mother’s knee wanting to be the scarlet princess whose beauty lights fires. Sunita felt a green stab of envy, seeing Chila, dark, dumpy, dearest friend Chila, parading her joy like a trophy. Sunita had been a perfect size eight when she wore her wedding sari. Akash had kissed each of her fingertips that night, awed by their perfection. She used to paint her nails then. (14)

Soon after the wedding, both women receive further warning signs that indicate a lack of contentment in their respective marriages that is specifically tied to gender expectations. Chila’s description of her school-drawing of “My Perfect House” suggests that with the advent of her marriage she might have sacrificed her deep desire for independent selfhood:

I always did the same picture: My Perfect House. I’d cut round beds and dining tables and pine kitchen units and pink chaises-longues and I’d arrange them all into rooms and I’d always leave a space in the hallway for me to stand. Just me. And a cat if I could find one, though I was never very good with cutting round the ears, really fiddly. I liked it in that hut. (29)

Despite her husband making her feel like “a bit of meat” in his sandwich, Chila deliberately “cover[s] herself with lime pickle” and continues to serve herself to Deepak (50). However, the cultural expectation of serving her husband at the expense of herself reminds Sunita of the Ram and Sita myth:⁷

Sita, the good Hindu wife, walked through fire for Lord Rama to prove her purity.

It was an image that had haunted Sunita throughout her childhood. If he had loved her, why didn't he believe her? It was only during the first few years of her marriage that she understood the subtext of that altruistic gesture. All those moments when she could have met fire with fire, risen to Akash's angry bait, let out that nine-headed demon to pull them apart. Instead, she chose to acquiesce, and he became putty in her hands, responding to her sweetness with immeasurable tenderness. (46-47)

These sentiments, however, are never seriously expressed to Akash; as Sunita's continued thoughts indicate, each of them habitually fails to communicate effectively in the marriage, preferring to withdraw in fear of confrontation:

Even now, after seven years, she could not remember one screaming match. Some long silences perhaps, some endless sulks, a few slamming doors. But they had not crossed that line, into the war zone where things were said and done which could not be undone. Not yet. A few burns on her soles were worth that, surely. (47)

When the demon finally "rattle[s] its box" with her son Sunil's accident, because it has occurred due her husband's irresponsibility, Sunita tells Akash to "piss off" (67). But due to Akash's failure to understand her hostility, the frustrated Sunita can only respond with a half-serious joke:

I tried to explain to Akash that I was not being a neurotic woman, it was just that he knew what was going on and I didn't. It was just me and my imagination in that taxi, and we've never got on too well when left alone in dark places. All he kept saying was, "You swore at me, Sunita," and that was something I had never

done before. Apparently. So Sita has an off day sometimes! I told him, although he didn't get the joke. Not that it was, really. (74)

Unable to express openly her discomfort with the cultural code of being a domestic and submissive Sita-like wife, Sunita continues to keep her sentiments hidden and thus manages to escalate the hostility between herself and her husband even further.

On the whole, it is Tania's silent observation of her two friends, for the creation of her groundbreaking documentary film, which allows Syal to convey the need for Chila and Sunita to break out of molar patterns. However, what Tania herself fails to recognize throughout the first half of the novel is that her own sense of identity must also undergo further molecularization. In other words, while Tania proves to be a useful model for Chila and Sunita as the unmarried "hip and with it" hybrid woman who literally stands with "one foot in each world" (49, 38), she realizes that she too must further differentiate her already hybrid identity when, as a filmmaker, she is stereotypically fixed as "merely exotic" by her boss and expected to adhere to this image in her creative work (16-17). As a result of her confrontations with her boss Jonathan, which cause her to feel "inexplicably betrayed" (63), Tania, who normally hates the "proximity" of "her people" (13), is forced to come to greater political awareness concerning the South Asian side of her identity. As she learns over the course of the novel, getting "used to not belonging" without taking such ethical responsibility can lead to a great degree of alienation and loneliness (54).

Tania, Sunita and Chila must each redefine themselves by rejecting molar patterns and coming into process; in short, they must undergo what Deleuze and Guattari term "becoming-woman" through a "rethinking [of] the positivity of difference" (Braidotti

2001). What is called for here is the refusal of each woman to remain “a molar entity, the woman as defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject” to become instead subjects that are “intensive or dynamic field[s] of intersecting forces” undergoing a constant state of “betweenness” (*entre deux*) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 275; Braidotti 2001, 384-5; Flieger 43). In short, it is essential that these women become *subjectless* subjects – that is, “effects of a universal becoming” – rather than either allowing themselves to “take man as the ground of becoming” or actually *arrive* at any notions of fixed female subjectivity (Colebrook 2, 12). What troubles certain feminist critics about this concept of “becoming-woman” is “Deleuze’s apparent consignment of ‘molar’ women to the sexual and reproductive roles marked out by patriarchy, as though ‘molar’ were immutable,” prompting the question of whether “Deleuzean Feminism” is an oxymoron (Flieger 41). But here, it is important to keep in mind Jerry Aline Flieger’s observation that for Deleuze and Guattari, “becoming-woman is not a ‘macropolitical’ project concerning female subjects” (41). As Flieger has argued persuasively in “Becoming-Woman: Deleuze, Schreber, and Molecular Identification” (2000), “becoming-woman does not aim at the emancipation of a homogeneous collectivity (women), an aggregate of same-sex subjects with a shared ‘identity’ struggling to gain political and economic rights: it aims at *tensile transformation and transgression of identity*” (43, my emphasis). In short, women’s identity is anything but “immutable” in Deleuzean philosophy – and this is successfully exhibited by each of Syal’s protagonists in *Life*.

Two significant events instigate the process of becoming-woman in Sunita and Chila: Tania’s film – a gritty, interview-based documentary in montage about perceptions

of marriage in the diaspora – and her affair with Deepak. Tania, thus, serves as the catalyst for the molecularization of both women in two ways. First, her film allows Sunita and Chila to see who they really are – namely stereotypical South Asian housewives in denial of their unhappiness – so that they might question that construction of themselves. This particular effect of the film is clearest in Sunita: she not only begins to stop cutting herself and loses weight right after she sees herself on large and multiple screens, but she also leaves Akash by the novel’s end. Sunita is finally able to take this step when she realizes that Akash, much like the other male characters in *Life*, has undergone very little, if any, genuine self-transformation, despite having read the revealing notes Sunita has scribbled in her books concerning the “Sita Complex” (208). We leave Sunita with plans to go to Spain (331), and having constructed herself anew as a fish that has leapt against the current:

Sunita felt as if she stood on the banks, poised, watching others borne away happily in the current. It was so easy, to just drift, to laze in the undertow, like Chila, instead of leaping against the waves. She remembered Uncle with Patterned Jumpers and his lecture on reincarnation, and wondered if he was inside. She thought he might like to know that she had come back as a salmon. (272)

Tania functions similarly as a significant catalyst for Chila’s molecularization. It is not accidental that her affair with Deepak begins the same night as her film debut. More than the film itself, it is watching Tania and Deepak kiss on the balcony of the club that causes Chila to recoil in “fear” and consider dismantling her life:

Chila waits until she is absolutely sure before she starts crying... She only knows

now what it was that she did not recognize on her face on that screen. It was fear. And now she knows what she was afraid of, what has always haunted her, what propelled every smile, every altruistic gesture, every cheerful acquiescence, every I don't mind, jaan. She has constructed a whole life around it. No-one must leave. No-one leaves nice people. I am nice. I will make myself nice. Someone should have told her, her mother, her friends, all those romances she read, all those films she watched, all those customs she upheld that there are no guarantees. She walks down the stairs like her grandmother. On the balcony, the children play. (181-82)

As Chila's identity as Deepak's wife unravels before her in this scene, her entire constructed life dismantles, suggesting a need for her to rebuild her life without him while exploring subjectivity on her own terms. In the next section of the novel, however, along with the arrival of spring we learn that Chila has not left Deepak as she may have intended but is instead seven months pregnant with their first child. Here, we realize that while both Sunita and Chila have undergone out-of-body experiences in reaction to Tania's actions, only Sunita's change has been immediate; Chila remains in denial of Tania and Deepak's affair until the night she gives birth. She is finally forced to confront this relationship when Sunita calls Tania's apartment to inform Deepak that his wife is in labour – a passage worth citing at length:

“Hello?”

“It's Sunita. Is Deepak there?”

Deepak felt her stiffen beneath him, not an arch of passion. Suddenly there were steel fibres beneath the muscle. She atrophied beneath his hands, each pore snapping shut, tightly.

“Sunita? Sunny? I don’t believe—”

“Is he there?” Sunita cut in, expressionless.

Tania held herself very still. “Why should Deepak be —”

“Tell him his wife’s in labour. Now.”

“She’s what?... She’s... I didn’t know.”

The dialling tone.

Tania sat up, she fell out of bed, something sharp entered her thigh, she fumbled for the light switch, scrabbling across the wall with freezing fingers.

Deepak recoiled in the sudden wash of light.

“What... what’s going on?”

Tania stood naked before him. She clung to the wall behind her for support. There was a small cut in her leg. Against the white wall, she was as darkly stark as the desert, so many shades of gold and brown. She looked at him, profound with loss. A hot wind began blowing him away, grain by grain. Her voice, when it came, was parched, parchment dry. “Get out.” (280-81)

A few pages later, Chila’s thoughts in her final monologue reveal that it is the juxtaposition of these events – the discovery of the affair and childbirth – that finally allows for the initiation of her becoming. While Chila does manage to acquire a “Perfect House” over the course of her pregnancy (Deepak has lavished money on her out of guilt), by the novel’s end she realizes that her attempt to contain everything within an

illusion of perfection has been at the expense of her desire for independent selfhood. When her husband attempts to steal their newborn son, this act confirms Chila's decision to choose a molecular life without him. In the funeral scene that closes the novel, we are told she has plans to take her son to India:

Chila held Anand closer to her, smelled the milk and soap in his downy hair. She felt light as air, solitary. It was so strange to be standing with the old ones, aged couples holding hands, taking part in the old ways, and feel so new and unfamiliar. It wasn't so bad, to be here alone. Not better, just different. It was monsoon season in India, the travel agent had advised her. Chila had replied that she didn't mind rain. (331).

In her state of newness and unfamiliarity, Chila feels lighter as she finally lets go of old identity constructions that fixed her. In a move away from molarity, Chila's decision to go to India is the first step in charting her own path without a husband against which to define her identity.

The passage depicting Sunita's phone call to Tania is extensively quoted above for a second reason: it is at this climactic moment that Tania learns Deepak has been lying about Chila's pregnant state and decides to end their affair. Prior to Sunita's call, Tania has remained unaware of the changes her friends have undergone, believing that they too have not been in touch since the launch of her film. After this moment, however, realizing that further relationships must not fragment as a result of her selfish actions, Tania makes the decision to stop stereotyping the South Asian diaspora in her films and instead work with more political awareness; in short, she undergoes a becoming of her own. By the novel's end, Tania finally acknowledges that even though she might

have started out with “the best intentions” (81), her achievements as a director can no longer come at the expense of important friendships:

It was simple really, only having to choose between two worlds, home and everywhere else. And in between was the long walk home, and the three of us; rebuilding the crossing on each journey. That’s what I missed most; it’s not some mysterious mother country ancient bond, it’s nothing to do with being oppressed, menstrually synchronized womb-en or any of that crap. It’s just that there aren’t that many of us who built that bridge, walked it together. Our parents ignored it, our children won’t even see it. Some of us will never get off it. I missed them, my fellow travellers. (317).

The positive effects of Tania’s transgressions, however, remain highlighted: here, the image of traveling on a bridge highlights her position as a nomad in constant movement between “home” and “everywhere else.” Significantly, she envisions her friends building and walking along this bridge with her, in a community. Although Sunita and Chila come off as the unfortunate brunt of a joke in her film, Tania’s partially destructive acts allow those very same friends to liberate themselves from molarity and become women in process.

The influence of Syal’s novels on Monica Ali’s debut novel *Brick Lane* is clear at more than just the level of shared genre. Ali combines Syal’s use of comic characters – also labeled ethnic stereotypes in several reviews of the book⁸ – with very similar thematic concerns, such as women’s transgression and self-possession. Like Sunita and Chila, at the advent of her marriage, Nazneen also forgoes the possibility of possessing any dual or multiple forms of identity celebrated in transnationalism by opting instead to

become the traditional, “authentic” Bangladeshi woman she is told she is fated to be. However, over the course of the novel, an arranged marriage and the ensuing forced displacement are revealed to be extreme constraints on her agency. Thus, painful struggles with cultural duality lead Nazneen to an act of transgression (a Deleuzian “line of flight”) with a man who also exemplifies problems of belonging. Significantly, like both Tania’s film and affair in *Life*, Nazneen’s affair with Karim also serves as a liberating act of transgression, a positive catalyst in her becoming-woman. This process of becoming can be charted in the novel as Nazneen moves from a static and molar identity at the start of her marriage to a fluid, borderless, and transnational one by the novel’s end. Ultimately, *Brick Lane* concludes with Deleuzian possibility, offering to Nazneen “different worlds and individualities” with multiple variables (Deleuze 1990, 115).

Ali’s account of Nazneen’s life is a straightforward one, with limited access to Nazneen’s thoughts. Several key moments in the narrative, however, highlight its central themes – or the key issues that affect and inform Nazneen’s identity. For example, in the first five pages of the novel, the idea of “Fate” as a guide is set up from the moment of Nazneen’s birth: whether she lives or dies is “Left to [Her] Fate” (Ali 2003, 4). Here, fate operates not merely as one of the novel’s central themes, but as a grand Lyotardian meta-narrative, one that Nazneen will eventually come to dismantle. In the novel’s Islamic socio-cultural context, where duty and familial obligation precede personal choice (Mrs. Islam is the prime vocalist of this position), Nazneen’s debate becomes whether to live a life guided by fate – an Eastern meta-narrative or cultural pattern – or guided by choice – the Western alternative. Nazneen chooses to rebel against fate quite

early in the novel and in her life: her first rebellion is her refusal to breathe at birth (2). Fate, however, wills her to live: her mother decides to leave things to fate by choosing not to exercise control over something in God's hands, and eventually Nazneen breathes. Nazneen's second rebellion quickly follows: her refusal to eat (3). She is eventually forced to subdue this rebellion, and from this point on, fate becomes her guiding principle: "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle ruled her life" (4).

Eventually, Nazneen marries Chanu and moves to England. When she is deterritorialized from Bangladesh, the nation that was her home, and migrates to Chanu's, Nazneen simply moves from one state of "homelessness" to another, and remains relatively powerless under male authority. It is significant that at this point in her life, Nazneen does not have the dual, hybrid, or multiple type of identity celebrated by transnationalism. Rather than immediately becoming-hybrid as a result of her move, Nazneen opts to live a typical South Asian life guided by fate, as the traditional Bangladeshi wife, or a good village girl according to Chanu. She adopts the expected role of such a woman as the carrier of tradition and custom, and throughout her marriage negotiates a balancing of East and West for not only her husband and herself but also her daughters, who also undergo a feeling of homelessness. England, however, gradually becomes a place of possibility for Nazneen. Just before she moves there, she sees a symbolic field of grass, "glittering green and gold in the brief evening light" (5) that foreshadows her eventual resumption of the pattern of rebellion she began at birth. Once this process has begun, Nazneen will become invested with the agency to define not only

her own identity but also a “home” for herself within England, a nation whose shifting boundaries increasingly call into question the “Englishness” of the nation.

In the end, physical (dis)location does lead to positive developments for Nazneen, for she does manage to articulate a particular transnational position both for herself and her daughters. But while possibility and choice do open themselves to Nazneen, this process of transformation does not begin before much fear, the weighing of options, the exercising of both small and large rebellions, and the making of crucial decisions. Several external influences on Nazneen – Chanu, Mrs. Islam, Razia, and Hasina – serve as her possible alternative constructions of selfhood: Bangladeshi, English, or something in-between. Mrs. Islam’s symbolic name tells us that she represents the traditional view on diaspora held by Muslim South Asian immigrants with children. She thinks in terms of either/or: racial “mixing” is not a positive concept for her, so she firmly believes in choosing one side or the other (14). Even Chanu agrees that in London a deliberate Bangladeshi diaspora is created which retains a national essence and Bangladeshi values, but is also a space where hybridity, or Mrs. Islam’s mixing, is considered “heresy” (see Chapter One). For Chanu, the decision seems fairly easy: he chooses to be English, via a study of the country’s “white” literature. Chanu seems to accept the static definition of a homogeneous England. He sees its racial and cultural dynamism as problematic to all rather than as a useful means of creating a new, fluctuating identity for the nation that now also involves immigrants like himself (47). This aspect of Chanu reminds us of Changez in *Buddha* and Saladin from *Satanic Verses*, making him a particular character type found in diaspora novels set in London (“fresh off the boat,” enamored with English

higher learning). Both Chanu and Mrs. Islam accordingly represent identity types that Nazneen will eventually come to reject.

In contrast, the biggest influences on Nazneen's quest for molecular identity are her friend Razia and sister Hasina, the latter with whom she communicates via letters. Both Nazneen and her sister are leading lives with obstacles, one in London and the other in Dhaka. At first, Nazneen thinks Hasina was wrong to kick against fate (9, 11), but later her sister becomes her model. It is Hasina who rebels first, and Nazneen seems to follow by example. Hasina, however, struggles with exterior forces while Nazneen has an inner crisis as she negotiates the domestic tightrope between Chanu and their daughters. In the end, Nazneen rejects several models immediately around her in favour of the model of rebellion her sister represents.

Several small rebellions build to Nazneen's big rebellion: the affair with Karim. It all begins, however, years earlier with Nazneen's first adventure on Brick Lane. Right before this adventure, we are told that Nazneen was beginning to experience contradictory impulses towards her husband (18); she begins by using silence rather than words in her communication with Chanu. She also becomes depressed and starts to have suicidal thoughts (23). At one point, she even expresses the desire to be elsewhere (27): "when she awoke she thought, *I know what I would wish*, but by now she knew that where she wanted to go was not a different place but a different time. She was free to wish it but it would never be" (Ali's emphasis, 27). The image for her rebellion and her desire to be free is that of ice skating. From the first reference to this image of possibility (10), we know that it will greatly impact Nazneen's future decisions and somehow liberate her. Perhaps we can go so far as to apply Nazneen's thoughts on the store

mannequins near the end of the novel to the skaters she sees on television: “For the actions of their bodies, there was no accountability” (291). Nazneen sees both the mannequins and the skaters as images of hope, not fate; she begins to yearn for a type of freedom of movement and identity – represented by ice skating – in which there is no accountability, and this yearning eventually persuades her to leave the home her husband has forbidden her to leave and go to Brick Lane.

At this point, Nazneen is pregnant (motherhood is not something she looks forward to), and she chooses to leave the complex of Hamlet Towers and run towards downtown London – this is her first open act of rebellion. What prompts Nazneen is a letter from her sister Hasina – she runs away just as her sister does: “they were both lost in cities that would not pause even to shrug. Poor Hasina” (37). In this city where she is lost, Nazneen desires to be unseen; she desires faces turned away. She wants invisibility because it gives her pleasure: “they could not see her any more than she could see god... She enjoyed this thought” (35). But then a little while later, she feels a desperate desire to be seen and understood: “She had spoken in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something” (39). Nazneen thus becomes visible and self-aware as a result of her adventure, for Brick Lane serves as a significant setting for Nazneen in a city (London) that is a place of visible possibility. While at first Nazneen fears this Deleuzean “plane of immanence” to which she goes only with her husband, she later ventures out to it alone. When her daughter Shahana is lost, this is where Nazneen wants her to be, for it is the only place in London with which she is familiar: the place will eventually come to give her hope and salvation. As an immediate result of her initial trip to Brick Lane, however, we are told her heart becomes

ablaze with mutiny (40), and that she starts to increase her little domestic rebellions.

Chanu, however, doesn't notice these rebellious acts (49), leading to Nazneen's feeling of entrapment (50), from which she will find temporary escape only through an affair.

Eventually, as arranged marriage and forced displacement are revealed to be constraints on agency, Nazneen commits an act of sexual transgression with Bangladeshi-British Karim. As a result of the affair, her passive identity changes, but aspects of her self still remain passive. Nazneen is not reserved in the affair as she is in her letters to her sister (her curt tone when conveying news of her son Raqib's illness is an example), but very unrestrained and uninhibited. Karim is the first man to see her naked; in contrast, the sexual act was a duty with Chanu. Nazneen's affair is a central event in her becoming, her evolving sense of identity. She is not the only one to change; Chanu suddenly starts using silences and is not as vocal as he once was. His reaction to the affair is to pretend he knows nothing, if he knows at all; meanwhile, Nazneen wants to be discovered.

