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Picaresque and Romance in Golden Age Spain and Postcolonial Britain: A
Comparative Study

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Multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon in European history. Neither are its literary and artistic manifestations. This thesis compares and contrasts two distant but similar multicultural contexts: Golden Age Spain and postmodern Britain. Picaresque and romance are chosen to illustrate how authors question religious oppression, cultural intolerance and thought control within multicultural contexts. Cervantes and Rushdie give voice to marginalised minorities and deconstruct the grand-narratives of religion; Alemán, Kureishi, Dhondy and the author of Estebanillo González all depict life at the margins.

The establishment of a counter-canonical critique of literary tradition in Golden Age Spain, and the emergence and development of genres such as the picaresque, would not have been possible without Spain’s multicultural heritage and the presence of Spanish marginal and dissident voices. Gradually these voices from the periphery vanished as Spanish minorities were absorbed by the centre. Likewise, the power to confront of a marginal genre, such as the picaresque, disappeared. From the Spanish case we can draw a parallel in contemporary Britain, where representations of the margins are becoming absorbed into the mainstream. Postmodern Britain recalls the Spanish case not only in terms of the emergence of minority voices which are being absorbed by the centre, but also in terms of the choice of genres to express hybridity, difference and cross cultural and religious encounters. However, there is a difference
between sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain and postmodern Britain; ethnicity has become desirable.
If you hear anything new, associate it with what you know.

Hippias 5th century BC
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Chapter I

Multiculturalism and Hybridity in the Western Tradition

1.1 Intertextual projects

All writing is intertextual. 'The text', as Barthes points out, 'is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original [...] His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others' (Barthes 1977: 146-7). The recent emergence of a multi-ethnic British culture and multicultural policies echoes similar situations in earlier European literary history. Taking as my starting-point Barthes' idea of textual dialogue, in which 'a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue' (1977: 148), I propose to examine similar approaches to oppression and marginality through minority and hybrid discourses in two distinct and widely separated literary contexts: Golden Age Spain and postcolonial Britain.

'Margin' and 'centre' are psychological constructs. Marginality is the condition constructed in relation to a privileged centre, an example of 'Othering' dictated by authority. It represents a challenge to the 'centre'. Similarly, the term 'ethnicity' as used in British cultural studies provides the basis for a mode of social critique for those marginally displaced; that is, ethnicity is a kind of marginality. In Western multicultural or multiracial societies writers seen as 'ethnic' often respond to their environment through a critique of contemporary Western 'high' culture, and also through dramatising or satirising life in a 'minority' group.
Fiction draws on the knowledge and fashions of its period, current discourses which are themselves sites of both power and contestation of power. The manipulation of discourses is a powerful resource of the artist. For example, *Saint Stephen's Martyrdom* (1560-65), a pious painting by Vicente Juan Maçip, also known as Juan de Juanes (1523-1579), succeeds in combining two opposing discourses. While it presents itself as an expressive work of Catholic piety, depicting Saint Stephen’s plight assaulted by a group of Jews, it may also be interpreted as a homage to victims of religious intolerance and persecution, such as those of the Inquisition. Indeed, in the case of fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain, painters and writers often subverted mainstream values so effectively that not only did they escape censorship but in fact became part of canonical art. A celebrated example is Velázquez (1599-1660), who not only painted those who held power - mainly members of the Spanish court - but also servants, buffoons, craftsmen and other lowly citizens of his time. The difference between Velázquez’s portrayals and, for example Murillo’s (1617-1682) more straightforward representations of the underclass - *picaros* and peasants -\(^1\) lies in Velázquez’s ability to blur the boundary between margin and centre. In the portrayal of Philip IV’s family (*Las Meninas*, 1656), the members of the Spanish Royal family share the centre of the canvas with their servants, and in *The Forge of Vulcan* (1630) and *The Spinners* ('Palas Athenea’s dispute with Arachne', c. 1657), mythical gods appear among workers and scenes from daily life. Like Cervantes in *The Adventures of Don Quixote* (1605), Velázquez offers an image within an image, a text within a text, to pay indirect homage to marginality.\(^2\) Like the polyphonic novel, Velázquez’s paintings question

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\(^1\) See Bartolomé Esteban Murillo’s *The Younger Beggar*, oil on canvas, 1650, Louvre Museum, Paris.

\(^2\) See Riley’s comparison of Velázquez’s Meninas with *Don Quixote* to illustrate ‘an act of mental detachment which is a distinguishing mark of European thought around 1600’; Edward C. Riley, *Cervantes’s Theory of the Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) 223.
official points-of-view through covertly anti-canonical art. His stress on otherness stems from the need to oppose official discourses at a time when questioning incurred draconian measures of persecution. His success, like that of Cervantes or Mateo Alemán, stems from ambiguity. The lack of centrality, for example, in the portrayal of the Infante Baltasar Carlos with a Dwarf (1631), makes us wonder who is the subject of the portrayal: the Infante himself, or the dwarf. In fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain, such ambiguity must be read in terms of a reaction to the threatening presence of the Inquisition. In contemporary Britain the case is usually less clear-cut. However, certain recent cultural manifestations can be understood as part of the same questioning of dominant values, a similar interplay of discourses which questions culturally dominant truths and beliefs.

Since the emergence of the satiric model ('Menippean satire'), at the time when Hellenic national bonds and moral standards where dissolving (c. 4th century BC), there has always been the potential for non-realist forms in Western fiction to be used as agents of cultural criticism; Boccacio, Cervantes, Rabelais, Sterne, Swift, Gogol, Joyce, Günter Grass and García Márquez have all employed such forms. Whenever there is an imposed uniformity - Philip II and Philip III's totalitarianism in Spain or today's globalisation of both capitalism and Islam are two such cases - canons and metanarratives are questioned. In the period of Roman decline, for example, Petronius' Satyricon (c. 61-62 AD) and Lucius Apuleius' The Golden Ass (mid 2nd C. AD) resulted from the need to find a literary form which was anti-heroic in substance and language. The response to epic and tragic seriousness by such writers was to create a loose, carnival-like atmosphere. Heroes undergo adventurous wanderings, not only on Earth but also in Heaven and Hell. The Golden Ass satirises the society and Roman life in a period of crisis which brought insecurity and unrest. Fifteen hundred years after Apuleius' satire, Cervantes's The Adventures of Don
Quixote (Part I 1605, Part II 1615) satirised Spain in the same anti-epic way, subverting the genre of the chivalric romance.

In our contemporary Western world, this process of mounting a critique of the centre from the peripheries is somewhat different. We constantly question tradition, and no single dominant mainstream of values and morality exists. Discourses of the centre are less fixed. So, whereas previous periods had an identifiable centre against which satirists could measure their sordid reality, a revival of genres such as the picaresque or satire today has a weaker and less challenging impact than that of their precursors. Moreover, the challenging of authority runs the risk of providing an alternative centre in which the marginal becomes the formative centre of literary discourse, and even becoming fashionable. As we shall see in the final chapter, such a ‘new’ centre may reiterate the same binary oppositions between centre and periphery that it began by confronting.

An examination of the intertextual influence of Cervantes' Don Quixote (1605) on European literature might include a discussion of the quixotic anti-heroes of Turgenev, Borges, Henry Fielding and Graham Greene. In the case of the picaresque itself and the typological frames which it establishes, we might also see a continuing influence in Western literature, from the anonymous Lazarillo de Tormes (c. 1553), Mateo Alemán’s Guzmán de Alfarache (1599), Francisco de Quevedo’s The Life

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3 Las aventuras del ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha translated into English by Thomas Shelton (Part I, 1612; Part II, 1620) as The Adventures of Don Quixote.
4 Translated into English by David Rowland in 1568 and published in 1576 as The Pleasant History of Lazarillo de Tormes. Rowland’s Lazarillo was reprinted in 1596, 1624, 1639 and 1653.
5 Translated into English in 1622 as The Rogue, or the Life of Guzman de Alfarache by James Mabbe and reissued in 1623, 1630, 1655 and 1656.
Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) to contemporary versions such as Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) or Mohammed Choukri's *For Bread Alone* (1972).

Although the picaresque is inherently a genre of the margin, intertextual exploration of the relationship between ethnicity and the Spanish picaresque has rarely been attempted. It is my intention here to study intertextual parallels between the Other in sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain and in late twentieth century Britain. Such an exercise involves an assessment of the hostility between different communities in Spain and the problems of discrimination against immigrants in Britain. Central to my thesis are issues of race, ethnicity, identity and hybridity, social changes in two ex-colonial empires, as well as parallel cases of religious intolerance: Catholic zeal and Islamic fundamentalism. Images of angry mobs in Bradford in 1989 burning Rushdie's photograph, his novel, and repeating the threat of the *fatwa*, remind us of the persecution of heretics and witches in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. However, there are other parallels. Thus, the edicts of expulsion of Spanish minorities between the fifteenth and seventieth centuries might be seen as responses to pressures similar to those which have led to debates on immigration and repatriation in Britain in the late twentieth century.

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7. *La Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor y compuesta por el mismo* was first translated into English by Captain John Stevens in the beginning of the eighteenth century as *The Life and Facts about Estebanillo González, Man with a Good Sense of Humour, Written by Himself*. 
In *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995b) Salman Rushdie pays tribute to Moorish Spain as a model of a multicultural society: 'the fabulous multiple culture of ancient al-Andalus' (Rushdie 1995b: 398), a world in which the tolerance of Muslim rulers towards Christian and Jewish citizens contributed to the flourishing of a highly complex and productive culture, especially in terms of literature. The Moor of the title is Boabdil, the last Moorish monarch of Granada, itself the last stronghold of Moorish rule in Spain. 'The last sigh refers to Boabdil's reaction when in 1492 he was forced to leave the seat of his power, the Alhambra, by the conquering armies of the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella' (Cantor 323). What followed in fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain parallels the situation in modern India: a multicultural coexistence under constant threat from religious fundamentalisms. Paintings in *The Moor's Last Sigh* serve as an 'attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation' in which Aurora 'was using Arab-Spain to re-imagine India' (Rushdie 1995b: 227). For the purpose of illustrating the European multicultural heritage, I will, like Rushdie, use the Spanish case. I will compare literary perceptions of tensions generated in two multicultural societies: Renaissance and Baroque Spain and Postcolonial Britain.

History often repeats itself, and the resulting products of cultural exchange and cultural manifestations may also repeat themselves. For example, today the negative and desperate philosophy of Renaissance Iberian Jewish thinkers, such as the Portuguese Uriel da Costa (1585-1646) and Mateo Alemán (1547-1615), sounds modern, even Kierkergaardian. However, when it comes to multiculturalism, there are considerable differences between the Spanish Golden Age and postcolonial Britain. In the modern literary marketplace for instance, the name of an author may

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8 See also *The Book of Pir* in *Grimus* (London: Gollancz, 1975), where Rushdie combines the East and the West in the Moorish coast of Morispain.
possess an 'ethnic' exoticism which offers the reader-critic difference and otherness. In the relationship between author, work and the reader-critic, in which reading is a form of consumption, the 'difference' of ethnic writing becomes a commodity. The Other, as author and as literary material, has been a constant in European literature but the commodification of alterity is a uniquely contemporary phenomenon scarcely detectable in Renaissance Spain. Indeed the modern marketing of marginality has contributed to a self-imposed victim status that makes it difficult to find 'genuine' minority voices.

1.2 Outsiders and Migrants

Much of the richness of European culture is born of the despair of outsiders and exiles. Dissenters, heretics, blasphemers and rebels have made major contributions to the development of European arts, politics, philosophy, science and technology. The list includes Copernicus, Galileo, Martin Luther, Spinoza and Michel Servetus, as well as many cases where the victimisation of an individual by the mainstream was less clear cut. Similarly, serious creative literature in England often appears peripheral to power. There is a long history of English writers having an ambivalent relationship with power: Shakespeare, John Milton, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, William Blake, Oscar Wilde, as well as pioneer women writers.

In terms of European culture it is often the case that the outsider moves gradually from the peripheries to the centre and becomes part of the European canon. The capacity to generate difference and dissent and then absorb it into the mainstream is a key characteristic of European culture, and this continues today with the questioning presence of integrated 'outsiders' and fabricated minorities. Indeed,
the English canon is constantly changing (or is being changed) in this way. However, there is an irony here, in that the resetting of the European canon in terms of a multicultural agenda may lead to the neglect of many ‘traditional’ writers who were in fact themselves writing on the margins.

In ‘DissemiNation’, Bhabha praises Eric Hobsbawm for writing ‘the history of the modern nation from the perspective of the nations’ margin and the migrants’ exile’ (Bhabha 1995: 139). The perspective of those who are never taken into account (the ‘subaltern’, or oppressed subject, a term borrowed from Gramsci’s ‘subaltern classes’ (Gramsci 1975)) takes shape in discourses of marginality such as race, gender, psychological, geographical and social distance, political exclusion and religious difference. ‘Minority discourse’ is a term which implies the aim of overthrowing the canon and the power that produces it. Such a ‘resistance to totalization’ can be regarded as a threat to the ‘absolutism of the Pure’ (Rushdie 1992: 394), especially that of race, nation or culture, because it promotes difference and generates ambiguous forms. Bhabha and Kristeva have argued that a marginal or ‘outsider’ position in relation to the limits of race and gender produces a radically different understanding of national and cultural identity (Bhabha 1990a, 1995; Kristeva 1991). Hence, this marginal product can serve as a counter to essentialist subjectivity by questioning the cultural and social constructs of ‘imagined’ identity and race (Bhabha 1990a: 300; 1995).

Similarly, postcolonial theory can be used to provide alternative understandings of ‘cultural’ production, a site of radical contestation. Postcolonial studies direct their critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledge in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world. Postcolonialism as a whole, including authors and critics, assumes a position away from the centre, criticising the centre from the periphery. Furthermore,
different kinds of hybrids and hyphenated identities, such as the 'Post-diaspora community', call into question such things as aspirations towards 'British monoculturalism' (Rushdie 1992). Rushdie comments that it is the migrant or exile writer who can best deal with the effects of a 'century of wandering' in which tradition and 'ethnocentric truths' are called into question, because migrants possess the fantasy and irony for an alternative discourse (Rushdie 1992: 15, 125).

One of the consequences of mass migration is the creation of geographically and culturally displaced people who, having experienced the effects of rootlessness 'and various ways of being', distrust the 'suspect realities' of totalising homogeneities and 'understand their illusionary nature' (Rushdie 1992: 125). To move into another place opens up the possibility of a new way of becoming, 'a way which belongs both to the future as much as to the past' (Stuart Hall 1990: 225). Hence, migrants, open to new influences, bring new ideas that make pre-existing epistemologies vulnerable to 'newness'. Newness transforms and enables translation, which for Rushdie becomes culturally enriching. Rushdie points out that newness 'is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world', insisting that he has 'tried to embrace it' in The Satanic Verses, a text 'for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining' (Rushdie 1992: 394). Ambiguity and displacement enable writers to find 'new angles to enter reality' and write from a 'kind of double perspective' free from the 'whole sight' because of their advantageous position as both insiders and outsiders (Rushdie 1992: 10-13, 15, 19).

The migrant, therefore, has a more complex understanding, a double vision, of the new cultures (s)he encounters than those individuals who lack the advantages of cross-cultural encounters: 'To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier' (Rushdie 1992: 125). Rushdie notes that, 'to be a migrant is, perhaps, to be the only species of human being free of the shackles of nationalism (and of its ugly sister,
patriotism). It is a burdensome freedom' (Rushdie 1992: 124). He sees the emergence of doubt, questioning and even confusion as being part of that cultural 'excess' that facilitates the formation of new social identities that do not appeal to a pure and settled past or to a monocultural present in order to authenticate themselves. Their authority lies in the attempt to articulate emergent, hybrid forms of cultural identity.

The hyphen of the 'migrant-hybrid' tries to accommodate the past of the migrant’s place of origin with the future of the new home (Radhakrishnan xiii). For the migrant there is no original home or identity to return to (knosos), but rather multiple new ‘homes’ to inhabit. Rushdie uses the image of ‘broken mirrors’ to refer to the fragmented and lost identities of the migrant writer. For him this becomes a positive and valuable force that gives immigrant writers a plural identity. Individuals between cultures, between different societies and world views, experience ‘the ability to see at once from the inside and out,’ ‘a stereoscopic vision’ which the indigenous writer cannot experience (Rushdie 1992: 19).

Reflecting on the work of Indian writers in England, Salman Rushdie points out that they ‘compose fiction about the phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority group’ (Rushdie 1992: 20):

It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity. Which seems to me self-evidently true; but I suggest that the writer who is out-of-country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form. (Rushdie 1992: 12)

We are all migrants, Rushdie says, in the sense that ‘we all crossed frontiers’. ‘Homelessness’, Heidegger pointed out, ‘is coming to be the destiny of the world’ (1978: 219). The journey from the ‘peripheries’ to the metropolitan ‘centre’, or to the
'centre' itself, is experienced through the universal figure of the traveller who feels at home nowhere and everywhere, who is both outside and inside:

Exile is not a new phenomenon: it is as old as the first home one has left in the prime of consciousness. Its growing incidence, and the psychic states attendant upon the awareness of loss it renders, is, however, a contemporary phenomenon. Exile, or the consciousness of it, has become a dominant part of the modern age and in some cases has acted as a nurturing stimulus to creative expression of its impact. (Tucker xiii)

However, exiles are not only those relocated from their original homes and transplanted into new contexts. Fragmented and contingent postmodern hybridity is experienced not only by migrants residing in metropolitan cities. There are also internal exiles living on the margins of hegemonic cultures: women in endemically sexist societies, homosexuals in homophobic societies, oppressed majorities under occupation, dissidents and eccentrics living beyond the confines of the centre, such as a notable group of dissident writers in the Spanish Golden Age.

Rushdie has called himself a 'translated' man. The meaning of the word 'translation', literally 'bearing across', lies at the root of the dual identity based on cultural negotiation, interaction and assimilation (Rushdie 1992: 17). However, members of some immigrant communities insist on remaining untouched by the new environment in which they find themselves, while at the same time loudly claiming equality. The reception of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) among some British Muslims illustrated that not all minority voices from the margins are progressive or in favour of hybridity:

*The Satanic Verses* failed to convince the diaspora that there is not such a thing as an 'untranslated man': large sections of the diaspora wish to retain this nostalgic definition of the self and cling to 'millenarian' narratives of self-empowerment in which only the untranslated can
recapture a lost harmony but, paradoxically, the desire to retain a pristine sense of the past is only possible through the technologies of mechanical reproduction such as cassette tapes, films, and so on. (Mishra 1995: 14)

Migrants who do not easily fit into the new space they inhabit need to search for alternative options, memories and new ideas in which to ‘root themselves’ (Rushdie 1992: 124). Dislocation can generate loss and uncertainty, which frequently results in a regression into their own past. But being unable to rediscover the exact idea of the past, migrants create ‘imaginary homelands’ and replicate them in the new lands (Rushdie 1992: 10). Thus also did dissident writers living on the margin of sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish society create marginal voices to evade their situation: *picaros* and outsiders like Don Quixote.

### 1.3 Identity and ethnicity

It is an illusion to believe that identity rests on a static sameness or essence. It is subject to constant change, and lacks a fixed meaning or definition. Such a fixity of identity is generated only subjectively in people’s minds. ‘The constitution of identity,’ according to Laclau, ‘is an act of power,’ and ‘identity as such *is* power’ (Laclau 1990: 31; Stuart Hall 1996a: 5). Hence, identity, like all signifying practices, is subject to the ‘play’ of *différance* (Stuart Hall 1996a: 3; 1990: 228); that is, the condition of being the ‘same’ needs ‘otherness’ against which to construct its ‘sameness’. Mutual relations of alterity generate the exclusion and subordination of other groups. It is these relations of power that promote the emergence of identities. Laclau points out that ‘if the oppressed is defined by its difference from the oppressor, such a difference is an essential component of the identity of the
oppressed, which implies that ‘the latter cannot assert its identity without asserting that of the oppressor as well’ (Laclau 1996: 52-53). This, together with the fact that they are both drawn from multiple sources and constructed in relation to various antagonisms, constitutes the fragility and instability of identities. From a Lacanian perspective, however, there is a capacity for occupying multiple identities, which implies creating multiple relations of alterity, both rooted and unrooted.

In our postmodern condition we are beginning to see the limits and dualities of Western modernity. On one hand, the construction of Western identity at the expense of the Other is not longer valid, so collective identities are reinvented by the postmodern mind. On the other hand, if the modernist problem was how to construct an identity, preserve it and protect it from homelessness, the postmodern problem of identity is how to manage new possibilities in a world without fixity. The painful experience of exile central to Modernism is substituted by Postmodernist ideas celebrating loss, rootlessness and the liberating possibility of unbelonging and non-attachment (Ahmad 1992: 134):

What is new in the contemporary metropolitan philosophies and the literary ideologies which have arisen since the 1960s, in tandem with vastly novel restructurings of global capitalist investments, communication systems and information networks - not to speak of actual travelling facilities - is that the idea of belonging is itself being abandoned as antiquated false consciousness. The terrors of High Modernism at the prospect of inner fragmentation and social disconnection have now been stripped, in Derridean strands of postmodernism, of the tragic edge, pushing that experience of loss, instead in a celebratory direction; the idea of belonging is itself seen now as bad faith, a mere ‘myth of origines’, a truth-effect produced by the Enlightenment’s ‘metaphysic of presence’. (Ahmad 1992: 129)

It is in this sense that Spivak points out that being rooted to one place is potentially negative and restricting (1990: 37). The only way to defend the notion of rootedness, Spivak insists, is ‘to surmise the mechanics’ by which its ‘institutions and
inscriptions can stage a particular style of performance' (Spivak 1992: 781). The curse of exile, migrancy, hybridity and of forced homelessness gains a new positive angle through the theory that these sites of difference also offer privileged positions of critical perception and understanding (Bhabha 1990a; 1995). Therefore, discourses of hybridity become a powerful means ‘for critique and resistance to the monological language of authority’ (Papastergiadis 1997: 267-75). Indeed, the very model for academic freedom becomes that of the exile, migrant or traveller who enjoys a double, or plural, consciousness (Said 1991a: 17).

Poststructuralist theory, celebrating the fluidity of boundaries and the undermining of truth-claiming totalities, seeks to present identity as floating through imagined constructions. In this way, an Aristotelian, essentialist conception of form and matter can no longer be applied to Man, since it is assumed that a person is not born with a fixed identity. Both Bhabha and Stuart Hall resist essentialist (cultural) positions in which identity is culturally and socially determined. Hall insists on the anti-determinist process of cultural identity as a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. The process of ‘becoming’, the ways in which we have been represented and how they influence the ways in which we might represent ourselves, is partly drawn from the Lacanian idea that we achieve knowledge of what we are from how others respond to us:

[.. . ] identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (Stuart Hall 1996a: 4)
The ‘changing same’ would become ‘not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms with our “routes”’ (Gilroy 1996, quoted in Stuart Hall 1996a: 4). In Gilroy’s words, ‘it ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at’ (Gilroy 1993b: 120).

Cultural identities are, therefore, variable points of constructed identification through discourses of history and culture. Ethnic identity has been referred to as a ‘social imaginary’ (Castoriadis 1997) and as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983), what Ali Rattansi describes as ‘a collectivity bonded together by forms of literary and visual narration which locate in time and space, in history, memory and territory’ (Rattansi 58). Because it involves at least two components, ethnicity can only happen at the boundary of ‘us’, where we are in contact or confrontation with ‘them’, through a process in which ‘their’ difference is used to enhance the sense of ‘us’. Not only does the boundary shift, but the criteria which mark it change. Thus, ethnic identities, drawn from various sources and often myths of common origin, also evolve and vary.

The word ‘ethnicity’ entered Western academic discourse after the Second World War but its origins are found in the Greek word (ethos), through the Latin ethnicus, both meaning people or nation. Until the nineteenth century it was used in English to refer to pagans or non-Christians, and during the development of scientific racial theories ‘ethnicity’ was used as a synonym for ‘race’. Even now that scientific racism has become obsolete and inappropriate, ‘ethnic’ remains as euphemism for ‘racial’. For example, in We Europeans (1936), Julian Huxley uses the phrase ‘ethnic group’ to refer to groups that were still seen as biological groupings, without implying that they are biological races. Nowadays, ‘ethnic group’ is often a synonym for ‘religious group’.

Thus, ethnic politics become the politics of oppression and racism, of inclusion and exclusion. The ‘ethnic’, as Bhabha points out, often stands for ‘the racial’ or ‘the
marginal or minority’, and in this sense it ‘is not the space of a celebratory or utopian self-marginalization’ (Bhabha 1990a: 4). For contemporary Britain ‘the limits of the nation’ still ‘coincide with the lines of race’ (Gilroy 1993a: 60) and, of course, very often of religion. However, Blackness and Britishness are not mutually exclusive categories, or incompatible identities:

[T]o be both black and British was thought to be an impossible compound identity. To be British is, in any case, to contract into a category of administrative convenience rather than an ethnic identity. It is an ambiguous word which often refuses [its] own obvious cultural referents. The term ‘English’, which is often mistakenly substituted for it, acts as a partial and manifestly inadequate cultural counterpart. The disjuncture between the two terms is a continual reminder not just of English dominance over Scots, Welsh and Irish people, but also that a British state can exist comfortably without the benefit of a unified British culture. (Gilroy 1993b: 75)

In a predominantly white society, whiteness, the absence of colour, becomes the normal unracialised identity. In Britain, whiteness has not been categorised as ethnic. Non-white, conversely, is constructed through ethnic affiliations, based on power relations. Wittgenstein’s observation that ‘something can be transparent green but not transparent white’ (Wittgenstein 1977: I, 9) can be used to analyse British hyphenated identities. In labels such as ‘British-Northern Irish’, ‘British-Scottish’, or even ‘British-English’, the ‘British’ would sound superfluous or redundant because British is synonymous with white and thus lacks ‘ethnicity’. In ‘British-Caribbean’ or ‘British-Indian’, ‘British’ acts as a reminder of the fact that the hyphenated ‘Caribbean’ or the ‘Indian’ are not the same as in just ‘Caribbean’ or ‘Indian’. This hyphenated ‘British’ also warns of a modulated, and perhaps reduced Britishness.

Hence, ethnic identity arises as a definer of racial and cultural identity against the excesses of power and domination of an imagined sense of Englishness. Bhabha, like Rushdie, celebrates ethnic hybridity and syncretism. However, Bhabha tends to
privilege voluntary migrancy and exile, awarding the migrant intellectual a superior position to that of the enforced migrant. Aijaz Ahmad warns of the dangers of this approach, which accommodates itself to the imprecision of a hybrid subject free of gender, class or race constraints (Ahmad 1995: 13; Mongia 286-7). Bhabha’s, and to a lesser extent Rushdie’s, enthusiasm for migrancy pays insufficient attention to the suffering and hardship of the economic migrant or asylum seeker facing discrimination, or the religious and political exile facing persecution:

So, why complain? Ethnicity is in. Cultural difference is in. Marginality is in. Consumption of the Other is all the rage for late capitalism. Finally, it appears that the ‘cooie’ has become cool. Yet [...], racial violence continues to soar as Fortress Europe further secures its borders. (Sharma et al. 1996: 1)

The academy celebrates hybridity while asylum-seekers die trying to enter Europe illegally. This is highly ironic. The need for manual workers which prompted efforts to attract migrants to post-war Britain still exists. It has recently been suggested that the European Union will need up to seventy million extra workers within the first half of the twenty-first century. Some demographers consider immigration a positive force, providing society with both cultural and economic stimulation. However, immigrant workers still face strong hostility in host countries.

Neither has movement across national boundaries become effortless in modern-day Europe; indeed, it was probably easier to move freely through Europe in Medieval times than to cross frontiers without a Schengen visa in the twenty-first century. Tradesmen and pilgrims appear to have travelled within Europe more comfortably than today’s illegal immigrants trying to cross The Straits of Gibraltar or The Channel at Dover. Therefore, in using the terms ‘diaspora’ and ‘migrant’ we should avoid generalisations which ignore the diverse modalities of diasporas, which
include such distinct groups as migrant intellectuals, migrant labour, economic refugees and political exiles. The tendency to talk about the migrant as a member of a homogenous group also ignores distinctions of class, gender and race, pays insufficient attention to the sociological economic and political forces behind migration and 'robs the oppressed of the vocabulary of protest' (Krishnasamy 130).

1.4 The comprador intelligentsia of multiculturalism

The trick to becoming a successful guru is to be an Indian, but to surround yourself with increasing numbers of non-Indians.


In 1996 Olliverio Toscani’s photograph of a black woman breast-feeding a white child was used in the controversial advertising campaign of the Benetton clothing company. The black community in the US voiced strong objections, claiming that it perpetuated the stereotype of the black nanny. Such a negative reaction was, of course, precisely the desired effect, and provided excellent publicity for a company which has systematically exploited issues of race, religion and disease (AIDS) in its advertising. Other images used in the campaigns of ‘The United Colors of Benetton’ have sometimes been reminiscent of the appeals of international charity organisations such as UNICEF or Oxfam (recently Benetton has included direct support for World Food Programme in their advertising). However, beneath Benetton’s photographs of a black hand with a few white grains of rice (1997), of a black Albino girl observed with curiosity and suspicion by her own people (1992), or of a group of refugees in Rwanda straining to get food (1992), there is a significant added meaning; difference and multiculturalism can now be exploited as a new
global aesthetic of commodification. Indeed, in 1986 Benetton chose the image of the globe as its advertising symbol (Mantle 129-30). Models with prominent ethnic characteristics wearing Benetton clothing reminiscent of their national costumes became identified with the visual identity of the company. For some, the image of a young Jew embracing a young Arab with hands holding a globe, or that of models wearing ethnic clothes, were offensively stereotypical. However, Benetton’s vision of a ‘Family of the Future’ (1991) consisting of a black woman, and a white woman with their oriental child, received hardly any response. It seems that even Benetton’s controversial tone became part of the current discourse of advertising and, consequently, the campaign lost some of its ability to shock.

Minority voices can easily seduce dominant discourses to the point that the minority voice is assimilated and subverted by the dominant discourse. The vocabulary of resistance can become standardised and assimilated into the mainstream, blunting its capacity for interrogation. As Graham Huggan states, ‘such terms as “marginality”, “authenticity” and “resistance” circulate as commodities available for commercial exploitation, and as signs within a larger semiotic system: the postcolonial exotic’ (Huggan 2001: xvi). The marketing of ethnicities and cultural difference in the form of commodities such as restaurant meals, ‘ethnic’ clothes, novels, films, photography, the international expansion of Irish theme pubs (also English theme pubs), and indeed the obsession with cultural diversity and multiculturalism, are examples of commodified ethnicity. Ironically, hybridity and minority discourses of resistance are themselves in danger of abandoning their sites of resistance and becoming another marketable commodity. The commodification of ethnicities and cultural difference in the twentieth century has contributed to the process of the marginal becoming the central, the Other converted into a commodified Same. This can occur, for example, when the absolutism of political
correctness is concentrated on ethnic culture and liberal attitudes, ignoring the host culture. Hence, as Spivak points out, there is a constant need for ‘autocritique’ within this area of postcolonial and marginality studies, where ‘the upwardly mobile exmarginal, justifiably searching for validation, can help commodify marginality’ (Spivak 1991: 154; 1999: 170).

Still, marginality can sometimes maintain a certain capacity to contest, even from a central position. If exoticism has reached the centre, we have to consider that ‘it still derives from the cultural margins or, perhaps more accurately from a commodified discourse of cultural marginality’ (Huggan 20). In the Spanish Golden Age a group of marginal texts, although lacking the marketable aspect, became part of the Spanish canon without losing their counterhegemonic power. In the twentieth century, marginality, as bell hooks points out, ‘[is a] central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in the habits of being and the way one lives’:

[Marginality is] a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (hooks 1990: 341; quoted in Huggan 20)

For Simon During theories of postcolonial hybridity are ‘Western academic inventions’ which often help to limit ‘the celebration of indigenous cultures’ (During 1992). Often these postcolonial theories result from the work of diasporic critics - ‘marginals within the centre’ - working in Western universities and writers addressing their works to Western audiences, and postcolonial writing is often the resulting product of ‘cultural “raw materials” [. . .] coming from the colonies to be turned into “finished products” by the critical industries of empire’ (Mitchell quoted in Huggan 2001: 4). It should be borne in mind that migrant intellectuals do not
represent their entire community but only a particular sector. Neither should ‘discourses of representation,’ as Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out in a rejection of western feminist writings on ‘Third World Women’, ‘be confused with material realities’ (quoted in Parry 1987: 35). Literary fiction as a consumer product offers literary representations of migrancy but not the definitive migrant experience. Examples of ethnic minorities claiming to be the ‘same’ but ‘different’ - ‘both opposition-marginal and dominant-central simultaneously’, are constantly heard (Radhakrishan 289):

Their race to occupy the space of the hyphen - Indo-Americans, Indian-Americans, Hindu-Americans, Muslim-Britons - signals the desire to enter into some kind of generic taxonomy and yet at the same time retain, through the hyphen, the problematic ‘here’ and ‘there’. But [...] the ‘belonging there’ part of the equation cannot be linked to a teleology of return because this belonging can only function as an imaginary index that signifies its own impossibility. (Mishra 1996: 433)

Not surprisingly, there are those who see in postcolonialism and minority discourses not the return of the repressed, but the return of the Same in the guise of the Other (Appiah 1991; Dirlik 1994; During 1992; Huggan 2001). In 1985 Spivak challenged the race and class blindness of the Western academy in an article asking ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ Three years later Spivak herself concluded that the subaltern could not speak: ‘there is no space’ (Spivak 1988: 103).

A varied group of writers and critics ‘operate as latter-day culture brokers’ in the Western metropolis (to use Kwame Anthony Appiah’s term), exploiting a situation of pseudo-ethnicity to mediate the ‘international trade in cultural commodities’ from the periphery to the centre (Appiah 1991: 348). Novelty, bell hooks explains, is the key to the success of the marketing of Otherness:
The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. (quoted in Nederveen Pieterse 35)

In recent African writing, Appiah contends, the great theme of the postcolonial - the legitimation of a national or nativist culture distinguished from the culture of the colonial powers - has become oppressive. What had appeared as a liberating anticolonialism now seems nothing more than the currency of 'a *comprador* intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery' (Appiah 1991: 348). 'These cultural mediators,' Revathi Krishnaswamy points out, 'are invariably dependent on and inevitably influenced by Euro-American publishers and readers, Western universities, and Westernised elite educational institutions in Asia or Africa' (Krishnaswamy 125). Hence, a large number of critics and writers secure their professional privileges through the increasing commodification of the discourse of minority, ethnicity and alterity.

For example, in "The Postcolonial Aura" Arif Dirlik suggests that the postcolonial has become a means of 'academic success: of the increasing cultural capital built up by self-designated postcolonial intellectuals in the universities of the West, especially in the United States' whose leading research universities host well-known Third World critics (Huggan 6, 241). In similar terms, Huggan notes the existence of 'links between postcoloniality as a global regime of value and a cosmopolitan alterity industry' (Huggan 12). Rey Chow, writing about the language of victimisation and 'self-subalternisation', goes as far as to claim that the discourse of marginality 'has become the assured means to authority and power' in the metropolis (Chow 1993: 13). Self-victimisation under the guise of the ethnic plays
on ‘constructed exoticism’ to exploit liberal guilt and literary trends. Auto-victimisation becomes an effective site for exploiting Orientalist self-representations, while empowering fabricated Others, which echo Foucault’s argument concerning the intimate relationship between power and knowledge.

In *Bombay Duck* (1990), Farrukh Dhondy explores ways in which the West (Britain) is being ‘culturally mugged’ by fake pseudo-ethnic victims who are invited to exploit the system by the system itself in the form of the Arts Council. Such exploitation of the ‘Other’ has hardly any precedent in European literary history. There have always been periods when the exotic was in fashion, and there have also been discourses about the subaltern by the subaltern, such as some picaresque Spanish texts. However, Spanish Renaissance and Baroque marginal narratives of alterity are very different from contemporary, commercialised versions of otherness (which might include constructed marginality). The emergence of meretricious accounts of the margin makes it difficult to speak of postcolonial or ethnic authenticity: hybridity, Robert Young points out, makes ‘difference into sameness’, and ‘sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different’ (Young 1995: 26-27).

Indeed, third world and Commonwealth books praised in the West often play on feelings of guilt about colonialism, eurocentrism and racism, but also on criticism of the East. Whereas the West once insisted on the illegitimacy of non-western knowledges, now - Spivak laments - ‘we postcolonial intellectuals are told that we are too Western’ (Spivak 1990: 8). There is a danger that resistance discourses may reproduce the very inclusiveness and universalism they seek to combat. For example, to see Europe and the West as self-contained entities is to repeat the imperialist and colonialist mythologies that one is supposed to be deconstructing. Spivak insists that
the preoccupation with hybridity in academic discourse may ignore the existence of
class, gender and intellectual hierarchies within other cultures (Papastergiadis 258).9

In contemporary Western society fiction has become a highly commodified
product, and literary representations of the 'ethnic' are a profitable part of this
commodification. Writing concerned with the British class system seems
increasingly trivial, whereas literature about third world societies, the
Commonwealth and immigrants to England has received much critical attention.

This commodification is no longer limited to the exploitation of minority
writing by South-Asian, Caribbean or African writers offering a highly marketable
immigrant face, but includes Irish writing playing on its own exoticism, and the
exciting marginality of the Scottish underclass in the work of Irvine Welsh and
James Kelman. Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1996), which includes heavy Scottish dialect
and drug jargon, could in this way be regarded as ethnic Scottish writing. Kelman's
*How Late it Was, How Late* (1994) is written in what for many non-Scottish readers
was an almost impenetrable Glaswegian dialect, yet won the 1994 Booker Prize.
Perhaps, then, Kelman can be considered as postcolonial, multicultural writer. One
of the most interesting critiques of this situation was made by the white-male-
middle-class novelist Martin Amis in *The Information* (1995). In this novel he
describes the situation in which Richard Tull, a novelist (white male-middle-class)
finds it impossible to find a publisher precisely because he has no claim to ethnicity.
There is a further irony in Amis's novel in the fact that Tull eventually finds a

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9 Research conducted in London showed that 'by 1998, it was white children who had
become a minority at local authority secondary schools in inner London and even in the
suburbs they made up only 60% of the secondary-school population [and that] over a third
of inner London's children did not even have English as their first language'; London
Research Centre, *Education in London: Key Facts* (1997) 18. For the first time, the 2001
Census contained the category 'white' British as an ethnic minority.
publisher who is looking for a token ‘white’ writer to complement its list of ‘ethnic’ authors.

