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Literal and figurative spatial maps: Conceptual readings of borders and frontiers

If the aims of this study are to be realised, it is necessary to define the key concepts, terminology and methodology that will be employed, beginning, in this chapter, with the overarching theme of borders and frontiers. Having reviewed relevant existing literature on firstly, border and frontier theory; secondly, imaginative literature; and thirdly the interdisciplinary field of politics and literature, this study will then directly engage pertinent aspects of Rushdie's literary project.

Conceptual understandings of borders and frontiers have their basis in an extensive, diverse and growing body of literature. The scope of this literature is broad, covering scholarly fields including, for example: political science, literary studies, history, cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy and law. The field of political geography (sometimes referred to as geopolitics) is informed by a body of theory that offers a useful starting point for the border and frontier concepts engaged in this thesis.

1.1 "The razor's edge": geopolitical readings of borders and frontiers

In his text *Boundaries and Frontiers*, political geographer John Prescott presents an insightful review of key theoretical developments that helped "to fashion the foundations" of his field.¹ Prescott focuses on the period spanning 1897-1945. Two major progressions are apparent in the era he discusses. Firstly, Prescott considers the theories offered by pioneering political geographers such as Thomas Holdich,

¹ J. R. V. Prescott, *Boundaries and Frontiers*, Croom Helm, London, 1978, p. 13.

Friedrich Ratzel, George Curzon, and Lionel Lyde. Secondly, he addresses notable progressions on these theories made by figures such as Percy Fawcett, Paul de Lapradelle and Michel Ancel. The accounts of borders and frontiers the former of these two strands of theorists present are primarily concerned with the “importance of boundaries in the conduct of foreign affairs” and conflict.² Given the major political upheavals that occurred in this era it is understandable that much of the theoretical discourse of the time focussed on borders and frontiers as barometers of defence and attack, expansion and retreat, consolidation and disintegration.³

As Prescott observes, Holdich employs the language of defence and attack, emphatically stating that “boundaries must be barriers – if not geographical and natural, they must be artificial and strong as military device can make them”.⁴ A similar tone is evident in Prescott’s citing of Curzon’s view that “frontiers are the razor’s edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war and peace, the life and death of nations”.⁵ This adoption of the defence-and-attack idiom runs concurrent with another notion which many theorists grant a similar level of emphasis; specifically, the idea that borders and frontiers are in constant flux.

Prescott highlights how Ratzel viewed “borders as dynamic features”.⁶ For Ratzel, “when [borders] were fixed they marked the temporary halting of political expansion”.⁷ A lesser explored theoretical vein of the time was the idea, as expressed by Lyde, that “boundaries should be drawn to give maximum ethnic homogeneity, through areas where populations would meet and, hopefully, mingle”.⁸ As Prescott observes, Lyde’s theory, presented as “an aspiration for Europe”, was developed on the eve of World War I, a time where militarists

² *ibid.*, p. 18.

³ Political upheavals such as: ongoing imperialist expansion throughout Africa, South East Asia and South America; the break-up of empires such as Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman empire; the development of socialist, liberal democratic, fascist and totalitarian political ideology; and the major territorial shifts of World Wars I and II.

⁴ T. H. Holdich, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*, Macmillan, London, 1916, p. 46, as cited in: Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁵ G. Curzon, *Frontiers: The Romanes Lecture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1907, p. 7, as cited in: Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁶ Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 18.

viewed national borders with a vastly different set of aspirations in mind.⁹ Progressive views of the type expressed by Lyde were generally derided as unrealistic and unworkable in the context of the dominant vein of defence-and-attack orientated geopolitical theory that prevailed at the time. While it was accepted that borders and frontiers were dynamic, it was generally agreed that changes in borders and frontiers occurred in response to questions of military strategy, physical terrain, economic influence or military strength, rather than as a result of idealistic aspirations.

The militaristic antecedence of early geopolitical theory is reflected in much of the language adopted to describe borders and frontiers. The dynamic and contested nature of the theoretical subject matter required descriptive tools that were reciprocally fluid and adaptable. Many theorists attended to this need with the extensive use of metaphor. This is particularly evident in several of the writings Prescott analyses. For example, Ratzel claimed, “the boundary was the skin of a living state and like the epidermis of animals and plants it provided defence and allowed exchanges to occur”.¹⁰ Similar descriptive tools are employed in Curzon’s “razor’s edge” border analogy, and Holdich’s description of the Himalayas as a “huge unbroken wall of peak and snowfield... a barrier such as no device of man, no devilish ingenuity of invention can assail”.¹¹ The language itself, especially in the case of the latter example, is difficult to “assail”. It is the robust and doggedly practical language of defence-and-attack.

The theorists Prescott reviews developed much of the terminology used to delineate and define fundamental concepts in the field of political geography. The terms of most significance are those describing the characteristics of “artificial” and “natural” borders.¹² This distinction, devised by Curzon, defined “natural” borders as those “dependent upon... physical features on the earth’s surface”, and “artificial” borders as those “independent” of these features.¹³ As Prescott observes, Curzon’s theory was initially criticised by many of his peers “on the

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ Holdich, *op. cit.*, p. 124, as cited in Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹² Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹³ *ibid.*

logical grounds that all boundaries were artificial because men had to choose a single line".¹⁴ However, Prescott identifies the subtleties of the theory, which he believes these critics missed. Citing Curzon, Prescott emphasises that in addition to being a descriptor of physical borders, the term "natural" contains sub-categories. Natural can also refer to borders "claimed by nations as natural on the grounds of ambition, or expediency, or more often *sentiment*".¹⁵ This is a crucial theoretical progression. By introducing the notion of "sentiment", Curzon locates a vital component of more contemporary culturally themed theories of borders and belonging. For example, the notion of cultural sentiment is particularly evident in certain facets of nationalism theory.¹⁶ Despite the undoubtedly important foundations laid by the early theorists Prescott refers to, he also points to certain flaws common to the era. He is mainly critical of the "use of 'frontier' and 'boundary' as interchangeable terms".¹⁷ For Prescott, the beginnings of the distinctions required to redress these flaws is to be found in the work of theorists such as Fawcett, Lapradelle and Ancel.

Fawcett agreed with the commonly held idea that borders and frontiers were dynamic and shifting, yet he felt that this dynamism demanded that the science of political geography develop a more expansive focus, one that would also require a clearer definition of terms. As Prescott observes, Fawcett drew a "clear distinction" between what he viewed to be the "zonal characteristics" of frontiers and the "linear nature" of borders.¹⁸ History had taught Fawcett that "all regions" are in transition, yet, he concluded, "it is only when the transitional nature is the dominant characteristic that the region is a true frontier."¹⁹ As Prescott suggests, Fawcett's deliberations led to a marked shift away from political geography's previously narrow focus on the determinant influence of conflict at the border.

Fawcett determined that a broader view was required, one that

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Curzon, *op. cit.*, p. 54, as cited in Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 17, [my italics].

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities" exemplifies this type of approach. See: Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London, 1991.

¹⁷ Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 20.

countenanced the importance of other factors such as, the “political, legal and economic” complexities of the frontier zone.²⁰ Theorists such as Lapradelle and Ancel followed Fawcett’s lead by maintaining and advancing the practice of differentiating between borders and frontiers. Both of these figures also continued to approach the frontier within the previously mentioned framework of transition and exchange, with Lapradelle primarily addressing questions of international law, and Ancel mainly examining the political and economic factors at the frontier that provoke border fluctuations.

As Prescott suggests, the period he reviews is certainly one in which fundamental progressions were made in the study of borders and frontiers. In summarising the central terminology to emerge from his study of early political geography, he asserts that the border “refers to a line, while [the] frontier refers to a zone”.²¹ This is indeed a pivotal factor clarified by his discussion. Importantly, Prescott also identifies that the borders and frontiers are dynamic. As Fawcett states, frontiers in particular are “an environment of change”.²² Despite the major advances in border and frontier theory Prescott locates, certain gaps and omissions are also apparent. For example, he observes, how borders and frontiers “related to cultural features were not considered.”²³ Utilising the vital theoretical framework provided by theorists of the era cited above as a starting point, questions of culture, and a range of other considerations have become the domain of many contemporary border and frontier theorists.

1.2 Other understandings of borders and frontiers

Cultural anthropologists, Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson argue “culture is the least studied and least understood aspect of the functions and structures of international borders”.²⁴ They make this statement fully aware of the wealth of contemporary literature they estimate to have been written on the “buzzword”

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 21.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 31.

²² *ibid.*, p. 21.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ H. Donnan & T. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Oxford, New York, 1999, p. 11.

topic of borders.²⁵ Donnan and Wilson develop new perspectives, drawing on a diverse cross-section of contemporary border theory, and on the previously discussed work of early theorists such as Curzon. They present a reading of borders and frontiers that expands upon the language of, for example, defence-and-attack to examine, what they suggest are “the least studied and understood phenomena of international borders, namely border cultures and identities”.²⁶ Donnan and Wilson point to the inherently dynamic properties of borders and frontiers to highlight the reciprocally dynamic features of cultures and identities. In this way they implicitly demonstrate the logic behind using the language of borders and frontiers as an explanatory device in discussions of cultures and identities.

For Donnan and Wilson, culture must always be discussed in the context of transition. They do not suggest that the term culture, in a broad sense, is no longer the appropriate term to describe the factors that coalesce to form a sense of collective identity amongst a particular group of people; rather, they wish to emphasise that these factors are typically subject to unavoidable processes of change and transition. As they explain, “culture encompasses both imagined and lived experience, and it provides unity, continuity and boundedness in the spaces, places and times of modernity and postmodernity.”²⁷ In suggesting there is a spatial component to culture, they make metaphorical references to borders, yet they do not seek to limit their reading of culture by suggesting it is a static, quantifiable “experience”, an experience that strictly corresponds to the dictates of borders.

Culture may be a spatial (and indeed, a “bounded”) phenomenon but that space is in flux and impossible to measure in an absolute sense. Put simply, it is extremely unlikely that one could describe a particular set of cultural circumstances and confidently assert that those circumstances will remain unchanged. As Donnan and Wilson state, the word culture in the context of borders and frontiers can no longer be considered as representative of the

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. xiv.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 10.

“imagined or lived experience” of “groups which are characterised as occupying discrete spaces or having discrete cultures.”²⁸ They emphasise this point very early in their study by using the example of people who conditionally traverse borders and frontiers.

These people, often labelled transnationals, are compelled or choose to cross a wide range of geopolitical and metaphorical borders. Refugees, migrants, workers, criminals, soldiers, merchants and nomads cross and create many boundaries in their movements through their and other people’s spaces and places. Even as they problematise the relationship... many of these people themselves still believe in the essential correspondence between territory, nation, state and identity, a correspondence in which each element is assumed to be an integral part of naturally occurring bounded units. And if some transnationals have lost this belief, they must nevertheless deal with those who still hold it.²⁹

Donnan and Wilson’s reference to “metaphorical” borders and frontiers is significant. It is not an entirely new way to interpret borders and frontiers, given for instance, the defence and attack metaphors apparent in many of the political geography theories discussed earlier. However, Donnan and Wilson extend the metaphor from its original application to physical barriers to suggest that borders and frontiers can also be employed to articulate, for example, psychological perceptions of space, limits and transition. In doing so, they do not seek to deny or downplay geopolitical understandings of borders and frontiers; indeed, they argue that a “natural correspondence” may still exist between many factors of concern to earlier theorists. Rather than retrospectively dismantling or meticulously critiquing existing theory, they appear more concerned with pushing ahead and emphasising that other understandings are possible.

Indicative of their permissive view of the representational properties of borders and frontiers, Donnan and Wilson do not claim that their anthropological perspective is superior. Indeed, they go on to review a series of border and frontier perspectives offered by fields such as “geography”, “history”, “political science”, and “sociology”.³⁰ Ultimately they conclude that no single discipline can claim to offer a comprehensive account of borders and frontiers. Instead they

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 43-61.

stretch the border metaphor further still, applying it to the methodology of border and frontier scholarship itself. "If border studies *in toto* do not adequately reflect one discipline", Donnan and Wilson observe, "then it must reflect them all." This statement is indicative of the multitude of perspectives apparent at the frontiers of recognised academic disciplines. In different, and sometimes converging ways, the disciplines to which they refer, all seek to extract meaning from borders and frontiers.