Her lover, Karim, however, is an Englishman of Bengali descent (he has never been to Bangladesh), who also has identity issues like Nazneen. For example, when he speaks Bengali, Nazneen notices that he stammers, indicating a lack of ease in this linguistic side of his identity. This act of stammering, as Deleuze suggests, indicates a "disequilibrium or bifurcation" in language itself (Deleuze 1997, 108), but it can also reflect Karim's own bifurcated sense of self, his unease with which is expressed as linguistic stutters. Furthermore, like Riaz and Chad in *The Black Album*, Karim uses political involvement problematically to channel his frustrations concerning race. For him, political action is a way to find community, but this idea is called into question on 9/11. Nazneen eventually ends the relationship when she realizes he is not who she wants

him to be. He does not, as it turns out, have his “place in the world,” just as Nazneen and Chanu do not (Ali 2003, 191). Nazneen considers that she might have constructed her own version of whom she desires:

How had she made him? She did not know. She had patched him together, working in the dark. She had made a quilt out of pieces of silk, scraps of velvet, and now that she held it up to the light the stitches showed up large and crude, and they cut across everything. (339)

Nazneen’s act of assembling Karim signifies how identity itself is a construct. This idea leads Nazneen not only to reject Karim, but also provides her with the agency to make the choice to reconstruct her own identity, and thus rebel against fate. As she explains to him, “How can I explain? I wasn’t me, and you weren’t you. From the very beginning to the very end, we didn’t see things. What we did – we made each other up” (339). This motif of stitching together, of clothing, symbolizes Nazneen’s own plane of identity. She sees the cloth of dreams and sews lines of flight across it. Her large, crude stitches to put Karim together will not hold, but she is also desperate to keep the cloth of her family tightly sewn together. Thus, stitches connect her not only to Karim but also to her family: for example, at one point Bibi asks for a story because she feels that words stitch her and her mother closely (362). This stitching may reflect our intersections with other planes of identity, into which we become more generally woven.

Nazneen’s attempts to keep her family’s stitches from coming apart fail in the end. This failure is, however, a positive act for Nazneen’s evolving sense of identity, as was the ending of her affair with Karim. Just as both these men leave Nazneen’s world, she looks up and sees an airplane pass overhead: “She looked up. The plane climbed

steadily. The higher it climbed, the deeper the sky. It rode up. And it went on” (364-5). Soon after this uplifting image, Nazneen has a similar significant moment of evolution: dancing to a song on the radio in her apartment. We are told that “the music broke in waves over her entire body. She waved her arms, threw back her head and danced around the table. *Shout!*”(367).

However, a third significant line of flight more fully marks her entry into becoming-woman: her first skate at the skating rink (the final scene of the novel). Nazneen’s initial skating experience, a symbolic flight of freedom, is crucial to her identity development and solidifies the final choice she makes to remain in London with her daughters. Nazneen’s daughters remove her blindfold, and she sees the skating rink before her as a shimmering, crystalline Deleuzean surface:

In front of her was a huge white circle, bounded by four-foot-high boards.

Glinting, dazzling, enchanting ice. She looked at the ice and slowly it revealed itself. The criss-cross patterns of a thousand surface scars, the colors that shifted and changed in the lights, the unchanging nature of what lay beneath. (369)

The skating rink serves as a symbolic plane of immanence, or a “metaphysical surface on which the pure event stands and is played out,” that represents Nazneen’s own plane of identity (Deleuze 1990, 238). While at times Nazneen has been afraid to come out onto this surface, as much as she may have desired it, at this point in her life she has finally emerged from the deep depths of despair in her own personal dark abyss and put on skates. Nazneen’s becoming gives her a particular agency, and the opportunity to escape any simple, binary notions of identity. Like her hybrid friend Razia, who wears saris and jumpsuits all at once, Nazneen dons skates with her sari, and “for a glorious moment, it

was clear that clothes, not fate made her life” (Ali 2003, 201). Razia’s explanation for this combination – “this is England... You can do whatever you like” (369) – reflects Nazneen’s own final decision to occupy a third space of an ever-evolving identity and her final choice to remain in England, where she will stay married to Chanu but also choose a life without Karim. Having chosen neither a clearly Eastern nor clearly Western option, finding both unsuitable, Nazneen generates her own definition of self: a particular, unique combination of somewhere in-between. This act of creating her own fate, of choosing her identity, is her most empowering act.

Nazneen does opt for choice in the end, and for Deleuzian possibility, by choosing to remain in the West (for Bangladesh is now a lost motherland), where England operates as a plane of immanence, a surface where choice is promoted over destiny and fate. By making the choice she does, Nazneen stitches together her own identity as an Asian woman in Britain, picking her own threads and fabrics, that is dictated by free will and not fate. In the process, she also attempts to provide her daughters with an opportunity to do the same, for they also undergo a particular “cultural schizophrenia” in their own liminal spaces of identity. For Nazneen, going back to Bangladesh with Chanu would limit her choices, or eliminate choice entirely, as her sister Hasina’s example has shown. Consequently, Nazneen chooses the postmodern, Deleuzian “both/and” rather than Mrs. Islam’s “either/or.” Ultimately, Nazneen’s willful acts of crossing boundaries, erected by patriarchal definitions of female identity and belonging, call for a redefinition of transnational and diasporic theory’s emphasis on the ready availability and acceptance of multiple identities for (im)migrant women. The options available for Nazneen are limited as an immigrant woman if she is to remain

within prescribed definitions of identity for Bengali wives and mothers, a world in which heterosexual marriage is one's familial duty, and personal choice is often very limited. Like Syal's *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, *Brick Lane* also remains open-ended on a Deleuzian note of possibility. While reconciliation between East and West is implied to be unlikely and larger issues of race and religion remain (the Bengal Tigers are still fighting their war), the acknowledgement of desire leads Nazneen to fight timidity and fatalism and come into a degree of self-possession and agency in a transnational world without easy answers.

According to Avtar Brah, while "the word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience," at the same time, the journeys of Meena, Chila, Sunita, Tania, and Nazneen show that "diasporas are also potentially the sites of new hopes and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble, and reconfigure" in a postmodern way (Brah 193). Such collisions and reconfigurations are usefully understood as acts of becoming-woman. While Meena regresses from full Deleuzian potentiality at the end of *Anita and Me*, the women in *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* and *Brick Lane* manage to overcome the discontents of being transnational and female by forming various useful Deleuzian strategies of becoming. In the next chapter, further implications of this concept come to light as issues of queer sexuality complicate already present issues of race and gender in the work of lesbian poet and storyteller Suniti Namjoshi.

Chapter Four

Queering the Diaspora: The Lesbian-Feminist Geographies of Suniti Namjoshi

I have a soul which... far from being dead is three times livelier than most people's for I have no less than three native lands which I can call my own.
~ Aubrey Menen, *Dead Man in the Silver Market* (118)

At times, home is nowhere. At times, one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference.
~ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (149)

Women cannot work on the question of their own oppression without an analysis and even an experience of institutions – institutions governed by men.
~ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (161)

The issue of homosexuality complicates already present issues of race and gender in women of South Asian origin, generating a sense of multiple oppressions. In South Asia itself, attitudes towards homosexuality have been and remain problematic and unwelcoming, despite the fact that the phenomenon has a deep cultural history that is daily visible in the region's art, culture, religion, philosophy, and sculpture (AIDS 21; Shah 120-23). While homosexuality is rampant across South Asia, as it is in any given culture, it is an aspect of identity that is kept carefully guarded and hidden, whether one is from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, or any of the other South Asian nations.¹

As Sharmeen Islam articulates in “Toward a Global Network of Asian Lesbians,” an essay in Rakesh Ratti’s *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (1993), “lesbian invisibility” in particular continues to be “the norm, not the exception, even in ... gay organizations in [South] Asia. This is due in large part to the economic and political discrimination that women face in Asian societies” (44). Within this context, C. Vijayasree has noted that the Indian/Canadian/British writer Suniti Namjoshi has periodically been labeled as the first “out” lesbian writer in India (Vijayasree 26).² This claim must be understood in the context of the absence of homosexual discussion in the arts in general, and the generally underground practice of homosexuality across the region. For example, despite claims that there is “a massive vibrant and exciting gay scene in India, primarily in metropolises like Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, and Bangalore” (Ratti 92), the first film in India attempting to deal with lesbian issues, *Girlfriend*, was released only recently in 2004.

Such issues, however, have been more openly and readily addressed by multiple filmmakers of the contemporary diaspora, such as the British Hanif Kureishi (*My Beautiful Launderette*, 1985; *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, 1987) and Pratibha Parmar (*Memory Pictures*, 1989; *Flesh and Paper*, 1990; *Khush*, 1991), the Canadian Deepa Mehta (*Fire*, 1996), and the American filmmaker Nisha Ganatra (*Chutney Popcorn*, 1999).³ The proliferation of diasporic films on the subject indicates that emigrating to Western nations has made homosexuality no longer a taboo subject. While the issue may remain taboo for older generations of immigrants, still deeply tied to the cultural values of South Asia, this is not the case for recent members of the South Asian diaspora who see a more ready acceptance of homosexuality at a quotidian level and thus willingly

engage with the subject in their art. Many lesbians and gays in the West agree that they have a certain “economic, academic, intellectual, personal lifestyle, and political freedom and privilege that is not available to the same degree to [gays and] lesbians in the East” (Islam 45), allowing for a more open exploration and expression of their sexualities in the context of Western culture.

But while in the contemporary British diaspora the medium of film can be argued to be the most accessible avenue for homosexual exploration, some South Asian lesbians and gays have preferred poetry and prose as forms of self-expression. Namjoshi is a transnational, feminist writer known not only for her lesbian poetry, but also for her literary experiments with narrative forms such as the revisionist myth, fable, and fairy tale (classic, well-known stories rewritten in both verse and prose), atypical and often collaborative stories for children, the mythic autobiographical novel, and the collaborative form of the hypertext. In *Goja: An Autobiographical Myth*, Namjoshi articulates that as an Indian woman living in the West, she already has two things working against her: colour and gender. Sexuality is the third layer of oppression Suniti contends with in her work, but not without reference to the first two, generating a questioning within her of the imposed label that she is “triple oppressed” or bound (Namjoshi 2000, 16). While the ability to speak from multiple locations might serve as advantageous because it generates new ways of understanding the world, Namjoshi’s work highlights how this same ability also contains within it a certain tension in terms of the complexity of the conflicts which are explored.

As Sharmeen Islam has noted, “lesbians in [South] Asia must acknowledge that Asians who live in the West face a set of unique and important daily issues: racism, exile,

immigration and deportation threats, cultural isolation, and Western hybridization” (Islam 45). It is these issues and more that Namjoshi confronts and explores in both her poetry and prose: of particular interest is her articulation, achieved through the use of “revisionist mythmaking” and “feminist fabulation,” of the transnational migrant narrator’s “schizoid” position as a lesbian of colour (Vijayasree 16; Deleuze 1990, 189).

Overall, for Namjoshi’s South Asian feminist lesbian narrators, who often reflect various aspects of the author herself, heterosexuality and the attached South Asian cultural expectations of marriage and motherhood are revealed to be extreme constraints on agency, even while living in the West might allow them certain immeasurable leaps, or lines of flight, forwarding their empowerment. These narrators reflect Namjoshi’s feminist belief that an individual’s autonomy should not be checked or curtailed under repressive social structures – such as compulsory heterosexuality – that only serve to subordinate women, systematically reducing them to the status of “other” within any patriarchy (Vijaysree 26). It has been argued that all of Namjoshi’s work – whether prose or verse – is concerned with “the construction of gendered identities in a male-centered society and explores the position of lesbian women on the margins of the dominant heterosexual order” (Neumeier 265). As such, Namjoshi’s central aim in her work, achieved through distinctive and creative modes of postmodern and postcolonial writing, becomes redefining the construction of the category “woman.” Namjoshi ultimately liberates “woman” from patriarchal constraints and calls instead for a female subjectivity that is arguably Deleuzean in its constant formation, eternal process, and engagement with “rhizomatics, multiplicity, and becoming” (Grosz 197). When applied to Namjoshi’s work, it becomes clear that such a concept of subjectivity concerning “the

intensive Deleuzean subject” opens up a range of “possible configurations of a variety of subject-positions that are post-metaphysics of gender, or beyond sexual difference” (Braidotti 2000, 162).

Important to an analysis of Namjoshi’s unique poetics is the consideration that South Asian writing as a whole, as we receive it in Western academies in the field of postcolonial literature, has historically been analyzed nearly exclusively from political angles and not necessarily for its aesthetic value. This approach has been a necessary and significant focus, given the impact of Indian colonial history that has permeated the authors’ lives and consequently their literatures. As Susan Spearey reminds us in “Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures: Spatial Odysseys in Diaspora Writing,” these writings “launch projects of reclamation and deconstruction” as a resistance to colonial myths about India:

From the earliest moments of resistance writing within European colonial territories, one of the most prevalent and readily discernible aims of the writers in question has been the debunking of myths of European origination – a writing back, in particular, to those many explorers and writers of romance narrative who have registered the moment of their arrival as the founding of a new Eden. (Spearey 152)

But while this declaration applies aptly to diasporic writers of the 1930s-70s (such as V. S. Naipaul, G. V. Desani, Mulk Raj Anand, Attia Hosain, and Raja Rao), since the mid-1980s postcolonial studies have increasingly been moving away from a homogeneous model and thus can no longer be simply categorized as “resistance writing” that is “solely historicist in [its] revisionism” (152). While colonialism still remains a significant point

of reference, contemporary writers of the diaspora are now pointing to the need to discuss in-between spaces – more specifically, diasporic, worldly, transnational and transcultural spaces – and we cannot underestimate this shift within the postcolonial context. As Chelva Kanaganayakam has recently argued, there is now a sense of urgency in the field that we may have “jettisoned the methodology” we have been looking at this literature with.⁴ The issue at stake is where the aesthetics have gone: postcolonial literature is all too often valued for its political messages, its sociopolitical context, at the expense of its aesthetic merit. In other words, despite recognitions that we are now “beyond postcolonialism” – for contemporary diaspora literature is increasingly being regarded as part of a global stage, and parallel shifts have begun to occur in critical practice – what recent critics continue to seek in these works to give them merit is their ability to engage with socio-political contexts, whereas they ought to be approached from multiple and variable entry points, including that of aesthetics or stylistics.

According to Kanaganayakam, a notion of “authenticity,” or what he terms “the problem of ethnography” precludes this focus: South Asian literature in particular is often framed not in the ethnicity itself, but *in what it is embedded in*, resulting in a dismissal of aesthetic critical judgments at the expense of the presence of the political. When dealing with diasporic texts, this becomes “misplaced ethnography,” eliciting the question of whether diasporic writers are capable of taking on the indigenous voice they are often expected to adopt by virtue of being ethnically sited as South Asian. Such writers are, more often than not, labeled “hopelessly out of touch with local reality” by postcolonial scholars residing in South Asia. Forms of hierarchy result here, within the field of postcolonial studies as a whole, rather than a recognition that there are varying

postcolonial histories across cultures and genres that we need to make difficult comparisons among if the field is to move forward and not die. These comparisons have to move beyond socio-political contexts and the texts themselves must be considered on aesthetic grounds as well. It is significant that in his argument, Kanaganayakam does not advocate a return to new criticism, but rather promotes the idea that we must read for aesthetics *and* politics alongside one another. He questions whether there may be a means to bridge the binary – in other words, a way to maintain an aesthetic focus on issues of language, form, questions of genre, and the strategic breaking of all of these conventions – while *allowing* politics to enter.

This problem is of particular relevance to women's postcolonial literature. In her introduction to *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*, Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan articulates the opposition between politics and aesthetics as it applies to women writers of the diaspora, in the context of a review she has written of Susie Tharu and K. Lalita's anthology *Women Writing in India*. Rajan wonders why the editors' project is informed by the insistent belief that "the recovery of women's writing, feminist literary criticism, and writing by women itself, are political rather than aesthetic activities," for this "unrelenting opposition... between the aesthetic and the political as separate cognitive structures plays not only into the opposition dominant/subaltern, but also into other oppositions between form and content, scripts and life stories, literary conventions and reality, art and experience, even 'writing' and women, which are made to correspond with it" (Rajan 2). Rajan goes on to argue that a further result of this opposition between the political and the aesthetic is "the apparent irrelevance of critical judgments – and of pleasure itself! – to our reading 'politically'... one wishes that there

could have been a stronger sense of the infusion of the aesthetic into the political in their critical commentary” (2-3).

A similar attention to aesthetics is called for in the philosophy of both Luce Irigaray and Gilles Deleuze. In her study of the points of intersection between the two philosophers, *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, Tamsin Lorraine argues that “[a]lthough Irigaray’s and Deleuze’s approaches may suggest different ways of understanding the distinction and relationship between body and mind, both nevertheless advocate a way of thinking and being that would explore the connections between the two in the context of understanding what lies beyond both,” leading in turn to “new ways of thinking and seeing in the world,” particularly in regard to subjectivity (Lorraine 12-13). This common way of “thinking and seeing” between the philosophers, insists Lorraine, is a result of the emergence of French poststructuralism:

The French poststructuralism that emerged in the wake of and in response to phenomenology and existentialism looked for the affective roots of language and held out hope that cultural politics, and in particular avantgarde literature, could achieve what Marxism could not: a shift in consciousness that would lead to significant social change. This French line of thought suggests that language does not simply describe human reality but is an important constitutive factor in conscious experience. Stylistic innovations can be crucial to understanding new ways of thinking and being that can transform our awareness... [for] innovations in style respond to what lies beyond the familiar. (13)

To move “beyond the familiar” rather than “repeating what has already been said,” both Irigaray and Deleuze repeatedly insist that it is essential to shift the angle of philosophy’s

gaze and engage with “stylistically evocative language” that confronts the limits of the perceivable and conceivable (13-14). What this leads to in Deleuzian philosophy is the notion of becoming-imperceptible, involving “the invention of new forms of being through the pursuit of the immanent unfolding of desire” (14).

Considering South Asian women’s literature from a Deleuzian point of view, where style is of utmost importance since the politics of a work only emerges via its strategic use, gives us an avenue to combine politics and aesthetics in a manner that reveals the literature’s transformative societal aims rather than simply the sociopolitical context that envelopes or underlies it. Namjoshi’s overall aesthetic sensibility is especially Deleuzian in that it involves transgressive and subversive acts of creative thinking and writing that challenge traditional boundaries among bodies and minds (such as male and female, human and animal). Her aesthetic also allows us to “rethink the interdependent nature of subjectivity,” which in turn “could suggest strategies for facilitating constructive change” at a societal level (15). Rather than search for overt political statements in her work, for none will be found, we can draw subtle political insights via Namjoshi’s stylistic innovations, many of which result in a general mood of “playfulness” that is inherent in women’s writing – or what Namjoshi herself terms “pure fun” (Vijayasree 23; Kanaganayakam 51). As Namjoshi herself has stated, this sense of play is part of her Indian aesthetic sensibility: “what we are trying to do is make something pleasing as a whole” (Kanaganayakam 52). Vijayasree argues that this sense of play and ironic vision, or Namjoshi’s “ability to imagine beyond the limits of so called ‘normal’ and ‘standard,’” is what allows her work to be seen as “more than a literature of protest. It is provocative, engaging, and entertaining” (Vijayasree 22, 28). Thus,

Namjoshi's stylistic aim is not simply to please the reader with innovations; through the strategic use of style she also offers politically and socially transformative messages in her work.

To best articulate her angst, Namjoshi presents unique styles of expression primarily in the form of revisionist poetry and prose, or fractured fairy tales and myths that critique the heterosexual and patriarchal norms present in both Eastern and Western classical and mythic traditions. For the fables found in collections such as *Feminist Fables* (1981), *The Bedside Book of Nightmares* (1984), *The Blue Donkey Fables* (1988), and *Saint Suniti and the Dragon* (1993), her many sources include the Indian epics the *Panchatantra* and the *Mahabharata*, the epics of Homer, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Aesop's fables, Shakespeare's plays, and Lewis Carroll's fiction. In her fracturing and revising of such stories, Namjoshi breaks the tradition of contemporary British South Asian women's writing as it has been commonly characterized. As one of the very few openly lesbian South Asian writers in England, she refuses to be traditionally comic in the manner of novelists such as Meera Syal, Zadie Smith, and Monica Ali and instead creates new, more innovative and experimental forms that employ satire and irony. Furthermore, Namjoshi's transgressive writing can be best understood within the context of newly emerging South Asian literary strategies that are no longer based on the politics of place (famously termed by Salman Rushdie as the "imaginary homeland"), but focused on creating interior worlds of language and memory.⁵ As a reflection of that shift, rather than lament lost places of origin, Namjoshi creates her own fictive mental spaces using unique narrative strategies for the purposes of questioning heterosexism and racial stereotyping as well as deconstructing patriarchal models of femininity (Weedon 224). As

a writer, she therefore defies conventional categorization, describing herself not as a poet, novelist, or satirist, but as a mythmaker or fabulist, a figure that inhabits the in-between spaces of conventional categories.⁶

Such innovative strategies, according to Vijayasree, benefit women in particular as part of their “quest for liberation” from their long history of patriarchal oppression:

The issue of women’s language is the subject of much contemporary debate and the need for women writers to reclaim a language of their own free from the influence of male conceptualizing is often stressed. For some critics such as Hélène Cixous, language is tied intimately to gender: [sic] “Woman must write woman. And man, man” (1976: 877). Female writing is bound up in female biology, she maintains, because women have been taught to feel guilty about both, and the courage to claim and proclaim both language and biology is for her the first step towards “transformation”... A quest for new words, therefore, becomes an important aspect of women’s movement for liberation. (Vijayasree 27-28).

