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"No Room for Messy Humanity":
Identity processes at the frontiers of the "integrated global economy"

In the previous chapter I referred to the character-based structure of the novel as a potentially insightful analytical vehicle for constructing a uniquely humanist and imaginative approach to theoretical questions. *Fury* has this analytical potential. Questions of identity inhabit the text's engagement with various social, cultural, personal and political themes. Indeed, in many ways *Fury* can be approached as a reading of contemporary notions of identity. Through the metanarrative devices of Solanka's observations and his interaction with the text's diverse collection of characters and contemporary events, Rushdie examines a broad range of often competing notions of self, for example: insider-outsider identity, representative identity and identity-difference. Many of the identity related concepts he engages have been the subject of extensive theoretical analysis. This is hardly surprising given the complex and interrelated nature of identity theory and for instance, theoretical accounts of culture, politics, psychology and sociology. Through an examination of a selection of initially broad readings of identity, followed by a progressively focused view of its more nuanced semantic categories, the distinctive aspects of Rushdie's treatment of identity in *Fury* emerge.

In a markedly inclusive vein, sociologist Richard Jenkins attests, "the word 'identity'... embraces a universe of creatures, things and substances which is wider than the limited category of humanity."[1] Indeed, this reading of identity could be

[1] R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 3.

seen as a symbolic, or more precisely representational, account. This is a stratum of identity Rushdie explores extensively in an allegorical manner in *Fury*, particularly through his use of the "Puppet Kings" tale.[2] Importantly, however, the representational dimension of identity, for Rushdie at least, is never completely severed from its human context; it is an extension of the human aspect. Rushdie's literary representations of identity (representations that regularly traverse the earlier detailed "magical realism" trope) are invariably drawn back to their human origins. In its broadest context, this human dimension is shaped through relational processes of comparison. To recognise the manner in which Rushdie renders this process in *Fury*, it is necessary to firstly review the theoretical concept of relational identity.

4.1 Identity negotiated through "two possible relations of comparison"

On a functional level, Jenkins argues identity is a construct formed by "two possible relations of comparison... *similarity*, on the one hand, and *difference*, on the other".[3] If, as Jenkins attests, we accept that identity is a comparative process, it follows, then, that it cannot be understood as a static or unchanging phenomenon. "There is", Jenkins observes, "something active about the word that cannot be ignored".[4] Indeed, it is the active, changing and challenging nature of identity upon which Rushdie focuses significant thematic attention in *Fury*. What then, is the "active" process to which Jenkins refers? In noting the role of similarity in identity, Jenkins is indicating that a degree of association is apparent in the comparative process. As he explains, "things or persons" are associated with "something or someone else (for example, a friend, a hero, a party, or a philosophy)".[5] If the process of similarity is active, the related process of difference must also be understood as active.

Disassociation, the process of eschewing or rejecting that which one feels opposed to or different from, is, as suggested, an equally active process. Just as one may seek to project one's own version of self through varying processes of association, an individual can also, often in remarkable detail, map the contours of

[2] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., pp. 160-168.
[3] Jenkins, op. cit., p. 4.
[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.

his or her own personal boundaries by identifying their difference from others or, indeed, other things and ideals. On what may be regarded as an obvious level, identity-through-difference can occur through an individual's perception of their marked ethnic or racial difference from another individual or group. The process of disassociation can also occur via what may superficially be viewed as comparatively subtle guidelines. However, for many within this paradigm, these seemingly minor differences can appear to be impenetrable barriers. The level of difference, be it marked or subtle, is determined by perspective. Levels of difference are not intrinsic; they are fashioned in accordance with differing positions. This fact is evidenced by an extraordinarily broad range of identity-related manifestations of difference, but perhaps best exemplified through the more subtle variety.

4.2 Identity "distinguished by what it is not"

Sociologist Kathryn Woodward cites an acute reading of the identity-through-difference process in her examination of journalist Michael Ignatieff's report of the views of a Serbian militia during the 1990s Serbian-Croatian conflict. Ignatieff describes how this was "a village war".[6] Prior to the conflict, he adds, both Serb and Croat combatants "all went to school together... some of them worked in the same garage; dated the same girls".[7] However, in the midst of conflict these similarities are discarded. "Every night", Ignatieff continues, "they [would] call each other up on the CB radio and exchange insults - by name", and the following day, they would "go back to trying to kill each other".[8] He goes on to relate the remarkable attitude of a particular Serbian combatant. "The man I'm talking to takes a cigarette packet out of his Khaki jacket", says Ignatieff; "See this?" the man defiantly states, "these are Serbian cigarettes. Over there", he adds, pointing to the Croatian camp, "they smoke Croatian cigarettes".[9] Woodward rightly asserts that, in this instance, "Serbian identity is distinguished by what it is not. To be a Serb",

[6] M. Ignatieff, *The Narcissism of Minor Differences*, Pavis Centre Inaugural Lecture, Milton Keynes, The Open University, 1994, as cited in: K. Woodward, "Concepts of Identity and Difference", in *Identity and Difference*, (ed.), K. Woodward, Sage, London, 1997, p. 8.
[7] ibid.
[8] ibid.
[9] ibid.

she concludes, "is to be 'not a Croat'".[10] Identity achieved through difference or disassociation, Woodward adds, is "relational".[11] This form of identity "relies for its existence on something outside itself".[12] This example acutely illustrates the emotional resonance of relational identity. The fact that Serbians and Croatians exist together in similar cultural circumstances and within shared social networks does not automatically imbue them with a sense of fraternity. Evidently, the fissure of difference, however slight, can trigger a tragically brutal culture of antagonism and identity-affirming hatred. Yet difference alone is not the sole source of this affirmation. Poignantly, the Serbian combatant Ignatieff interviews cites ethnic and social similarity of Croats and Serbs as being, in his view, the most despicable signifier of difference. "Those Croats", he asserts in a derogatory tone, "they think they're better than us.[13] They think they're fancy Europeans... I'll tell you something", he concludes, "we're all just Balkan rubbish".[14] Whilst this example is not intended to somehow succinctly quantify the inescapably complex and multi-faceted question of difference in relation to identity, it does, however, highlight the potentially extreme dynamics of the identity/difference paradigm.

Without engaging in a potentially complex analysis of the Balkan region, it is evident that the distinct and transient nature of the area's cultural schisms, historical conflicts, and the typically volatile, self-interested influence of dominant exterior powers could all be viewed as factors that have contributed to the distinct tenor of Serb-Croat tensions. Yet the nature of the Serb-Croat identity-difference dilemma could not be considered distinct. Indeed, when examined on a personal level, many of the dynamics of this dilemma are apparent in the allegedly most socially, politically and economically advanced regions. This fact is exemplified by a series of extraordinarily violent relational expressions of identity Rushdie explores in *Fury*. However, before directly addressing these matters as they are apparent in the Rushdie's text, I will present a reading of relevant aspects of

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[10] Woodward, op. cit., p. 9.
[11] ibid.
[12] ibid.
[13] Ignatieff, op. cit., p. 8.
[14] ibid.

identity processes characteristic of the contemporary Western liberal-democratic context within which *Fury* is set.

4.3 Identity within the "integrated global economy"

In a study primarily concerned with the alleged "democratic" failings of the "integrated global economy", political scientist Robert Paehlke devotes significant attention to what he perceives to be a related "deficit... at the personal level".[15] He uses the term "integrated global economy", in the first instance, to describe the contemporary process by which "democracy and social progress is maintained".[16] He is reluctant to call this process "globalisation"; "single explanations", he argues, "are of course always too simple".[17] Indeed, the subsequent socio-economic, political and personal complexities he associates with "integration" affirm his rationale. Despite the apparent personal "deficit" associated with the integrated global economy, Paehlke concedes that some "positive benefits" are also apparent.[18] For instance, increased trade, he observes, has brought the benefits of "product diversity" and "economic growth".[19] However, for Paehlke, these benefits have not come without a cost.

The positive assessments Paehlke does offer concerning particular aspects of the integrated global economy are merited in a manner relative to their broader political, social and personal implications. For example, whilst he acknowledges the financial benefits of economic growth, he cannot maintain this positive view when assessing the impact of growth economics on a broader scale. "Politics", he argues, "cannot easily follow economics to this new [conditionally expansionist] scale of operation".[20] Indeed, the integrated global economy mode of economics Paehlke describes, requires growth. This is a view also held by political scientist Toby Miller. In discussing particular theories conceived to counter economic determinism, Miller concedes, "the dynamic of growth and newness...

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[15] R. Paehlke, *Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity, and the Global Economy*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2003, p. 229.
[16] ibid., p. vii.
[17] ibid.
[18] ibid., p. viii.
[19] ibid.
[20] ibid.

emblematises capitalism".[21] This growth-based form of economic modelling and practice is often referred to as neoclassical economics. For neoclassicists, economics that does not abide by the growth imperative is irreconcilable; put simply, is not economics.

The neoclassical view increasingly dominates politics within the integrated global economy. As Paehlke argues, "global governance proceeds as if all that mattered were economic considerations".[22] "Most citizens and elected political leaders", he adds, "fear" the integrated global economy in a manner "akin to the fear of flying".[23] As such, Paehlke continues, they are "prepared to leave global governance to invisible, largely economically self-interested, 'pilots' in the closed cockpits of global trade organisations".[24] The result is that political entities and individuals ironically feel disconnected from a process that is promoted as globally binding. The effect of this alienation, Paehlke argues, results in a palpable form of social deterioration. "Social equity", he asserts, "is in retreat worldwide".[25] The dominant neoclassical view of the integrated global economy charts human behaviour within the restrictive framework of the inhuman logic of economic competition. This logic offers little or no account of, for example, unquantifiable notions of social equality. As political economists Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick suggest, neoclassical theory purports that "all individuals seek to maximise their satisfaction from consuming goods and services".[26] It does not countenance individuality, as it is expressed, for example, through behaviour based on trust, altruism, or even idiosyncrasy. In response to, and in accordance with, neoclassicism's seemingly narrow "presumptions about human nature", the course of contemporary politics is charted by consumerist values that conflict with the altruistic, communal and personal dimensions of social relations.[27] Metaphorically, it would appear that no meaningful or coherent social narrative

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[21] T. Miller, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture and the Postmodern Subject*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993, p. 113.
[22] Paehlke, op. cit., p. viii.
[23] ibid., pp. 30-31.
[24] ibid., p. 31.
[25] ibid., p. viii.
[26] R. Wolff & S. Resnick, *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987, p. 7.
[27] ibid.

can be drawn from neoclassicism's prescriptive and undeviating plot.

Just as social decay is thought to flow from the effects of political disassociation and economic alienation, Paehlke suggests that, almost as a matter of consequence, the integrity of the personal sphere is also threatened. For Paehlke, neoclassicism's growth imperative has irrevocably altered the dynamics of contemporary life. As a result, he suggests that the "division" between the formerly "socially distinct spheres" of "public (work) and private (home)" life have been blurred.[28] According to this view, contemporary work life is characterised by job insecurity, increasing hours and a lack of meaning. Paehlke claims that the mental and physical effects of modern employment encroach upon the formerly reprieved private sphere. He argues that a "family-and-community-time deficit of dangerous proportions" is prevalent in "many nations", including the most economically advanced.[29] Factors such as "accelerated competitiveness", increasing "media-fed pressure to consume", and the "hardest-working-nation-takes-all" ethos of "global competition", Paehlke's observes, are just a selection of the many potential triggers for this deficit.[30] He argues that these factors, and others, are readily recognised by "most people" as the source of increasing levels of "stress and depression" and a "decline in community, democratic, and organisational participation".[31] Despite this level of awareness, few seem ready, willing or able to retreat from striving to succeed or "win" in the competitive socio-economic exercise he calls "the game".[32] With the choice to retreat seemingly denied, Paehlke suggests that "illness" becomes a predominant, often indeterminable, trigger for many individuals within the integrated global economy to quit "the game".[33] While, as Paehlke argues, many seem unable to articulate the deeper or core reasons behind their participation in, and resignation from "the game", it is evident that illness functions as, what may be broadly described as, a way out. This is by no means intended to imply that illness is a mere "function" or

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[28] Paehlke, op. cit., p. 242.
[29] ibid., p. 229.
[30] ibid., pp. 229-230.
[31] ibid., p. 229.
[32] ibid.
[33] ibid.

that it is a choice or an excuse. The increasing incidence of societal/work-related diagnosed depression, anxiety and stress suggests that illness is in fact a thoroughly substantiated and demonstrable trigger for retreat.[34] Rushdie examines this "game" exit strategy throughout his thematic treatment of identity in *Fury*. This is particularly so in his construction of Solanka's character trajectory, and to a lesser degree evident in the experiences of many of the text's secondary characters such as Krysztof Waterford-Wajda and Jack Rhinehart. In the following section I analyse an extract from *Fury* to introduce the general tone of Rushdie's engagement with identity and the associated compulsion to retreat from "the game".

4.4 The "secret sadness" of the integrated global economy

"Everyone was here to lose themselves", Rushdie observes of Solanka and New Yorkers in general.[35] "Such was the unarticulated magic of the masses," he continues, "and these days losing himself was just about Professor Solanka's only purpose in life".[36] In the midst of one of several disillusioned emotional peaks, Solanka, the protagonist of Rushdie's novel *Fury*, pleads for self-effacement. He yearns to have his "anger, fear and pain" erased by the "omnivorous" noise of contemporary America.[37] A series of complicated, intensely personal, social and political events edge him towards this point of despair; yet, as Rushdie's broader narration reveals, Solanka is unable to meaningfully quantify or rationalise those events. Ironically, he can only articulate his uniquely *personal* dilemma through the lens of the opposing prism of *impersonality*. As Rushdie describes it, Solanka "felt like a drone, or a worker ant. He felt like one of the shuffling thousands in the old movies of Chaplin and Fritz Lang, the faceless ones doomed to break their bodies on society's wheel while knowledge exercised power over them from on high".[38] Unable to name his pain, Solanka, it would seem, is consequently

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[34] An Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 survey indicated that approximately 20% of adult Australians have experienced a mental illness at some stage in their lives. See: "National Health Survey: Mental Health, Australia (4811.0) - February to November 2001", *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (online), http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/6E563414CCB54124CA256DF100 796A3A?Open, 2005 (accessed 19 October 2005).
[35] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 7.
[36] ibid.
[37] ibid., p. 44.
[38] ibid., p. 45.

unable to know himself. He is unable to extract a self-defining measure of similarity or difference. Neither his environment nor humanity offers him a bearable sense of self or even a version of self. Indeed, as Rushdie describes it, Solanka is "faceless". Retreat appears to be his only option. He too was in New York to lose himself.