Early in their text, Donnan and Wilson argue that "borders are meaning carrying and meaning making entities".³¹ This is evident in the "meaning" they locate with the anthropologically orientated example of "transnationals"; people who both extract and impart meaning from the "entities" they traverse. So great is the propensity for meaning in these acts of interpersonal and interregional exchange, they suggest that the transnational could be seen as a border personified, a transient figure able to "create many boundaries" through the very process of transition. Similarly, Donnan and Wilson also seem acutely aware that they "create many boundaries" through their own scholarly endeavours. The border and frontier theories they develop inhabit the "spaces and places" of the theoretical perspectives of other academic disciplines they engage in their study. A consciousness of these academic boundaries is evident in various examples of interdisciplinary methodology. The propensity for shared exchange between differing academic perspectives of borders and frontiers also heightens the consciousness of the borders delineating the distinctive preoccupations of different academic disciplines.

Clearly, Donnan and Wilson offer a significantly expanded view of borders and frontiers, a view that goes beyond territorial and state-based concerns to countenance the importance of "meaning" in border scholarship. Their approach exemplifies the manner in which psychological perspectives have been increasingly recognised as essential parts of contemporary border and frontier theory. This level of importance is reflected in the attention many theorists direct towards describing such perspectives.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

1.3 Imagined borders and frontiers: the topography of “mental maps”

Sociologist Joel Migdal uses the term “mental maps” to explain the psychological and social “meaning” of borders and frontiers. “Mental maps”, Migdal suggests, “incorporate elements of the meaning people attach to spatial configurations”.³² According to his hypothesis, borders and frontiers are vital orientating devices, necessary for the articulation of an individual’s spatial relationship with their psychological, physical and social environment. Migdal’s perspective brings additional layers to the already diverse understandings of borders and frontiers discussed thus far. However, in highlighting the psychological dimension of borders, he does not completely jettison existing theory. Rather, not unlike Donnan and Wilson, he suggests that, despite the plethora of contemporary border and frontier literature, many theorists remain fixated on “spatial and geopolitical” questions “associated with the nation state”.³³ He also claims to be concerned with “spatial understandings” but he seeks to expand the possibilities of these understandings to suggest a “way of conceiving borders and space that goes beyond a school map of states”.³⁴ In line with the core aspects of border and frontier theory, he remains committed to the idea that borders are “porous, and in flux”; however, he argues that “few works” have sought to address the psychological consequences of this flux and, in turn, “the political and cultural meaning attached to borders”.³⁵ Like Donnan and Wilson, he is conscious of the “meanings” borders “hold for people”.³⁶ He is also aware that these meanings “vary and are contested by other social formations”.³⁷ This “meaning”, he suggests, is problematic, difficult to quantify or locate within the methodological framework of most existing forms of border and frontier theory. The mental maps he advocates can be seen as one way to address this problem by giving “meaning” shape.

³² J. Migdal, “Mental Maps and Virtual Spaces: Struggles to Construct and Maintain the State and Social Boundaries”, in *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities*, J. Migdal, (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2004, p. 7.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁷ *ibid.*

Migdal relates the psychological idea of mental maps to the meaning people seek to impart and extract from processes of social interaction. As he explains, in addition to their geopolitical functions, borders and frontiers are also,

constructed and maintained by people's mental maps, which divide home from alien territory, the included from the excluded, the familiar from the other. Mental maps incorporate elements of the meaning people attach to spatial configurations, the loyalties they hold, the emotions and passions that groupings evoke, and their cognitive ideas about how the world is constructed. All these act to establish and maintain the attachment of people to one another, but in so doing, they also mark the separation between groups.³⁸

As Migdal suggests, mental maps help to define, maintain and give psychological *meaning* to the notion, or indeed the social realities, of "separation". They provide the necessary orientating borders and frontiers to enable a particular individual or social grouping to work towards recognising and reconciling their essential difference from other individuals or groups.

Migdal uses the term "spatial logic" to describe the manner in which mental maps are drawn.³⁹ Various "social groups", he argues, "have certain territorial dimensions (usually physical, sometimes virtual), quite apart from state borders".⁴⁰ He employs the "extreme" example of a "smuggling ring", to explain the space he discusses.⁴¹ This clique of criminals, he asserts, "may have all sorts of monitoring devices marking it off, such as code words, secret names, signals, established routes for travel, and sanctions for breaking the rules of the ring".⁴² Through these practices, he explains, this particular social group develops a clear, shared awareness of its borders. They produce a mental map in the basis of, firstly, their common understanding, and secondly, their difference from other individuals, social groups, state apparatus and indeed, other possibly competing criminal groups. However, Migdal also notes that the mental map that this group produces may not necessarily be beyond the understanding of other social groups, nor may it be radically different from the maps of seemingly diametrically opposed groups. The smugglers' "mental map" he argues, which may include "its

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

territorial reach as well as who is inside the group and who is outside” can also be etched in “the minds of border guards, customers, competitors and others” – those with which the group interacts.⁴³

Migdal’s expanded perspective opens up a range of possibilities. Most notably, he offers an interesting explanation of the progressive notion that borders and frontiers, when approached in the context of mental maps, can also be seen as providing a way to define social structures. They are a highly illustrative and referential marker of a social group’s shared characteristics. Concurrently, the borders and frontiers devised through mental maps can clearly articulate differences between conflicting groups, opinions, practices and beliefs.

1.4 “Which side are you on?”: the borders and frontiers of debate

Writing in 1989 in response to the declaration of the *fatwa*, U.S. writer and political commentator Hendrik Hertzberg presented the following observations on what he deemed to be the “obvious” aspects of the Rushdie affair: “On one side, a fanatical terrorist-theocrat... a despot” who “offers a million dollars to anyone who will kill the author of a book deemed blasphemous. On the other side, a novelist in his quiet London study. He taps out fictions, trying obliquely to understand the real world by creating imaginary ones”.⁴⁴ Hertzberg eschewed the more pragmatic path taken by many commentators at the time, instead reducing the issue to polar opposites (seemingly for illustrative purposes) then provocatively asking readers to choose between two perspectives. “On one side, murder. On the other, art. Which side are you on?” he glibly concludes.⁴⁵ Hertzberg tells us that he uses the extreme nature of the Rushdie affair as a means to build an argument designed to “remind us how precious [secularism] is” in politics, “and how fiercely it must be guarded” from those within the U.S. “religious right” he deems to have “declared war on secular humanists”.⁴⁶ Hertzberg’s approach is double-layered; he employs one extreme border metaphor to illustrate the gravity of another.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ H. Hertzberg, *Politics: Observations and Arguments 1966-2004*, Penguin, Camberwell, 2004, p. 158.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 159.

Debate, in the guise employed by Hertzberg, seems to disavow the existence of shades of grey. Yet this type of debate, even when painted as a starkly black and white choice of either “murder” or “art”, still retains levels of nuance and subtlety. Choices are rarely as simple as his argument may at first seem to render them. In asking us to choose which side of the line we occupy, we are also implicitly urged to *imagine* such a line. We are perhaps driven to ask, for example, what exactly is it that divides opposites such as murder and art. Or indeed, we may ask what cultural, economic, political, social, or personal factors combine constitute this line? Similarly, we may be compelled to question how Rushdie’s “oblique... *imaginary*” worlds could clash so bitterly with the “*real world*” view of others.⁴⁷ We may also speculate as to where and how these real and imagined worlds intersect or collide. In the context of border metaphors, the possibilities unleashed by Hertzberg’s deceptively simple choice are endless.

In asking the reader to side with one of two distinctly opposed view-points, Hertzberg is arguably fully aware that it is impossible to know exactly where one side begins and the other ends. The impact of his argument relies upon the existence of drastically different “sides”, yet ironically the line that divides these extreme opposites is indistinct. He uses the “murder” and “art” imagery of opposing sides of the line to provoke questions; to emphatically state that there is a figurative point in the twists and turns of a debate, where we are compelled to act, to choose.

For some political scientists and political actors, the point in a debate at which choices arise is the point where politics occurs. According to this view, politics becomes a question of taking a position, a question of choice, of choosing sides. For a writer like Rushdie, who regularly engages in political debate, it may not be a question of taking a position either side of a line. Rather, he could be seen as questioning the line itself. This questioning instinct is of course provocatively emphasised by the title of his text, *Step Across This Line*. To question the line is, of course, to acknowledge its existence and its symbolic power.

If we accept Hertzberg’s symbolic depiction of the border as a marker

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 158. [my italics].

separating the two conflicting “sides” of a debate, then we may by extension look at the frontier (the zone of constant flux that envelops and recedes away from the border) as the zone in which this conflict is addressed. In his critique of social democracy, political scientist John Gray argues that “the sphere of life in which... unavoidable conflicts are negotiated and, always provisionally, resolved is that of *politics*.”⁴⁸ In the context of the border and frontier metaphors considered thus far, the “sphere of life” that Gray describes can readily be understood and as the frontier. The “spatial logic” of politics is expressed through the level of shared understanding political protagonists hold concerning the practices and conventions that constitute politics. Similarly, the manner in which politics is approached from a theoretical standpoint also relies on a level of shared understanding.

1.5 The border and frontier motif in Western political theory

Broadly considering the canon of Western political theory, border and frontier motifs are fundamental illustrative devices in the articulation of ideas. Metaphorical borders and frontiers are regularly used as highly adaptable descriptive tools to imbue theoretical perspectives with the necessary spatial logic required to give such perspectives meaning. Just as Prescott’s review of the fundamental advances in political geography catalogues a series of major theoretical progressions in his field, political scientist Graham Maddox’s insightful abstraction of key developments in political theory serves as a useful source for the locating of border and frontier motifs in selected developments in political science. The following are brief examples of a theme that features prominently throughout Maddox’s more extensive account.

- i) **The Reformation:** As Maddox explains, the Reformation ideal that the “sovereignty of the individual consciousness” can only exist free of “external coercion”, is an ideal that requires the theoretical imposition of figurative frontiers delineating the spheres of the idealistically unfettered individual consciousness and potentially coercive external agencies.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ J. Gray, *Endgames: Questions in Late Modern Political Thought*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 21.

⁴⁹ G. Maddox, *Australian Democracy in Theory and Practice*. Second Edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p. 70.

ii) **Feudal Law:** Maddox's account of English feudal law provides further evidence of the conceptual importance of the frontier motif. His description of this particular form of "political contract" suggests that the figurative frontiers delineating the responsibilities of a "lord" and "his" bounded "vassals" were mapped by "obligations" adhered to by "*both sides*".⁵⁰ A fracturing of this theoretical frontier, that is, a "breach of the obligation on either side", Maddox adds, "could end in the dissolution of the contract".⁵¹ Again we see how the frontiers delineating the obligations of this contract exist in a perpetual state of tension.

iii) **The Madisonian System:** The system of "checks and balances" devised by political theorist James Madison can be read as another example of the theoretical significance of the frontier motif. As Maddox observes, this system was derived in part from Montesquieu's Enlightenment ideal concerning the "separation of the powers of government".⁵² Madison's approach was conceived to attend to the "excesses of faction" within government.⁵³ The figurative frontier is clearly evident in Maddox's description of the structure of the American Constitution. "The thicket of barricades was made dense as never seen before", Maddox observes, "as the [executive, legislative and judicial] checks and balances of the federal Constitution were overlaid on the federal system, with its inevitable and automatic antagonisms between regional and central government".⁵⁴ The Madisonian example offers additional evidence of the manner in which the frontier motif encapsulates the tension of the contested zones of conflict and cooperation apparent in certain fundamental aspects of political theory.

Of course the above examples are not comprehensive accounts of their respective areas of concern; rather, they serve to indicate the incidence, tonal characteristics and purpose of border and frontier motifs in the language of political theory. Naturally, further reading uncovers additional metaphorical delineations and complexities. These abridged theoretical examples do, however, clearly show how political theory *can* be read in the context of the mental maps discussed earlier and how such a reading relies upon the language of borders and

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 78.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

frontiers. Given its theoretical basis, it is perhaps unsurprising that political rhetoric commonly relies upon similar descriptive devices.