Namjoshi’s need to articulate her own language(s) has primarily been understood in the context of her transformative use of fantasy, the use of which in “subversive fiction, particularly in feminist subversion of gender constructs, has been critically noted” (25). This move away from realism towards fantasy in feminist writing stems from a belief that “the reality that the so-called realist literature represents is the patriarchal reality flawed by gender bias” (25). Fantasy, via the forging of “concepts and ideas that contradict patriarchal ideology,” can thus be seen as a useful medium in women’s writing through which to “explore areas of life that realist literature tends to deny or repress” (25).

It is the presence of a certain intertextual and fantastical layering in Namjoshi's work, involving allusions to multiple myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales from Greek, Christian, and Hindu traditions, that requires her writing to be multiply read from various angles for full comprehension. As Vijayasree explains,

Each reading of her layered texts brings out newer possibilities and one cannot rush into easy generalizations about her work. She... weaves an intricate network of intertexts into her texts. Any attempt at an analysis of Namjoshi's work requires [readers] to grasp this interconnectedness and this can sometimes send one on an endless search for the missing links... [S]he does not serve the meaning on a platter to her readers; in fact she does not even believe that there is a single authoritarian meaning that a writer can dictate. Instead, she leaves it to her readers to draw their own inferences and arrive at their own decoding of the texts. (14)

The attempt, then, to fix Namjoshi's work with meaning defies the Deleuzian sensibility and purpose of the work itself, which is to insist upon "the relativity and mutability of truth and reality" (28), since "ideas are always reusable" and their history is never continuous (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 235). Namjoshi's work can be best understood via the thresholds through which her ideas pass, particularly when contextualized within a larger framework of her contributions to oppositional discourses such as women's writing. Once imagined, Namjoshi's alternate worlds, "verbal, textual, and conceptual," become "possible potential places" for future dwelling (Vijayasree 28).

While Namjoshi's migrations to Canada and Britain have made her conscious of a particular Western construction of her as being triply bound (based on her gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation), at the same time, as an Indian woman living and

working in a predominantly white, male academy and as a Hindu living in a primarily Christian environment, these migrations have also allowed her to write from “a position of multiple liminalities” (Vijayasree 52-53). It is important to note that Namjoshi, like Salman Rushdie, is a true transnational, identifying herself with three countries – India, Canada, and England – and publishing in four, including Australia. Born on April 20, 1941, in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, Namjoshi attended English boarding schools as a child and then obtained her BA (1961) and MA (1963) from the University of Pune.⁷ Once she began working for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1964, she took up writing poetry. Namjoshi then took leave from the Indian government in 1968 to undertake a second Master’s degree (in Public Administration) from the University of Missouri, and, after resigning from the IAS in 1969, she obtained her doctorate from McGill University in Montreal (1969 – 1972) by completing a dissertation on the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound (“Ezra Pound and Reality: The Metaphysics of the *Cantos*,” 1972). Ultimately, Namjoshi chose to remain in Canada for an extended period, where she taught at the University of Toronto (1972-1988) and resumed publishing her own prose and verse. During this time, she took a sabbatical leave to England (1978-79), where she was first introduced to the feminist thought that has permeated all of her work since. Armed with knowledge from her exposure to feminist and gay liberation movements, she returned to Canada where she not only came out as a lesbian, but also helped launch a Women’s Studies program at Scarborough College at the University of Toronto. In May of 1987, Namjoshi moved to England with her partner Gillian Hanscombe, with whom she has also done some collaborative work (*Flesh and Paper*, 1986; *Kali Yug: Circles of*

Paradise, first performed in 1993), and subsequently resigned from teaching in October 1988. She presently lives and continues to write in Devon.

Namjoshi's early work, published in India, consists of collaborative translations with her mother and grandmother as well as a few books of verse. Her first book of poetry, *Poems*, was published in Calcutta in 1967, by P. Lal of the Writers' Workshop, a publishing firm founded in 1958 for the purpose of publishing Indian creative writing in English from home and abroad. Namjoshi then went on to publish three more books of verse with the Writers' Workshop, entitled *More Poems* (1971), *Cyclone in Pakistan* (1971), and *The Jackass and the Lady* (1980). Additionally, she published with the Workshop an English translation of Ram Ganesh Gadkari's *Poems of Govindaraj* (1968), in collaboration with her mother Sarojini Namjoshi, and also translated some poems from old Marathi into English with her grandmother, Laxmi Devi Naik Nimbalkar, during this time.

Critics have found Namjoshi's early work impressive in its use of self-introspective and dreamlike language, stressing in particular her "singular blend of complexity and lucidity," as well as her "elaborate imagery [and] her ironies and paradoxes [which] are not used as a disguise or a shield, but as a way of clarifying" (Mary Meigs, qtd in Gale). The most significant aspect of her deployment of irony and paradox in this early poetry is Namjoshi's use of discretion, or "willful obfuscation" (Vijayasree 31), when writing about her sexual orientation, in contrast to her overt treatment of the issue of racism. The reason for this indiscretion can be found in the 1965-66 poem "Various Reasons," from her first collection, in which the metaphor of the police is used to convey her opinion about self-censorship:

A policeman? He raised his hand? So,
 He said, "Stop." But is that poetry?
 Is that life? Now there are no policemen
 In my mind, neither traffic, nor otherwise,
 ... Not that I hate policemen
 And they don't really remind me of anything;
 But the policeman said "Stop."
 And my dear, they do exist. (Namjoshi 1967, 6)

In *Because of India*, a selective anthology of the author's work, Namjoshi explains that this policing metaphor reflects the request placed upon her by her family to "be discreet" when it came to questions of sexuality and sexual orientation:

The word "lesbian" had not been thrown around and it wasn't in my own active vocabulary. I think now, after all these years, that in the end the basic message from the family was, "Well, all right, do what you like, but BE DISCREET." That's why I've included the poem with the police in this selection – there's a knowledge in it that there are some rules it would be foolhardy to break. I certainly didn't think that the police were my enemy. Indeed, one of my jobs [as a member of the IAS] was to maintain law and order. Surely I must have assumed that I was about as Establishment as it was possible to be. And yet, and yet, the poem reveals a certain unease. (1989a, 9)

As a result of her internalization of her family's request, an unease and discretion concerning sexuality, atypical of her later work, can be found throughout Namjoshi's first three collections of poetry, namely *Poems*, *More Poems*, and *Cyclone in Pakistan*.

Many of the strategies and techniques Namjoshi uses consistently in her later work take initial shape in these early collections of poetry. For instance, Namjoshi consistently employs a method of raising significant questions – often anguished and despairing – while refraining from providing resolutions, instead choosing to leave this responsibility to her reader. Consider these examples, a quizzical two-line poem from *Cyclone in Pakistan*, as well as an excerpt from “The Head of the Rose,” published in *Poems*:

Does the old, fierce sun that blazed for us
Now burn alone for your sole pleasure? (1971a, 14)

What creed was it we affirmed or denied?
Oh I think the Mughal emperor
Built that tomb before her death.
Seeing the black holes in the bright summer.
Was it courage or fear that kept us silent
Watching the dragonfly over the water?
Now I give you the head of the rose. (1967, 5)

In both of these poems, multiple readings can be arrived at based on how the poetic images invoked are interpreted, and the questions offered are deliberately left unanswered, leaving the reader to arrive at his or her own conclusions.

Also highlighted in these early poems is Namjoshi’s preoccupation with playfully rewriting classical texts, often from the Western male canon, in parodic fashion.

Vijayasree points to “It’s a Quality of the Gods” from *More Poems* as one of the earliest

caught in a twist
of the blind green coil being Adam
and evil and Eve. (Namjoshi 1980, 13)

By the time this collection is published in 1980, along with a newly developed awareness of feminist consciousness (the revised manuscript of *Jackass* reflects her political awakening), Namjoshi also begins to discuss her sense of her own sexuality more overtly, as indicated by her deeply erotic poems such as “I Give Her the Rose”:

I give her the rose with unfurled petals.

She smiles

and crosses her legs.

I give her the shell with the swollen lip.

She laughs. I bite

and nuzzle her breasts.

I tell her, “Feed me on flowers

with wide open mouths,”

and slowly,

she pulls down my head. (43)

As “Her Form in Clear Water” suggests, Namjoshi also demonstrates a significant affiliation with animals beginning with the collection *The Jackass and the Lady* – a preoccupation that comes into sharper focus in later works such as *The Conversations of Cow* (1993), *The Blue Donkey Fables* (1988), and *Saint Suniti and the Dragon* (1993). When questioned in an interview about why she chooses to invoke animals consistently in her work, Namjoshi explains that this is related to her alienation from and willful

rejection of the “male-centered Western humanist tradition” and her affiliation instead with Hindu philosophy and religion that surrounded her while growing up in India, where there is “no clear cut division between human beings and animals” and “a bird or a beast [is] a creature like anyone else” (Vijayasree 177; Namjoshi 1989a, 28). Namjoshi goes on to explain that “if to be centrally human meant one had to be an Anglo Saxon heterosexual male, then I personally would rather identify with the birds and the beasts” (Vijayasree 177). Her introduction to the *Jackass* section of *Because of India* clarifies this position further:

I think I was heading towards the same perceptions by a roundabout way as those being voiced by some Western feminists today. It’s apparent to many women that in a humanist universe, which has been male-centered historically, women are “the other,” together with the birds and the beasts and the rest of creation. An identification with the rest of creation, possibly with the whole of it, would only be logical; unless, of course, one wished to create a mirror image of the humanist universe, with woman at the centre, accepting the consequences of consigning everything else to “the other.” But I don’t want to be separated from the birds and the beasts, nor do I want to “humanise” them particularly. (Namjoshi 1989a, 28-29)

Thus, Namjoshi’s affiliation with the beast rather than “the lady” in *The Jackass and the Lady* reflects a willed rejection of both gender stereotyping and “the hierarchization of living beings” (Vijayasree 53).

Namjoshi’s analogies between women and animals that begin in *The Jackass and the Lady* form significant parallels with Deleuze and Guattari’s development of the

concept of becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The term of any “becoming,” insist Deleuze and Guattari, “exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first... Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance” (238). In such a process of alliance neither subject (whether human, animal, or particle) loses its own original specificity but gains an additional dimension, for the self is “only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” upon which a new pact is formed (249) – all rushing toward becoming imperceptible, the “immanent end of becoming,” that opens subjectivity to “a virtual chaos of impossible becoming” (279; Lorraine 11). Deleuze and Guattari’s very definition of multiplicity, the backbone of their concept of (non)subjectivity, supports this process:

A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*. Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors.* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 249; authors’ emphasis)

In *Jackass*, such an alliance between human and animal, or the poet’s becoming-animal, can be seen in several poems, most strikingly in “Her Form in Clear Water” (quoted above), “The Animals in this Forest,” and “Homage to Circe.” Excerpts from the latter two poems read as follows:

“Why do beasts inhabit your mind?”

They like it there.

I thought I could please disguised

as a swallow,

As a fox I was groomed, my manners

were good

and my wits were keen. As a fish

I glittered.

But bird, beast and fish is all that

I am. (Namjoshi 1980, 49)

I am all animals to you?

I could sit cat-like and gaze

sisterly.

I am all animals to you,

could offer myself

on a wide lily-pad,

drink from your cup and eat from your lip,

turn bird for your purpose, feed

from your hand – disarm the way.

She draws the birds from the trees,

they would say, she tames the hungry.

Circe,

all animals adore you,
 you are all things to each
 in the tutelary garden, at the continuous feast. (45)

While in the former poem the writer herself becomes-animal in the act of writing, in “Homage to Circe” the poet offers to turn into any animal for her lover, suggesting that the latter’s power, like Circe’s, is derived from her ability to ally herself with the animals that surround her.

All of the above mentioned strategies and techniques – namely her use of self-introspective and dreamlike language, method of raising unanswered questions, preoccupation with playfully rewriting classical texts, and allying women and animals – are brought more sharply into focus as Namjoshi continues to write both verse and prose during the 1980s. After writing *The Authentic Lie* (1982), a slim volume chiefly concerning themes of death and violence in response to the loss of her father in a tragic aviation accident, Namjoshi turns fully towards developing what she is best-known for, already begun in her early work: feminist revisions and fracturings of classical texts from both South Asian and Western traditions. Inherent in all of these revisions is a questioning of patriarchal institutions’ positioning of women, and an often subsequent formation of lines of flight for them. Such retellings actually begin at the end of *The Authentic Lie* (written during 1976-1978), the first of Namjoshi’s works in which she begins to experiment with prose, short snippets consisting of fables or revised myths, peppered between the poems in the collection. For instance, her revision of the Pygmalion myth reads as follows, displaying a consideration of the woman’s anguish, in continuous process, in the hands of the male artist:

Consider next, if you will, what the embrace of Pygmalion must have felt like at first: he, human and sweating, she, cold to the bone... His love awakened her? Kindled her to life? Have it your way. It may be so. But consider also her mute anguish, the effort required and the pain it must have cost. They loved one another: she this marble man, he, this human woman. But he was a sculptor. He carved another stone, and she ran away with the man next door, who, as it happened, was a potter who worked in mud. (1982, 44)

Here, rather than continue to exist in the form that the stone sculptor created for her, the marble woman chooses to explore an alternative line of flight as a woman of mud.

While Namjoshi starts by inverting fables, myths, and fairy tales in poetry in *The Authentic Lie*, she then switches to prose fables when employing this technique in the work that follows, a medium in which she is more readily able to empower the fictional women she invokes through her reorienting of their tales. As Kanaganayakam notes, “Namjoshi’s most characteristic work... is not poetry or fiction, although she has produced an impressive quantity of both, but fable. Sometimes they appear in the form of short fables, as in *The Blue Donkey Fables* (1988), but more often in the form of lengthy narratives that are still fabulous” (45). Namjoshi herself claims that she is “not a novelist. I am a fabulist... Now I call myself a fabulist, but when I started writing I didn’t know anything about it. Every time a story is repeated, it changes. When it changes dramatically, people call it a reworking of myth” (50-51). But while the prose satires *The Conversations of Cow* (1985) and *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989) are indeed representative of her most typical, distinctive, and well-known work as a fabulist,⁸ the

feminist themes that emerge in these narratives have their roots in the collections *Feminist Fables* and *The Bedside Book of Nightmares*.

Written from 1979-1980, immediately after Namjoshi's sabbatical in England, *Feminist Fables* is a collection of 95 revised classical tales in which "transgression is the key to transformation" (Vijayasree 28). In these short prose pieces Namjoshi speaks to both her feminism and lesbianism through the invocation of diverse mythical figures, both human and animal, from multiple sources, most notably the work of Ovid, Aesop, Charles Perrault, the Brother's Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen of the Western tradition, as well as Indian classical myths from the *Panchatantra* and the *Mahabharata* and the Middle Eastern classic *The Arabian Nights*. Her most striking revisions are of Western fairy tales. For example, in Namjoshi's version of "Hansel and Gretel," Gretel takes charge as the one who is "braver and wiser" by choosing to remain in the forest and fight the witch, while the frightened Hansel does not even enter the house of candy and "runs back home to his wicked stepmother" to wait for the day he is a man and can then "fight them all" (Namjoshi 1993, 95). Another notable revision is that of "Jack and the Beanstalk," in which the evil and defeated giant is really a powerful giantess who marries one of Jack's brothers with such kindness and love that "it's entirely possible that they lived happily ever after" (101). Finally, the manner in which Cinderella is empowered in "And Then What Happened?" is also noteworthy:

The Prince Married Cinderella. (It pays to have such very small feet.) But soon they started squabbling. "You married me for money," was the Prince's charge. "You married me for my looks," was C's reply. "But your looks will fade,

whereas my money will last. Not a fair bargain.” “No,” said Cinderella and simply walked out. AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED? (118)

By investing this particular Cinderella with the agency to walk out of her marriage, the narrator points to Cinderella’s passivity in the conventional fairy tale as told by Charles Perrault or the Grimm brothers; moreover, the final open-ended question subverts the very notion that a woman can passively live “happily ever after” within the confining structures of patriarchy.

Namjoshi continues with such fracturings and retellings in *The Bedside Book of Nightmares* with stories such as that of Homer’s Penelope in “Archetypes” (Namjoshi 1984, 39). In this story, Penelope’s daily weaving and unweaving is not performed out of any sense of love, duty, or virtue, but is an expression of healthy rage that helps her maintain her wholeness and sanity. As McGifford notes, in this version of the tale Penelope is presented as a “born survivor” who “undoes her weaving instead of herself” (McGifford 294). Similarly, Namjoshi’s Antigone in “The Reformed Antigone” does not bury her brother but instead chooses to save her own life, a revision that exposes the original myth’s sexist implications (294):

So my brother sprawls in the desert, and I do not
bury him. Let the sun salvage what the sun is able.

Let the cultures keep what the vultures have eaten. (Namjoshi 1984, 38)

But perhaps the most significant and lengthy example of a retold classical story in *Bedside* is Namjoshi’s revision of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in the collection’s final sequence of poems, “Snapshots of Caliban,” where the theme of violence returns sharply. Here, Namjoshi tells her reader that she is dealing with “the bloodier aspects of gay and

women's liberation – things to do with who one loved, how and why it hurt, and what about the family” (Namjoshi 1989a, 83). These themes have been described by many critics as brimming with savagery, while at the same time commenting on what it means to be human in a world of institutions we ourselves have socially constructed (McGifford 294). Namjoshi informs her readers that “In ‘Snapshots of Caliban’ I tried to create a female Caliban, with a strong ego and a healthy appetite, who just wanted what she wanted... egoism itself was as central to the voices of Miranda and Prospero as it was to Caliban's” (Namjoshi 1989a, 83).

Ultimately, the smothering and threatening Prospero, who has tried to pit Miranda and Caliban against each other, is left puzzled as to why the defiant female artists, associated with creativity and closely tied to nature, become united as “sisters,” laughing together ironically. Namjoshi suggests that it is Prospero's own patriarchal perspective that prevents his understanding of the alliance (McGifford 294, York 191). What Miranda and Caliban engage in at the end of the sequence is a Deleuzean union, a becoming-one another, in which they are able to “take any colour, fit any mould, be a bird or a bush, a thing or a dream” (Namjoshi 1984, 68), while Prospero retreats in his inability to control them, proclaiming,

I made them? Maiden and monster
 And then disdained them?
 Was there something in me
 That fed and sustained them?
 Are they mine or their own?
 I dare not claim them. (70)

On the whole, in *Beside* Namjoshi successfully transforms exiled figures into autonomous subjects who are able to tell their own tales in their own distinctive manners (the poems are multivocal, shifting in perspective among Caliban, Miranda, and Prospero) by exposing the biases of their constructions in original tales (Crane and Mohanram 133). According to Kate Chedgzoy, author of *Shakespeare's Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture*, Namjoshi's exploration of "the problem of warring egos" does not offer easy solutions. Such "reinterpretations of the Shakespearean text show that its pleasures and its ideological effects alike are neither univocal nor timeless, but culturally contingent and open to intervention and re-creation from a variety of perspectives" (Chedgzoy 117, 96).⁹

As one biographer has argued, all of Namjoshi's mythic creatures, both human and non-human, "constantly transmute, under Namjoshi's pen, to refract a diversity of beings, emotions, and genders, showing the poet's vision of personal 'identity' to be far from static" (Gale). In fact, Namjoshi's view of identity is very similar to that of Deleuze, who defines subjectivity as a multiplicity in a process of molecularization rather than as a fixed or molar construction with clear boundaries (see definition on 124). Like Deleuze, Namjoshi too rejects the notion of a unitary self and instead insists on plural and shifting selves (Vijayasree 28). She explains in *Because of India* that such a notion is in consonance with the Hindu concept of reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls:

Personal immortality is not one of the tenets of Hinduism, as it is of Christianity.