Although published two years after *Fury* and without direct reference to Rushdie's 2001 novel, Paehlke's account of "the game" and its potential personal effects has interesting parallels with the narrative Rushdie builds around Solanka. Indeed, Rushdie's construction of Solanka could theoretically be read as a kind of case study of a selection of the broader issues Paehlke discusses. For instance, Solanka's desperate escape from London to New York is depicted as a consequence of a form of career-related mental breakdown - a form of illness that Paehlke would no doubt include as a trigger for retreat from "the game". Rushdie tells how Solanka, upon resigning his post as a "Kings Cambridge" professor, "despaired of the academic life, its narrowness, infighting and ultimate provincialism".[39] For Solanka, the worst characteristics of "the game" are epitomised by the negativity he perceives to be inhibiting post-Thatcherite academia. This feeling of *public* (career/work) disillusionment crosses the work-home frontier becoming a debilitating *personal* "melancholy".[40] The repercussions continue, with Solanka's disaffection leading him towards a crippling and dangerous form of emotional insularity. He isolates himself from his family (to whom his feelings are muted) and feels alienated from his social/work environment (which he views with contemptuous cynicism). As Rushdie relates, Solanka finds himself stricken with a "secret sadness" that he is unable to, or perhaps afraid to articulate. It is a sadness that he instead "sublimate[s] into the public sphere", which, with less emotional cost to himself, he is able to dismiss as "increasingly phoney".[41] Additional correlations between "the game" and *Fury* can also be readily drawn from Solanka's disparaging musings on aspects of the survival of the fittest socio-economic ethos he

[39] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 14.
[40] ibid., p. 7.
[41] ibid.

perceives exists both within his former U.K. life (amongst his family, work and social life) and the life within which, upon fleeing London, he is immersed in New York. Other avenues of identity analysis are open in *Fury*. Indeed, the text offers a range of comparative fictional narratives concerning concepts of identity that can assist in clarifying, explicating and exemplifying related non-fiction accounts of identity theory.

Solanka's plight serves as an illustrative device through which particular contemporary notions of identity can be applied and tested. For example, Rushdie's fictional version of the personal and socio-political consequences of the integrated global economy's "let the fittest survive" mantra can be seen as questioning the implications of this doctrine's challenge to the private-public frontier.[42] Additionally, *Fury* could be understood as a text that in various ways asks how an individual can find meaning within a system that seemingly denies meaningful personal expression. It is a novel that can also be seen as a study of the factors apparently inhibiting the construction of a bearable personal identity within the integrated global economy's impersonal mêlée. Broadly, Rushdie seeks to discover what becomes of personal values amidst a system that seemingly values only profit, efficiency, competitive rigour and economic growth. Rushdie's fictional construction of these questions engages themes that have been extensively explored by a range of contemporary theorists. Indeed, as I have indicated, Paehlke directs significant analysis towards these questions. It is important to note, however, that a range of other theorists offer what could be interpreted as complementary and contrasting accounts of many of the identity related themes Rushdie engages.[43] For example, if the trigger for Solanka's career disengagement and associated identity dilemma is to be rigorously analysed, then the theories of sociologists Richard Sennett, Madan Sarup and, relevant aspects of Paehlke's work provide a suitable theoretical context through which the complexities of Rushdie's account of this dilemma can be illustrated.

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[42] ibid., p. 167.

[43] For example, political scientists John Dunn, Hanna Arendt and Bernard Crick are notable theorists in this field. Refer to: J. Dunn, (ed.) *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, 1992; H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989; & B. Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, Fifth Edition, Continuum, London, 2000.

4.5 "New capitalism" and the "corrosion of character"

Sennett's 1998 text, *The Corrosion of Character* examines what he sees as the personally demoralising plight of the worker (by whom he means the employed of all classes) within the "new capitalism".[44] Sennett uses the term new capitalism in reference to what he claims to be the current social, political and economic dominance of economic rationalism and free-market economic trends within western liberal-democratic labour structures and practices. "New capitalism" is a descriptor that could readily be seen as accounting for many of the socio-economic and political features of contemporary society that, as I have shown, Paehlke defines as constituting the integrated global economy. Noting that the crux of Sennett's thesis is that this system has a corrosive affect on character, it is important to clarify his understanding of "character". Sennett sees character as being the "personal traits which we value in ourselves and for which we seek to be valued by others".[45] He suggests that character, in its traditional sense, refers to one's sense of "ethical value" in relation to themselves and others.[46] As I explain later in this chapter, with particular reference to social identity theory, interpersonal relations (as expressed, for example, through processes that Sennett may describe as the exchange of ethical values) are markedly complex forms of interaction. Mindful of the level of complexity that may be apparent if Sennett's views were to be examined in the context of diverse forms of identity theory, his study of the potentially detrimental effects of changing work practices serves as a useful theoretical backdrop to Rushdie's fictional treatment of the same issue.

Sennett explores the corrosive effects of new capitalism through a series of related areas. The themes of drift, flexibility, risk and failure are presented through examples the author has drawn from what he calls, "concrete experience".[47] Indeed, his exploration of the personal ramifications of new capitalism through his imaginative analysis of the experiences of pseudonymed individuals (workers)

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[44] R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1998, p. 10.
[45] ibid.
[46] ibid.
[47] ibid.

functions in an insightful and penetrating manner, not unlike that of character-driven political literature.

Referring to the generation in employment in the post-War "boom" era prior to new capitalism, Sennett argues that "time" was the "only resource freely available to those at the bottom of society".[48] He extrapolates this argument citing sociologist Max Weber's "iron cage" descriptor.[49] In Sennett's view, Weber's term referred to "a bureaucratic structure which rationalised the use of time",[50] enabling an individual to set and achieve goals relative to their economic and social status. These rationalising structures include, for example, union agreements regarding pay and conditions, regulations ensuring the provision of a government pension and a viable welfare system. In spite of their limiting nature, such systems, Sennett argues, gave people a greater sense of purpose and certainty than is apparent today. These are the provisions of an era he labels as the "stable past"; indeed, he observes this post-war period was the era through which the "new regime" was forged.[51] In his view, however, the current state of apparent economic prosperity has come at the expense of the very individual value systems and social ethics that were crucial to its realisation. Again, this is primarily a reference to what he views as the conflicting and consequently impractical ratios of work/home time and the devaluing of personal and professional commitment.

4.6 Identity and the mantra of change

"Institutional loyalty", Sennett argues, is a thing of the past.[52] In a labour market built on the mantra of change and flexibility, the notion of "long-term" employment, is in his view, no longer viable.[53] To use Marxist terminology, employees are commodities and their labour is, as a matter of course, seen as marketable. For Sennett, this is the most penetrating character corroding force he engages. He questions how a sense of self and a commitment to family and

[48] ibid., p. 15.
[49] ibid.
[50] ibid., p. 16.
[51] ibid., p. 23.
[52] ibid., p. 25.
[53] ibid., pp. 22-24.

community can be maintained when employment practices within the integrated global economy are underpinned by a completely contradictory set of values. In discussing emerging patterns of employee behaviour, Sennett observes that employees learn through experience or grim reality that "detachment and superficial cooperativeness are better armour for dealing with realities than behaviour based on values of loyalty and service".[54] When isolated to the workplace, these factors may readily be seen as potentially damaging yet not completely debilitating.[55] However, when career-based behavioural patterns are transferred to the home - as is increasingly the case when the public-personal frontiers between work and home are blurred - the effect can be markedly detrimental. As Sennett adds, "transposed to the family realm, [the career-based mantra] 'no long term' means keep moving, don't commit yourself and don't sacrifice".[56] This is the antithesis of traditional family-based notions of commitment and sacrifice.

In Sennett's view, the dependable values of the seemingly "stable past" have given way to the so-called contemporary virtues of flexibility and adaptability. As a consequence, formerly fixed notions of public and private identity have been usurped by a system that values change above all else. A person's "emotional" life, Sennett observes, can be deeply affected by this shift.[57] This is a reasonable assumption. Change - whether approached positively, negatively or ambivalently - is in most cases a personally taxing phenomenon. However, mindful of its context, the impact of change of the nature Sennett is referring to can seem unreasonable. As I have suggested, this type of change is typically the result of an unwelcome blurring of the work-home frontier in which the public (or career-based) drive for change increasingly infiltrates the personal sphere. Individuals generally have an expectation of change and a measured capacity to cope with certain shifts. However, Sennett argues that many are ill-equipped to

[54] ibid., p. 25.
[55] For example, most employees are not forced to loyally embrace their workplace's competitive doctrines, yet in rejecting these doctrines an employee may be overlooked for promotion and, in many instances, risk retrenchment. Evidently, in terms of one's career, these doctrines can be limiting.
[56] Sennett, op. cit., p. 25.
[57] ibid.

endure work related change that is adverse to their personal values. His reasoning lies in his comparison of the differing dynamics of past and present public-personal frontiers and an individual's capacity to understand and cope with these frontiers.

In the "stable past", Sennett argues, relatively static systems of state and private industry infrastructure ensured that employed persons (regardless of their socio-economic status) could identify a clear "linear narrative" in their lives.[58] This was possible largely because the differences between public and private values were negligible. The ability to find certainty and purpose in one's career (and, by extension, their personal life) enabled individuals to construct a solid, relatively unassailed sense of self. Regardless of the reality of their circumstances, workers were made to feel in charge of both their vocational and their personal destinies. In Sennett's view, the ethos of the post-war work practices that prevailed throughout this economic "boom" period encouraged and rewarded employee loyalty and long-term commitment. This was the era of the so-called "job-for-life" ideal in which a worker could see the tangible results of their labour and enjoy job security in return for their efforts or (at the most basic level) their compliance.

The contemporary labour market machinations of the integrated global economy have upset the apparent stability of the past. For Sennett, the absence of both a sense of purpose and job security corrodes concepts of personal identity and public (professional) fulfilment. In short, the linear-narrative, and thus a crucial determinant of an individual's sense of self, is undermined. Rushdie places significant emphasis on the identity-related importance of linear narratives in *Fury*.

4.7 "Identity and narrative"

"We [are] our stories", Solanka reflects in the throes of his subjection to the worldly, yet annoyingly unrelenting personal tales of a man he ruefully calls "a talker", the elderly plumber Schlink.[59] Turning his thoughts towards his own predicament, Solanka describes his revelations concerning the importance of personal stories as "the great truth".[60] This is the "truth" we bring "with us on our

[58] ibid., p. 16.
[59] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 47.
[60] ibid., p. 51.

journey across oceans, beyond frontiers, through life."[61] Our stories, he adds, are "our little storehouse of anecdote and what-happened-next, our private once-upon-a-time".[62] This point in *Fury* also marks a significant ripple in the flow of Rushdie's authorial voice. For the first time in the text, in a markedly postmodernist vein, Rushdie momentarily reveals a bold sarcastic skew in his narrative technique as he describes Solanka effacingly commenting to himself that Schlink's life was "novelistic".[63] In keeping with the wider themes of the text, for a brief moment it is as though Solanka-the-puppet is critiquing Rushdie his puppeteer. Yanking insubordinately at the strings leading up to his master's directing hands, the reader can almost imagine Solanka pleading with Rushdie: "Don't undermine the 'realism' of *my* life story. Don't let the complexities and the importance of this task - your telling of the story of my *pain*, my *identity*, my *fury* - be crudely debased as 'novelistic'! Save that indignity for the lesser-players in my tale; save your clumsy fictional misadventures and your thespian-'*me-thinks*'-asides for the Schlink's of this world." Should the reader be able to envisage this subtext, and indeed locate further instances of authorial interjection of this nature, then the already complex analytical breadth of *Fury* broadens. In this instance, we are exposed to the deeper layers of the novel. Rushdie's authorial voice traverses traditional literary frontiers, challenging the borders separating author and protagonist. In doing so, readers may also be provoked to reflect on potential "novelistic" aspects of their own life stories. The importance of narrative or "stories" in relation to identity cannot be underestimated. However, it is Solanka's voicing of the "once-upon-a-time" fictional connotation that offers perhaps the clearest indication of the tone, intent and effect of an individual's personal stories in relation to their contribution to various processes of identity-affirmation.

Sarup suggests "if you ask someone about their identity, a story soon appears".[64] He explains the significance of this personal "story", adding that it is one of the "processes by which identity is constructed."[65] Interestingly, by stating

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[61] ibid.
[62] ibid.
[63] ibid., p. 48.
[64] Sarup, op. cit., p. 15.
[65] ibid., p. 14.

that it is but "one" contributing factor, Sarup is careful to clarify that an individual's narrative is not the sole determinant of their identity. Our stories present an incomplete and imperfect picture. Indeed, as Sarup points out, the "identities" we seek to affirm through narratives, like our stories themselves, "are fragmented, full of contradictions and ambiguities".[66] "We tend to emphasise what happened and what we did", observes Sarup; "we focus on the concrete effects, rather than the possible 'theoretical' causes. Nevertheless," he argues, "these issues are implied in the story".[67] Through mediation with others, and through the filters of, for example, cultural, socio-economic, religious or ethnic factors, an individual's personal narrative contributes significantly to their socially constructed version of self. If the identity-narrative characteristics Sarup discusses are applied, for instance, to Sennett's notion of a career-based linear narrative, then the level of permeability apparent across contemporary public-personal frontiers must be seen as a markedly influential factor.

Sarup highlights the identity-narrative implications of the cultural transactions that occur at the public-private frontier stating "the stories we tell are often reshaped in/for the public sphere. And then," he adds, "when these narratives are in the public sphere, they shape us."[68] Sarup's observations locate personal narratives within a highly dynamic and potentially transgressing conceptual space. "Narratives are," he continues, "sites of cultural contest, and when they become public we should ask: who is orchestrating them?"[69] Sarup concludes, "this leads us to the problems of representation and power".[70] The problems Sarup discusses are evident in Sennett's account of linear narratives. Specifically, when the work-based "values" of change, adaptability and risk are given primacy ahead of conflicting personal values then the notion of a stable or linear narrative is interrupted.

If an individual's work-life constitutes a significant portion of their identity-narrative then that individual feels constantly compelled to re-write and

[66] ibid.
[67] ibid., p. 15.
[68] ibid., p. 18.
[69] ibid.
[70] ibid.

reinvent their story and thus reconstitute their identity. Whilst, as I indicated earlier, identity is not a static concept, it is equally a concept that relies on an individual's ability to at least entertain the idea that their narrative is based upon certain level of permanence and stability. The blurring of public-private frontiers and the subsequent influx of unpredictable and uncertain career-based "values" does not inhibit the construction of an identity-narrative; it does however, undermine the notion of a linear narrative. The growth ethos of the integrated global economy demands change. In accordance with this demand, an individual's story, their process of identity affirmation, must also change and grow concurrently. Just as Sennett perhaps pessimistically seeks to map the personal consequences of this process, Sarup (in a rhetorical vein) questions the personal dynamics of the narrative process itself. Paehlke, however, seeks to redress the problematic aspects of the contemporary identity-narrative process. The viability of the solutions Paehlke offers is a matter that is also implicitly questioned in *Fury*.