1.6 The border and frontier motif in Western political rhetoric

Ancient Athenian ideals provide some of the earliest articulations of border and frontier motifs in political rhetoric. For example, in an attempt to encapsulate what is now referred to as the classical ideals of participatory democracy, Pericles (in his famous funeral oration) declared, “we do not say that a man who has no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all”.⁵⁵ This is a strikingly unambiguous articulation of the personal-political frontiers of Athenian democracy.⁵⁶ Those unaligned with the Athenian ideal of politics – an ideal exemplified by the tone of Pericles’ speech – do not belong within the ancient city-state. The border and frontier motif permeates Pericles’ speech as he offers additional accounts of the spatial logic of the Athenian ideal. For example, he explains how Athenians “are free and tolerant in [their] private lives; but in public affairs [they] keep to the law”.⁵⁷ There are, however, other borders and frontiers to which he does not refer, such as those that divided people of citizenship from those deprived of the participatory privileges such a status conferred.

The most distinctive features of the mental map he draws for Athenians is the implicit processes of Othering apparent in his declaration. Political scientist Greg Therborn uses the term the “unifying Other” to describe the manner in which the supposedly opposed behavioural traits and values of social groups beyond the spatial logic of another are used by the latter to rally and consolidate domestic political support or consensus.⁵⁸ This unifying principle relies on the promotion of

⁵⁵ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. R. Warner, Penguin, Ringwood, 1972, p. 147. Although the speech is attributed to Pericles’, many argue Pericles is a figure most likely “worked-up” by the historian Thucydides. See: M. I. Finley, “Introduction”, in Thucydides, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁶ The following two texts offer interesting conceptual accounts of this “insider-outsider” divide: E. Baker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, Dover Publications, New York, 1918, pp. 293-312; and, D. Held, *Models of Democracy*, Second Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 13-20.

⁵⁷ Thucydides, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵⁸ G. Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*, Sage, London, 1995, as quoted in: (eds) O’Dowd & Wilson, *Borders, Nations and States: Frontiers of Sovereignty in the New Europe*, Avebury, Sydney, 1996, p. 3.

the real or imagined threat of external entities beyond the borders of the group within which such a principle is employed. It relies on the identification of irrefutable differences and contrast between social groups.

“Our system of government”, Pericles states, “does not copy the institutions of our neighbours”.⁵⁹ He compares Athens’ “free and tolerant” democracy with the “minority” rule and the “class” based systems of the city-state’s “enemies, Greek or foreign”, arguing that the virtues of Athenians are “unique”.⁶⁰ Discussing the social dimension of the city-state, he tells his fellow citizens, “in questions of general good feeling there is a great contrast between us and most other people”.⁶¹ Pericles does not offer significant detail of the supposedly contrasting practices of others, nor does he specifically stipulate who those others are. Such details are unnecessary. He is preaching to the converted, addressing those citizens who, by engaging in the act of Athenian politics within the city-state’s borders, have a shared understanding of the political conventions and ideals to which Pericles refers.

If brought forward and applied to contemporary political rhetoric, border and frontier motifs can be seen as having a similar, albeit circumstantially different, level of potency. Again, the use of borders and frontiers in processes of Othering are also evident. This is particularly so in relation to the promotion of a perceived accordance between ethnicity and value systems. Nationalism theorist Anthony D. Smith uses the term *ethnocentrism* to describe this phenomenon.⁶² He asserts that some ethnic or national communities are characterised by their openness to “outsiders and external influences”, whilst others, he adds, “are more or less closed”.⁶³ The tension between these open and closed attitudes to “external influences” is, for example, apparent in the post-World War II immigration programs of several Western liberal democracies, such as the USA, Canada, the UK, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. With various levels of conditional “openness”, the economic boom these democracies experienced in the thirty or so years following the war relied significantly on the mass labour

⁵⁹ Thucydides. op. cit., p. 145.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 145-147.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶² A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1999, p. 45.

⁶³ *ibid.*

and specialised ingenuity of Others originally beyond national borders. Despite this prosperity, a “closed” attitude is also evident in some instances, an attitude evident in certain negative perceptions of cultural difference.

To use the Australian experience as a brief example, border and frontier rhetoric has been employed with considerable effectiveness at the federal political level. For instance, in their 2003 text *Dark Victory*, political commentators David Marr and Marian Wilkinson argue that the Federal Coalition, led by Prime Minister John Howard, won the 2001 election on the basis of their employment of the “unifying Other” principle.⁶⁴ Marr and Wilkinson assert that the Howard government utilised the so-called “Tampa incident” to redress their poor standing in pre-election polls and build the support required to retain office. They argue that Howard’s most visible campaign slogan, “we decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they come”, was devised during the immediate aftermath of the *Tampa* incident to inflate the idea of an external threat and implicitly appeal to the anxieties of voters already unsettled as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York.⁶⁵ Journalist Fran Kelly was one of many political commentators who concurred with Marr and Wilkinson’s suggestion that the Howard government’s campaign strategy sought to capitalise on previous efforts Howard had made to develop a spatial logic amongst voters on the basis of the alleged difference between the “values” of Australians and the supposedly “unAustralian” values of asylum seekers.⁶⁶ As the ancient Athenian and contemporary Australian examples indicate, the “unifying Other” principle of border and frontier political rhetoric relies on the expression of real or imagined oppositional values between differing groups. This oppositional characteristic is also apparent in the much of

⁶⁴ See: D. Marr, & M. Wilkinson, *Dark Victory*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 277.

⁶⁶ See: F. Kelly, “Tampa Retrospective”, *7.30 Report* (television program transcript), *ABC Television* (online), <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/s659178.htm>, 2002 (accessed 16 December 2003). The term “unAustralian” erroneously implies that the idea of Australianess is complete and uncontested. Howard’s use of this term could be classified as an *ethnocentric* appeal to those inside Australian borders; an appeal that seeks to link *his* moral perspective with anyone he considers morally worthy to be an Australian. Quite simply, Howard is arguing that those outside Australia’s physical borders are by implication beyond Australia’s moral borders, they are incompatible with his view of Australians and hence they do not belong within the Australian community.

the language used to describe contemporary geopolitical divides; so much so that it could be argued that the language of contemporary border and frontier disputes becomes a frontier symbol itself.

Sociologist Liam O'Dowd and, the previously cited cultural anthropologist, Thomas Wilson argue that "borders are reminders of the past... the product of previous conquests, invasions, population movements or treaties".⁶⁷ They suggest that the term frontier encompasses the zone of "political and cultural contest which stretches away from the borderline".⁶⁸ This description is especially applicable to the highly contested Israel-Palestine border and frontier zone, particularly the West Bank and Gaza regions. In 2002 Israel claimed that threat of "terrorist" incursions (a threat renewed in 2000 with Palestine's invoking of the "*al-Aqsa intifada*") necessitated the construction of a security fence.⁶⁹ In many ways, rather than alleviating hostilities, the "fence" has been the source of increased Israeli-Palestinian tension concerning border integrity and associated territorial, economic, cultural and socio-political problems.⁷⁰ The erection of the fence has triggered considerable debate regarding the classification of its actual function and its symbolic impact. Official Israeli government policy detailing the "concept and guidelines" of the security fence is careful to assert that it is a "line of defence – not a border".⁷¹ U.S. researcher Robin Shulman commented on the highly nuanced language employed by Israeli authorities who, in the planning stages of the security fence, labeled it the "Seam Line Project".⁷² Shulman presents a semantically focussed argument suggesting that the use of the sewing metaphor is an attempt to promote the project as a unifying, rather than divisive,

⁶⁷ L. O'Dowd, & T. M. Wilson, "Frontiers of Sovereignty in the New Europe", in O'Dowd & Wilson, (eds), op. cit., p. 1.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ S. Jeffery, "What is the Conflict About", *The Guardian*, 4 June 2003.

⁷¹ "Concept and Guidelines: A Line of Defence – Not a Border", *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (online), <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/home.asp>, 2004 (accessed 15 January 2004). Aware of Palestinian and, primarily, international sensitivities regarding the nature of the fence and the possible consequences of its construction, the Israeli government has gone to considerable lengths to claim that the fence will merely serve as a "line of defence". It "will not", according to official government statements: "establish a border of any kind; annex any Palestinian lands to Israel; change the legal status of any Palestinians;" or "prevent Palestinians from going about their lives". [*ibid.*]

⁷² R. Shulman, "Tracing Borders", *Frontline World* (online), <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellowws/israel/nfintro.html>, 2002 (accessed 5 January 2004).

act. She argues that the title “refers to stitching that connects – rather than separates – two pieces of a whole”.⁷³ Regardless of Israel’s professed motives for constructing the fence and their attempt to clarify its status, Palestinians have reacted angrily, refuting all of the above assertions and raising a range of additional criticisms.

PLO Executive Committee Member Yasser Abed Rabbo labels the fence a form of ethnic and political segregation. The difference in language and definition compared to that used by the Israelis is also notable. “The Separation Wall”, Abed Rabbo argues, “is in fact a wall that will lead to the creation of an apartheid regime and will turn the Palestinian territories into isolated *Bantustans*”.⁷⁴ Crucially, there are acute differences in the tendentious language employed by both parties. The fence is diametrically presented as either a defensive line or a provocative wall.⁷⁵ It would appear that ultimately, the actual nature and function of the “security fence” is significantly determined by the language used to describe it. Given the fact that much of the debate surrounding the fence is centred upon its definition, it is clear that the language of borders and frontiers can be as divisive as the features it describes.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Y. Abed Rabbo, “Stop The Wall Before It Kills Peace”, *Arab Media Network* (online). <http://ww.w.amin.org/rabbo.htm>, 2003 (accessed 5 January 2004).

Not only could the Israelis use of non-threatening language be perceived as a public relations tactic designed to allay accusations that the fence is a land-grabbing exercise; it may also be viewed as an attempt to show a tacit compliance with international law and avert foreign criticism. Indeed, Israel has been the target of a typically measured level of U.S. ire regarding what they observe to be the fence’s incursion into Palestinian territory. Although stating that the barrier itself does not trouble them, U.S. officials have labelled the sections of the fence that encroach on Palestinian land, particularly within the Gaza region, a “de facto border”. [C. McGreal, “Israel’s Fence Draws Threat of US Sanctions”, *The Guardian*, 6 August 2003.] Indeed, the fence does prevent some Palestinians from accessing significant areas of their internationally recognised territory, effectively functioning as a border and validating U.S. and Palestinian assertions. Equally, as political scientist Amin Saikal observes, despite Israel’s “formal withdrawal” from the Gaza strip, “for all practical purposes”, the area remains “under [Israeli] control”. [A. Saikal, “Israel and the US Fall Into Another Trap of Their Own Making”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 2006.] On a symbolic and practical level, the “fence” does little to allay this fact.

⁷⁵ Despite criticisms, Israel has maintained its policy of supporting alternative (non-“border”) definitions of the fence. It would appear that this policy is, in many ways proving useful for Israel. Shulman illustrates this point through her discussion with Palestinian Authority geographer Khalil Tafakji. “Not calling this fence a border”, says Tafakji, “will trap thousands of Palestinians between countries. Calling it a border will effectively be a unilateral declaration of frontiers.” [Shulman (online), *op. cit.*]

1.7 Conclusion: a map of literal and figurative borders and frontiers

Several key concepts have emerged from this review of theoretical perspectives of borders and frontiers. Early political geography theory provides distinctions between natural and artificial borders and frontiers. Scholars from this field also provide the basis for distinguishing between borders and frontiers in the context of nation states by emphasising that frontiers are environments of change, and borders are linear lines temporarily marking these fluctuations.

Sociological and anthropological perspectives of culture were then canvassed with four key points emerging. It was found that borders and frontiers are, firstly, representative of imagined and lived experience; secondly, they are meaning carrying and meaning making entities; thirdly, they can function as symbols of change and transition personified in an individual or group; and, lastly, that the meaning borders and frontiers hold can be partially explained with mental maps drawn through processes of shared understanding derived through the framework of spatial logic.

The various articulations of the *meaning* of borders and frontiers apparent in the perspectives outlined above are contingent on particular understandings of their representational characteristics. It was found that these characteristics were most commonly expressed metaphorically. This conclusion enabled the use of borders and frontiers as orientating devices in debate to be explored with the aid of the Hertzberg example. The representational properties of borders and frontiers allow metaphorical lines to be drawn between opposing ideas. These oppositional standpoints and the dividing line provide the spatial logic required to create and enable a choice. Rather than clearly delineating between the opposing positions, however, it was found that the provocation to choose (in some instances) only increased a consciousness of the line itself – a point that, as I will show, is not lost on Rushdie.