Identity is arbitrary in the sense that who you happen to be this time around has to do with who you wanted to be. Much depends, of course, on the level of interpretation of the metaphor of reincarnation; but the very framework makes it

possible to ask: what would happen if one let go of the identity one clings to so desperately? (Namjoshi 1989a, 84)

Of particular concern to Namjoshi is the construction of femaleness as an essential quality within dominant modes of ideology: an alertness to the political processes that naturalize such representations reveals that femaleness, like all identity, is “constantly made, and redistributed” (Rajan 129). As Namjoshi’s work reveals, “one has to be able to see the formation of female-ness in each and every form at a given moment or in later interpretations, and see what it is composed of what its social correlates are, what its ideological potentials are, what its freedoms may be” (129).

In line with this view, a key feature of Namjoshi’s stylistics in *Conversations of Cow* is her use of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the nomadic subject as protagonist, constantly reinventing herself through “ongoing attunement of the fluxes and flows of material life to the specific contingencies of social existence” (Lorraine 14). In an interview with Kanaganayakam, Namjoshi explains her intent concerning the theme of identity in the narrative: “I once told a Christian friend that only a Hindu could have written *Conversations of Cow*, but few people realize that. In the West, readers tend to think that the book is concerned with a quest for identity. But a Hindu grows up thinking that identity is arbitrary. Because you are one thing in this life and another in the next. You may not believe it, but it is a metaphor that becomes part of your thinking” (Kanaganayakam 49). From the Western point of view, in her essay “Subversive Fabulations: The Twofold Pull of Suniti Namjoshi’s Feminist Fables,” Sabine Steinisch analyzes the intersections between “gender, genre and cultural identity” in *Feminist Fables* and *Conversations of Cow*, arguing that in the latter “the postcolonial quest is

radicalised... through a series of ironic border crossings between male/female, human/animal, realism/fantasy, ending in an acceptance of the impossibility of fixing identities, and a celebration of ‘the thousand faces’ (*CoC*) of each individual” (Steinisch 11).

Conversations of Cow opens with the narrator Suniti’s encounter with Bhadravati (also known as B), an immigrant lesbian Bhramini cow who manifests herself as a goddess on a “green turf,” wished into existence by the narrator (Namjoshi 1985, 13). This non-white narrator, who is just beginning to come to terms with her own lesbianism, subsequently finds herself immersed in a continuous present, in a process of constantly changing both bodies and identities while living in Canada. Upon request, the cow serves as the narrator Suniti’s guide and “travelling companion” on this journey:

“O Cow,” I say, “would you care to be my travelling companion?”

“What are the terms?” inquires the cow.

“Negotiable,” I answer. “Perhaps as we stroll we might discuss the matter?”

Cow and I walk the length of the park. (13)

Cow takes her companion to a “Self-Sustaining Community of Lesbian Cows,” where Suniti is forced to confront questions concerning her race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and even her non-vegetarianism (17). As the relationship between Suniti and the cow develops, Suniti learns that Cow’s “identity” is not determined by social markers, as she is able to change form and “be anything she chooses to be” (Paranjape 73). Over the course of the narrative, Cow shifts identity at will, ranging in form from an Indian woman (in response to the narrator’s concern that she may be a misogynist) to a white man named Bud (so that the two can open themselves to the possibility of

marriage, not possible as two women) and finally to S2, the mirror image of Suniti herself. Cow deliberately undergoes all of these shifts in order to help the narrator arrive at greater self-acceptance, wisdom, and tolerance while recognizing that all identity, including her own, is ultimately fluid. Thus, throughout the story, often seen as a parody of the conventional quest narrative (Vijayasree 107), “reality and identity are rearranged to suggest life’s possibilities, while the reshaping and reinventing of form – the mixing of novel, fantasy, science fiction, and fable – stresses the point that feminist art needs new forms” (McGifford 293).

By the narrative’s end, Suniti comes to realize that the cow is not only a manifestation of her own psyche but also a version of herself (S2) – a multiplicity with “a thousand” faces and names:

S2 starts writing. I read it aloud: “O Cow of a thousand faces and a thousand names, O Julia, Peter, Madeleine and Kate, O Margaret, Charlotte, Amy and S1, O Boudicca, Sybilla, Cowslip and S2, O Ariadne, Lou-Ann and Madame X, O Cow who manifests herself in a thousand shapes and a thousand wishes...”

“Well?”

“Why ‘a thousand’?”

“It’s traditional.”

“It’s a bit long.”

“We have to be thorough.” (Namjoshi 1985, 121-22)

Shortly thereafter, in the final scene of *Conversations*, S1 and S2 sit together to meditate, engaging in a Deleuzean alliance, becoming, or encounter: “We both sit on the floor in the semi-lotus position – we can’t quite manage the full lotus – and meditate hard. Our

wills and mind merge” (124). Here, Namjoshi’s image brings to mind Deleuze and Claire Parnet’s famous image of the wasp and the orchid in *Dialogues II*. As the theorists explain, in such an encounter,

it is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other, [in] a single becoming which is not common to the two... but which is between the two, which has its own direction, a bloc of becoming, an a-parallel evolution. This is it, the double capture, the wasp AND the orchid: not even something which would be in the one, or something which would be in the other, even if it had to be exchanged, be mingled, but something which is between the two, outside the two, and which flows in another direction. (Deleuze and Parnet 7)

Deleuze and Parnet go on to insist that what is ultimately produced as a result of the encounter is not a union or a juxtaposition but the “birth of a stammering,” an “active and creative line of flight... AND...AND... AND...” (10) – or in the case of S1 and S2, an assemblage with “a thousand faces and a thousand names... in a thousand shapes and a thousand wishes” (Namjoshi 1985, 121-22).

In *Dialogues II*, Deleuze and Parnet also spend some time elaborating on their experience of collaborative writing, a strategy that Namjoshi is also well-known for in some of her more recent innovative writings. On the whole, her innovations consist of not only revisionist mythic poetry and prose narratives, but also four published books of transnational children’s literature (*Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey*, *Aditi and the Thames Dragon*, *Aditi and the Marine Sage*, and *Aditi and the Techno Sage*), a volume of collaborative poetry as well as a play with her Australian-born partner Gillian Hanscombe (*Flesh and Paper* and *Kaliyug: Circles of Paradise*, respectively), and a

collaborative hypertext “novel” called *Building Babel* that is available both online and in print. In all of these genres of writing, one can regard Namjoshi as innovative, pushing the boundaries of what defines transnational South Asian and British literature.

While Namjoshi’s prolific work still remains relatively understudied, her children’s fiction has garnered the least critical attention. However, a consideration of her four published children’s books – *Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey*, *Aditi and the Thames Dragon*, *Aditi and the Marine Sage*, and *Aditi and the Techno Sage* – is critical to a complete understanding of Namjoshi’s literary aims.¹⁰ While her poetry and other prose works ostensibly address relevant issues of gender and sexuality in fragmented form, in the surprisingly linear *Aditi* books, Namjoshi articulates the need for children’s social activism, particularly when it comes to matters of saving the lives of animals as well as that of the environment. Namjoshi’s definition of animals includes all living creatures, including wicked monsters, which are seen as constructions of the “patriarchal master narrative” (Vijayasree 79). In *Aditi and the Thames Dragon* in particular, the only one of the books to be set in England, through the significant act of rescuing the River Dragon from the increasingly polluted Thames, Namjoshi carefully intertwines the two issues of saving all life and saving the environment to generate a powerful message for children.

In *Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey*, the first book in the series, Namjoshi displays her knowledge of popular Western children’s literature and the traditions and trends within it, particularly its contemporary obsession with dragons and dragon-slaying (consider, for example, timeless classics such as *The Paper Bag Princess*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Narnia Chronicles*, among others). While *Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey* does

not urge a specific form of social activism per se, it does convey the message that lives of any and all kinds should be saved without the use of violence. For example, once the team of adventurers (consisting of Aditi, a one-eyed monkey, an ant, and an elephant) has convinced the King and Queen that they will be able to assist and protect their granddaughter Aditi during her venture, each member of the group is given a gift. Significantly, these gifts are non-violent and non-traditional: a cloak of invisibility, the Sword of Courage, and magic clay are the humble weapons bestowed upon them by the King and Queen. The monkey refuses the sword at first, for swords are traditionally associated with slaying and she has never used one. But she is soon convinced to accept it when she realizes it does not necessarily need to be used for violent purposes:

“I have never used a sword in my life,” she faltered.

“It is the Sword of Courage,” the King answered quietly, “You are agile and quick. Use it with caution.”

The monkey accepted the sword from the King and thanked him for it.

They stowed it neatly in the parasol handle. (Namjoshi 1986, 17)

The suggestion is made that agility and caution may be more useful weapons for the monkey to use than the sword itself; in fact, this sword is never used for slaying at all. Significantly, what is visible in the choice of both non-human humble protagonists and the weapons of choice is a central theme of non-violence that continues throughout the narrative. Although the idea of violence is very much present in many of the works Namjoshi has written for adults, the idea of murder is carefully removed from her first children's book.

In the sequel, *Aditi and the Thames Dragon*, Aditi and her companions – the one-eyed monkey, the ant, the elephant, and the unnamed dragon (later named Opal) – are invited to London by two children, Rohit and Roshan, to rescue a River Dragon from the increasingly polluted waters of the Thames. Ultimately, the environmental lesson that emerges from the successful mission is invaluable: something conclusive must finally be done about the historically polluted Thames, and the solution lies in the hands of Britain’s children, to whom and by whom the message can and must be conveyed. At a more complex level, through the imagery of dragons in her first two *Aditi* books, Namjoshi suggests that children’s fiction might not only be an important medium to achieve awareness of the long-standing social concern of river pollution, but also to convey the value of saving all life, both human and non-human, through non-violent means. Furthermore, in the process, by employing South Asian protagonists and evoking ideas of visibility and invisibility surrounding dragons and pollution, Namjoshi also succeeds in commenting on the multicultural status of contemporary Britain. Similar social themes continue to emerge from the further adventures that ensue in Australia and Canada in her next two *Aditi* books, marking all of them as unique within the context of not only South Asian literature, but transnational children’s literature as a whole.¹¹

Namjoshi has also collaboratively written children’s works with Christine Donald (for example, the unpublished *Nonsense Rhymes for Aditi and Guppy*),¹² in addition to multiple published and unpublished works with Gillian Hanscombe.¹³ A collaborative hypertext called *Building Babel* is also available both online and in print form. For Namjoshi, collaborative writing is not “work” but “play,” as her invitation to build Babel, “Come and play,” suggests (Namjoshi 1996, xvi), and both reading and writing are acts

of inevitable building (190). In their article “ ‘Who Wrongs You Sappho?’ – Developing Lesbian Sensibility in the Writing of Lyric Poetry,” Namjoshi and Hanscombe explain how collaboration has influenced their writing of lesbian poetry, the difficulties of which come to be a theme in *Flesh and Paper* itself:

Our meeting and subsequent relationship profoundly influenced our poetry. One result was the writing of *Flesh and Paper* between 1984 and 1986. The reciprocal exchange, poem for poem, clarified for us, as nothing else had, that an attempt to extend liberal humanism to include lesbians was a waste of time. Together we claimed the central ground for lesbian consciousness in the “Introduction” to *Flesh and Paper*...

These formulations were arrived at after the experience of writing the poems which was unique for both of us, i.e., neither of us had ever been confronted with a ‘you’ who literally spoke back. The process began with SN’s epigraph to the first poem she sent to GH: “ ‘Writer requires active accomplice,’ Want Ads. Saturday Times.” Both of us were writers and both of us were acutely aware of the technical difficulties surrounding the writing of lesbian poetry. It is not surprising that this awareness forms one of the underlying themes of the sequence. (Namjoshi and Hanscombe 1991, 9-10)

In the above-mentioned introduction to *Flesh and Paper*, Namjoshi and Hanscombe explain why they have built the poetry collection in a manner in which it is virtually impossible to distinguish who wrote which poem, and which poem is addressed to whom:

Words invent the world; and then the invented world invests language with images of itself. In turn, we see and hear the emerging world with words... Who,

in lyric poems, is addressing whom and in what capacity? And who is overhearing? And who has authority and credentials to comment on what is being said? In the past the roles assigned by the heterosexual context have silenced heterosexual women and obliterated lesbians. But we lesbians, millions of us, now have a new understanding. We can speak in public... Now let us invent who we are. (Namjoshi and Hanscombe 1986, 3)

Collaboration, then, is an act of invention for these writers, allowing for the forging of a third space of articulation between them, or a new line of flight that is representative of lesbian solidarity. Much like the projects Deleuze has undertaken with both Claire Parnet and Felix Guattari, this poetic project can be seen as a negotiation of sorts in which the two writers have not worked together but “between the two” in the process of its creation (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, viii). Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s collective consciousness in *Flesh and Paper* articulates the desire for the creation of a new space for lesbians in response and in reaction to heterosexual male commentaries on the world. They insist that roles must fall away, so that it is no longer possible to determine who speaks for whom. Within a Deleuzian context, each poem in the collection can thus be understood as emerging from between the writers as “a stammering, or screaming, something slipping through underneath the redundancies of information, letting language slip through, and making itself heard, in spite of everything” and in defiance of constructed roles within patriarchy (Deleuze 1995b, 41).

In this framework, Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s collaboration can be seen as an intensive process of reading and writing, where each author is “in contact with what’s outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machinage among others” (8-9).

What emerges as the result of such a negotiation is not simply the bringing together of two ideas, but the production of something that is “neither one nor the other...neither a union nor a juxtaposition, but a broken line which shoots between the two,” as a “bloc” that is carried off (Deleuze and Parnet 18-19). In this process, according to Namjoshi and Hanscombe, individual egos fall away, removing all sense of hierarchy and the ethical problems that arise as a result, generating a collective “we”:

...what seems to happen when some sort of collective identity is at last formed... is war against other collective identities and a simple-minded, jingoistic attempt to proclaim that we are best. The difficulty is that neither GH nor SN can honestly say that we are best, and in any case, arguing about who is best simply reinvents a hierarchy of power, whether actual or intended. What is startlingly clear is that the ego’s will to survive, if need be at the expense of other egos, inevitably raises ethical problems. ...The “universalizing” undertaken by a lesbian lyric poet must try to diverge from the recent Romantic past, in which the lyric “I” is deemed emblematic of all the other “I’s” who eavesdrop, so that the “I” of her poetry can subsume the collective “we.” (Namjoshi and Hanscombe 1991, 164)

In terms of collaboration, Namjoshi is also revolutionary in her use of hypertext – she is the first South Asian British writer to engage in this possibility as a method of novel-writing – as well as that of the autobiographical myth. One of Namjoshi's latest works, *Building Babel*, contains a chapter to which readers can add, thereby “opening Babel to everyone.” Namjoshi encourages her readers to engage in this process of creating the collaborative text by pointing them to the Building Babel website, arguing that hypertext can play an important role in the building of culture. As she explains,

I have an axe to grind. I want writers - particularly women - particularly those who enjoy poetry and dense text - to get interested in using the World Wide Web as a means of broadcasting and interacting with other writers and readers of poetry. ... What the Internet offers is an analogue for the process of building culture. This process goes on anyway, with or without computers or indeed, any particular form of technology. However, the notion of bits of information stored in computers immediately suggests the other equally obvious notion of bits of information stored in humans brain cells. That is culture. And the accumulation, interchange and restructuring of this information is the cultural process. That we make use of the tools on offer and engage in the process consciously is, in my opinion, critical. (Spinifex Press).

The published version of *Building Babel* consists of Namjoshi's introduction to the characters – all women displaced from fairy tales – and to their basic task: to build a feminist culture in a continuous process in which all participate, constantly making and unmaking what is built. The text that follows is Namjoshi's version of the plot (alternative and continuing plots have been developed by various writers on the internet), written without a central narrator, all culminating in the realization that “It's the building of the building that *is* the project” (Namjoshi 1996, 34). Culture is defined in the end as “not the product of a process but... the process itself: it is not static or fixed at any point of time, but is constantly changing and eternally evolving” (Vijayasree 145). This emphasis in *Building Babel*, on the value of the process of building itself, is effectively conveyed through Namjoshi's use of not just multiple narrators but also her use of the trope of hypertext. While the writing/building process generates much conflict among

both characters and writers alike, it is the final sense of interconnectedness and solidarity between the women that emerges as the value within it. Throughout both the print and online versions of *Building Babel*, much emphasis is placed not on finding the answers, but, in true Deleuzean fashion, asking the right questions in a state of “perpetual inquiry and exploration” (148). Ultimately, in order to create the greatest possibility of multiple interpretations, all versions of the text are left open-ended, reflecting the idea that the process of building culture, like building identity, is an eternal one. Hence, the “Prologue/Epilogue” found at the end of the print version could easily have been placed at the start of the text.

Finally, in *Goja: An Autobiographical Myth*, Namjoshi is revolutionary once more in her play with the genre of the autobiographical novel. In this text, Namjoshi creates an imagined dialogue with her dead grandmother and nanny in which she attempts to negotiate the complicated tensions of race, gender, sexuality, and class within herself. Rather than recollected historical facts, imagined myth and collective – often fabricated – memory become Namjoshi’s angle into the past. Her medium to convey her tale is once again unconventional and non-linear, as the genre of the novel is reinvented to present not only “a literary shaping of a lesbian personal politics” (Vijayasree 164), but also a reshaping and understanding of her childhood neglect at the hands of her parents, her sexual molestation by a servant, and her own guilt about inherited class privilege. Both Namjoshi’s servant Goja and her grandmother Goldie are brought back to life so that the author might come to reconcile with them in regards to all of these issues. Ultimately, she cannot do so, for at the novel’s end, the two maternal figures still do not understand or accept their daughter’s choice to leave India because of the difficulties she has faced

there in regard to her sexual orientation. In the final chapter, constructed chiefly using the trope of rivers, Namjoshi rows away backwards in an act of withdrawal in response to Goja's inflexible defiance. Yet within this act of concession, a crucial recognition is made by the writer: while Goja has not accepted her lesbianism, she too has exploited Goja as a servant. Thus, Namjoshi rows away leaving Goja "caught in the crack between what was and might have been," in a space where "no tense applies" (Namjoshi 2000, 149), ultimately displaying that in the process of autobiography, not just facts can be curtailed, but "the autobiographer too is in turn transformed by the whole exercise of recall, recapitulation, rehearsal, and revelation" (Vijayasree 173).¹⁴

On the whole, when considered within the context of the development of black British feminism, the particular correlation of feminism with postmodernist aesthetic strategies in Namjoshi's feminist metafiction displays the "political possibilities" that result as a consequence of "radically critiquing" any and all categories of identity, especially those traditionally assigned to women (Butler 149).¹⁵ Namjoshi has achieved her critical aim by constantly creating new forms of expression and experimenting with language and genre in all of her work. In texts such as *Feminist Fables*, *Conversations of Cow*, the *Aditi* books, *Flesh and Paper*, and *Goja*, Namjoshi's message is a plea for women in particular to take an active role in shaping their own patterns of identities, particularly with regard to their sexuality, through un-writing master narratives. But rather than promote a reversal of power structures, in her imagined geographies Namjoshi "favours an ideal according to which [all] human beings, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or race, share a life without hierarchies and are able to construct their own subject positions" (Neumeier 272) because "the deconstruction of [all] identity, and not

just of male identity... is urgent” (Namjoshi and Hanscombe 1991, 165). Such a sensibility is postmodern and Deleuzean, denying the closure of molar subjectivity in favour of molecular fragmentation, and promoting a process of constant reinvention or becoming that generates a multiplicity of possible subject positions. As articulated throughout Namjoshi’s work, “the female feminist subject” in particular is redefined: rather than “streamlined into a linear, teleological form of subjectivity,” she becomes “the site of intersection of subjective desire with willful social transformation,” affirming the positivity of her own politics (Braidotti 1994b, 161).

Chapter Five

South Asian Filmmakers in/and Contemporary British Cinema

If we have a right to be here, don't we have a right to be human, warts and all?
 ~ Ravinder Randhawa, *A Wicked Old Woman* (105)

There are no Pakistani homosexuals they say.
 ~ Hanif Kureishi (Pally 504)

What the black actor has managed to give are moments – indelible moments, created, miraculously, beyond the confines of the script; hints of reality, smuggled like contraband into a maudlin tale, and with enough force, if unleashed, to shatter the tale to fragments.
 ~ James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (Bourne xv)

The pleasure of writing as an Asian woman is the pleasure of exploding stereotypes.
 ~ Meera Syal, *The Guardian*¹

Can we not be ourselves and be mainstream?
 ~ Danny Thompson (Korte and Sternberg 28)

In the British South Asian diaspora's film and television we witness the central characters transform themselves by taking varied and multiple Deleuzian lines of flight – racial, sexual, national, and religious – in their engagements with debates surrounding hybrid, liminal, and transnational identities. To illustrate the treatment of these themes on the cinematic screen, in this chapter I discuss lines of flight as reflected primarily in Hanif Kureishi's films (often collaborative projects with director Stephen Frears), with some reference to the work of post-1980s filmmakers who have been influenced by Kureishi –

namely Ayub Khan-Din (with Irish director Damien O'Donnell), Gurinder Chadha, and Meera Syal (often working collaboratively with each other and their husbands, Paul Mayeda Berges and Sanjeev Bhakhsar respectively). The theoretical base for this chapter stems from Deleuze's work in general, including his classification of cinematic images and signs in *Cinema I* and his discussion of the dynamism of the time-image in *Cinema 2*, as well as his and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" as defined in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Also significant here are Deleuze's ideas on collaborative writing and filmmaking, found interspersed throughout his general work, as most of the filmmakers discussed in this chapter are *auteurs* who nonetheless have a strong tendency to work in this manner.² In documenting primarily Hanif Kureishi's work over the past twenty years, in this chapter I will chart the manner in which contemporary Asian cinematic interventions, often as collaborative projects, can be seen as operating from the margins of the mainstream as a minor poetics that have added to and altered the definition of what constitutes the British cinema.