Like Sennett, Paehlke engages the apparent corrosion of identity that follows the embrace of the work practices of the integrated global economy; however, he differs in his pursuit of a more practical and, at times, optimistic line. He is primarily concerned with achieving schemes he describes as feasible "work-time reductions".[71] Paehlke argues that the lure of career-driven monetary reward will, as a matter of natural course, be usurped by the realisation of the greater value of personal, family and community time. It may seem he is advocating that this situation needs to worsen before it can improve; yet this is not necessarily the case.

While Sennett argues a worker's sense of personal identity and familial-community position is diminished by the demands of integrated global economy, Paehlke seems intent on suggesting the act of choice between public and/or personal fulfilment is an identity-affirming act in itself. However, it is difficult to believe that such an act is possible for all participants in "the game". With Western liberal-democratic welfare structures in retreat, it is highly improbable that, for example, a minimum wage earner (engaged in a competitive labour-market vocation) would have the bargaining power to negotiate with their employer for a

[71] Paehlke. op. cit., p. 229.

more suitable form of public-personal balance. An employee attempting to secure such an agreement could readily find their public identity (as an employee) obliterated as a consequence of retrenchment in response to their employer's likely rejection of their proposition. Paehlke's "work-time reduction" vision would seem only to be a viable prospect to those with the necessary degree of financial independence. It is a vision, however, he sees many workers embracing. Indeed, he identifies the apparently increasing proliferation of popular literature on "life choice" topics such as "downshifting, job sharing, early retirement, time out, and alternative modes of personal fulfilment" as validating particular aspects of his observations.[72] Even when the previously mentioned financial considerations are discounted, in a society where the term "mobility" seems only applicable to those moving in an "upward" fashion, is the lifestyle choice Paehlke refers to viable, and indeed, is it a reality? Rushdie's depiction of Krysztof, Solanka's friend and academic colleague, suggests that it is not. Interestingly, Krysztof has the necessary financial independence to negotiate and secure an improved model of work-time balance. Yet, as Rushdie's construction of this character indicates, it is other factors that debilitate him.

4.8 Contemporary identity dilemmas: "your life doesn't belong to you"

Krysztof's remarkable professional achievements and shocking personal demise feature prominently in the opening stages of *Fury*. As a structural device, Krysztof's brief biography allows Rushdie to introduce and establish a selection of the text's major themes without prejudicing or betraying the eventualities of Solanka's subsequent exposition of these themes. Little mention is made of Krysztof once Solanka eschews his U.K. life. Krysztof encapsulates a range of the possibilities - good and bad - open to Solanka at the entry point of the novel. Upon reviewing Krysztof's identity dilemma and recognising similar crises mounting in his own life, Solanka feels compelled to make certain life-changing decisions designed to avert suffering his friend's fate.

Krysztof's downfall is interesting on many levels, most notably, because it

[72] ibid., p. 234.

postulates the potentially dire consequences of a fracturing of an individual's linear narrative. Publicly Krysztof appears to be quite successful. He is described as "a star" during the period in which, as Rushdie observes, "academics had become charismatic".[73] He is portrayed as an outwardly vibrant and carefree individual at the top of his field yet, like Solanka, he harbours a "secret sadness" borne from a lack of purpose and an over-arching sense of disillusionment with the system that celebrates his apparently stellar career achievements. Krysztof's burgeoning public persona crosses the border, infiltrating his personal life and consuming any sense of private self he once considered independent from his vocation. As Rushdie retrospectively observes, Krysztof's identity dilemma became so acute that, "the more he became a personality, the less of a person he felt".[74] Solanka seemingly sits on the precipice of a similar level of career success yet, mindful of the depth of Krysztof's crisis, he is uncomfortable with what he feels that success may demand of him.

In Krysztof, Rushdie presents the reader with a penetrating example of a so-called "high-flyer" unsuccessfully attempting to find what Paehlke describes as "alternative modes of personal fulfilment".[75] He is a character who encounters a career-induced form of burnout that leads him to question the broader purpose of his life and life in general. "Why does it all go on and on?" Krysztof pleads to his friend Solanka, in reference to the fast pace and all consuming grind of life within the ethos of the integrated global economy.[76] Bleakly weighing up the personal consequences of his many professional successes, Krysztof adds, "you wake up one day and you aren't a part of your life... your life doesn't belong to you".[77] Poignantly, Krysztof's fame as an academic was broadly attributed to his ability to so grapple with, what Rushdie calls, "the great question of what it is to be human".[78] Ironically, it is his tragic demise that ultimately answers this question.

Rushdie's construction of Krysztof's dilemma has parallels with Sennett's

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[73] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 23.
[74] ibid., p. 27.
[75] Paehlke, op. cit., p. 234.
[76] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 27.
[77] ibid.
[78] ibid., p. 24.

claims concerning the loss of identity that is symptomatic of the disproportionate primacy of career values over personal values within the work practices of integrated global economy. I will examine the identity dilemma often associated with this imbalance later in this chapter. However, to substantiate that examination I wish to firstly identify a pivotal identity-related perspective that can be drawn from the fictional character constructs in *Fury*. This perspective is apparent in Rushdie's extensive employment of illness imagery. Mindful of firstly, Paehlke's reference to illness as a trigger for retreat from "the game"; secondly, the treatment of identity in *Fury*; and thirdly, the relatively limited extent of critical writing on illness imagery in contemporary literature, this is an area of marked analytical significance.

4.9 "Dual citizenship": "unhappiness" or "physical unfitness"?

In the opening passage of her text *Illness as Metaphor* critic and novelist Susan Sontag describes illness as "the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship".[79] From the outset, she is careful to emphasise that she is not presenting a study of the "real" experience of illness.[80] Rather, she is interested in examining "the punitive or sentimental fantasies concocted" from the depiction of illness in literature.[81] We all hold "dual citizenship", Sontag states, adding that we all posses a figurative passport granting us passage to "both the kingdom of the well and the kingdom of the sick".[82] "Although we all prefer to use only the good passport", she continues, "sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place".[83] Analysis of Sontag's concept reveals two factors pivotal to the perspectives of identity Rushdie offers in *Fury* concerning: firstly, his use of the illness metaphor as applied to particular aspects of character development within the text; and secondly, the previously discussed notion of figurative frontiers, as evidenced in these depictions.

The idea that an individual maintains a "dual citizenship" is central to the

[79] S. Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988, p. 1.
[80] ibid.
[81] ibid.
[82] ibid.
[83] ibid.

character constructs in *Fury*. If we accept Sontag's assertion that illness is generally understood as the aberration of a state of wellness, it follows that it may also be considered a component of a form of singular ("wellness" dominated) citizenry. In this vein, illness could be viewed as an undesirable yet defining twitch, deformity or freckle on the figurative face of our uni-citizenship of wellness. To varying degrees we overwhelmingly strive to maintain a state of physical and mental wellness. Indeed, in the competitive market-driven public and private spheres of the integrated global economy, physical and mental toughness is perceived by the majority of game-players as the optimum; it is considered the ultimate virtue. This is a world in which, as Solanka reflects in *Fury*, "unhappiness [is] redefined as physical unfitness" and "despair as a question of good spinal alignment".[84] Rushdie further illustrates the wide-ranging cultural embrace of this redefinition extensively throughout *Fury*. For competitors in "the game", Solanka states, there is "no room... for messy humanity".[85] This could also be seen to imply that there is "no room" within the integrated global economy for the human characteristics of frailty, sensitivity and compassion that are often negatively associated with illness. These characteristics may additionally be interpreted as features of the "other" world Sontag speaks of. What then are the factors that trigger a descent into this world? Three fictional characters in *Fury* present interesting versions of this transition.

Solanka, Krysztof and Jack Rhinehart all experience serious forms of personal decay in opposition to their former positions of apparent physical and mental toughness. All three, at various stages, reach career pinnacles in the eyes of their peers: Solanka was the respected Cambridge academic, creator of the media-renowned Philosopher Dolls; Krysztof was the globe-trotting literary critic with a "grin which no shadow of pain, poverty or doubt had ever darkened"; and Rhinehart was the "young radical journalist of colour with a distinguished record of investigating American racism".[86] Each of them endures an extreme departure from these former positions of supposed strength (or "wellness"). Their

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[84] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 183.
[85] ibid., p. 74.
[86] ibid., pp. 19-57.

respective descents into their distinct worlds of illness are dramatic and utterly personally debasing. Solanka loses his career, family and (it would appear) his sanity. Krysztof's career violently crashes and he suicides. Rhinehart is murdered after his embroilment in a heinously violent series of misogynistic cultural rites.

All three characters experience a loss of identity after suffering intense, albeit understandable, levels of mental anguish that, within the integrated global economy, would clinically be described as an illness. The changes they endure, and indeed the worlds each of them enters are so acutely different and alienating that they could readily be described as separate from the apparent reality of day-to-day life. These characters *do* depart the world Sontag describes as the "kingdom of the well" and descend headlong into "the kingdom of the sick".[87] In this sense, they could aptly be described as holders of the unique form of "dual citizenship" she describes.[88] Equally, their respective fates could be described as a kind of journey. These characters traverse the figurative frontiers of Sontag's opposing kingdoms and their personal narratives (along with all of the "real"-life connotations these literary narratives hold) could be interpreted as exemplifying the concept of illness as metaphor.

4.10 Mapping the "wellness"-"illness" frontier

As discussed earlier, Sontag argues that "each of is obliged, at least for a spell", to cross into the "kingdom of the sick".[89] However, particular theoretical perspectives combined with a series of character developments in *Fury* suggest that this crossing need not always be seen as an obligation. Both Paehlke and Rushdie, to differing degrees, may be seen as suggesting this "spell" is often entered into willingly. Indeed, Solanka seems to be pleading to cross the border between wellness and illness, solely for the sake of respite.[90] Although highly

[87] Sontag (1988), op. cit., p. 1.
[88] ibid.
[89] ibid.
[90] Interestingly, Rushdie's construction of Solanka's search for respite is not unlike his discussion in *Imaginary Homelands* on Orwell, who he also suggests longs for respite or, as he describes it, "quietism".

critical of America's sickness, its state of "crisis" and its "pain", Solanka seems to recognise aspects of his own sickness personified in the culture he despises. A part of him identifies with America's pain, and he seeks to eradicate his hurt by blending with and disappearing into the nation's clamour.[91] "Devour me America", Solanka begs, "scan me, digitize me, beam me up".[92] A stark confirmatory connection between Sontag's notion of "obligation" is apparent in Solanka's personal border crossing. "The everywhere-ness of life", Solanka desperately proclaims, "its bloody-minded refusal to back off... the sheer goddamn unbearable head-busting volume of the third millennium... obliged" him to engage in fury-inspired acts of madness.[93] There is a clear link between Solanka's plea for mental relief or space and the previously mentioned brevity of "room for messy humanity". Solanka's journey into the kingdom of the sick is explicitly expressed as an obligation, but there is an implicit escapist drive also apparent in this act. As Rushdie describes it,

> There was to be no escape from intrusion, from noise. [Solanka] had crossed the ocean to separate his life from life. He had come in search of silence and now found a loudness greater than the one he left behind. The noise was inside him now.[94]

Clearly, as I indicated, the escapist drive *is* explicitly apparent in Solanka's actions. He has undertaken his ocean (border) crossing pilgrimage in an attempt to "separate" then, reclaim his life. As he had seen, this was the task his friend Krysztof was unable to achieve; that is, Krysztof's "life" no longer belonged to him. Solanka, recognising the warning signs in his colleague, attempts escape through a form of geographical and cultural border crossing. However, it soon becomes apparent this avenue is insufficient. The escapist imperative requires a more demanding form of crossing. If, as he says, "the noise [is] inside him", Solanka must make the crossing between two internal worlds to satiate his escapist longing. He must traverse Sontag's dual kingdoms. The kingdom of the sick is now apparently his only source of respite, his only source of silence.

[91] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., pp. 28-51.
[92] ibid., p. 28.
[93] ibid., pp. 47-48.
[94] ibid., p.47.

A brief comparison of Kundera's use of the "illness as metaphor" technique assists in clarifying the rationale behind Rushdie's employment of the additional illness imagery subcategory of "noise" and respite. In Kundera's 2002 novel *Ignorance*, Irena, one of the text's major protagonists, seeks respite through a quiet and contemplative walk with her terminally ill husband. They come to rest on what appears to be a peaceful river embankment when a "volley of music" from a nearby loudspeaker suddenly assaults them. Irena is distraught. Her suffering is then compounded over the coming days as a result of the unrelenting bleating of their neighbour's radio.[95] The solemnity of her husband's condition and their last days together is destroyed. Her husband only finds peace in illness and eventual death. She, however, like Solanka, is unable to find relief. "Stop that hideous racket!", she pleads, "My husband is dying! Do you hear? Dying![96] Again there is apparently no room for messy humanity amidst the all-enveloping clamour of inhumanity.

To adopt Rushdie's language, illness, for Solanka, promises a *nowhereness* antidote to the "everywhereness" of life. As he puts it, his descent into America is his attempt to "metaphorically [take] his own life".[97] That this intention is directly expressed via Solanka's contemplative voice as a *metaphorical* act, suggests he is seeking a form of psychological reinvention; a reinvention that he views as being contingent on the temporary surrendering of his citizenship of the "kingdom of the well" and a consequent "spell" in the other world.

4.11 Illness as a "psychological event", or a form of "social deviation"

Particular aspects of Sontag's critique of theories describing illness as a "psychological event" are applicable to Rushdie's construction of Solanka's plight.[98] Sontag suggests illness, as represented in literature, is expanded "by

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[95] M. Kundera, *Ignorance*, Faber & Faber, London, 2002, p. 147.
Kundera combines this narrative with a discussion of the German composer Arnold Schoenburg who in 1930 "wrote: 'Radio is an enemy, a ruthless enemy marching irresistibly forward, and any resistance is hopeless'; it 'force-feeds us music... regardless of whether we want to hear it, or whether we can grasp it.'" [See: ibid., pp. 144-148] For Kundera, the sheer proliferation, the inescapable sound of music in the contemporary era has obliterated aesthetic borders and crudely turned music into noise.

[96] ibid., p. 148.

[97] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 27.