A consciousness of borders and frontiers permeates the field of political science. The brief examples drawn from Western political theory illustrated the use of border and frontier motifs as markers of the tension between various ideals and structural political contracts. Pericles' expression of the Athenian political ideal also

introduced the typology of border and frontier rhetoric as it is often employed to consolidate values and ideals on the basis of their opposition to the values and ideals of others. The example-based examination of this unifying Other principle as practiced in contemporary Australian electoral politics illustrated the function and potential impact of inclusionary-exclusionary political rhetoric as it is expressed through the oppositional framework of borders and frontiers.

Given the meaning-carrying and meaning-making properties of borders and frontiers, the meaning-*influencing* role of the language used to describe them was proven to be a matter of considerable importance. It is difficult to believe that the Israeli and Palestinian figures cited in the example were describing the same project. The disparities between the realities of the security fence and the opposing perspectives of the barrier revealed an additional sub-stratum of borders and frontiers apparent in the descriptive language employed by both parties. It is an example that starkly illustrates the manner in which an imagined view can impart meaning and indeed, alter the professed meaning of actual borders and frontiers.

I wish to emphasise a difference between the series of fundamental border and frontier concepts and perspectives I have reviewed thus far. The methodology and literary focus of this thesis requires that a working distinction be established between literal and figurative frontiers. Our understanding of borders and frontiers is generally contextualised within two distinct, yet closely intermeshed and generally interdependent, thematic spheres: the literal and the figurative. Literal readings of borders and frontiers have their basis in, what may be described as, real or actual geopolitical representations of limits or divides; for example, physical barriers such as dividing walls, geographical features, nation-state boundaries or codified limits concerning rule of law.

Alternatively, figurative accounts of borders and frontiers are forged through complex and multifarious processes of imagination. This is the context in which, on one level, the meaning of literal borders is interpreted and, on another level, enacted. For example, a figurative view of codified rule of law may be understood as a view concerned with particular ethical questions surrounding the morality of the behavioural delineations such legal limits impose. Figurative

readings are also those concerned with the defining contours of often unquantifiable, endlessly fluctuating factors such as personal identity or notions of cultural, ethnic or socio-economically delineated unity. Frontiers are the regions within which literal and figurative spheres converge in an environment of constant change.

Literal borders are points upon which institutional politics is enacted, as is the case within, for instance, the codified and conventional political transactions that occur within the Australian and Canadian federal systems or, on a multi-state level, the European Union. Political scientist Adrian Leftwich asserts, politics can be perceived, in an expansive manner, as being “at the heart of *all* collective social activity”; present wherever there is “conflict” and “cooperation”.⁷⁶ In line with Leftwich’s permissive definition of politics, borders and frontiers can be similarly viewed as the focal points for a diverse array of political transactions. These orientating “points” are identifiable wherever literal processes of conflict or cooperation occur.

Figurative accounts refer to *concepts* of borders and frontiers; contested concepts with, for instance, a predominately emotional, creative and theoretical dimension. Figurative readings are often distinguished by markedly impressionistic and imaginative language. For instance, nationalism theorist Benedict Anderson employs the terms “imagined community” and “emotional legitimacy” to describe the otherwise intangible frontiers of nationalist or cultural sentiment that intersect literal borders.⁷⁷ Unlike natural or artificial divides, these terms are typically difficult to measure or irrefutably define.

As we have seen, figurative accounts of borders and frontiers also often rely on the border as a metaphorical descriptor of divides – a fact that is testament to their imaginative character. As sociologist and literary theorist Madan Sarup observes, the figurative border metaphor is also regularly employed to describe degrees of difference in, for example, “political or religious viewpoints,

⁷⁶ A. Leftwich, “Politics: People, Resources and Power”, in *What Is Politics? The Activity And Its Study*, (ed.) A. Leftwich, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 163.

⁷⁷ Anderson, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

occupational categories and cultural traditions".⁷⁸ Figurative accounts of borders and frontiers enable the theoretical delineation of these less empirically attuned aspects of socio-political thought and action. The metaphorical and imaginative nature of figurative accounts also highlights the manner in which literature can be viewed as a suitable disseminating device for these often idiosyncratically abstract perspectives.

The highly illustrative, imaginative and adaptive potential of literature is intrinsically attuned to the concept of the figurative, metaphorical view of borders and frontiers. Of course, literature can and does engage literal borders and frontiers; however the use of metaphorical language to describe literal entities can create additional problems. The distinctions between the literal and figurative, or indeed the real and the imagined can be difficult to locate. Similarly, given Donnan and Wilson's argument that people give meaning to borders and frontiers, imparting facets of their own personal boundaries in the act of crossing, we must also consider the borders and frontiers of the writer. The writer inhabits the "spaces and places" of the reader, potentially imparting their personal borders and frontiers in their literary border-crossings, crossings apparent in the reader-writer exchange. These questions, and the greater border and frontier questions concepts engaged up to this point, form the basis the literary spaces and places explored in the next chapter.

⁷⁸ M. Sarup, *Identity. Culture and the Postmodern World*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1996, p. 11.

2

Border Crossings: **Conceptual readings of literary borders and frontiers**

The claim that Rushdie's literary project can be articulated through a methodology based on literal and figurative frontiers requires that the factors that constitute a literary project be explored. This chapter builds upon the border and frontier concepts discussed thus far to offer an overview of the literary theories and concepts necessary to critically engage Rushdie's project. In considering the aims of this thesis and the array of existing critical perspectives of Rushdie's project, two broad areas of interest emerge. First, questions surrounding his authorial position regularly arise, a position most commonly described by the term exile. Secondly, Rushdie's use of diverse literary forms traversing fiction and non-fiction, the characteristics of his authorial voice, and his challenge to particular understandings of literary genres, raise questions concerning the limits and possibilities of literature.

As I indicated earlier, Rushdie describes his writing as existing within a dynamic frontier of spatial "disorientation".¹ How are we to define such an unstable and erratic space? And is the term exile, a term regularly used to describe his authorial position, the most appropriate descriptor? In addressing these questions, I will begin by critically reviewing a range of understandings of exile. This review will incorporate a study of relevant psychological, sociological, and political perspectives of exile designed to establish a working profile of Rushdie's authorial position. Having formed an account of the creative basis of his literary

¹ Rushdie (2002), p. 292.

project, I will then review the characteristics of the literary forms through which this project is executed. The diverse set of challenges Rushdie's writing presents to particular understandings of literary genres suggests that an account of relevant postmodernist literary themes will also be required. Having explored the functional aspects of his literary project, this thesis will have the necessary conceptual basis to engage questions concerning the literary genre and interdisciplinary field of politics and literature presented in chapter three.

2.1 Literature's "border crossings"

The spatial logic of literature can be mapped in terms of figurative borders and frontiers. Border and frontier motifs permeate a markedly broad array of literary forms including the generally independent and occasionally intermeshed genres of fiction, non-fiction, theory and imaginative written expression. Equally, the process of writing itself is regularly likened to a crossing of frontiers. For example, Australian poet and essayist Fay Zwicky figuratively describes the multi-faceted processes of writing as "border crossings".² In attempting to articulate her motivations to write, Zwicky suggests that her personally perceived outsider status is of primary importance. Significantly, she is not an outsider in the context of national borders – indeed, she is Australian born – however, she does classify herself as an outsider in terms of her creative and intellectual identity.

Zwicky confesses that she identifies with the "fate" of imaginative writers who, as she suggests "suffered multiple humiliation at the hands of the mainstream".³ She introduces a theological dimension to her argument when reviewing Biblical and other literary accounts of the humiliation of Christ, a figure she deems the archetypal "outsider".⁴ "My sympathies", Zwicky states, were "always directed to the noble despised figure of the One who was Different in both life and literature".⁵ Mindful of her spiritual "sympathies", it is interesting to note that Zwicky's "literary heroes" include prominent figures such as Camus, Koestler,

² F. Zwicky, "Border Crossings". in *The Best Australian Essays 2000*, (ed.), P. Craven, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000, pp. 225-238.

³ *ibid.*, p. 232.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

and Orwell.⁶ Despite their respective multi-national travels, these writers, apart from perhaps Koestler, could not exclusively be defined as geopolitically exiled writers; rather, Zwicky seems more inclined to classify them as emotional and imaginative outsiders.

Mindful of the influence of such writers, Zwicky promotes her *own* outsider status as a source of strength and literary inspiration rather than an impediment. “My own writing”, she confesses, “seems to have depended for a long time on remaining adversarial”.⁷ This view could be seen as aligned with the perspectives governing the literary techniques of her heroes. As she suggests, these writers “were inseparable from the apparatus of totalitarianism, concentration camps, Nazism and Stalinism”.⁸ However, regardless of their insider status and despite their immersion in these political and ideological dystopias, through the imaginative impetus and adversarial tone of their writings, the “literary heroes” Zwicky refers to, remained emotionally and imaginatively outside these oppressive political frontiers. This is the nature of the insider-outsider paradigm that characterises imaginative literature of the sort Zwicky discusses. To recognise life’s borders and frontiers – which, all at once, can be complex, basic, contradictory, false and blindingly real – one must sometimes figuratively step outside the frontiers they know and surrender the insider perspective for that of an imaginary outsider, the Other. This is especially the case for a writer. Of course, the border crossings attendant to particular processes of writing are not always figurative.

2.2 Literary exiles: “always the black sheep”?

Innumerable critical profiles of the so-called *exiled* writer have been constructed, yet strangely the features of literary exiles remain hazy and indistinct. Perhaps this is because many of these accounts are either intentionally or unwittingly formulated in a manner designed to rationalise the circumstances of the exile in a way that lends them to convenient categorisation. Additionally, the term exile also implies that the entity in question is beyond or outside of a clearly delineated area.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 234.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

It follows, then, that there is a temptation for some literary theorists to define the exile solely in accordance with their opposition to that area. These approaches neglect both the potential fluidity of frontiers and the similarly amorphous and idiosyncratic characteristics of individual writers and their unique circumstances.

In discussing the concept of the literary exile, it is useful to consider the broader connotations of the term exile. Madan Sarup argues that sweeping references to the trials of “literary” exiles are “archaic” because they isolate the experience of exile from the “modern, political” reality for those “uncountable masses... exiled by poverty, colonialism and war”.⁹ Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that in an attempt to rationalise only one of the elusive processes governing the great humanising properties of literature, the glaring realities of so much of the human experience that literature seeks to illuminate are often overlooked. Sarup makes some interesting observations of the broader conditions of exile that could, at least in a secondary sense, be applied to writers:

All migrants, refugees, exiles come to the frontier. The frontier does not merely close the nation itself, but also immediately opens it to an outside, to other nations. All frontiers, including the frontier of nations, are, at the same time as they are barriers, places of communication and exchange.¹⁰

The literature of exiled writers can be seen as an articulation of this distinct form of “communication and exchange”. The writings of exiled authors are often critiqued within the context of the closed environment a particular writer may have left behind. This is more often than not the case with a writer like, for example, Milan Kundera, who having emigrated from his birthplace Czechoslovakia to France in 1975 is relentlessly subjected to having his subsequent work contextualised by its apparent relationship to his formerly totalitarian homeland. Kundera scrupulously refutes connections of this nature. The “geographical” situations of his novels, Kundera argues, are a matter of aesthetics, *not* politics.¹¹ Rather than accepting the label of exile in a geographic sense, Kundera prefers to suggest that the nature of imaginative writing means that *all* writers are exiles of some sort.

⁹ Sarup, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ J. Elgrably, “Conversations with Milan Kundera”, in *Critical Essays on Milan Kundera*, (ed.) P. Petro, G. K. Hall & Co., New York, 1999, p. 57.

The label of exile can be problematic in that it somehow implies that a writer speaks authoritatively on behalf of or in opposition to his or her entire nation. However, the intensity of “individualism” inherent to the vocation of writing, Kundera adds, means that a writer “can never be a spokesman for any sort of collectivity”.¹² Indeed, the individualist component of writing, he concludes, ensures that “the writer is always the black sheep”.¹³ Despite his high-profile frontier crossing and the undeniable, albeit purposefully ambiguous, political dimension of his novels, Kundera can also be seen as aligned with the view expressed by Zwicky; that is, that his writing renders him an imaginative outsider, rather than a geopolitical exile.