1.5 Multiculturalism and Hybridity: a European constant

In order to avoid the danger of defending a romanticised, folklorist version of multiculturalism, certain issues of cultural diversity must be clarified. The demand for cultural recognition on the part of the excluded migrant minority (migrant), Bhabha argues, is based on the presumption of equal cultural value (Bhabha 1997: 449). Marginal or minority cultures claim that ‘we are all equal but different’. In a democratic society their traditional culture should, therefore, enjoy the same recognition as the dominant culture. However, the weakness and naivety of the liberal principles of ‘tolerance’ underpinning multicultural discourses can be seen when members of the ‘Other’ minority culture exhibit, on their part, not ‘equal respect’ or ‘tolerance’ but despotism and fanaticism. In Europe, for example, cases of female oppression, clitoridectomy, enforced arranged marriages, and support for the 11th of September atrocities by different minority groups, have all provided new perspectives for the debate on multiculturalism. In such cases, the liberal ‘multicultural’ defence of differences seems indefensible. The cosmopolitan celebration of difference has to be selective, and this selection can be problematic.

Multiculturalism is often seen as an addition to mainstream values which camouflages reality (Yubal-Davis 197), an extension of the politics of domination and discrimination in the shape of a reappropriation of the ‘other’ to expurgate white liberal guilt:
But multiculturalism has become the vogue; it gives the 'ethnic' teachers a leg up and it exculpates the whites: they now know about my culture, so they don't have to question their own. Worse [...] they know more about my culture than I do, or think they do! (Sivanandan 1990: 68-69)

Contemporary multicultural politics might even perpetuate exclusion and difference, for example through racial quotas and positive discrimination in employment. Liberal multicultural discourses may be dangerously essentialist, if stress is laid on ideas of group boundedness and homogeneous 'communities' (with self-selected 'community leaders'). This can also be perceived as a means of defending white cultures from contamination. Apart from anything else, many multicultural policies simply do not work, since they fail to address the underlying economic situations of marginalised communities, a point made by René Green (Bhabha 1995: 3). One might also add that many of these policies tend to generate resentment in members of the host community.

One consequence of the emergence of multicultural policies is that the word 'racist', and the notion of 'racism', have become less clear, and carry new tensions. The word 'race' entered European languages in the early sixteenth century. Its origins are unclear but its central meaning was what Banton (1987) calls *lineage*, that is a stock of descendants linked to a common ancestor. However, at this time the physical appearance of an individual was not necessarily fundamental as a sign of identification. The idea of 'race', created from the existence of certain biological differences (other than sexual), first appeared in the English language in the early seventeenth century. But it was during the late eighteenth century that the term came to be employed in European and American scientific writing in order 'to name and explain certain phenotypical differences in human beings' (Miles 1993: 28). Due to the changing concepts of race in Britain and in USA after the rise of Nazism and the
Second World War, racialism was carefully camouflaged under what Gilroy describes as an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified *cultural community* (Malik 187). The essentialised conception of identity in racial terms has been the basis of discourses where the hybrid is perceived as a monstrous threat to purity.

Hybridity implies the transgression of boundaries and the consequent creation through fusion and creolisation of a new form, which can either react against its components, or act as a reinvigorating, positive force, depending on previous conceptions of boundaries and purity. If these boundaries are based on a distinction between ‘one’ and the ‘other’ (us/them), which functions to exclude the Other, the hybrid is regarded as a dangerous degeneration, a monster. Traditionally, there has been an insistence on defending the *gens* and the purity of blood by protecting it from illegitimate mixings, which would carry disease or imperfection. The tension between autochthonous and barbarians and between autochthonous and *épelus* (outsider) are situations familiar to Aristotle when he analyses the servant nature of the barbarian and the rights to citizenship. Ernesto Laclau stresses the way in which boundaries and frontiers are drawn to analyse transgression (Norval 65). ‘Without the concept of the boundary’, Laclau points out, ‘there would not be transgression and without transgression no boundary’. Hybridity would not exist.

Borders, boundaries and ‘pure’ identities are often seen as valuable assets which must be preserved from the threat of the foreign and the risks of being contaminated by the ‘Other’. But if the boundary involves positive forms of inclusion and exchange, the hybrid complements and revitalises its older forms. It is a matter of cultural transformation and development rather than destruction and

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10 During the Renaissance, Aristotle’s theory of the ‘natural slavery’ of barbarians was employed in Europe to justify imperialism; colonisation was regarded as a service for the barbarian. See also Marx’s defence of the colonisation of India in Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992) 221-242.
degeneration. Hence, hybridity does not only challenge but also supplements and infiltrates dominant discourses. Mishra has noted that, in this way, the migrant no longer suffers cultural schizophrenia or the confinements of collectivities such as race, class, or nation, but 'writes back' to the empire in the name of all displaced and dispossessed peoples, denouncing both colonialism and nationalism as equally oppressive constructions (Mishra 1995). That is, the contaminated diasporic space of the border facilitates 'possibilities of exploring hybrid, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary relationships' (Mishra 1996: 433-34).

However, hybridity is still perceived as having dangerous potential for transformation. Strangers are viewed with suspicion and ethnic identities regarded as a threat to national identities. Nationalism is defined in relation to what it is not (us/them). Cultural judgements are in danger of resembling the discourses of racism when they include race in a cultural opposition. This 'cultural racism', or in Balibar’s terms (1991) ‘differentialist racism’, works on a different level to phenotypical racism. It can be justified in terms of reluctance to accommodate and tolerate difference. For example, cultural racism can emerge as a reaction against globalisation (Touraine 227), or against oppression. But often 'cultural racism' replaces traditional biologically based racism and is, in fact, used euphemistically to convey racial or ethnic categorisations. Paul Gilroy points out the dangers of not recognising that issues of racism are involved in discourses of patriotism and nationhood (Malik 187). In the same way, Henry Louis Gates remarks that 'race' in this sense is seemingly an objective term of classification, but is in fact 'a dangerous trope' (Gates 1985: 5-6).

The discourse of racism rejects the idea of nations as 'imagined communities' constructed historically, in favour of a homogenising theory of nation as synonymous with race, presenting an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified
entity. Nationalisms and fundamentalism try to impose order on the cultural rootlessness and loss of identity caused by uncontrollable cross-cultural encounters and globalisation. Secular nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms in this sense share a common *modus operandi*. Essentialist nationalism is generated by the disestablishment of models of identity. The idea of there being danger for nation and culture generates prejudice against the hybrid, which can only be combated by thinking of culture and identity diachronically as a matter of unfixed processes, constantly evolving through history. The problem, therefore, is not hybridity itself, but attitudes towards it based on prejudice and racialised theories of identity. Do we accept hybridity as enriching, or reject it as destructive?

By invoking ideas of shared origin, ‘kith and kin’ and ‘nation’, myths shape collective identities and also their approaches to the Other, which in different contexts might be the European Other, the British Other or the South-Asian Other. The central problem in the perspective of the Other is to establish what, beyond its descriptive features, constitutes the Other’s identity and its difference. In order to analyse the reception of the Other in Europe it is useful to consider the old European myths which consolidated European identities, that is, the core beliefs which acted as foundations for an emerging European sense of origin and identity.

Western civilisation was constructed in negation of the Other (Levinas 1969). From the first Western history by Herodotus (440 BC), a distinction is naturally drawn between Us and the Other (in the case of Herodotus, the barbarians). This distinction assumes that there are superior cultures, which have history, and others, without history or any notable civilisation.

In Medieval Europe the Other was to be found on the other side of the Mediterranean in the shape of Islam. Anti-Islamic attitudes became part of Western identity as Islam began its expansion in the Byzantine East and Southern Europe (the
Iberian Peninsula and Sicily). Hostility to Islam was based on a real power-struggle for control of Europe. The *defensio christianitatis* and *fines christianitatis* date back to the fourth century and continued even after the collapse of the Ottoman empire in the First World War, since some parts of what had once been Christendom still remained under Turkish rule. For centuries Muslims constituted a theological, political and intellectual problem for Europe, and the effects of this are still seen in the contemporary reception and portrayal of Islam. Religious frontiers will tend to persist through history, and they help to maintain important cultural substrata, which determine what Ortega y Gasset called ‘subconscious beliefs’ (Trias 21). In the case of Britain, direct contact with Islam took place in a rather different setting from that of mainland Europe, first with the Crusades and later through British colonial expansion. Nevertheless, Europe’s anti-Islamic heritage was powerful enough to influence the reception of Muslims as a threat to Britishness. Contemporary hostility to Islam obscures Europe’s cultural debt to Islam and also the past periods of multicultural harmony between Muslim, Christian and Jewish Europeans.

In Western Europe over the course of at least ten centuries an exclusively Christian perspective on history has become so powerful, and has been so deeply internalised into our culture, that it has become an almost invisible habit of mind. Such a Christian perspective was constructed mainly against Islam and portrayed Muslims as the ‘Demonised Other’ in European thought and history. The development of the European Renaissance would have been impossible without the contribution of Muslim civilisation. However, this rich cultural inheritance from Islam was ignored, to be replaced by a simplified version of history in which the Renaissance represents a rebirth of pure Greco-Roman culture. The Islamic and also African components in this Greco-Roman past are removed from history. When Leon the African (c. 1487-1554) joins the service of Pope Leon X (1513-21) and
publishes his description of Africa (1550), he offers a different view of the dark continent whose origins would not to be found just in Ethiopia. For Leon the African, Africa would have the same rights to the Greco-Roman past/heritage as white Christian Europe. In fact, the Greco-Roman world was itself familiar with Black Africa, and Africa was highly influenced by classical Greek and Roman life. Up to about the twelfth century cultured Berbers spoke Latin, which had been the language of North Africa until the arrival of the Arabs. Conversely, Romanists, often unaware of Arabic culture, analysed with exclusively Latin criteria the artistic manifestations of Europe. For example, until recently Petrarch's (1304-1374) pessimistic philosophy has been perceived as the product of Western creativity, without any Islamic influences. Similarly the origins of troubadour verse, motifs and imaginary, were attributed exclusively to European origins and never to Arab theory or music. Indeed the obliteration of Arabic culture led to the neglect of works such as *The Life of Hayy* (n.d.) by Ibn Tufayl (1100?-1189, known as Abentofail), one of the earliest philosophical novels, and which for a modern reader might well seem reminiscent of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

A striking illustration of the denial of Islamic influences in the West can be found in the reinvention of the history of the Iberian Peninsula. The history of Spain constitutes a fascinating example of both denial and inclusion. The rejection of Islam and religious persecution in Spain was so profound that it generated internal opposition to the excess of Christian fundamentalism which it fostered. The emergence of Catholic zeal against multiculturalism at the end of the fifteenth century was a consequence of the birth of the colonial empire. Prior to the pact of Tordesillas (1494) between Ferdinand and Isabella (1474-1516) and Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503), Muslim Spain (711-1492) was the first truly multireligious and
multicultural society in Europe. However, as Rushdie points out, ‘one should not sentimentalize that entity, for the basis on which it existed was Islamic imperialism’:

Islam was clearly the boss, and the other religions had to abide by the laws. All the same, there was a fusion of cultures which since then have been to some extent each other’s other. In that fusion are ideas which have always appealed to me, particularly now; for instance, the idea of the fundamentalist, totalized explanation of the world as opposed to the complex, relativist, hybrid vision of things. (Rushdie in Banville 35)

When the figure of the semi-mythological traitor Count Julian opened the gates of Gibraltar to Moorish invaders in the year 711, both Spain and Europe opened their gates to the enriching influence of the Eastern heritage. Through the al-Andalus Arab translators Europe recovered Aristotle, Archimedes, Ptolemy, Heraclitus’ medical treaties, as well as developing its knowledge of astrology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, pharmacy, geology and botany. Even the crusades can be understood as reflecting the earlier Arab notion of soldier-monks (almorávides) who lived in military monasteries (rábidas). Rushdie shows his vivid awareness of this key role played by Spain in The Moor’s Last Sigh:

*I am a Jew from Spain, like the philosopher Maimonides, I told myself, to see if the words rang true [...] I am like the Catholicised Córdoba mosque, I experimented. A piece of Eastern architecture with a Baroque cathedral stuck in the middle of it.* (Rushdie 1995b: 388)

Indeed from the arrival of the Berber kings Tarik and Muza in 711 to the edicts of expulsion of *moriscos* in 1606, 1609 and 1614, the Iberian Peninsula acted as a bridge between Islam and Christianity together. Some classic Spanish Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn-al-Sina (1052-1127, known as Avycen), as well as the author of Aristotle’s Comments, Ibn Rushd (1126-1198, known as Averroes) wrote in Arabic, and their works were transmitted to Christian Europe in translation thanks
to the multicultural promotion of the arts and culture under the Castilian monarchs Ferdinand III the Holy (c. 1201-1252) and his son Alfonso X (1221-1284).

It was in Medieval Spain where multicultural policies first became institutionalised under the reign of King Alfonso X, whose court became a model of multiculturalism in the arts and law. Attempts to deal with cultural pluralism can be seen in Alfonso X’s *Code of the Seven Partidas* (13th C.), which included a call for religious tolerance and respect for cultural difference (ironically King Alfonso X himself conquered Muslim territory in the Iberian Peninsula). In 1252 Alfonso X ordered that his father’s tomb in the cathedral of Seville should carry inscriptions in Latin, Arabic, Hebraic and Spanish, in order to respect the communities and languages spoken at that time. Another example of religious tolerance in a literary text of this time is *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis* (c. 1274-1276) by Ramón Llull (c. 1235-1315). Llull’s work describes an interreligious dispute between a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim, for the edification of a truth-seeking Gentile. Although it is difficult to judge whether the citizens of Alfonso X’s kingdom lived harmoniously in cultural difference, the court itself became an example of multicultural politics and arts, and also of religious tolerance which, not surprisingly, collapsed with the development of colonial imperialism. Muslim Spain, Rushdie points out, ‘was the only time in history when there was a fusion of those three cultures’ (Rushdie in Banville 35).

As a consequence of Catholic zeal Spain’s imagined identity since this time has tended to reject its Jewish and Islamic heritage, as well as to exclude groups such as Gypsies from notions of Spanishness, to the extent that the patron of Spain is St. James, the ‘Moor-slayer’ (Santiago ‘Matamoros’).

As well as surrounding himself with Christian, Jewish and Muslim advisors, King Alfonso X of Castile established the centre of translators of Toledo, where
Eastern Philosophy met Western thought and Christian Europe recovered the work of Aristotle, Herodotus, Cicero, Sallust, Tacitus, Polybus, Suetonius and Livy, as well as many others. Alfonso X ('The Wise') brought to his court Jewish and Arab intellectuals and translators to work on translations of the Bible, the Qu'ran, the Cabala, the Talmud and the Pânchatantra (c. 200 BC), in addition to many other texts. Examples of the enriching influence of the East on the European literary tradition can be seen in works such as Don Juan Manuel’s Libro de los enxiemplos del conde Lucanor et de Patronio (Count Lucanor’s tales, written in 1333, first published in 1575),11 Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales (14th C.), Bocaccio’s Decameron (1350), La Fontaine’s Fables (late 17th C.) and the brothers Grimm’s Tales (1812). Eastern works such as Khalilah wa Digna - an 8th century Arab translation of the Indian Pânchatantra, the Sendebar (n.d), The Arabian Nights (10th C.) and Ibn Hazim’s The Pigeon’s Necklace (c. 1022) have all inspired writers in Europe. Indeed, Medieval and Renaissance Spanish literary texts can only be understood within a social and linguistic context which includes catholicised Islam and Judaism.

It is, then, significant that part of the value of many Spanish literary texts derives on the one hand from Islamic literary traditions and, on the other, from the questioning of a purely Christian national construction. Cervantes, for example, can be understood as the author of a multicultural statement on behalf of the Moriscos of Southern Spain, and as a recipient of a complex literary background which included Arabic texts, as well as texts highly influenced by Islamic traditions. His experience as a captive in Algiers also enabled him to see the Islam-Christianity dichotomy as an imagined rivalry.

11 Other Medieval works influenced by Indian and Arab texts include El Libro de los gatos (Book of Cats, n.d) and Juan Ruiz’s Libro de buen Amor (Book of Good Love, c. 1330-1343).
In *Don Quixote* he examines the violence and imperialism of Spanish history through an Arabic narrator and translator, invites the reader to laugh at Medieval Castilian identity. Don Quixote himself is a mocker of excessive intolerance towards various Others: *moriscos*, *conversos*, Basques. Similarly, in his picaresque novel *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), Mateo Alemán can be interpreted as defending the idea of Muslim tolerance in opposition to Catholic fundamentalism.

Multiculturalism is not, therefore, a new phenomenon in postcolonial Europe. The European experience is historically one of crosscultural encounters, since Europe’s imperial past is long and extensive. From the Hellenic to the Roman and Habsburg empires, Europe enjoyed periods of multicultural tolerance. Attempts were frequently made to maintain good relations between different religious and linguistic communities. However, with the rise of nation-states the coexistence of multiple cultural groups within a single nation was increasingly seen as undesirable. But, as well as religious and cultural intolerance, oppression, imperialism and colonialism, the history of Europe also involves significant anti-imperialist attitudes. From Classical Greece and the Roman Empire to twentieth century postcolonial Europe, cultural and religious intolerance were attacked and rejected in literature.

Antibarbarian ideologies in Classical Greece (mostly anti-East/Asia) were born after the wars against Persians but died out as the philosophy of the Academy was developed in Athens and greater tolerance emerged. In Plato’s *Menexeno* (c. 387-361 BC), for example, Greek patriotism is parodied. Medieval Galician-Portuguese mock-epic poems, such as *Cantigas de Escarnio* (13th C.), denounce the Crusaders through the use of parodies, and offer an alternative to the normal eurocentric reading of religious wars by presenting Medieval crusades as the equivalent of contemporary sex tourism. During the Spanish Golden Age both *conversos* and Christian writers denounced the excesses committed against non-Christians. Attacks
against religious intolerance even extended to the Vatican. For example, De Las Casas (1484-1566) attacked the role of the Vatican in the New World as well as the depravities of the Catholic Church and the excess of Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) and his followers. Jean Bodin (1530-1596) anticipated some of the problems of religious diversity with the ‘humanist defence of religious toleration’ that Hobbes (1588-1679) would later elaborate and which John Locke (1632-1704) would develop in a theory of religious liberty that emphasised the individual’s right to conscience.

In contemporary Britain, tolerance of cultural and religious difference has become the main objective of multicultural politics. The cultural diversity of Britain has continually increased, as has the need to tolerate difference. An early champion of liberal ‘multiculturalism’ was Daniel Defoe, who proclaimed that ‘A True Born Englishman’s a contradiction!/ In speech, an irony! In fact, a fiction!’ He termed the English ‘a mongrel half-bred race’ and ‘the most scoundrel race that ever lived’ (Defoe 1701). He was responding to a wave of contemporary anti-Dutch feeling. And often the assimilation of new minorities has depended on immigrants being seen as too different for comfort. Those newcomers whose presence is more visible than others, such as black minorities, will tend to be the target of the kind of xenophobia Defoe was attacking. For example, earlier in the sixteenth century, the black population - of African or Afro-Caribbean origin - was small, but still created certain official concern, which led to proclamations in 1596 and 1601 expelling the ‘Negros and blackmoores’ (all ‘infidels’) that were apparently being introduced into the kingdom in large numbers (Walvin: 1971: 64-65; Fryer 1984: 10–12).

Over the last two decades ‘multiculturalism’ has become widely accepted as the goal for British society, especially in the arts and the media. The main reason for this lies not simply in an ideological commitment to cultural diversity but in the
attempt to counteract the rise of racism, and also perhaps to redeem white liberal
guilt. It is here that we observe the construction of diversity as an effect of modern
government and society:

When I was in my teens, in the mid-sixties, there was much talk of the 'problems' that kids of my colour and generation faced in Britain because of our racial mix or because our parents were immigrants. We didn't know where we belonged, it was said; we were neither fish nor fowl. I remember reading that kind of thing in the newspaper. We were frequently referred to as 'second generation immigrants' just so there was no mistake about our not really belonging to Britain. We were 'Britain's children without a home'. The phrase 'caught between two cultures' was a favourite. (Kureishi 1996: 134-35).

In *The Observer* (10-9-2000) Darcus Howe commented on the results of a recent report which claimed that white people will one day be Britain's ethnic minority; in Greater London and inner cities, whites will be the minority in the next twenty-five years or so. It is estimated that by the year 2050, no more than 50 per cent of the population will be of white Anglo-Saxon-Viking-Norman ancestry,¹² a vision of Britain quite different from John Major's imagined future of 'long shadows on county [cricket] grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and - as George Orwell said - old maids cycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist'.¹³

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¹³ John Major, speech delivered on 22 April, 1993.
1.6 East meets West

Oh East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great judgement Seat.

All forms of culture are in a constant process of hybridisation. According to Lévi-Strauss’s theory of ‘bricolage’, ‘the result of mishmash, borrowings, mixtures that have occurred, though at different rates, ever since the beginning of time’ makes each society ‘multicultural’. Aijaz Ahmad sees the ‘cross-fertilisation of cultures’ as ‘endemic to all movements of people’, which involve ‘the travel, contact, transmutation, hybridisation of ideas, values and behavioural norms’ (Ahmad 1995: 18).

However, it is not only the origins of a culture which make it whole, as Claude Lévi-Strauss has pointed out, but also the process of syncretism through which these origins are synthesised (Borofsky 1994: 424). Thus culture evolves in complex ways and under various influences. At any one time cultures also vary according to region and class. Since it is not a static category, any attempt to define culture encounters the problem of dealing with a process of constant transformation in which race, class, gender, history and national identity are all elements. A cultural form such as cinema, illustrates differing perceptions of cultural identity. Contemporary British cinema offers very distinct ideas of identity, based on class and region. The dualities of North versus South and working-class versus upper-middle class are recurrent themes. Unemployed steel workers from Sheffield, in Peter Cattaneo’s The Full Monty (1997), or unemployed miners from Yorkshire, in Mark Herman’s Brassed Off (1996) and Stephen Daldry’s Billy Elliot (2000) offer very different perceptions of cultural identity from the characters in Mike Newell’s Four Weddings and a
Funeral (1994). Hanif Kureishi’s screenplays My Beautiful Laundrette (1985), The Buddha of Suburbia (1993) and My Son the Fanatic (1997a), Gurinder Chadha’s Bhaji on the Beach (1993), and Damien O’Donnell’s East is East (1999) explore the contradictions of being from the South-Asian community in Britain and the implications of being English in a multicultural and plural society. Contemporary British culture, it seems, is now most often described in terms of dualities.

Despite the commodification of ‘ethnic’ writing and the centralisation of marginality, we must not forget that much current work produced from the margins of society by artists fluctuating between cultures is reinvigorating the arts in Britain and stimulating discussion of significant social issues. For example, the work of black artists has explored the contradictions of being black and English: ‘the desire to make art out of being both black and English has become a major issue in the black art movement and should be seen as part of the long, micro-political task of recording the cultural core of national life’ (Gilroy 1993b: 76). A dynamic black culture contributes to a continuous reconstruction of British identity. National culture is not homogeneous or fixed. Radical authors and cultural critics (Gilroy and Bhabha, for example) have, by drawing on a variety of postmodern currents, argued in favour of what they claim is a dynamic hybrid concept of British culture and identity ‘Culture’, Gilroy insists:

is not a fixed and impermeable feature of social relations. Its forms change, develop, combine and are dispersed in historical processes. The syncretic cultures of black Britain exemplify this. They have been able to detach cultural practices from their origins and use them to find and extend the new patterns of metacommunication which give their community substance and collective identity. (Gilroy 1993a: 217)

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14 The transition from short story to film includes notable changes, such as new characters and a less sympathetic approach to extreme islamists.
The idea of a ‘national literary tradition’ must also be understood as a construct. Hence, it is wrong to try and explain literary traditions in terms of nations (Colley 1992). On one level, national literatures might be determined by language. Certain genres, such as the epic or the heroic ballad, become associated with the expression of nationalism and are often regarded as overt examples of national literary traditions. However, searching for a national literary canon may result in over-emphasising the ‘national’ at the expense of the universal.

Searching for ‘multicultural’ or ‘ethnic’ literatures may bring similar risks. Ernest Renan, for example, warned of the risks of becoming enslaved by the concept of nation. We might apply this argument to liberate literature from these boundaries. The cross-fertilisation of cultures and nations frees literary works from restricting categories and classifications. The literature of the Roman empire, for example, drew on Greek forms and sources. Many Latin authors were people of the Roman Empire with complex, varied backgrounds and experiences, who enriched pre-existing genres. The Roman Empire was also influenced by non-Latin literature, and absorbed writers of diverse origins. In this way a number of African authors and thinkers became part of the European literary canon through the Roman Empire. Paradoxically, the first Catholic theologian who advocated systematic religious persecution was a North African, Augustine, the bishop of Hippo Regius (now in Algeria), though nowadays he is hardly regarded as an African. Later, Lucius Apuleius of Madaura’s The Golden Ass became a Latin classic and part of the European literary tradition, despite the Moroccan origins of its colonised author. So, the ethnic is not new in European literature, it has always been an influence.

Intertextuality within Western literature stems, in part, from the European cultural synthesis generated from contact between the culture of empire and vernacular practices. The final product is a complex cultural heritage, a result of the
assimilation of various peoples and civilisations. East-West encounters occurred even before Alexander the Great conquered the North of India. The Roman Empire regularly sent ambassadors to India to study philosophy and sciences. There were Indian ambassadors and diplomats in imperial Rome, such as the ambassador sent by King Rochias of Ceylon (Gallud 9). At this time it was also normal for Greek and Roman armies to have Indian soldiers. The first recorded East-West encounters dates back to the tenth century BC, when the Phoenicians had established themselves on the Western Coast of the Sub-Continent. Other examples include Herodotus’ narrations (6 BC) of the travels of Scylax of Caryanda in India (Gallud 8).

Postcolonial writing can be seen, broadly speaking, as the meeting of East and West, since it most often results from European expansion eastwards. Yet Western thought can itself be viewed as originating in a form of colonial discourse. Martin Bernal (1987), for example, has noted Europe’s cultural debt to Africa and the East. Indeed, European culture owes a great deal to Eastern sources and for about eight centuries the Iberian Peninsula acted as a bridge between East and West. Spain, in Reparaz’s words, is ‘an African peninsula linked to Europe through the Pyrenees’ and if ‘its geographical function was that of transition and link, so was its historical function’ (de Reparaz 7). However, in the twentieth century, we might add, there is not such a bridge but a gate, which Europe tries (often unsuccessfally) to keep closed to unwanted visitors. Spain is no longer that point of cultural passage between Europe and Africa and between Europe and Latin America. Its function now is that of limiting migration into the European Union by guarding the Straits of Gibraltar; Spain also pays close attention to the influx of migrants from South America through

15 ‘España es una península africana ligada a Europa por el istmo pirenaico. Siendo su función geográfica de transición y ligamento, tal debía ser su función histórica, porque la historia se deriba naturalmente de la geografía’; Gonzalo de Reparaz, Páginas turbias de la historia de España que ahora se ponen en claro (Madrid: Marques de Urquijo, 1926) 7, my translation.
its airports, and now rejects many hopeful migrants from Latin America whose
descendants originated from Spain and crossed the Atlantic in the past in search of
better opportunities.

During the Medieval and Baroque periods the presence and influence of
Eastern philosophy and Indian cultural and aesthetic elements in Spanish philosophy
and literature was considerable, due to the Jewish and Arab presence. For example,
the taste for polyphony and unusual poetic verb constructions in Spanish in Libro de
buen amor (Book of Good Love, 1330-1343) are due to its Arabic influence and
Fernando de Rojas's sources can be found in Ovid as well as in Avycenn and
Averroes, whereas Saint John of the Cross can be read as a Sufi poet (Goytisolo

There was also considerable contact as a result of Portuguese commercial
activity in the Sub-continent, and through travellers who went to the East in search
of other cultures. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese sailor Vasco de Gama
arrived in the port of Calicut on the coast of Malabar, and Luso-Indian commerce,
which would continue into the twentieth century, began. Travellers such as
Benjamin de Tudela, a Jewish geographer who in the twelfth century (1159-1165)
travelled Eastwards to visit synagogues, wrote Masaot (1173) (translated in 1573 by
Benito Arias Montado as Itinerarum Benjamin Tudelensis), about his perceptions of
the East. Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo (? -1412) a historian sent in 1402 by Henry III of
Castille to assist the Ambassador Fray Alonso Paez in the court of the Great
Tamerlan of Persia wrote Historia del Gran Tamerlan e itinerario y encarnacion de
la embaxada (n.d.). An early example of the influences of this contact is in the first
Spanish novel of chivalry, Historia del Caballero de Dios, que habia por nombre
Zifar, el cual por sus virtuosas obras et azañas fue rey de Mentón (attributed to
Ferrand Martínez c. 1300), which contains several references to India. In the
fourteenth century in Granada, Ibn Yuzayy wrote a rihla (travel book), *A Través del Islám (Through Islam, 14th C.*), which narrated the journeys of Ibn Battuta (1304-1368) and described Islamic countries known in his time. Curiously, one of the characters in Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* was inspired by Ibn Battuta.

Contact with Eastern literature was also strong at this time. For example, it has been generally assumed that *The Arabian Nights* was first introduced to the West through a French translation by Antoine Galland (1646-1715). However, intertextual evidence suggests that Medieval and Baroque literati were familiar with this and other Eastern works such as the *Rāmāyana* (c. 200 BC) and the *Mahābhārata* (c. 200 BC). The way in which Eastern-Western literary encounters took place was closely related to commercial and imperial activity. From 1580 to 1640 Goa and other Portuguese trading posts in the Sub-continent were under the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs, and this explains why from this point Spanish literature found new sources in Indian texts. For example, a story from the *Mahābhārata* inspired the play by Tirso de Molina (1583-1648) *El condenado por desconfiado*, a play which, curiously, was regarded as a fine example of religious drama in the best Christian tradition (Gallud 104). Similarly the comedy *Las aceitunas (The Olives, n.d.*) by Lope de Rueda (1509?-1565) echoes a story from Visnu Sharma’s *Pāñchatantra* (c. 200 BC).

The collection *Kalila wa Dimna* significantly influenced Spanish Medieval writing and the history of its translations is particularly interesting, since it illustrates how texts were adapted to the cultural environment of the translation. It had originally been translated from Pehlevi into Arabic in the year 750 by Abdallal ben al-Muqaffa. Another Arabic version, that of ben al-Muqaffa, was used for a Hebraic version by Rabi Joel, which in turn was translated into Latin in the thirteenth century by the *converso* Juan de Capúa (*Directorium vitiae humanae, n.d.*) (Gallud 134). It
was probably this version which most influenced the European story telling tradition. However, between 1257 and 1261 several more versions in Castillian (*Calila e Dimna*) were commissioned by King Alfonso X (Gallud 134). Another Indian text which influenced European literature was the *Sendebar*, which arrived in Spain through an Arab-Hebrew translation commissioned by Alfonso X’s brother, the Infante Fadrique (1224-1271). Numerous references to the *Sendebar* can be seen in the *Libro de los engannos et los asaymientos de las mugeres* (*The Book of Women’s Tricks*, 1253).

In contemporary British fiction a group of writers with non-British backgrounds is joining the English literary canon in the same way that writers from the provinces of the Roman Empire joined the Latin canon or Medieval and Baroque Spanish marginal authors became mainstream. What is particularly interesting is that members of this group of new English writers (South-Asian) are reintroducing Eastern sources in the West. For example, Salman Rushdie’s works are in many ways as English as Sterne’s, yet they also employ Indian forms which mix Eastern and Western traditions. Some still regard Rushdie as an Indian author writing in the West. However, this surely fails to take into account that the complex Eastern-Western tradition in his work has been part of the European literary tradition for centuries. To label Rushdie or Ishiguro as ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ limits the reception of their work to a set of constructed constraints.

1.7 Academia and the Book Trade

Most of the underlying issues of cultural encounters have been a constant in European history, and strategies for dealing with them have been present for
centuries. The main novelty in terms of twentieth century Europe seems to lie not in a supposedly liberal attitude towards the Other, but in the belief of the uniqueness of this situation, a belief reinforced by the perception that globalisation has increased the scope and internationalism of our society. If we reflect on the origins and creation of European nations, and in particular Britain, we might rather conclude that the only novelty of modern multiculturalism is that it has been subject to market forces and cultural commodification not seen in the past.

Postcolonial studies is one of the growth areas in the British academy. The consequences of the rapid institutionalisation of postcolonial studies, a phenomenon by no means restricted to Britain, includes a curious new version of colonialism in the shape of writers searching for inspiration in the ex-colonies and in minority communities in Britain. New voices in postcolonial British writing transformed a kind of English novel which George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* referred to as 'the middle class in taste and middle class by intention' (Lamming 1960: 44). The work of authors such as Arundhati Roy, Ardashir Vakil, Zadie Smith, Hari Kunzru and Monica Ali find now a natural audience in British readers and publishers in search of the exotic. Postgraduate programmes in English literature both in Britain and in Europe currently offer a great deal of choice for those interested in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, and significant numbers of overseas students are attracted to Britain to specialise in colonial and postcolonial literary studies. ‘[P]ostcoloniality’ Arik Dirlik suggests, ‘is the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism’ (Dirlik 1994: 356). Lisa Jardine (Queen Mary and Westfield College, London) recently suggested in *The Guardian* that writers such as Philip Larkin may be excluded from the programme of studies of her department because: ‘the Little Englandism [Larkin] celebrates sits uneasily within our revised
curriculum which seeks to give all our students, regardless of background, race or creed, a voice within British culture' (quoted in Taylor 2000: 11).

The rise of the marketable academic field of postcolonial studies has not only resulted in the creation of a new basis for English studies, with works and writers carefully selected for inclusion, but has also involved uncritically enforced postcolonial readings of the standard English literary canon in order to preserve the place of some of the more traditional English writers in the new programmes of study. In 2002 Harold Bloom loudly rejected 'politically correct' literatures, complaining that American and British universities choose literature programmes based on the gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity of the authors, rather than the literary value of these works (Bloom 2002: 36). Indeed, 'counterhegemonic thought,' postcolonial studies academic Graham Huggan argues, 'constitutes the new academic orthodoxy, as different interest groups fight it out for the right to make the margins their own' (Huggan 83).

The marketing and consumption of fiction in the last two decades in Britain has followed a very similar path to that of the expansion of postcolonial studies. Texts dealing with marginality and ethnicity continue to find great success, and are explicitly valued for their 'authenticity', as the recent awarding of literary prizes illustrates. Indeed, prizes are increasingly seen as a necessary element in the marketing of literature. Commercial success, including the whole process of the judging and awarding of literary prizes, moves these 'minority and ethnic voices' to the centre, which often diminishes their power to counteract hegemonic discourses. The British Council, through the promotion of such writing, has also contributed to this situation. The recent increasing media profile of literary prize awards in Britain has focused extensively on this kind of new 'ethnic' and postcolonial writing. For example, since 1980 Booker Prize short lists have tended to include a majority of
novelists with origins in the Commonwealth, as well as other countries with an anglophone tradition, such as the Republic of Ireland, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and South Africa. Between 1980 and the year 2003 the Booker Prize was awarded to only thirteen British nationals, two of whom (Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro) have very clearly multicultural backgrounds, and in general the tendency is towards favouring cultural difference: Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), Roddy Doyle's *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993), James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1990), Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* (2002). The history of the Booker Prize might in this way be seen as the history of the replacement of the English novel by the novel 'published in Britain' (Todd 78, 83). For example, none of the six books shortlisted for the year 2000 prize was set in modern Britain, and the only British born author was Matthew Keale. In the field of literary studies, this process has led to programmes being adapted to reflect these tendencies in production and consumption of fiction in Britain.

Likewise, in the United States, the Pulitzer Prize, usually awarded to 'fiction by an American author preferably dealing with American life' has recently been awarded to Frank McCourt for his autobiography depicting his childhood in Ireland, *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* (1999), and to Jhumpa Lahiri for a collection of Indian stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000). In France, the Goncourt Prize has also been given to fiction originating from outside France: North African writers Tahar Ben Jelloun's *La nuit sacrée* (1987) and Amin Maalouf's *Le Rocher de Tanios* (1993), or from French territories overseas, such as Martinican novelist Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992).

At the same time, new British fiction is now exported and translated at speeds previously unknown, generating high levels of interest in British-ethnic writing.
abroad. The reception of British ethnic writing in countries such as Spain has generated not only a popular and academic interest for British-ethnic authors by publishing houses such as Editorial del Bronce, but also a desperate search for Spanish minority writers in, for example, Equatorial Guinea (Donato Ndongo Bidyago), among the Spanish Moroccan community (Ahmed Daoudi, Mohamed El Gheryb, Abdel Hamid Beyuki) and Spanish-Latinoamerican (Roberto Bolaño), and even within peripheral Basque and Galician authors (Bernardo Atxaga, Suso de Toro and Manuel Rivas).