[98] Sontag (1988), op. cit., p. 60.

means of two hypothesis" [*sic*]:

> The first is that every form of social deviation can be considered an illness. Thus, if criminal behaviour can be considered an illness, then criminals are not to be condemned or punished but to be understood (as a doctor understands), treated, cured. The second is that every illness can be considered psychologically. Illness is interpreted as, basically, a psychological event, and people are encouraged to believe that they get sick because they (unconsciously) want to, and that they can cure themselves by the mobilization of will; that they can choose not to die of the disease.[99]

By willingly immersing himself in the "unbearable head-bursting volume" of "third millennium" America Solanka is, as he states, intentionally engaging in a form of "metaphorical suicide".[100] His course of action can be interpreted as an extreme example of literary illness imagery rationalised as a psychological event. Sontag explains this "event"-based notion of illness by employing a literary example. Referring to *The Book of It,* she cites Groddeck's declaration that "he alone will die who wishes to die, to whom life is intolerable".[101] That illness, or indeed death, is perceived by some as a state into which we can will ourselves, also suggests that it is a state we are able to will ourselves *out* of. Indeed, Solanka is determined to do the latter. Confronting his descent into what he perceives to be madness he resolves "to face his demon".[102] He is aware he is unwell. This awareness is confirmed when he countenances seeing a psychiatrist and engaging in a course of anti-depressants. Upon reflection he rejects this option, adamant that he will recover on his own through sheer force of will. To seek conventional help would contingently mean allowing himself to be defined as "unwell" in accordance with the values of the very establishment he derides.

Solanka claims to have retired from "the game". If this claim is genuine then re-entry into "the game" or a re-invention of the self outside of it can only be accomplished through a form of individual struggle. He has eschewed the so-

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[99] ibid.
[100] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 48.
[101] Sontag (1988), op. cit., p. 60.
Of course examples of this phenomenon are readily found in literature. Interestingly, although it may be an act triggered by the perceived intolerability of a fictional character's life, it may also, in some cases, be understood as a liberating act. For an example of the latter type of motivation see the character of Edna in the previously discussed Kate Chopin short story *The Awakening*. See: Chopin, op. cit.
[102] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 38.

called virtues of the integrated global economy. He no longer competes, no longer recognises the free-market mantra of let the fittest survive. As such, he no longer (subconsciously) accepts the integrated global economy's definitions of mental or physical failure. It may be a state into which he has psychologically willed himself, but if he is indeed unwell it is on his terms alone. For Solanka, his malaise is different from, and thus beyond the mores of integrated global economy; in this sense it may also be considered a form of social deviation. There is evidence of both of Sontag's hypotheses in the illness imagery Rushdie employs throughout *Fury*.

Perhaps the most prominent example of Sontag's "illness as a form of social deviation" theory in *Fury* is found in the demise of Solanka's friend Rhinehart. Rhinehart, the "radical journalist of colour", is facetiously described by his friend Solanka as "the phone-smasher".[103] Outwardly he indeed had lived a "radical" life as an ethically minded political journalist; a life tempered by his penetrating exposés of U.S. political, racial, foreign policy and economic hypocrisy. Naturally Rhinehart acquired many enemies on account of this practice. Initially, this vitriol spurs him on in his crusade. However, with age and a burgeoning drinking problem, Rhinehart slows and, by his own admission, gives up "visiting war zones" and is reduced to penning what he describes as "lucrative profiles of the super-powerful, super-famous and super-rich for their weekly magazines of choice".[104] Disillusioned by what he feels is his diminished status as a mere social-commentator, Rhinehart too becomes consumed by the deafening "noise", the "everywhereness" of life.[105] He is increasingly frustrated and prone to fits of rage. Rather than retreating inwardly, as Solanka does, it is from this desperate position that Rhinehart pursues a personal course that may be described as a form of social deviation. Such is the nature of his border crossing.

Rhinehart is crushed by the weight of his personal contradictions. In the public domain, the success of his career depends upon his ability to bestow effusive praise on the subjects of his writing. Yet privately, he despises and ridicules the decadent subjects of his magazine profiles. This duality utterly

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[103] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 53.
[104] ibid., p. 56.
[105] ibid., p. 47.

exhausts Rhinehart, forcing him to surrender both his public and his private personas and enter what Solanka describes as his "Tiger Woods phase".[106] "His label changed", Solanka continues, "he stopped hyphenating himself [as a black-American] and became, simply, an American".[107] From the point of view of his ever-increasing clique of wealthy white associates, Rhinehart had become the acceptable face of black America. In reality, he was now but a caricature, with all of the artificiality of the "magazine profiles" he so skillfully rendered.

Rhinehart's resignation from his real-life persona does not provide the antidote he craves. His new identity leaves him emotionally anesthetized. Striving to feel something, anything at all, Rhinehart looks for sensation in misogyny and sadomasochism. He becomes involved in a secret society of "gilded" young and wealthy white New York men called "S&M, which stood... for Single & Male", a brutal group of people with little time for "messy humanity".[108] In the latter stages of *Fury* we discover the group was responsible for a series of horrific society murders, bludgeoning their "formidably accomplished" female peers to death with lumps of concrete.[109] In time, Rhinehart's S&M colleagues begin to doubt his conviction and he is killed. The killing is brutal and careless and the group is unmasked. In death, however, Rhinehart takes on yet another mask.

Rather than being embroiled and shamed in the "society scandal of the summer", Rhinehart is posthumously canonised by Solanka as "the great, brave journalist, who had been sucked down by glamour and wealth."[110] His dramatic descent is attributed to a form of mental illness, a psychological deviation. "To be seduced", Solanka laments, "by what one loathed was a hard destiny".[111] Unable to cope with life's unbearable noise, Rhinehart had, in Solanka's view, *"crossed the line"* (a personal border not dissimilar to his own).[112] The fact that Rhinehart's crossing uncharacteristically took him into a dehumanising world of violence allows Solanka to view his friend's bizarre actions as a symptom of his illness

[106] ibid., p. 198.
[107] ibid., pp. 56-64.
[108] ibid., pp. 72-74.
[109] ibid.
[110] ibid., p. 200.
[111] ibid.
[112] ibid., p. 57. [My italics]

rather than a crime. Solanka is haunted by the idea that he had "been a bad friend" and "betrayed" Rhinehart by becoming romantically involved with his former partner Neela Mahendra.[113] As such, in Solanka's view, Rhinehart's extreme actions were in a way understandable.

Mindful of Sontag's hypotheses, the difference between Solanka and Rhinehart is clear. The illness imagery Rushdie constructs concerning Solanka does suggest an element of psychological intent is involved in the onset of his depression. That is to say, Solanka's resignation from his former life is somewhat voluntary. Alternatively, Rhinehart's crimes are almost excused as the manifestations of a form of mental illness or, to use Sontag's terminology, a type of social deviation. Solanka feels that Rhinehart is somehow not to blame for his actions. Rather, his peers, his friends had let him down and left him nowhere to turn. As Sontag might suggest, Solanka sees Rhinehart as someone "to be understood" rather than "condemned or punished".[114] Yet the fact remains that Rhinehart chooses to join the so-called socially acceptable group he initially despises. He willingly joins those who exhibit the integrated global economy's version of mental and physical toughness, those who successfully compete at the highest socio-economic level. Ironically this group (the epitome of integrated global economy's version of social acceptability) becomes one of the most prominent examples of social deviation. This dichotomy raises interesting questions as to identity and sociological and/or criminological theories of inclusion and exclusion.

4.12 The "dystopia of exclusion": "where life is experienced as precarious"

Referring to what he sees as the growing shift away from "inclusive" towards "exclusive" social structures, criminologist and social theorist Jock Young discusses the "components" of a phenomenon he calls the "dystopia of exclusion".[115] "Life" within this "dystopia", he observes, "is experienced as

[113] ibid., p. 200.
[114] Sontag (1988), op. cit., p. 60.
[115] J. Young, *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*, Sage, London, 1999, p. 19.

precarious".[116] Young identifies the lack of secure "career structures and biographies" as the primary reason for this fracturing of formerly inclusive social structures.[117] There are clear parallels between Young's observations and Sennett's account of the lack of stable individual linear narratives within the integrated global economy. Young's theory can be viewed as a progression of sorts on aspects of Sennett's thesis in that he labels those marginalised by this disintegration of personal narratives as members of society's "outgroup".[118] For many contemporary theorists, Young observes, it is the "single mothers and feckless fathers" with their economies of "drugs, prostitution and trafficking in stolen goods" that constitute the outgroup.[119] This is perhaps an obvious conclusion that allows certain disadvantaged groups to be problematically categorised with exclusionary language, thus further entrenching their already marginalised position. Young presents a compelling account of this dehumanising symptom of the integrated global economy, yet it would be a mistake to argue that the outgroup is solely the domain of people trapped in the "precarious" cycles of socio-economic disadvantage and criminal behaviour Young delineates. The individual complexities and idiosyncratic responses of Rushdie's various fictional constructs indicate that the figurative frontiers of the outgroup Young refers to are not so readily discernable. In particular, the outgroup's frontiers cannot be mapped on the basis of socio-economic or criminological considerations alone.

Solanka, Krysztof and Rhinehart all enter a form of outgroup through what may be seen as a form of obligation rather than ill fortune or socio-economic circumstance. To use Young's terminology, "life" for these characters "is" (or was) "experienced as precarious", yet it is not a lack of a solid career-based linear narrative that drives these characters to retreat from "the game". Nor is it socio-economic circumstance that triggers their subsequent border crossings into the kingdom of the sick, their relegation to the outgroup. Rather, it is the lack of a bearable personal narrative that is the ultimate trigger for their crossings. Interestingly, although Solanka tries, none of the three characters cited above are

[116] ibid.
[117] ibid.
[118] Young, op. cit., p. 20.
[119] ibid.

able to satisfactorily articulate the nature of exactly what it is they find unbearable. The unnamable all-encompassing din of the integrated global economy obliterated the necessary moments of quiet reprieve required for self-reflection.

Life's music has become life's noise. In attempting to close their ears to this unbearable noise, Solanka, Krysztof and Rhinehart respectively resign their citizenship in the integrated global economy's version of the kingdom of the well and enter that "other" world Sontag describes. Their journeys over this frontier, Solanka's in particular, are essentially what *Fury* is based upon. Specifically, it is a novel concerned with the fracturing of personal narrative. This is a theme that quite naturally forms the crux of many works of fiction that structurally depend on the existence of certain identifiable shifts and fluctuations in a particular character's narrative. Indeed, rarely do authors of fiction offer a static or complete version of self in their fictional characters. Characters initially presented in this light - as many readers may perceive to be the case in, for instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby - are typically unraveled as the novel's broader narrative progresses. This may be considered a fundamental constitutive requirement for a "story" to be identified as such.

As in life, a complete notion of self in fiction is ultimately unachievable. Fictional characters are constructs and generally they are constructed through their immersion in complex processes of personal transformation - formative processes which are often referred to in literary terms as *bildungsroman*. While the literary representations of *bildungsroman* are varied and typically complex, its fundamental structure can be briefly described in the following manner: a character's sense of self is challenged by a crisis, the character responds, and a new notion of personal identity is formed through the ensuing trials.

4.13 The fracturing of the personal narrative

A direct connection can be drawn between Rushdie's literary employment of *bildungsroman* and Sennett's views concerning the increasing inability of many within the integrated global economy to construct a clear, career-based "linear

narrative".[120] As I have shown, the "corrosion" of fictional or actual "character" is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon triggered by innumerable factors, sometimes inclusive of, yet not solely dependent on, varying degrees of career orientated identity crises. In *Fury*, Rushdie chooses to present the "corrosion of character", or the fracturing of personal narratives, primarily as a form of psychological crisis that is not necessarily tied to career-based issues. Mindful of the fact that psychological crisis is generally articulated by terms associated with illness, his employment of many of the writing techniques Sontag highlights is understandable. However, Rushdie takes these techniques in an interesting direction. By metaphorical extension, he expands upon Sontag's binary of "illness" and "wellness" to offer readings of a series of additional binaries. For example, he explores the socio-economic paradigm of "inclusion" and "exclusion". Using the novel as the vehicle for his treatment of these binaries allows Rushdie a distinctive type of imaginative analytical license, different from that which is generally achievable through more theoretically orientated texts.

Fury engages issues of socio-economic inclusion and exclusion regularly discussed in theoretically based sociological, political or economic literature. However, Rushdie's approach differs from these types of literature primarily as a result of the idiosyncratic perspectives afforded him through his creative utilisation of the fictional form. He presents individual studies as opposed to, for example, generalist case studies of ethnic, economic, social or cultural groups. Rushdie's fictional constructs remind the reader that individuals, even those within a common socio-economic group, can and often do react in extraordinarily differently ways to very similar dilemmas.

Considered together, the characters of Solanka, Krysztof and Rhinehart could be seen as occupying the same socio-economic stratum. They are formidably accomplished, non-Anglo middle-aged men living and working within the upper-echelons of white-Anglo society. Additionally congruity is apparent in the manner in which each of them is confronted with a crisis of identity. In this sense they could be analysed as a theoretical case study. However, Rushdie's construction of

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[120] Sennett, op. cit., p. 16.

their respective responses to their crises illustrates the complexity of questions of identity. The complexity lies in the fact that individuals are sophisticated and act in different and generally unpredictable ways. Fictional constructs of the type evident in *Fury* allow the humanist truisms of individual uniqueness to be countenanced in insightful and purposeful ways beyond the generalising abstractions of theoretical case studies.

Given the similarities that exist between Solanka, Krysztof and Rhinehart, the reader could plausibly accept that each of them could pursue each other's paths.[121] Despite the propensity for interchangeable responses, each of these three characters dispels the rigidity of, what could be called, case study responses by responding in dramatically different ways. Certain interpersonal factors, rather than shared socio-economic circumstances, govern their distinct responses. Rushdie's treatment of these responses (these figurative personal border crossings) is primarily concerned with disaffected notions of self. The crucial subtext, however, is that an individual's border crossing is just that - an *individual* process. Regardless of the apparent similarity of one's life circumstances with those of his or her peers, the processes of mapping, challenging and traversing one's personal borders is always unique. A significant part of this sense of uniqueness is founded in the comparative processes an individual engages in throughout the course of their varied processes of identity affirmation. Identities are unique because - as, for instance, illustrated by the earlier cited Serb-Croat example and Jenkins' categories of comparison - we are defined through our interaction with others and our environment.

It is Solanka's interactions with the entire gambit of characters presented in *Fury* that offer the reader the most salient and complete account of his identity rather than the often disconnected, fragmented and contradictory picture he periodically offers through his own contemplative asides. At one point, almost echoing the broader thematic tack of the novel, Solanka remarks that his "identity" was "coming apart at the seams".[122] Indeed, it is only through his interactions firstly with his friends and the city in which he is immersed that Solanka admits he

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[121] For instance, Solanka does countenance the suicidal thoughts upon which Krysztof acts, and, like Rhinehart, Krysztof does paradoxically, for a time, seek acceptance within a particular socio-economic group – a group that he outwardly despises.
[122] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 86.

will be able to reconnect "the chronological segments of himself... that had literally disintegrated into time".[123] In an ironic departure from his initial intent to lose himself, to be "unmade", when Solanka eventually glimpses the true nature of self-effacement he feels compelled to reevaluate his aims. Resignation from life, he discovers, only offers him a fractured or segmented version of self and not, what may be called, a new or bearable sense of self. Faced with this painful realisation, he resolves to reconnect, albeit in a limited manner, with that which he initially eschewed. "He would take charge of himself anew", Solanka decides, "binding his breaking selves together."[124] Despite this resolve his interactions remain constantly characterised by his wish to assert his difference from that which he encounters.