Just as many critics are committed to the idea that all literary émigrés are forever inseparable from the trials and tribulations of their former homelands, the perspectives of writers regarding their *new* surroundings are open to similar critical assumptions. For example, in reviewing *Step Across This Line*, literary critic Richard Elder identifies what he calls a distracting “wince” behind Rushdie’s literary visions, a distraction he links to the author’s apparently inescapable status as “a stranger in a strange land”.¹⁴ Elder seeks to fuse Rushdie’s personal and literary identity by then adding that “for [Rushdie] there would be no land that was not strange”.¹⁵ Elder bases his comments on his belief that Rushdie injects too much of himself into his writing. Indeed, Elder takes this hypothesis so far as to suggest, “Rushdie, of course, is never *not* writing about himself”.¹⁶ It would seem, then, that Rushdie, a self-confessed, “migrant”, is, in Elder’s view, never settled, and thus, never sufficiently qualified to offer an insightful account of, what could

¹² *ibid.* In discussing the topic of exile, Kundera identifies Czech poet and post-1990 Czech president Vaclav Havel as a peculiar kind of creative exile. Whilst an open admirer of Havel’s literary efforts, Kundera feels that his peer’s unambiguous political vigour has seen his literature misappropriated. “A man who devotes himself to political struggle”, Kundera argues in reference to Havel, “is no longer master of a life – his own – that everyone else seeks to appropriate”. [See: M. Kundera, “A Life Like a Work of Art: Homage to Vaclav Havel”, *The New Republic*, Vol. 202, No. 5, 1990, p. 17.] Edward Said has been described in a manner that encapsulates the tone of Kundera’s comments on Havel. U.K. literary commentator Julian Borger argues, Said’s “evocation of his own experience of exile has led many of his readers in the west to see him as the embodiment of the Palestinian tragedy.” See: J. Borger, “Friends Rally to Repulse Attack on Edward Said”. *The Guardian*, 23 August 1999.

¹³ Elgrably, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁴ R. Elder, “The Permeable Frontier”, *New York Times – Book Review*, 13 October 2002, p. 10.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.* [My italics.]

be called, a culturally settled entity.¹⁷ For example, Elder finds a quarrel with Rushdie's essay on English football culture, suggesting that Rushdie's apparently overbearing literary voice, the voice of a "stranger", fails to bridge the cultural distance between his essay's quintessentially English subject matter and "indifferent" U.S. perspectives of the game.¹⁸ Elder explains that his criticisms of Rushdie are proffered "not just because of cultural distance"; rather, it is the layers of estrangement he identifies in the text (between, firstly, Rushdie's technique, secondly, his essay's subject matter, and lastly, his audience) that apparently undermine it.¹⁹ Elder's criticism of Rushdie's style, his apparently imposing voice, is of course entirely acceptable on the basis of authorial technique or as a matter of taste. However, the issue of "cultural distance" is problematic, most notably because Elder chooses to link his criticisms of Rushdie's writing to his assessment of the author's personal circumstances. Elder's depiction of Rushdie as an eternal stranger implies that it is impossible to reconcile the "cultural distance" to which he refers. If we accept Elder's premise, then the question arises: how can the voice of the "stranger", however imposing, be accepted as authoritative? For some, it seems the voice of a stranger is not to be trusted. In accordance with this dismissive view, a strange voice cannot demystify the strange nor give clarity to the ambiguous. It can be an intriguing, comedic, cute, or quaintly "gorgeous" voice, as Elder concedes in relation to Rushdie,²⁰ yet it is forever the voice of the outsider, the Other, whose attempts at authoritative and insightful commentary are to be dismissed as playful misadventures.

Critical accounts of the literary exile, of the sort exemplified above, are not only short-sighted, they cancel each other out by neglecting the vital importance of the space in-between, the unbounded and contested region of communication and exchange that is the frontier. The *open* perspectives of exiled writers are forged at the frontiers, not within the *closed* confines of particular nation states, be they familiar or foreign. Literary exiles should not be crudely categorised as 'outsiders' looking in, nor should they be dismissed as disparate Others. Rather, they should

¹⁷ Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 415.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁹ Elder, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁰ *ibid.*

be examined in the context of change and transition. To view a literary exile in this manner is to imbue the term exile with its full semantic breadth. In accordance with this view it follows then that one's perspective is possibly broadened in a way that allows the reader to accept the invigorating intellectual challenge literary exiles present to the typically staid behavioural dynamics of frontier crossing.

2.3 Frontier crossings: "I am simple. Let me pass"

To be at the frontier and to be creative is to buck the expected norms of frontier communication and exchange. As Rushdie observes, "the creative spirit, of its very nature, resists frontiers and limiting points".²¹ By including this statement I wish to suggest that the at times unwieldy, complex and unfettered "spirit" to which Rushdie refers is perhaps at odds with our unconsciously restricted and muted emotional responses to physical frontiers. For example, observing the behavioural patterns of people crossing customs-controlled national borders, Rushdie suggests, "at the frontier we can't avoid the truth".²² The truth, he argues, is at the "line", the line "at which we must stand until we are allowed to walk across and give our papers to an officer who is entitled to ask us more or less anything."²³ Nowhere, in day-to-day life do individuals willingly surrender themselves to this level of exposure. "Here, at the edge", he suggests, "we submit to scrutiny, to inspection, to judgment".²⁴ At the frontier the inherently complex, unique and sophisticated characteristics of humanity are reduced to their barest form. We must deny the innate complexities of our identity. At the frontier, Rushdie adds, "we must be passive, docile..."

we must present ourselves as simple, as obvious: I am coming home. I am on a business trip. I am visiting my girlfriend. In each case, what we mean when we reduce ourselves to these simple statements is, I'm not anything you need to bother about, really I'm not: not the fellow who voted against the government, not the woman who is looking forward to smoking a little dope with her friends tonight, not the person you fear, whose shoe may be about to explode. I am one-dimensional. Truly. I am simple. Let me pass.²⁵

²¹ Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 274.

²² *ibid.*, p. 412.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

The literary exile is anything but “obvious”, “one-dimensional”, or “simple”. Indeed, the exile is characteristically complex; and, as Zwicky states, the exile can also be adversarial. This goes some way towards explaining the sense of outrage literary exiles generate amongst many critics who may consider themselves the figurative cartographers and moral guardians of particular cultural borders. In the comparative context of this thesis, an account of Edward Said’s experience of exile significantly informs my account of Rushdie’s similarly adversarial position. Said recalls how his early 1970s writings in support of, what he describes as, “the Palestinian cause” exposed him to a significant level of wrath upon his return to the U.S., a nation in which, at that time, he had held a position of academic esteem for over a decade.²⁶ Said recounts the “frequent death threats, acts of vandalism, and abusive behaviour” he and his family experienced as a result of his literary frontier crossing.²⁷ This overt reaction was punctuated by the silence of nearly all of his former peers. By refusing to remain “passive” or “docile” at the figurative frontier, by the very creative impetus of his distinct mode of intellectual enquiry, Said became a source of fear and repulsion; typically not as a result of the intellectual vigour of his work, rather because of the apparent gall of his stance. His position on the frontier was at odds with the staid behavioural conventions of frontier crossings.

There are two flawed rationales behind most personally based criticisms of Said. Firstly, as a writer he is perceived to have transgressed because his work is adversarial, he refused to remain politically neutral regarding his former homeland; and secondly, as a previously welcomed U.S. immigrant he had also transgressed because many seemed to imply his pro-Palestinian stance displayed a lack of assimilatory gratitude to the nation that had so graciously taken him in and educated him. Said, of course, went on to produce a range of critically acclaimed work, not least of all his well known incisive commentary on post-colonial

²⁶ Said (2001), op. cit., p. xiii.

For examples of Said’s writing in relation to the “Palestinian cause” see: E. Said, “Arabs and Jews” *The New York Times*, 14 October 1973; E. Said, “An Open Letter to the Israelis”, *Newsweek International*, 12 December 1974; and, E. Said, “U.S. Policy and the Conflict of Powers in the Middle East”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Winter, 1974.

²⁷ Said (2001), op. cit., p. xiii.

literature, *Orientalism*.²⁸ Yet his high-profile activities at literature's figurative frontiers ensure he remains a target of often highly personalised wrath.

Perhaps through a sense of empathy, Rushdie, a writer regularly labeled a political exile ("a stranger in a strange land") as a result of the *fatwa*, has become a valiant defender of Said. Most notably, Rushdie takes umbrage at reaction to Said's memoirs *Out of Place*. Critic Justus Reid Weiner argues that Said falsified aspects of his Palestinian heritage.²⁹ Rushdie offers evidence to rebuke this accusation, yet his most distinct quarrel with Weiner lies in his belief that the critic's implicit aim was to suggest that the supposed ambiguities of Said's personal circumstances somehow disqualify "him from speaking as a Palestinian".³⁰ Rushdie highlights what he views to be the contradictory facets of Weiner's argument, cynically posing the rhetorical question that "it's okay for Weiner, an American Jew transplanted to Israel, to speak as an Israeli, but not for Said, a Palestinian re-rooted to New York, to speak for Palestine?"³¹ Mindful of comments I expressed earlier concerning "assimilatory gratitude", it is perhaps significant that, as Rushdie adds, "no American paper would publish Said's rebuttals" to Weiner.³² It is evident that the label of political exile – and the level of personal exposure such a label brings – sits uncomfortably with both Rushdie and Said. Whilst they do not necessarily retreat from their respective positions on the creative frontiers, they appear to hold a more affable connection with notions of exile as they apply to the creative dimension of their work rather than the political affectations many seek to attach to their personal lives. As Rushdie argues, the implications of Weiner's form of personal attack reach far beyond the already dire realities of literary inspired vandalism, abuse, ostracism and threats. "When [Said's] enemies set out not merely to give him a bad review, but to destroy him",

²⁸ See: E. Said. *Orientalism*, Penguin, London, 1985.

²⁹ See: J. R. Weiner, "Edward Said and Me", *Middle East Forum* (online), <http://www.meforum.org/article/191>, 2000 (accessed 16 June 2006).

For additional examples of this theologically divergent form of personalised criticism see: I. Warraq, "Debunking Edward Said: Edward Said and the Saidists or Third World Intellectual Terrorism", *Secular Islam* (online), <http://www.secularislam.org/articles/debunking.htm>, 2002 (accessed 16 June 2006).

³⁰ Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 318.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

Rushdie observes, “then there is always more at stake than the mere quotidian of malice of the world of books”.³³ Indeed, there is more at stake, it becomes not just a matter of literary aesthetics. Rather, it is a question of frontier dynamics, notions of exile, and the Othering of those who refuse to be simple or docile at the frontier. The exiled writer, working at the frontiers, is exposed in a manner distinct from the accepted dynamics of both creativity and border crossing. Said was adversarial. In 2000, he famously “threw a rock toward an Israeli guardhouse on the Lebanese border”.³⁴ He rebelled both practically, intellectually and symbolically against the behavioural norms of the frontier. Like Rushdie, the overt nature of Said’s challenge ironically renders him unclassifiable to those who seek to vigorously police these intellectual frontiers. The term exile is regularly employed as a categorising device, yet the experience of exile, by its very nature, resists categorisation. Evidently this is a cause of much consternation for many on both sides of the frontier.

2.4 “Unclassifiable” inhabitants of the frontier

Clearly the category of literary exile is problematic. The writer deemed an exile typically rejects such a label, as Kundera, Rushdie and, to a lesser extent, Said have done. Indeed, the dominant geopolitical connotations of exile can, as Kundera attests, overrun the aesthetic intent of the author. To view a writer solely within the context of geo-political exile is to adopt an absolute, “one-dimensional” perspective of the meaning literal and figurative borders and frontiers simultaneously carry and create.³⁵

In discussing what he observes to be the typically simplistic use of the term exile in literary criticism, literary theorist Terry Eagleton presents a compelling argument for a broader understanding of the term. “It is important”, he states, “not to vulgarise the notions of exile and expatriation to some simple model of the ‘outsider’, with its banal imagery of a fixed ontological gap between isolated artist

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ G. Wright, “World-renowned Scholar Edward Said Dies”, *The Guardian*, 25 September 2003.

³⁵ Rushdie (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 412.

and inauthentic society.”³⁶ Eagleton directs his study of exile towards “twentieth-century English literature”, a period he deems to have been dominated by literary exiles.³⁷ The “most significant writers” of this era, namely “Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats [and] Joyce”, Eagleton observes, were all “foreigners and émigrés”.³⁸ However, in discussing the respective authorial perspectives of these writers, he is careful not to make the mistake of using the terms *exile* and *émigré* as interchangeable descriptors.