This new literary scene in Britain itself stimulates discussion of what 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' now mean through an ongoing investigation of racial and national identity-production within a British comparative literary context. It is within this context that Hanif Kureishi insists, like Karim in the *Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), on being regarded as belonging to a new type of British community which 'involves people with names like Kureishi or Ishiguro or Rushdie, where it didn’t before':

Most of the critics in England don’t understand that. So there isn’t any understanding of Britain being a multicultural place. They think that I’m, let’s say, a regional writer or writing in a sort of subgenre. They think writers like [me] are on the edges. We are still marginalized culturally [...] they don’t see that the world is now hybrid. (Kureishi in Kaleta 7)

Through the works of so-called ethnic writers the meaning of Britishness, or at least British metropolitanism, is redefined, and the ideal of assimilation into British culture for these members of society is challenged. In postcolonial English writing, humour is often used as a device to counter racism and intolerance. However, the use of an inverted carnivalesque romance to convey subversion, irony, paradox and parody can also be dangerous, as the Rushdie Affair proved. Rushdie intended *The
Satanic Verses to be a comic novel; 'the real dispute in it was between people who had a sense of humour and people who didn’t' (Niven 1997: 55).

In the 1960s, Kureishi explains, the idea was to fit, to assimilate into the host culture: ‘you would strip yourself of the past, of your identity, [then] through the seventies and eighties there was a sense of holding on to your own culture’, which itself implied a redefinition of the host culture:

In those days [...] there wasn’t the same thing about having your own identity that there is now. Now we want to have our own culture, find our own background. Even in the sixties I think the idea was that you should become as English or as American as you could if you were an immigrant. (Kureishi in Kaleta 17)

The Other, either in colonial societies or in the multicultural postcolonial metropolis, is often forced into a dilemma between assimilation and resistance. When assimilation does occur cultural mixtures become standardised and the sense of diaspora disappears. Assimilation into the host culture involves the end of cultural diversity and, consequently, it eliminates the risks of hybrids or migrants endangering national identities. In the past, the ‘good immigrant’ was one who was wholly assimilable.

The shift from assimilation into the host culture to the retaining of the migrant’s culture happened concurrently with changes in prevailing economic conditions. In the 1960s there was a flow of immigrant workers into Britain, but not of capital. Through the eighties and nineties, the new phenomenon of globalisation emerged, which involved an exchange of capital but not of workers. As labour migration evolved so too did the idea of assimilation. Advances in communications technology also increased the individual’s ability to interact with people of cultural backgrounds quite different from their own. This has contributed to the awareness of
new nations, the ease of international travel and communications, an active global literary market and, perhaps most significantly, the increasingly dominant role of English as the lingua franca of international communication.

However, as the new global transnational culture became more apparent, the understanding of nations, nation-states, patriotism, racism, and issues of cultural, national and ethnic identity changed. This new global transnational culture is, of course, predominantly North American. However, the emergence of a homogenised global culture generates contrary pressures. Cultures are constructed locally in opposition to the idea of a coherent globe. The tendency towards unity and cohesion is countered by pressures to divide; mechanisms emerge which counter assimilation with exclusion, and which respond to the spread of a general, globalised secularism with a return to religion and fundamentalism. Races, religions, and communities demand recognition of their individualism, challenging assimilation, sometimes through radicalism. Mass migration, obviously, plays an essential role in the development of these social and economic changes.

Against the idea that assimilation into the host culture is desirable in order to preserve national identity, one can argue that the assimilation and absorption of difference can result in positive enrichment of the host culture. The case of the English language is particularly pertinent here. Languages are constantly evolving and subject to historical, economic, social and cultural influences, and the richness of the English language derives in part from an extraordinary array of borrowed terms from various sources. English, having borrowed half of its common words from non-Anglo-Saxon stock, is the richest and most diverse language in terms of its vocabulary (Bryson 61, 68). According to McCrum et al. its hybrid nature is due to 'three invasions and a cultural revolution':
In the simplest terms, the language was brought to Britain by Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, influenced by Latin and Greek when St Augustine and his followers converted England to Christianity, subtly enriched by the Danes, and finally transformed by the French-speaking Normans. (McCrum et al.: 51)

McCrum omits to mention the influence of other languages in the development of the English language, because after the Norman conquest many loan words would come from the British colonies overseas rather than through new language communities taking root within the British Isles. English would borrow words (rather than have them imposed) from vernacular languages spoken in the colonies, and from other European languages previously imposed on those territories. Salman Rushdie, discussing hybridity, notes that English enjoys ‘the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs’. Unlike many European languages, English has never had an official Academy of the Language, or indeed any regulatory body to control the entry of foreign terms; English ‘rejoices in mongrelization’ without the absolutism of the Pure (Rushdie 1992: 394).

Similarly, English literature has always adopted authors born beyond the British Isles. The works of Conrad, James, Eliot, Joyce, Wilde and Shaw are all considered to be part of the English canon. However, English has recently expanded its scope to include a new level of exoticism. In the last decades a remarkable cultural development in the shape of a new wave of internationalism within British literature has emerged, paralleling the world-wide emergence of postcolonial and multi-ethnic literatures. Salman Rushdie, at the heart of the new internationalism within British literature, ‘has the cosmopolitanism, the universalism and the displacement of uprootedness in stylistic innovation found in such exiles in England as such Joyce and Nabokov (Bruce King 1991: 193)’. Although Rushdie, both
educated and resident for many years in England, is not an absolute outsider, and his
creative imagination and sensibilities are partly those of an immigrant combining
Eastern and Western influences. However, his works, like those of Joyce or Conrad,
can now be regarded as part of the English canon.

This new internationalism differs from Commonwealth, Third World and
'ethnic' writing in that these novelists write within the mainstream of British
literature, within a British metropolitan and cosmopolitan framework. In the 1980s
literary responses to socio-economic decline included a growth of creative energy
which concentrated on the cosmopolitan capital, London as the main focus and
analysis of identity and ethnicity. The city as a text allows space for self-formation
and self-creation, for experimentation and change. The textualisation of the city is
not new to English literature, as it can be seen in the urban quest of picaresque and
bildungsroman heroes (chapter 2). Contemporary literary representations of the
social and economic effects of postcolonialism and globalisation echo Dickens' and
Blake's depictions of urban scenes of misery and hardship set in times of colonial
prosperity and the industrial revolution. Many British-Asian writers – Rushdie,
Kureishi, Dhondy – echoing Spanish picaresque authors, chose the metropolis as the
setting for their urban narratives; the same is true in the case of cinema, with works
such as Kureishi's *London Kills Me* (1991) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1996). For
Rushdie, 'the city as reality and as a metaphor is at the heart of all [his] work'. *The
Satanic Verses*, Rushdie tells Alastair Niven, 'is a novel about London, a city visible
but unseen' (Niven 1997: 54). 'The modern city,' says Otto Cone in *The Satanic
Verses*, 'is the locus classicus of incompatible realities' [...] as long as [...] they
pass in the night, it's not so bad. But if they meet! It's uranium and plutonium, each
makes the other decompose, boom' (Rushdie 1989a: 314). Hence, the city becomes
the new site for negotiating spaces for selfhood, meaning, and survival. It is no
coincidence that Kureishi's, Rushdie's and Dhondy's novels all contain elements of theatre and have actors as their protagonists. Through discourses of identity the characters of these writers try to come to terms with their unique position within multicultural Britain. It is not simply that the characters in these novels, being actors, adopt and perform different identities; they are also asked to play ethnic roles. So we can see that issues of ethnicity and multiculturalism are now so deeply rooted in English literature that the playing of ethnic roles has itself become a recurrent theme in fiction.

I noted that the academy and the book trade have recently contributed to the emergence of a large group of 'ethnic' writers. Most of this new writing resists and challenges national conceptions of identity. However, as I have argued, these discourses of marginality often end up being absorbed into mainstream writing. Such a rapid assimilation of concepts such as 'ethnicity' suggests that contemporary multicultural discourses are often victims of marketing. This intense commodification of the discourses of ethnicity makes it difficult to distinguish between what is 'authentic' and what is false in representations of the marginal. It also raises broader questions of how culture assimilates outside influences, and deals constantly with ideas of the 'marginal'. In the following chapters I will explore these issues through the comparison of two moments in European literature - sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain and late twentieth century postcolonial Britain. The similarities, despite a gap of five centuries, suggests that multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon. The principal difference in the case of contemporary Britain might in fact be what Farrukh Dhondy has called the 'fraud' of multiculturalism in postcolonial Britain, a phenomenon that is spreading to other countries in Europe.

For centuries marginal discourses did not exploit difference. In fact, they often tried to hide difference to avoid persecution and censorship. By the late twentieth century, an obsession with minority voices had resulted in a self-imposed marginality that has gradually become part of the canon, from where it risks losing its power of resistance and contestation.
Chapter II

The Coming of Age of the Picaresque: From Guzmán de Alfarache to
The Buddha of Suburbia

A Kinde of liberty that wee have in begging, yet nevertheless doe not loose
our liberty, which is not so with your better sort of men.
Mateo Alemán, The Rogue, or the Life of Guzmán de Alfarache,

The spirit of the age among the people I knew manifested itself as general drift
and idleness. We didn’t want money. What for? We could get by, living off
parents, friends or the State. And if we were going to be bored, and we were
usually bored, self-motivated, we could at least be bored on our own terms,
lying smashed on mattresses in ruined houses rather than working in the
machine.

2.1 Introduction

One fascinating feature of late twentieth century postcolonial literature is the
reinvigoration of established literary genres. And this process of reinscription is
nowhere more interesting than in the case of the picaresque. My intention here is to
compare a classical work of the Spanish Renaissance with a contemporary
postcolonial British novel, to see how the contradictions and complexities of the
picaresque are shared by works separated by almost four centuries. By outlining the
similarities between Mateo Alemán’s Guzmán de Alfarache (Part I 1599, Part II
1604), the work of a converso and the Spanish picaresque novel par excellence, and
Hanif Kureishi’s seminal ‘British-Asian’ novel The Buddha of Suburbia (1990), I
will suggest the existence of an intriguing intertextuality.

17 All quotations in English are from Mateo Alemán, The Rogue, or the Life of Guzmán de Alfarache, trans. James Mabbe (1622), 4 vols., (The Tudor Translations, London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1924 [1623]).
In terms of the usual approach to literary history, it may seem that sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain and late twentieth century Britain have little in common. The world of Charles V, Philip II, and of the Inquisition and the Counter Reformation, seem far indeed from the world of Thatcherism, the Welfare State, and the Rushdie Affair. It is commonly assumed that Spanish literature of the Golden Age, that is, from the period between the ascendancy of Charles V (1517) and the death of Calderón de la Barca (1681), was responsible for the most universal and also the most ‘Spanish’ characters to emerge in Hispanic literature: Cervantes’ anachronistic Squire Don Quixote; Fernando de Rojas’ Celestine; and the trickster or Picaro, in the shape of Lázaro and Guzmán. But it is no accident that these literary characters, who became part of ‘world literature’ and also emblematic of Spanishness, were created by authors who were half-outsiders, writing from the margins of Spanish society. Indeed, as the modern critics Américo Castro (1948, 1961, 1963, 1966a) and Marcel Bataillon have noted (1969), characters such as Don Quixote, Guzmán and Lázaro de Tormes, despite their amusing nature, express a tragic sense of displacement, a search for self-expression and the resentment of the underdog against privilege.

In “Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist” (1983b) Salman Rushdie announced the beginning of a new era, when English literature would benefit from the writings of a group of authors often labelled as ‘Commonwealth’ and considered to be outside the British canon (Rushdie 1992: 70). Nearly five hundred years earlier a similar point had been made by Fernando de Rojas, when he illustrated the role of Jews in the shaping of Spanish culture. In the prologue to his play Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea (1499) - translated into English by James Mabbe (1632) as The Spanish Bawd; Celestine or the Tragick-Comedie of Calisto and Melibea - Rojas explains to a ‘friend’ that ‘their common patria’ was in need of a work which
emerged from both Hebraic and Christian traditions. The converso writer Francisco Delicado suggests the same idea in *The Lustful Andalusian Woman* (Part I 1524, Venetian edition 1528), a work which pays tribute to Moorish and Jewish customs. Delicado’s heroine Aldonza, depicted as a symbolic ‘compatriot of Seneca’ because of her intellect (Delicado I: 73), and the Neapolitan Sephardic Rampin, a character from the same work, both praise the marginal voices of Iberian Jewry as an enriching factor in the development of both Spanish and European culture. Aldonza’s pride is based on her complex Hebraic heritage: ‘I thank God for having been educated in Cordova and not in another land, for making me wise and not brutish, and of Spanish nation’ (Delicado XLIX: 335, my translation). Rampin praises the Spanish Jews exiled in Italy above other European Jews: ‘Our Spanish Jews,’ he remarks, ‘know more than all the others, for there are among them wise and wealthy men who are very learned’ (Delicado XVI: 158-59, my translation).

The modern critic Américo Castro, in his analysis of the ‘Age of Conflict’ (1963; 1966a), insists that without the presence of Spanish writers aware of their Jewish stock (*conversos*), the literary Golden Age would not have happened. He points out the irony that before the emergence of the caste conflict, Spanish Christian scholars studied the culture and language of their Islamic compatriots with more interest than their own in order to acquire elegance and intellectual prestige (Castro 1965a: 161-62). Castro and Goytisolo stress the influence of Spanish-Jewish authors - Mateo Alemán, Cervantes, Torrres Naharro, Juan del Encina, Friar Luis de León, Saint John of the Cross and Saint Theresa of Avila - in the emergence and development of the three main Spanish Baroque genres: the picaresque, drama and

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18 ‘Yo doy muchs gracias a Dios porque me formo en Córdova más que en otra tierra, y me quiso muger sabida y no bestia, y de načión española y no de otra’; Francisco Delicado, *Retrato de la Loçana Andaluza* (Madrid: Ed. José Purrúa Turanza, 1975 [1528]) 335.

19 ‘Más saben los nuestros españoles que todos, porque ay entre ellos letrados y rricos, y son muy resabidos’; (Delicado 158-59).
mystical poetry, and also analyses the influence of the Spanish Moors, claiming that both Arabic and Jewish sources should receive similar critical attention to Western classical literary sources in sixteenth century Spanish literary scholarship, especially in works such as *Don Quixote* and *Celestine* (Castro 1966a: 189, 205; 1954: 281; Goytisolo 1996: 48). For over three hundred years Mateo Alemán’s *converso* background (1547-c. 1614), together with the personal motivations behind *Guzmán de Alfarache*, lay hidden. Likewise, Cervantes’ *The Adventures of Don Quixote* (1605) is not usually read as a reflection of the circumstances and contradictions of a member of a minority.

A similar process occurs in contemporary English literature through the literary contribution of ‘ethnic’ authors. Some of these ethnic or other minority writers become absorbed into the English canon, and their cultural backgrounds become secondary. While Hanif Kureishi could be hyphenated as British-Pakistani, the success of his suburban and metropolitan picaresque novel, like the classical picaresque of Alemán, in fact lies in escaping the limitations of postcolonial ethnicity dictated by the immigrant condition.

Lukács has called the novel the literary form of a world in which man is neither fully integrated or excluded (Lukács 1963: 66-7). It is not surprising then that the picaresque novel should come to prominence in sixteenth century Spain and contemporary Britain, both periods of social diversity and exclusion. There is, however, one crucial difference between the two periods. In general, the approach of Renaissance and Baroque Spanish writers is one of deep ambiguity, and they carefully encode their questioning of accepted values. On the other hand, in contemporary Britain the classic form of picaresque has developed into a form in which difference in explicitly celebrated.
Modern British picaresque, in contrast with that of Renaissance and Baroque Spain, praises exoticism and celebrates the hybridity which would previously have been seen as ‘corruption’. The difference between classical and postmodern picaresque lies in the different perception of the marginal, with the latter influenced by a nineteenth century romantic fascination with the exotic. In multicultural Britain the picaresque comes of age by occupying the place formerly occupied by the *Bildungsroman*. The European *Bildungsroman* typically defends middle class values and attempts to show how a protagonist’s growth - his mental, social, philosophical or artistic development - reaffirms social values. However, the picaresque constitutes a kind of off-centre, marginal *Bildungsroman*, where the protagonist is never fully accommodated into society. Susheila Nasta examines how in postcolonial and diasporic literature, the *Bildungsroman* pattern is ‘subverted, re-angled, manipulated and appropriated’:

Narratives such as Kureishi’s and Randhawa’s, which are set in a postcolonial and diasporic context, can be seen to disrupt the seamless pattern of social integration typical of the genre, whilst simultaneously positing a need to invent an alternative means of inscription and identification. (Nasta 195)

However, we might add that in multicultural Britain the *picaro* can sometimes be accommodated in an unusual central position, rather than one on the margins.

Curiously, in postcolonial societies which still lack a celebration of difference, such as those of India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, narratives of formation more usually follow the *Bildungsroman*’s traditional genre of ‘coming of age’, and not the marginal picaresque form. *Bildungsroman* novels set in these postcolonial contexts - Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Cracking India* (1991), Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1995), Romesh Guneesekera’s *Reef* (1995) and Firdaus Kanga *Trying to Grow* (1990) - present the development and maturity into society of ‘fragile’ and ‘different’
individuals through the struggle against gender, racial and social roles, but without exploiting the inherent ‘difference’ of Parsee Zoroastrianism in Hindu and Muslim societies (Kanga and Sidhwa) or homosexuality in Sri Lanka (Selvadurai).

From the broader perspective of postcolonial theory, it may be that there are more interesting similarities between Renaissance and Baroque Spanish visions and those of multicultural Britain. The Spain of the Habsburg monarchs and late twentieth century Britain are, for instance, both examples of once great colonial powers coming to terms with the loss of empire. They are both also deeply multicultural societies. These conditions may have comparable influences in literary production, in particular, in the striking coincidence of the choice of genre: the *picaresque*. In Kureishi’s case it does not seem accidental, and we can perhaps find clues to this in some of the literary tastes of his characters. For example, Karim is keen on *beatnik* and Kerouac. To improve his literary background Eva gives him a copy of Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759), a parody of the picaresque novel which attempts to invalidate Leibniz’s philosophy and optimism (Kureishi 1990: 10).

There are noticeable similarities between the confession of Alemán’s liar (Guillén 1971: 92) and the narration of Kureishi’s untrustworthy *picaro*. Both *picaros* have mixed backgrounds and neither conforms to social rules. Their misadventures reflect the prejudice, injustice and humiliation which they have to endure. Guzmán suffers unjust treatment for being a *converso* and he is occasionally humiliated into acting like a buffoon. In the first part of the book, the young Guzmán is unfairly beaten up and often wrongly accused and arrested:

> [T]wo Ministers of justice, with their Officers at their heeles, came in pursuit of a Page, that had stolne from his Master great store of money and jewels. And by the markes that were given them; it should seeme it

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20 In Bapsi Sidhawa’s *Cracking India* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Edition, 1991), Lenny suffers the effects of polio and in Firdaus Kanga’s *Trying to Grow* (Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1990), Brittle suffers from brittle bones.
was such another stripling as my selfe. They had no sooner spide me, but they cryde out aloud: Ah thou thiefe, have we caught thee? wee have thee safe enough now, thou canst not escape our hands: And presently hereupon they strooke me off the Asse (my brother) with their Fists; and when they had me downe, laying fast hold on me, they fell a searching mee, thinking to have found the stolne-goods about me. (Alemán vol. I, I.vii: 156-57)

Karim has to accept discrimination and stereotyping. He is a ‘funny kind of Englishman’ and is forced to appear on stage wearing a ‘loin-cloth and brown make-up’ to resemble Kipling’s Mowgli (Kureishi 1990: 3, 146). Karim is also unreasonably punished, on one occasion being unfairly castigated for trespassing on the property of Helen’s father, an admirer of Enoch Powell. His insolent attempt to enter Chislehurst, a wealthier (white) area ends with Helen’s father’s dog - a Great Dane - chasing, attacking and ‘raping’ him:

My soft words obviously affected the dog, for suddenly there was a flurry and I felt something odd on my shoulders. Yes, it was the dog’s paws. The dog’s breath warmed by neck. I took another step and so did the dog. I knew by now what the dog was up to. The dog was in love with me - quick movements against my arse told me so. Its ears were hot. I didn’t think the dog would bite me, as its movements were increasing, so I decided to run for it. The dog shuddered against me (Kureishi 1990: 41).

However, both Guzmán and Karim respond to being mistreated by swallowing their pride and finding ways of exploiting those who exploit them. Gradually, they metamorphose into their picaresque fathers, both renegades: a Jewish Levantine converso rogue and a Muslim-Buddhist suburban pícaro. There is a slight difference, however. Guzmán and his father are involved in a severe struggle to survive, whereas Karim and his father enjoy the benefits of being ‘different’. 
2.2 The picaresque: a universal genre

The existence of the picaresque as a new narrative genre is first alluded to in *Don Quixote*, in the encounter between Quixote and Ginés de Pasamonte:21 ‘It is so good’ says Ginés, referring to his own ‘book’, ‘that Lazarillo de Tormes will have to look out, and so will everything in that style that has been written or ever will be’ (my italics) (Cervantes 1605: 176). Ginés’ supposed book reflects the new genre. It is the autobiography of an unrepentant rogue with an open ending:

‘And what is the title of the book?’ asked Don Quixote.  
‘The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte,’ replied that hero.  
‘Is it finished?’ asked Don Quixote.  
‘How could it be finished,’ replied the other, ‘if my life isn’t? What is written begins with my birth and goes down to the point when I was sent to the galleys this last time.’  
‘Then you have been there before?’ (Cervantes 1605: 176-77)

However, it was predominantly the success of Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), ‘the first authentic best seller22 in the history of printing’ according to Claudio Guillén (quoted in Sieber 11), which established picaresque conventions. Not surprisingly, the term *picaro* - rogue, knave, sharper - appeared for the first time in Spanish literature in the prologue to this novel. The appearance of *Guzmán de Alfarache* also illustrates the power which publishers and printers have in the evolution of literary genres. It is usually believed that the publication of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) signalled the emergence of the picaresque novel. However, this novel went relatively unnoticed, and only gained widespread attention fifty-five years later

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21 See also Cervantes’ references to his own novella about a guild of *picaros* Rinconete and Cortadillo (1613) in chapter xlvii in the first part of *Don Quixote* (1605) 420.
22 By 1605 at least twenty-five editions of the first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* had been printed in Spain and abroad. In 1602 *Guzmán de Alfarache*’s apocryphal second part by Juan Martí was published. Two years later Alemán’s genuine second part appeared; Harry Sieber, *The Picaresque* (London: Methuen, 1977) 11.
when *Guzmán de Alfarache* was published. Exploiting the phenomenal success of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Alemán’s publishers in Barcelona and Zaragoza reissued *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Sieber 11), and by 1603 at least nine different editions of *Lazarillo de Tormes* were in circulation. Hence, a ‘new’ and marketable genre had been discovered.²³

There are several obstacles to the clear and precise definition of the picaresque novel, either as a historically defined (and therefore ‘closed’) genre, or distinctive type of fiction. Spanish literary theorists of the Renaissance imposed classical categories upon the new literary forms of the time, which led to a decontextualised interpretation of these emerging forms. This in turn promoted the idea of fixity and the assumption that, however flexible the rules governing the production of new works might be, genres are themselves fixed. Hence, whatever alterations and modifications were introduced from country to country, an ‘archetypal’ picaresque novel, in terms of its most salient features, is nevertheless identifiable. In fact, the picaresque novel is by no means a unified or a static novelistic convention tied to a particular half-century or to a particular country. Nor is it necessarily a phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and indigenous to Spain, but the continuation of a tradition whose elements had existed earlier and elsewhere in literature, which re-emerged in Spain to subvert totalitarian ideas of purity.²⁴ Even the etymology of the word *picaro*²⁵ is unclear, and may have derived from one of

²³ This ‘new’ genre would soon be exploited further by writers such as López de Ubeda, who in 1605 published *La Picara Justina*, a novel about Guzmán de Alfarache’s fiancée and rival in picaresque exploits.

²⁴ The picaresque authors were classicists who drew their sources from both Western classics and Eastern sources. The role King Alfonso X’s court and the Toledan translators was essential in, for example, the reception and transmission of Eastern sources, such as Arabic *Maqâmats*, *The Calila e Dimna* and *The 1001 Nights*, which influenced the Spanish classical picaresque.

²⁵ After the Court Assembly of 1659 the term was used to describe those who lived off charity without working.
several sources: from the Latin *pica* (a pike; a piker, or pike-carrying foot-soldier), *picar* (to pick, puncture, nibble, bite) or *picaro de cozina* (kitchen assistant); on the other hand, as De Haan and Bonilla suggested, it may derive from an amalgamation of Arabic terms such as *bikaron* (early riser), *bakyr* (early), *bocaron* (liar), *baycara* (vagabond) and *bacara* (pull) (De Haan 1903, Bonilla 1901).

The picaresque novel is the autobiography of an ingenious rogue, a knave or a trickster who, as he serves different masters and struggles by both fair and foul means to make a living, satirises and criticises the evils of the hostile society in which he finds himself trapped (De Haan 1903: 1, Chandler 1899: 45-6). Although some critics, such as Alison Weber, consider that attempts to define the picaresque have failed (Weber 1979: 13), the general characteristics of the picaresque novel and hero in their early Spanish forms are widely accepted. The *picaro*, after abandoning his family at an early age, goes through a series of episodic adventures in a world of rogues and tricksters who survive through begging and petty theft (Whitbourn 1974: 20-23). The ‘Spanish pattern’, Claudio Guillén (1987) points out, follows certain formal and thematic principles. It is an autobiography in episodic form by a half-outsider protagonist of low birth and disreputable background who, cast out in the world, goes through a process of discovering values anew and, as a consequence of this experience, becomes a rascal.

According to Guillén’s strict definition, in Europe the genre can only be seen in use up until the eighteenth century (Guillén 1987: 100). This would place Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) - the English novel most closely resembling López de Ubeda’s *La Picara Justina* (1605) and in which a debt to the Spanish tradition can easily be seen - as one of the last in a long line of examples of the English

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26 The Habsburg Kings were committed to empire building and war so large numbers of all sorts of individuals became pike-men in their armies.
Picaresque which begins with Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594). For example, in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), the protagonist does not suffer the doubts and humiliations of Guzmán or Pablos; the picaresque, in Guillén's view has been domesticated. Despite Guillén's strict Euro-centric definition of the genre, however, writers from outside Europe have continued to use the picaresque model as a vehicle to observe and analyse their contemporaries. Examples include the work of an interesting group of writers born beyond British soil: G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), Farrukh Dhondy's *Bombay Duck* (1990), Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *Moses Migrating* (1992).\(^{27}\)

We should bear in mind that the presence of 'picaresque' characters does not necessarily mean that a novel can be described as picaresque. However, from the framework of sixteenth century picaresque conventions *The Buddha of Suburbia* does come close to reflecting the conventions of the picaresque novel. The choice of the picaresque as a form indicates both Kureishi's awareness of the intense displacement within his social and political universe, and a need to define a minority identity within Britain.

\(^{27}\) Selvon not only follows the conventions of the picaresque hero but includes the original epistolary form, often omitted by other postpicaresque authors: 'A Special preface by Moses Aloetta Esq.'; Samuel Selvon, *Moses Migrating* (London: Longman, 1992 [1983]) ix-xiii.
2.3 A Baroque multicultural conflict

For the purpose of the comparison of subaltern voices in sixteenth century Spanish picaresque with their postmodern counterparts in postcolonial Britain, it is necessary to understand the conflict of castes during the Spanish Golden Age and the situation of the Spanish *converso*. In “The Archaeology of Desire in *Don Quixote*”, Cascardi discusses the emergence in early modern Spain of a series of culturally ambiguous, displaced or ‘marginal’ groups, such as the *moriscos*, *conversos*, *picaros*, and of course loose women*: the disfranchised and dispossessed (Cascardi 1997, quoted in Fajardo 2001: 311). Similarly, in “Lepers and Liminality” (1999) Cruz states that as the number of lepers began to fall at the end of the Middle Ages, their traditional role as ‘other’ was taken instead by these marginal groups. Being a *converso*, a Christian of Jewish origin - a cultural and religious hybrid, who might well have abandoned one faith without gaining another - meant that one was forced towards the margins of society, often persecuted by the state and under intense scorn and suspicion. However, this ‘new’ Christian was thus afforded a new viewpoint, in which it was possible to question traditional dogma and morality, and generate countercultural ideas. So, although to be a *converso* was to be relegated to the margins of society, occasionally this could provide the ‘truest eye’ (Bhabha 1995: 5) of intellectual distance and critical analysis. It could generate fierce satirical and ironical commentaries on the mainstream values dictated by the ‘Old Christians’. The problem of *conversos* and *moriscos* (Moors converted to Christianity), was not racial or religious, since their miscegenation and hybridisation within the Christian community was a common aspect of Iberian life. Indeed, there was never a physical description of the ideal or pure Spaniard. The problem was rather that of increasing
social mobility, which tended to foster a new intensity in the favouring of traditional Christian values and backgrounds.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish intellectuals, especially writers of Jewish background, did not necessarily accept Christian visions of society, and attacked in particular the myth of honour and purity of blood, which was seen to generate marginality and persecution. Spanish essayists of Jewish background, such as Luis Vives (1492-1540)\(^\text{28}\) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566),\(^\text{29}\) often reflected their situation as outsiders in their own country. Often they show an exaggeratedly orthodox attitude towards Christian culture. *Conversos* such as Juan de Lucena lament that ‘men of genius and excellent doctrine’ are ignored and forgotten while the king sends as his ambassadors ‘veritable trotters who if they can’t speak, brag in Spanish’ (Gilman 344).

Such was the level of discrimination that certain authors hid their *converso* connections (Fernando de Rojas, Mateo Alemán, Miguel de Cervantes, etc.). Others used adopted Christian identities (López de Ubeda\(^\text{30}\) in *La Picara Justina*, translated into English as *Book of the Entertainment of the Picara Justina* (1605)), whilst some chose to remain anonymous (the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (c. 1553)). The ambiguous moral and didactic tone (*Captatio benevolentiae*) of the narrators of *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *La Picara Justina* is also explicable in relation to the necessity of gaining the *aprobación* of censors following the literary prescriptions of the Council of Trent (1546-1563) which accentuated the didactic function of


\(^{30}\) López de Ubeda was a *converso*, favoured by the court of Philip III (1598-1621). For this, in *El viaje al Parnaso* (1614), Cervantes portrayed him as a sycophant and, despite sharing the same heritage, Cervantes mocked Ubeda’s *converso* background; Richard Björnson, *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1977) 87-88.
literature, in addition, of course, to the constant fear of the *Tribunal de la Santa Inquisición*.

At a superficial level, the *picaro* is an anti-hero driven by hunger and insecurity, and the picaresque is a means of denouncing social injustice through 'resistance'. Edmund Cros (1967) has examined the link between poverty and the picaresque. During the mid-sixteenth century the plight of the poor concentrated in the emerging urban centres was becoming a moral and social issue. In the year prior to the publication of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Mateo Alemán corresponded on this topic with Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera, one of the most important social reformers of the time and author of *Discurso del amparo de los legítimos pobres*, (*Dissertation on the Protection of Genuine Paupers* 1598) (Rico 1983b: 46). Cruz (1999) examines some of the debates taking place at this time on how to view and deal with the poor, in particular the positions held by the Dominican Domingo de Soto and the Benedictine Juan de Robles. She argues that pauperism had previously been seen as a moral problem to be solved through charity within a religious context but that, in the mid-16th century, a more systematic organised approach to poor-relief began to emerge, an approach that opposed incipient bourgeois rationalism to traditional aristocratic values.

The development of cities in early modern Spain involved the gathering of diverse groups of people attracted to the urban centre. This influx formed the basis of a large marginalised underclass. In *De Subventio Pauperum* (1526), the Renaissance humanist philosopher Luis Vives points out that the number of outcasts in other European countries, in particular in France and Italy, greatly exceeded the number in Spain. Hence, the explanation of the emergence of the picaresque as the product of the social conditions of sixteenth century Spain, a supposed country of vagabonds and rogues, proves to be unsustainable. The emergent concept of *picaro*
must consequently be seen as essentially a literary phenomenon. As Rico points out, the real *picaro* does not explain the existence of the literary *picaro* (Rico 1984: 100-106). Nevertheless, part of the successful reception of the Spanish picaresque abroad was indeed due to this perception of all Spaniards as idle *picaros*, as the Prologue to the seventeenth century French translation of *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes* shows: all Spaniards are the same and would rather die of hunger than take up some trade.31

The literary *picaro* (similar to the French *gueux*, the German *schelm* or the English *rogue*) was characterised by his low social status and his fall into delinquency. However, the favourite Spanish picaresque themes were not starvation and the struggle of life, as if they were novels of what Tierno Galván has called ‘the Baroque proletariat’ (Galván 1974: 9-35). Rather, they questioned identity and social conventions, and in particular the concept of honour in society, which the *picaro* is unable to achieve due to his family background. For Tierno Galván and Maurice Molho the picaresque novel deals with the impossibility of mobility upwards during the Spanish Golden Age and the consequent resentment of an emergent bourgeoisie repressed by the dominant aristocracy. It examines bourgeois class consciousness critically and through parody (Galván 1974: 24-34).

Bataillon and Castro see in the picaresque a reaction against an anti-*converso* society. The new genre, then, is a result of social tensions, with anguished *converso* writers, who suffer discrimination, making caste and honour (not hunger) the central theme of their work. Bataillon examines the fact that Lázaro, Guzmán, Justina and Pablos, from their *converso* situation, are able to show both the underground of society as well as the obsessive concern with honour of the time.

31 ‘Tous les Espagnols sont de même, et mourront plutôt de faim que de se mettre en quelque mestier’: *La vie de Lazarillo de Tormes, et de ses fortunes et adversités*. Traduction nouvelle, (Paris: A. Tiffaine, 1616) 82, my translation.
The *picaro*, who, from the fringes of society, expresses social resentment against the privileged, is not a social parasite, but the victim of social discrimination and prejudice in a society in transition. Sixteenth century Spain was a declining colonial power but also a postcolonial and multicultural society, in terms of the plurality of castes and religions inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula. Similarly, the last decades of twentieth century Britain have seen the end of the British Empire and the emergence of a postcolonial and multicultural society. Thus, the current problematic multicultural situation in Britain has not been without precedent in Europe. It seems that history repeats itself, and that comparable shifts in literary models follow historical patterns. The picaresque genre was historically the product of multicultural and social tensions, and the marginality of the Baroque *picaro* reflects religious and cultural conflict. However, there is one important difference between sixteenth century Spanish picaresque and its late twentieth century British successor. Whereas the society described in Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* still preserves an apparently strongly coherent and unitary self-image which dominates the text, the climate in late twentieth century Britain is radically pluralistic, a fact which transforms the conception of the *picaro*.

One of the main differences between Alemán’s and Kureishi’s *picaros* is the marketing of culture and ethnicity which characters like Karim can exploit. Although Alemán’s novel became one of the earliest best-sellers in European literary history, the marketing of exoticism is a more recent phenomenon. Karim is caught between mimicry and subversion in a society which patronises or accepts the ‘other’, provided that the ‘other’ responds to mainstream assumptions and to commercial notions of exoticism. One principal difference between Guzmán and Karim, then, is that it is only in the twentieth century that deracination and victimisation have become commodified. Also absent from the period of classical picaresque are
characters such as Eva or Eleanor in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, whose liberal guilt makes them attracted to the victim. We can perhaps see certain parallels between the Renaissance exploitation of the trade of charity through which the wealthy gain forgiveness, and the contemporary exploitation of multiculturalism and ethnicity among guilty liberal minds:

To the rich, it serves as an Instrument and meanes (by the helping of Charitie) to buy eternall blessednesse. And that man shall be charitable, and truely rich, who making the poore man rich, shall make himself, of a rich man, poore. (Alemán vol. II, III.iv: 168)

Likewise, in *The Buddha of Suburbia* the success of individuals such as Haroon and Karim can be explained not only in terms of their constructed exoticism but also as the result of postcolonial guilt. In the same way, Eleanor's interest in a working-class person, such as Heater - 'a man in the street' (Kureishi 1990: 175) - can be seen as the result of middle-class guilt.

The classical Spanish *picaro* appeared at the point of incipient national deterioration, and there is undoubtedly a relationship between 'decadent' societies and decadent artistic manifestations. Alan Francis, for example, examines the progress of the picaresque novel in terms of Spain's decadence in the seventeenth century (Francis 1978). The picaresque novel's 'decadent' tone, he argues, can be read as a reaction against the 'pastoral landscape' or *locus amoenus*, chivalric novels and Italian Renaissance forms, all of which are incapable of conveying the decay of social, ethical, artistic and religious values. The optimism of the Renaissance had given way to disenchantment with contemporary life, and the prevalent attitude amongst these writers was one which sought to expose abuses and dispel illusions;

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32 Ecglogues and chivalric novels were the literary forms chosen by 'Old Christian authors', such as Garcilaso de la Vega (1501-1536) and Jorge de Montemayor (1520-1561).
their means included realism and the exaggeration of the ugly, the grotesque and the sordid.