Having acknowledged that his earlier choice to completely retreat from life was misdirected, Solanka comes to a point where he decides that he will be pro-active in his quest to reconstitute himself, he would be marked by his difference from that which he despised rather than be consumed by it. "What he opposed in [America], he would attack in himself", Solanka defiantly states.[125] Thus, for Solanka, difference becomes the most reliable aspect of an otherwise unreliable and fragmented sense of self. However, a sense of difference alone cannot constitute identity, for a meaningful understanding of difference cannot be achieved without comprehension of what it is to be similar. Mindful of this point, it would appear that it is not theoretically practical to separate similarity and difference in the manner that, for example, Jenkins does. Indeed, many theorists argue that these comparative categories be eschewed, thus enabling identity to be understood as difference itself.

4.14 "Identity requires difference"

For political scientist William Connolly, "identity requires difference in order to be".[126] Although this assertion offers further clarification of the constitutive factors of identity it may also, in a particular context, be interpreted as heightening the

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[123] ibid., p. 85.
[124] ibid., p. 86.
[125] ibid., p. 87.
[126] W. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991, p. 64.

complexity of notions of self. Connolly personalises his account of the "identity/difference" dichotomy explaining, "my identity is what I am and how I am recognised rather than what I choose, want, or consent to".[127] If we accept Connolly's reading, then identity, as a matter of course, is something none of us ultimately has complete control over. We are in possession of an ideal rather than an actuality. In this sense, Solanka's ideal - his wish to traverse the borders delineating "illness" and "wellness" - would seem unachievable. This a point that Rushdie may be striving to highlight; that is, one's identity is a perpetually changing, multi-faceted and ultimately uncontrollable descriptor, formed by a series of innumerably diverse factors that govern the manner in which an individual is recognised by others. If this is Rushdie's aim, he is not alone in presenting this type of hypothesis. For example, politics and literature theorist Robert Boyers locates a similar form of identity-dilemma in the characters of Kundera's 1967 novel *The Joke*.[128] Boyers' observations are not explicitly directed at the question of identity. Rather, he is concerned with the manner in which Kundera's novel thematically maps the gulf between the ideal and the actual on a personal-political level. However, by extending Boyers' theory, interesting connections between one's ideal-identity (who one wishes to be) and one's actual-identity (how one is seen) emerge.

Boyers argues that *The Joke* presents "alternatives" to a culture of political oppression.[129] It is a novel, he adds, that projects a "hypothetically nurturant political culture".[130] In this context, he suggests, the novel's characters, despite their cynicism, are able to "imagine alternatives" to their politically oppressed identities.[131] However, they are unable to realise these alternatives or ideals "in the space of their lives".[132] It is Boyers' aim, as he professes, to show us how "the novel thinks politically by putting us in mind of the gap between projection and

[127] ibid.
[128] M. Kundera, *The Joke*, Faber & Faber, London, 1983.
[129] R. Boyers, *Atrocity and Amnesia: The Political Novel Since 1945*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, p. 222.
[130] ibid.
[131] ibid.
[132] ibid.

fulfilment".[133] *Fury* thinks in this manner. The gap between projection and fulfilment is plainly evident in Rushdie's construction of character identity.

Solanka explicitly refers to the projection-fulfilment gulf when pondering his notion of self. His journey between Sontag's kingdoms is testament to this fact. The social, political and economic conditions of his environment impede his ability to reconstitute his "ideal" identity in the "space" of his life. True to Boyers' claim, Solanka too seeks to define himself in a "nurturant political culture", yet a damaging and self-defeating cynicism hinders this transformation.

For Solanka, contemporary America is the antithesis of his ideal. He sees oppression where, it would appear, the majority does not. For example, what he negatively describes as the integrated global economy's unrelenting, soul-destroying "noise", others may positively see as the "buzz" of America's verve of cultural vitality and unbounded economic opportunity. Similarly, Solanka's derision of the "everywhereness" of contemporary culture (the seemingly all-pervading bombardment of advertising, media and "lifestyle" symbols) may be at odds with the supposedly dominant cultural view that "everywhereness" equals convenience, sophistication and technological enlightenment. An additional binary between the ideal and the actual is evident in the gulf between these views. Solanka's cynicism towards the intrusive impulses of contemporary culture may unmask the fact that its ideals bear no resemblance to its actuality; that actuality being that information saturation is suffocating rather than enlightening. However, cynicism alone does not insulate him from the effects of this intrusion.

Solanka aims to secure a clear sense of self through his opposition to the ideals of the integrated global economy. Considering Connolly's account of the inextricable role of difference in identity processes, Solanka's oppositional stance could in itself be seen as an identity-affirming point. Yet opposition alone may not be sufficient. In time, Solanka's deteriorating mental state and the views expressed by his friends cause him to doubt his perspective of the previously mentioned ideals. Ironically, his search for "quietus", for "peace" draws him into the symbolic heart of the integrated global economy, New York.[134] He claims,

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[133] ibid.

[134] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 82.

however, to be aware of the contradiction. Indeed, in the early stages of his New York experiences Solanka asserts that he "would be that contradiction".[135] His identity would be pinned on his acute difference from that which he confronted. In the thematic mould of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* he planned to seek out, confront and stare down that which he feared the most. In a figurative sense, he would emerge from this tumultuous personal journey as an island of silence in a sea of noise. The furies of the integrated global economy would lap at his shores yet never subsume him; they would only serve to better define his personal boundaries, his identity. However, his "fury-induced memory blackout[s]", his irrational bouts of anger and subsequent feelings of self-loathing weaken his resolve, challenging his view of himself as an unaffected observer of the integrated global economy's chaos.[136] Solanka's friends also look cynically upon his proclamations of scientific distance and immunity from the raging noise of the city. The identity they construct for Solanka has none of the passivity he seeks to project. In their view he is thoroughly immersed in the very darkness he outwardly claims to rally against. Whether he cared to admit it, the disruption of Solanka's personal narrative, albeit voluntary, had taken a terrible toll on his emotional life; it had all but obliterated his sense of self.

4.15 Identity affirming anger

Rhinehart views his friend Solanka as a whirring source of noise rather than an individual who shies away from clamour. "You can't not know how hard your friends try to avoid certain subjects in your company", he tells Solanka.[137] These "subjects" invariably concern politics. "U.S. policy in Central America", Rhinehart continues, "Southeast Asia. Actually the U.S.A. in general has been pretty much off limits for years".[138] "You're conscious of the amount of times you've rung people up to apologise - the number of times you've rung *me* up - in the morning after some little wine-lubricated explosion of yours?" Rhinehart concludes.[139]

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[135] ibid.
[136] ibid., p. 91.
[137] ibid., p. 68.
[138] ibid.
[139] ibid., p. 67.

While initially challenging his friend's unflattering assessment of him, in time Solanka is impelled towards an introspective admission regarding the gulf between his view of himself and the view others hold of him. His unruly geo-political diatribes, his peace-shattering tirades were a larger part of himself than he had recognised or, indeed, cared to admit.

Mindful of the immense impact Rhinehart's seemingly inconsequential observations have on Solanka, it is clear that the perspectives of others can play a significant role in identity processes. Kundera offers an account of this phenomenon in his 1998 novel *Identity*. When casually reminiscing with an old friend, one of the text's major protagonists, Jean-Marc inadvertently discovers what he feels is the "real reason for friendship".[140] Friends, he surmises, "provide a mirror so the other person can contemplate his image from the past, which, without the eternal blah-blah of memories between friends would have disappeared long ago".[141] Despite Rhinehart's provision of a figurative "mirror", the full impact of his friend's observations do not initially register with Solanka. It takes an unexpected event to jolt Solanka into unearthing the deeper truth behind Rhinehart's words.

Significantly, Solanka arrives at a qualified acceptance of Rhinehart's assessment of him through a comparative examination of his own assessment of a stranger, an irate "Indian or Pakistani" Muslim New York taxi driver, Manju Ali, which translated, literally meant "Beloved Ali".[142] Solanka's self-reflective mood is disturbed during an eventful ride in Ali's cab. Unaware that his passenger also speaks *Urdu*, Ali adds to the surrounding fury, spewing forth a tirade of foreign language insults at his fellow New Yorkers. Solanka is amazed by the apparent intensity of the driver's wrath. Ali, outwardly consumed with vitriol, screams abuse at "rival" motorists, yelling, "Islam will cleanse this street of godless motherfucker bad drivers".[143] "Unclean offspring of a shit-eating pig", he continues, leering at another unfortunate motorist, "the jihad will crush your balls

[140] M. Kundera, *Identity*, Faber & Faber, London, 1998, p. 11.
[141] ibid.
[142] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 66.
[143] ibid.

in its unforgiving fist".[144] When Solanka chastises Ali's language at the end of his journey, the driver is "bewildered" as to the effect of his outbursts.[145] "Sahib", he says remorsefully addressing Solanka, "if you heard it, then it must be so. But, sir, you see, I am not aware."[146] "It means nothing", Ali adds, "I don't even go to the mosque. God bless America, okay? It's just words."[147] With hindsight and Rhinehart's earlier critique resonating in his head, Solanka regretfully concludes, "he and Beloved Ali were really the same".[148] This is a disturbing revelation that exposes an equally disturbing set of contradictions. Solanka is forced to concede that he and Ali added additional volume to the "unbearable head-bursting noise" they both claimed to despise. The anger-averting personal borders they strove to reinforce had been breached and overrun and now they were both unwittingly feeding the voracious fury that was swallowing them.

4.16 The fallout from life's "collisions and explosions"

The intense level of personal introspection triggered by Ali and Solanka's seemingly random encounter reveals a great deal about the potential effects of interpersonal relations within the integrated global economy. Interestingly, this is a feature of contemporary social interactions regularly engaged throughout Rushdie's broader literary project. For example, in Rushdie's 2005 novel *Shalimar the Clown*, the text's intriguingly named protagonist, India, grapples with similar issues when contemplating her feelings regarding the increasingly committed romantic advances of her young co-tenant Jack. Feeling contradictorily threatened and flattered by Jack's affections, India seeks out the cause of her inner conflict. "Everywhere was now a part of everywhere else", she reflects.[149] "Our lives, our stories, flowed into one another's, were no longer our own, individual, discrete. This unsettled people", she concludes.[150] "There were collisions and

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[144] ibid.
[145] ibid.
[146] ibid.
[147] ibid.
[148] ibid., p. 68.
[149] S. Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005, p. 37.
[150] ibid.

explosions".[151] India's account of her feelings accents the manner in which the increased diversity and volume of up-close contemporary relationships and the consequent emotional volatility of these encounters unmasks the permeability of personal boundaries.

In applying the idea of interpersonal permeability to the identity constructs in *Fury* it is helpful to draw upon India's collision metaphors. The metaphorical intersections of our encounters with others bear the scars of interpersonal "collisions and explosions". These frontiers, these random zones of contest are littered with personal debris. This wreckage is piled with the cumulative, intermeshed, confused, fragile and abrasive fragments of both parties; it provides a unique record of the emotional terrain at innumerable interpersonal intersections. We can either drive on oblivious to the damage, never glancing back at the scars of these encounters (as Solanka, according to Rhinehart, had regularly done in the past); or, we can stop. Stopping and reviewing the scene, however, adds a new and potentially confronting set of complications to the process. In the act of retrieving, identifying and cataloguing these confused personal fragments, we can reevaluate ourselves, redraw our borders and reconfigure our version of our identities. After his encounter with Ali, Solanka makes a crucial decision, one that changes the tack of the text's overall narrative. For the first time in the novel, Solanka chooses to stop.

In surveying the aftermath of their collision, Solanka is unsettled by the seemingly flippant manner in which Ali explains away his anger. He is also disturbed by the similarities in his own tendency to dismiss his outbursts in a similarly nonchalant manner. As Rushdie narrates, "Solanka recognised *himself* in foolish young Ali" and he was aghast at his "fear" of "the terrorist anger that kept taking him hostage".[152] Equally troubling was the fact that if he accepted Rhinehart's observations, and his own assessment of Ali, then he would also have to admit that he could now understand how so much of his identity was constructed by a trait he despised in others and feared in himself. This is the identity neither he nor, he assumed, Ali wished to project. For Solanka, his angry

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[151] ibid.

[152] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 67. [my italics]

diatribes concerning "U.S. politics" were not matters of life-or-death; they were passionate articulations of his political views, a symptom of his academically honed "habits of combativeness".[153] Similarly, Ali's violent jihadist rhetoric was not, one could assume, legitimised by a strict observance of an extreme form of Muslim faith; after all, he did "not even go to the mosque".[154] Despite the apparent lack of conviction behind his outbursts, Solanka found it disturbing to think that he and others could be ready to identify Ali in accordance with only one base (albeit highly demonstrative) dimension of his inherently sophisticated personality.

Solanka's encounter highlights the tendency for many individuals to deny particularity in others, choosing instead to define them in accordance with essentialist stereotypical identity paradigms. Political scientist Craig Calhoun describes these paradigms as "large-scale categories".[155] Calhoun offers the following account of the constitutive dynamics of these categories:

> Most identity politics involves claims about categories of individuals who putatively share a given identity. This allows a kind of abstraction from the concrete interactions and social relationships within which identities are constantly renegotiated, in which individuals present one identity as more salient than another, and within which individuals achieve some personal sense of continuity and balance among their various sorts of identities.[156]

Ironically, Solanka's recognition of the identity-abstracting effects of his own anger spurs a new level of salience on his behalf regarding the abstractions attendant to placing others within "large-scale" identity categories.[157] Solanka's renewed vision also leads to a realisation of the potentially dramatic effect language (in Ali's case: vitriolic *Urdu*) and words (in Solanka's case: geopolitically inspired expletives) can have in relation to identity abstractions.

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[153] ibid.

[154] ibid., p. 66.

[155] C. Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, p. 220.

[156] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 66.

[157] Orwell offers an interesting account of this phenomenon when considering the effects of his public criticism of English author Stephen Spender. When Spender questions Orwell's motivations, Orwell replies: "You ask how it is that I attacked you not having met you, and on the other hand changed my mind after meeting you... not having met you I could regard you as a type and also an abstraction. Even when I met you had I not happened to like you, I should still have been bound to change my attitude, because when you meet anyone in the flesh you realise immediately that he is a human being and not a sort of caricature embodying certain ideas".
See: G. Orwell, "Stephen Spender (1909-95) by George Orwell (1903-50)", in *The Faber Book of Writers on Writers*, (ed.) S. French, Faber & Faber, London, 1999, p. 170.