Eagleton argues literary criticism has undergone a “metaphorical transformation” and the term exile has outgrown its “literal” geopolitical meaning.³⁹ For Eagleton, “genuine exile [in the context of English literature] now centres on a disorientated, isolatedly traditionalist, ‘underground’ or individualist subculture in English society itself.”⁴⁰ He nominates writers such as “Woolf, Forster, Huxley and early Waugh” as “free-spirits” who exemplify the characteristics of the exiled writer through their use of the “imagery of exile and expatriation”; imagery articulated as “a half-desired, half-regretted spiritual self-distancing from a country which is still in some respects one’s proprietary birthright, but which is temporarily or permanently occupied by aliens”.⁴¹ Eagleton’s depiction of exile goes a considerable way towards expanding its use. To adopt his view is to see “literary exile” as a term to describe the spatial logic of authors whose writing presents implicit mental maps delineating factors such as social mores, values, class, politics and ideology on the basis of the inclusionary-exclusionary symbolism these phenomena hold.

A truly exiled writer is ostracised, not solely as a consequence of their geopolitical biography. Rather, it is a writer’s challenge to the traditionally understood borders and frontiers of creativity, imagination, intellectualism, politics, religion and culture that renders them a stranger. And, as Sarup argues, it is the “unclassifiable” challenge presented by the stranger that is most problematic

³⁶ T. Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1970, p. 219.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 219.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 220.

for many. "A stranger", he adds,

is someone who refuses to remain confined to the 'far away' land or to go away from our own. S/he is physically close while remaining culturally remote. Strangers often seem suspended in the empty space between a tradition which they have already left and the mode of life which stubbornly denies them the right of entry. The stranger blurs a boundary line. The stranger is an anomaly standing between the inside and the outsider, order and chaos, friend and enemy.⁴²

Sarup's comments can be readily applied to the "stranger" and the exile, in both the literary form and its broader, often-circumvented, reference to displaced persons. As Rushdie also suggests, the exile exists "at the edge", blurring the borders.⁴³ They work within the amorphous in-between regions of the frontier, be they real or imagined, literal or figurative. They represent a challenge precisely because they eschew the imposition of limits.

2.5 Rushdie and the "parable of the migrant condition"

How does the account of the exile presented thus far apply to a writer like Rushdie? The term exile, when expanded beyond narrow considerations of a literary figure's geopolitical circumstances, refers to a writer who refuses to be "docile" or "simple, a writer who works "at the edge". The imposition of the *fatwa* denied Rushdie the choice to assume this adversarial perspective on the fringe. For over a decade Rushdie remained "at the edge", not purely by his volition but through necessity. He was no longer one of the type of literary "free spirits" Eagleton describes. The political dimension of exile was thrust upon him. The effect of this enforced exile on his personal life, his safety and the safety of his family, was obviously immense, but what of the effect on his writing? In his 1994 speech to the "International Parliament of Writers", Rushdie seeks to illustrate to his peers the creative dilemma he experienced as a result of the *fatwa*. He does this with the aid of a border and frontier metaphor, which enables him to explain the limiting spatial logic he was forced to endure, a logic mapped not by the writer's unlimited tools of imagination but rather, the crude immovable dictates of a political reality.

⁴² Sarup, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴³ Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 412.

The art of literature requires, as an essential condition, that the writer be free to move between as many countries as he chooses, needing no passport or visa, making what he will of them and himself. We are miners and jewellers, truth-tellers and liars, jesters and commanders, mongrels and bastards, parents and lovers, architects and demolition men. The creative spirit, of its intense nature, resists frontiers and limiting points, denies the authority of censors and taboos. For this reason it all too frequently is treated as an enemy by those mighty or petty potentates who resent the power of art to build pictures of the world which quarrel with, or undermine, their own simpler and less open-hearted views.⁴⁴

Rushdie closes with the aphorism, "it is not art that is weak, but artists who are vulnerable."⁴⁵ So how does he cope with his vulnerability? A writer can choose to go quietly, or to react against his or her situation; Rushdie adopts the latter mode. In doing so he makes no claim to be a pioneer. As he observes, Voltaire's "nervousness of the power of the church, not the state," led him to suggest that it was "advisable for writers to live in close proximity to a frontier, so that if necessary they could hop across it into safety".⁴⁶ However, Rushdie is also aware that the very permeability of frontiers he demands as a writer ironically exposes him to a level of persecutory rage that also defies borders.

"Frontiers will not defend a writer now," Rushdie argues, "not if this new form of terrorism, terrorism by edict and bounty, is allowed to have its day."⁴⁷ Given his awareness of the vulnerability of the artist, Rushdie is forced to confront his persecutors. "This is a battle of wills", he declares. "Religious persecution is never a matter of morality", Rushdie adds, it is "always a question of power."⁴⁸ Looking to rally fellow writers and supporters he explains that "to defeat the modern-day witch burners, it is necessary to show them that our power, too, is great - that our numbers are greater than theirs, and our resolve, too."⁴⁹ Much of his endurance of the pervasive threat of the *fatwa* depended upon this resolve. Of course, Rushdie spoke often about his situation, publicly defending his position and that of other similarly persecuted figures such as the Bangladeshi writer

⁴⁴ Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 274.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 233.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Taslima Nasreen.⁵⁰ He also took precautions recommended for his physical safety, shifting abodes with the regularity and caution of a person in a witness protection program. But most importantly, he continued to write.

Writing in the adversarial manner of the literary exile exposes Rushdie to risks, the risks of critical wrath and even prejudice and personal persecution. Yet much of the strength of his “art” relies on his acceptance of his vulnerability and his failings as an artist.⁵¹ He indirectly reveals this fact in “Out of Kansas”, his essay on the film adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s novel, *The Wizard of Oz*; a film that he claims “made a writer of [him]”.⁵² Discussing the migrant status of the Wizard and Dorothy, who both hail from Kansas, Rushdie recognises aspects of himself in both characters. “Dorothy and the Wizard have adopted opposite strategies for survival in the new, strange land”, Rushdie explains.⁵³ “Dorothy”, he continues, “has been unfailingly polite, careful, courteously ‘small and meek’, whereas the Wizard has been fire and smoke, bravado and bombast, and has hustled his way to the top – floated there, so to speak, on a current of his own hot air.”⁵⁴ For Rushdie, neither approach is entirely successful. As he observes, “Dorothy learns that meekness isn’t enough, and the Wizard – as his balloon gets the better of him for a second time – that his command of hot air isn’t all it should be.”⁵⁵ Reflecting on these fictional dilemmas, Rushdie remarks, “it’s hard for a migrant like myself not to see in those shifting destinies a parable of the migrant condition.”⁵⁶ Although Rushdie’s comments are directed to the migrant condition, they can also be extended to encompass the writer’s condition.

Like the Wizard, the imaginative writer seeks to eschew “meekness” and take flight. This is the very longing which Rushdie claims the film stirred in him. Similarly, this type of writer’s “bravado” is also evident in his previously cited comments on the “essential condition” of the “art of literature”, the condition that demands the “writer be free” to take flight. But these urges can “get the better” of

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 275-278.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 274.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

an author. To some extent, *The Satanic Verses* metaphorically became the Wizard's balloon, taking flight in a manner beyond the control and intent of its pilot. Working at the frontier, in the region of flux, the literary exile is able to use this transience and instability as an imaginative tool, but there are risks. Perhaps *that* is the parable of this particular literary condition.

Rushdie is right to suggest that Voltaire's advice regarding the need for a writer to linger at the frontier for the sake of personal protection is no longer applicable. The writer may still work "at the edge", but not solely because he or she seeks sanctuary from persecution. Frontiers no longer afford the writer this level of safety. Rather than being beholden to outmoded understandings of the physical or practical properties of borders and frontiers, the literary exile seeks to attribute a different level of meaning to borders and frontiers. Through the act of freely traversing frontiers, the literary exile draws attention to and questions our understanding of the frontier. And, through the process of literary imagining, the writer becomes part of the "meaning making" properties of borders and frontiers.⁵⁷ However, to argue for the permeability of borders and frontiers is to also be forced to deal with the possible consequences of this level of artistic freedom. This point is not lost on Rushdie, who, as I have shown, describes such consequences as an irreconcilable sense of "unbelonging... a disorientation".⁵⁸ Such is his understanding of exile, an understanding that relies on a consciousness of the multitude of meanings borders and frontiers hold, yet one that stridently rejects a *single* meaning. Literature born through disorientation can also be read as literature rejecting a single meaning.

2.6 Literature: "fancy notions" of genre and intertextuality

If a single meaning is insufficient then what exactly *is* encompassed by the term literature? Eagleton examines this question through his review of a series of fundamental variations in literary theory. He begins by addressing problematic distinctions between, for example, writing based on "fact" or "fiction", and writing that exhibits certain "creative" and "imaginative" form. Eagleton argues that

⁵⁷ Donnan & Wilson, op. cit., p. 4.

⁵⁸ Rushdie (2002) op. cit., p. 294.

attributing the term literature to one particular combination of these factors at the expense of another discounts the propensity for literature to be all or none of these things at once.⁵⁹ He then turns to a “different kind of approach”; specifically, “the definition of the ‘literary’ advanced by the Russian Formalists”.⁶⁰ These early twentieth-century theorists, Eagleton observes, saw “literary language as a set of deviations from a norm, a kind of linguistic violence: a ‘special’ kind of language, in contrast to the ‘ordinary’ language we commonly use.”⁶¹ He is careful to point out that the Formalists “were not out to define ‘literature’, but ‘literariness’ – special uses of language, which could be found in literary texts but also in many places outside them”.⁶² Eagleton defines this as an understanding of literariness based on “estrangement”.⁶³ The Formalists, he argues, “presumed that ‘making strange’ was the essence of the literary”.⁶⁴ While recognising that the “estrangement case” may be a suitable way to describe, for instance, “literature as *poetry*”, Eagleton identifies a series of limitations in the Formalist approach.⁶⁵ Not least of all, he observes that estrangement requires that there exists an “idea that there is a single ‘normal’ language”, a language unequivocally accepted as normal.⁶⁶ Put simply, he states, “one person’s norm may be another’s deviation”.⁶⁷ Rushdie illustrates Eagleton’s point in what could be called his own experience of literary estrangement.

Rushdie identifies possible cultural estrangements of language and meaning that occur in *The Wizard of Oz*, a film he describes as his “very first *literary* influence”.⁶⁸ For example, when Glinda descends into “Munchkinland in her magic bubble”, Dorothy is visibly stunned by the “high speed and oddity of local transport operating in Oz”.⁶⁹ According to Rushdie, this estrangement did not occur to him as a child in Bombay viewing the film. “To an Indian audience”, he argues, “Glinda was arriving exactly as a God should arrive: *ex machina*, out of her

⁵⁹ T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 5. [my italics]

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Rushdie (2002) *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

divine machine".⁷⁰ As he later discusses, he attempted to create similar types of transcultural and intertextual double-meaning in his novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Indeed, when Haroun, the novel's young protagonist remarks that "too many fancy notions are turning out to be true", he is not referring to his outlandish friends the "pale blue" Water Genie and the "Imaginary Flying Organism" Butt the Hoopee.⁷¹ He interacts almost nonchalantly with these bizarre creatures. Haroun's comments are directed at the "fancy notion" that the world seemed to be running out of fanciful stories. How "strange" it would be, Haroun and the Hoopee thought, if "storybook things weren't everywhere to be found".⁷² Rushdie's understanding of literature is, of course, not only concerned with intertextual references to film imagery or the inversion and estrangement of meaning and symbols across cultural frontiers.

In discussing the literary inspiration he claims to derive from film, Rushdie states, "the world of books has become a severely categorised and demarcated place".⁷³ Rushdie is talking about the manner in which he conceived *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* with the consciousness that "children's fiction" is in his assessment often detrimentally viewed as a literary "ghetto... subdivided into writing for different age groups".⁷⁴ Movies, he argues, "have regularly risen above such categorising".⁷⁵ In many ways, postmodernist literature can be seen as an argument against categorisation. Indeed, the postmodernist characteristics many critics ascribe to Rushdie's literary project acknowledge his implicit proffering of this type of argument or challenge.