The new literary code of *Lazarillo de Tormes* produced semantic distress and confusion due to the way its unusual semiotic system degraded literature. Underneath the wrath of the *converso* writer there is a fierce attack on the rigidity of tradition - both artistic and social - which manifests itself through the trickster’s ambiguous apology for freedom and non-conformism. For Alan Parker (1967) the picaresque, a product of the new moral attitudes resulting from the Counter Reformation, offers seventeenth century courtesans freedom from restrictive values. Whilst impoverished gentlemen of the time accept obsolete conceptions of honour as a means of life, *picaros* search for personal freedom in opposition to the social restrictions imposed by the lack of honour on *conversos* and their descendants (Bataillon 1969: 214, 217, 242). Such vindication occasionally drives picaresque authors to divert their *picaros* from mainstream society. In general, the picaresque genre can be regarded as asserting a claim to moral, social and sexual freedom. Guzmán questions traditional values and vindication of social freedom:

> Then might I affirme, that leaving my roguish kinde of life, this *Picardia* of mine, (as a Queene, whose name I am not worthy to take in my mouth, and whereunto any other politicke course of life is not to be compared) all the braverie and gallantrie of the curious method of living happily, and passing well away the time, which the world solemnizeth so much, must yeeld, and give place thereunto. (Alemán vol. II, II.v: 24)

Similarly, in postmodern Britain the new intellectual and plural climate questions the validity of traditional values. In Kureishi’s picaresque, the predilection for cruel prosaic realism and the scatological emerges from the desire to rebel against conformity, as in the case of Karim’s favourite punk groups:
You don’t do what you want then you’ll fade away
you won’t find me working nine to five
It’s too much fun BEING ALIVE
I’m using my feet for my human machine
(The Sex Pistols, ‘Problems’, 1977)

In the ‘decaying London’ of ‘decrepit England’, Charlie, the ‘anti-star’ of the punk group The Condemned, is ‘continually being chased by national papers, magazines and semioticians for quotes about the new nihilism, the new hopelessness and the new music which expressed it’ (Kureishi 1990: 153). For Hanif Kureishi pop culture is no longer peripheral but a central element in Western culture, which reflects the disintegration of values and the sense of community, in the new era of opportunism of the Thatcher years. After returning from New York, Karim notices how London has changed in just ten months, the latest contemporary issues being unemployment, racist attacks and a ‘terminal class struggle’ (Kureishi 1990: 207, 259):

I walked around Central London and saw that the town was being ripped apart; the rotten was being replaced by the new, and the new was ugly. The gift of creating beauty had been lost somewhere. The ugliness was in people, too. Londoners seemed to hate each other. (Kureishi 1990: 258)

Kureishi’s urban vision of the 1980s in Britain is indeed far away from the idyllic pastoral version of ‘old England’. Britain, Kureishi implies through Eleanor ‘who believed herself to be part of Britain’s greatness’, ‘was declining’ and was ‘to her consternation, sexually curious’ (Kureishi 1990: 179). ‘In a world which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain,’ Eric Hobsbawm suggests, ‘men and women look for groups to which they can belong, certainly and forever’ (Hobsbawm 1996: 40). Thus, in such ‘an age of doubt and uncertainty’ where traditional religions have been substituted by materialism, picares like Haroon can
achieve success by selling exotic ideas of the spirituality and wisdom of the East to the disenchanted British middle-class, and characters like Karim can easily market artificial ethnicity to liberal consumers.

2.4 Nation, culture and hybridity

The creation of the Spanish state in the fifteenth century, coinciding with the cross-cultural encounters of colonial expansion, brought into question the implications of national identity, a preoccupation which is reflected in the literature of the time. In contemporary Britain the understanding of nationhood changed in the postwar period due both to postcolonialism and the emergence of a global transnational culture. The issues of identity, resistance and freedom - in Guzmán de Alfarache and The Buddha of Suburbia - are closely related to the narrators’ ‘double-vision’ (Bhabha 1995: 5) as interpreters of two cultures and the authors’ complex background. Alemán constantly makes jokes about Jews, although he often does this as if to stress that he is a Christian of ancient stock, playing with the idea that the religion of the author has a bearing on his ‘authority’. Kureishi is able to be more explicit. His novel is full of the humorous depictions of those whose racial identity is confused or in some way multiple: Indians who want to be more English; English people who find satisfaction in the rejection of their ethno-centric British inheritance.

Writers acting as interpreters between two cultures face the demands and potentially antagonistic expectations of both. The danger of misrepresenting minorities is clearly exposed when Tracey, Karim’s black colleague, believes that his performance should be censored in order not to render the ethnic ridiculous, or when
the postcolonial rebel Jamila fears that to tell Helen about her arranged marriage would contribute to the cliché of Asians as ‘old-fashioned, extreme and narrow-minded’ (Kureishi 1990: 71). In practice, however, the outsider can attack mainstream values more effectively when his voice as an insider is also directed against his own ‘people’. Thus, Kureishi employs the textual device of the *picaro* being ‘on the inside’, in an attempt to ‘solve the problem of representation’ in a work ‘where the quest for identity is crucial.’ *The Buddha of Suburbia* is concerned with the issue of identity, in particular that of a ‘new breed’ of English people resulting from ‘the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not’ (Kureishi 1990: 3). Representation is a form of power, and postcolonial authors need to redefine themselves in order to regain the identity lost through cultural colonial subjugation. Kureshi plays with this notion of representation, and also with the idea of being represented: for example, when Pyke asks the theatre group to ‘concentrate on the way [they] think [their] position in society has been fixed’ (Kureishi 1990: 168-69). Karim’s own identity, however, does not coincide at all with the ethnic identity which society imposes on him.

From an existentialist perspective one might say that to want to be someone else simply implies the rejection of the identity imposed upon one by society. Identity is a matter of perception and relation. The most characteristic psychological aspect of Guzmán is his protean form: ‘I was of all occupations; a mariner, a miller, a baker, a scout, a crosse-biter, one of your upright men, a cheater, a cozener, a fox, that was full of craft and subtletie’ (Alemán vol. III, II.v: 266). Guzmán constantly desires to be somebody else. He attempts this through a re-representation of himself, combining new clothes and new names to create identities. However, he fails because ‘name chases man’: ‘Wouldst thou know who this is? Behold his name’ (Alemán vol. II, II.v: 33). Disguises and changes of names show the desire to be
somebody else, but their superficiality also illustrates the futility of the act, the impossibility of change. Full of resentment, Guzmán hides his frustration beneath moralising digressions against social mobility:

The Porter, as well as the Trades-man; the Trades-man, as the Merchant; the Merchant, as the Gentleman; the Gentleman, as the Knight; the Knight, as a Grande and the Grande as a King; all desire to bee in-throaned, and to out-strip one another, by living beyond their compasse, and spending beyond their means. (Alemán vol. II, II. v: 39)

Guzmán rejects such pretentious appearances and concludes that ‘the selfe-same Lesson [he] reade to all, that every man would learne to know himselfe’ (Alemán vol. II, II. v: 41). The picaro is an outsider, but aims to become a successful member of society. In the case of sixteenth and seventeenth century novels, the form can be seen as a reaction to the perceived relative security and immobility of an earlier Medieval society. The disintegration of the certainties of Medieval society leads to a sense of instability in the life of the picaro.

In The Buddha of Suburbia, all characters at certain points of their lives experience the wish to be somebody else, or are redefined or renamed. Examples of this traditional picaresque subversion of identity include: Haroon suggesting that his English wife wear a sari to be less English and, probably, more acceptable; Ted anglicising Haroon by naming him ‘Harry’; ‘Creamy’ (Karim) renaming Jean and Ted ‘gin and tonic’, the archetypal British colonial drink. As children Karim and Jamila used to play at being French or Black American, yet to their English compatriots they were ‘always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it’ (Kureishi 1990: 53). Karim’s brother goes further and changes his name from Amar to Allie to avoid racial trouble, although we never learn whether Allie-Amar succeeds in becoming accepted, nor how Asian Allie looks in his Italian designer clothes. Similarly, Eva’s construction of ‘an artistic persona for herself’ (Kureishi 1990: 150)
originates in a wish 'to scour that suburban stigma right off her body', a suburban
inferiority complex which resembles the search for acculturation and assimilation
familiar among immigrants. Karim perceives through her that 'it was in the blood
and not in the skin; she didn’t see there could be nothing more suburban than
suburbanites repudiating themselves' (Kureishi 1990: 134). Guzmán could easily
have added that:

It is a common saying; Que aunque vistan a la mona de seda, mona/se queda. An Ape, though he bee cladde in gold, will be an Ape still. And this is so infallibly true, that it admitteth no exception. (Aleman vol. II, II.viii: 78)

The image of the immigrant first trying to assimilate and fulfil the expectations
of the host country and then rejecting this role to look for his origins is, according to
Karim, the problem of 'the immigrant condition' (Kureishi 1990: 64) and the
creation of identity on the margins of society. Guzmán’s father, a Genoese usurer,
adopts himself to his new surroundings by converting first to Islam in Argiers and
then to Christianity after arriving in Seville. The image of this renegade praying in
the Spanish language, using ‘his large Masse-booke’ (Aleman vol. I, I.i: 46) has an
obvious similarity to Haroon rehearsing his English accent. In order to succeed
Haroon contrives an artificial identity as ‘a renegade Muslim masquerading as a
Buddhist’ (Kureishi 1990: 16), while in order to survive Guzmán’s father’s adopts a
false Christian identity.

In both Spanish Baroque society and postcolonial Britain social respect and
acceptance can be gained more easily through fame and reputation than through
wealth. Thus when Guzmán becomes the jester of a cardinal and of a French
Ambassador in Rome he realises not only the favours and privileges which a good
buffoon can achieve, but also his role in society: ‘A witty Jester is sometimes as
necessary, and as use-full as a wise Counsellour’ (Alemán vol. III, I.ii: 43). He decides to exploit his wit:

I was now entred into the service of the French Embassadour, with whom my Lord (who is now in glory) held strict amities; who, in his life-time tooke likewise great pleasure in my witty jests, and merry conceits [...] the pleasure he tooke in my jerks of wit, the merry tales I would tell him, and the pleasing messages that I should bring him now and then, from those his Ladies and Mistresses to whom he made love. (Aleman vol. II, III.x: 262)

It is ironic that like Guzmán and Lázaro de Tormes, who quotes Cicero’s saying *honos alit artes* (honour promotes arts), implying that Lázaro’s artistry will render him honourable, Karim also chooses an artistic career (the world of show business) to avoid the destiny of ‘a half-caste in England’, of ‘belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere’ (Kureishi 1990: 141). Fame, Karim points out, can gain you ‘goods that mere money couldn’t obtain’ (Kureishi 1990: 251). Ironically, Karim gains respect and a new identity through being an actor of Asian stereotypes.

Thus, Karim, like Kureishi himself, decides to join the world of theatre, film and show business, all forms of artifice, and all, of course, concentrated in the metropolis. The longing for the centre is a recurrent theme in *The Buddha of Suburbia*: ‘To have an elder brother who lived in London and worked in fashion, music or advertising was an inestimable advantage at school’ (Kureishi 1990: 8). In Kureishi’s postmodern London the metropolis has become a theatrical enabling space for discovery and consumption, in particular the consumption of culture - especially ‘other cultures’. It is the same open space for opportunity identified by

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Aleman, ‘the great theatre of the World’ in which Fortune befriends brave spirits - ‘Audaces fortuna juvat’ (Aleman vol. II, III.viii: 236), while it dictates our roles (Aleman vol. I, I.iv:137) and in which artifice does not matter because, as Guzmán points out, everybody, including himself, swindles:

I imagine with my selfe, that all men are just such as I am; weake, facill, and full of naturall passions; nay, sometimes strange and extravagant humours [...] Being bad my selfe, I thinke no man good: such is my wretched condition, and of as many as beare the same minde. (Aleman vol. III, I.i: 26)

For no man buyes an Office for any other end and purpose, but for his profit, be it publike, or be it private; they will grate and scrape, be it by hooke or by crooke, to raise a fortune there-out unto themselves. (Aleman vol. I, I.iii: 100-101)

After four years of questioning where he belongs, Karim manages to locate himself in relation to ‘here’ and ‘there’ by turning his own created ethnic identity to his advantage. Karim’s quest for self-identity among so many false and imposed identities concludes when he regains his Indian heritage and decides to fuse the ‘two old histories’, those of the Indian sub-continent and England, which together constitute his family history and complex multicultural identity:

But I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now - the Indians - that in some way these were my people, and that I’d spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I’d been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them. (Kureishi 1990: 212)

Hence, as Uncle Nasser points out in My Beautiful Laundrette, appearance ‘can get [you] anything you want [...] you just have to know how to squeeze the tits of the system’ (Kureishi 1996: 17). In case the Amirs do not know how to benefit from their exoticism they always have the ‘support’ and encouragement of Eva: ‘Haven’t
you noticed, Karim, the world’s full of money! Haven’t you noticed it sloshing around the country?’ (Kureishi 1990: 114).

2.5 The cosmopolitan metropolis

The metropolis as the centre of power and opportunity has long been the target of satirists, such as in the second century romance, *The Golden Ass*, where the protagonist’s aunt Birrena satirises urban life in Hipata. In “On the city of Rome”, Juvenal depicts the corruption of Rome, and wonders what he could do there, since he had not learnt how to lie (Juvenal 88).

Traditional *picaros* perform a journey from the periphery towards the centre, to the metropolis. This pilgrimage to the city is also a metaphorical inner journey (often circular) in search of identity - social, mental and cultural - ending with the inevitable metamorphosis of the *picaro*. Similarly, the *Bildungsroman* narrative of the nineteenth century often included a journey from the periphery to the city. In *Les Confessions* (1782) Rousseau tells the story of an inexperienced youth who leaves a claustrophobic provincial town, acquires his sentimental education through a series of adventures, and eventually makes his name in the capital city. For many young provincial fictional heroes, as for Rousseau, the big city allowed the space for self-formation and self-creation, for experimentation and change, offering a plethora of liberating possibilities. Often the protagonist of picaresque or *Bildungsroman* is an orphan, and his education and personal development are crucial. However, these can only take place in a large urban environment offering opportunities. Thus, desire to leave home (or loss of home) drives the protagonist to find trade or occupation in an urban centre. This urban experience involves an arduous process of maturing.
through ordeals in the shape of repeated clashes between the protagonist’s desires and the strict social order.

Guzmán’s search of self-improvement leads him to Spain’s growing metropolises: Seville and Madrid. In the sixteenth century, Seville was a prosperous multicultural city, the administrative centre of the Spanish empire where various cultures, races and castes had intermingled for centuries. Guzmán’s relationship with Seville and Madrid, ‘where everything flourished, with many knights of the order of the Golden Fleece, many Dukes and Grandees of Spaine; men of title, many Prelates, many Knights of the Habit with many principall Gentlemen of extraordinary ranke and quality’ (Aleman vol. I, II.i: 239), is precisely that of Karim’s with London. The city is a new territory of freedom, adventure and opportunity:

Sevill stood very fitly and commodiously seated for point of profit, or for any kinde of incroaching-getting, and as much is brought thither to be sold, as there is to be bought. For there shall you meete with Merchants that will deale with you in all commodities, no wares come amisse. It is Patria communis, and a free-common for all commers; it is a pasture, without inclosure; a Gordian Knot, an open field, a Globe without end, a mother of Orphans, and a shelter for sinners; where all cry out of want, and yet no man wants. (Aleman vol. I, I.ii: 91)

Young Guzmán also travels to other European metropolises, such as Rome, Genoa, Bologna and Florence, ‘to try [his] fortune [...] to see if [he] could mend [his] miserable Estate [...] to see the World, travelling from place to place, recommending my selfe to God, and well-disposed people, in whom [he] had put [his] trust’ (Aleman vol. I, I.ii: 92). It is no coincidence that, like other Spanish picaros (Justina, Aldonza and Estebanillo, who was half Italian), Guzmán chooses Italy, a relatively safe destination for Spanish Jews,34 where he has many opportunities for

34 Alemán's maternal ancestors were Jews from Italy; Donald McGrady, Mateo Alemán (New York: Twayne, 1968) 90.
social advancement: ‘I thought with myself, because I was a handsome young Lad, well shap’t, and of some reasonable good fashion in my behaviour, that they would have gone together by the eares for mee, striving who should have me away with him’ (Alemán vol. I, II.i: 239).

Karim impatiently fantasies about all the temptations London offers him - drugs, sex and rock-and-roll - concluding that his goal is to conquer the centre of the old empire, no matter the price he has to pay (Kureishi 1990: 121). In London Karim is searching for the same freedoms as Guzmán in Seville. For Karim the freedoms which multicultural London or New York offer are based on the possibility of undoing stereotypes. In New York he experiences a sense of belonging because Manhattan’s open space liberates the individual from his imposed artificial background. Ironically, though, it is Charlie who gains a profitable new identity by mimicking Cockney parlance, ‘selling Englishness’ to the mighty Americans (Kureishi 1990: 247). Like Haroon and Karim, Charlie aims to access the centre by remaining peripheral or marginal. Karim, however, follows his father’s model of accepting difference and manipulating the gullible Western taste for exoticism for his own benefit. Haroon had discovered that ‘the whites [would] never promote [him]’ (Kureishi 1990: 21) and decides fraudulently to exploit obsolete oriental colonial conceptions of the East by adopting a false identity as ‘the Buddha of suburbia’. He reverses his previous assimilation into Englishness, ‘hissing his s’s and exaggerating his Indian accent’, which for so long he had tried to suppress in order to be ‘less risibly conspicuous’ (Kureishi 1990: 21). Accepting stereotypical perceptions of the other, however, involves the humiliation of being labelled as ‘ethnic’ or of the minority.

35 In the metropolis he even frequents a bar with a name with picaresque connotations (The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Jack Wilton (1594)): ‘a house of fights and dope called the Nashville’; Hanif Kureishi, The Buddha of Suburbia (London: Faber, 1990) 127.
The *picaro* suffers twofold aggression: both conscious acts committed against him as a person, and also indirect social injustice. However, part of the very nature of the *picaro* is that he is not subjugated by these conditions, and remains resilient. The *bildungsroman* in some ways adopts the structure of the picaresque novel in its depiction of the self-developing hero. This type of novel was particularly popular in Victorian England, when many authors produced works focused on the journey from childhood to adulthood: Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and *Great Expectations* (1860-1). Traditional *bildungsroman* characters usually experience a succession of adventures, sometimes including picaresque episodes, which result in their growth and transformation from immature youngsters into worthy respected citizens. *Picaros*, in contrast, hardly ever achieve such a status.

The first obstacle which Guzmán de Alfarache and Karim Amir face is their background. Guzmán tells us that his biological father and ‘his Kindred, were a certaine kind of upstart Gentlemen, that came out of the Levant’ (Aleman vol. I, I.i: 44), that is, from Jewish stock. The insistence on explaining their questionable ‘Noble and Honourable Stocke’ (Aleman vol. II, II.vi: 62), and the commencement of the narrative with the description of the family background, is linked to the confessional tone of the autobiography of an antihero reflecting on his misspent life:

> My natural disposition was good; I was descended both by Father and Mother of a Noble and Honourable Stocke. This I could neither hide, nor lose. (Aleman vol. II, II.vii: 62)

It is common for the picaresque hero to be born in the most peculiar circumstances: Lazarillo claims to have been born in a river, Moll Flanders is born in a prison. This
extraordinary birth is important to show both the picaro’s low status and also as an
description of the non-conformist adult life to come. Karim Amir is an ‘Englishman
born and bred’, but being only ‘almost’ sentences him to be ‘looking for trouble, any
kind of movement, action and sexual interest’ (Kureishi 1990: 3). Moreover,
Karim’s father’s masquerade - a Muslim as a Buddhist - mirrors Guzmán’s father’s
life of a double renegade. Guzmán, we learn, ‘had two fathers: for [his] mother was
so well learned in her Art, that she knew very well how to father [him] on them both’

Guzmán’s father is taken by Algerian pirates to Argiers where ‘for quietness
sake, as one that had not the spirit of contradiction, or that was wont to gainsay
anything, he renounced his Religion, and Turned Turke’ and married a ‘Moore, a
woman of perfect beauty, and principall ranke, with whom he had good store by
himselfe to the Faith of Jesus Christ, repenting himselfe of his fault, with tears in his
eyes, being his owne Promoter, he accused himselfe, craving pardon for his offence,
and that some favourable penance might bee inflicted upon him’ (Alemán vol. I, I:i:
48). The actions of Guzmán’s father seem to be due to the Inquisitorial context. The
Inquisition used to grant non-Christians time to convert before beginning any
process. Alemán seems to suggest that Guzmán’s father joined those who agreed to
convert in these circumstances, and who, in exchange of forgiveness, would often
collaborate by denouncing members of their own group.

Family background works as a device to convey the tension and bitterness of
picaresque authors, and as a means of redefining identity. Kureishi also adopts this
device in the redefinition of British identity and the place of minorities within
Englishness. But the difference is that Guzmán’s father becomes Christian to fit in
with a repressive Christian context. Karim’s father, on the other hand, turns from Muslim to Buddhist in a post-Christian context - to be ‘exotic’.

The second obstacle the picaro has to encounter and overcome is being young and inexperienced: ‘My yeeres were few, my experience lesse, it being fitting, that they should both have beene greater they were’ (Alemán vol. I, II.i: 236). Guzmán’s picaresque education continues throughout his life. However, he constantly looks back on his years of innocence to explain his current situation as a galleon convict:

I was an unfortunate man, (as you have heard) and stood alone by my selfe, without any tree by me. I had many troubles come upon me, the burthen was heavy, my strength weake, my debt great, and my meanes small. See then and consider whether it were fit or no, that such a young Youth as I, that began to crowe before I was scarce out of the shell, and to write so soone, having such honest parts in me, and good in dowments, should not bee made some reckoning off? (Alemán vol. I, I.i: 92)

I saw my selfe abandoned and so dangerously ingulphed, that I knew not where to find harbour, or to put into any port to save my selfe. My years were few, my experience less [...] I entred into a reckoning with my selfe, and was making my Account; which I found to be very bad; my charge was great, and my cash small: I was about not to have gone any farther; for to go on I wanted meanes, as I likewise did for to carry me home. (Alemán vol. I, II.i: 236)

Youth not only excuses mistakes but also works as a device to secure empathy with the reader: ‘I knew, that all this hapned deservedly unto me; because, being a wilde simple ladde as I was, I was so easie of beliefe’ (Alemán vol. II, II.viii: 97). Picaros recount their metamorphosis and the tricks they learn from the various masters they have throughout their lives. In the classical picaresque these tricks are often related to begging, cheating and petty theft:

Besides all this, he taught me how to faigne my selfe a Leper, to make wounds in my flesh, to raise a swelling in my legge, to benumme an arme, to set a counterfeit colour on the face, to alter the whole body, and other curious principles of this Art. (Alemán vol. II, III.iii: 162)
Picaros frequently look for the company of other outsiders and may even join a brotherhood which reproduces the social grouping of the society they reject. In Kureishi’s work the brotherhood is represented by theatre groups and Karim’s father’s company. The *picaro* of south London, like Lázaro, Justina or Guzmán, claims he inherited from his father a ‘strong survival instinct’ (Kureishi 1990: 250). Karim models himself on his father, from whom he learnt most of his tricks, such as flirting and acting:

Dad taught me to flirt with everyone I met, girls and boys alike, and I came to see charm rather than courtesy or honesty, or even decency, as the primary social grace. And I even came to like people who were callous or vicious provided they were interesting. (Kureishi 1990: 7)

There are many similarities between father and son. Haroon, Karim’s first mentor, told him when he was a child that he wanted him to become an actor because ‘it was a good life’ and ‘the proportion of work to money was high’ (Kureishi 1990: 23). Karim’s situation occasionally resembles his father’s lack of direction and sense of being misplaced when, as a young man, he had been sent to Britain to study law:

In contrast [to Anwar], Dad was going nowhere. His family cut off his money when they discovered from a spy - Dr Lal - that he was being called to the Bar only to drink several pints of rough stout and brown ale wearing a silk bow-tie and a green waistcoat. (Kureishi 1990: 26)

Unlike Guzmán, once his parents have separated, and especially after Eva and Haroon leave the suburbs in the second part of the novel, Karim greatly enjoys his new life of freedom as ‘lonely’ and ‘itinerant’: ‘There wasn’t even a bed for me; I slept on the sofa in the front room’ (Kureishi 1990: 94, 125). Nevertheless, like Guzmán (Alemán vol. I, I.i: 92), being young and vulnerable, Karim has to survive on his own. He has nowhere to go, especially after Changez discovers him and Jamila together in bed.
After having been left alone, the *picaro* can rely only on his own charms to survive. Guzmán believes that his physique can help him to succeed:

I thought with my selfe, because I was a handsome young Lad, well shap’t, and of some reasonable good fashion in my behaviour, that they would have gone together by the eares for mee, striving who should have me away with him. (Aleman vol. I, II.i: 239)

Karim is delighted at his own image and the possibility of bisexual affairs:

At that moment I glimpsed myself in a shop window and was pleased with what I saw. I had no job, no education, and no prospects, but I looked pretty good, oh yes. (Kureishi 1990: 99)

The *picaro* plays with his image and identity and adapts them to what is expected from him: Karim as an exotic product and Guzmán as a reliable servant. Guzmán quickly discovers that life consists of appearance and, consequently, he learns how to exploit his charm and wit to be granted elevated status as his employer’s advisor and gains control of one of his masters:

For these, and other the like things annexed there-unto, I was alwayes well clad, much made of, I was the Favorite, the familiar friend, the Master of my Master, as also of all those that were interessed in his friendship.

I was the principall doore, whereby they entred into his grace and favour, and onely I the Lord of his Will. I kept the golden key of his secrets. Hee had sold his libertie unto me [. . .] (Aleman III, I.ii: 46)

Similarly, Karim can also become a symbolic master and guide in Vilayet for his ‘friend’ Changez. Karim concentrates on corrupting his newly arrived Indian friend with London’s entertainments, which include ‘dancing in the Pink Pussy Club, yawning at Fat Mattress at the Croydon Greyhound, ogling strippers on Sunday mornings in a pub, sleeping through Godard and Antonioni films and enjoying fighting at Millwall Football Ground, where [he] forced Changez to wear a bobble-
hat over his face ‘in case the lads saw he was a Paki and imagined [Karim] was one too’ (Kureishi 1990: 98). Karim has turned into Changez’s guide to the wildness of London, at the expense of Changez’s own freedom.

Where the more orthodox hero of the *bildungsroman* finds his moral and sexual fulfilment in a progressive integration into society, the *picaro* is driven by his social and sexual freedom into an existence of nomadism and illicit living. In picaresque novels, for example, the romantic love interest is usually absent, since love and marriage are potentially entrapping, whereas classical *bildungsroman* novels, as Moretti states, must always conclude with marriages (Moretti 22). *The Buddha of Suburbia* ends with the proposal of a wedding. However, the marriage is not Karim’s, but that of his father.

The issue of freedom also echoes the author’s desire for freedom in the choice of expression. Guzmán’s apology for freedom against conformism can also be understood in terms of a compensation for failure. Guzmán’s first ordeal occurs after leaving home, when he is given an omelette with rotten eggs. The hostess saw, Guzmán says, ‘that [he] was a novice in the world, and look’t like a good honest simple Youth’ (Aleman vol. I, I.iii: 98). Later, instead of veal he is given mule meat, symbolically an ‘impure’, hybrid animal, to which he comments ‘[it] was all one in a manner, as if I should have devoured mine own flesh’ (Aleman vol. I, I.vii: 146-47).

The difference between Guzmán’s early ordeals and Karim’s humiliation lies not in the gravity of the humiliation but in the extent of their awareness of the situation. In this sense, the *picaro* of suburbia lacks the naïveté of Guzmán, who in his youth scarcely understood the evil of humankind. Despite Karim’s early self awareness, he never becomes a hardened criminal figure, as Guzmán does. In this respect Karim is closer to Lázaro, who in terms of the degree of delinquency required by Spanish picaresque conventions is not exactly a criminal but a victim.
Nevertheless, Karim manages to overcome and manipulate his marginal position. Like Guzmán, who was ‘willing to be one of the number, and would faine ranke my selfe amongst them, by doing as they did, being no way their equall, but a poore Picaro, a ragg-taild Rogue, out both of clothes and credit’ (Alemán vol. II, II.vi: 48), when it comes to his career Karim is happy to lose his independence and take the role of the colonised and exploited. This tension is seen in Pyke’s company:

Before I could complete the sentence, England’s most interesting and radical theatre director was inserting his cock between my speaking lips. I could appreciate the privilege, but I didn’t like it much: it seemed an imposition. He could have asked politely. So I gave his dick a South London swipe - not viciously, not enough to have my part in the play reduced - but enough to give him a jolt. When I looked up for his reaction it was to see him murmuring his approval. (Kureishi 1990: 203)

Over the course of the novel Karim learns to suffer and tolerate any indignity that might help him succeed and escape suburbia. As an actor he is ready for change and promotion whatever this might involve:

I felt a complete wanker, waving at that wasp. But I wanted the part, whatever the part was. I couldn’t face going back to that flat in West Kensington not knowing what to do with my life and having to be pleasant, and not being respected by anyone. (Kureishi 1990: 139)

The didactic philosophy which characterises the literature of the sixteenth century dominates Guzmán’s discourse. Alemán hides his converso rage behind Christian doctrines and traditional values. Underneath the didacticism of Guzmán’s discourse there is an overt message of social denunciation. Guzmán, like Sisyphus (as he explains), realises that his situation is unchangeable. If Alemán was able to reveal his identity, it was because he had hidden Guzmán’s intentions beneath layers of ambiguity, so that the author’s critique was missed by the censors. Guzmán seems to be confessing his story (Parker 1967: 6) to attain forgiveness and excuse himself.
Indeed, Alemán’s novel fulfils the Counter Reformation’s demands of religious responsibility by showing the protagonist within a corrupt society being brought into temptation, sin and subsequently repentance. Guzmán appears not only as a repentant sinner and sermoniser full of wisdom, but also as an individual with useful social skills. For example, he reflects on the nature and art of flattering in general:

> With Flatters, no rich man is a foole; nor no Poore man wise. For they still weare Spectacles of the largest sight; by reason wherof, things represent them selves far greater then indeed they are. It may truly bee called, Wealths-Moth, and Truths-Worme. Flatterie resideth most with the Poore, being the greatest enemie that he hath. (Alemán vol II, III:i:127)

In this Karim also echoes Guzmán’s sermons:

> Later that night [Eva] came into my room in her kimono, bringing me a glass of champagne and carrying a book. I told her she looked happy and luminous, which made her look even more happy and luminous. Compliments were useful tools of the friendship trade, I told myself, but in her case it was true. (Kureishi 1990: 92)

Karim is a natural born actor and liar for whom life is a play: ‘I don’t care, [. . .] I am an actor’ (Kureishi 1990: 232). He knows how to manipulate and control not only the narration of those significant four years of his life, but also his constructed identity and, therefore, his interaction with people. Thus, he can act ‘innocently as a vicar’ in order not ‘to stymie things by seeming too eager’ and at the same time cynically excuse his fabrications (‘a nod can’t be a lie’ (Kureishi 1990: 14)). From the first pages of the text Karim shows that he is not an innocent hyphenated adolescent at all, but a mischievous trickster:

> I’d discovered in life that if you’re too eager others tend to get less eager. And if you’re less eager it tends to make others more eager. So the more eager I was the less eager I seemed. (Kureishi 1990: 6)
In Alemán's novel the narrative point of view emanates from Baroque demands of individualism and freedom. The picaresque’s individualist claim was twofold: social and aesthetic, emerging as a product of the incipient individualism; of the ‘I’ as the project of the self, independent of God, fortune or heritage. The move away from Medieval notions of Man involved the individual seeing himself less in terms of predetermined norms of status, caste, class, etc. This tendency, vindicating the right to define oneself against imposed identities through virtue and merit, had to struggle against the reactions of a traditional society in crisis. Lázaro and Guzmán have to place their respective I’s against a threatening society and at the same time have to adapt to the system in order to protect themselves, so as not to be absorbed and lose their individuality. Having to remain as semi-outsiders in society, their only options are either to exploit the system or to accept its rules. Picaros do not believe in ideals and morals. They are ‘metaphysical outsiders, dangling between commitments and value systems’ (Galloway 83). They follow their instinct against conformism, or, in Kureishi’s antiheroes, against bourgeois values.

Like a traditional picaro, seventeen-year-old Karim does not want to conform. He wants to be different, craves adventure, and cannot wait to be elsewhere:

[...] I had an extraordinary revelation. I could see my life clearly for the first time: the future and what I wanted to do. I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs. I hadn’t come upon it all like this before, and now I wanted nothing else. The door to the future had opened: I could see which way to go. (Kureishi 1990: 15)

But after an initially euphoric time in New York with Charlie, Karim, feeling depressed and hating himself, resembles Guzmán as he cynically examines himself:

36 See Jay, the narrator of Kureishi’s Intimacy (London: Faber and Faber, 1998) or Gabriel’s father in Gabriel’s Gift (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).
I began to bethinke my selfe what I had beene doing, nor should I have wak’t so soone, if the Timbrels, and the songs, and the Dancing of certaine Women, which came thither that day to keep their Wake, and to feast, and be merry, with their dubbing, and their bawling, had not rowz’d me up from sleepe [. . .] I began to examine my selfe. (Alemán vol. I, I.iii: 95-96)

Didactic literary principles also dictate that the protagonists repent their unrecommendable lives (*Exemplum ex contrario*). In the prologue ‘to the Discreet Reader’ Guzmán justifies writing his autobiography: ‘I must confesse I made a false Vie, and did set up my rest in jest, but now I am driven to see it in earnest’ (Alemán vol. I, I.: 16). Both Karim and Guzmán pretend that their ways of living have changed or will change. However, we are conscious that we are dealing with the unreliable narrations of two tricksters or liars, who conclude their dubious confessions ambiguously. Hence, the possibility of a return to the ways of the *picaro* is not discounted. Guzmán suggests certain repentance and tells the ‘gentle Reader’ that he is putting ‘a full point to these my mis-fortunes’ (Alemán vol. IV, III.ix: 353), which seems to imply an abuse of Christian conventions by a false convert.

However, Karim is a more mischievous and manipulative character. His life had been a mess, and it was ‘absolutely characteristic of [him],’ Jamila had once told him (Kureishi 1990: 54). Finding himself without money, he vaguely considered renouncing his life as a *picaro*: ‘things were so desperate it had become necessary for [him] to work’ (Kureishi 1990: 205). But at twenty, aware of the advantages of his ethnic condition, Karim insists that ‘it wouldn’t always be that way’ (Kureishi 1990: 284) because he eventually seems to have found his place in society:

[T]here were hours of congratulation and drinking and so many people around our table I didn’t have to talk much. I could think about the past and what I’d been through as I’d struggled to locate myself and learn what the heart is. (Kureishi 1990: 283-84)
For a ‘funny kind of Englishman’ (Kureishi 1990: 3), roots, as Sivanandan suggests, are not to be found looking in some place, but rather through examining ‘the resources within [himself] for [his] understanding of [his] place in society: [his] place in a particular country, [his] place in culture’ (Sivanandan 1990: 16). In postcolonial Britain, Karim’s resources for understanding himself include the industry of multiculturalism.

2.7 The Trade of Picares and the Trade of Multiculturalism

I began to follow the Trade de la Florida Picardia, exercising all your Cony-catching trickes, knavish prankes, fine feates, with slight of hand, and whatsoever Rogueries come within the compasse of that prowling office. The shame that I had to return home, I lost it upon the way [...] I began to free my selfe from that irkesomenesse, and that little shame that was left me, I turned into Impudience: for Hunger and Shame could never yet be made friends. (Alemán vol. I, II.ii: 251)

Guzmán’s metamorphosis, from eager adventurer to pessimist, is ultimately the result of belonging to a minority of half-outsiders. In the first part of Guzmán de Alfarache, Guzmán discovers his marginal condition and also encounters human evil in general, but in the second part, being aware of the impossibility of change, he realises the futility of his efforts and, full of resentment, bitterly compares his own situation with that of the mythical Sisyphus. Guzmán’s conclusions after having been an ‘an eye-witnesse’ to so many ‘insolences; which to deliver, would require a large Discourse’ (Alemán vol. I, II.i: 248) are drawn from the perception of greed as a universal human condition:

In all my travels, I have evere observed, that these great rich men, and powerfull persons, are like unto Whales, who opening wide the mouth and jawes of their covetousnesse, swallo up all that comes in their way;
to the end that their houses may be well provided for, and their revenues increased. (Aleman vol. I, I.iii: 103)

Aleman's negative vision of man (*homo homini lupus*) and pessimistic perception of life (*Hac lacrymarun valle*) supposedly drive Guzman to narrate his conversion from sinful youth to repentant adult. However, much of Aleman's text subverts its own moral tone. Aleman's literary inconsistency and contradictions can be explained in social and historical terms, given the fierce censorship of the time. Guzman, unable to benefit from the empowering of ethnicity experienced by his literary descendant, Karim, does not regain any identity, and remains marginal and resentful. As a jester he sorrowfully analyses his role as the clown of people's misfortunes: 'I held this to be one of my greatest unhappinesses, that like a setting dogge, I was driven to winde out other mens weakenesses' (Aleman vol. III, I.ii: 45). And as a narrator, he often defends himself from any suggestion of dishonest behaviour:

I was never any Tale-carrier nor sower of sedition; nor did I ever discover any secret, or report against what I had heard, though it were not delivered under the seale of Silence unto me, or that the relators had laid their finger on my mouth. (Aleman vol. II,II.v: 23)

The name Alfarache derives from the Arab consonant cluster /f/ /r/ /g/ meaning 'console, entertain'. 'Al- farag', therefore, means 'pleasure, happiness, being free of sorrow' (San Miguel 1971: 55). However, Guzman is far from being pleased with his life, especially with certain episodes. If the shame of having practised male prostitution drives Guzman to repentance, though, the bisexual Karim seems not to have any regrets about accepting Pyke's proposals.

Pyke might abuse Karim but Karim is not fooled by Pyke's theatrical performances. Might it be that the name 'Pyke', a knavish theatre director who
seduces Karim, has a specific resonance here? If ‘name chases man’, as Guzmán says, the choice of a name sharing the same etymology as *picaro* (pyke/pikeman 1649), and which in slang English can also mean ‘gypsy’, may have been intentional. Karim seems delighted by the ridiculous rehearsals with his new ‘master’ Pyke, and with his happy new life as an actor in the company of what Guzmán might have referred to as ‘the fraternity of Asses’ (Aleman vol. I, II.ii: 253). And, as Guzmán happily shows, he will never change: ‘this life of a Picaro, this roguish life of mine, for the best that any of my Ancestors ever ledde’ (Aleman vol. I, II.ii: 252-54):

[I] had taken a rellish of this Roguish life, and found the sweetnesse of it [. . .] What a fine kind of life was it, what a dainty and delicate thing, without Thimble, Thred, or Needle; without Pinsers, Hammer, or Wimble, or any other Mechanicall Instrument whatsoever [. . .]. (Aleman vol. I, II. ii: 253-54)

In the same way, Karim expresses the pleasure which he takes from his *picaro* existence:

None of this seemed like work to me, and I loved to think of what the suburban commuters in our street, who were paying for us through their taxes, would have made of a gang of grown-ups being pop-up toasters, surfboards and typewriters. (Kureishi 1990: 168)

In contrast to Guzmán’s development, Karim’s is rather optimistic and symbolic of colonial emancipation and cultural liberation, in particular, his liberation from all masters - Haroon, Charlie, Shadwell and Pyke. The most remarkable change in Karim is his final emancipation from his symbolic master Charlie, who begins to ‘[seem] merely foolish to [him]’ (Kureishi 1990: 255). The educational ‘voyeur stuff’ was getting to be too much’ for the mature Karim, who begins to require ‘more fodder - bigger ideas, new interests’ (Kureishi 1990: 278). In the past Karim had loved to observe and comment on everything he encountered: ‘I was an eager
witness to Eva and Dad’s love, and even more fascinated by Changez and Jamila’ (Kureishi 1990: 95). He was curious to follow Ted and find out what was going on ‘with Dad and Eva and all the Buddha business’ (Kureishi 1990: 47).