Over the last two decades, the phenomenon of South Asian migration as a whole has had a significant impact on the development of British cinema:³ cutting across the national space of British film and television, such minority work has an impact upon and questions formations of gender and sexuality that consolidate and homogenize the nation. Rather than rely on normative categories of gender and sexuality to produce identities – but while remaining attentive to them – filmmakers such as Kureishi, Khan-Din, Chadha, and Syal challenge such categories with new and more mobile constructions of identity. In Kureishi's films, this challenging is of particular relevance from the perspective of queer theory, as queer theorists question the mechanisms that produce identity by rejecting any

“essentialist or biologist notions of gender and sexuality, and see them instead as fluid and socially constructed personalities” (Benshoff and Griffin 1).⁴ In all cases, the work of these filmmakers highlights how new identity formations necessarily involve the raising of significant political issues that are the result of the experience of migration: for example, racism, sexism, and sexual discrimination. Difficulty with cultural integration and national assimilation also occurs, as a result of inevitable identity crises. The new postmodern identities formed as a result of migration are hybrid, “never completed, never finished”; or, in essence, Deleuzian subjectivities “in process” (Hall 44).

A key result of questioning dominant modes of identity in film and television is that the assemblage of the British cinema itself has changed in nature. Accordingly, much of the work that has intervened in British film and television has altered “mainstream” national cinema itself. It was only around the mid-1980s that Asian cinema really began to reach wide audiences, transcending categories of “British festival and art-house cinema” (Korte and Sternberg 1). Prior to this time, the Asian experience had never before been depicted in British cinema except as stereotyped representations in Raj epics and heritage films such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981). However, since the 1980s, there have been several South Asian filmmakers in Britain who have made an impact on British cinema (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 70-71). After Hanif Kureishi’s pioneering films in the mid-80s, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), Gurinder Chadha and Meera Syal’s *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) was co-funded and aired by Channel Four – a British television channel that centers primarily on multicultural programming – and quickly became labeled “the first *mainstream* feature written, directed, and produced by non-white British women” (Korte and Sternberg 163, their emphasis). On the heels of

Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia* (1993) came Ayub Khan-Din's immensely popular *East is East* (1999), "the first big box-office and international success of an Asian-themed feature film from Britain" (1). In the 2000s, major Asian films from Britain include Syal's *Anita and Me* (2002) and the BBC drama *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (2005), and Chadha's international hit, *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002).

In the context of all of these films, the 1990s mark a particular shift in British Asian cinema, for it is in this decade that notable multiple "interventions" have been made by blacks and Asians into mainstream British culture in general. As Gaylene Givanni explains, "in the cultural sphere there is more flexibility..... Cultural industries are more malleable to our intervention now, because racism in other industries is more entrenched. ... [I]n the past we were struggling for profile and representation, but without any real structures to support them. Now the Nineties are about claiming structures, by bidding for the mainstream" (qtd. in Korte and Sternberg 7). But since the late 1990s, "mainstream" British culture has rarely been defined. Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg point out that "any straightforward answer is impossible," and that while the notion is "complex and rightfully debated... [it] is useful as an umbrella term" in British cinema studies (7-8). In their definition, "mainstreaming" does not equate to the "streamlining" of culture into "one hegemonic cultural strand," but rather, in its more affirmative sense, implies "the integration of cultural diversity within the cultural assumptions and tastes of an average or majority population" (8). In this context, mainstreaming is not about submitting or simply adapting; rather, it concerns participating in and changing a predominant cultural stream by helping redefine its structures – "already in the process of redefinition" – by setting into motion "its own decentralization" (9). As Korte and Sternberg argue, this type of

“mainstreaming” of black and Asian British film “has been observed in film criticism and theory and articulated by an increasing number of practitioners themselves, referring to changing modes of production, distribution and reception within the cinema and implying a more popular and commercial orientation of media products” (1). Such mainstreaming, in short, is changing the face of British cinema.

Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of a “minor literature” helps to understand how South Asian cinematic interventions have altered mainstream cinema in Britain. Situated at the edge of the majority, any “minority” poetics contains within it a particular revolutionary potential. In a process based on “fragmentation and breakup,” the “minor” can deterritorialize the “major” by introducing new ways of thinking and being that are not based on representing the mainstream, or “an already existing people, but [on] contributing to the invention of a people that are *missing*” from that representation (Deleuze 1997, xli-xlii). These people (in this case, South Asian filmmakers) are missing “precisely because they exist in the condition of a *minority*” (xlii). In *a Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that any determination that deviates from “the axiomatic model,” or the standard measure by which a majority is evaluated, “by definition and regardless of number, will be considered minoritarian” (xlii). In this context, minorities are not defined by the smallness of their numbers but rather “by becoming or a line of fluctuation,” or “by the gap that separates them from this or that axiom constituting a redundant majority” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 469). Thus, the power of a minority is not measured by its “ability to enter and make itself felt within the majority system,” or to become a part of that majority (xliii). Instead, Deleuze and Guattari insist, minorities must be thought of as “seeds or crystals of becoming whose

value is to trigger *uncontrollable movements* within the mean or the majority” that work to unsettle it (xliii, my emphasis). Due to these intervening movements, the minority itself by definition can be seen as “*a becoming or a process, in constant variation*” that has the potential to help constitute a consciousness of the people who are missing (xliii). The majority itself can thus be seen as an abstract standard, but in order for a minor culture to represent itself, it must subvert that majority by deterritorializing its very language and imbuing it with a minor tradition. Such a process of subversion can be charted in the cinematic lines of flight taken by British South Asians since the mid-80s. For these directors and writers, discussing the right issues – the controversies of the time surrounding race relations, immigration, and sexual orientation – led to success in the 1980s and through the 1990s and eventually changed the face of the nation. Presently, in the 2000s, writers such as Kureishi and Chadha no longer feel obligated to deal with the same issues in their most recent projects of the new century. While this shift may indicate Chadha’s desire to “become-mainstream,” Kureishi continues for his part to explore alternate minor lines of flight, as I argue near the end of this chapter.

In *Cinema I* and *Cinema II*, Deleuze contends that the cinema, like horizontal philosophy, is an art form that is capable of deterritorializing the “rigid ‘image of thought’” that dominates Western philosophy (Flaxman 3). In his cinema books, as in his other philosophical work, Deleuze engages in a process of concept creation – for philosophy is, after all, not a reflection of something else but the process of inventing concepts, or images of thought. On the whole, in the cinema books Deleuze invents and classifies cinematic concepts consisting of types of images (perception-, affection-, and action-images in the classic cinema, and the time-image in the modern cinema) and the

signs that correspond to each type. His ideas derive from Bergson's concepts of the movement-image and the time-image found in *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907), as well as the types of signs advanced by the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Overall, in these two books Deleuze makes the Bergsonian claim that the cinema works with these two complementary givens: "instantaneous sections which are called images; and a movement or a time which is impersonal, uniform, abstract, invisible, or imperceptible, which is 'in' the apparatus, and 'with' which the images are made to pass consecutively" (Deleuze 1986, 1).

Time and movement (the traversal of space) assume significant roles in Deleuze's overall characterization of the cinema. In *Cinema I*, Deleuze presents the image of the pre-World War II classical cinema primarily as a movement-image, where time does get represented, but only indirectly: it depends on montage and derives from the movement-images themselves. But a reversal occurs in the movement-time relationship in post-World War II cinema: "instead of an indirect representation of time which derives from movement, it is the direct time-image which commands the *false movement*" (ix, his emphasis). The war itself made possible such a reversal, as Deleuze explains:

The fact is, that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces we no longer know how to describe... what tends to collapse, or at least lose its position, is the sensory-motor schema which constituted the action-image of the old cinema. And thanks to this loosening of the sensory-motor linkage, it is time, 'a little time in the pure state,' which rises up to the surface of the screen. Time ceases to be derived from the

movement, it appears in itself and itself gives rise to *false movements*. (Deleuze 1989, ix)

In other words, our shift in world-perception after the war – from a rational world of modernity to a postmodern world that is becoming increasingly fragmented and disjointed – can be seen as reflected in the development of the cinema itself. Rather than continue to create a sense of overall rational continuity and a truthful representation of time, filmmakers after the mid-century are more interested in depicting *false continuity* in cinema, more reflective of our very process of perception: here, “the images are no longer linked by rational cuts and continuity, but are relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts” (ix).

Such “powers of the false” in cinema, or the irrational linking of images, characterize many of the postmodern films discussed in this chapter. The taxonomy of the time-image and its signs (called “chronosigns,” such as opsions, sonsigns, mnemosigns, onirosigns, and hyalosigns) discussed in *Cinema II* is of particular relevance to British Asian cinema in the 1980s and 1990s. Directors such as Kureishi, Chadha, Syal and Khan-Din not only depict characters engaged in Deleuzian lines of flight, but through the use of time-images also create *false movements* in their films to reflect a particular state of postmodern angst. The representation of such angst in this manner supports the general view that “the emergence of [all] new, multifarious black identities since the 1970s is bound up in the historical process of fragmentation which currently afflicts the postmodern world” (Murphy 214). In the British South Asian films analyzed here, this fragmentation is reflected in the deconstruction of essentialized identities of “ethnicity, gender, nation, and sexuality” in such a manner that their “internal contradictions,

conflicts, and differences become visible and significant” (Dave 13). By depicting such conflicts, Asian filmmakers “make self-conscious use of the new London to explore the changing contours of British society” (Murphy 206) and ultimately point towards a more inclusive British cinema whose representation of the national collective is all-encompassing, plural, and heterogeneous.

Responding to social changes of the times, British realist films of the 1980s and 1990s such as Chris Bernard’s *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), Alan Clarke’s *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1986), and Mike Leigh’s *Life is Sweet* (1990) and *Secrets and Lies* (1996) were generally concerned with highlighting “the polarization of British society and the fragmentation of a traditional working class” (Ashby and Higson 247). This fragmentation has frequently been blamed on the “deindustrialization, mass unemployment, and poverty typical of the Thatcher years (1979-90)” (Hill 2000, 178). Hanif Kureishi’s films in particular became a direct response to the legacy of the 1980s in Britain, depicting “the impact of Thatcherite policies on British cinema and the culture at large, and the ways in which they inform and resonate in Britain under New Labour” (Ashby and Higson 247).⁵ While Kureishi had addressed issues of class in nearly all of his early plays, he turned from theatre to film and television because he felt that by the 1980s, “the energy and experimentalism of the fringe had got lost” (Thomas 26). He had begun his work as a writer and director in theatre (often collaboratively with companies like Joint Stock) with an awareness that in the English tradition, this medium had “always been a forum for criticizing the social and political failures of London life” (Kaleta 21). In plays such as *Borderline* (1981), Kureishi first dealt with the issues of race and class that were then more fully developed for the cinematic screen. Kenneth C. Kaleta explains that Kureishi

ultimately found theatre unable to lend itself to his own “aesthetics, techniques, and interests as fully as the novel and the cinema would later prove to do. Thus he would only clearly define his hybrid, cinematic dream in his screenwriting and novels” (22).

Kureishi’s work in the theatre ultimately helped him formulate how he would use “sound, sound effects, silence, and music in his developing cinematic aesthetic” (31). Furthermore, through playwriting, Kureishi also achieved an awareness of traditional genres of writing in England that he later chose to subvert on both the stage and screen (38).

Like other films of the decade, Kureishi’s first collaborative films with Stephen Frears, *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, “carry on a tradition of 1960s social realism” and simultaneously “deviate from it” (Hill 1999, 205). Kureishi “identif[ies] his own work with this trend” (205). As he states in the diary accompanying the script of *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*, the “freshness” of many British films of the 1980s was “due partly to the... exploration of areas of British life not touched on before. Just as one of the excitements of British culture in the sixties was the discovery of a lower middle class and working class as a subject, one plus of the repressive eighties has been cultural interest in marginalized and excluded groups” (Kureishi 1992, 120). Indeed, as John Hill has observed, the working classes are strikingly absent from Kureishi and Frears’ work; depicted instead are “the professional classes and an urban ‘underclass’” (Hill 1999, 205). Furthermore, it is significant that members of these classes are not white, but Asians living in contemporary Britain. Kureishi explains in his introduction to the script of *My Beautiful Launderette* that this is a conscious choice because he “was tired of seeing lavish films set in exotic locations... [where] anyone could make such films, providing they had an old book, a hot country, new technology, and were capable of

aiming the camera at an attractive landscape in the hot country in front of which stood a star in a perfectly clean costume delivering lines from the old book” (208-9). Indeed, with the self-conscious use of Indian actors from both Bollywood (Shashi Kapoor) and British films such as *A Passage to India* and *Gandhi* (Saeed Jaffrey, Roshan Seth), *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* “may be read as something of a riposte to the Raj films of the early 1980s” that confirmed the West’s fascination with the Orient through an intensification of colonial images of the “other” (208; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 70).

My Beautiful Launderette, first shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival and then on Britain’s Channel Four, has been hailed as “one of Britain’s most commercially and critically successful films of 1986” (Kaleta 40). It features South Asian protagonist Omar (played by actor Gordon Warnecke), who manages to achieve professional success as a Pakistani in London – something South Asians have struggled for from their earliest immigrations to Britain – by opening a newly renovated state-of-the-art flashy launderette in Peckham that he calls “*Powders*.” Featuring a cast of primarily South Asian characters, much is made in the film of race and its intersection with class. Among the characters featured are Omar’s alcoholic and disenchanted father (played by Roshan Seth), a former radical journalist in Pakistan who has not gotten over the loss of his wife. Omar lives with his father in what is described as a “small, damp, and dirty” flat in South London that has “not been decorated in years” (Kureishi 1992, 42). Also featured are Uncle Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey) who gives Omar management of the launderette, and cousin Salim (Derrek Branche), in whose shady drug dealings Omar gets involved in order to launch his business. Neither Uncle Nasser nor Salim are put off by England’s racism, feeling

“contempt for the English who lack the energy and drive” to “squeeze the tits of the system” and labeling their own country as having been “sodomized by religion” (Thomas 29). They promote Omar’s desire to make big money, despite Omar’s father’s socialist belief that sees “education and not money as the key to combating racism and class inequality” (32).

But while Omar achieves success with the help and support of all of these family members, his most significant relationship in the film is with the former squatter Johnny, a member of the urban “underclass” (Hill 1999, 205). As his partner both in business and love, Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis) has a commitment to Omar that speaks not only to the transcendence of race but also that of class and sexuality. Such a depiction of homosexuality – one of the very first instances of a Pakistani gay man on film – was perceived as radical to Muslims both in the British diaspora and in Pakistan. As Sukhdev Sandhu has pointed out, given that “sex scenes, explicit language and nudity are totally forbidden” in South Asian culture, Kureishi’s accounts of Omar and Johnny’s relationship as well as that of “Tania swishing her breasts before a startled Zaki... aren’t merely descriptive, but provocative assaults on the sensibilities of his more delicate [South] Asian audiences” (Sandhu 2000b, 148).⁶ Kureishi himself asserts that he has deliberately refused to provide “useful lies and cheering fictions” about his characters, concentrating instead on making them “rounded and human” in his “warts-and-all” presentation (Root 333, Rushdie 40). In the end, it is this very portrayal of a “semi-derelict London, riddled with unemployment, poverty and racist violence” that won Kureishi an Oscar nomination for best screenplay of 1985 (Thomas 26).

Sexuality intersects with race and class most sharply in a famous scene near the end of the film where Omar and Johnny's cross-racial relationship is juxtaposed in the same shot, or the same plane, as that of Uncle Nasser and his white mistress Rachel. On the opening night of *Powders*, while Nasser and Rachel are waltzing in the locked launderette, Omar and Johnny are behind the closed door of the back office, "*making love vigorously, enjoying themselves thoroughly*" (Kureishi 1992, 80). The central image that dominates the scene is the one-way mirror that divides the couples: both relationships are celebrated, but while Omar and Johnny can see out, their own lovemaking has no voyeurs but the audience. What is crucial here is the use of framing and "deframing" in order to designate an abnormal point of view (Deleuze 1986, 15), evident in the layering of windows in the image: peering customers arriving for the opening are first framed in the windows, forming what Deleuze refers to as an "out-of-field" (consisting of the larger set or whole that extends the particular scene) while the camera frames both couples (14, 18). Radhika Mohanram analyzes the camera's positioning in this scene as follows:

The trajectory of the camera's gaze reveals its position behind the homosexual couple who are themselves behind a one-way mirror, and the heterosexual couple are [sic] then aligned with the homosexual couple. In effect, the one-way mirror might reflect Nasser and his mistress, but the audience knows that behind the mirror, miming the two, are Johnny and Omar. Heterosex mimes homosex and vice versa and becomes interchangeable. The discourse of illicit desire (homosexuality) can only be slid secretly behind the discourse of permitted desire (heterosexuality). However, in this instance, even the heterosexual desire

expressed is itself illicit in that Nasser is having an affair with this Englishwoman.

What is revealed here is the hierarchy of desires in the text. (Mohanram 125-26)

I would like to push Mohanram's analysis further by emphasizing how homosexuality operates as an *added* layer of complication in this particular image, as is evident from the manner in which frames are layered in the shot. From the point of view of the social realm (represented by the onlookers in the window and door frame in the far back), homosexuality must be kept locked behind a *second* set of doors behind the already socially unacceptable cross-racial and adulterous heterosexual relationship represented by Nasser and Rachel in the front room of the launderette. Additionally, between the mirror/window and the homosexual couple in the foreground is the beaded curtain that Omar pulls across when he and Johnny come into the back room. If this curtain symbolizes prison bars and the mirror/window suggests a police interrogation room, the entire frame-within-a-frame image taken collectively indicates how homosexuality is *doubly-barred* in 1980s British society. Nonetheless, despite the "hierarchy of desires" betrayed by this image as well as the repeated "general silence" of the other characters on the subject of homosexuality (126), the final scene of the film remains cautiously optimistic and open-ended. The last image depicts Johnny and Omar "*washing and splashing each other in the sink in the back room of the launderette, both stripped to the waist*" (Kureishi 1992,109), suggesting that their love, an even larger challenge to normative categories of race and sexuality than Nasser's adulterous relationship, will likely continue despite its lack of social acceptance.

A comparable scene to the one depicting "mirrored" relationships in *Launderette* can be found in *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*; this time, however, we are given a sexual

trptych that forms a montage on the screen that celebrates love. Rather than show each couple in a linear fashion, depicting each duration in turn, by means of false cuts three durations are at once represented on the screen as “the indirect image of time, of duration” (Deleuze *CI* 29). Rosie and Dannie, Sammie and Anna, and Rafi and Alice are simultaneously depicted making love in a wide range of varied social spaces: Danny’s caravan, a temporary home in a wasteland, the roof of Anna’s studio apartment, and Alice’s North London mansion. Sandhu describes this moment as “an[...] instant of London providing an accommodating arena for sexual harmony”(Sandhu 2000b, 149). At this moment, continues Sandhu,

[b]etween them, these six people represent a very wide social spectrum. Danny is an itinerant and hustler; Anna, a photographer; Sammy, a businessman; Rafi, a former Government cabinet minister. They come from different generations – Danny could be Rafi’s son. They have conflicting political views – Alice’s old-fashioned Conservatism is at odds with Danny’s street-based radicalism. The latter’s also black, Rafi and Sammy are Pakistani, and the others white. Collectively they cover a cultural range the width of which can only ever be found in cities like London. And here they all are “*in energetic, tender, and ecstatic climax,*” welded together by Kureishi in a “*COLLAGE OF COPULATION IMAGES*” ([Kureishi 1992] 44). (150, his emphasis)

To Sandhu, the presence of collage on the screen at this point in the film is not accidental given the social spectrum of people depicted onscreen: to him, “[c]ollage is a democratic art... [which] creates a new imaginative space where no individual can insist on preserving a privileged zone or an unpolluted sphere from which members of other races or classes

are barred” (144). Sandhu also suggests that the roof and the windows on the fringes of each frame also gesture towards the “social realm” of the world outside (150). Indeed, in the centre frame, just beyond the window of Danny’s caravan is a troupe of black performers dancing and singing “My Girl,” and the series of copulation shots just prior to the collage are punctuated with shots of this performance. Such a gesture to a social world that is full of movement suggests that each couple’s copulation is not a private or privileged act, but extends across the plane of the shot towards a Deleuzian “out-of-field” with which it unites. The juxtaposition of images in this scene connects the couples with not just each other but also the general city of London beyond. The incorporated elements of color and sound can be seen as telling a “story in movement[:]. . . the segment flaunts itself – then implodes back into the film” (Kaleta 57).