Solanka dwells apprehensively on both his and Beloved Ali's dismissal of their respective forms of vitriolic behaviour as "just words".[158] "Words are not deeds", he ponders, "though words can become deeds. If said in the right place and at the right time, they can move mountains and change the world".[159] Considering the subsequent events of September 11, 2001, some readers may choose to view Rushdie's narrative as extremely thought provoking; indeed, particular readings of the text could be considered prophetic. In the case of the 2001 attack, Jihadist words became deeds that *did* move two economically and politically symbolic mountains/towers. However, the veracity (specifically the actuality, degree and form) of this claim is not a point of debate directly related to the aims of this thesis. It is the rhetorical role of interpersonal assessments in the creation of identity that I wish to highlight. The propensity for a significant part of an individual's identity (the part which is formed through our interactions, our collisions with others) to be determined by factors that we may personally perceive to be minor parts of ourselves is an extraordinarily significant feature of identity theory. This is a conceptual aspect of identity that is critically countenanced by reflexivity theory.

4.17 Identity and "reflexivity"

Jenkins draws from and expands upon particular aspects of psychologist and social theorist Gilbert Ryle's ideas to illustrate the role of "reflexivity" in the formation of identity. "Reflexivity", Jenkins observes,

> involves observation and retrospection, and is essentially similar whether I am considering myself or others. Potentially I have different data available in each case. I may have more information about myself, including recollections of my talk with myself, and biographical data only I know. On the other hand, I cannot observe myself in *quite* the way I can observe others... Self knowledge is not necessarily more accurate than our knowledge of others, and self awareness does not entail 'privileged access' to the mind. Accepting this, we can begin to account for the common realisation that our understanding of ourselves is at least as imperfect as our understanding of others.[160]

[158] Rushdie (2002), op. cit., p. 66.
[159] ibid.
[160] Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

As Jenkins states, our knowledge of ourselves should not be considered superior to the account others may form about us. The image we construct of ourselves through the process of reflexivity is only a component of a broader and inherently complex array of identity-affirming processes. To assume that we have the most complete or authentic understanding of ourselves is to erroneously discount the potential insight apparent in the perspectives others form of us.

The argument that our view of ourselves is "imperfect" could be interpreted as challenging the assertion that individuals are, as Michel Foucault postulated, "self-making".[161] The act of self-making is a component of Foucault's "ethics of the self".[162] Foucault rejected Western culture's Christian derived preoccupation with "purity and self-renunciation".[163] As Sarup describes it, Foucault believed that the moral code of self-renunciation unnaturally implied that "the self was no longer something to be made but something to be renounced and deciphered".[164] Sarup adds that, for Foucault, self-making was "primarily an aesthetic experience... the principal aim of which was to make one's life a 'work of art'".[165] Foucault idealistically saw the pursuit of this aim as a way to counter "the normalising effects of disciplinary power".[166] As Sarup observes, "reflexivity is central to Foucault's theory, providing it with its ethical dimension".[167] Indeed, the process of reflexivity could be seen as the essential catalyst for the enactment of Foucault's notion of self-making. Self-examination is necessary if the disparate component parts of one's life (in a crude sense: the fragments of the un-made self, or in Solanka's case the debris of life's "collisions and explosions") are to be firstly defined and subsequently refined into a "work of art".

Solanka seeks to engage in the exercise of "self-making". However, his could not be called an aesthetic pursuit. He does not aim to make his life a "work of art"; indeed, as he repeatedly states, he conversely strives in vain to wipe his

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[161] M. Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress", in P. Rabinow, (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, Peregrine, Harmondsworth, 1984, p. 351, as cited by: Sarup, op. cit., p. 88.
[162] ibid., p. 87.
[163] ibid., p. 88.
[164] ibid.
[165] ibid.
[166] ibid.
[167] ibid., p. 90.

canvas clean, to be devoured by the noise, to be lost in - what he perceives from a cultural distance to be - the chaotic abstractions of contemporary New York. Of course, his subsequent close-up immersion in that environment eventually debunks his original perception. His original desire for self-effacement is no longer viable. In fleeing the U.K. he renounces the unbearable "normalising effects" of his formerly "disciplinary" influences - namely his career, his Philosopher Dolls, his colleagues and his family - only to replace them with the furious and unrelenting "normalising" influences of New York. Staid Oxbridge English "normality" is replaced with the relative "normality" of New York's splattered Pollock-esque chaos. The nature of this trans-Atlantic cultural inversion is clear, yet the oppressiveness of both situations is also plainly evident. Quite simply, Solanka has replaced one crisis with another. The fury he sought to flee has followed him into a new and unfamiliar lair. Although the resurrection or creation of a bearable sense of his identity is based upon reflexivity - for example, he realises that he needs to be open to the perception others have of him - he is not, as he had originally intended, engaged in an exercise of self-making. However, regardless of the tenability of his aims, Solanka ultimately seeks a blank canvass not a work of art. It is not self-making; rather it is self-effacement that he yearns for.

To wipe the slate clean, Rushdie indirectly shows the reader that Solanka is compelled to acknowledge the role of reflexivity in identity. The reader is shown how Solanka realises that his view of himself is skewed; it is, in terms of perspective, one of many views of the complex prism of his identity. Solanka's view of himself is a component picture; regardless of its apparent clarity it is incomplete, "imperfect". That there is imperfection apparent in any understanding of others or ourselves, however, is not the sole reason for my illustration of reflexivity theory in *Fury*. Solanka's review of his behaviour, as for example prompted by Beloved Ali's outburst and Rhinehart's rebuke, again serves to highlight two crucial features of identity theory discussed earlier in this chapter; specifically, that identity is a process, not a static or complete phenomenon, and that it is a process is characterised by collaborative (and, at times, competing) catalysts.

In attempting to understand others and ourselves we constantly negotiate borders of difference, comparison and selfhood. We view one another from naturally differing perspectives, not only in relation to the three factors I have cited above, but also in accordance with a series of perspectives governed by the fractious aspects of ourselves. These inner or sub-perspectives can assume many forms. For the purposes of explaining the difference-defining properties of these perspectives we can again employ Sontag's concept of dual-citizenship as an illustrative device. In doing so, we discover that identity-affirming difference is quite naturally expressed with a markedly heightened level of clarity and conviction when it is articulated as a response to the perceived contemporary drive for sameness or conformity.

"What could a head doctor [psychiatrist] tell him about himself he didn't already know", muses Solanka when contemplating seeking assistance for his deteriorating mental state.[168] "Medication was a mist", he defiantly asserts; "it was a fog you swallowed that curled around your mind".[169] This is quite an ironic position considering his earlier admission of the frightening accuracy of Rhinehart's assessment of him. Rhinehart had thoroughly debased what Solanka felt he already knew about himself. Could Solanka also deny that the "mist" of his anger, his fury, had already enveloped him - "curled around [his] mind"? Regardless of the nature or degree of his malaise, it is clear that by this late stage of the novel Solanka has relinquished his citizenship of the kingdom of the well and has entered the kingdom of the sick. Indeed, his personal admission that his "fury" had "led him into the country of the irreversible" suggests that he feels that self-determination is beyond him.[170] As he reflects, "aspects of his behaviour had been escaping from his control".[171] He has undergone significant change, yet he is not willing to quantify this change in terms acceptable within the *lingua franca* of the integrated global economy. That is, he will not allow his "unhappiness" to be defined as "physical unfitness".[172] Similarly, he will not admit that he is a

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[168] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 182.
[169] ibid.
[170] ibid.
[171] ibid., p. 85.
[172] ibid., p. 183.

"failure". Accepting his decision to eschew the dominant semantic paradigm of the integrated global economy, how is his situation to be rationalised? Has there been a shift in his identity, so dramatic, so different from accepted norms that he alone is aware of his true state, his actual self? This, of course, depends on one's definition of accepted norms. Specifically, if the primacy of competition within the integrated global economy is the accepted norm then Solanka has, indeed, undergone a dramatic identity shift. The boundaries that define his identity within contemporary New York have been redrawn.

As I have shown, Sennett discusses this shift in terms of career "failure". He is careful to clarify that his use of the word failure refers to an inability to compete on the terms of free market or the integrated global economy's work ethos. To fail on these terms, to buck the so-called progressive trend and be *down*wardly mobile or "unfit", can mean a loss of a sense of self. Sennett's argument is based on his perception of the personal consequences of increasingly intrusive and unrealistic career demands. Soaring work hours, job instability and the free-market's economic growth imperative means that a sense of (career-based) self can never be attained. The necessary identity narratives, discussed earlier in this chapter, can never be maintained or reconciled. "The psyche dwells in a state of endless becoming", Sennett argues, "a selfhood which is never finished".[173] This is the state Solanka is attempting to withdraw from. Retreat could be viewed as a natural or even a rational response to this situation. However, when the competition ethos is so strong and pervading, withdrawal is deemed failure. To seek conventional help for this apparent failure would not equate to a shift in identity. For conventional help (for example, help from a "head doctor") is understood as such precisely because it seeks to rein in and dissolve any notion of difference, rendering everyone "faceless".[174] The dissolution of difference appeases the integrated global economy's pervading push for sameness, conformity and unity.

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[173] Sennett, op. cit., p. 133.
[174] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 45.

4.18 The logic of identity

Political philosopher Iris Marion Young discusses this drive for unity within the "logic of identity" theoretical framework established by *Frankfurt School* sociologist Theodor Adorno. The "logic of identity", she argues, "expresses one construction of the meaning and operations of reason: an urge to think things together, to reduce them to unity".[175] This is the "logic" Solanka proclaims to be struggling against; it is also the source of his cynicism as he is all too aware of its flaws. As Marion Young observes,

> The irony of the logic of identity is that by seeking to reduce the differently similar to the same, it turns the merely different into the absolutely other. It inevitably generates dichotomy instead of unity, because the move to bring particulars under a universal category creates a distinction between inside and outside.[176]

If we accept Young's account what are the implications for Solanka's condition? Does he become the archetypal outsider? In a superficial manner he can be viewed as such. Indeed his expressed desire to be swallowed up by America, to be subsumed by its great chaos suggests that he feels as though he is a strangely delectable *foreign* object rather than a part of that which he describes as the burgeoning omnivorous entity New York. He perceives himself as the willing prey wandering blindly into the dragon's lair. However, for several reasons this account is too simplistic.

Solanka is immersed in New York, the integrated global economy's symbolic heartland, and he may be a willing victim but he is far from blind to the personal implications this environment may hold for him. His cynicism towards the integrated global economy's competitive, "let the fittest survive" values suggests he feels at least partially assimilated to and complicit with that which he so vehemently claims to reject.[177] Indeed, his reasons for eschewing his former academic career acutely illustrate how part of his personal mission is to reject what he views as the insidiously competitive parts of himself, those parts he felt

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[175] I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1990, p. 98.
[176] ibid., p. 99.
[177] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 161.

reflected his "increasingly phoney" surroundings.[178] His assertion that he is not, and nor does he ever wish to be one of those people the all-pervading proponents of the "values" of the integrated global economy hail as the "fittest" is his defiant claim of difference. Yet as we have seen, the multifarious processes of reflexivity dictate that this assertion alone cannot be seen as the final word.

Solanka's cynicism could be seen as undermining his claim to the outsider category. It may be the one emotional response he still feels is firmly within his control, yet it is a response that only exists and thrives as a consequence of his combative engagement with the subject of his ire. This response binds him to that which he claims is alien to him. Ironically, his oppositional stance, his claim on the status of an outsider can only be maintained through his immersion as an insider within the very environment that is symbolic of all he despises. As such, the question of Solanka's status as either an outsider or insider becomes problematic. In this instance the frontiers of difference imposed by the logic of identity are blurred and unworkable. Solanka's inability to articulate his position on this frontier confirms this fact.

Connolly correctly states: "the definition of difference is a requirement built into the logic of identity".[179] This requirement, however, is not the problematic aspect of the logic of identity. It is the manner in which difference is defined within the context of this logic that presents a new set of questions. As Marion Young argues, "the logic of identity" as constructed throughout "the history of Western thought" demands that "difference" is defined through "binary oppositions".[180] This logic, she adds, "shoves difference into dichotomous hierarchical oppositions: essence/accident, good/bad, normal/deviant".[181] Solanka does not fit this dichotomy; it is unworkable. He is neither outsider nor insider. He indirectly recognises this fact when reviewing his encounter with Beloved Ali. Ali stakes his claim as an insider through his professed neglect of his Muslim faith and his feigned "God Bless America" jingoism, yet he dualistically attempts to straddle a position of outsider with his belligerent claims of difference

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[178] ibid., p. 7.
[179] Connolly, op. cit., p. 9.
[180] Young, I. M., op. cit., p. 99.
[181] ibid.

from those he contradictorily derides as being "Godless" New York drivers. This is precisely the type of contradiction Marion Young is referring to. As she states,

> the logic of identity has created a vast number of... mutually exclusive oppositions that structure whole philosophies: subject/object, mind/body, nature/culture. These dichotomies in Western discourse are structured by the dichotomy good/bad, pure/impure. The first side of the dichotomy is elevated over the second because it designates the unified, the self identical, whereas the second side lies outside the unified as the chaotic, unformed, transforming, that always threatens to cross the border and break up the unity of the good.[182]

Rushdie's construction of Solanka's plight and, more pointedly, Beloved Ali's contradictory behaviour directly exemplifies the crux of Marion Young's argument. On a symbolic level, Ali is obeying the rules of the insider; for example, on a daily basis he travels cooperatively down busy New York streets in lawful cohesion with his fellow New Yorkers, conversing politely with his passengers in English. Alternatively, he acts as the archetypical outsider, erratically changing lanes, hurling vitriolic abuse at these same drivers in foreign *Urdu*. His behaviour represents a disruption of the rules governing the logic of identity. If Marion Young's account is applied to Ali's insider-outsider identity binary we see that "the first side of the dichotomy" - Ali's calm, obedient and compliant English-expressed identity - "is elevated over the second" - his antagonistic, deviant and discordant *Urdu*-expressed identity.

The good/bad, pure/impure dichotomies of the logic of identity can also be applied to Ali's behaviour, yet they would not be sympathetic to his assessment of himself. For example, Ali's claim that "Islam will cleanse" New York's streets inverts the Western pure/impure binary. [183] It is a claim that derides Western notions of order and correctness. Within the current Western socio-political context, radical Islam is increasingly being portrayed as signifying all that is bad and impure. It follows that the "mutually exclusive" sides of the identity-logic frontiers Marion Young discusses also problematically designate Islam as symbolic of all that is negative. However, Ali's superficial expression of readiness to wash his hands of Islam, his appeasing claim that he doesn't "even go to the mosque"

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[182] ibid.
[183] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 66.

indicates that he is aware of the need to at least be seen to be attending to the Western cultural imperative for unity. Regardless of his true feelings, Ali is outwardly remorseful when he realises Solanka has uncovered his binary opposites because he is keenly aware that his angry outbursts betray a form of negative particularity that threatens the opposing "unity of the good".[184] Ali flippantly repents because he realises that he has transgressed Western cultural frontiers with his momentary expressions of disdain. His contrition shows he understands that, if he is to work, live and generally be accepted within the integrated global economy he must metaphorically keep a foot either side of the insider-outsider border; he must maintain at least the façade of an acceptable identity.