Karim experiences a positive metamorphosis from naive youth to worldly-wise adulthood; from passive witness, to actor and narrator of his own life: ‘She [Eva] didn’t recognise me at first: I must have changed, but I didn’t know how. I felt older, I knew that’ (Kureishi 1990: 260). The first symptoms of Karim’s transformation from a naive young man into a self-conscious *picaro* appear when he decides to use Changez as the basis of a ‘black oppressed character’ to satisfy the demands of Pyke’s liberal consciousness. For the first time in his life, he is aware of ‘having a moral dilemma’ and experiencing ‘a sense of guilt’, which is not typical of the classical picaresque mind. We might add, though, that he had felt no guilt about sleeping with Changez’s wife Jamila (Kureishi 1990: 109):

If I defied Changez, if I started on a character based on him, if I use the bastard, it meant that I was untrustworthy, a liar. But if I didn’t use him it meant I had fuck-all to take to the group after the ‘me-as-Anwar’ fiasco. As I sat there I began to recognise that this was one of the first times in my life I’d been aware of having a moral dilemma. Before I’d done exactly what I had wanted; desire was my guide and I was inhibited by nothing but fear. But now, at the beginning of my twenties, something was growing in me. Just as my body had changed at puberty, now I was developing a sense of guilt, a sense not only of how I appeared to others, but how I appeared to myself, especially in violating self-imposed prohibitions. (Kureishi 1990: 186)

In Hanif Kureishi’s framework the *picaro* becomes socially respected, because the social perspective is plural. In a society where the centre prides itself in being plural or where centrality itself disappears, the picaresque changes and acquires a new meaning. Due to liberal shame and guilt, postcolonial British society in fact prides itself on not assuming the position of metropolitan centre. The *picaro* becomes the focus of dreams and desires; he becomes a fashionable model. Hence, multicultural
picaresque and Bildungsroman cease to be easily distinguishable. Examples of new perceptions of the margins include a fetishisation of the underclass and marginal in fashion, film and media. ‘Junky’ and ‘heroin chic’ style, for example, go beyond traditional romanticised versions of addiction and self-destruction. In London Kills Me (1991) Kureishi created a picaresque cinematic version of the fringes of urban society, in particular the marginal world of drug addiction, imitated by a plethora of followers, such as the film version of Irvine Welsh’s Trainspotting (1995). In a society where the picaresque has become so familiar and canonical, the genre itself becomes self referential, self-aware. The four centuries which separate Alemán and Kureishi have seen the rise of complex development of a form which began as a ‘low’ literary subgenre. In Kureishi’s postmodern version of the suburban picaro, the antihero becomes heroic, and being marginal becomes a positive factor. Classical picaresque apologies of freedom are also celebrated in Kureishi’s postmodern version:

I found my selfe free from all these things [masters and conventions], as subject to none of them, except infirmite, and sicknesse [...] I injoyed a free and flourishing kinde of liberty, praised by the wise, desired of many, and so much applauded and reapplauded by the Poets. To whose true valuation, all the gold and richess of the earth, are not to bee compared, as things of to poore and meane a price. (Alemán vol. II. II.iv: 20-21)

But in Kureishi’s work we witness the coming of age of a classical genre in which the picaro becomes a role model. Alemán’s worries in the 1623 English translation of his Picaro being mistreated after having ‘changed his Costume, his Suit, not in the Spanish way, but in the English’ would vanish under the

37 My translation of the original dedication: ‘Plego á Dios, que di mi mano no sea mal tratado [...] El Picaro de Alemán ha mudado su Vestido; su Traje, no a la Española, sino a la Inglesa’; The Rogue or Life of Guzman de Alfarache. Written in Spanish by Matheo Aleman, Servant to his Catholike Majestie and Borne in Sevill (Alemán 1623) 3-7.
empowerment gained by postmodern *picaros* and overt apologies of freedom:

So, if you punish yourself through self-denial in the puritan way, in the English Christian way, there will only be resentment and more unhappiness. (Kureishi 1990: 76)

Homi Bhabha’s ‘empowering condition of hybridity’ (that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of a present’) (Bhabha 1995: 227) can be reinterpreted in terms of the contradictory empowering of a manipulating form of victimisation. Fabricated images of ethnic identity can be fraudulently exploited as a means to success. In Kureishi such an enabling hybridity is seen in Haroon’s and Karim’s created exotic existences in their journeys to the city. However, Karim’s ethnicity is based on artifice, image and performance. In Stuart Hall’s formulation of ‘new ethnicities’ (Hall 1990; 1992; 1996b; 1996c) ‘ethnicity’ is seen as seeking to overturn ‘hegemonic’ conceptions of ‘Englishness’ and oppose static homogeneity in favour of the fluid, the hybrid and migrant. In Kureishi’s work, in contrast, ethnicity gives access to a position in which the marginal is not marginal any more, but paradoxically central.

Antiheroes have to survive in the midst of the hostility and hypocrisy that surrounds them, and to pass trials and ordeals which, apparently, will lead them to success. The *picaro* always succeeds in overcoming poverty and discrimination in the most extraordinary way. Guzmán decides fraudulently to occupy the Christian centre. Karim decides fraudulently to move to the exotic and original periphery. In postmodern and postcolonial Britain, ethnicity offers a privileged identity which can be exploited. Karim decides to play the rules of the game whenever he has to choose whether to protect his own dignity (and fail), or accept various trials (and survive). For Karim moving upwards does not seem difficult. He has left his suburban world, but is aware of the dangers of entering into a strange territory, of ‘getting into deep
water’ (Kureishi 1990: 178), especially when, after meeting Eleanor, he wants to move up the social ladder by losing not his Indian accent, like his father, but his suburban one. His strength is generated by a sense of ambition and improvement in life.

Both father and son become false Indians who successfully sell their English neighbours Oriental versions of imagined Indias. But they are as authentically Indian as Charlie is a genuine punk, Eva genuinely artistic or Pyke genuinely socialist. Indeed, Charlie’s marketable pop identity is clearly reflected in Karim’s father’s fraudulent simulation of a Buddhist. Karim wants to find out if Haroon is ‘a charlatan’ and would ‘con his disciples for an hour in silence (perhaps just popping out one mystical phrase such as, “Dried excrement sits on the pigeon’s head”’ (Kureishi 1990: 35) or if he is really authentic. In Haroon’s second session, Karim feels almost hypnotised and believes that ‘[p]erhaps Daddio really was a magician, having transformed himself by bootlaces (as he put it) from being an Indian in the Civil Service [. . .], into the wise advisor he now appeared to be’ (Kureishi 1990: 31). This has echoes of Lázaro’s comments on his master, the pardoner:

If I, being an eye-witness to such an imposition, could almost believe it [. . .] ‘How many more amongst this poor innocent people must be imposed on by these robbers!’ (Ricapito 193-94) 38

But Haroon cannot fool Karim, who, watching his father’s first appearance as the mystical Buddha, cannot believe such a transformation could take place:

Eva turned to my father and bowed to him, Japanese fashion. ‘My good and deep friend Haroon here, he will show us the Way. The Path.’

‘Jesus fucking Christ,’ I whispered to Charlie, remembering how Dad couldn’t even find his way to Beckenham. (Kureishi 1990: 12-13)

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38 ‘Cuando el hizo el ensayo, confieso mi pecado, que también fui dello espantado y crei que así era, como otros muchos [. . .] “¡Cuántas de estas deben hacer estos burladores entre la inocente gente!”; Anonymous, Lazarillo de Tormes, ed. Joseph Ricapito (Madrid: Cátedra, 1976 [c. 1553]) 193-94.
Ironically, Karim also has to act the role of a stereotype. First as Shadwell’s little Mowgli and then as the oppressed black immigrant Changez in Pyke’s leftist and xenophobic interpretation of multicultural Britain. For a champagne socialist like Pyke, the world is divided into binary groups: oppressors-oppressed, master-slave, colonised-coloniser. Karim sees that in the 70s and 80s manipulating this division of the world based on liberal guilt could be an effective means to success. The images which the others have of him do not necessarily coincide with his self-image, so he moves from being a passive recipient of imposed images to being able to play the system.

Like the antichrist/anarchist of his favourite punk group, Karim ‘knows what [he wants] and [he knows] how to get it’, that is by ‘using the enemy’ and selling him victimisation and ethnicity (The Sex Pistols ‘Problems’, ‘Anarchy in the UK’).

When he is asked to be Mowgli in _The Jungle Book_ (1894) Karim is appalled by the idea and tempted to come back to the suburbs where he belongs. Yet the offensive implications of playing such an undignified role and being covered in brown make-up disappear when he ambitiously realises that his ‘happiness and progress and education could depend on [his] own activity - as long as it was the right activity at the right time’ (Kureishi 1990: 155). Both Shadwell’s caricature of an Indian accent and his choice to stage such a product of colonialism as Rudyard Kipling’s _The Jungle Book_ and also Pyke’s leftist misconception of Asians as caricatured, exploited immigrants constitute ordeals which the _picaro_ Karim has to undergo in order to leave the suburbs and improve his career and life:

I knew it did me good to be reminded of how much I loved the suburbs, and that I had to continue my journey into London and a new life,

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ensuring I got away from people and streets like this. (Kureishi 1990: 101)

The Buddha of Suburbia's concludes with hopeful ambiguity, which stresses the relative value of concepts such as identity and location. Karim is left 'in the centre of this old city that [he] loved, which itself sat at the bottom of a tiny island' (Kureishi 1990: 284), not far from the Greenwich Meridian, which divides East from West. He seems to stress the relativity of location and the impossibility of specifying a fixed point in the definition of identity. Or, as Guzmán would have put it: 'I am [. . .] a Towneborne child: I will therefore hold my peace; for all the whole World is one and the same, here and there, and every where, all alike' (Alemán vol. I, I.iii: 100).
Chapter III

Conversos, Moriscos and Immigrants: The Adventures of Don Quixote and The Satanic Verses

Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space.

3.1 Introduction

Cervantes' The Adventures of Don Quixote (Part I 1605, Part II 1615) and Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses (1988) are both satirical works which resist intolerance in their respective multicultural contexts. Despite the obvious differences between the Spanish Renaissance writer and the 'postcolonial' British author, both Cervantes and Rushdie are influenced by complex cultural and religious backgrounds, and both deal with problems of hybridisation and discrimination, of adjusting to the old and the new. Also, they both defend the artist's freedom, and denounce oppression and religious fanaticism, in the face of threats from powerful censors. However, the reception of their respective works differs considerably. Cervantes not only escapes the controls of censorship, but his eponymous hero has become strongly identified with Spanish culture and heritage. Rushdie, by comparison, has become a victim of those he tried to represent. One of the principal consequences of the Rushdie affair has been that the reader cannot escape the idea of

the fatwa; it is impossible to read *The Satanic Verses* without recalling the religious outrage which it prompted. This leads to simplistic, monothematic discussions of the author and the book, which concentrate on Rushdie's awareness of blasphemy and the intolerance of Islam, and pay less attention to issues of literary value. As Sara Suleri points out: 'the murderously intense reaction that has attended the publication of *The Satanic Verses* has made it difficult to read the book in the cultural context it demands' (Suleri 1989: 604).

Traditional critical approaches to Cervantes' work maintain that Cervantes, the author, respected the social, political and religious system of his time; that is, the monarchy and the Catholic Church. Details of his life, and also the weight of traditional criticism, have lent him the reputation of the classic Spanish writer. However, his work does not sit easily at the centre of the Spanish conservative mainstream. On the contrary, there is substantial evidence that his work questions Castilian identity and tradition, and also deplores the excesses of the Church and the State (Graf 1999). The Portuguese Inquisition, for example, found *The Adventures of Don Quixote* to be both blasphemous and potentially subversive. Even as late as 1891, when the reputation of *Don Quixote* as a canonical Spanish text was well established, Father Miguel Mir abandoned the Jesuit Order after members of the Catholic establishment attacked *Don Quixote* as heretical and burnt it in an isolated auto de fe (Osterc 1972: 48). Another example of the potential ambiguity in Cervantes' work is his play *Numancia* (*La tragedia de la destrucción de Numancia*, 1582), based on the true events of the Roman occupation of the village of Numancia in 133 BC. The residents committed mass suicide rather than submit to Roman control. During and after the Spanish Civil War *Numancia* was appropriated by Republicans as a statement of opposition to oppression and by Rebels as a work of patriotic heroism. Cervantes' skill in managing to avoid arousing the concerns of the
censors, then, seems to be the result of having created a radically ambiguous text. Indeed, he confirms this in the prologue to Part I of Don Quixote, stating his intention to offer a literary work with a variety of possible readings:

> Be careful too that the reading of your story makes the melancholy laugh and the merry laugh louder; that the simpleton is not confused; that the intelligent admire your invention, the serious do not despise it, nor the prudent withhold their praise. (Cervantes I: 30)

Don Quixote successfully defies a stable, consistent interpretation. However, the work does force the reader to take a position. One such position is to read the adventures of this emblematic Spanish Catholic knight errant as the work of an outsider: a skilful religious hypocrite rather than a pious author. Ortega y Gasset, for instance, sees Don Quixote’s body as a long, metaphorical question mark riding across the plain of La Mancha ‘like the guardian of the Spanish secret, of the misunderstanding of Spanish culture’. It was also Ortega y Gasset who raised the question: ‘who is that poor gentleman mocking from a prison? And what is the meaning of mocking?’ (Ortega y Gasset 1964: 46).

Within the extensive literature on Cervantes’ major work, few critics have followed the theories put forward by Ortega y Gasset. However, Américo Castro and Ludovic Osterc have contended that although Cervantes was a Christian believer he was also an anti-church author (Castro 1966a: 84, 110; 1972: 291-92; Osterc 1963). Despite the fact that Cervantes is known to have joined various religious congregations, such as The Humble Slaves of the Holy Sacrament (Indignos Esclavos del Santisimo Sacramento) in 1609, and The Glorious Third Order of Saint

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41 'De lejos, sola en la abierta llanada manchega, la larga figura de don Quijote se encorva como un signo de interrogación: y es como un guardián del secreto español, del equivoco de la cultura española. ¿De qué se burla ese pobre caballero desde el fondo de una cárcel? ¿y qué cosa es burlarse?'; José Ortega y Gasset, Meditaciones del Quijote (Madrid: Espasa Calpe 1964 [1914]) 46, my translation.
Francis (Venerable Orden Tercera de San Francisco) in 1613, these critics argue that his position was essentially in opposition to the Catholic church as a social and political organisation, at a time when the church was at its most decadent. That is, the author of Don Quixote opposed thought-control, corruption and the ostentation of the church, but not Christianity itself.

While Cervantes' position towards the Church is ambiguous, Salman Rushdie's anti-Islamic attitude is often taken for granted. However, there is no evidence that prior to the fatwa, Rushdie had taken an anti-Islamic position, despite the fact that after publishing Midnight's Children (1981) and Shame (1983) he had already been the target of Islamic and Hindu censors in India and Pakistan. In an interview in the New York Review of Books, Rushdie insists that his original intentions were sympathetic to Islam because he was 'trying very hard to imagine himself into that frame of mind, albeit from a nonbelieving point of view' but he 'couldn't write that sympathetically now, because of the very intimate demonstration [he] had of the power of religion for evil' (Banville 36). The Satanic Verses is not an attack on Islam, Rushdie insists, 'but an attempt to challenge preconceptions and to examine the conflict between the secular and religious views of the world' (Rushdie quoted in Ruthven 113).

In the novel Rushdie may be felt to present an offensive parody of Shi'ite theocracy rather than of Islam. One of these offences is the depiction of Mohammed as a cruel businessman. In an interview for the Channel Four programme Bandung File (broadcast 14 February 1989, quoted in Appignanesi & Maitland 29), Rushdie explained that Mohammed should be understood within his own historical context. From a liberal perspective, which assumes certain human rights to be universal, Mahound's executions of those who do not submit to his religion are cruelly despotic. However, in Mahound's time liberal conceptions of society simply did not
exist. The fact that he spares anyone (including his enemy Hind) who submits to his religion is intended to show him as tolerant in nature and restrained in the use of power. Baal and the whores do not submit, so they are executed:

When Mohammed returned to Mecca in power, he was very, very tolerant. And I think, if I remember correctly, only five or six people were executed after the re-taking of Mecca. And of those five or six people, two were writers, and two were actresses who had performed in satirical texts [...] at the very beginning of Islam you find a conflict between the sacred text and the profane text, between revealed literature and imagined literature. (Rushdie, *Bandung File 14/2/89*, quoted in Appignanesi & Maitland 29)

Rushdie’s respect for religious belief is illustrated by Gibreel’s gradual destruction after his loss of faith. Indeed, Rushdie seems to satirise secular Western spiritual barrenness through the organisation of the book; on the one hand, sections set in Thatcherite Britain (chapters I, III, V, VII) abound in magic realism and superstition, whereas the sections about Mahound and Ayesha (chapters II, IV, VI, VIII) are presented in realistic terms, despite being the result of Gibreel’s dreamed ‘archangelic’ condition. In *The Satanic Verses* dilemmas of identity and religious doubt are resolved within the community and through filial love. Saladin’s reconciliation with his dying pious father indicates that not all aspects of Islam should be rejected.

The religious crisis that Rushdie presents in *The Satanic Verses* bears similarities to the tone of uncertainty, scepticism and the critique of beliefs which characterise *Don Quixote*, a text written at the time of transition from Renaissance to Baroque in Europe. In fundamentalist societies new beliefs that challenge existing values become dangerous threats, and artists often see their role in society as provocateurs challenging the *status quo*, as denouncers of oppressive beliefs. Lukács postulates that *Don Quixote* should be read as a vision of Man in a godless society,
and that the ‘writer’s irony is the negative mysticism to be found in times without a
God’ (Lukács 90):

Cervantes lived in the period of the last great desperate mysticism, the
period of a fanatical attempt to renew the dying religion from within; a
period of a new view of the world rising up in mystical forms; the last
period of truly lived but already disoriented, tentative, sophisticated,
occult aspirations. (Lukács 104)

At a time when novels about knights errant were becoming obsolete and the
chivalric genre dying out, Don Quixote insists: ‘Chivalry is a religion’ (II, viii: 520).
Hence, Cervantes’ and Rushdie’s social and cultural contexts result in similar
approaches to religious crisis and the questioning of accepted values. If the
questioning of our perception of reality is a recurring feature of our history, then this
will certainly be manifest in the arts.

In this way we can perhaps see how postmodern conceptions of truth in our
own time echo the concerns of sixteenth century Platonic relativism. 42 Cervantes can
be read as both postcolonial and postmodern when he questions national and
religious identity. Like a postmodern writer, he narrates self-consciously. He makes
the reader constantly aware of his presence and his explicit concern with literary
criticism and theory. Rushdie’s magic realism allows ‘the miraculous and the
mundane [to] co-exist’ (Rushdie 1992: 376), while Cervantes’ fantastic world of
enchantment permits the mixing of the sacred with the profane, offering a secular
version of the sacred. The adventures of a deranged actor and a confused immigrant
in postcolonial London parallel those of an archaic, mad knight errant and his squire

42 See the influence of the relativism and neoplatonism of León Hebreo (c. 1460-1521, Judá
León ben Isaac Abravanel) in Cervantes; Américo Castro, El pensamiento de Cervantes
(Barcelona: Noguer, 1972) 39, 41, 123-24. In the prologue to Don Quixote Cervantes
mentions León Hebreo’s Diálogos de Amor (c. 1520), a work written during the first
decades of the sixteenth century, translated into Spanish by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega
(1586) and later banned by the Inquisition; (Cervantes 1605): 29.
3.2 Cultural purity

Reactions to The Satanic Verses provoked a debate over how to deal with multiculturalism and pluralism. The Rushdie case raised major questions, such as whether immigrants should accept the culture of the host country as a condition of citizenship, and whether different beliefs and religious practices can receive equal treatment before the law in a ‘Christian society’. These apparently new conflicts have long been present in Europe. Tensions arising from multicultural societies and intransigent religious establishments are essentially the same in the case of Cervantes and Rushdie. Both writers are the product of these tensions, and both seek to question the social and religious order in which they live. Cervantes avoids socially accepted moral and religious values. Instead, he presents different points of view by giving voice to the ‘Other’ - the Turk, the Moor, the Basque, the Galician, the galley slave - in an attempt to challenge the accepted point of view of his contemporary readership. In the seventeenth century the very act of giving a voice to minorities was a rare innovation. Conversely, in the Western metropolitan novels of the late twentieth century there is space for the marginal presence of its postcolonial migrant communities. Authors such as Salman Rushdie, V. S, Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Sam Selvon, Caryl Philips, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo, Zadie Smith, Monica Ali and Trezza Azzopardi fictionalise the migrant’s experience, offering a close insight into minorities.

Critics have proposed a variety of classifications of Rushdie and his work: postcolonial, Indian, British-Indian, westernised, European metropolitan, etc. For
example, Timothy Brennan (1989) uses the term ‘third world cosmopolitan’, implying exoticism produced for and read within western. Similarly, discussions of Cervantes’ alleged *converso* stock (Castro 1966a: 9, 24, 27, 43, 208) tend to accept that the author of *Don Quixote* had a clear understanding of the mind of the outsiders of his time. The *conversos* proved to be a potential danger for Catholicism and the monarchy, while the *moriscos* were seen as latent agents of heresy. The literary work of Spanish *conversos* - Vives and de las Casas - challenged accepted Renaissance beliefs and Catholic dogma. There is some evidence that Cervantes was also a converso (Castro; Bataillon; Goytisolo and Rico). In this light we might see *Don Quixote*, born of the author’s despair in an African prison, as presenting the discourse of a skilfully hidden *converso*. It is not, however, essential here to prove Cervantes’ *converso* stock. Rather I wish to illustrate his clear understanding of the Spanish-Jewish and Spanish-Arab situation at a time of religious persecution.

The relevance of Cervantes’ family background and Rushdie’s British-Indianness lie in their hybridity and their ability to occupy a critical position within society as both insiders and outsiders. Works which embody controversial social and political discourses are often innovative in terms of form and technique. It is, of course, unrealistic to characterise the Cambridge-educated Rushdie as a typical South Asian immigrant struggling against discrimination and racism. To an extent his marginality is a conscious, assumed identity. Still, Rushdie as a ‘translated’ man (Rushdie 1992: 17), a migrant, sees migration as a lesson against the absolutism of purity, as a challenge to the rigidity of static notions of the self and cultural identity. In *The Satanic Verses* he explores the experiences of immigrants in England and

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43 Timothy Brennan suggests that Third World cosmopolitans, such as Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee and Derek Walcott, have placed themselves as spokespersons for the suffering of the “Third World”, but show little active resistance; Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and Third World: Myths of the Nation* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).
raises questions about faith, scepticism and the nature of revelation.

To understand Cervantes’ literary background it is essential to examine Alfonso X’s policies, the product of the syncretic culture of Medieval and Renaissance Spain and, above all, the result of a tripartite civilisation. The artistic pollination resulting from cross-cultural Iberian encounters is clearly seen not only in the influence of Arabic poetic forms in Spanish poetry and epic, but also in the literary debt to Eastern sources. Cervantes and Rushdie share the Arab legacy that makes Mediterranean culture in some ways so similar to Indian culture. Indeed, it may be that Cervantes would have been more familiar with some of Rushdie’s eastern literary influences than Rushdie’s average contemporary Western reader. We might even imagine Don Quixote defending Rushdie’s text from the flames, and comparing his own misfortunes to those of Saladin Chamcha, an enchanted knight errant who bravely fought adversity and heroically defeated demonic enemies.

In May 1999 Rushdie explained that the history of his family name was to be found in Medieval Spain: ‘My father chose the surname Rushdie because it was the name of an early Medieval Arab-Spanish philosopher he admired, a dissident from the Islamic orthodoxy of his time’ (Rushdie 1999b). Rushdie has recognised his literary debt to Cervantes on several occasions (Rushdie 1992: 106; 1995c: 35). It is no coincidence, then, that Rushdie’s novel *The Moor’s Last Sight* (1995b) begins and ends in the Andalusian falangist village of Benengeli, named after Cervantes’ fictitious Moorish author in *Don Quixote*, Cide Hamete Benengeli. Other tributes by Rushdie to the author who best analysed a crucial moment in the history of Spain are detectable. There are references to: ‘Quixotism’ as a form of idealism; reading and

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44 Ibn Rushd (1126-1198); ‘Mi padre escogió el apellido Rushdie porque era el nombre de un filósofo hispanoárabe de la baja Edad Media al que admiraba, un disidente de la ortodoxia islámica de su época’; Salman Rushdie, “El guardaespaldas de Rushdie”, *El País Semanal* (5 May 1999b) 18, my translation.
madness (*lectura-locura*) stemming mainly from excessive reading; Erasmo, the republican village where villagers took sides in the great debates of philosophy; Avellaneda ‘a town of thieves’ named after the spurious author of *Don Quixote’s* second part; a taxi-driver named Vivar, after the epic figure Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, El Cid - ironically carrying an Arab nickname. References to Cervantes’ fictional creations include Felicitas, a *renegada* whose ‘surname might be Lorenço or del Toboso’, Monipod, Miranda, and his novella *The Glass Graduate* (Rushdie 1995b: 109, 126, 385, 386, 395). As well as all these reminiscences of Cervantes’ work, Rushdie also turns out to enjoy Cervantes’ approach to novel writing; that is, to ‘*cervantear*’ (*cervantecise*) - Goytisolo’s term for Cervantes’ particularly modern way of addressing novel writing. Goytisolo identifies this approach to writing in Cervantes’ innovatory subversion of existing literary norms and rupture with the past (Goytisolo 1985: 25).

Rushdie’s work is attuned both to western and eastern aesthetic forms. However, some of his ‘eastern’ cultural heritage is in fact found in the pillars of European culture and literature. It seems that through postcolonial metropolitan writers, Europe is recovering its complex multicultural background. The West is in this way re-reading its past through the East. Rushdie has explained how religion and his eastern literary ancestors shape the form of his literary output (Rushdie 1992: 376). The literary migrant, he says, is able to ‘choose his parents’. Rushdie’s own ‘parents’, then, include Cervantes, along with a host of Muslim and Hindu poets and Eastern oral myths (Rushdie 1992: 21). Rushdie’s cultural references and allusions include Shakespeare, Defoe, Blake, Borges, Keats, Melville, Dickens, Nietzsche, Beckett, Nabokov, Calvino, Singer, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Bob Dylan and James Joyce. As well as Cervantes’ literary and cultural influence, Rushdie’s own literary parents include classics such as the works of Lucretius, Apuleius, Ovid, the
Medieval mystery plays, the Koran and the Bible. Indeed, the intertextuality of *The Satanic Verses* extends to Hindu myths and tradition, Indian literature and film. When Saladin Chamcha visits his father in India he finds ‘a ten-volume set of the Richard Burton translation of *The Arabian Nights*, which was being slowly devoured by mildew and bookworm’ (Rushdie 1989a: 36). Changez, Saladin’s father, owns thousands of books, which he leaves to rot, unread, in a conscious act of contempt. However, Changez expresses his enthusiasm for his priceless collection of Hamzana nama paintings, an example of ‘the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic tradition’ (Rushdie 1989a: 70).

Changez’s decision to give his son a ‘profitable’ British education, that is, a rejection of Indian culture, turns against him when his son returns home transformed into an Englishman:

‘Tell your son,’ Changez boomed at Nasreen, ‘that if he went abroad to learn contempt for his own kind, then his own kind can feel nothing but scorn for him. What is he? A fauntleroy, a grand panjandrum? Is this my fate: to lose a son and find a freak?’

‘Whatever I am, father dear,’ Saladin told the older man, ‘I owe it all to you.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 45)

Despite the many eastern influences in *The Satanic Verses*, it should be acknowledged that its literary form is in fact a Western expression. Tim Brennan and Talal Asad dismiss the novel as produced for (and ‘consumed’ by) Western audiences alone. Bhabha (using Yunus Samad’s reading of blasphemy), argues that Rushdie, by ‘casting his revisionary narrative in the form of the novel - largely unknown to traditional Islamic literature [. . . ] violates the poetic license granted to critics’ (Bhabha 1995: 226).
3.3 Religious purity

In Cervantes' time, Spanish society suffered from a 'national neurosis' (Castro 1963) of blood cleansing. The persecution and alienation of those without pure Christian blood was one of Cervantes' principal targets. Jews, *Conversos*, and to a lesser extent Spanish Moors, suffered intolerance and discrimination. Cervantes' own life indicates that he was more than familiar with the crusade against all those who were not pure (or 'Old') Christians. Evidence of his possible Jewish background can be seen in the number of his relatives who worked in trades associated with non-Christians, such as the medical profession. Members of his family married into *converso* families, including that of Fernando de Rojas, author of *Celestine* (1499). Moreover, it may be significant that Cervantes' desire to go to America was never realised, since he was denied a visa in 1590. Only Old Christians were allowed visas to America. Mateo Alemán, for example, unable to prove the purity of his blood, was refused permission to emigrate to Peru in 1582; thirty-five years later he exchanged his maternal Jewish surname of Enero for the respectable Ayala (McGrady 89) and in 1608 managed to obtain a visa by bribing a government official to overlook the details of his family history (Björnson 45). Sadly, this bribery - as documents found by Márquez Villanueva show - included handing-over the rights to *Guzmán de Alfarache* (Goytisolo 1998). It has recently been suggested that Velázquez also lied about his origins, in order to make possible his entry into the prestigious *Orden de Santiago*. Velázquez not only lacked noble blood, a

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45 Cervantes was born in 1547, the son of a poor doctor. In sixteenth century Spain medicine was generally a Jewish profession. In 1587 he was employed in the provisioning of the 'Invincible Armada', but suffered excommunication for misappropriation of corn which proved to belong to the Church.

46 When Rojas was twelve years old his father was arrested and burnt in an *auto de fe*; Juan Goytisolo, *Disidencias* (Madrid: Taurus, 1996) 22.
requirement to join this order, but his background was *converso* (Ingram 1999b: 2-3).

In *Don Quixote* there are a great many references to the *converso* situation, which seem to reflect Cervantes' own anxiety. The threatening presence of the Inquisition forced him to camouflage his critique, although the indications are plain enough. In the opening passage of the novel he expresses Renaissance authorial freedom whilst at the same time he adopts the common tradition among *conversos* of omitting the names of their birthplaces (as this would disclose their origins): ‘In a certain village in La Mancha, which I do not wish to name, there lived not long ago a gentleman’ (Cervantes I, i: 31).47 The dichotomy between Sancho, the Old Christian, and Don Quixote, the covert *converso*, is expressed through word-play and puns. For example, there is a hint as to Don Quixote’s marginal state in the ambiguous description of his poor diet:

His habitual diet consisted of a stew, more beef than mutton, of hash most nights, boiled bones on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and a young pigeon as a Sunday treat; and on this he spent three-quarters of his income. (Cervantes I, i: 31)

In the Spanish version ‘boiled bones on Saturdays’ is *duelos y quebrantos*, which we might translate literally as ‘pain and sorrow’. However, *duelos* is also a partial pun on ‘eggs’ (*huevos*) in Spanish, which leaves the reader free to interpret the dish as ‘eggs and bacon’, a popular meal of the time in Castile. Might it be that the converso Quixote feels pain at the consumption of the taboo bacon? Might it also be that the unusual surname Quejana - from *queja* (sorrow) - alludes to the grief of being from *La Mancha* (stain) and therefore polluted by Jewish blood?

47 In Spanish ‘En lugar de La Mancha de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme [. . .]’ (‘In a certain place in La Mancha, which I do not want to remember’) the reference to forgetting Don Quixote’s birthplace is overt.
Through Don Quixote's diet, Cervantes implicitly contrasts the figure of the *converso* with Sancho, the Old Christian. Quixote's background remains ambiguous throughout the work. Nevertheless, his pork-free diet is significant: 'Don Quixote ate nothing [then] began to cram the cheese and bread into his mouth' (II, lix: 847). Conversely, Sancho\(^{48}\) constantly insists that he is an 'Old Christian' (I, xx: 157; I, xlvii: 423; I, xxi: 169; II, iii: 489) and proves it by eating 'kid, beef, salt meat, turnips and onions' (II, llix: 780), and ordering the controversial 'lashings of bacon and eggs' which his master would reject. During this scene, which takes place at an inn, the inn-keeper also seems to show *converso* tendencies: 'Discuss some other delicacies, if you like,' he tells Sancho, 'but stop asking for rarities' (II, lix: 849). However, he offers Sancho calves' feet 'stewed with chick-peas, onions and bacon', a dish his other guests would not dare to touch because they, 'being people of quality, have their own cook and steward and provisions with them'. Sancho conspicuously excuses Don Quixote's taste in food, possibly indicating his awareness of his master's status as a *converso*: 'if you go in for quality [...] there's none better than my master; but the office he professes doesn't allow of larders and butteries' (II, lix: 850). Indeed, Sancho's reference to his master's 'office' is perhaps ambiguous, since the office of knight errant, a traditional Christian one, is not usually associated with dietary idiosyncrasies.

Another character who (less ambiguously) shows the tastes and customs of a minority faith and culture is Ricote the Moor. He attempts to show himself as a Christian, claiming great knowledge of Christian Europe. However, he refuses to drink wine (II, liv: 818), an extremely significant abstinence in wine-drinking Spain. Cervantes provides in the dignified figure of Ricote an alternative to the typically negative stereotype of the Spanish-Arab. Through Ricote's double discourse he

\(^{48}\) Panza surname means 'belly', which with 'Sancho' makes 'Saint Belly' or 'broad belly'.
examines the cultural and religious tension between the two communities, and in particular the pathetic reality of the Spanish-Moors who secretly returned home despite constant persecution.

Food is similarly emblematic of religion and culture in Rushdie’s work. However, the gastronomic episode of religious betrayal in *The Satanic Verses* is a consequence of the loss of faith and not of forced assimilation. Gibreel’s religious doubt is expressed by his devouring of pork and discovering that punishment is not immediate:

He got out of the limousine at the Taj hotel and without looking left or right went directly into the great dining-room with its buffet table groaning under the weight of forbidden foods, and he loaded his plate with all of it, the pork sausages from Wiltshire and the cured York hams and the rashers of bacon from god-knowswhere; with the gammon steaks of his unbelief and the pig’s totters of secularism; and then, standing there in the middle of the hall, while photographers popped up from nowhere, he began to eat as fast as possible, stuffing the dead pigs into his face so rapidly that bacon rashers hung out of the sides of his mouth. (Rushdie 1989a: 29-30)

Saladin, less transgressively, struggles to convert to Britishness by digesting jingoistic food: ‘*rostbif, boudin Yorkshire, choux de bruxelles*’ (Rushdie 1989a: 269). His first ‘victory, the first step in his conquest of England’ takes place in Rugby school when he eats a kipper, which he compares to England: ‘England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it’ (Rushdie 1989a: 44). In his desire to assimilate Englishness Saladin rejects Asian cooking:

‘Now I’m supposed to eat this filthy foreign food?’ - with expressions of sympathy, made matters even worse. ‘Sawful muck,’ Mishal agreed with him. ‘No bangers in here, worse luck.’ Conscious of having insulted their hospitality, he tried to explain that he thought of himself, nowadays, as, well, British. (Rushdie 1989a: 258-259)
In *The Satanic Verses*, Chamcha’s sad attempts not to be regarded as ‘ethnic’ illustrate the struggle which assimilated immigrants experience when demanding to be accepted in the host society. Saladin insists on being assimilated into Britishness, despite having been mistreated, discriminated against and insulted through a racist police arrest: ‘Opening time, Paky; let’s see what you are made of!’ (Rushdie 1989a: 157):

‘My name is Salahuddin Chamchawala, professional name Saladin Chamcha,’ the demi-goat gibbered. ‘I am member of Actors’ Equity, the Automobile Association and the Garrick Club. My car registration number is suchandsuch. Ask the Computer. Please.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 163)

Where Ricote in *Don Quixote* has been forced to reject his own community, Chamcha, under similar social pressure, seeks to abandon ethnicity. Even when he receives shelter in the Sufyans’ home he still rejects them and what they represent: ‘I’m not your kind,’ he said distinctly into the night. ‘You’re not my people. I’ve spent all my life trying to get away from you’ (Rushdie 1989a: 253).

Cervantes’ complex obsessions with Moorish culture and his fascination with Islam originates in his personal experience in Islamic lands. Curiously, Cervantes created his complex vision of Spain from a prison in Africa, while Rushdie created his vision of contemporary Islam from London. Cervantes’ familiarity with Islamic culture allows him to analyse the social material from a rather privileged position. Having been a soldier in Lepanto, Navarin and Tunisia, and a prisoner in Barbary (Argiers) from 1575 to 1580, he also knew that in political terms the Moorish danger was fantastically exaggerated, since the Ottoman empire had already begun to decay:

‘[...] it was considered certain that the Turk was going to make a descent with a huge fleet, but that his purpose was obscure, and no one knew where this mighty storm would burst. All Christendom,’ he said, ‘was in alarm from the same dread which almost every year calls us to
arms [...]

'[... ] I would counsel [His Majesty] to take one precaution which is far from occurring to His majesty at present.'

'[... ] God protect you, my poor Don Quixote; for you seem to me to be throwing yourself from the high peak of your madness into the deep abyss of your folly.'