The London that is presented in both *Launderette* and *Sammie and Rosie* is characteristically Kureishi’s. Ultimately, in all of his work the city is featured positively as “a fluid, non-hierarchical society” (Kureishi 1992, 136), or a place of Deleuzian potentiality where anything is possible. In these films in particular, London becomes the site of the new enterprise culture promoted by Margaret Thatcher. The opening shot of *Sammie and Rosie*, for example, is of an urban wasteland, with Thatcher’s voice-over cautioning “We’ve got a great deal of work to do, so no one must slack. . . We have a huge job to do in some of these inner cities” (Mohanram 128). But as John Hill has usefully observed, while Kureishi’s London is characterized by “uprising and deterioration,” it is at the same time a place of “fluidity and possibilities” in which characters may establish new forms of relationships and identities. The city, in this respect, may be seen as a kind of “interstitial” space in which “new forms of social connections are rendered possible. . .

[and containing] a source of creative energy in which new forms of social and cultural identifications may be realized” (Hill 1999, 206). For example, in Kureishi’s next two films, *London Kills Me* (1991)⁷ and the TV-drama *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1993), Clint and Karim are both characters who dream of “escaping the streets” in order to achieve new identifications in London (Kaleta 14), made possible due to the “free movement across classes” inspired by the city (Kureishi 1992, 136). While Clint spends the course of the film fighting for a job and attains one by the end (the final image in the film is of him waiting tables), Karim escapes the suburbs and becomes a successful actor in an ending that is far less ambivalent than the conclusion of the 1990 novel (see Chapter Two). In fact, for Kureishi’s characters in all of his films, London becomes “something of a spree, a passport to mobility, a chance to rid themselves of their cosseted, comfy suburban pasts” (Sandhu 2000b, 152).

For Sammie, Rosie, and their group of friends (including a lesbian couple, one of whom is played by Meera Syal), being Londoners is about being able to choose freely, creating unique identities that are ultimately multiplicities. As Sammie (Ayub Khan-Din) says to his father, “[w]e love our city and we belong to it. Neither of us are English, we’re Londoners you see” (Kureishi 1992, 234). But things are not as simple for Rafi (Shashi Kapoor) who, with his modern ideals and memory of a more conservative England of the 1940s, does not fit into the New Britain of the 1980s. Rafi sees youth culture in London as having become too radical since he left the country to fight India’s war of independence. In response to witnessing the riots taking place almost daily on Sammie and Rosie’s street, he realizes the racist attitudes in England towards Asian immigrants have only escalated since he lived there last. Although he expected things to be the same upon his return, Rafi

finally has to admit “god how things have changed so little!” (218). Over the course of the film, he moves from idealizing an England of the past (beginning with his first appearance in the film, he does everything to stake his claim to Englishness) to the other extreme of valorizing and defending an India of the past. At this point, Rafi’s concern is no longer with wanting to be English, but preserving Asianness to the point that he has fights with both Alice and Rosie in which he defends Pakistan.

Ultimately, Rafi’s notion of the post-imperial English nation changes as a result of the images he sees on the streets. Deciding that he does not like the undecidability and constant change of the present in England, he comments on Western decadence in conversation with Alice, while she herself adheres to a rather Orientalist notion of Pakistan:

RAFI: Perhaps you’re right. Right that we must contain and limit ourselves and learn to be content. The West has become very decadent, sex-mad and diseased since I came back. In my country, you know what I did?

ALICE: Was it terrible?

RAFI: I shut all the nightclubs and casinos. The women have gone back in their place. There is restriction. There is order. There is identity through religion and a strict way of life.

ALICE: It is tyrannical no doubt.

RAFI: While here there is moral vertigo and constant change. (245)

Rather than embrace the Deleuzean characterization of the city as constantly changing and evolving, Rafi’s comments indicate a desire for a more ordered society and, by extension, a more fixed definition of identity. His crisis of hybridity culminates with his suicide in

the final scene of the film. Like Gibreel of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, Rafi is also unable to handle the chaos and undecidability of losing one's identity and chooses to die, having decided that the individual's decision to "fight" the system is not enough (262). Thus, the liminal space of the city – a reflection of the pluralism and fluidity inherent in 1980s British society – proves to be an impossible home for Rafi's shifting subjectivity. The final image of the film is ambivalent: as Sammie and Rosie cry in each other's arms in their London home, the audience is left unsure as to whether the embrace brought about by Rafi's death will be a permanent one, or whether (as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak believes) its fragility suggests that the "idea of such a courtship is defunct" (Spivak 1989, 40).

The protagonist of Kureishi's collaborative film with Udayan Prasad for the BBC, *My Son the Fanatic* (1997), forms a sharp contrast to Rafi. Kureishi's original screenplay for this film, based on his short story of the same name first published in the *New Yorker* in 1994, was nominated for a British Independent Film Award in 1998. The film does not tell the usual story of the teenager rebelling against the restrictive father, but is about "puritanical sons rejecting the liberalism of their fathers" (Thomas 119). In the film's opening scenes, Parvez (Bollywood actor Om Puri), a Pakistani taxi driver in Bradford, is concerned about his British-born son, Farid (Akbar Kurtha), who has rejected all Western institutions and questions his father's assimilation into mainstream British society. In response to his father's integration into Western society and culture, Farid has adopted a Muslim fundamentalist identity. To Farid, Parvez's liberalism must be questioned: his white mistress Bettina (Rachel Griffiths) is a prostitute by profession, and he is a lover of "Scotch, jazz, and bacon-butties" (Ranasinha 93).

The struggle between father and son comes to a head when one of Bettina's clients, German businessman Herr Schitz, asks Parvez to organize a sex party for him. As a result, Parvez's liberalism, alongside his rosy view of Britain as a place of equal opportunity for all, is called into question. Immediately after this party Farid points out that "the realities of discrimination mean that in daily life Parvez must rely on obsequiousness to survive" (Moore-Gilbert 2001, 168). In response, Farid organizes an attack on the prostitutes of Bradford, including Bettina, with the help of his fundamentalist friends as well as a *maulvi* (an Islamic expert) they have invited from out of town. Parvez, who happens to be driving by this scene, takes his son home and, in a series of climactic images, attempts to beat the fundamentalism out of him. Ultimately, Parvez is unable to deal with his son's extremity because it unsettles his own sense of identity. His own "contradictions and confusions... [become] abundant" as he is reminded of his culturally hybrid and liminal position. After all, the fundamentalist belief in the rejection of complexity jars sharply with his own world of desires (Kureishi 2005, 86). After Farid spits out the paradoxical and rhetorical question "so who's the fanatic now?" and leaves home to move in with his friends (Elia, Thomas 119), Parvez retires to his empty house (his wife Minoo has also left him) to take comfort in a bottle of scotch and jazz records.

This final scene of the film is significant: the central image on the screen is the interior of Parvez's house. The camera in this scene is positioned at the front door looking in at Parvez as he walks out-of-field and leaves the frame twice, first to turn on the record player in the basement, and then upstairs to turn on the remaining lights in the house. This image initially evokes a paradoxical response in the viewer: on the one hand, we pity the abandoned Parvez as we watch him walk through his empty house – after all, he has just

declared to his wife, "I have managed to destroy everything." On the other hand, he also punctuates this statement with the confession, "I have never felt worse or better," thereby gesturing towards his paradoxical in-between state, left glaringly underscored in the wake of his son's actions. Parvez's symbolic lighting up of the house in this final scene, however, can ultimately be seen as an act of *affirmation*: by first moving from the bottom to the top floor of the house, but then proceeding to sit in the middle of the stairs, in acknowledgment and in acceptance of his liminality. Finally able to drink and listen to jazz openly, Parvez now inhabits a space from which he can finally carve out his own becomings in-between the Pakistani and English aspects of his identity.

Given its theme of fundamentalist Islam, *My Son the Fanatic* has particular relevance in England after the London bombings of July 2005, within the context of our present age of global terrorism. Susie Thomas suggests that Kureishi "does not see Muslim fundamentalism as an old faith clashing with modernity but as a recent phenomenon, as recent as postmodernism and a defence against it" (Thomas 121). In fact, in his 2002 essay "Sex and Secularity," Kureishi has made the argument that racism and fundamentalism in today's age both function as "diminishers of life – reducing others to abstractions" (Kureishi 2005, 87). To him, "the effort of culture must be to keep others alive by describing and celebrating their intricacy, by seeing that this is not only of value but a necessity" (87). Presented as being the enemy of religious fundamentalism, the complexity that is valorized at the end of *My Son the Fanatic* is characteristic of all of Kureishi's work. With this film, Kureishi signals the further development of his filmic career, having now also dealt with issues of religion alongside race, class, and sexuality –

all issues that complicate the contemporary Asian immigrant's sense of subjectivity and national affiliation.

On the whole, while Kureishi's early plays may not have had the impact he had hoped for and the genre of the novel proved unsatisfactory to him, the importance and influence of his cinematic lines of flight since the mid-1980s cannot be underestimated. His screenwriting in the 1990s was generally successful, yet none of his films became mainstream box-office hits in Britain. His pioneering films in the 1980s, however, are considered part of the growing Black and Asian cinema movement in England as a whole. By taking up serious issues surrounding South Asians in film – again, race, class, sexuality, and religion – Kureishi has helped break the mold of essentialized representations of South Asians in television. As in his novels, with the creation of characters like Omar, Sammy, and Farid in his films, Kureishi suggests that inherited notions of “Englishness” need to be revised and expanded to include both black and Asian experiences (Hill 1999, 216). In terms of race, ethnicity, and sexuality, these films urge that there be no more essentializing tendencies (present in colonial epics and British heritage films) but instead insist upon a free exploration of these issues, particularly the controversial presence of black and Asian homosexuality onscreen. In other words, such films deconstruct a British cinema in order to make visible the “internal contradictions, conflicts, and differences” inherent within its representation of essentialized identities (Dave 13). *My Beautiful Launderette* in particular, as the first “mainstream” success of Black and Asian cinema in Britain, created an audience for such films, making it possible for Asian filmmakers after Kureishi to be “themselves” in their efforts to become part of the mainstream (Korte and Sternberg 47).

Kureishi's cinematic success is partly due to his choice of collaborative filmmaking, a method of working that has greatly influenced more recent British Asian filmmakers in Britain. He explains in an interview with Geoff Gardner, "The Nature of Keeping Awake: Hanif Kureishi and Collaborative Film-Making," that "mostly the cinema is collaborative," and that this is a contemporary phenomenon (Gardner). In this context, Rebecca Dyer opens her essay on Kureishi's cinematic collaborations by quoting Stephen Farber and Marc Green's 2001 essay, "The Genius of Creative Collaboration":⁸

The reverence for autonomous authorship probably has roots in the Romantic Age and its mythology of the Promethean spirit, but it also plays right into our contemporary culture of celebrity, which may be why the myth continues to flourish. . . . It is far more complicated (and considerably less sexy) to unravel the tangle of influences that contribute to a work of art than it is to extol the triumphs of a single creative genius. (Dyer 1)

As Dyer then explains, such a pervasive and powerful myth of the individual genius might explain why Kureishi's collaborations have "not received much critical attention or comparative analysis even though he explores the nature of collaborations quite often in his fictional works and screenplays, and he has even managed to make such collaborative work 'sexy'" (1). However, continues Dyer, Kureishi's interest in "the interplay between sexuality and business partnership" has been evident in his work at least since his 1985 depiction of Omar and Johnny's relationship in *My Beautiful Launderette*. In fact, "other recurring forms of coupling and collaboration" can also be found in Kureishi's work: for example, "same-sex and opposite-sex partnerships; interracial and intergenerational collaborations; and spouses and lovers" (1).

As a screenwriter, Kureishi admits he has chosen to collaborate with many directors over the course of his career partly to reach mass audiences (Kureishi 1992, 156), but also because he felt collaboration could lead to greater imaginative possibilities. As he states, "I believe that all of the best films are collaborations. I've worked in many different ways. I've worked for some very fine talented directors, writers and all the rest of it. And I've worked on some very arty pictures. I don't intimately believe in that auteur theory of filmmaking. I believe that the best films come out of collaboration. At the deep, you know that Hanif-Stephen relationship is a very strong one" (Kaleta 45). Frears especially displayed a useful ability to "absorb criticism" and use it to "improve his work" (186-7). Other advantages of collaboration also became evident to Kureishi as he continued to work with Frears. Flaws in the screenwriting for *Sammie and Rosie*, for example, became evident during the production, and the film's ending was tightened and given a "clearer perspective" as a result (49).

But as Kureishi himself has indicated, not all of his collaborative experiences were positive. In the interview with Gardner, Kureishi explains how cinematic collaboration is potentially stimulating, but also has the possibility to turn out disastrously:

It's very boring being a writer. I go into a room every day. I shut the door. I stay in there and that's it. I come out after a couple of hours with a headache. So working with Stephen Frears or working with Udayan Prasad who directed *My Son the Fanatic*, or working with the other directors in the theatre or the cinema enables me to collaborate with other imaginations. Then the actors come in and take their part. When Rachel Griffiths came in to *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) she made it a very different kind of film.

It's exciting for a writer to have their work taken away from them and to have other people mess with it. They might mess it up and it might be a disaster. On the other hand working with other people can sometimes really open up our heads to something new. So I do it for the fun of it, but also because sometimes it works out well. (Gardner)

Some argue that disaster has, in fact, occurred: certain critics of *Sammie and Rosie* insist that the writer overbearingly dominates and as a result the film is “off balance” (Kaleta 50). In his recent essay “Something Given: Reflections on Writing,” Kureishi explains that writing *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* often felt like pushing “a huge rock up the side of a mountain” alone until he had the “relief” of getting others involved: “Now other people can take the weight” (Kureishi 2002, 62).

Nonetheless, despite such caveats, cinematic collaboration has primarily worked out well for Kureishi. Consider for example, Kaleta’s claim that in *My Beautiful Launderette*, “[t]he successful collaboration of Frears and Kureishi in portraying a controversial political situation [of Pakistanis caught between cultures] is isolated again as the root of the film’s strength” (Kaleta 45). Additionally, Susie Thomas informs us that “the making of ... [*Sammie and Rosie*] was fully collaborative... the film was ‘collective’ in its mode of representation and in its production,” and that Kureishi felt both “surprise” and “pleasure” throughout this process (Thomas 46). Thomas also writes of *My Son the Fanatic* that “Kureishi worked closely with Prasad and considered that the collaboration was fruitful” (119). On the whole, then, the end products of the Kureishi-Frears and Kureishi-Prasad collaborations were likely enhanced as a result of multiple viewpoints considered in their formation.

While such experimental authorship has few precedents in philosophy, Kureishi's positive interaction with Frears and Prasad reminds us of Deleuze's collaborations with Claire Parnet and Felix Guattari. As Deleuze states in *Dialogues*, his work with Parnet was a negotiation of sorts: "We do not work together, we work *between the two*. We don't work, we negotiate. We were never in the same rhythm, we were always out of step" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, viii, my emphasis). His interaction with the "nonphilosopher" Guattari, however, "brought the philosopher Deleuze to a new stage: from thinking the multiple to doing the multiple" (viii). Similarly, in "Filming *Intimacy*" (Kureishi's 2002 essay dealing with his working relationship with the French director Patrice Chéreau, who adapted his 1998 novella *Intimacy*), Kureishi "closely examines an artistic and commercial collaboration that appears to have affected him and his work greatly—that of the director and the screenwriter" (Dyer 1-2). Like Deleuze's imagery of the wasp and the orchid (referred to in the previous chapter), on a number of occasions Kureishi also "uses the language of love and intimate partnership" when describing his interactions with directors" (2). For example, regarding his first meeting with Chéreau he states, "we'd looked at one another for a bit—not unlike the couple at the beginning of the film, about to embark on something big, neither one knowing the 'little things' about the other" (2). Not knowing what was "possible" and "impossible" between the two of them, in his comments regarding Chéreau Kureishi suggests his thrill at making a film collaboratively as an *event*, one that would ultimately emerge *between* all of them: "something that a number of us – director, writers, actors, editor, cameraman – have made together" (Kureishi 2002, 223). He goes on to clarify, "[s]o it is my film and not mine. I

made the characters and most of the story, but Patrice transformed, cast and cut it; and of course, his style and voice as a director are his own” (223).

As a screenwriter, Kureishi’s influence on other diaspora artists “cannot be underestimated” (Korte and Sternberg 8). Not only his groundbreaking themes but also his method of collaboration have influenced various filmmakers and writers in the 1990s, such as Ayub Khan-Din, Gurinder Chadha, and Meera Syal.⁹ Ayub Khan-Din’s immensely successful 1999 collaboration with Irish director Damien O’Donnell, *East is East*, is one of these films. Largely inspired by Kureishi’s 1993 television dramatization of *The Buddha of Suburbia* for the BBC and based on Kahn-Din’s own autobiographical stage play of the same name, the BAFTA award-winning *East is East* proved universally appealing, “hailed as by far the most successful Asian British feature film to date” (Korte and Sternberg 154). In the film, the Muslim Khan family is the only family of South Asian origin within a predominantly Catholic neighborhood, part of the Salford district of Manchester in northern England. The identity crises of the six Khan children in *East is East* are also complicated by the fact that they are of mixed race, products of a Pakistani father, George (Om Puri), and a white English mother, Ella (Linda Bassett), who together run a fish and chips shop called “George’s English Chippy.” It is significant, however, that while all the children are products of hybridity, each occupies a different position within the third space of liminality. One reviewer describes the film as follows:

Nazir the eldest is gay and, after fleeing an arranged marriage, is disowned by his father; Abdul, the second eldest, is caught in the family crossfire; Tariq is a handsome, party-loving rebel who rejects his Asian heritage, calling himself Tony; Maneer is a religious Muslim who believes that his family will never be regarded

as properly “English”; Saleem is an art student who pretends to be studying engineering to appease his family; Meenah, the only daughter, is a loud tomboy who favours kicking a ball to wearing a sari; and finally, the permanently parka-clad Sajid (played movingly by 12-year-old Jordan Routledge), is an observer of the unfolding family drama. (Olden)

The central crisis in the film concerns the clash between George’s desire to “Islamicize” his British-born children and their insistence on defining their own identities as hybrid individuals. Although much of the film is comic, it takes a serious turn for its painful climax. In response to his children’s destruction of the wedding paraphernalia he had gathered for Tariq and Maneer’s arranged marriages, George beats both Maneer (for not telling him who is responsible) and his wife (for defending her children) in the chip shop, while the crying Sajid looks on from the out-of-field, framed in one of the windows. By the film’s final scenes, George is forced to stop controlling his children’s desires in response to their anger. While the parents reconcile in the shop, their children gather on their front steps to study Salim’s controversial sculpture of female genitalia. In the last shot, the camera zooms out over the street, suggesting that these children, whatever their liminal positioning, are a part of larger England (Deleuze 1986a, 22). In the end, the ability to choose is valorized and the pluralism of identity celebrated (aurally represented by the lyrics “I don’t know who I am” off-screen), while “too strict an adherence to traditional Asian life (not only Muslim life) is shown as disruptive” (Korte and Sternberg 161). At the same time that hybridity is celebrated, however, the violence of the scenes just prior remain in our mind, reminding us that liminal conditions cannot be idealized, given the difficulties the members of the Khan family have had to face.

As Paul Dave has argued in *Visions of England: Class and Culture in Contemporary Cinema*, in “both [*East is East* and *My Son the Fanatic*] the desire for pure unitary, cultural identities based in traditional certainties is pitted...against the wishes of those for whom identity is irretrievably caught up in the ‘cultures of hybridity’ which have arisen as a result of diasporas created through post-war, post-colonial migration” (Dave 13). Such a statement can also apply to *Bhaji on the Beach*, written in 1993 by Meera Syal and Gurinder Chadha. Co-funded by Channel Four, *Bhaji on the Beach* has been hailed by critics as *the* mainstream film that “caught the imagination of Asians in Britain” (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 71). Generally about the theme of female liberation, Chadha and Syal tell a “tale of two generations of South Asian women on a day trip to Blackpool” (71-72). The trip is organized by the feminist Simi, head of the Saheli Women’s Group in Birmingham. Committed to making mainstream commercial films, director Chadha’s aim in this film is to show a variety of lives of Indian women who live in Britain, each of whom needs to overcome certain challenges by the end of this trip. It is significant that these women transform themselves in Blackpool. Although Blackpool is presented as a white, lower class beach resort where the women are labeled with stereotypes and face racism, at the same time it also serves as a place of liberation where everyone can transcend fixed notions of themselves and “let go.” As one street sign claims, here you can be “whatever you want to be.”