4.19 "The mechanization of the human"

Contemporary Western society invariably seeks to rationalise and extinguish the so-called negative side of identity dichotomies. The logic of identity is unworkable and ultimately unattainable, yet paradoxically it holds cultural primacy. As a result, the personal expectations that Western culture encourages are unrealistic – they are supposedly human expectations that are ironically best described as *in*human. This is the glaringly illogical flaw in the logic of identity that Solanka is unable to reconcile. The black and white binaries that constitute the logic of identity eliminate particularity; there are no shades of grey. Within these ruthlessly policed socio-political paradigms, individuality is force-catagorised in accordance with impossibly idealistic, prejudiced or indeed hopelessly vague notions of good and bad, pure and impure. Physical and mental facets that are deemed as representative of the negative side of these paradigms are crudely classified as flaws or errors rather than positive markers of virtue, uniqueness or individuality. The integrated global economy obliterates public-private frontiers and unrealistically demands similarly integrated ideals of physical appearance and mental behaviour. Mindful of Solanka's opposition to these ideals, his views regarding the manner in which individuals are relentlessly encouraged to achieve them offers an additional perspective of the dynamics of contemporary identity processes.

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[184] I. M. Young, op. cit., p. 99.

Reviewing his own apparently deteriorating mental state - a state that designates he occupies Sontag's "night side of life" - Solanka renews his earlier expressed "scorn for [the] age of doctors".[185] He views them as shrewd beneficiaries of an inhuman process he refers to as the "mechanization of the human".[186] Mechanization is described as a mental and physical process designed to remedy those deemed unfit according to the logic of identity. Psychiatry, Solanka asserts, mentally cripples its victims into dependence on "chemical crutches".[187] Pharmaceutical companies, he adds, monopolised the economic windfall associated with mechanization, patenting treatments that compelled the so-called "unfit" to surrender to the "mist" and "*pledge allegiance to the American drug*".[188] Solanka vows he will not succumb; "everything in him fought against the mechanization of the human."[189] However, the promotion of mechanization as a process that not only efficiently remedies so-called human flaws but also promises to guarantee a miraculous change in lifestyle has meant that the will to fight against it can be difficult to maintain.

Sociologist Anthony Elliot suggests the "quick-fix" promise of "cosmetic surgery" potentially turns the new identity dream into a "nightmare".[190] His argument echoes much of the meaning behind Solanka's mechanization metaphor. Elliot offers his own account of the commonly held criticism that "today's surgical culture promotes a fantasy of the body's infinite plasticity".[191] Acknowledging the ethical, physical and mental dilemmas attendant to cosmetic procedures, Elliot's argument is significant in that it highlights a broader set of additional problems. The increasing insistence that cosmetic culture keeps pace with the integrated global economy's mantra of rapid change presents a new set of dilemmas. As Elliot states,

> The culture of short-termism puts pressure on people to try to 'improve', 'transform' and 'reinvent' themselves. Driven by desire and fear of such

[185] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 182.
[186] ibid.
[187] ibid., pp. 182-183.
[188] ibid., p. 182, [italics are Rushdie's].
[189] ibid.
[190] A. Elliot, "Drastic Plastic – Beauty's New Quick-Fix Nightmare", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 2006.
[191] ibid.

> metamorphosis, individuals desperately attempt to refashion themselves as more efficient, faster, leaner, inventive and self-actualising than they were previously. Day-in day-out, society in the era of surgical culture is fundamentally shaped by this fear of disposability.[192]

Elliot's comments regarding "short-termism" are reminiscent of many aspects of the career-identity dilemmas discussed by Paehlke and Sennett. Individuals within the integrated global economy have their personal narratives, their "ethical value" threatened not only in the workplace environment but also within the realm of body image.[193] The same set of potentially destructive and emotionally vapid "values" apply: "no long term... keep moving, don't commit yourself, don't sacrifice".[194] These "values" are seen as guarantees of career success within the integrated global economy. Earlier, I presented an account of a selection of the potentially detrimental effects of applying these values to particular areas of the personal realm; for instance, the family. However, if applied to the physical self, as countenanced by Elliot, then the consequences can be even more severe. "For those seduced by the promises of the makeover industry", Elliot observes, "the danger of cosmetic surgery is a form of change so rapid and so complete that identity becomes disposable".[195] The personal cost for those who submit to this industry is clear, however, as Elliot adds, there are "wider social costs" associated with mechanization.[196] "We are all debased by this soulless surgical culture", he concludes.[197] This is the social cost to which Solanka refers.

Although Solanka claims to fight against the illusory "promises of the makeover industry", he is aware that his opposition to it defines him. This is evidently a frightening prospect. The irony in his situation is clear: his friends and colleagues cast him as abnormal for choosing to not seek "help" of this superficial nature. He is aware that his journey back into the "kingdom of the well" will take time; indeed he is not even sure as to what form that journey will take. "He feared himself", yet he was certain that it was he alone that would "bring this thing under

[192] ibid.
[193] Sennett, op. cit., p. 10.
[194] ibid., p. 25.
[195] Elliot, op. cit.
[196] ibid.
[197] ibid.

control".[198] To do so would require that he reject the dominant dictates of makeover industry and instead follow a remedial path of his making. He needed to confront his fear in a manner that enabled him to articulate the fractured components of his identity at a safe distance. He needed to reduce his calamity to a small and manageable scale; a microcosm through which he could direct, unite and consolidate his disparate selves.

4.20 A "trick of the mind"

As I have indicated, Solanka is unable to reconcile his own identity, yet he is unwilling to surrender himself to the dominant logic of identity. Mindful of this point, his motivations in the conception of The Puppet Kings story begins to gain clarity. The Puppet Kings serve as a model against which the problematic aspects of the logic of identity can be tested and explicated. The incorporation of The Puppet Kings tale within *Fury* allows many of the symbolic aspects of identity hinted at throughout the novel to be explored in an intensive allegorical fashion. It offers yet another perspective, an additional angle through which identity can be analytically engaged beyond the confines of the frontiers that designate that the term identity only be applied to "the limited category of humanity."[199] To adequately contextualise the allegorical function of The Puppet Kings, it is crucial to note that the tale is spawned from Solanka's earlier conceived academic project: The Philosopher Dolls.

The Philosopher Dolls were born-out of an "idiosyncratic personal vision"; an idea fostered by Solanka's obsessive interest in an historic series of ornate miniature dolls-houses he viewed on display at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum.[200] The displays "were open-fronted, as if bombs had knocked away their façades".[201] This observation is crucial, in that it appears to unearth the root of Solanka's interest: the intricate miniatures exposed and simplified the inner-workings of otherwise hidden and complex entities. They remained true to the detail, yet scaled it down to a more manageable size, a reduced scale that could be

[198] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 181.
[199] Jenkins, op. cit., p. 3.
[200] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 16.
[201] ibid., p. 15.

comprehended. Solanka describes them as representative of a broader, unarticulated cultural fascination with miniatures. The Rijksmuseum display gave substance to what he described as an exquisite "trick of the mind", a trick that leads us "to see human life made small, reduced to doll size".[202] His disillusionment with the apparent lack of meaningful institutional recognition of his humanities research into "the state's responsibility to and for its citizens, and the parallel and sometimes contradictory idea of the sovereign self" could be seen as triggering his eccentric adaptation of the miniature theme to his academic work.[203] Miniatures, Solanka believed, would reinvigorate his faltering passion for ideas; they would expose the "narrowness, infighting and ultimate provincialism" of "academic life" and provide an antidote to the "scorn" of his former colleagues.[204] Thus, the Philosopher Dolls were born.

The dolls were fashioned in the mold of the so-called "great minds".[205] They included figures such as Bertrand Russell, Kierkegaard, Machiavelli and Socrates. Each miniature doll had idiosyncratic attributes. For example,

> Solanka's favourite, a two-faced, four-armed Galileo: one face muttered the truth under its breath, while one pair of arms, hidden in the folds of his garments, secreted a little model of the earth spinning around the sun; the other face, downcast and penitent under the stern gaze of the men in red frocks, publicly recanted its knowledge, while a copy of the Bible was tightly, devoutly clutched by the second pair of arms.[206]

Years prior to Solanka's desperate flight from his U.K. life, the Philosopher Dolls hint at the duplicity of the logic of identity that would later confront and confound him in the midst of his New York crisis. Like Beloved Ali, Krysztof, Rhinehart and indeed, Solanka himself, Galileo is depicted as impossibly straddling both sides of the good-bad, pure-impure identity dichotomies. The irrationality of the logic of identity seems to compel Solanka to depict Galileo as a multi-limbed proponent of a form of comical duplicity. The dolls ridiculed the impossible demands these identity dichotomies imposed on individuals. Indeed, they served as an articulation of Solanka's own frustrations in this regard.

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[202] ibid.
[203] Rushdie (2001), op. cit., p. 14.
[204] ibid.
[205] ibid., p. 16.
[206] ibid.

Solanka believed many within, what he viewed as, the cloistered ranks of contemporary academia demanded its "charismatic", "golden-boy" intellectual "titans" be all things to all people; he felt he had witnessed the inevitable results of these demands in the rise and fall of his friend Krysztof.[207] As Krysztof's inevitable "Icarus-like flameout" confirmed it was impossible to sustain such a mantle of universality.[208] To maintain this level of success, like the miniature Galileo one would need to be two-faced and four-armed. Whether Solanka realises it or not (notably, his motivations are not explicitly expressed in Rushdie's narrative) this is one of the points that the dolls help to illustrate. As with the Dutch dollhouses, Solanka's Philosopher Dolls miniaturised the titans. On an overtly symbolic level, they too were vessels that served to expose and simplify the inner-workings of otherwise hidden and complex entities.

The same cultural fascination that inspired Solanka was swiftly identified by shrewd popular cultural apparatchiks outside the academy. However, their motivations were distinctly different. Television "executives soon weighed in"[209] and his "notorious collection" of "outsize egghead dolls" became the protagonists of a "late-night" BBC "series of popular history-of-philosophy programmes".[210] The programmes proved popular and, as Solanka reflects, they quickly "blossomed into a full-blooded prime-time hit".[211] Part of the dolls' appeal lay in their occasionally derisory simplification of sophisticated, perceived elitist, ideas. It seemed the class-conscious U.K. viewing public reveled in the idea of cantankerous miniature dolls rattling the so-called ivory towers of academia. However, despite the avowed simplicity of the dolls, as their appeal broadened a translator of sorts was required to draw out and clarify their scaled-down, albeit still complex, ideas. In order to attend to this need Solanka conceived of "the female time-traveling doll Little Brain".[212] As her moniker attested, Little Brain would toil within the confines of the same reduced scale imposed on her

[207] ibid., pp. 14-24.
[208] ibid., p. 24.
[209] ibid., p. 96.
[210] ibid., pp. 14-15.
[211] ibid., p. 15.
[212] ibid., p. 17.

philosophising interviewees. It was Solanka's intention that she would function as a "smart, sassy... but still idealistic Candide, his Valiant-for-Truth".[213] Her popularity grew and she soon outsized her companions. For example, when interviewing Galileo, she adopted the dismissive, rebellious vernacular of contemporary youth culture: "If some pope had tried to get me to lie," she defiantly shrieked at the perplexed philosopher, "I'd have started a fucking revolution... I'd have burned his fucking city down".[214] It was quickly apparent to Solanka that his dolls had literally outgrown the metaphysical parameters of their conception. Anthropomorphosis had occurred in increments too subtle to see. Their unexpected popularity, particularly Little Brain's appeal, had re-sized them. The overbearing desire of the viewing public to place them within "large-scale categories" had poisoned Solanka's project.

Little Brain was "literally" reanimated as a "life-size" star in her own right.[215] The former "disciple" of "the real heroes" (the philosophers she interviewed) was to be played by a *real* actor with her own top-rating television show bolstered by a mass merchandising campaign.[216] Ironically, the "heroes" that Solanka had sought to deconstruct and simplify were "deemed much too highbrow"; Little Brain's phenomenal success eventually "wiped out" all memory of her companion philosophers.[217] As Solanka suggests, "she had outgrown her creator".[218] The perversion of his Philosopher Dolls became but another component of a range of personal factors that compelled him to abandon his career and family and leave for New York. His identity project remained incomplete.

4.21 "The Coming of The Puppet Kings"

The introspection triggered in the aftermath of his collision with Ali seems to inspire Solanka to renew his abandoned project. There are, however, distinct modifications. His disillusionment with the Philosopher Dolls convinced him that

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[213] ibid.
[214] ibid.
[215] ibid., pp. 96-97.
[216] ibid., p. 96.
[217] ibid.
[218] ibid., p. 97.

a new level of control needed to be established. His new venture would involve puppets as opposed to dolls. Solanka's puppets differed from the dolls in that they are not tactile entities, they are written matter – the subjects of a story he entitles: "Let the Fittest Survive: The Coming of The Puppet Kings".[219] Unlike the Philosopher Dolls who could be unscrupulously remodeled and adapted, he vowed to retain complete control over the puppet protagonists of his new tale. The story, he admits, is fuelled by his New York experiences. The writing process initially proves therapeutic. In fictionalising that which he feared, the unnamable cacophony that threatened to obscure him seemed to dissipate. "New York", he reflects, "faded into the background".[220] This did not mean that he had completely disengaged form his surroundings; he had merely refashioned them. Indeed, amidst the inspiring early stages of the project, it seemed he had finally taken control. As he states, "real life had started obeying the dictates of fiction, providing precisely the raw material he needed to transmute through the alchemy of his newborn art."[221] However, as the story progresses, Solanka reveals that the puppet protagonists are reluctant to obey the dictates of their creator.