'[... ] For it only half a dozen came, might there not be one amongst them who would be sufficient in himself to destroy all the power of the Turk?' (Cervantes II, i: 472-473)

*Don Quixote* bears an introduction by its assumed author, who claims that it is an original manuscript discovered in the Alcana of Toledo, entitled *The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, Arabic historian*:

One day I was in the Alcana at Toledo, when a lad came to sell some parchments and old papers to a silk merchant. Now as I have a taste for reading even torn papers lying in the streets, I was impelled by my natural inclination to take up one of the parchment books the lad was selling, and saw in it characters which I recognized as Arabic. But though I could recognize them I could not read them, and looked around to see if there was not some Spanish-speaking Moor about, to read them to me; and it was not difficult to find such an interpreter there. (Cervantes I, ix: 76)

This is more significant than merely the fictitious explanation of a discovered manuscript, a literary device to make the story believable. Cervantes must surely also intend a homage to Spain's Arab background. Ironically, Don Quixote's reaction upon hearing that the author of his story was a Moor is comic:

For he could hope for no truth of the Moors, since they are all cheats, forgers and schemers. He was afraid too that his love affairs might have been treated with indecency, which would redound to the disparagement and prejudice of his lady, Dulcinea del Toboso. [...]

Don Quixote made him get up and said: 'So it is true, then, that there is a history of me, and he was a Moor and a sage who composed it?'

'So true is it,' said Sampson, 'that it is my opinion there are more than twelve thousand copies of this history in print to-day.' (Cervantes II, iii: 485-86)

The original version includes a pun on the name of the Arabic author; the literal
translation of Cide Hamete Benengeli would be ‘Sir who praises the Lord’ (Ben-
engeli: Son of the evangelical Scriptures). The name Benengeli also bears some
resemblance to the Arabic word in Spanish berenjena (aubergine) which vexes
Sancho’s understanding:

‘But if the author of this history was a sage enchanter,’ answered
Sancho, ‘how can it be that, according to the bachelor Sampson
Carrasco - for that’s the man’s name - he’s called Cide Hamete
Aubergine!’

‘That is a Moor’s name,’ observed Don Quixote.

‘So it may be,’ replied Sancho, ‘for I have heard that your Moors,
for the most part, are very fond of aubergines.’

‘You must be mistaken, Sancho,’ said Don Quixote, ‘in the
surname of this Cide, which in Arabic means Lord.’ (Cervantes II, ii: 484)

Cervantes’ maurofilia (love of Moorish culture) pays tribute to the Spanish-
Arab community through the creation of a fictional Arab author and the depiction of
moriscos as dignified characters. In Don Quixote Cervantes’ treatment of his Arabic
compatriots is truly respectful. Indeed, the most startling assertion of hybridity lies in
its very claim to authorial reliability. The fictionalised author of the story of a
Christian gentleman is, extraordinarily, an Arab:

Blessed be Cide Hamete Benengeli, who has left us the history of your
great deeds recorded, and thrice blessed the man of taste who took the
pains to have it translated out of Arabic into our vulgar Castilian, for
the universal entertainment of mankind! (Cervantes II, iii: 486)

The translator, a Moor, is indeed the first to be entertained. When he reads about
Dulcinea’s efforts to prove herself an Old Christian by salting and eating pork, he is
unable to refrain from laughing (Graf 1999: 78). Cervantes presents a community
largely forgotten in Spanish literature, despite their contribution to the development
of Spain’s cultural and literary heritage. He leaves clues to his interest in the Arab
community, such as the choice of El Toboso as Dulcinea’s village. Toboso, in
Castile, was mainly populated by *moriscos* at the time. It seems that in terms of ethnicity El Toboso in Christian Castile would equate to Brickhall in Rushdie’s London.

In an interview with Alistair Niven Rushdie explained that *The Satanic Verses* was ‘a novel about London and that by far the longest chunk of *The Satanic Verses* is an attempt to describe this thing that it calls a city visible but unseen, which is right here, which is not so far from here anyway’ (Rushdie & Niven 1997: 54). Rushdie pays tribute to the second class citizens of postcolonial and post-industrial London’s, by paying homage to the minorities hidden ‘behind the cathedrals of the Industrial Revolution, the railway termini of north London’ (Rushdie 1989a: 459). This theme, of course, has literary antecedents in Dickens and Blake, both of which are dissident voices in their own times.

### 3.4 Cultural heretics: Ricote and Saladin

Ricote suffers from having been born a Moor in a Catholic country: ‘I was born of that nation, unhappy and unwise, on which a sea of misfortune has lately fallen. I was born of Moorish parents, and in the course of their misfortune carried to Barbary by two of my uncles’ (Cervantes II, lxviii: 883). He is, then, the result of a cosmopolitan but bastardised culture. The expulsion of the prosperous Moorish population of Spain, the *Moriscos*, by Philip III in 1609 and 1614 was seen by the Spanish majority as a great religious victory. Ricote expresses his sympathy with the tragedy of the Spanish Moors, but also his admiration for their love of the homeland they were forced to leave. Thus, Cervantes describes the consequences of the combined activities of Church and State through the voice of the Moor Ricote.
Ironically it is the victim himself who defends the expulsion and, more broadly, the King’s policies towards the Moors. In the following encounter between Sancho and Ricote, we see how flagrantly double-edged is Cervantes’ treatment of the Moorish expulsion, as narrated by Ricote:

Well, you know, Sancho Panza, my neighbour and friend, what a terror and dismay the proclamation and edict which His Majesty commanded to be published against those of my nation struck into us all. [. . .] I almost imagined its dreadful penalty already inflicted upon my own family, even before the time allowed us to leave Spain had expired. So I arranged - sensibly I think - as a man does who knows that on a certain date he will lose his home and so provides himself with another to move on - I arranged, I say, to leave my village, alone and without my family, [. . .] knowing as I did our people’s desperate and foolish intentions; which made me think it was divine inspiration that had moved His Majesty to adopt such wise measures. Not that we were all guilty, for some of us were steadfast and true Christians. But we were so few that we could not make head against those who were not; and it is no good thing to nourish a snake in your bosom and have enemies within your own house. In fact it was with good reason that all of us were punished with exile; a mild and merciful penalty in the opinion of some, though to us it was the most terrible that could be inflicted. Wherever we are we weep for Spain; for, after all, we were born here and this is our native country. (Cervantes II, liv: 819)

Cynically Ricote explains that he ‘was brought up with good [Catholic] principles, and neither in [his] language nor in [his] customs,’ did he show any signs that he was a Moor (Cervantes II, lxiii: 883). This kind of subverted ethnic discourse is also seen in the character of Zoraida, a christianised Moor. She has left her land in order to come to Catholic Spain, and harbours extreme negative feelings about her own culture. In a letter she advises a Christian captive: ‘Do not trust any Moor; they are all deceitful’ (Cervantes I, xl: 359).

Saladin Chamcha represents a similar kind of ‘cultural heresy’ (Suleri 1989: 608; Fletcher 224). He rejects his own culture and wishes to become ‘more British than the British’. On returning home to India he discovers ‘that his blood no longer contained the immunising agents that would enable him to suffer India’s reality’
(Rushdie 1989a: 57). He has become permanently 'translated' into an English medium. Chamcha, born Salahuddin Chamchawala, a voice impersonator, 'Chumch,' 'Spoono', sings Rule Britannia while his partner in the air crash, Gibreel Farishta, celebrates his Indianness (Rushdie 1989a: 5-6). His desire for deracination leads him to adopt a new identity and marry a woman he considers the epitome of the English upper class, yet he does not realise that she marries him to escape from her own stereotyped existence. Despite taking shelter in his own community, the Sufyans' home, he discards them, their culture and their 'muck food' (Rushdie 1989a: 258). Chamcha becomes a complex modern Caliban, and when he metamorphoses into a huge beast with horns, he becomes the racial stereotype of the 'Asian immigrant' in Thatcher's Britain. In this way Rushdie rewrites colonial discourse by deconstructing racial stereotypes.

Two decades prior to the publication of The Satanic Verses the Indian novelist Kamala Markandaya, in The Nowhere Man (1972), had portrayed Srinivas and his wife Vasantha, Indian immigrants in Britain, as sufferers of imaginary leprosy. The novel describes how Srinivas himself adopts an extreme racial stereotype (Indians as lepers), and eventually dies, the victim of his own bizarre need to conform to the racial stereotyping which he encounters in Britain. Likewise, Saladin, the victim of the 'power of description' (Rushdie 1989a: 168), becomes a racial stereotype for white Britain, but also a half assimilated monster of the black community. He fights racism, police brutality and the feared 'cultural contamination' of society. Rushdie has himself been accused of being westernised, and has been criticised for presenting embarrassing and offensive characterisations of immigrants and women (Brennan 164). For example, in The Satanic Verses, Rushdie parodies the vagaries of certain anti-racist discourses: 'Now-mi-feel-indignation-when-dem-talk-immigratin-when-dem-make-insinuation-we-no-part-a-de-nation-an-mi-make-proclamation-a-de-true-
situation-how-we-make-contribution-since-de-Rome-Occupation' (Rushdie 1989a: 292). We can see this as an ironic mirror image of familiar anti-immigration discourses on the threat to national cultures and of potential contamination of religious faith.

Gibreel and Saladin are seen as the essence of post-European colonialism, as hybrid migrants. But migration and hybridisation are not simply conditions of recent postcoloniality. Don Quixote is a knight errant travelling through Spain, and Cervantes himself was a traveller and prisoner in North Africa. In Rushdie's work Gibreel and Salahuddin can be read as metaphors for the Prophet, who we might remember was himself a migrant who took shelter in exile. Contemporary *mohajirs/muhajirs* (immigrants) rethink their sense of identity like the Prophet in his *hijra* ('migration') or, like Ricote the Moor, in exile. For Rushdie, '[i]n this century of wandering' traditional cultures are being drawn more and more into conflictive confrontation (1992: 11-12). Such a confrontation is not rare in Europe, especially at times of crucial historic change and cross-cultural encounters, such as those following colonial expansion. *Don Quixote* is typical of the Renaissance in the way that it satirises the cultural traditions of the Middle Ages as absurdly old-fashioned. Cervantes' Renaissance perceptions of the self as a fragmented, multiple entity coincide with postmodern conceptions of identity. Don Quixote constitutes not a schizophrenic self, but an individual open to multiple possibilities: 'I know who I am,' replied Don Quixote, 'and I know, too, that I am capable of being not only the characters I have named, but all the Twelve Peers of France and all the Nine Worthies as well, for my exploits are greater than all the deeds they have done, all together and each by himself' (Cervantes I, v: 54).
3.5 Philip III’s Spain and Thatcher’s Britain

Living in culturally hybridised societies, Cervantes and Rushdie satirise the decay of the countries they live in as both insiders and outsiders. Cervantes concentrates on the coercive religious policies of Philip III (1598-1621), and Rushdie attacks Thatcherism and badly implemented multiculturalism. Rushdie explicitly denounces the situation of immigrants in Thatcher’s Britain, while Cervantes presents an indirect critique of the unjust treatment that *conversos* and *moriscos* received in the Spain of the Habsburgs. For example, through the figure of Sancho, the Old Christian simpleton, religious persecution is often mocked: ‘Yet the historians ought to take pity on me’, says Sancho, ‘and treat me kindly in their writings, if only because I’ve always believed in God and in all the tenets of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and because I’m a mortal enemy to the Jews’ (Cervantes II, vii: 516).

Through Sancho, Cervantes also makes indirect attacks on society and on the corruption of Philip III’s court. In what the fictional translator regards as an apocryphal chapter, Sancho confesses his wish to live under ‘some profitable government that’ll lift [his] feet out of the mud’ (Cervantes II, v: 500). The episode of the Montesinos Cave and the enchanted boat are further examples of Cervantes’ religious and social satire. During this incident, overt allusions are made to the inbreeding of European monarchs, as well as to the corruption in the court. If the king was a model of virtue, his court was not. The black Milanese cap serves to associate the crown with fraud, achieved here through word-play: Spanish *gorra* (‘cap’) suggesting the term *gorrón*, meaning ‘free-loader’ (Percas 557). Also, the green cap and the ‘collegians’ bands of green velvet’ evoke the Faculty of Theology and Episcopates Schools, and, more broadly, the university, another corrupt
institution under Philip III (Cervantes II, xxiii: 615).

However, it is criticism of the edict expelling the Spanish-Arabs (moriscos) that is the core of political satire throughout Don Quixote. In the Spain of Cervantes, to expel moriscos was, often, to expel Christians. Spanish-Arabs had lived in the Iberian peninsula for eight centuries and many of them had adapted to Christianity. For Don Quixote the social and political affairs of the time were marked by gross hypocrisy. For example, Queen Margaret of Habsburg begged the court to finance her works of charity, but she was also a fanatical proponent of the Moorish expulsion of 1609. In the Montesinos cave, Don Quixote sees a procession of ladies wearing black gowns, which suggests a link to a convent. However, they also carry white turbans - in the Turkish fashion. At the end of the procession Lady Belerma, who recalls Margaret of Habsburg, carries a turban larger than any other in the procession, which is symbolic of the queen’s cruel obsession with the moriscos (Percas de Ponseti 1975: 563). Indeed, Don Quixote constantly refers to the ‘depraved times’ he is living in, times that saw religious persecution and ethnic discrimination flourish:

I am only at pains to convince the world of its error in not reviving that most happy age in which the order of chivalry flourished. But our depraved times do not deserve to enjoy so great a blessing as did those in which knights errant undertook and carried on their shoulders the defence of kingdoms, the protection of damsels, the succour of orphans and wards, the chastisement of the proud, and the rewarding of the humble’. (Cervantes II, I: 477)

Don Quixote, who seems to have experienced the shadow of having Jewish ancestors, fights for equal opportunities and a society where merit comes before blood: ‘For blood is inherited but virtue acquired, and virtue has an intrinsic worth, which blood has not’ (Cervantes II, xlii: 738).

In Don Quixote, allusions to the Jewish and Moorish communities in Spain
take various shapes, from subverted discourses and ironic statements to open
denunciation of the atrocities committed against those who prayed to a different
God, or upon those who did not pray at all. The situation of *moriscos* and *conversos*
also parallels more broadly the treatment of immigrants as second class citizens. In
*The Satanic Verses* social satire becomes critique of racial discrimination. The
portrayal of immigrants in Thatcher’s Britain as ‘visible but unseen’ also
incorporates the depiction of the hardship they encounter. Their status as second
class citizens is stressed when Saladin metamorphoses into a wild beast. Public
school-educated Saladin Chamcha is mistreated and brutally abused by police who
refuse to listen to him: ‘Look at yourself. You’re a fucking Paky billy. Sally-who?
What kind of name is that for an Englishman?’ (Rushdie 1989a: 163). Later in the
novel he encounters a group of skinheads who verbally attack him and Gibreel:

‘Enjoying your food?’ he screamed at Chamcha and Gibreel. ‘It’s
fucking shit. Is that what you eat at home, is it? Cunts.’ Gibreel was
wearing an expression that said, loud and clear: so this is what the
British, that great nation of conquerors, have become in the end.
(Rushdie 1989a: 441)

Saladin’s own appearance and perception of the world is in conflict with
reality. In his new goat shape he discovers a world of racial discrimination where
minorities are constantly abused. The metamorphosed migrant uncovers ethnic
marginalisation and ‘stories of police brutality, of black youths hauled swiftly into
unmarked cars and vans belonging to the special patrol groups and flung out, equally
discreetly, covered in cuts and bruises’ (Rushdie 1989a: 451). The South Asian
community, as one character says, has taken over the Jewish role of the enterprising
businessman. However, she also implies that the South Asian community has also
become the focus of the discrimination which Jews experienced when anti-Semitism
was at its peak:
Twenty-three years I’ve been on this corner and the Pakis have finally driven me out of business.’ She heard the word *p-a-c-h-y*, and had a bizarre vision of elephants lumbering down the Moscow Road, flattening Sunday news vendors. ‘What’s a pachy?’ she foolishly asked and the reply was stinging: ‘A brown Jew.’ She went on thinking of the proprietor of the local ‘CTN’ (confectioner-tobacconist-newsagent) as *pachyderms* for quite a while: as people set apart - rendered objectionable - by the nature of their skin. (Rushdie 1989a: 299-300)

As an actor, Saladin encounters professional discrimination, the only acting roles he is offered or allowed to play being those of outsiders, in questionable programmes such *The Aliens Show*. Saladin plays the role of Maxim Alien, whose reception by critics of all types resembles Saladin’s own reception by society, that is, rejection:

As *The Aliens Show* got bigger it began to attract political criticism. Conservatives attacked it for being too frightening, too sexually explicit (Ridely could become positively erect when he thought too hard about Miss Weaver), too *weird*. Radical commendation began to attack its stereotyping, its reinforcement of the idea of aliens-as-freaks, its lack of positive images. (Rushdie 1989a: 63)

Despite trying to assimilate into Britishness and having become the perfect ‘brown sahib’, Saladin remains alienated from society. In fact, he has become an outsider from both the host society and the migrant community. His assimilation into Britishness and the betrayal of his background has made him the target for ethnic activists in Britain:

When *The Aliens Show* started coming in for stick from black radicals, they gave Chamcha a nickname. On account of his private-school education and closeness to the hated Valance, he was known as ‘Brown Uncle Tom’. (Rushdie 1989a: 267)

Meanwhile, in his own country nationalists reject the claims of marginalisation by those who, like Saladin, have migrated abroad and faced discrimination:

Many of you in Britain speak of victimization. Well I have not been
there, I don’t know your situation, but in my personal experience I have never been able to feel comfortable about being described as a victim. (Rushdie 1989a: 518)

In *Don Quixote*, Ricote, who first suffers the consequences of being an outsider in his homeland and then being expelled from it, adopts a false identity, becoming a foreigner in his own land in order to survive. In this way Cervantes also analyses the artificiality of assimilating another culture, religion or identity. Indeed, this analysis of forced assimilation is a recurrent theme in *Don Quixote*. For example, when Don Quixote finds the Toledan traders he forces them to declare Dulcinea’s beauty, despite the fact that they have never seen her. As one of them says:

> I beg your worship in the name of all these princes here present that you will kindly show us a portrait of this lady, even one no bigger than a grain of wheat; because we would not burden our consciences by testifying to something that we have never seen or heard and, what is more, something so detrimental to the Empress and Queens of Alcarria and Extremadura. (Cervantes I, iv: 51)

Don Quixote’s blind, fanatical devotion to Dulcinea resembles unreasoning religious fanaticism, and his insistence that others proclaim her beauty (without seeing it) also appears to parody cases of the forced conversion of Jews and other enforced procedures carried out by the Inquisitorial tribunals. It is a parody of conversion in which Quixote’s language is of faith beyond question:

> Look you, heretic, have I not told you a thousand times that I have never seen the peerless Dulcinea in all the days of my life, nor ever crossed the threshold of her palace, and that I am only enamoured of her by hearsay, and because of the great reputation she bears for her beauty and wisdom. (Cervantes II, ix: 522)

As a result of migration, translated people lose their original identity and gain a new hybrid one. Saladin’s transformation into Englishness results in contradictory
patriotic feelings, since he has been assimilated into an idealised version of Britain: ‘For a man like Saladin Chamcha the debasing of Englishness was a thing too painful to contemplate’ (Rushdie 1989a: 75). Even after having been metamorphosed into a goat by racist stereotyping, and having been abused by the police, Saladin (like jingoistic readers of sensationalist media) dreams of the epitome of Englishness:

[... ] he found himself dreaming of the Queen, of making tender love to the Monarch. She was the body of Britain, the avatar of the State, and he had chosen her, joined with her; she was his Beloved, the moon of his delight. (Rushdie 1989a: 169)

‘If The Satanic Verses is anything’, Rushdie insists in ‘In Good Faith’, ‘it is a migrant’s-eye view of the world’. Rushdie believes that from the migrant condition of ‘uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis, slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable’, a metaphor for all humanity can be derived (Rushdie 1992: 394). Being between cultures generates a need to question the validity of one’s identity. The migrant also experiences the dilemma of change, running the risk of losing identity and faith, and always trying to hold onto a constant idea of selfhood.

3.6 Metamorphoses

The transformation of identity which affects the migrant has been a recurrent topic in literature. Changes of names are amongst the simplest devices for signalling identity changes in a literary character (Frye 1975: 106), and this device is used by Cervantes. Don Quixote, in fact, changes his name from Alonso Quijano at the beginning of the book. Not only is a change of identity suggested here, but also a
subversion of naming conventions, since *Don* should be followed by a first name not a surname. Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses* Salahuddin Chamchawala makes his name less Indian by changing it into Saladin Chamcha. There is an element of comedy here, combining a heroic first name (Saladin - the great Muslim Hero who defeated the Crusaders and restored Sunni Islam to Egypt) with the term 'spoon-seller' (a yes-man), which in Bombay street slang, as ‘salah chamcha’, also means ‘bastard’ and ‘homosexual’.

Other features of *Don Quixote* and *The Satanic Verses* attest to the close similarity of structure in these two works. For example, they share the same literary model of circular travel. According to Frye (1975), the romance employs a stylised pattern for the delineation of an identity quest. The quest usually starts with some departure from the hero’s stable identity, represented by setting out on a journey. Don Quixote travels through late Renaissance Spain, and Gibreel and Saladin travel to postcolonial London; Gibreel also travels in dreams to Mohammed’s times. The action of the romance stresses the use of metamorphoses to point out that the hero has embarked on a quest for identity, as Cervantes recognised:

[... ] you must consider what you are, seeking to know yourself, which is the most difficult task conceivable. From self-knowledge you will learn not to puff yourself up, like the frog who wanted to be as big as an ox. (Cervantes II, xlii: 738)

During the quest Don Quixote goes mad and believes himself to be a disciple of Amadis of Gaul (*Amadis of Gaul* 1508), whilst in *The Satanic Verses* Chamcha experiences a wild metamorphosis, and Gibreel believes himself to be the Archangel Gibreel. Gibreel Farishta, the Indian film star famous for playing Hindu gods (though he himself is a Muslim) was born Ismail Najmuddin. After gaining a new name, denoting ‘The Angel Gabriel’ in Urdu and Persian, he takes the form of an
Archangel.

Within an Indian context, the most fundamental metamorphosis is of course reincarnation. Hence, the most obvious starting-point for a novel focusing on the issue of metamorphosis of Indian migrants would be a metaphorical reincarnation: ‘To be born again,’ sang Gibreel Farishta tumbling from the heavens, ‘first you have to die. Ho ji! Ho ji! To land upon the bosomy earth, first one needs to fly’ (Rushdie 1989a: 3), while Chamcha ‘as befitted a new-born babe, burst into foolish tears’ (Rushdie 1989a: 10). Saladin first renounces his own culture and religion, becoming a product of assimilation. In the process of metamorphosis, religious doubt follows questions of cultural and religious identity. At the end of the novel, Saladin Chamcha, the ‘creature of selected discontinuities; a willing re-invention of himself’ (Rushdie 1989a: 427) recovers his unassimilated selfhood as Salahuddin Chamchawala, the Bombay bourgeois. When Saladin Chamcha, the contemporary mohajir, takes shelter in the Sufayan home in London and is ‘liberated’ through them, Rushdie implies that liberation from oppression and identity can be found within the migrant’s own roots, religion, group and community. However, he still favours change and translation above pure and static identities. Traditionally, identity-quests also involve the completion of various trials:

The novel tells of the adventure of interiority; the content of the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and, by proving itself, to find its own essence. (Lukács 89)

In Don Quixote, Sancho’s constant trust of his master and the cruel test by the Duke and the Duchess, to be named governor of the Isle Barataria, can be seen as the

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49 The Sufayans had originally been opposed to Mohammed; they remained neutral in the battle of Medina. Mohammed had granted complete immunity to any Medinans who took shelter in the Sufayans’ homes.
quest for a change which will provide a desired identity. In the same way, Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* waits desperately to recover his human shape. The narration of Don Quixote’s story starts with a sane character, and finally ends with the hero recovering his mind. Likewise, in *The Satanic Verses* Gibreel begins the story falling and indeed continues this ‘fall’ throughout the novel, whilst Saladin returns to his origins in India. Rushdie uses the opposition between Saladin and Sufyan to analyse the nature of essence after change. Confused Saladin, ‘in his semi-consciousness was seized by the notion that he, too, had acquired the quality of cloudiness, becoming metamorphic, hybrid’ (Rushdie 1989a: 6-7), chooses Lucretian materialism while the idealist Sufyan prefers Ovid:

‘For me it is always Ovid over Lucretius,’ he stated. ‘Your soul, my good dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form.’

‘This is pretty cold comfort,’ Chamcha managed a trace of his old dryness. ‘Either I accept Lucretius and conclude that some demonic and irreversible mutation is taking place in my inmost depths, or I go with Ovid and concede that everything now emerging is no more than a manifestation of what was already there.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 277)

In this way Gibreel and Saladin can be seen as representing two sides of the deeply divided migrant self. In the case of Saladin, the division is secular: he is torn between Bombay and London, between East and West. In the case of Gabriel, the division is spiritual. He has lost his faith and is struggling between his need to believe and his inability to do so. However, they are both embarked on a search for wholeness.

Gibreel journeys to England in pursuit of Alleluia Cone, in broad parallel of Don Quixote’s quest of Dulcinea. The opposition between the migrant’s translation and his attempts to remain untranslated constitutes part of the antithesis of Rushdie’s characterisation of the migrant self: ‘Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha’, an ‘angelic
devilish’ creature. Farishta cannot accommodate the various roles which society
compels him to take, and in the attempt to do so he goes mad, while Saladin’s
attempts to become assimilated turn him into a wild beast. Don Quixote and Sancho
Panza similarly encapsulate two opposing forces which were (and remain)
characteristic of Spanish society: the Quixotic spirit, idealistic and unaware of the
decay of the country, versus the simple, self-interested practical Sancho Panza. In the
case of Don Quixote there is an added paradox in that the chivalric romance, which
inspired his innocent idealism, was also, historically, the preferred genre amongst
fanatical defenders of Catholicism, crusades and imperialism; readers of these texts
were often persecutors. On arrival in America, for example, some of the
conquistadors believed that they were meeting fantastical characters from chivalric
novels and not real native people. Hence, they looked for and named many places
after characters and places from such romances, such as California (a rich island in
Sergas de Esplandian 1510).50 Indeed, whilst the chivalric genre was particularly
popular among Old Christians, the picaresque genre emerged to oppose the values
which these romances upheld. Don Quixote is a comic portrayal of those defending
static values, whilst at the same time his character appears to represent the values of
anarchy and metamorphosis.

50 The Exploits of the Very Powerful Cavalier Esplandian, Son of the Excellent King Amadis
of Gaul written by Ordoñez de Montalvo in 1510 was a sequel to Amadis of Gaul, the most
popular novel of the early sixteenth century. The romance of Esplandian depicted Calafia,
queen of the Amazons, who lived on the island of California. The Spanish conquerors
arrived in South California in 1533 and named it after this romance novel. Other
toponyms resulting from chivalric novels include Texas after the Great Kingdom of Tejas.
See also Texón in Don Clarian de Landanis (1518, 1522, 1524 and 1528).
3.7 Scepticism

One of the principal and most controversial issues of *The Satanic Verses* is the possibility of change in Islam. Gibreel, the 'untranslated man' whom the world considers 'good' and respects for wishing to remain 'continuous', is finally destroyed, unable to control attacks of religious megalomania which, against his will, turn him into the shape of the Angel Gibreel. 'When Rushdie speaks of his sustained respect for the religious mind', Mufti points out, 'this must be taken not only seriously, but as the very basis of his novel's complex engagement with the culture and politics of contemporary Islam' (Mufti 108). The novel was never intended as an insult against believers, as can be seen in Gibreel's destruction after he experiences metamorphosis and the loss of faith:

> On that day of metamorphosis the illness changed and his recovery began. And to prove to himself the non-existence of God, he now stood in the dining-hall of the city's most famous hotel, with pigs falling out of his face. (Rushdie 1989a: 30)

In *The Satanic Verses* the translation of the self involves questioning authority and certainties, not only within Islam but also within English and European liberalism. *The Satanic Verses* is a serious attempt to examine the question of faith and doubt from the point of view of Islam. Rushdie questions whether absolute beliefs are justified, when they may be a figment of the imagination or the inspiration of Satan. In *The Satanic Verses* it is satirically proposed that if one verse could be proved to be satanically inspired, why not another, why not all? Religious doubt, both in Cervantes and Rushdie, becomes a means of resisting fundamentalism. The only choice, for Cervantes' readers as much as for contemporary Muslims, is either submission to the faith or disbelief:
Question: What is the opposite of faith?
Not disbelief. Too final, certain, closed. Itself a kind of belief.
Doubt. (Rushdie 1989a: 92)

In *The Satanic Verses* special attention is paid to the issue of religious doubt that follows metamorphosis. This theme, linked to the experience of migration, with its loss of certainty and moral absolutism, is central to the controversy generated by the novel. Through the joke ‘Ooparvala-neeuchayvala’, Rushdie comically depicts Gibreel’s gradual lost of faith:

‘Who are you? he asked with interest. [. . .]  
‘Ooparvala,’ the apparition answered. ‘The Fellow Upstairs’  
‘How do I know you’re not the other One,’ Gibreel asked craftily,  
‘Neechayvala, the Guy from Underneath?’ (Rushdie 1989a: 318)

Salman (the author) is associated with doubt, apostasy and treachery when he is identified with Salman al Farsi: Abdullah ibn Sa’ad, one of the Prophet’s scribes who fell temporarily into doubt. Salman means ‘non-Arabic Muslim’ and Mahound’s scribe was responsible for secretly polluting God’s word (Ruthven 39). The identification of ‘the author’ with ‘the fictional character’ is achieved through a transformation from the third person to the first, from ‘Salman [the Farsi] complained to Baal’, to ‘I [Salman the author] began to get a bad smell in my nose’ (Rushdie 1989a: 365). Ironically Salman the author was accused exactly of contaminating God’s sacred message. To dare to ask ‘What kind of idea is he? What kind am I?’ (Rushdie 1989a: 111), implies transgressing the limits of doubt, an unforgivable sin in Islam.

Both in Cervantes’ Catholic Spain and in Islamic fundamentalist societies, to question faith involves risks. New beliefs can threaten monotheist societies and it is the potential carriers of these new beliefs who are the targets of fundamentalists. In
the case of Baroque Spain, the Reformation and the Jewish and Moorish communities were seen as the main threat to the established order. Cross-cultural encounters facilitate cultural exchange, but can also endanger already existing concepts of the world. Rushdie sees them as a dynamic force for change:

*Melange*, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves. (Rushdie 1992: 394)

Others see them as a threat to the established order.

The Spanish quest for purity, from Philip II’s Inquisition to Franco’s dictatorship, was generated by the fear of cultural contamination. Hybridity and plurality were regarded as evil because of their perceived debilitating effect on the idea of a united Catholic nation. Dissident voices, or those voices which simply questioned the social, religious and political order, often came from the margins of society. Meanwhile, the American adventure also generated ideas of change in Spain that questioned European traditional thought. In Rushdie’s terms his heretic novel ‘rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure’ (Rushdie 1992: 394). But in Rushdie’s case the fear of pollution is twofold. On the one hand, migrants constitute a risk to the *status quo* of their host countries, and on the other represent a potential source of contamination of their own culture and faith. Rushdie experienced religious persecution taken to its limits. In various ways, Sixteenth century Catholicism and contemporary Islam can be seen to share similar mechanisms of control. In the following chapter I will compare Cervantes’ and Rushdie’s opposition to fanaticism and fundamentalism in *Don Quixote* and *The Satanic Verses*.  

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Chapter IV

Inquisitors and Mullahs against Freedom of Speech.

[I]t is neither just nor proper to carry out a man’s bequest when what he orders exceeds all reason.


I would like to inform all the intrepid Muslims in the world that the author of the book entitled _The Satanic Verses_, which has been compiled, printed and published in opposition to Islam, the prophet and the Qur’an, as well as those publishers who were aware of its contents, have been declared _madhur el dam_ (i.e. those whose blood must be shed). I call on all zealous Muslims to execute them quickly, wherever they find them, so that no one will dare to insult Islam again. Whoever is killed in this path will be regarded as a martyr.

Ayatollah Khomeini, 14 February 1989. (Harrison ix; Ruthven 112)

4.1 The defence of purity

There is clear evidence that Cervantes participated in religious life in Catholic Spain. Nevertheless, there are also good grounds for the claim that _Don Quixote_ is in many ways an antireligious work. Cervantes and Rushdie take similar attitudes toward religious intolerance. However, there are significant differences. Cervantes’ questioning of religious authority and practices is carefully disguised, using the figure of a mad knight errant, his squire, and a plethora of grotesque characters. Don Quixote’s detachment from normality, seen as a descent into madness, enables the author to convey an incisive attack against the injustices of the times in which he lived. In this way he avoided trouble with the censors. Moreover, in the prologue to Part One, the reader is invited to interpret the work as he or she wishes, and the ironic tone that characterises the
book is established. This tone of religious (and narrative) ambiguity continues into Part Two:

CIDE HAMETE, the chronicler of this great history, introduces the present chapter with these words: 'I swear as a Catholic Christian,' on which his translator observes that Cide Hamete’s swearing as a Catholic Christian, he being a Moor, as he doubtless was, meant only that as a Catholic Christian, when he swears, swears, or should swear the truth, and observe it in all he says, so he would tell the truth, as if he had sworn like a Christian Catholic, in writing of Don Quixote [...]. (Cervantes II, xxvii: 646)

The case of *The Satanic Verses* is rather different. Its sceptical references to religion, and indeed the title of the novel itself, were too explicit for the guardians of Islam, and provoked censure even from Catholics and extreme multiculturalists. The way in which Rushdie treats the life of the Prophet and his wives, and the principles of the Qur’an, was seen to contravene Islamic law. Mohammed, the Messenger of God, is portrayed as a businessman constantly doing deals with the archangel and God - a ‘smart bastard’, whose wives’ names are adopted by the prostitutes of the brothel The Curtain (Hijab). In the Jahilia section, Baal becomes a sort of pseudo-Mahound, an anti-Prophet, by making love to each of the prostitutes of the brothel. Salman the Farsi visits Baal and suggests that the real Ayesha may have been unfaithful to Mahound. The offence which Rushdie caused in Islamic circles extended to the way he wrote about religious doubt, apostasy, migration and cultural hybridisation. In addition, he did all this in a foreign language, and in a Western literary form. Even the fictional names used by Rushdie gave offence: Mahound, the name of the prophet in *The Satanic Verses*, is an insulting derogatory medieval European version of Muhammad, and Jahilia is the Arabic word for ‘barbarism’:
His name: a dream-name, changed by the vision. Pronounced correctly, it means he-for-whom-thanks-should-be-given, but he won’t answer to that here; nor, though he’s well aware of what they called him, to his nickname in Jahilia down below - he-who-going-up-and-down-old-Coney. Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; has adopted, instead, the demon-tag the farangis hung around his neck. To turn insults into strengths, whigs, tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be medieval baby-frightener, the Devil’s synonym: Mahound. (Rushdie 1989a: 93)

However, the dispute also centred around the defence of purity against translation. Fundamentalist purists fear the effects of translation, both literally - carrying into another language - and more generally, in the ‘carrying across the self into another place’. Indeed, in Rushdie’s novel Sufyan’s wife believes that ‘everything she valued had been upset by the change; had in this process of translation, been lost’ (Rushdie 1989a: 249). Yet, Rushdie himself has maintained that ‘something is gained in translation’:

Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained. (Rushdie 1992: 17)

In *The Satanic Verses* the question of blasphemy is not only present in the overtly ‘Islamic’ sections but also in the description of the postcolonial deracination of the ‘cultural heretic’ Saladin (Suleri 1989: 608; Fletcher 1994: 224). The potential dangers of cultural translation and of the celebration of ‘hybridity’ were too strong for those opposed in principle to ‘impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs’ (Rushdie 1992: 394). Rushdie, hostile to fixed belief systems, described the conflict about his novel as a battle between ‘apostles of purity’ who claim to possess the truth,
and the force of ‘mongrelisation’ (1992: 394). A work like *The Satanic Verses* requires a certain cultural flexibility on the part of its readers. Indeed, Rushdie puts it even more basically in an interview with Alistair Niven arguing that ‘the real dispute in *The Satanic Verses* was between people who had a sense of humour and those who didn’t’ (1997: 55).

In contrast to Rushdie’s extremist narrative, which caused him severe problems with Islamic censors, we might see Cervantes as having employed a subtler discourse, which effectively hid his own extremist position from the Inquisition. However, a comparison of the relative conditions of censorship in both cases is problematic. The Spanish Inquisition was perhaps less rigid than it is often assumed. Also, Catholic fundamentalism is no doubt qualitatively different from contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. The two religions differ in many basic founding principles. For example, whereas Christian doctrine called for tolerance and forbearance of one’s enemies, Mohammed called for holy war - *jihad* - against his enemies. Hence, when Rushdie re-examined Islam and parodied the figure of the Prophet, he inevitably became an enemy of the faith.

Khomeini’s charge against Rushdie is *kufr*; it includes ‘atheism’, ‘insult to God’, ‘heresy’ and ‘apostasy’ (Appignanesi & Maitland 1989: 203). Under Islamic law the death penalty is applicable to ‘those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger’: ‘the punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for themselves in this world, and in hereafter they shall have grievous chastisement’ (Qur’an 5: 33). In particular, Allah tells his followers to seek those who disbelieve and ‘wherever they find them, kill them’ (Qur’an 2: 191). Rushdie committed the sin of insulting
the Prophet as well as questioning the claim to exclusive truth of monotheist religions and the persecution of non-believers.