Chadha has emphasized in an interview that the film is not about any specific type of “Indianness,” but about the varied self-images of British women of South Asian descent who have transcended the category (Chua 18). As with *Kureishi*, it was also important to Chadha to avoid representing essentialized identities in the film; as she explains, “I was

trying to... deal with the specific; deal with the characters and the complexity of each character. This way, you throw up all kinds of antecedents and subvert all kinds of expectations” (18). On the whole, Chadha mixes Eastern and Western traditions to celebrate the hybridization of identities, best embodied by the film’s use of sound: off-screen music is used to “indicate the fusion of ethnicities that result from migration” (Korte and Sternberg 168). For example, in scenes featuring Hashida and Oliver, Asian and Caribbean traditions are mixed, and a “bhangrified rendering of the popular ‘Summer Holiday’ with Punjabi lyrics” underlies the women’s drive to Blackpool (168).¹⁰

Ultimately, a “becoming” occurs for each woman as a result of the day spent at the resort town since each learns to let go of her molar construction of identity and instead embrace the plural self that transcends categorization as either Indian or British. For example, at the start of the film, the oldest woman in the group, Pushpa, has a hard time accepting Hashida’s unwed pregnancy with her black boyfriend, Oliver, from college. However, Pushpa undergoes some unloosening due to Hashida’s responses to her insults (at one point, Hashida throws her tea at Pushpa in anger), and also as a result of manhandling by some male strippers who drag her onto the dance floor in the final scenes of the film. In the end, Pushpa must let things be, knowing she cannot change others, but can only attempt to accommodate herself to them. Simi functions as a catalyst for all of these becomings, and her own “letting go” is signified by her taking up smoking again, a habit that is frowned upon by the elder women. Additionally, the transformation of the stereotypical abused wife Ginder, who finally leaves her husband once and for all by the film’s end, is literally embodied by her physical makeover – new clothes, hair, and makeup – all prompted by Asha.

Asha herself undergoes the most interesting transformation in a Deleuzian context. At the start of the film, she has non-realistic flashback memories of her past, in a combination of Deleuzian time-images known as “mnemosigns” (memory images) and “onirosigns” (dream-images) (Deleuze 1989, 273). In these images, a Hindu God as well as her dead husband feature as the symbols of her conscience, reminding her to adhere to her fixed Indian identity. The headaches that accompany these visions suggest her identity struggle between being a dutiful Hindu wife and her own desire for who she really wants to become. Asha ends up spending most of her day with Ambrose Waddington, a British actor whose exotic stereotypes of India and Indian women help her come to terms with her hybrid identity.

Asha’s visions are highly stylized, directly influenced by Indian popular cinema. Bollywood films are not wholly realistic, nor are they internally coherent narratives. Instead, they are generally structured around spatial and temporal discontinuities, often deliberately breaking up or interrupting the narrative. As Lalitha Gopalan writes in *Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema*, such “interruptions rule the narrative of Indian films” (179). Influenced by this technique, in *Bhaji on the Beach* Chadha deliberately seeks to create a world of Bollywood fantasy in Asha’s visions that interrupts the otherwise linear narrative of the film. For example, right after Asha hears about Harshana and Ginder’s cultural transgressions, Harshana and Ginder are presented in two of Asha’s “onirosigns,” or fantastical dream landscapes, as stereotypical Bollywood vamps. Each woman is depicted as a decadently modern, Westernized, cigarette-smoking, blonde woman (resembling the famous 1970s Bollywood

vamp, Helen), who transgressively flouts tradition with unacceptable behaviour (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 79; Finch).

Another one of Asha's visions is an oniro-sign, or dream-image, that involves music and dance sequences, also reminiscent of Bollywood (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 80-81). As she stands on a theatre stage with Ambrose at one point in the film, she has a fantasy of them expressing their desire for one another by stereotypically dancing around trees in the rain. In Gopalan's view, such sequences in diaspora films "serve as fabulous strands expressing immigration fantasies born out of travel and displacement" (7). Asha's Bollywood fantasy, however, is shattered when the rain washes Ambrose's brown makeup off, revealing him to be a white man beneath. Thus, Asha's nostalgia for tradition – represented both in this time-image as well as the earlier flashback of her dead husband – is subverted. This nostalgia is exposed as "a desire for the obsolete which can only still be lived out as theatre" (Korte and Sternberg 167). As Korte and Sternberg explain, "[i]n present-day Britain, the old values which the actor [Ambrose] tries to embody are just as much of a relic of the past (or rather an imagined past) as the traditions in which Asha still longs to believe – in both cases, traditions work only as ghostly images in the phantasmagorical world of Blackpool vaudeville and Bollywood movies, not as patterns relevant for life in the modern world" (167). Realizing this, Asha abruptly walks away from Ambrose, signaling not a resolution but a continuation of her search for a becoming, perhaps a different position on the liminal spectrum.

It has been argued that the "Kureishi approach" has been "taken up, modified and expanded by Asian film-makers such as Gurinder Chadha in the 1990s" (Korte and Sternberg 90). Indeed, by the present decade Black and Asian film has "come a

considerable way” since its beginning in the 1960s and significant development in the 1980s (91). In initial representations of Blacks and Asians in the cinema, “the tendency to restrict Asian talent to serial and comedy formats [was] still prevalent,” beginning with “minority programming” on 1960s and 1970s television (11-12). Shows such as *Mind Your Language* were seen as presenting limiting and “ghettoised” stereotypes of Asians in particular (18). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, two shows in particular have called the comic representation of Asians on British television into question: *Goodness Gracious Me* (1998-2000) and *The Kumars at No. 42* (2001-). Both shows are co-written by teams of seven writers each, including Meera Syal and Sanjeev Bhaksar. Syal has written many notable screenplays for British film and television, and has also acted since the mid-1980s in films such as *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* and her own *Anita and Me* (1999), among many additional British films by mainstream white directors. Her most notable performances, however, have been in her series of various comic roles for *Goodness Gracious Me* and her performance as Ummi, an elderly widow, in the comic talk show *The Kumars at No. 42*. *Goodness Gracious Me*, which began as a radio show for BBC 4, lasted for three seasons on television, then went on to a very successful live tour in 2000, featuring Syal and her co-stars Bhaksar, Kulvinder Ghir, and Nina Wadia (Jha), each in various roles.

Syal’s screenwriting for her own films is less comic than her television shows. Although comic moments still characterize *Anita and Me* and *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, Syal takes on some serious issues surrounding racism and female agency in both films. Based on Syal’s autobiographical novel *Anita and Me* (discussed in Chapter Three), the 1999 film visually depicts Meena’s story about being an “other” in her community

who tries desperately to fit in. With its timeless theme of growing pains that transcends cultures, the film succeeds as a result of Syal's tightening of character and plot elements from the novel. Syal deliberately rewrote Meena's story for the screen in a non-linear way (while retaining her first person narration) because director Metin Hüseyin chose to begin rather than end with the story's moment of crisis. The film opens with Meena's memory – a flashback or mnemosign – of when she and Anita fall into the river as a result of a fight, and Anita nearly loses her life. This key moment is an “any-instant-whatever... a pure locus of the possible” in the context of Deleuze's cinema theory (Deleuze 1986, 109). Such a moment allows for a privileging of choice, whereby a decision must be made that is rich in “potentials or singularities which are... prior conditions of all actualization, all determination” (117, 109). But the decision is not made here: the scene cuts off as the girls fall into the water, and Meena's decision to rescue Anita or not (the latter cannot swim) is withheld until the film's end. We only realize in the final scenes that Anita was rescued by the inhabitant of the mysterious Big House, Harinder P. Singh, although the town comes to believe it was Meena who saved Anita's life. Depicted through the use of mnemosigns as a cinematic device, the time shifts present at the start and end of the film take away from the story's linearity in a series of false movements.

In the new millennium, Chadha's *Bend it like Beckham* (2002), co-written with Paul Mayeda Berges, has pioneered the new direction South Asian cinema in Britain has recently taken.¹¹ In this film, as well as in her next two productions, *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), Chadha fuses Asian and British culture in a celebration of cross-cultural plurality and with a clear message that love transcends race. Jess of *Bend it Like Beckham* (Parminder Nagra), Lalita of *Bride and Prejudice* (played by

famous Bollywood actress Aishwariya Rai), and Tilo of *The Mistress of Spices* (Aishwariya Rai) all fall in love with men who are of non-South Asian cultures (Irish, white American, and Native American respectively) and ultimately manage to convince their elders of their happiness within their unique liminal positions. Chadha's forthcoming collaborative film with her husband, however (2007), is a feature-length rendition of the popular 1970s and 80s American television show *Dallas*, one that does not address cross-cultural issues at all. Chadha's choice to make another American film, particularly one that does not address liminal identities as previous films have, is part of her deliberate attempt to make mainstream films. As she has indicated in an interview, her desire is to be recognized not as a "woman director" or a "British-Asian director," but one who has "become-mainstream." Like Khan-Din's *East is East*, Chadha's films, with their high entertainment value, can be seen as examples of the *mainstreaming* of British Asian cinema. As Korte and Sternberg argue, "what these films, as well as other[s]... illustrate is that certain formats and genres are more conducive than others to mainstream appreciation, in particular the music film and the comedy format [employed in both *Beckham* and *Bride*], that is[,] two modes belonging to a popular (and commercially viable) aesthetic and having a high entertainment value" (206).

Likewise, in his most recent films, *Intimacy* (2001) and *The Mother* (2006), Kureishi has also stopped addressing issues of race and class. Unlike Chadha, however, this shift is not due to a desire to become-mainstream but instead reflects Kureishi's interest in exploring new and alternate lines of flight. While some have seen his thematic turns as evidence of his decline as a filmmaker, Kureishi's shifting interests to less political themes, such as the necessity of intimate human relationships, may simply

indicate his settling into middle-age life and its concerns.¹² As he has stated in a 1999 article in the *Washington Post*, “My father had died and then I had kids, twins. So I’d become a different kind of person, and suddenly I saw there was another perspective, which was my becoming a father and becoming middle-aged. I found that it was easier for me to get inside the father’s head than in the son’s head” (Mack). In fact, Kureishi displays a similar turn in his most recent fiction, such as *Midnight All Day* (1999) and *Gabriel’s Gift* (2001), where the issues of race and class that consumed him in his youth are no longer at the forefront, having been replaced by alternative, less political perspectives on what it means to be British.

As Robert Murphy has stated, “the idea of British national cinema has often been linked, virtually by definition, to discourses of nationalism and myths of national unity” (Murphy 252). Historically, British films have deliberately attempted to project “a positive image of imperial England for its consumption both at home and abroad... based on the idea of Britain as a civilized, homogeneous nation, gathered around notions of gentleness, justice, and tolerance” (Santaolalla 218). In our present decade, however, “while the British cinema may no longer assert the myths of ‘nation’ with its earlier confidence, it may nonetheless be a cinema which is more fully representative of national complexities than ever before” (Murphy 252). As part of a minority cinema, Kureishi’s work has pioneered the now numerous interventions of Asian films into the larger assemblage of mainstream British cinema, a project that has been aided by support from the British media, which has “actively encouraged and funded this sector of cultural production” and also increasingly created “programme slots and opportunities” such as Channel Four for such minority productions to be seen (Korte and Sternberg 206). Although many other

cinematic lines of flight have been created by Asian filmmakers in Britain,¹³ none have had quite the impact as the contemporary creations of Hanif Kureishi, deeply influencing subsequent filmmakers such as Ayub Khan-Din, Meera Syal, and Gurinder Chadha.

Conclusion: Towards a New Cultural Poetics

We will create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but
invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.
~ Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line* (10)

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that
is not one's own the spirit that is one's own...
We cannot write like the English. We should not.
We cannot write only as Indians.
~ Raja Rao, Foreword to *Kanthapura*

“And then, of course,”
she was saying,
“We have grown so great
that now we dream
only of the possible.”
~ Suniti Namjoshi, “Altitudes” (1980, 20)

I have argued in this dissertation for a reconsideration of how we have been studying contemporary literature and film from the South Asian diaspora in Britain. One of my aims has been to illustrate the diasporic figure's call for “new figurations, for alternative representations and social locations for the kind of hybrid mix we are in the process of becoming” in our postmodern, postcolonial world (Braidotti 2002, 2). As the work of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Meera Syal, Monica Ali, Suniti Namjoshi, and Gurinder Chadha indicates, South Asian diaspora writers and filmmakers in Britain have a tendency to “eschew the center,” deliberately refusing the collectively singular identity with which they are traditionally affiliated or saddled (Bernstein 114). If we see the

various movements of these particular writers as occurring multi-directionally and horizontally away from their “island English” or South Asian centers, then we can start to see the links between their “poetic projects involving secession, dispersal, and regrouping,” culminating in a “sharing [of] poetic space” at a center that is uniquely their own (115).

Well-suited within the context of global migrations, British Asian experiments with genre, form, and language have a tendency to unsettle any rigid or essential definitions of a national literature or cinema. This unsettlement is because the negotiation and development of a Deleuzian subjectivity, or a fluid and borderless self that highlights the positivity of difference, has the affirmative potential to deterritorialize and reterritorialize any given nation-state or national culture. Because British Asian diaspora poetics highlights a nomadic subjectivity that is “ethically accountable and politically empowering” (Braidotti 2002, 2), it operates in the context of what Deleuze and Guattari call a “minor literature.” This poetics bespeaks a type of literature, or art in general, as a production machine that operates as an open multiplicity, transmitting the flows and intensities inherent in lines of flight that are opened and closed during the process of identity formation. More importantly, such a minor poetics is “immediately social and political, affected by a high level of linguistic deterritorialization and expressive of a collective assemblage of enunciation” (Bogue 2003b, 59). In other words, in order for a minor culture to represent itself, it must subvert a major language by deterritorializing that language and imbuing it with a minor tradition. In terms of the writers and filmmakers discussed here, Rushdie, Kureishi, and Namjoshi in particular engage in a minor use of language that proceeds through “metamorphosis, change and becoming,”

ultimately with a revolutionary aim in mind that that is crucial to the “functioning of the minor writing machine” (Bogue 84, 89). Responding to what lies “beyond the familiar,” stylistic innovations in general, such as those inherent in the creation of hybrid languages, crucially transform our awareness of the world because they introduce new ways of thinking and being in it (Lorraine 13).

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of a minor literature suggests that in such an assemblage, politics and aesthetics are necessarily and significantly intertwined. Contemporary Asian British novels and films may be aesthetically engaging, but the use of minor language within them is what endows them with political relevance and purpose, destabilizing the norms and rules of what has gone before. Such a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization can be seen in a recent linguistic experiment that has emerged this year from the Asian diaspora: Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani* (2006). The novel began as a sociological dissertation on “desi rudeboys” in London’s middle-class suburb of Hounslow, but Malkani soon switched to fiction, feeling that the medium of the novel would better suit his purposes. Like his British Asian predecessors, Malkani also addresses issues of ethnicity in *Londonstani*, reminding us that the racial violence of the 1980s is still with us in the present age. More important to an understanding of Malkani’s aims, however, are issues of gender and how language is used to express masculinity and femininity. As the author has explained in a recent interview, in the 1990s, Asian British youth began to carve a unique identity out for themselves that no longer relied on racial divisions, or ethnic subservience to a particular culture, but on the creation of a new subalternity based on *not* assimilating.¹ In his presentation of “desi rudeboy” subculture, ethnicity becomes a performance that is

gendered. Over the course of Malkani's novel, the four protagonists Jas, Hardjit, Amit, and Ravi deliberately cultivate a certain hypermasculinity within their identities that is in direct opposition to what they see as the effeminizing of their fathers and the masculinizing of their mothers within their individual homes. The revision of the English language is highly significant in the process creating this subculture: the rudeboys blend Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and "ghetto" English into a hybridized language that is unique to them. Ultimately, the novel demonstrates the ability of a self-created minor language, from the small community of Hounslow, to undermine the overall "authenticity" of the English language as spoken by the majority of Britons in and around London as a whole.

Along with subverting a major language from within, Malkani's novel also illustrates how a minor literature also contains the potential within it to destabilize essential categories of nationhood. As Homi Bhabha has argued in the *Location of Culture*, the postcolonial subject is forced to go through identity revisions in-between two or more nations, resulting in the opening of a third space of negotiation from which the reworking of those nations becomes possible. In Britain, as one who has suffered the "sentence of history" in terms of "diaspora and displacement" (Bhabha 172), the in-between figure of the South Asian migrant becomes crucial to the reshaping of the English nation. The "boundary that marks the nation's selfhood" (148) is interrupted by the arrival of an intervening "supplementary" discourse that adds to and alters the nation (155). In Deleuzian terms, Bhabha's intervening supplementary discourse functions as a minor literature, the intervention of which can not only redefine the canons of British literature and film, but also the identity of the English nation itself, as I have argued throughout this project. As a result of the presence of this minor poetics at the edges of

the nation, the signification of the nation's identity and the signification of its people as homogeneous is disrupted (148). From this reconfigured Deleuzian space of liminality the diasporic figure encompasses, certainty comes to a collapse and the nation is forced to revise itself, finding itself no longer able to remain "the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized" (149).

By positing the concept of a minor literature, or open-ended assemblages that allow for multi-directionality within the boundaries of this canon, Deleuze creates an event or a "line of flight" in English literature and cinema on which "there can no longer be but one thing: life-experimentation" (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 47). For Deleuze and Parnet, lines of flight are essential to any literature, the writing of which is always "a process of experimentation" (49):

It is possible that writing has an intrinsic relationship with lines of flight. To write is to trace lines of flight which are not imaginary, and which one is indeed forced to follow, because in reality writing involves us there, draws us in there. To write is to become, but has nothing to do with becoming a writer. That is to become something else. (43)

Such lines of flight have taken the form of a minor poetics in Britain. Hence, as I have scrupulously undertaken to show in the forgoing chapters, Asian British novels and films continue to emerge rapidly as "great ruptures" from a "frontier, through which everything passes and shoots on a broken molecular line of a different orientation" (131-32). In a Deleuzian context, therefore, South Asian diasporic literary and cinematic interventions highlight the presence of an open-ended "constructive" body of literature and film in Britain today. What ultimately results from these interventions is an

assemblage of poetics that “grows in many directions, without an overall ordering principle” (xi). This multi-directionality makes British diasporic artistic endeavours, from South Asian communities or others, an exemplification of Deleuzean pluralism because they are engaged in a continual process of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization that revises the very nation of England itself. Ultimately, in light of global migrations and diaspora building, British Asian writers and filmmakers are engaged in a collective process of enunciating a unique minor literature that is gradually carving out a more flexible space within which to negotiate the diverse particularities of Britons everywhere, diasporic and otherwise.

Notes

Introduction

1. In the Canadian context, the term “South Asian” applies to “Canadians who trace their origins from one of the following South Asian countries – India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh” (Parameswaran 102). In Britain, however, “South Asian” immigrants from these countries are known simply as “Asians,” and their literature and film is frequently described as “Asian” or “British Asian.” Throughout this dissertation, the terms “British Asian” and “Asian” will be used interchangeably with “South Asian.”

The term “British” generally implies all of the countries of Great Britain: England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Although the South Asian diaspora does extend into all of these British countries, unquestionably the majority lives in England. To limit the scope of the project, I have chosen to restrict myself to England as the central focus of this dissertation. Hence, when the term “British” is used, it most often refers exclusively to England.

For more on the history of Asians in Britain, see Peter Fryer’s *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (1984), Rozina Visram’s *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (2002), Susheila Nasta’s *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (2002), Sukhdev Sandhu’s *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (2003), and Shyam Selvadurai’s introduction to *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers* (2005), all listed in the Bibliography.