The tale comes to Solanka in a "great rush".[222] Set on the fictional planet "Galileo-1", Solanka begins his story with its central character: "Akasz Kronos, the great cynical cyberneticist".[223] Kronos is a figure Solanka (the self-professed great cynic) admits embodies a selection of his own strengths and failings. Considering the subsequent course of the story, Solanka's nominal adaptation of the mythological character Kronos "the child devourer, Time", is also significant.[224] Akasz Kronos creates The Puppet Kings in response to an impending environmental crisis that threatens to end the planet's "prolonged golden age".[225] However, "on account of a terminal flaw in his character that made him unable to consider the general good", his Puppet Kings are designed to "guarantee nobody's

[219] ibid., pp. 161-168.
[220] ibid., p. 170.
[221] ibid.
[222] ibid., p. 139.
[223] ibid., p. 161.
[224] ibid., p. 170.
[225] ibid., p. 161.

survival but his own".[226] Kronos's cybernetic puppets are given immense power; each one has the ability to "endlessly re-create itself in its own image".[227] In an effort to ensure the greatness of his legacy as the genius-creator, Kronos also gives them a "value system" that affords his creations a "degree of ethical independence. The possibility of idealism was allowed."[228] Kronos, Solanka writes, "could not resist seeing how theses new life-forms resolved the battle that rages within all sentient creatures, between light and dark, heart and mind, spirit and machine".[229] This metaphysical aspect of Solanka's Puppet Kings story, his identity-project presents yet another set of questions regarding the binaries of the logic of identity. In the context of his story, however, the conditions influencing The Puppet Kings' approach to these binaries seem controlled, directed by metaphorical strings. As Solanka himself found, this control is illusionary. Mindful of his own experience, he seems to inject his perspective of these binaries into his tale.

Kronos' resolve to grant his creations "psychological and moral liberty" proves to be a dire decision.[230] "The greatness of Akasz Kronos", Solanka writes, "was also his downfall".[231] Realising the seemingly unlimited extent of their abilities, The Puppet Kings re-define the "value system" imposed upon them by Kronos. The meaning behind the so-called "six high Kronosian values" is drastically modified: "*Lightness*" becomes "making light of what is grave"; "*Quickness*" becomes ruthless "efficiency"; "*Exactitude*" becomes "tyranny"; "*Visibility*" becomes "attention seeking"; "*Multiplicity*" becomes "duplicity"; and "*Consistency*" becomes "obsessiveness".[232] This pivotal development in the tale seems to serve as Solanka's fictional portent as to the possible results of the "mechanization of the human". The disposability of identity that accompanies mechanization appears to mirror Solanka's earlier highlighted views regarding the disposability of previously entrenched human values. As we have seen Solanka reflect, the modification of these values is already underway. For example, within

[226] ibid.
[227] ibid.
[228] ibid., p. 164.
[229] ibid.
[230] ibid., p. 165.
[231] ibid., p. 164.
[232] ibid.

the integrated global economy: "unhappiness [is] redefined as physical unfitness" and "despair as a question of good spinal alignment".[233] Immune from reflexivity, The Puppet Kings engaged in a ruthless form of self-making; one that appears to lead to the unmaking of their apparently superfluous creator Kronos.

The Puppet Kings remain governed by their prime directive stating that they must not harm their creator. However, their skillful duplicity imbues them with the necessary cunning to negate this commandment. The Puppet Kings establish their own set of identity binaries that equate humanity with unpredictability; using this logic as justification they usurp Kronos with a "creator" of their own making, dubbing this cyborg "The Dollmaker".[234] Kronos' fate, however, is uncertain. The Dollmaker was so like the original creator that the inevitable question was posed: "Had [Kronos] genuinely been overthrown, or was his disappearance some sort of fiendish ploy?"[235] This quandary led The Puppet Kings to examine their own notions of self. In the beginning, by imposing a "value system" upon them, Kronos had offered them a choice: "a choice between their original, mechanical selves and some, at least, of the ambiguities of human nature".[236] It is at this suspenseful point that the first installment of Solanka's "Let the Fittest Survive" tale closes. "What would be their choice", Solanka writes, "wisdom - or fury? Peace - or fury? Love - or fury? The fury of genius, of creation, or of the murderer tyrant, the wild shrieking fury," he concludes, the fury "that must never be named."[237] The choice of The Puppet Kings is Solanka's choice. His tale, however outlandish, had served to articulate his own dilemma. Importantly, his fictional microcosm did not offer any answers; its strength lay in the manner in which it deconstructed the formerly complex questions that had once threatened to subsume Solanka. As the master creator, he was now presented with a set of binaries of his own making. What would be his choice: the fury of creation or the wild, shrieking unnamable fury?

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[233] ibid., p. 183.
[234] ibid., pp. 166-167.
[235] ibid., p. 168.
[236] ibid.
[237] ibid.

4.22 "The dissolution of the frontiers"

With the assistance of a clique of his cyber-literate New York acquaintances, Solanka is discouraged from pursuing the traditional publishing route and his tale "Let the Fittest Survive" is solely presented through the medium of a website. In keeping with the "speed of things" within the integrated global economy, he is informed that his tale would achieve a "leading edge" by being interactive.[238] "The whole concept of ownership as far as ideas is so different now", his technically astute colleagues tell him, "it's so much more co-operative".[239] Made to feel selfish, foolish and old-fashioned, Solanka is convinced. He falls victim to mechanization; his belief in dedication and commitment is debased by the contemporary imperative that he be "flexible".[240] Again, in a manner indicative of his tale and his bleak perception of reality, Solanka finds that formerly virtuous values are inverted, modified and re-defined. The choice between furies, a choice that he had strived for so long to clarify, would no longer be his choice alone.

As with his Philosopher Dolls, The Puppet Kings tale metaphorically severed its strings. Millions of interactive internet users downloaded, re-booted and reconfigured his creations. The subtle distinctions and delicate ambiguities Solanka had fostered between puppet and creator, mechanized and human were muddled by the unfettered imposition of endless possibilities. The website's innumerable variations of "encounters between 'real' and 'real', 'double' and 'double'... demonstrated the dissolution of the frontiers between the categories".[241] Ethical battles were played-out on the website between competing understandings of truth and lies, real and double. A stream of questions emerged. For example: "What were the limits of tolerance? How far in the pursuit of the right could we go before we crossed a line, arrived at the antipodes of ourselves, and became wrong?"[242] Unlike his reaction to the undesirable evolution of his Philosopher Dolls, Solanka is not outwardly adverse to the uncharted and unchecked development of The Puppet Kings. It seems to play-out and confirm his belief in

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[238] ibid., pp. 178-179.
[239] ibid., p. 178.
[240] ibid.
[241] ibid., p. 187.
[242] ibid., p. 188.

the inevitability of the identity process. He equates his attitude to the acquiescence of creative control to his understanding of Krysztof's, earlier cited, dilemma. "People were waking up like Krysztof", Solanka surmises, "and realising that their lives didn't belong to them".[243] The distinctions between real and unreal Solanka had previously strived to delineate did not exist. His creations, like his identity project, did not belong to him; they were part of a wider, indistinct cultural malaise. He too was "waking up", and he had finally realised the true nature of his dilemma. As Rushdie's narration indicates, "the furies hovered over Malik Solanka, over New York and America, and shrieked. In the streets below, the traffic, human and inhuman, screamed back its enraged assent"[244]. His identity project had obliterated the false frontiers of real and double, lies and truth, and "human and inhuman".

The Puppet Kings had served a purpose, they had shown that he could escape the identity binaries that imprisoned him; notions of good-bad, pure-impure were false and indistinct. As The Puppet Kings website had shown, the possibilities for the self were endless and unrestricted. Despite his newfound perspective, Solanka gained no respite. The fury remained. Like his life and The Puppet Kings, the fury did not belong to him alone, it enveloped the masses, making the human and the inhuman indistinguishable. It drowned out and devoured all in its path.

Regardless of the intent behind their creation and their subsequently unchecked development, The Puppet Kings had functioned as an insightful allegory. They had confirmed that there was substance to his cynicism of identity binaries. The idea that puppetry be utilised as a didactic, or purely expressive, identity tool is not new. Referring to the "ancient" theological heritage of puppetry, Japanese puppeteer Noriyuki Sawa suggests, "puppet theatre has been developed as [a] religious ritual".[245] Reminiscent of the metaphysical origins of Solanka's Philosopher Dolls, Sawa pays homage to the same cultural fascination with miniatures. Puppetry, he adds, "has been [a] miniature-model of the relation

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[243] ibid., p. 184.
[244] ibid.
[245] Asai, T. "The Wizard of the Stage", *Chuou-Kouron* (online), http://www.puppet-house.co.jp/nori/sawa6.htm, 2000 (accessed 12 January 2006).

between God and human beings."[246] Again mindful of the apparent manipulation or evolution of the Philosopher Dolls, Sawa's comments regarding the didactic potential of puppet theatre are interesting. Sawa inverts the puppet-puppeteer exchange, adding that he "would also like just to go forward being manipulated, hopefully by the God but maybe by puppets."[247] Sawa's closing remark is of particular significance in that it illustrates that the puppeteer or, in Solanka's case, creator can be guided by a similar desire for direction, change or manipulation. As with the miniatures discussed earlier, this desire can be described as a project designed to expose and simplify the inner-workings of the otherwise hidden and complex conceptual facets of identity.

4.23 "Being inside another skin"

The idea of puppetry as an identity-project is also a concept increasingly being countenanced in popular culture. For example, the 1999 U.S. feature film, *Being John Malkovich,* written and produced by Charlie Kaufman, presents a skewed vision of identity through puppeteering and subsequently possession.[248] The film could be classed as a black comedy that explores competing readings of identity through the bizarre plot premise that an individual can occupy and, indeed, subsume another's body and soul. The film's protagonist, Craig Schwartz (played by John Cusack) is a long-suffering unemployed puppeteer. "Nobody's looking for a puppeteer in today's wintry economic climate", he whines, scanning the employment pages.[249] Upon securing a "temporary" job as a file clerk, Schwartz

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[246] ibid.
Puppets can also be seen as acting as vessels for the articulation of particular cultural rituals. For example, renowned Czech puppeteer Christian Jankowski held a "Puppet Conference" in 2003 at the Carnegie Museum of Art. As the museum's website reported "a number of internationally known television puppets, including Grover from Sesame Street, Fozzie Bear from the Muppet Show, and Mallory Lewis and Lamb Chop... gathered to discuss the vocation, celebrity, and private lives of puppets". Clearly, Jankowski seeks to address issues of identity and celebrity commonly engaged in contemporary culture. However, his methodology differs from common analytical tacks. In using puppets as vessels, Jankowski adds another layer to his analysis, and thus we are offered a unique and penetrating insight into these issues. "In Puppet Conference", the report adds, "the puppets discuss the intricate web of understanding and protocol that defines a puppet's personal identity".
See: "Christian Jankowski's Puppet Conference at Carnegie Museum of Art", *Sagecraft* (online), http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/news/, 2004 (accessed 12 Jan. 2006).

[247] Asai (online), op. cit.

[248] *Being John Malkovich*, Feature Film, Director: Spike Jonze, Polygram, U.S.A., 1999.

[249] ibid.

accidentally discovers a so-called "portal" that leads inside actor John Malkovich's body; hence the film's central concept and title.[250] Notwithstanding the somewhat outlandish nature of the film's plot, it does pose some insightful questions concerning the notion of self and the previously cited logic of identity binaries. Interesting parallels are also apparent between Rushdie's construction of Solanka's Puppet Kings and Kaufman's treatment of Schwartz's puppeteering motives.

Like Solanka, Schwartz's engagement with puppets is presented as the way in which he negates the negative, unrealised and unsatisfactory aspects of his life. Solanka's Puppet Kings can be understood as implicitly engaging identity on a conceptual level; Schwartz, however, addresses his personal dilemmas in an extraordinarily direct, explicit manner. For instance, when his clumsy declaration of love for his "beautiful" work colleague Maxine (played by Katherine Keener) is rebuked, his reaction is startling. "You're not somebody I could get interested in Craig. You play with dolls!" Maxine bluntly tells him.[251] The spurned Schwartz is not deterred, he re-enacts their encounter alone at home with two puppets he has fashioned in the likeness of himself and Maxine. However, as the following puppet dialogue indicates, the outcome is dramatically different:

> MAXINE: "Tell me Craig, why do you love puppeteering?"
>
> SCHWARTZ: "Well Maxine, I'm not sure exactly. Perhaps it's the idea of becoming someone else for a little while. Being inside another skin; thinking differently, moving differently, feeling differently."
>
> MAXINE: "Interesting Craig. Would you like to be inside *my* skin; think what *I* think, feel what *I* feel?"
>
> SCHWARTZ: "*More than anything* Maxine."
>
> MAXINE: "It's good in here Craig. It's better than your wildest dreams."[252]

The exchange is then sealed with Schwartz's orchestrated puppet kiss. The puppetry however, fails to ultimately address or resolve Schwartz's problems; he is of course unable to get "inside" Maxine's skin. In fact, his role-play results in a volatile heightening of his unrequited infatuation and he eventually becomes subsumed by various identities he frantically adopts in the mistaken belief they

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[250] ibid.
[251] ibid.
[252] ibid.

will appeal to her. As with Solanka's Puppet Kings, the evolution of the puppet identity seems to inevitably end with the severing of the strings and the obliteration of the puppet's creator.

4.24 Conclusion: the unfinished identity project

The identity dilemmas puppetry may be designed to solve are played out on a smaller scale. Despite the lack of resolution, these miniaturised versions of identity (these microcosms) adjust our perspectives and allow identity to be encountered on a uniquely different and at times insightful level. Although it does not appear to be his original intention in conceiving The Puppet Kings, Solanka's tale reveals a pivotal aspect of identity processes. We are both the creators of our projected identities and the created identity itself. Yet, like Professor Kronos, we can never hope to maintain complete control of our creations; our identities cut the strings. Our original designs are devoured by the passage of time - time that, to a great extent, is measured by the emotional flux of life's encounters. These encounters, these inescapable collisions and explosions with others can distort our notion of self; revealing the hidden angles of our identity that we cannot otherwise hope to see. The themes engaged in The Puppet Kings story again emphasise that identity is not a static phenomenon. We are subject to the identities we create for ourselves yet we do not maintain absolute control of these identities. The perspectives of others and our own changing perspectives determine the shape of our personal borders and frontiers.

Solanka's identity project could not be completely realised in an isolated, individual sphere. His attempts to do so, however sophisticated and introspective, invariably led him to the same end-point. The same question always emerged: was his personal dilemma, his fury, merely "a thing of pathetic insignificance, the indulgence, perhaps, of a privileged individual with too much self interest. And too much time on his hands"?[253] This was an intensely personal question that ironically could only be addressed and tested within the public domain. It raises broader issues concerned with the manner in which Solanka's individuality, his

[253] ibid., p. 193.

sense of self, is influenced by his surroundings and shaped by his conscious and unconscious interplay with his environment. As Sarup states, "identity is a construction, a consequence of processes of interaction between people, institutions and practices".[254] Mindful of this point and the nature of Solanka's identity dilemma, it is apparent then, that the complexities surrounding questions of identity can only be fully comprehended when addressed in the context of the processes of interaction to which Sarup refers. These processes are semantically articulated as cultural processes. The cultural sphere can be figuratively understood as one of many the frontiers at which notions of the private and the public intersect. As such, it is culture and the cultural form of meta-identity known as celebrity to which I direct my analysis in the following chapter.

[254] Sarup., op. cit., p. 11.