Had Rushdie's novel been delivered more tactfully, it may have been received less aggressively (Ruthven 47). Perhaps the greatest offence was not a matter of the derogatory treatment of religion, but rather the perceived danger of the very act of questioning faith and belief. We can see a similar concern for this kind of questioning during the Inquisition, where scientific works were sometimes regarded as heretical not because they constituted any kind of attack on religious doctrine, but because their new theories (such as Miquel Servet's theories of blood circulation) extended scientific knowledge and thereby weakened the myth and superstition underlying traditional faith. *The Satanic Verses* questions religion and examines the components of Indo-British Muslim identity through strategies of inversion: 'they sought ethical satisfaction in the oldest of the grand narratives, that is, religious faith' (Rushdie 1989a: 537). Rushdie depicts the birth and triumph of a religious philosophy, resembling Islam, which he blasphemously terms 'Submission', the literal translation of 'Islam', as a religion born from the Prophet's discontent with seventh century Arabian society -'a city of gold [... ] a miscarriage of a place' (Rushdie 1989a: 118-119). The 'revealed knowledge' is absolutely fundamental and neither the message nor the Prophet should be questioned; thus, Rushdie's text is seen as
defamatory.

One of the main distinctions between Christianity and Islam is that, with a few exceptions, in the West religion and state became detached from each other, whereas in Islamic societies religion and politics have tended not to separate. It was because of this gradual separation that Roman Catholicism needed to develop institutions of 'thought control', such as the Inquisition - officially regulated by Pope Gregory IX in 1231 to protect the faith. In Islam, on the other hand, the rules are dictated by the Holy Book itself, and both religious and secular leaders ensure that the faith is preserved and protected from blasphemous attacks. Nevertheless, within the Islamic community debate about what Islam requires, forbids or permits has traditionally gone on. For example, in the twelfth century Rushdie’s near namesake Ibn Rusd (‘Averroës’) said: ‘not all the words of the Qur’an should be taken literally’ (Rushdie 1992: 436).

In fact, the controversial issue of the ‘satanic verses’ had already been examined by some of the early Islamic historians. The author of *The Satanic Verses* is regarded as a heretic because he recounts an episode in the history of Islam that has often been deliberately forgotten or overlooked. Rushdie’s text is sacrilegious for depicting Mahound as revering the goddesses Lat, Uzza and Manat, ‘the exalted birds [whose] intercession is desired’ (Rushdie 1989a: 114). Indeed, Rushdie borrows the title of his novel from al-Tabari, one of the canonical Islamic sources. In Sura 53: 19, Mohammed made a small concession to polytheism, which was later eliminated because the idea of worshipping other divinities was seen to violate the basis of Islam: ‘There is no God but Allah’.

The fatwa underlined a tension between secular free speech and religious fanaticism: fundamentalism against enlightenment. Religious fanaticism is in this light seen against a European tradition of independent thought and scepticism.
Nevertheless, Western religious fanaticism has been responsible for the persecution of many dissenters, among them Giordano Bruno, Miquel Servet, Copernicus and Spinoza. Authors hostile to religion, or who denounced oppression, also paid with their lives. Writers within the Catholic tradition were not infrequently the victims of intolerance. Saint John of the Cross, for example, was persecuted by the Carmelite friars, whilst Friar Luis de León was victim of the inquisitorial fanaticism of the scholars at Salamanca. Indeed, the history of the Catholic Church and the Inquisition offers a target no less vulnerable (and hardly less durable) than the excesses of Islam. Catholic intolerance towards the ideas of Galileo Galilei, one might bear in mind, was only finally brought to an end very recently, and even then in grudging terms. The Galileo Affair (the Church’s resistance to the ideas of the Copernican revolution) was officially closed on 31 October 1992 when, in an audience before the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, John Paul II officially concluded the work of the Studi Galileiani after having received in that same audience what was - by Vatican standards - an unusually open-minded report from Cardinal Paul Poupard on the work of the Galileo Commission:

From the Galileo case we can draw a lesson which is applicable today in analogous cases which arise in our times and which may arise in the future [. . .] It often happens that, beyond two partial points of view which are in contrast, there exists a wider view of things which embraces both and integrates them. (L'Osservatore Romano, 4 Nov. 1992, previously 31 Oct. 1992)

However, we might also note that the Vatican Observatory continued to address the issue through the series Studi Galileiani (Galileo Commission), a further meeting of which was held in May 1997.

Contemporary Catholic approaches to the banning of works which attack
the Church have changed substantially from those employed by the Inquisition. For example, in September 1999 the Vatican’s ecclesiastical court, the Rota Romana, conducted a trial for libel against Monsignor Luigi Marinelli. Marinelli had published *Gone with the Wind in the Vatican* (1999), a book narrating illicit sexual and business affairs within the Vatican. The grounds on which the Catholic Church sought to ban Marinelli’s book were the protection of the right of individuals to freedom from libel. Thus, the post-enlightenment language of individual human rights is appropriated in a discourse very different from that of the earlier Church. Despite such changes, however, we see that the response of the modern Catholic church is still essentially the same as that of the Spanish Inquisition, in that a trial would most often be the means of dealing with attacks on the church. A trial lends legal respectability to the proceedings, and in the case of the Tribunal of the Inquisition - founded in Spain in 1478 - was thought to be the best form of publicising the work of Catholic fundamentalists in Renaissance and Baroque Spain.

The way in which the *fatwa* was pronounced was, in comparison, violent and precipitate, even when compared to the Inquisition of Renaissance Spain. Indeed, Rushdie talks about a future when Muslims will be ashamed of cases of intolerance like the ‘Rushdie Affair’ (Rushdie 1992: 432). Ironically, the Islam which pronounced the *fatwa* is portrayed in *The Satanic Verses* not as an intrinsically religious force, but as essentially aberrant. Baal would have been executed by General Khalid without trial if Mahound had not insisted on a trial. Paradoxically, it is the laughter which Baal’s confession during the trial generates, seen as potential for disbelief, which finally sentences him to death. Curiously, his previous crime of mocking the Recitation receives less attention than his symbolic marriages to the twelve ‘wives of the Prophet’, due to the effect

The work of both Cervantes and Rushdie examines the foundation of religious intolerance and totalitarianism, with their criticisms focussing on censorship and the conditions that it creates. Cervantes centres his analysis on the misappropriation of religion for purposes of thought control and socio-political domination. Similarly, Rushdie’s attack is aimed at the abuse of sacred mythologies in the service of power, dealing with the despotic power of Islamic belief. For example, at one point Rushdie employs a pun on ‘Anti-Christ’: ‘freedom, the old antiquest’ (Rushdie 1989a: 92), an apposition which underlines the tension between religion and liberty. He attacks religious bigotry by demonstrating that most tyrannical acts are not the essence of religion but the weapons of spiritually blind individuals looking for power.

Both writers insist on the same Enlightenment ideal: ‘freedom of thought is precisely freedom from religious control, freedom from accusations of blasphemy’ (Rushdie 1992: 432). Hence, in the struggle for freedom of thought and speech, their criticism naturally falls on those who perpetuate the system: the institutions which maintain religious control.

4.2 Inquisitors and *mullahs*

Contrary to the suggestion of some critics, Cervantes is not a religious hypocrite who, whilst living as a devoted Catholic, opposes all notions of religion through his literary work. He opposes the church not *per se*, but as an oppressive hierarchy (Castro 1972: 260-1, 291; Osterc 1963: 159-99). His objections are
against official positions of the church, as well as the abundance of convents and monasteries with disproportionate wealth. He criticises the decadent life of the clergy, and the excessive number of clerics at a time when the ecclesiastical life was one of the three ways of escaping poverty, the other two being the army and the newly colonised American continent:

‘Yes,’ replied Sancho, ‘but I have heard it said that there are more friars than knights errant in Heaven.’
‘That,’ replied Don Quixote, ‘is because the number of religious is greater than the number of knights.’ (Cervantes II, vii: 520)

Don Quixote can be read as an attack on religious fanatics and politico-religious powers: priests, bishops, the papacy, as well as a host of icons of Catholicism. He is never seen to enter a church in the novel, and those religious rites which he does perform are always in some way irreverent. In general Cervantes’ treatment of the religious establishment is subtle; far more subtle than Rushdie’s. It must, however, be conceded that occasionally this might be the result of editors trying to avoid problems with censors and not the result of Cervantes’ own skills. For example, in the original manuscript of Don Quixote the editors ordered the change of a capital to a lower-case letter on the word ‘church’ to avoid the impression that the author’s text implied any attack on the Church:

‘It’s the church we have come upon, Sancho,’ he said.
‘So I see,’ replied Sancho, ‘and please God we haven’t come for our burial. (Cervantes II, viii: 521) (my italics)

Sancho’s role is designed to assist in the partial concealment of the religious critique in Don Quixote. For example, in order to criticise the artificiality, corruption and excesses of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Don Quixote asks Sancho
if he has seen ‘a play acted with Kings, Emperors and Popes, knights ladies and various other personages brought to the stage’. When Sancho agrees, he replies that ‘the same thing happens in the comedy and traffic of [the] world, where some play Emperors, others Popes and, in fact, every part that can be introduced into a play’. Sancho, an expert in popular wisdom, replies: ‘A fine comparison although not so new that I haven’t heard it on various occasions before - like the one of the game of chess, where each piece has its particular importance while the game lasts, but when it’s over they’re all mixed up, thrown together, jumbled, and shoved into a leather bag, which is much like shovelling life away into the grave’ (Cervantes II, xii: 539). Don Quixote’s example, of course, is drawn from one of the great Renaissance metaphors, that of the great theatre of life, which was often developed by Cervantes’ contemporaries, such as Calderón de la Barca in *Life Is a Dream* (*La vida es sueño*, 1636). This same theme is taken up by Rushdie, whose main characters move in the artificial world of show business and advertising; Saladin and Gibreel work as voice impersonators, actors, performing different roles, the former to survive in Vilayet through television, and the latter to become a success in Bollywood.

The author of *Don Quixote* ironically remarks in the prologue of the second part: ‘I am not likely to persecute any priest, particularly if he is a familiar of the Holy Office to boot’ (Cervantes II: 468). Nevertheless, Don Quixote often attacks the clergy verbally and physically. At one point he sees two dark figures approach. They are Benedictine monks, a brotherhood connected with the Inquisition. Don Quixote quickly recognises them as his enemies, and has no problem imagining the evil act they are in the process of committing:

‘For those dark shapes looming over there must, beyond all doubt, be enchanters bearing off in that coach some princess they have
stolen; and it is my duty to redress this wrong with all my might’ [. . .] ‘Monstrous and diabolical crew! Release immediately the noble princesses whom you are forcibly carrying off in that coach, or prepare to receive instant death as the just punishment for your misdeeds’ [. . .] ‘No fair speeches for me, for I know you, perfidious scoundrels!’ (Cervantes I, viii: 71-72)

Don Quixote’s physical attack, then, is directed against the clergy as representatives of oppression. Later, fearing excommunication, Don Quixote excuses his assault: ‘I did not suspect I was injuring priests or church property, which, good Catholic and faithful Christian that I am, I respect and adore, for I thought they were phantoms and spectres from the outerworld’ (Cervantes I, xix: 147).

Similarly, Rushdie’s primary target is not Mohammed or the faith itself, but the mullahs and fanatics who exploit Mohammed’s figure in order to oppress and control believers. Rushdie concentrates on repressive figures such as the Imam, while Cervantes concentrates on priests who represent the Inquisition. For example, Cervantes attacks the Duke and Duchess’s priest, who bears similarities with Philip III’s confessor, a well-known opponent of humanism in the history of Spanish thought (II, xxxi: 673). Cervantes draws a parallel between the domestic life of the Duke and Duchess and the political situation of a country whose monarchs had become the puppets of the Church:

Is it enough to enter other men’s houses by hook or by crook and rule their owners, and after a narrow upbringing - without more knowledge of the world than the district sixty or seventy miles around - roundly to lay down the law to chivalry and judge of knights errant? (Cervantes II, xxxi: 674)

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51 Friar Louis Aliaga, a Dominican friar, was appointed by the King’s private to control Philip III and the court. Aliaga’s inquisitorial spirit contributed to the Moorish expulsion (1609). After Cervantes’ death Aliaga became general inquisitor under the private Uceda, son of Lerma. See other references to Aliaga in the Montesinos’ episode.
Likewise, *The Satanic Verses* is a brilliant condemnation of sectarianism and intransigence. Rushdie’s Imam satirises Ayatollah Khomeini, who began his politico-religious career prior to the Iranian revolution broadcasting clandestine recordings from Paris. The Imam in *The Satanic Verses* does exactly the same, but from London (Rushdie 1989a: 210). The fictional Imam is an exile, a term ‘which must not be confused with, allowed to run into, all the other words that people throw around: émigré, expatriate, refugee, immigrant, silence, cunning’ (Rushdie 1989a: 205). Rushdie presents the figure of a tyrannical paranoid in the shape of a deranged cleric whose main fear is cultural contamination. He isolates himself in a London apartment where ‘the curtains, thick golden velvet, are kept shut all day, because otherwise the evil thing might creep into the apartment: foreignness, Abroad, the alien nation’ (Rushdie 1989a: 206). The Imam’s obsessive fear of the threat of contamination from the secular West mirrors a wider fear amongst fanatical religious leaders. ‘Paranoia, for the exile,’ the narrator of *The Satanic Verses* points out, ‘is a prerequisite of survival’ in a ‘soulless country [where] the furniture is ugly, expensive, all bought at the same time in the same store and in too much of a hurry’ (Rushdie 1989a: 208). The Imam’s rejection of British culture typifies the reluctance of some immigrants to integrate into the host culture. ‘In exile all attempts to put down roots look like treason: they are admissions of defeat’ and the Imam cannot remain long in a sinful land (Rushdie 1989a: 208). ‘Untranslated’ migrants continually look towards a return home:

Exile is a dream of glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution: Elba, not St. Helena. It is an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back. The exile is a ball hurled high into the air. (Rushdie 1989a: 205)
The paranoid Imam is frustrated at the impotence of exile, and magnifies his own importance to the extent of worshipping his own self (Rushdie 1989a: 214). His obsession, like the position of leaders of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, extended to an attempt to defeat history: ‘History is a deviation from the Path, knowledge is a delusion, because the sum of knowledge was complete on the day Al-Lah finished his revelation to Mahound’ (Rushdie 1989a: 210).

Rushdie’s use of characters itself contributes to his critique. There are, for example, telling similarities between the characters of Mahound and the Imam. The Imam’s friends (Khalid, Salman and Bilal) share the same names as three of Mahound’s (and Mohammed’s) disciples. Bilal X, a follower of Mahound and the Imam, is a caricature of singer Cat Stevens, who converted to Islam and denounced his earlier recording career. Interestingly, he subsequently supported the fatwa against Rushdie. The guard outside the Imam’s room is Salman Farsi (Rushdie 1989a: 210). Farsi is a term designating a follower of the Persian religion of Zarathustrainism. In the Jahilia plot, Salman the Persian is a follower of Mahound who loses his faith.

Rushdie’s attack on the mullahs also includes a parody of the former Shah of Iran, in the shape of Ayesha, the cruel ruler of Desh, in the Imam plot. The name Ayesha is shared by a fanatical girl, who is an archangel of death and who leads the march to Mecca, and also by the youngest and favourite wife of Mahound. Ayesha is also the favourite wife of the historical Mohammed and an unpopular figure among Shi’a believers because she opposed the succession of Fatima’s husband Ali to the leadership of the Islamic community after Muhammad’s death. For Spivak, the sharing of the names is significant, because it suggests that Rushdie could be provoking Sunnis by associating Shi’a superstition with the religious mainstream (Spivak quoted in Ruthven 47). Hence,
references to the supposedly mutual rivalry between Fatima and Ayesha may have been intended to imply that religion should not be controlled by sectarians.

4.3 Book burning

Don Quixote famously begins with the burning of the Knight's library. Cervantes lived and worked in a society dominated by the presence of state and religious thought-control, and the book-burning scene makes obvious reference to this. There is a parallel here with the burning of The Satanic Verses in Bradford and other British cities, as well as in the Sub-continent, some four centuries later. Living in the secular West, it appears, does not exempt Rushdie from the kind of blind fanaticism associated with those who burn books. Ironically, in the face of such Islamic fundamentalism Rushdie was forced to seek the refuge of the British security system, protection which was ultimately provided by the secular state government of Margaret Thatcher, herself criticised in The Satanic Verses as 'Mrs Torture'.

Censors are acutely aware of the dangers of dissident voices, and attempts to control subversion and dissidence have often resulted in drastic measures against those who dare 'to name the unnameable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it from going to sleep' (Rushdie 1989a: 97). In Don Quixote, the draconian persecutions by the Tribunal of the Inquisition lead Don Quixote to call for the creation of a 'reasonable' institution of censorship capable of orientating writers within prescribed limits, and hence avoiding charges of blasphemy or heresy. Don Quixote cannot be seen to advocate freedom of speech overtly, yet there is a clear implication in the
proposal of an ‘intelligent and judicious’ centralised board of censorship:

[. . . ] if there were some intelligent and judicious person at court to examine all plays before they are performed, not only those that are acted in the capital, but all that are to be played anywhere in Spain. Then no magistrate in any town would allow any play to be performed without this man’s approbation, under his hand and seal; and so the comedians would take good care to send their plays to Madrid, and could then act them in safety. (Cervantes I, xlviii: 430)

Cervantes and Rushdie deal with the reality of religious censorship in different ways. Cervantes often seems to be more careful than Rushdie in his approach, employing a number of strategies to avoid problems with Spanish censors. One of these is to leave an obvious sign of offence, in order to deflect the censors’ attention away from subtler passages. In Don Quixote this technique is used masterfully to conceal the author’s broader critique of Catholicism. For example, in the episode in Sierra Morena Don Quixote does penance for Dulcinea but, finding himself without a rosary, makes one by tearing ‘a great strip from the tail of his shirt, which was hanging down, and made eleven knots in it, one fatter than the rest; and this served him for a rosary all the time he was there, during which time he recited a million Ave Marias’ (Cervantes I, xxvi: 215). The mention of a million prayers was, at the time, a fairly obvious, albeit indirect, reference to Erasmus’ opposition to the repetition of formulas. (The repetition of formulas also takes place in Muslim worship: ‘There is no God but Al-Lah.’) Don Quixote also contains allusions to this practice:

‘Blessed be Allah the mighty,’ says Hamete Benengeli at the beginning of this eighth chapter. ‘Blessed be Allah!’ he repeats three times, and declares that he utters these blessings on finding that he has now got Don Quixote and Sancho Panza into the field, and that the readers of his delightful history may reckon that from this point the exploits and humours of the knight and his squire begin’ (Cervantes II, viii: 514).
As perhaps intended, the Spanish censors eliminated the allusion to the repetition of prayers, but left the more scandalous idea: making the rosary from shirt tails, (which in Cervantes’ time were often used instead of toilet paper). The Portuguese Inquisition, either stricter or more attentive in this case, eliminated mention of both the reference to a million Ave Marias and the profane rosary.

Other references alluding to the repetition of formulas censored in Portugal include an episode in Part Two, where Sancho ‘begged [the Duke and the rest] to aid him in his peril with a couple of Paternosters and as many Ave Marias, that God might provide someone to say the same for them when they were in a like predicament’ (Cervantes II, xli: 730). Cervantes, attentive to the risks involved in mentioning such religious practices, dramatises the episode so as to deflect attention from the implied criticism. The mad knight errant here reprimands Sancho in the most chivalric style for resorting to prayers of this kind. However, such strategies for avoiding censorship clearly failed to deceive the stricter Portuguese censors. The Index of Mascarenhas, Bishop of the Algarve and General Inquisitor of Portugal (1620), records many other sections of Don Quixote eliminated on account of blasphemy or heresy, many of them quite subtle in their nature (Olmeda quoted in Osterc 169).52

A comparison of the Spanish and Portuguese censors is interesting here. Curiously, at a time when Portugal happened to be under Spanish rule, the Portuguese were often more attentive to the mere hint of religious critique than

52 The Portuguese eliminated various references to prayers, such as the mention of the popular belief that the prayer to Saint Apollonia held miraculous powers to cure toothaches; (DQ II, vii: 508); the episode of the balsam of Fierabas was also excluded from the Portuguese edition, since it was argued that the same ingredients were applied to Jesus’ corpse: ‘little oil, some wine, some salt, and some rosemary’; (DQ I, xvii: 127). Other censored scenes included the episode in which Don Quixote employs a rosary to count the lashes Sancho should give himself; (DQ II, lxxi: 922), and, at several points in the text, Don Quixote addressing himself first to Dulcinea and then to God; (DQ I, iii: 43).
Spanish zealots. We can possibly draw a parallel here with the reception of *The Satanic Verses* by different Islamic communities. Just as the Portuguese Inquisition was stricter than the Spanish, so South Asian Islamists proved to be more fanatical than, for example, the Iranians. The ‘Rushdie Affair’ first emerged in the Sub-continent, where Islam had developed from the syncretism of Mughal-Islamic religion and culture: ‘The controversy originated in India, which was the first country to ban it, on 5 October 1988. South Africa proscribed it not long after, on 24 November 1988’ (Goonetilleke 1998: 107).

Muslims in the Sub-continent pray from a book written in Arabic, a distant foreign language, and have been influenced (contaminated?) by many cultural and spiritual influences, in the same way that Islam was Catholicised in Spain by the *mudejares* (from the Arabic meaning and denoting tamed or domesticated animal to refer to Spanish Muslims subject to Christian rule). On the other hand, in Iran the condemnation of Rushdie was institutionalised, yet lacked the kind of popular support which it attracted in countries such as India or Britain, where Islam is not the majority religion. Indeed, it seems to be the very marginality of Islam in these countries which exerts pressure on believers to reassert more strongly the values of their religion.

The threat of contamination is a particular feature, perhaps an omnipresent one, for Muslims who try to maintain Islamic belief and customs in non-Islamic societies. One of the risks which these Muslims have to face is the need to adapt their religious practices to their new lives. Customs from their home countries, as well as those dictated by the Qu'ran, prove difficult, even ridiculous, to maintain when translated to a different environment. In chapter VI of *The Satanic Verses*, which deals with the traditional Islamic law, Rushdie has been accused of blasphemy. His satire on the Sharia and the dictates of the Qu'ran is seen as a
highly offensive attack on the sacred scripture, held to be the exact and perfectly recorded word of God:

Amid the palm-trees of the oasis Gibreel appeared to the Prophet and found himself spouting rules, rules, rules, until the faithful could scarcely bear the prospect of any more revelation. Salman said, rules about every damn thing, if a man farts let him turn his face to the wind, a rule about which hand to use for the purpose of cleaning one's behind. It was as if no aspect of human existence was to be left unregulated, free. The revelation - the recitation - told the faithful how much to eat, how deeply they could sleep, and which sexual positions had received divine sanction, so that they learned that sodomy and the missionary position were approved of by the archangel, whereas the forbidden postures included all those in which the female was on top. (Rushdie 1989a: 363-64)

Rushdie's satire on restrictive moral codes has here been confused with a satire on Islamic faith itself. For example, he mocks the ablutions of the Sunni tradition, and also the model of behaviour based on the life of The Prophet, who lived under very different conditions from those of Muslims in Bradford in the 1980s.

Before the fatwa, Rushdie had already been condemned by fundamentalist and totalitarian politicians: The Jamaat-i-Islami, an ultra right-wing Islamic party based in Pakistan, had denounced him for his novel Shame (Ruthven 15); Mrs Gandhi, depicted as the malign 'Widow' in Midnight's Children (1985), sued Rushdie and his publishers for the passage that suggests that Sanjay, her younger son, had accused her of neglecting Feroze, her last husband, who died of a heart attack at the age of forty-seven. It is hardly surprising, then, that Rushdie's subsequent novels would centre around issues of censorship and its effects on literature, or that he would seek to discuss such issues in his work. Similarly, Cervantes, who had been excommunicated for misappropriating corn which belonged to the Church (1587-1588), mocks both excommunication and the
threat of hell as punishment in his writing. For example, during the spectacle organised by the Duke and the Duchess, which includes the figure of a Devil, Sancho comically reflects on punishment and hell:

‘This Devil must certainly be a honest fellow,’ said Sancho, ‘and a good Christian. For if he weren’t he wouldn’t swear by God and his conscience. So I suppose that there must be some good people even in Hell.’ (Cervantes II, xxxiv: 697)

The references to Satan in *The Satanic Verses* are also humorous. For example, using a well-known Bombay joke, the confused Gibreel asks an apparition how he can be sure the apparition is ‘Oorpavala’, ‘the Fellow Upstairs’, and ‘not the other One’, that is, ‘Neechayvala, the Guy from Underneath?’ (Rushdie 1989a: 318).

Cervantes’ references to the Inquisition are often concealed within comical episodes, and at one point he even creates a scene which presents the tribunals in a kind of burlesque. It occurs in the Duke and Duchess’ palace, after Altisidora’s fake death. Sancho mounts a hellish simulation of a trial, wearing the outfit worn by the heretics accused in tribunals of the Inquisition, although in this case he actually performs the role of judge: ‘Then an officer came across the court and, going up to Sancho, threw over him a robe of black buckram all painted with fiery flames and, snatching off his victim’s cap, put on his head a pasteboard mitre like those worn by the penitents of the Inquisition’ (Cervantes II, lxix: 910). Don Quixote, who ‘could not forbear smiling at his squire’s appearance’ although ‘fear kept his senses numbed’, laughs overtly at the mock trials. Perhaps what Cervantes attempts here is comparable to Rushdie’s treatment of *fatwas* in *The Satanic Verses*, where Baal laughs at *fatwas* and even turns his own trial into a comic event (Rushdie 1989a: 391-92).
At one point in *Don Quixote* the very system of censorship is irrationally defended by the mad knight with delightfully subversive effect:

‘That is a good joke!’ replied Don Quixote. ‘Books which are printed by royal licence and with the approval of those to whom they are submitted, and which are read with universal delight and applause by great and small, poor and rich, learned and ignorant, plebeians and gentlefolk - in short, by all kind of persons of every quality and condition - could they be lies and at the same time appear so much like the truth?’ (Cervantes I, I: 440)

Moreover, in the chapter entitled ‘*Of the great and pleasant Inquisition held by the Priest and the Barber over our ingenious gentleman’s Library*’ (Cervantes I, vi: 56), Cervantes openly defends freedom of speech and freedom of the artist through a combination of literary criticism and a parody of the Inquisition, heard through the mouths of an ignorant village priest and a barber:

He opened one, and saw that it was Jorge de Montemayor’s *Diana*, and supposing that all the rest were of the same kind, said: ‘These do not deserve burning with the rest, because they do not and will not do the mischief those books of chivalry have done. They are books of entertainment and can do no one any harm.’ (Cervantes I, vi: 61)

This parody of the Inquisition in *Don Quixote* (Cervantes I, vi) even includes the examination of Cervantes’ own literary works, such as his pastoral romance *Galatea* (1585). The burning of Don Quixote’s books reflects the practice of the ‘excommunication’ of books common at the time, which even some members of the Church had begun to see as having reached absurd levels. The character of the canon from the city of Toledo (known as a centre of tolerance within the Church) openly laughs when the village priest tells him that he burnt Don Quixote’s books

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53 In chapter XLVII the village priest examines Cervantes’ own picaresque text about a guild of criminals *The Tale of Rinconete and Cortadillo* (1613). Here, nevertheless, the priest ‘assumed that this was another story; and he expected that it would be a good one, since *The Tale of Foolish Curiosity* had been, and it was probably by the same author’; (Cervantes I, xlvii, p. 420).
The examination of Quixote’s library by the fanatical village priest Pedro Pérez and the barber is an overt parody of censorship, in that they consider Quixote’s extensive collection of chivalric romances to have been the source of his madness, and which the priest considers uncatholic or unsuitable to read. Ironically, the excommunication of heretical books (Cervantes I, vi) and the ‘purification’ of the library have the opposite effect; instead of leading to Don Quixote’s return to sanity, when the Knight first sees the state of his library he believes it to be the work of witchcraft. The way that censorship and the control of texts often provokes the opposite effect from that envisaged can perhaps be seen in the case of the ‘Rushdie Affair’. The fatwa and banning of The Satanic Verses, it could be argued, have had the effect of promoting stereotyped images of immigrants as fanatically backward. Ironically, interest in Rushdie’s novel subsequently increased, perhaps due to a morbid fascination with the fatwa rather than as a result of the book’s literary merits or its power to generate real debate.

As discussed in Chapter II, antiestablishment discourses from minority voices were expressed in a genre - the picaresque - which itself represented a break from traditional literary conventions. Similarly, the praise of freedom by marginal characters also figures strongly in both Don Quixote and The Satanic Verses. Thus we hear Don Quixote placing a high value on freedom:

Liberty, Sancho, is one of the most precious gifts Heaven has bestowed upon man. No treasures the earth contains or the sea conceals can be compared to it. For liberty, as for honour, one can rightfully risk one’s life; and; on the other hand, captivity is the worst evil that can befall men. (Cervantes II, lviii: 837)

However, Rushdie believes that writers should enjoy the liberty to work free from restrictions imposed by censorship of any kind: ‘It isn’t right for the artist to become the servant of the state’ (Rushdie 1989a: 98). Indeed, he defends the role
of the artist at all costs, as if this fundamental principle outweighs all other considerations, including pressure from Islam:

What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist. Without the freedom to challenge even to satirise all orthodoxies, including religious orthodoxies, it ceases to exist. Language and the imagination cannot be imprisoned, or art dies, and with it, a little of what makes us human. (Rushdie 1992: 396)

Indeed, to Rushdie the role of a writer as the agent of freedom is clear: 'language is courage: the ability to conceive a thought, to speak it, and by doing so to make it true' (Rushdie 1989a: 281). In The Satanic Verses the satirist Baal puts himself at risk in the name of the freedom of the artist. There is even a suggestion that offence rising from this freedom is itself part of the creative process: 'And if rivers of blood flow from the cuts his verses inflict, then they will nourish him' (Rushdie 1989a: 97).

However, perhaps more importantly is the praise of literary freedom within the text itself. In the first chapter of The Satanic Verses, for example, Rushdie insists on the 'paradoxical nature of fiction's notion of “true” discourse' (Finney 73): 'Once upon a time - it was and it was not so, as the old stories used to say, it happened and it never did - maybe, then, or maybe not' (Rushdie 1989a: 35). This notion of narrative uncertainty was familiar to Cervantes, who pretends not to know the exact name of his hero or the name of the place where Don Quixote came from. In Don Quixote the narrator only suspects that his hero's name must be Quijana, which at the end of the novel proves to be false, when the knight errant himself states that his name is Alonso Quixano (Cervantes II, lxxiv: 936):

They say that his surname was Quixada or Quesada - for there is some difference of opinion amongst authors on this point. However, by very reasonable conjecture we may take it that he was called Quexana. But this does not much concern our story; enough that we
do not depart by so much as an inch from the truth in the telling of it.
(Cervantes I, i: 31)

As discussed in chapter III, the omission of Don Quixote’s origin is also a means by which Cervantes implies a *converso* background. However, we should perhaps also bear in mind that the Renaissance saw the rise of ideals of liberty, and that both authorial freedom and the autonomy of fictional characters were emerging literary themes. This literary notion of the emancipation of fictional characters is a prominent theme in Cervantes’ work. For example, in Part Two of *Don Quixote* the knight errant and his squire step back from the story from time to time, judging the work and also discussing its reception amongst readers.

In fact, *Don Quixote* abounds in references to authorial freedom and to the narrative process. For example, in Benengeli’s text the squire is called Sancho Zancas but the author renames him Sancho Panza, pointing out that this is necessary for the narrative structure. Such renaming in fact has no obvious structural purpose, and seems to reflect the author’s need to lay claim to his part in the creation of the novel. Cervantes’ incessant reiteration of the themes of freedom is also seen in Don Quixote’s acts and words: ‘there is no reason to impose laws or compel writers and actors to compose their plays in the proper way’ (Cervantes I, xlviii: 429).

Such Renaissance signs of authorial rebellion are echoed in postmodern texts, where uncertainty and doubt are at the core of the discourse: ‘*It was so, it was not,* that as Saladin Chamcha’s incarceration [...] lengthened into weeks and months [...] his condition was worsening’ (Rushdie 1989a: 275). Indeed, Rushdie’s vision of the postmodern crisis in Britain shares many characteristics with Spanish Renaissance vindications of literary freedom. In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes sarcastically warns of the risks that a writer faces when publishing
controversial material, when not conforming to literary fashions and tastes, and when not satisfying the reader:

‘All that is true, Don Quixote,’ said Carrasco, ‘but I should be glad if such censors would be more merciful and less scrupulous, and not scold at the specks in the bright sun of the work they review. For, though Homer sometimes nods, let them reflect how long he stayed awake to give us the light of his work with the least possible shadow. And it may well be that what seem faults to them are moles, which at times enhance the beauty of a face. In fact it is my opinion that an author runs a very great risk in printing a book. For it is the greatest of all impossibilities to write one that will satisfy and please every reader.’

‘The one which treats of me,’ said Don Quixote, ‘must have pleased few.’

‘Quite the opposite; for as there are an infinite number of fools in the world, an infinite number of people have enjoyed that history. But here are some that have found fault, and taxed the author’s memory for forgetting who it was that robbed Sancho of his Dapple. (Cervantes II, iii: 491)

Censorship is not the only danger which a literary work might face. Literary criticism and changes in the market for literature can also become dangerously coercive. Cervantes suggests that the effects of unfair literary criticism on some works can be as negative as those of fanatical censors:

‘The cause of that,’ said Sampson, ‘is that printed books are viewed at leisure, and so their faults are easily seen, and the greater the fame of their authors the more closely are they examined. Renowned men of genius, great poets and famous historians are always, or generally, envied by such as make it their pleasure and particular pastime to judge the writings of others, without having published any of their own. (Cervantes II, iii: 491)

Although the market for publishing in Renaissance Europe was relatively limited in size in comparison to the contemporary global literary trade, incipient market forces - the need to captivate publishers, and to please theatre managers - were nevertheless already powerful inhibiting pressures on writers. As mentioned in chapter II, for example, the success of Alemán’s Guzmán de Alfarache
contributed to a number of authors following a 'new' genre, not only in Spain but also in other European countries. For Cervantes this pressure could constitute a form of censorship, in that it leads to self-censorship:

[...] as plays have become a marketable commodity they say, and say truly, that the players would not buy them if they were not of the usual kind. And so the poet tries to adapt himself to the requirements of the manager who pays him for his work. (Cervantes I, xlviii, 430)

It is perhaps not too contrived to see a parallel here with the strong demand for 'minority' discourses and 'marginality' in contemporary multicultural Britain.

Despite criticising censorship and thought control, however, Cervantes appears to play with a complex contradiction. Don Quixote is a book of lies containing a parody of chivalric romance, played out through the character of a mad knight errant who himself mocks the genre which he seems to be defending. On the other hand, in the Prologue, three times during Part One, and also at the end of Part Two, the author insists that his intention is to attack the dangers of chivalric novels. Thus, the author claims to censure a genre, whereas in truth the whole book is an attack on censorship. Cervantes’ ambivalence towards chivalric romance is also illustrated in the attitude of the Canon of Toledo (Cervantes I, 49), who scorns romance as a literary form and then admits having tried to write one himself to perfect the genre. In the same way, Don Quixote censures those attempting to imitate his creator Cervantes, such as the author of the apocryphal second part of The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha:

‘I have heard of this book already,’ said Don Quixote, ‘but truly, on my conscience, I thought it had been burnt by now and reduced to ashes for its presumption. But it will get its Martinmas like every hog. (Cervantes II, lxii: 878)

We might deduce from Don Quixote that Cervantes did not believe purely
in ‘art for art’s sake’. Instead he saw the role of the artist as essential in questioning social structures. Similarly, in “Is Nothing Sacred?” (1990c), Rushdie sees the artist as interrogator of the status quo and demands a privileged space for literature, an ‘arena of discourse [...] where the struggle of languages can be acted out’ (Rushdie 1992: 427). Hence, his characters also call for that privileged space, free from restrictions. For example, after the closure of the Hijab, the suicide of its Madam and the arrest of its dozen working prostitutes, the poet Baal announces: ‘I am Baal,’ [...] ‘I recognise no jurisdiction except that of my Muse; or, to be exact, my dozen Muses’ (Rushdie 1989a: 391). Equally, Cervantes creates a uniquely free space for his main character who, despite existing in a country controlled by the Catholic hierarchy, naively believes knights errant to be immune from laws restricting freedom of speech. In his cry for liberty, Don Quixote denounces those who control freedom, such as the Holy Brotherhood, a kind of religious police that terrorised conversos, dissidents and other citizens, and which issues a warrant for the arrest of Don Quixote for liberating the galley-slaves:

Tell me, who was the dolt who signed a warrant of arrest against such a knight as I am? Who was it who did not know that knights errant are exempt from all jurisdiction, that their law is their sword, their charters their courage and their statues their own will? Who was the idiot, I repeat, who does not know that there is no patent of nobility with so many privileges and immunities as a knight errant receives on the day when he is knighted and undertakes the stern practice of chivalry? (Cervantes I, xlv: 410)

Similarly, the episode of the Montesinos Cave can be read as the product of an anti-inquisitional, converso writer. In the royal palace, the confessor accompanies the King to church and is in charge of locking all doors behind him. Montesinos, emulating this royal character, carries a huge rosary instead of keys,
as if this represents the keys to the spiritual doors of his cave (Percas 554-55). Hence, when he buries the rosary and Montesinos in the cave, Cervantes seems to be depicting a symbolic silencing of the Inquisition. Louis Philippe May sees in the character of Montesinos certain oblique references to the First Inquisitor, in the colours of his clothes (a cloak of purple serge), and in the fact that he carries a huge rosary (quoted in Percas 555). It is for this reason that when Quixote descends into the cave, Sancho makes 'countless signs of the cross over him' and asks God to return his master from the subterranean adventure 'safe, sound and unharmed': 'May God guide you, and the Rock of France, together with the Trinity of Gaeta' (Cervantes II, xxii: 613). The Rock of France was a Dominican monastery between Salamanca and Ciudad Rodrigo, a religious order closely associated with the Inquisition. However, critics such as Helena Percas de Ponseti do not believe that Cervantes had such a courageous and rebellious mind. Percas de Ponseti, for example, doubts that he was attacking the court, and explains the incident as showing Cervantes simply denouncing the excesses of the Inquisition, not the Inquisition itself.