Chapter One

1. The Deleuzian “crack,” also referred to as the aleatory point or Aion, is featured prominently in *The Logic of Sense* as the space from which lines of flight are taken resulting in new becomings. It is a space that is feared by many in favor of molarity, but a source of possibility for others. Thus, the cracking of the hijacked plane is an appropriate response to the “cracked” identities of the immigrants on board, and Gibreel’s nightmares are the first reflection of the discontents this crack can create.
2. In his analysis of the novel, Bhabha’s neglect in discussing Gibreel’s suicide and Saladin’s preference for one side of the hyphen points to a certain idealism in his construction of the hybrid subject. In fact, it is surprising that even more recent critics of Rushdie’s work fail to acknowledge the extreme painfulness of Gibreel’s suicidal position, preferring instead to place this novel within Bhabha-like frameworks that stress what Susheila Nasta has called “the celebratory aspects of hybrid fusion” (Nasta 199). Consider, for example, Nasta’s own discussion of Rushdie’s work in relation to that of V. S. Naipaul: while Naipaul’s work is said to be about pain, loss, and exile, Rushdie’s is “ostensibly [linked] to celebration” at several points in the text (137, see also 134). Furthermore, while Nasta acknowledges that the ending of Rushdie’s novel is “very differently framed” for both protagonists (169), she fails to adequately nuance Gibreel’s “certified schizophrenia” (160), a direct consequence of what is an extremely *painful* identity split.
3. In his discussion of dissident subjectivity in American Modernist literature, David Jarraway discusses the requirement of courage and stamina to be able to make or manufacture reality rather than emulate it (198). A similar concept operates here: to

open oneself to myriad possibilities, one becomes empowered when a choice or decision is made (Deleuze 1986, 114-115). Gibreel is unable to empower himself – he chooses not to choose (the most supreme choice), but takes his own life instead. With this tragic ending, Rushdie suggests that rather than giving up, Gibreel should have made a *decision*, whether that choice be to remain in the difficult liminal space of identity, or choose one side of the hyphen.

4. Bradford, in Yorkshire, England, is one of the towns where the riots and book burnings occurred with most frequency and with the most number of participants. The Bradford Public Library has on file collected newspapers (local and national) covering the Rushdie Affair, including statements of dissent against the novel from the British organization “Young Muslims”; these papers are available for local consultation to Rushdie scholars worldwide. A study of these papers clearly reveals the extent of the impact of the Rushdie Affair, from local effects in Bradford, to international responses. Some scholars, such as Bhikhu Parekh, have used these papers to argue that when taken collectively, newspaper coverage of the event suggests that the British press “engineered” the *Satanic Verses* affair (Parekh 77, Kuorrti 48). As Parekh writes,

It was depressing to note how the legitimate rage against the Ayatollah [Khomeini]’s murderous impertinence and outrageous Muslim support for it escalated step by even sillier step to a wholly mindless anger against all *Bradford* Muslims, then against all *British* Muslims, then against all *Muslims*, and ultimately against *Islam* itself... The neutral observers were left wondering

on which side of the debate lay “fundamentalism,” “medievalism,” and “intolerance.” (79)

Chapter Two

1. See Chapter Five for a discussion of Kureishi’s films, particularly his 1980s collaborations with director Stephen Frears, *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*.
2. “Perplication,” as defined in *Difference and Repetition*, is the “state of Problem-Ideas, with their multiplicities and coexistent variants, their determination of elements, their distribution of mobile singularities and their formation of ideal series around these singularities. The word ‘perplication’ here designates something other than a conscious state” (280).
3. For a history of the term “black,” see Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” as well as James Procter’s introduction to *Dwelling Places*. With reference to Kobena Mercer’s *Welcome to the Jungle*, Procter points out that in 1960s and 70s Britain, the term “black” originated more as a political category than a racial one: blackness, encompassing peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, was the label adopted to reflect a “collective stance against racism in Britain” (6). However, although still widely used, the label has become outdated: it is now seen as one that works to erase difference, marginalizing “feminist, South Asian and queer discourses” (6). The post-1980s shift in terminology from “black” to the more politically correct “South Asian” to refer to immigrants from that region is considered in Nasta’s *Home Truths*; despite this recent shift, however, a similarly problematic erasure of difference can also be

argued to exist in the umbrella term “South Asian,” for it also works to erase a certain degree of difference (such as, for example, between Pakistanis and Indians), this time within the South Asian diaspora itself.

4. Most useful here is Anna Marie Smith’s discussion of Thatcher and Powell’s similarly hegemonic political strategies in the *New Right Discourse on Race & Sexuality*. Smith opens the book with a quotation from a 1988 Thatcher speech that illustrates the paradox at work, including and excluding non-white immigrants at the same time: “People with other faiths and cultures have always been welcomed in this land, assured of equality under the law, of proper respect and of open friends. There is absolutely nothing incompatible between this and our desire to maintain the essence of our own identity” (Smith 1). Smith argues that speeches such as this reveal Thatcher’s adopted Powellian strategy of couching questions of race and gender within popular national and/or local issues, with the aim of recovering “an unchanged Britishness” (24). What Kureishi sees occurring is a problematic desire for a British unity that “can only be maintained by opposing those seen to be outside the culture.... [F]rom the New Right’s talk of unity, we get no sense of the racism all black people face in Britain: the violence, abuse and discrimination in jobs, housing, policing, and political life” (Kureishi 2002b, 78-79). The upshot is that the strategic use of language of inclusion actually works to *exclude*: “Asians are accepted as long as they behave like whites; if not, they should leave” (77).
5. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, sexual lines of flight also prevail in a similar fashion: consider Karim’s affair with Charlie, his sexual encounters with Jamila and Helen, and the orgy with Pyke and his wife.

6. Dean's definition partly stems from Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, New York: Routledge 1994.

Chapter Three

1. Flieger's note: for a critique of "becoming-woman" as a term associated with the nomad in Deleuze's text, see Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994 [sic]). Luce Irigaray refers to Deleuze's masculinist tendencies, as well as Lacan's "phallic" bias, in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985a). Elizabeth Grosz's critique of "rhizomatics" appears in "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminisms and Rhizomatics" (1994).
2. Parmar refers the reader to Lynne Segal's *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* (1987) for more on the decline of the white feminist movement; among others, Hazel Carby's "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (1983) is cited for more on the emergence of the black feminist movement.
3. It is rather surprising, given her innumerable achievements and current prominence in the UK, that no full-length study of Meera Syal's oeuvre exists as of yet. Syal's first play, *One of Us*, won the National Student Drama Award while she was a student at Manchester University. Since then, Syal (awarded an MBE - the "Most Excellent Order of the British Empire" - in 1997) has earned numerous television credits as a comic writer and actress, with notable roles in several British television series, including *Absolutely Fabulous* (1992 - ?), *The Real McCoy* (1991-1995), and the

currently successful shows *Goodness Gracious Me* (1998-2000) and *The Kumars at Number 42* (2001 - ?). Her film roles include the lead in the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) award-winning film *It's Not Unusual* (1995), as well as prominent roles in *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), and *A Nice Arrangement* (1994); her screenplays and writing credits include, among many others, *Tandoori Nights* (1985), *My Sister Wife* (1991), *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *Anita and Me* (2002), and *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (2005). Most recently, Syal has collaborated with the highly accomplished Indian musician A. R. Rahman on the transcontinentally successful musical *Bombay Dreams*. More on Syal's work as screenwriter, director, and actress follows in Chapter Five.

4. For more on the drama's production and reception, see "Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee" at the BBC's website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/hahaheehee>.
5. In *Home Truths*, Susheila Nasta discusses the links of writers such as Suniti Namjoshi, Leela Dhingra, Ravinder Randhawa, and Meera Syal with both the Asian Women Writers' Workshop, a collective founded by Randhawa in 1984, and with small publication presses such as The Women's Press and Virago, both arising in the wake of the feminist movement in the 1970s (Nasta 184). In Chapter Four, these events are discussed further in relation to Namjoshi's work.
6. Hanif Kureishi has also been long-accused of problematic comic stereotyping in most of his depictions of South Asians. For example, despite its immense success his film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) was criticized by the British South Asian community for promoting "neo-orientalism," or racist stereotypes, for some cheap laughs. For more on the argument's relevance to Kureishi's films, see Chapter Six.

For a fuller discussion of the presence of stereotypes in the diaspora's literature, see Nasta's discussion of Suresh Renejen Bald's "Images of South Asian Migrants in Literature" in *Home Truths* (186-87).

7. Later in the novel, Syal develops the implications of the myth in the book Sunita is reading, *Dark Lotus: The Mythology of Indian Sexuality*. Akash is reading Sunita's marginal notes in this book in an attempt to understand what he perceives to be his wife's odd behaviour towards him. In this book, the definition of the Sita Complex, which Sunita readily identifies with in her notes, is worth quoting at length:

... and due to this, the deeply imbedded image of Sita's sacrifice through fire to prove her worth, many Indian women subconsciously equate marriage and partnership with trial and suffering. Indeed, they expect it, welcome it as proof of a virtuous liaison, blessed by tradition. Stoicism in the face of extreme pain is expected of the good wife (a belief possibly reinforced by the resignation and fatalism displayed by the mother or other close female relatives). Surrounded by forceful female role models, or loving harmonious parental examples, that myth will be challenged and replaced perhaps with other powerful Kali-centred female models (particularly prevalent in the South of India where matriarchal familial structures still persist). Left unchallenged, and indeed encouraged by dominant male partners, Sita will encourage masochism, martyrdom and the subjugation of the self.... (208-209).

It is significant that the full purport of this passage, or the meaning of Sita's marginal notes, is lost on Akash, and even now he fails to understand his

wife. This failure is ironic, for through arranged marriage, he himself has also undergone a certain “subjugation of the self” that is required when adhering to any fixed code of identity.

8. See, for example, the BBC’s report, “Ali’s Brick Lane Upsets Community,” at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/entertainment/3287413.stm>.

Chapter Four

1. In India, not just Indian civil society but the government of India itself criminalizes homosexuality: Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) outlines provisions against unnatural sex and sodomy.
2. While numerous individual essays and reviews of Namjoshi’s work have been written, Vijayasree’s monograph on the writer and her work is the only one that exists to date.
3. See Chapter Five for more on some of these films.
4. I refer here to Chelva Kanaganayakam’s keynote address, “Postcolonial Studies, Translations, and Misplaced Ethnography,” given at the 2006 CACLALS (the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies) Conference at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, York University, Toronto, on May 28.
5. Romesh Gunusekera, Sunetra Gupta, and Aamer Hussein are regarded as others who also engage in such a spatial project. I refer the reader to Susheila Nasta’s final chapter in *Home Truths*, as well as her essay “Homes Without Walls: New Voices in

South Asian Writing in Britain” in *Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures* (eds. Crane and Mohanram).

6. In a personal interview I conducted with Namjoshi on July 12, 2006, at her home in Devon, England, when speaking of her literary influences Namjoshi explained that she does not consciously choose her medium when writing, and defines herself unconventionally as a writer who falls between categories:

The problem is that most people fall into clear categories. They are either prose writers or poets. The ones who are poets tend to be lyric poets that go for sound and making something out of their own emotions – density and brevity, and concentrated imagery. Prose writers tend to be more descriptive and discursive. The in-between figures are fabulists or satirists like Swift or Carroll. They are not just satirists but also mythmakers. A mythmaker, or a fabulist, thinks more like a poet than a novelist: meaning is brief, concentrated, embodied in an image. Stories and tales are thus more like myth than like biography. For some people [such as I] the distinction does not matter. Even in the prose there is a rhythm and logic and pattern, but then it ends always with a clincher, like in poems, like the end of a sonnet. The *Alice* books in particular show how such writers work with satire and parody, but are also mythmakers. Lewis Carroll and Jonathan Swift both do this – there is just something about their minds that works that way. In literature, many people do fall here in this middle section, including also La Fontaine and Marie de France. This is all part of the twenty-first century climate of ideas, this notion of memes [units of cultural information], that feed us all – as writers, we share some of these memes and are influenced [by them].

7. The biographical information that follows is obtained from a number of online sources (chiefly SALIDAA, the South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive), Namjoshi's autobiographical notes in *Because of India*, and my own personal correspondence and interview with the author.
8. I have chosen to restrict my discussion of Namjoshi's longer prose narratives to *Conversations of Cow*, as this text is thematically more relevant to this chapter as a whole than is *The Mothers of Maya Diip*. Some discussion of *Mothers*, mostly surrounding its themes of motherhood, mother-daughter relationships, and the notion of utopias and dystopias, can be found in essays by Diane McGifford and Harveen Sachveda Mann. Of *Mothers*, Suniti divulged the following in my interview with her:

I taught a course at the University of Toronto on utopias, and I used to be a science fiction fan. After a point you realize that a utopia is static. You can't have it when it is fixed. There is no growth and therefore no change. Such a society always turns into a dystopia. It can't last because we live in time. The ending of *Mothers*, in Paradise, is all satirical of course: she gets the power, and this is the last things she wants – to be saddled with responsibility. One is talking about the misuse and imbalance of power. You grow up in hierarchy and see what it does to people.
9. For more on this topic, I refer the reader to Chedgzoy's thorough and detailed analysis of "The Snapshots of Caliban" in Chapter Three of *Shakespeare's Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture*, 94-134.

10. Namjoshi has written numerous other works for children, all unpublished, that can be found among her papers at the Thomas Fisher Rare book library at the University of Toronto – see Bibliography for a list of texts.
11. I presented a fuller version of this argument as a conference paper in London, England – titled “The Problem of the Polluted Thames: Social Activism in Suniti Namjoshi’s Children’s Fiction” – at *Literary London 2006*, an Interdisciplinary Conference hosted by the Department of English and the Centre for Suburban Studies at Kingston University during July 14-15, 2006. This paper is currently being expanded for forthcoming publication in the journal *Literary London*.
12. Namjoshi’s work with Christine Donald is interesting in that it displays a very Deleuzean sensibility in the use of colour: blue and green frequently symbolize the trope of becoming in his writing. Note the use of blue and green in the following poem, which opens *Nonsense Rhymes for Aditi and Guppy*, found in one of Namjoshi’s diaries (entry dated 17 July 1981) as well as in typescript form:

There was once a queen who loved green.
 Her car was green, her gowns were green,
 the walls of her palace were a luminous green,
 and the grass was usually green,
 which was lucky, because had it been
 any other colour, she would have seen
 to it that it was painted green.
 And the water was green. But the sky was blue.
 Sometimes it was grey, but what I mean

is that it was not green, It was blue.
 And this bothered the queen. "I would give," she said,
 "all my rubies and diamonds and pearls,
 but not my emeralds, to have the sky green instead."
 People came in shoals and swirls
 to win her wide assortment of jewels,
 but, of course, none of them succeeded.
 So that, in her extreme old age, the queen decided
 that though green was good,
 blue was a colour much misunderstood,
 and that, in fact,
 blue
 would do.

13. These include the published texts *Flesh and Paper*, "Who Wrongs You Sappho?", and "Writing the Rag-Bag of Empire"; an unpublished collection of stories (*Short Stories*, 1989); several unpublished and published articles, such as "Hey Diddle Diddle"; a variety of unpublished sketches, stories and poems, including *Ceres' Blessing*, *Three Short Sketches* for the British show *The Real McCoy*, *In Counterpoint* (1995), and *The Grixey Poems* (1997); as well as the unpublished *Kali Yug*, a play set in the fourth and darkest age in Hindu mythology, "drawing from a multicultural discipline" and the "performance style of many cultures," but chiefly inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Namjoshi, Ms Coll. 341, 17:11).
14. In my recent interview with the writer, Namjoshi stressed that although the

autobiography follows an unconventional pattern of telling, all the facts in *Goja* are true, though not stated specifically but rather couched in metaphor. According to her, *Goja* is “an internal autobiography, and if it were external (consisting of naked facts) it would be a different book. None of the facts are false though. The emphasis is deliberately not on facts. If it were, they would be handled differently. It is all true – that is important.”

15. Namjoshi continues to write poetry along these themes: her collection of poems called *Sycorax*, also inspired by *The Tempest*, was just published by Penguin India in October 2006. She also informed me that she has chosen to continue the *Aditi* series, hoping to set the next set of four books in major cities across the world (now that she has “covered the commonwealth” with India, England, Australia, and Canada), potentially including Budapest and Hong Kong. All will be published with the same firm as the former *Aditi* books – Tulika Publishers – in India.

Chapter Five

1. Meera Syal, as quoted in *The Guardian Weekend*, April 6, 1996, on page 14. I thank Susheila Nasta for drawing my attention to this quotation; it serves as an epigraph to one of her own chapters in *Home Truths* (see Nasta 173).
2. “*Auteur* criticism,” developed in the mid-twentieth century, is a strategy to promote cinema as a “serious art form” (Banshoff and Griffin 17). It is defined by Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin as “assigning creative authorship of a film to a specific talent – usually the director,” based on stylistic and thematic motifs found in the director’s *oeuvre* (17). As a result of his or her virtually complete control over all of

the elements of production, the film achieves the *auteur*'s personal and unique stamp, reflecting his or her individual style. In Deleuzian terms, however, an *auteur* (loosely, filmmaker) works collaboratively with other members of a team, often undertaking multiple roles in the making of a film him or herself, most often some combination of director, writer, and/or actor. Thus, due to a deliberate evasion of creating any impression of a single governing voice within the team, it becomes nearly impossible to ascribe such a film to a "specific talent" or a single member's stamp or signature.

3. For the purposes of this chapter, in "cinema," I include short and feature films, as well as television dramas and comedy series.
4. As with Chapter Four, "queer" should be understood here as a theoretical approach that rethinks human sexuality as do a number of other gender theories, taking into account how "social, cultural, and historical factors... define and create the conditions for such orientations and behaviours [sic]" (Benshoff and Griffin 1).
5. Anna Marie Smith explains in the *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain 1968-1990* that the term "Thatcherism" was coined by Stuart Hall to refer to "the profound re-definition of the Conservatives' discourse under Thatcher's leadership and the subsequent impact of this shift on British society" (Smith 29). Hall goes on to explain that Thatcherism became hegemonic in the 1980s because it "exploited the weaknesses in leftist discourse, disorganized the opposition, re-organized the political terrain according to its own political agenda and radically changed the balance of power in favour of right-wing political forces" (29).
6. A revised and expanded version of this essay can be found in Sandhu's 2003 book, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City*.

7. *London Kills Me* is primarily an examination of the underbelly of London – white, drug-addicted – as Kureishi sees it. The film has been neglected largely due to its failure to address what Kureishi by then had a reputation for: depicting issues of immigration and ethnicity. Korte and Sternberg explain the reason for this neglect in the context of British Black and Asian filmmaking as a whole:

In general, productions referred to as black British films tend to comprise only a limited section of works involving black and Asian Britons. Thus films written by black or Asian authors but directed by white directors (like *My Beautiful Launderette* and *East is East*) are considered black British films when they have a distinct “ethnic” dimension. Where this dimension is missing, films with black or Asian screenwriters or directors tend to be disregarded, like *Elizabeth* (1998), directed by Shekhar Kapur, or even Hanif Kureishi’s *London Kills Me* (1991), although this is a film which Kureishi wrote and directed. (Korte and Sternberg 34)

This explanation is credible in light of the success of the Kureishi-Michell collaboration *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1993), a TV drama based on a novel that has an “ethnic” dimension to it.

8. I refer here to Rebecca Dyer’s conference paper, “Kureishi’s Collaborations,” given at *Literary London 2006*, an Interdisciplinary Conference hosted by the Department of English and the Centre for Suburban Studies, at Kingston University on July 14, 2006.
9. Given her deep investment with incorporating Bollywood elements such as song and dance in her films (most notably in her 2004 collaboration with Berges, *Bride and Prejudice*), Chadha’s choice to work collaboratively may have been influenced by the

manner in which films are made in India: “Director and screenplay writer work together to discuss the characterization of the story. Next, they plot the progression: the start, middle, and end. It is not necessary to remain faithful to a given novel or original story; director and writer are free to mould a story into a visual form to be translated onto film” (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 107).

10. “Bhangra” is a musical style, known as the “UK Desi scene,” that developed in Britain among Asian-British youth starting in the late 1970s. It is a fusion of traditional Punjabi music and dance (from the rural regions of Punjab in South Asia, a province now divided between India and Pakistan) with Western musical styles: hip hop and rap in the 1980s; reggae, house, soul, in the 1990s; and techno and underground dance in the present decade, a fusion that has been termed the “Asian Underground.” Bhangra was brought to England by South Asian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s, and Bhangra musicians still continue to perform at cultural events all over the nation (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 104-5).
11. Between her first feature film in 1993 and her mainstream hit *Bend it Like Beckham* in 2002, Chadha spent nearly ten years in the United States collaboratively working with Berges on *What’s Cooking?* (2000), “an episodic, multi-ethnic view of the American Thanksgiving holiday” (Korte and Stenberg 11).
12. See, for example, Sukhdev Sandhu’s comments in “Paradise Syndrome,” where he claims “Kureishi has reached an impasse” (Sandhu 2000a).
13. Consider, for example, the films of queer director Pratibha Parmar, such as *Memory Pictures* (1989), *Flesh and Paper* (1990), and *Khush* (1991), none of which have become mainstream in Britain.

Conclusion

1. My personal interview with Malkani was conducted at the recent launch of his book in Toronto, on October 24, 2006. My email correspondence with Malkani will continue, as I am currently expanding my argument concerning *Londonstani* into a more fully-researched article.

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