2.7 "Points of departure": the challenge of postmodernism

In seeking to explain "what precisely... is being challenged by postmodernism", literary theorist Linda Hutcheon highlights the manner in which postmodernism

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ S. Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Granta, Ringwood, 1991, pp. 55-79.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁷³ Rushdie (2002) *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

questions categorisation.⁷⁶ Hutcheon argues that much of the “contemporary debate about the margins and the boundaries of social and artistic conventions... is the result of typically postmodern transgressing of previously accepted limits: those of particular arts, of genres, of art itself”.⁷⁷ Rushdie’s commentary on certain challenging aspects of his literary technique (for example, his literary use of filmic imagery) indicates that he is aware that he may be challenging “previously accepted limits”. Indeed, a writer’s willingness to openly discuss (and even self-critique) his or her technique in the manner that Rushdie chooses can in itself be seen as a challenge to genres or authorial conventions that previously discouraged such a practice. The adage that art, once discussed, ceases to be “art” comes to mind here. Hutcheon is right to suggest that the term postmodernism broadly describes a challenge to limits, a challenge to figurative borders and frontiers. The nature of this challenge is of course extremely varied depending on the literary media and numerous relational factors. Hutcheon’s account of postmodernism encapsulates many established broad-scale perspectives of the term. It is a way of *seeing* postmodernism, rather than restrictive attempt to define it. There are, however, many ways of seeing.

Literary theorist Ricardo Quinones chooses to examine the effects of the challenges presented by a series of literary periods. His view is aligned with the notion that each literary period generally rises in conflict with the earlier period. Through these processes of challenge or conflict, Quinones identifies,

points of departure, initiating conditions; points of return, arresting conditions, the end of a movement – these are the means of delimiting a phenomenon as complex as a literary movement. Between these termini, the great literary movements undergo an evolution, with phases of development... We must see not only that one phase follows another, but the ways in which one phase actually derives from the preceding.⁷⁸

Quinones employs this methodology to form an account of literary modernism. He does this through a series of comparative discourses with other literary movements, most prominently realism. As I aim to illustrate, a similar form of

⁷⁶ L. Hutcheon, “Theorising the Postmodern”, in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*. (ed.), K. M. Newton, Second Edition, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1997, p. 275.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ R. J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1985, p. 13.

methodology is useful in tracking the “evolution” of postmodern literature and the trajectory of Rushdie’s literary project. However, there are additional complexities apparent in the postmodern literary movement that must be briefly considered before I proceed.

Literary theorist Patricia Waugh argues that “although ‘Postmodernism’ as a concept has emphatically spilled out of the boundaries of literary critical debate, it still carries with it the idea of ‘telling stories’”.⁷⁹ This is the “idea” of postmodernism that Rushdie’s literary project “carries”, it is an idea clearly expressed in his interpretation of the novel. However, the postmodern novel is by nature a complex and multi-faceted form, one that also challenges the manner in which stories are told. Although it typically exhibits certain characteristics regarding form and structure, it is not necessarily impaired nor constrained by these highly interpretive and malleable parameters. Indeed, a novel’s quality – its artistic substance, its aesthetic value, and its clarity of purpose – is often judged in accordance with its ability to challenge and deconstruct previously accepted understandings of form and structure. It is precisely because of its multi-faceted nature that the postmodern novel does not lend itself to what may crudely be called single points; or indeed, a political point. To plainly ask, “what is the point?” of a particular novel is to implicitly close one’s mind as to the unrestrained possibilities of literature. A series of complex and often ambiguous structural features or “signs” within postmodern literature make this singular view untenable.

2.8 “I do not yet know exactly what postmodernism is”

In suggesting that a postmodern novel does not offer a “single point”, it is also crucial to note that the postmodern literary form itself cannot be surmised in a singular or one-dimensional fashion. Not dissimilar to the contested nature of borders and frontiers, I want to emphasise that I am aware that postmodernism is also a highly contested term. Indeed, I wish to argue that although certain structural features of fictional writing can be identified as exemplifying particular aspects of the postmodern form, it is precisely the unquantifiable blend of these

⁷⁹ P. Waugh, “Introduction”, in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Waugh P. (ed.), Arnold, Sydney, 1992, p. 1.

features that enables some texts to be labelled as postmodern. This is a point not lost on Umberto Eco, a writer who has regularly been described as an exponent of the postmodern form. Despite his often challenging use of symbols, imagery, narrative structure and style he acknowledges the complexities of the postmodern form by valiantly declaring, “I do not yet know exactly what postmodernism is”.⁸⁰ He does, however, conditionally concede that some of the constitutive factors detailed above are characteristic features of postmodernist literature; features such as “symbolism”, “metanarrative” and “style”.⁸¹ Eco’s view is one that accepts the contested nature of postmodernism. He does not seek to categorise this complex and sophisticated literary genre in a regressive and restrictive manner. This is a view with which I am also firmly aligned.⁸² The following examples utilise Quinones “point of departure” methodology to offer an account of the fundamental postmodernist features of symbolism, metanarrative and style to which Eco refers. The concept engaged in each of these examples is then applied to comparable features evident in Rushdie’s literary project.

2.9 Symbolism as a postmodernist “point of departure”

The earliest examples of postmodernist techniques are, in many instances, understood as such precisely because they directly challenged formerly traditional notions that a work of literature’s worth be judged, for instance, in accordance with its technical ability to merely relate a tale, a singular message or all-encompassing point. For example, certain aspects of U.S. writer Kate Chopin’s 1899 novel *The Awakening* can be seen as having a richly symbolic basis. Chopin employs a complex structure of apparently oppositional thematic environments that primarily serve to raise questions regarding the nature of self rather than the differing character of those environments. She depicts the text’s protagonist, Edna

⁸⁰ E. Eco, *On Literature*. Secker & Warburg, London, 2005, p. 212.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Whilst I do periodically employ the terms “the postmodern novel” and “the postmodern literary form”, like Eco, I do not wish to prescriptively suggest that one particular amalgam or arrangement of the above-mentioned “characteristic features” succinctly constitutes postmodern literature. Nor do I discount the possibility that additional features, not referred to above, may also be encompassed by the postmodern moniker. Rather, I use the term postmodernism cautiously wherever I recognise these “features” as being, to varying degrees, apparent in particular literary examples critically engaged throughout the course of this thesis.

Pontellier, as an emotionally wrought woman striving to articulate her spiritual self in the frontier 'space' between two opposing worlds. She oscillates between the relaxed "Creole" summer realm of "freedom and expression, where there is no weight of darkness... [and] no shadows" and the opposing world of New Orleans, the "conventional" domain of civil society, where she is treated as a "charming" and "scrupulously neat... valuable possession".⁸³ These readily discernable and at times imposing symbolic oppositions between the text's physical environments do not, however, dominate the story. It is the unarticulated difference between these two environments that acutely serves to illustrate the irreconcilability of the space in-between - the "unlimited" space of "a thousand emotions" in which Edna is immersed.⁸⁴ In Chopin's text we see how symbolic borders and frontiers permeate the contemporary novel, yet characteristically they are not employed as limiting devices. Rather borders and frontiers typically serve as markers - sometimes contradictory, sometimes clear and progressive - of a particular protagonist's emotional state.

Eco argues that the "symbol" within the context of Western literature is understood as symbolic because it "refers to a reality that cannot be expressed with words".⁸⁵ This is precisely what Chopin achieves in *The Awakening*. Indeed, it is Edna's inability to express the "reality" of her emotions that imbues the text's symbols with a heightened level of meaning. Perhaps Chopin's novel may not be considered as being wholly aligned with many other characteristic features of postmodern literature. It does not, for example, have the ambiguity or complexity of narrative voice regularly associated with the postmodern form; it does, however, exemplify the beginnings of a departure from traditional realist literary forms through its concerted use of symbols and imagery.

2.10 Symbolism in Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* Rushdie employs "city" and "village" symbols of India to impart a similar form of emotional and spatial imagery. The journey into

⁸³ K. Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986, pp. 53-99.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸⁵ Eco, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

rural India is not measured by distance; rather, Rushdie suggests, “to journey” into “the backlands... was to travel back in time over a thousand years”.⁸⁶ From city to country, he observes, “reality shifted”.⁸⁷ Rural India held “the eternal fixities of caste and faith, gender and class, landowner and sharecropper and bonded labourer and serf.”⁸⁸ The city, on the other hand, was erratic and volatile, “crowded” with “rumours”, “fraud”, and “hysteria”.⁸⁹ These shifting realities are personified in the character Rai, who seeks to reclaim emotional stability through a “journey into the heart” of the Indian “backlands” yet is compelled to join in the “hysteria” of Bombay, and by a contagious form of extension, London and New York.⁹⁰ Indeed, an overarching form of symbolic spatial logic is thematically presented throughout the novel, a logic that dictates that characters unable to meaningfully articulate and resolve their emotional connection to a place figuratively “fly off into space”.⁹¹ Through its symbolic language, Rushdie’s text illustrates how contemporary culture’s shifting realities (or spaces) figuratively collide “at the edge”, shaking the ground beneath our feet and threatening to swallow us up.

2.11 Metanarrative as a postmodern “point of departure”

Border and frontier themes dominate a range of innovative literary forms exhibiting postmodernist characteristics. However, these themes do not necessarily constrain nor direct the potential symbolic impact of these texts. Again, the reader may be best disposed to look upon these thematic delineations as sophisticated orientating devices. Borders and frontiers are generally implied in the postmodern novel rather than imposed. For instance, this structural feature is evident in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, a text that upon its publication marked a significant departure from earlier novel forms. In many ways, Conrad’s text is an attempt to break free of the formulaic boundaries of realist literature. The most recognisable

⁸⁶ S. Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Vintage, London, 1999, p. 238.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 230-238.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 239.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 164.

feature of this departure is the relatively radical narrative structure of the text.

The narrative structure of *Heart of Darkness* is built around a multifaceted narrative that shifts through fragmented reflections and an anonymous narrator who reports the story as related to him by Marlow, the text's protagonist. The reader is presented with a *polyphonic* (multi-voiced) account of Marlow's literal and figurative journey beyond his known environment and indeed, his own personal boundaries into a dark and confronting emotional frontier. Again, symbols (the uncharted river - the unconscious mind) and imagery (dark - light) are employed as prominent structural devices; however, it is the nature of the text's narrative structure that presents the most telling challenge to traditional literary practices. Rather than being a device solely for the relating of the plot, the narrative is foregrounded in a manner that potentially provokes the reader to question the way in which the story is told.

Eco describes the metanarrative process as "a reflection that the text carries out on itself and its own nature".⁹² It is, he observes, often characterised by "the intrusion of the authorial voice reflecting on what it is narrating".⁹³ Metanarrative is a contested term that refers to a broader view of narration in which it is permissively understood as a sophisticated and multi-faceted form of expression rather than a mere technique or functional apparatus for the telling of a story. That is to say, the narrative is no less important than the story. This broader view can be applied to *Heart of Darkness*. The text's multi-voiced narrative allows for an equally multi-faceted reading. This signified a marked departure from the conventions of the traditional form.

Literary theorist Paul Cobley pinpoints the crux of this shift away from earlier modes of narrative structure. According to Cobley, literature of, for example, the "classic realist" mould is generally characterised by singularly

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 213.

⁹³ *ibid.*

Eco, however, is careful to add that metanarrative is not an entirely new technique. He uses Homer's, self-reflective, "Sing, Muse..." to illustrate his point. I would argue that Thespian "me thinks" asides could also be understood as examples of multi-voiced, self-reflective narrative. However, as Eco admits, "in the modern novel [a form I have referred to as postmodern] metanarrative strategy is present with greater insistence". *ibid.*

“omniscient” and, at times, “intrusive” styles of narration.⁹⁴ As Copley asserts, omniscient narration is distinguished by “the narrator’s godlike ability to go everywhere and to possess the power and control that derives from unlimited knowledge”.⁹⁵ The omniscient narrator, Copley states, “is not a character in the narrative”.⁹⁶ This type of narrator stands apart from the story and accordingly can limit and control all aspects of the tale. As a sub-category of omniscient narration, intrusive narration, Copley observes, was most pronounced in “nineteenth-century realism”, the period immediately preceding *Heart of Darkness*.⁹⁷ Copley suggests that intrusive narration is reminiscent of traditional forms of “oral” narration in which the intrusive narrator may begin a tale with phrases such as: “Once upon a time” or, “I want to tell you a story”.⁹⁸ Conrad’s narrative technique is significant, not solely because it attempts to eschew the narrative styles of classic realism; rather its importance lies in the fact that he chooses not to be limited by these categories.

Heart of Darkness differs from traditional modes of narration in that the nature of authorial voice can be questioned. For example, distinct parallels can be drawn between Marlow’s journey and Conrad’s own experiences on a river-steamer in the Belgian Congo.⁹⁹ In accordance with the multifaceted perspectives of metanarrative, the reader may be disposed to implicitly hear Conrad’s impassioned voice throughout the novel. Conrad viewed the Belgians’ imperialistic incursion into the Congo as “the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience”.¹⁰⁰ Many sections of the text’s narration echo these sentiments. “If anybody has ever struggled with a soul,” Marlow pleads when contemplating Kurtz’s “disfigured” conscience, “I am the man”.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Marlow’s comments concerning imperialism offer evidence of

⁹⁴ P. Copley, *Narrative*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 103-108.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 108

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

According to Copley, nineteenth-century author George Eliot exemplifies the “omniscient” and “intrusive” narrative techniques he refers to. See: G. Eliot (psued. of Mary A. Evans), *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1982.

⁹⁹ This type of narrative interpretation is often referred to as a psychoanalytical or psycho-biographical reading.

¹⁰⁰ J. Conrad, *Last Essays*, J. M. Dent, London, 1926, p. 25., as cited by: P. O’Prey, “Introduction” in *Heart of Darkness*, J. Conrad, Penguin, Ringwood, 1983, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ Conrad, (1983) *op. cit.*, p. 108.

possible further parallels with Conrad's personal views. It is nothing but "robbery with violence," Marlow states, "aggravated murder on a great scale".¹⁰² Of course, the existence of an author-protagonist link between these convergent opinions is not necessarily a given.¹⁰³ As Cobley asserts, there are no "steadfast" rules or conventions regarding "postmodern narratives".¹⁰⁴ Nor should rules or conventions be sought. Postmodern literature raises questions as to the nature of authorial voice; it does not, by its very nature, offer answers. It introduces the propensity for overt social, moral and political comment. It does so without always delineating the source of such comments. Indeed, as I intend to show in the latter stages of this chapter, it is the ability of this form of comment to be made through complex metanarrative techniques that allows particular postmodern texts to be classed, on this structural level, as political.

2.12 Metanarrative in Rushdie's *Shame*

Of his oeuvre to date, Rushdie's 1983 novel *Shame*, a text that has been described as a "pitch-black comedy of public life and historical perspectives",¹⁰⁵ offers perhaps the most intensive example of Rushdie's adaptation of metanarrative technique. The text's overtly polyphonic voices direct the reader through a series of distinctive narrative styles and perspectives. We encounter passages of candid authorial self-reflection, in which for example, Rushdie discusses the challenges of constructing the story. "Realism can break a writer's heart", he declares, when he momentarily deviates from the tale to describe the intricacies of its telling.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, when introducing a character early in the text, he pauses, sharing his reservations with the reader: "I'm wondering how to best describe Bilquis."¹⁰⁷ At another juncture in the text, he suddenly drops the guise of objective narrator to save one of the characters embarrassment. "Out of pity for Omar Khayyam

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰³ I discuss this link in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁴ Cobley, *op. cit.*, p. 101 (footnote: 1).

It should be noted that the ambiguities of metanarratives can provoke a response that Cobley refers to as the "perceived crisis of representation". [*ibid.*, p. 239]

¹⁰⁵ An extract of a review published in *The Times*, as reprinted on the cover of: Rushdie (1995), *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Rushdie (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 69

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 67.

Shakil", Rushdie states, "to spare, let us say, his blushes – I shall not describe the scene... he has been bounced in enough dirt for the moment."¹⁰⁸ Rushdie moves freely through these overt reminders of the dictates of the author's pen, into a series of additional perspectives.

Early in the text the "dear reader" is given a glimpse of certain "real-life" political and social inequities Rushdie claims he would "have to put in" were his a novel of the strictly "realistic" genre.¹⁰⁹ "How much real-life material", Rushdie states, "would become compulsory!"¹¹⁰ Should he include an account of the "Deputy Speaker who was killed in the National Assembly when the furniture was flung at him by elected representatives", or mention the "Sind Club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading 'Women and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point'?"¹¹¹ Having made his point Rushdie leaves these questions unresolved and re-enters a more traditional narrative voice, a voice that is conscious of the dictates of fictional time. "I must get back to my fairy-story," he states, "because things have been happening while I've been talking too much".¹¹² Rushdie's use of metanarrative in *Shame* attends to the disjointed longing he confesses to feel for Pakistan. He reveals that his own experience of the nation means that if he is to remain true to his perspective he is "forced to reflect" Pakistan as he has "learned it", as "a world in fragments of broken mirrors".¹¹³ His narrative voices show fidelity not only to his own crisis, but also to the crises that inhabit the personal, political, historical and spiritual dimensions of the story he seeks to relate.

2.13 Style as a postmodern "point of departure"

Just as complex symbols and sophisticated narrative structures are sometimes recognised as prominent features of the postmodern form, seemingly plain and unsophisticated structure and language can also be employed to convey a conversely complex and challenging set of questions. This deceptively simplistic

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 69.

approach is in itself a challenge to traditionally recognised understandings of literary style. As Eco observes, in the traditional sense, “style” is viewed as “a way of writing dictated by rules, usually very prescriptive rules” that rely on a “close adherence to models”.¹¹⁴ Whilst resisting such rigid forms of classification, I would suggest that postmodernist style, however, seems more aligned with, what Eco calls, “style that goes against the rules”.¹¹⁵ Postmodern style is typically recognised as postmodern in view of its various transgressions at the frontiers of traditional style.

While it is impossible to attempt to cover every aspect of postmodern style, I wish to offer one, somewhat pioneering, example. As a consequence of its deceptively simple and uncluttered approach to style, Albert Camus’s *The Outsider* can be seen as a critically lauded example of the rejection of the supposed “rules” of style. Character portrayal becomes central to the greater stylistic aims of Camus’ text.¹¹⁶ As Camus describes it, the text’s “hero”, Meursault, is not a “reject”, however, his refusal to “hide his feelings” renders him “an outsider to the society in which he lives”.¹¹⁷ His refusal to “lie” under any circumstances, however mundane or dire, sees him alienated. Meursault’s unwillingness to “play the game” means that he exists “on the fringe” of society’s frontiers.¹¹⁸ His truthful expression of “annoyance” at the consequences of his actions, rather than a false expression of feigned sorrow, results in an otherwise unremarkable man being pushed beyond the borders of socially acceptable behaviour.¹¹⁹ Meursault’s existentialist dilemma cannot, however, be cited as the sole message, moralistic revelation or “point” of Camus’s text. Despite his superficially simple and uncluttered style, the socio-political terrain that Camus investigates is in reality broad and sophisticated; it is not merely restricted to the immediate circumstances of Meursault’s downfall. Rather, Camus could be seen as using Meursault’s story as a vehicle through which he is able to question the broader dynamics of society

¹¹⁴ Eco, op. cit., p. 161.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Eco observes that character portrayal, “as a way of giving form” to particular ideas, can be viewed as a significant component of “the realm of style”. *ibid.*, p. 163.

¹¹⁷ A. Camus, “Afterword”, in *The Outsider*, A. Camus, Penguin, Ringwood, 1983, pp. 118-119.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 118.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 119.

and the individual. It is postmodernism's challenge to style that enables the posing of such questions.

The postmodern novel does not have a single point. It does not offer answers. As Kundera asserts, the "wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything".¹²⁰ This is not to say that other literary movements do not have the propensity or ability to "question"; however, the postmodern novel works towards the level of "wisdom" Kundera describes through the structural and thematic employment of a non-prescriptive range and combination of literary tropes. A novel's *signs* – its deliberative use of symbols and imagery, the employment of purposefully stylised structure and, as Cobley suggests, the multiple voices of narrative –

are not just a matter of artistic preference which may be analysed by means of a facile academic exercise. Signs are not to be considered as self-enclosed but as operating in a dialogue which is itself necessarily a site of contest or negotiation.¹²¹

Again, we are confronted with the idea that literary frontiers are zones of conflict and cooperation. Postmodern literature exists on these figurative frontiers. The questions the novel poses need not, and cannot be resolved with the closing of the book. The postmodern novel does not require linearity or closure. In questioning the novel, the reader potentially opens up a world of analytical possibilities that reach far beyond the act of reading.

Literature's world of possibilities is impossible to quantify or restrain with the imposition of rigid definitions. The most insightful way to map the figurative borders and frontiers of the postmodern novel is not to seek resolution or absolutes; rather, as Kundera urges, the reader defines these boundaries through the questions the novel inspires. This is the inspiration I seek to locate in the nominated Rushdie texts, *Fury* in particular. Of course, given the broader complexities of style, it is not a matter that can be illustrated, at this point of the thesis, with an encapsulating example. It is an overarching postmodern facet of

¹²⁰ P. Roth, "Afterword: A Talk with the Author by Philip Roth", in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, M. Kundera, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986, p. 237.

¹²¹ Cobley, op. cit., p. 107.

Rushdie's literary project that will be addressed throughout the remainder of this study and directly assessed in the thesis conclusion.

2.14 Conclusion: "literature is made at the frontier"

"Literature", Rushdie states, "is made at the frontier between the self and the world, and in the act of creation", he adds, "that frontier softens, becomes permeable, [allowing] the world to flow into the artist and the artist to flow into the world."¹²² This chapter has focussed on constructing a way to understand the "frontier" Rushdie speaks of. Through reviewing a series of literary theories and concepts concerning firstly, the spatial logic of Rushdie's authorial perspective and, secondly, the structural characteristics of his literary project, I have illustrated the process through which "the act" of creating literature in the manner Rushdie describes can be described through particular understandings of exile as applied to the "permeable" space between "the artist" and "the world". My subsequent account of the postmodernism form was designed to explain the fundamentals of the literary structures that enable the distinctive type of "flow" he describes.

Rushdie's claim that his writing is developed from, and exists within a space of "disorientation" was analysed in the context of a broad strand of literary theory concerned with the notion of exile. Analyses of several accounts of the literary exile were presented that in various ways challenged the idea that exile be classified solely in accordance with a writer's geopolitical circumstances. The notion of exile based on *figurative*, rather than literal borders and frontiers was countenanced. This included a review of literature born through a non-geographically derived sense of exile on the part of the author. Key characteristics of this authorial sensibility were identified and explained through a discussion of particular literary techniques practiced by figures such as Rushdie, Zwicky, Kundera, Said and Sarup. An idea of literary exile was explored that sought to explain exile as it is evident in, for example, an author's adversarial response to dominant socio-political conditions, or their imaginative, humanist articulation of the personal effects of such conditions.

¹²² Rushdie (1992), op. cit., p. 427.

Sarup's observations concerning the realities of exile for the great masses of people who experience the dislocating and fragmenting effects of forced migration were employed to illustrate the possible shortcomings of adopting a one-dimensional understanding of this complex term. He highlights the fact that the experience of exile is intensely felt by individuals in innumerable ways, as well as related through particular types of literature. Similarly, Rushdie's comments concerning the psychology and behavioural conventions of the act of crossing literal borders offer another view of the additional implications of exile, one in which we are ironically compelled to suppress our individuality and appear one-dimensional. The literary exile refuses to abide by similarly one-dimensional conventions regarding the form and structure of literature, thus presenting a challenge to these conventions.

Using the border crossing metaphor, particular characteristics of postmodern literature were approached as points of departure, in the context of the challenge presented to the figurative borders and frontiers of previous literary movements. This account openly accepted postmodernism as a conditionally contested and highly interpretive term; choosing to examine a series of postmodernist techniques relating to symbols, metanarrative and style identified as being central to Rushdie's literary project.

The following chapter maintains the border and frontier paradigm established thus far, utilising the literary concepts engaged in this chapter to examine the idiosyncratic aspects of Rushdie's technique as evident in his application of the above-mentioned authorial perspectives and literary structures to distinctly political subject matter. The political dimension of his literary project can be seen as an additional challenge to particular literary and, indeed theoretical conventions, a challenge that I seek to explore through the interdisciplinary field of politics and literature.