Rushdie is also concerned with excessive religious power, especially when it controls secular life. He believes the natural role of the artist to be specifically that of a dissident (Rushdie 1990a: 52-57; 1992: 393-414). His novel (The Satanic Verse) 'dissents [. . .] from imposed orthodoxies of all types', and opposes the very idea that debate has an end-point, a definite conclusion (Rushdie 1992: 396). However, he is also aware of the dangers inherent in the dissident position. Indeed, he fictionalises an extreme form of such persecution in the novel:

So he was sentenced to be beheaded, within the hour, and as soldiers manhandled him out of the tent towards the killing ground,
he shouted over his shoulder: 'Whores and Writers, Mahound. We are the people you can't forgive.'

Mahound replied, 'Writers and whores. I see no difference here'. (Rushdie 1989a: 392)

One might, then, conclude that Rushdie has joined a long list of writers who, living under the coercion of religious or political repression, are driven to struggle against the impositions dictated by those who fear cultural contamination and the weakening of faith. Indeed, he has often been compared to prominent victims of repression. Sadik Jalal Al-Azm, for example, praises Rushdie's novel 'for terrifying its time' in the same way that Spinoza's philosophy terrified its own time. He points out wittily that if authors like 'Louis Althusser can take pride in praising Spinoza for providing one of the greatest lessons in heresy the world has seen,' then we should equally take pride in praising Rushdie's novel for 'providing some of the greatest lessons of heresy that the Muslim World has seen' (Sadik Jalal Al-Azm 257).

4.4 Delusion and dreams

In "A Pen Against the Sword: In Good Faith", Rushdie states that in The Satanic Verses his intentions were to write not only about Islam but to explore the nature of revelation (Rushdie 1990a: 56, 1992: 408). One of the themes of his work, then, is the historical process that selects certain cults as genuine whilst discarding others as fraudulent or false. In Islam, such questioning of the religion's history is considered sacrilegious. In 'Open Letter to PM [Rajiv Gandhi]', Rushdie defends himself against the charge of blasphemy and disrespect, claiming that the offensive content of The Satanic Verses occurs in a
fictional dream: ‘this entire sequence happens in a dream, the fictional dream of a
fictional character, an Indian movie star, who is losing his mind’ (reprinted in
Appignanesi & Maitland 44). The dream-sequences become sites from which
Rushdie can attack state censorship, nationalism and religious intolerance. In The
Satanic Verses all the stories concerning irrational religious demands are set
within the dream-visions of Gibreel, and in all these he functions as the Angel
Gibreel speaking to Mahound, Ayesha, and the Imam. Gibreel ‘dreams’
Mahound’s early life, which resembles the early preaching days of Muhammad in
Mecca, at a time when he was not widely accepted, and when the Ka’ba was still
filled with pagan idols, including those of the three goddesses who are the focus
of the Satanic Verses. Mahound’s preaching earns him the hatred of the ruler of
Jahilia, Abu Simbel, whose own fortune is made from worshippers at his temples.
The rivalry between Mahound and Abu Simbel illustrates how human beings
have always manipulated supernatural beings, when they are put to use for their
own ends. Effectively, Rushdie’s defence against accusations of blasphemy is that
the religion remains untouched by the pathological delusions of Gibreel, a mere
character in a novel. However, Rushdie is perhaps not being perfectly candid
here. It is equally easy to read the text as a subversive attack on Islam, with
religious belief itself as delusion.

Both Don Quixote and The Satanic Verses rely heavily on the metaphor of
the madness/dream to escape the restrictions of realistic representation, and also
to challenge the traditional concept of a unified stable subject. Don Quixote
believes himself to be a knight errant, while Gibreel Farishta suffers from
‘paranoid delusions’ of being the Archangel. Gibreel’s dreams leak into his
waking life and he becomes a full-time archangel. There is something of the
Quixotic madman about him as he embarks on his divine mission to save London
from the ‘moral fuzziness of the English’ (‘meteorologically induced’): ‘I am going to tropicalize you’ (Rushdie 1989a: 354). Standing beside the Thames, he shouts: ‘I am Gibreel’. But in the big metropolis his voice is lost. In a scene reminiscent of Don Quixote’s battle against windmills, the demented Gibreel ‘took a mighty breath, lifted one gigantic foot, and stepped out to face the cars’ (Rushdie 1989a: 337). Gibreel is knocked down in the rush-hour traffic and rescued by an Indian film producer who recognises him and returns him to Alleluia. Similarly, Don Quixote is ‘discovered’, suffering the humiliation of being imprisoned in a cage pulled by oxen when the priest of his village finds him in Sierra Morena and, in disguise, manages to capture him.

Don Quixote attacks the clergy and never goes to mass, despite insisting on his own pious nature and Catholic intentions. His dementia serves to explain this, and perhaps saves Cervantes from the accusation of intending to offend the Catholic hierarchy. In addition, Quixote’s self-defence, in its reliance on fictional examples of chivalry, becomes the perfect literary device to convey Cervantes’ anti-church message. It is clear from Don Quixote’s words and actions that Cervantes mocks many religious rites and traditions; there is an abundance of attacks on fasting, miracles, prayer, sainthood and the superstitious worship of relics common at the time, when the obsession with relics in Europe became an absurd means of promoting the faith, as well as benefiting the economy of various European religious centres. France, for example, laid claim to eight arms of Saint Theresa, and throughout Europe there were said to be well over a dozen arms of Saint James; a feather of the wing of the Archangel Saint Gabriel and even the breath of Jesus were claimed to exist and were venerated. However, since the anti-Church message is put in the mouth of a foolish squire or a mad knight errant, the author’s burlesque intentions effectively escape accusations of
religious mockery:

‘Well, this fame,’ continued Sancho, ‘these favours, these prerogatives, or whatever they’re called, rest in the bodies and relics of the saints, who, with the approval and licence of our Holy Mother Church, receive lamps, candles, winding-sheets, crutches, paintings, wigs, eyes, legs, whereby they increase people’s devotion and spread their Christian fame. Kings carry the bodies or relics of the saints on their shoulders, kiss the pieces of their bones, and deck and enrich their private chapels and favourite altars with them [...] we should set about turning saints. Then we shall get the good name we’re aiming at rather sooner [...] - they canonized or beatified two little friars, and now people think it very lucky to kiss and touch the iron chains they bound and tortured their bodies with. They are held in greater veneration, they say, than Roland’s sword in our Lord the King’s armoury, God bless him! So, dear master, it’s better to be a humble little friar, of any order you like, than a valiant and errant knight.’ (Cervantes II, viii: 519)

Don Quixote is unable to detach fiction - chivalric novels - from reality. For example, at one point in the first part of the book, he attacks a procession of penitents, from whom he ‘liberates’ an image of the Virgin which he deliriously believes is a captured lady (Cervantes I, lli: 453). He also attacks a night procession because he believes the friars are carrying a dead or a badly wounded knight errant whom it is his mission to save (Cervantes I, xix: 144).

Don Quixote not only attacks the clergy, but also some members of the army. Indeed, as mentioned above, he gets himself and Sancho into trouble for having attacked a group of the King’s guards who were escorting a group of men sentenced to the galleys. Don Quixote frees these galley-slaves, which earns him a warrant of arrest from the Holy Brotherhood (Cervantes I, xlv: 408). Cervantes cannot be seen to denounce oppressors openly, but through a mad knight he can overtly provoke the oppressive Holy Brotherhood:

‘Come here, filthy and low-born rabble! Is it highway robbery you call it, freeing the enchained, releasing prisoners, succouring the unfortunate, raising the fallen, relieving the needy? You infamous
brood whose low and vile intelligence deserves no revelation from Heaven of that virtue which lies in knight errantry, nor any knowledge of your sin and ignorance in not reverencing the shadow - how much more the actual presence - of a knight errant! Come here, you pack of thieves, for you are no troopers, but highwaymen licensed by the Holy Brotherhood! (Cervantes I, xlv: 409-410)

Don Quixote’s delusion leads him to approach the world as if it were a chivalric novel. In his mind icons of Catholicism become fictional figures of chivalry. For example, in Part Two Sancho defends certain Christian notions, such as sainthood. Don Quixote also defends sainthood, but in terms of the chivalric and not religious values. He refers to Saint George as a knight errant defender of ladies, and to Saint James the Moor-killer (Santiago Matamoros, the patron of Christian Spain against Islam and Moorish Spain), as ‘one of the most valiant saints and knights the world ever possessed’. Equally, reflecting on a picture of Saint Paul’s conversion, Don Quixote addresses him as ‘a knight errant’ and ‘a peaceful saint’ (Cervantes II, lviii: 839). Thus, Cervantes manages to conceal his Erasmian criticism of the worship of saints - Erasmus also parodied sainthood and created his own saint: Saint Socrates - within the paranoid mind of a deluded gentleman who treats religious icons as fictional characters.

Although Cervantes in general avoided problems with the censors of his time, he did not entirely escape the criticisms of the guardians of Catholicism, particularly, as we have seen, the Portuguese Inquisition, not least because of his direct references to the ideas of Erasmus. As Américo Castro has pointed out, Cervantes himself, as a product of the late sixteenth century, shows a complex mixture of both acceptance and questioning of religion (Castro 1972: 245). Don Quixote is revealed to be a provocative mouthpiece for Erasmian principles.54

54 Cervantes’ debt to Erasmus can also be seen in the clearly Erasmian work Colloquy of the Dogs (Novelas ejemplares, vol. 2 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981 [1613]) 297-359.
There is a continual ambiguity as to whether Don Quixote is a mouthpiece for Cervantes’ ideas, or whether the ‘mad’ knight in some way sympathises with Erasmus’ ideas and deliberately hides behind the guise of a fool. The layers of uncertainty in the position of Don Quixote (his state of mind, the degree of his seriousness) make it possible for Cervantes to deal with such complex and delicate matters (Cervantes II, viii).

One of the references to Erasmus’ ideas in Cervantes’ work which escaped inquisitorial prohibition is the rejection of miracles. In the chapter narrating the events at Camacho’s wedding, a priest is depicted as being desperate for miracles. The Catholic Church, of course, has a long history of exploiting popular belief in miracles to sustain faith. Cervantes here describes a priest’s eagerness for miracles, with the cleric happily shouting ‘a miracle, a miracle’, to which Basilio replies:

‘No miracle, no miracle; but a trick, a trick!’ The priest ran up in confusion and astonishment to feel the wound with both his hands, and found that the knife had not passed through Basilio’s flesh and ribs, but through a hollow iron tube, which he had fitted into position, filled with blood so prepared, as it afterwards came out, as not to congeal. (Cervantes II, xxi: 606)

In another passage the absurd belief in miracles is compared to an irrational belief in the giants of chivalric literature.

In The Satanic Verses Rushdie also deals with the role played by miracles in the evolution and maintenance of faith. In particular, he sees miracles as part of the process by which religion seeks to justify a world beyond easy explanation. Rushdie recognises the value of confronting inexplicable situations with miraculous or otherwise strange fictions. For example, magic realism has been seen in this way, as an approach which allows writers to confront and depict
extreme situations, and in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie analyses García Márquez's use of magic realism to depict the complex situation of modern Colombia (Rushdie 1992: 301-2). Similarly, in the Ayesha section of *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie depicts the birth of a religion through a magical girl surrounded by a cloud of butterflies. The fanatical girl Ayesha has managed to convert the entire village of Titlipur, with the exception of Mirza Saeed, whose wife Mishal follows Ayesha and joins the pilgrimage. He tries in vain to oppose such superstition and witchcraft:

‘To hell with your spook cancer,’ he screamed at Ayesha in his exasperation. ‘You have come into my house with your craziness and angels and dripped poison into my family’s ears. Get out of here with your visions and your invisible spouse. This is the modern world, and it is medical doctors and not ghosts in potato fields who tell us when we are ill.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 232-33)

It is unbearable for agnostic Saeed to hear the exasperatingly mystical Ayesha recite: ‘Everything will be required of us, and everything will be given’ (Rushdie 1989a: 233), a form of words which villagers are already reciting, without knowing either what it means or why they are reciting it. The (medical) discovery of his wife’s cancer, foreseen by Ayesha, makes Saeed believe that a curse has fallen on him for mistreating Ayesha. Yet he still remains rational and insists that ‘There is no God’, to which the mad girl responds: ‘There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet’ (Rushdie 1989a: 239).

Despite the loss of life, those few survivors of the pilgrimage insist that they saw the miraculous parting of the sea, illustrating the extent to which the idea of miracles has become a dangerous figment of their own imaginations. Perhaps what is most striking in this scene, however, is that the irony of the surviving pilgrims’ blind belief could easily have come from the pen of Cervantes.
episode may be comical, yet it also illustrates the extent to which the belief in miracles can act as a means of perpetuating religious power and the superstitions which traditionally surround faith.

4.5 Blasphemy

Blasphemy is a crucial issue in the work of both Cervantes and Rushdie. Conscious of the potentially sacrilegious nature of his text, Cervantes is, perhaps, more careful than Rushdie, whose intention to provoke is more explicit. Indeed, Rushdie is aware of the cultural risks he takes when he brings the origins of belief into a fictionalised present, and seems even to dramatise this risk within the text itself. For example, the Madam of the brothel is aware that it is dangerous to dress the whores as the Prophet’s wives, commenting to Baal that it is ‘very dangerous [. . .] but it could be damn good business’ (Rushdie 1989a: 380). Some see in Rushdie’s provocation a call for attention, regardless of the consequences. In a letter to The Guardian, John Le Carré argues that Rushdie is ‘self canonizing’ and ‘arrogant [. . .] blinded by the pursuit of increased royalties for himself from the physical danger that sales of his book posed to others’ (quoted in Hoge 1997: 4).

In The Satanic Verses the figure of Baal, a satirical poet hired to caricature Mahound and his followers, is of particular interest. Both his intention to provoke and also his treatment at the hands of Islamic zealots seem to reflect Rushdie’s own position. Baal anticipates that his verses will prompt controversy and appears to enjoy this potential for provocation. The idea of debunking Mahound seduces him so greatly that in the end he entirely overlooks the consequences of his actions:
Giggling Baal can’t stop. ‘A revolution of water-carriers, immigrants and slaves... wow, Grandee. I’m really scared.’ Abu Simbel looks carefully at the tittering poet. ‘Yes,’ he answers, ‘that’s right, you should be afraid. Get writing, please, and I expect these verses to be your masterpieces.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 101)

Indeed, Rushdie goes as far as to include himself in the parody by implying physical similarities between himself and the deity which Gibreel encounters, with Mahound drawn in the image of Rushdie: ‘a salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the jaw’, ‘balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses’ like a ‘myopic scrivener’ (Rushdie 1989a: 318-19).

Rushdie has paid a heavy price for offending against Islam. However, he makes it clear that he is aware of the risks, and one might add that there is a certain delight in his acceptance of these risks, as if they represent an irresistible temptation for him. As I have mentioned previously, prior to the fatwa he had already been denounced by the Jamaat-i-Islami for his novel Shame. Moreover, the overt references to the risks of dealing with the Holy Book in Shame illustrate an awareness early in his career of the consequences of mistreating the Qur’an. The very idea of recovering the controversial Satanic Verses, which had been deleted by God from the Qu’ran, itself implies a kind of apostasy; the Book and the figure of the Prophet, whom Muslims revere almost as much as God, are under examination, and Rushdie, like Satan in The Satanic Verses, challenges the absolute authority of the Qur’an:

Burn the books and trust the Book; shred the papers and hear the Word, as it is revealed by the Angel Gibreel to the Messenger Mahound and explicated by your interpreter and Imam. ‘Ameen,’ Bilal said, concluding the night’s proceedings. (Rushdie 1989a: 211)

Both Cervantes and Rushdie enter their narrative discourses through their
characters to mock religious control and oppression. The supposed Arabic narrator - Cide Hamete Benegeli, that is, Ben Angeli or Son of the Angel - a chronicler and an unreliable translator, contributes to Cervantes' playful teasing of readers and, in particular, censors. In this way he can deal with totalitarianism and religious fanaticism without implicating himself as author in a critical position. Rushdie, in contrast, fails to detach himself from his own profane book and in fact enters his own fictional discourse, identifying himself with Salman the scribe and Baal the poet. Salman Farsi epitomises apostasy and Baal litigious writing, two aspects of Rushdie's own literary reputation. The identification of Salman, the author, with Salman the Prophet's scribe, responsible for polluting God's word, is crucial in the reception of *The Satanic Verses*. Many readers, and also those non-readers who nevertheless regard *The Satanic Verses* as satanic, take Gibreel's dreams to be the author's thoughts, rather than the fantasies of a fictional character. The author of *The Satanic Verses* is, therefore, seen as contaminating God's word directly; for this, it is argued, the author deserves punishment. Ironically, in *The Satanic Verses* the Prophet forgives his follower Salman, whereas Rushdie himself remains sentenced by the Prophet's intolerant followers.

Rushdie, like his character Salman Farsi, experienced loss of faith. In one sense, then, both are exempt from accusations of blasphemy. According to Rushdie, blasphemy can be expressed only within the compass of belief (Rushdie 1989a: 380). This parallel between author and character goes further, with Salman Farsi seen to be engaged in the same risky business as his creator, and in fact actually predicting his own death, as punishment for altering the text of the Holy Book:
‘Salman Farsi,’ the Prophet begins to pronounced the sentence of death, but the prisoner begins to shriek the qalmah: ‘La ilaha ilallah! La ilallah!’

Mahound shakes his head. ‘Your blasphemy, Salman, can’t be forgiven. Did you think I wouldn’t work it out? To set your words against the Words of God’. (Rushdie 1989a: 374).

Likewise, after the publication of The Satanic Verses, the prophetic references to a fatwa against Baal for heresy also became part of Rushdie’s own life.

Rushdie’s novel is seen as offensive because its detractors do not approach it as fiction, but as an irreverent questioning of the validity of the Sacred Book. It could be argued, however, that to read texts as acts of blasphemy implies a confusion between fictional discourses and reality. It is significant here that Rushdie is quite consistent in this distinction. Many of his supporters wished for the Pakistani film International Guerrillas (International Gorilay directed by Jan Mohammad, 1990), depicting him living in luxury on a island protected by the Israeli army from brave Islamists, banned. Rushdie, however, insisted that the film was mere fiction (at the end of the film he is killed by the Holy Book itself) and refused to condemn it.

In The Satanic Verses the dispute over a film on Indian sectarianism (chapter VI) foreshadows the treatment which Rushdie’s novel would receive after publication. As Billy Battuta, the fictional producer of a controversial theological movie in The Satanic Verses (which shares many similarities with the plot of The Satanic Verses itself), says: ‘Fiction is fiction; facts are facts’ (Rushdie 1989a: 272):

The film was to be - what else - a theological, but of a new type. It would be set in an imaginary and fabulous city made of sand, and would recount the story of the encounter between a prophet and an archangel; also the temptation of the prophet, and his choice of the path of purity and not that of base compromise. ‘It is a film,’ the producer, Sisodia, informed Cine-Blitz, ‘about how newness enters
In addition, Rushdie’s provocation acquires an interesting feminist perspective. He explains Islamic restrictions on women as having resulted from the elimination of the disputed verses from the *Qu’ran*: ‘these are exalted females whose intercession is to be desired’ (Rushdie 1989a: 340):

‘Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other?’ - After the first verse, Hind gets to her feet; the Grandee of Jahilia is already standing very straight. And Mahound, with silenced eyes, recites: ‘They are the exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed.’ (Rushdie 1989a: 114)

Thus, Hind’s disobedience to Mahound not only implies a defence of polytheism but also a vindication of the role of women in Abrahamic religions: ‘The point about our Prophet, my dear Baal, is that he didn’t like his women to answer back, he went for mothers and daughters, think of his life and then Ayesha: too old and too young, his two loves’ (Rushdie 1989a: 366). Therefore, the fact that Hind worships the three pagan goddesses of Mecca, al-Lat, al-Uzza and al-Manat, seems to suggest feminist sympathies in the approach to religion:

‘Messenger, what are you saying? Lat, Manat, Uzza - they’re all females! For pity’s sake! Are we to have goddesses now? Those old cranes, herons, hags?’ (Rushdie 1989a: 107)

Occasionally Cervantes also enters his fictional discourse to show his awareness of the delicacy of dealing with such topics. He is conscious that his story is not ‘the most delightful and least harmful entertainment ever seen to this day’ and that it could not be said that ‘nowhere in [Don Quixote] is to be found
anything even resembling an indecent expression or an unorthodox thought' (Cervantes II, iii, 490). In the passage where Don Quixote reassures Sancho that he will protect him from the Holy Brotherhood, Cervantes may be seen as laughing at his own skill in rendering an anti-Church novel immune, or largely immune, from inquisitional punishment:

'I think, sir, that it would be wise for us to retire to some church. For, seeing in what a bad way you left that man you fought with, I shouldn't wonder if they were to report the matter to the Holy Brotherhood and have us arrested: and, my goodness, if they do that, we shall sweat blood before we get out of gaol.' [...]

'Do not worry, my friend,' said Don Quixote. 'I will deliver you from the hands of the Chaldeans, let alone the Holy Brotherhood'. (Cervantes I, x: 80)

Cervantes manages to reflect his subversive position in subtle ways, and he manages to make similarly subtle references to his literary and philosophical tastes. For example, the encounter with the Knight of the Green Coat Don Diego de Miranda defends secularism and enlightenment ideas. Don Diego, who himself openly advocates the freedom of literature from religious didacticism and dogmatism, seems to embody the bold, humanist perspective which runs through Don Quixote:

I read profane books more than devotional, since they give me honest entertainment, delighting me by their language, and arresting and startling me by their inventions - though there are very few of this kind in Spain. (Cervantes II, xvi: 566)

Cervantes also conveys criticism of the literary situation in Spain through the character of a pompous Bachelor, who complains about the quality of Spanish poetry of the time: 'the Bachelor replied that, although he was not one of the most famous poets in Spain - of whom there were said to be no more than three and a half - he would not fail to write the verses' (Cervantes II, iv: 496). It should be
remembered here that Cervantes, whilst rather a poor poet, maintained a hot rivalry with his contemporary Lope de Vega. Indeed, the competition between them led to the composition of vicious, critical verses which they would dedicate to each other (Percas 347). Some of these attacks included mutual accusations of having *converso* blood. At that time it had become fashionable, and necessary, to prove one's Old Christian stock, and to hide any *converso* background.

This is one area where Rushdie's work and its cultural context is significantly different from that of Cervantes. *The Satanic Verses*, in addition to denouncing racism, also parodies those who exploit the chic commercial potential of ethnicity. For example, the character of Pinkwalla, in particular his performance in the Club Hot Wax, recalls certain 'minority' authors who through a self-imposed victimisation take advantage of multicultural trends (Rushdie 1989a: 291-92). As I suggested in chapter I, the marketing of marginality in contemporary Britain has contributed to a self-imposed victimisation which often becomes the formative centre of literary discourses, and as a consequence loses its power to confront. Of course, this authorial freedom was not available to Cervantes, for whom the very suggestion of problematic ethnicity (being a *converso*) could have led to dangers and problems. *Conversos* such as Cervantes and Mateo Alemán in Baroque Spain were unable to exploit their own ethnicity.

4.6 Fiction and scriptures

Cervantes and Rushdie subvert the grand narratives of religion, casting doubt on the accepted conventions of Catholicism and Islam. One intriguingly controversial feature of *Don Quixote* is Cervantes' scepticism about the nature of
fiction (original or in translation). His insistence on the inconsistency of his own narration gives him licence to approach history and religious texts as fiction and, therefore, as inconsistent. The Aristotelian contrast between history-poetry (story) is explicitly stated by the bachelor Sampson Carrasco, considering the frequent allusions to the question of ‘veracity’ in textual narrative (Monteser 587). Indeed, the interplay between fact and fiction is central to Cervantes, and underlines the idea that religious texts are best understood as fictional creations, not as canons of truth:

'[...]' there is no reason to record those actions which do not change or affect the truth of the story, if they redound to the discredit of the hero. Aeneas was not as pious as Virgil paints him, I promise you, nor Ulysses as prudent as Homer describes him.'

'That is true,' replied Sampson; 'but it is one thing to write as a poet, and another as a historian'. (Cervantes II, iii: 488)

Hence, Don Quixote is a potentially subversive text because it questions the authority of translations and, equally importantly, of history itself as a reliable medium of truth. Part of the effectiveness of Cervantes’ treatment is the way in which Don Quixote’s blind faith in the truth of texts is so transparently humorous:

‘To write in any other way,’ said Don Quixote, ‘would be to write not the truth, but lies; and historians who resort to lies ought to be burnt like coiners of false money’ (Cervantes II, iii: 490). The same kind of doubt is raised in relation to translation:

[... ] it seems to me that translating from one tongue into another, unless it is from those queens of tongues Greek and Latin, is like viewing Flemish tapestries from the wrong side; for although you see the pictures, they are covered with threads which obscure them so that the smoothness and gloss of the fabric are lost. (Cervantes II, lxii: 877)

The craftiness of this passage is best understood if one recalls that the Bible in
In chapter V of Part Two, the translator of Cide Hamete’s story repeatedly raises doubts about the accuracy of the text, despite the fact that throughout the book the editor assures the reader that Cide Hamete faithfully transcribed events as they occurred. Ironically, the narrator of *Don Quixote* only objects to the fact that the story he is narrating is an unreliable story written by an Arab:

> Now, if any objection can be made against the truth of this history, it can be that its narrator was an Arab - men of that nation being ready liars, though as they are so much our enemies he might be thought rather to have fallen short of the truth than to have exaggerated, [...] since historians are bound to be exact, truthful, and absolutely unprejudiced, so that neither interest nor fear, dislike nor affectation, should make them turn from the path of truth, whose mother is history [...]. (Cervantes I, ix, 78)

Cervantes even suggests comparison between Quixote’s unreliable and fantastic romances and the Holy Scriptures. For example, when Don Quixote is captured and taken away in a cart to the Canon of Toledo, the canon advises him to read not chivalric romances but moral texts, such as the Bible: ‘if your natural inclination is so strong that you must read books of adventures and chivalry, read the Book of Judges in Holy Scripture, where you will find grand and authentic exploits, which are both heroic and true’ (Cervantes I, xlix: 436). Ironically, the mad Don Quixote accuses the canon of blaspheming against romances of chivalry:

> ‘Why then, in my opinion it is you,’ replied Don Quixote, ‘that are deranged and enchanted, for daring to blaspheme against an

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55 In 1655 Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was accused of contempt for the Torah and heresy on account of his questioning of the Scriptures as translated texts. In 1656 he was excommunicated from the Amsterdam synagogue. In the countries of the Counter Reformation, like Spain, the vernacular reading of the Bible was perceived as subversive; Walter I. Reed, *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1981) 27.
institution so universally acknowledged and so authenticated, that anyone denying it, as you do, deserves the very punishment you say that you would inflict on certain books when you have read them and they displease you'. (Cervantes I, xlix: 437)

To have the deluded Don Quixote certify the truth of any text is highly subversive. Cervantes' skill, however, is in the way that through the knight's deluded belief in the truth of chivalric novels, he implies a questioning of the truth of the Bible. For example, Don Quixote uses biblical arguments to affirm that giants once existed:

‘About the existence of giants,’ replied Don Quixote, ‘there are different opinions. But Holy Scripture, which cannot depart from the truth so much as an inch, proves that they existed, by telling us the story of that great Philistine, Goliath, who was seven cubits and a half tall - a prodigious height’. (Cervantes II, I: 479)

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, chivalric romance was a favourite genre amongst Old Christians and traditional, conservative Catholics of the time. Hence, the mixing of secular and sacred texts together in one fictional construction is especially significant.

The same challenge to religious authority and insistence on the fictional nature of religious texts can be seen throughout The Satanic Verses. For example, the story of Salman Farsi's distortion of the sacred text dictated to him by Mahound is an attack on the reliability of the Qu'ran (Rushdie 1989a: 368). It constitutes a burlesque of the Islamic doctrine and the divine revelation. If Mahound did not notice Salman Farsi's alterations, then the only implication is that the infallibility of the Sacred Book can be questioned:

So there I was, actually writing the Book, or rewriting, anyway, polluting the word of God with my own profane language. But, good heavens, if my poor words could not be distinguished from the Revelation by God's own Messenger, then what did that mean?
Since Mohammed was illiterate, his Revelations had to be transcribed for him, and the suggestion of a potentially unreliable transition from oral to written form implies a questioning of the veracity of the word of the Holy Book.

Rushdie's appropriation of the Creator's function is shadowed by constant self-mockery and parody. He emulates almighty God by creating his own, similar discourses. In this way the shift from religious narrative to discourses of the imagination takes shape under the issue of religious doubt:

'It was the Devil,' he says aloud to the empty air, making it true by giving it voice. 'The last time, it was Shaitan.' This is what he has heard in his listening, that he has been tricked, that the Devil came to him in the guise of the archangel, so that the verses he memorised, the ones recited in the poetry tent, were not the real thing but its diabolical opposite, not godly, but satanic. (Rushdie 1989a: 123)

Rushdie disputes the word of God by mixing history and myth, fact and fiction, the mundane with the divine. He exploits fantasy to maximise religious satire and debunk the claims of religious 'truth':

The structure is as complex, and as confusing to many readers, as that of the Qur'an itself: indeed, The Satanic Verses, like its predecessor Shame, seems in ways to mirror the Muslim scripture. Like The Thousand and One Nights, it is a kind of 'anti-Qur'an' which challenges the original by substituting for the latter's absolutist certainties a theology of doubt. (Ruthven 17)

Through Gibreel's visions of Mahound, Ayesha, and the Imam, Rushdie explores and connects the mundane with the divine, the profane with the sacred. For example, Alleluia Cone, a climber of Mount Everest, offers a dream-analogue of the fictitious prophet Mahound's favourite retreat for angelic revelation; Mount Cone corresponds to Mount Hira, which in Islamic tradition is the designated site
for Muhammad’s encounter with the angel. Sometimes the connections are complex and subtle: Alleluia’s nickname, ‘Allie’, is perhaps a play on ‘ally’, or a diminutive of Allah, but could also allude to the goddess Allat.

4.7 Pastiche and parody

As well as exploiting metaphors of dreams and madness, both *Don Quixote* and *The Satanic Verses* incorporate into their discourse other textual modes, such as allegory, parody and pastiche. Parody provides the ironic distance which allows these works to enter the political and religious sphere, combining tradition and modernity, good and evil, continuity and discontinuity, realism and fantasy.

As a means of avoiding censorship, this approach of fusing and mixing the profane with the holy, the ridiculous and the sublime, the pious and the grotesque, was more successful for Cervantes than for Rushdie. Despite the fact that the target of the comic epic *The Satanic Verses* is primarily Britain and not Islam, its provocative tone contributed to the controversy surrounding its reception. ‘All metaphors,’ Rushdie points out, ‘are capable of misinterpretation’ (Rushdie 1989a: 537) and *The Satanic Verses*’ dialogic, polyphonic and carnivalesque metanarratives of religion were gravely misunderstood. In addition, Rushdie’s novel insists on the essential ‘impurity’ of contemporary culture, a position which will always cause conflict within sectors of society which strongly oppose hybridity.

*Don Quixote* and *The Satanic Verses* are both satires, expressed through the pastiche of grand-narratives: chivalric novels and Holy Books. Pastiche involving imitation of authors and styles, opens up through its ambivalence of form a space
which can be used as a site for criticism and subversion. Aamir Mufti points out that ‘in the case of The Satanic Verses, “pastiche” refers at the most general level to the novel’s formal equivocation between genres and styles, between realism, psychological realism, the fantastic, the historical novel, journalism, allegory, autobiography’ (Mufti 111). The Satanic Verses celebrates the joyful relativity of things, the excellence of parody and self-parody, through a rewriting of historical and religious narratives. It includes both the ‘root-metaphors of postmodernism’ - ‘pastiche, parody and history’ - and ‘culture-specific knowledges’ (Mishra and Hodge 1991: 406-7). In the book itself, Mimi Mamoulian, Saladin’s female partner in the voice impersonation business and later companion to Billy Battuta, insinuates the limitations of postmodernism when she accuses contemporary society of only producing pastiche, hinting at the self-conscious nature of the pastiche used in The Satanic Verses: 

So comprehend, please, that I am an intelligent female. I have read Finnegans Wake and am conversant with postmodernist critiques of the West, e.g. that we have a society capable only of pastiche: a “flattened” world. (Rushdie 1989a: 261)

Similarly, in Don Quixote the imitation of the ‘Amadis of Gaul’ (c. 1508) - an anonymous chivalric novel probably written during the early fourteenth century - constitutes a satire on an exaggerated literary fashion which had long ago been forgotten. Moreover, there are reminiscences of many romances, such as Don Clarián de Landanis (1518-1528), whose third book (Jerónimo López 1524), is reflected in ‘The knight of the sad countenance’ and whose fourth book (1528) appears in the story of ‘The knight of the mirrors’ (Sampson Carrasco). Other references to chivalric romances include Palmerín of England (Francisco de Moraes Cabral 1547-8) and Tyrant the White (Joanot Martorell 1490). In
addition, prophetic dreams of classical epics and the allegorical dreams of Medieval tradition are masterfully parodied in the Montesinos episode. After having been lowered by his companions into the cave, Don Quixote has a strange dream, which is open to manifold interpretations. Were Montesinos, Durandarte and Belerma real or part of a dream? The fact that Cide Hamete is sceptical is illustrative of Cervantes’ mocking tone:

> So if this adventure seems apocryphal, it is not I that am to blame, for I write it down without affirming its truth or falsehood. You, judicious reader, must judge for yourself, for I cannot and should not do more. One thing, however, is certain, that finally he retracted it on his death-bed and confessed that he had invented it, since it seemed to him to fit in with the adventures he had read of in his histories. (Cervantes II, xxiv: 624)

Cide Hamete also explains the insertion of interpolated stories in book-length works of fiction, such as the tale of foolish curiosity, the goatherd’s tale, the Cardenio-Lucindo-Dorothea episodes and the captive’s tale in *Don Quixote* as a way of relieving monotony. In his case perhaps it is the monotony of always talking about Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The insertion of stories is also a way of demonstrating the author’s skills as a storyteller, as a juggler capable of keeping a number of different objects in the air. On the other hand, the inclusion of such diverse stories provides space for intertextual comment within the novel, and this close relation between frame stories and internal stories is also strong in *The Satanic Verses*, where the insertion of narratives resembles filmic multiple narrative structure; there are major parallel stories, and alternating dream and reality sequences, often tied together by the recurring names of characters in each section. The intertextuality and cross references serve to hold this ‘fictional universe’ together.

Cervantes’ version of Renaissance Spain abounds in inverted carnivalesque
parodies of romances and sacred texts containing a plethora of caricature priests, captives, galleon-slaves, moors, renegades, imagined giants and princesses. Rushdie’s fiction also contains a similarly endless cast of Hindu-Muslim seers, fortune-tellers, astrologers, political operators, priests of all sorts and kinds, and in this sense has been compared to Rabelais’ satirical style (Sadik Jalal Al-Azm 258). Both Cervantes and Rushdie make heavy use of language-play and the creation of new terms and names for fictional creatures. However, this linguistic richness comes under threat when it is decontextualised. Translation of a text into another language, as well as the reception of a work outside its historical context, results in the loss of much of this richness. So, in the case of Cervantes much of his original punning and other subtle manipulations of the language are now largely unappreciated. With Rushdie, the depth of his linguistic invention is also sometimes lost on his readership, given that an understanding of his language games requires familiarity with a range number of references to Hindu, Muslim and British culture. He translates names (often with deliberate inaccuracies) from the Qu’ran, placing the corresponding characters in profane locations such as brothels (and, of course, novels). For example, John Maslama’s name denotes the ‘false’ prophet Maslama or Musailima, a contemporary of Muhammad who tried to turn the Arabian tribes against the Prophet. A further example is the variety of terms and burlesque names used to refer to Thatcherite Britain and to icons of Western culture which Rushdie employs. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for example, is referred to not only as ‘Mrs Torture’, but also ‘Maggie the Bitch’ and as ‘the milk snatcher’, a reference to Thatcher’s tenure as Minister for Education56 which only those with a detailed knowledge of British politics could be expected to understand.

56 She abolished the post-war distribution of milk in British state schools.
The names used by Rushdie are almost always significant in some subtle way. For example, Billy Battuta, a character resembling Ismael Merchant, shares his surname with Ibn Battuta, a great Arab traveller to West Africa. The name Pamela Lovelace is derived from a combination of Linda Lovelace, a sixties porn star, and also the eponymous heroine of Richardson’s novel *Pamela*; just to complicate matters, Lovelace is also the villain in Richardson’s *Clarissa*. S.Sisodia, an Indian filmmaker living and working in London, has a name which seems to imitate his stuttering, and inspires his nickname ‘Whisky’. The list of burlesque names in *Don Quixote* is similarly extensive: the giant Caraculiambro of the island of Malindrania, Micomicona and Pandafilanda, the Empress of Trapisonda, Alifánfarrún of the Trapobana, Pentapolín of Arremangado Brazo (Sleeves Arm), Micocolembo, Duke of Quirocia, Brandabardaran of Boliche, Timonel of Carajona, Espartafilarao of the forest, etc.

In this chapter and chapter III, I have compared the approaches taken by Cervantes and Rushdie towards marginality and religious totalitarianism, suggesting that despite the historical distance between their work and the different reception of their texts, they nevertheless share many characteristics. Both writers emerge from cross-cultural circumstances, and both are conscious of the presence of threatening bodies of religious control and thought control, which they attempt to denounce. In some ways, their experiences are not so different from those of Alemán and Kureishi (chapter II), and we may detect a certain intertextuality between all four authors here. In *Don Quixote* Cervantes examines the picaresque genre, and in *The Satanic Verses* Saladin’s ordeals echo the misfortunes of Guzmán and Lázaro. However, the picaresque of Alemán and Kureishi is a less confrontational form than the fantasy-romance of *Don Quixote* or *The Satanic Verses*; or rather, behind the entertaining tone of the picaresque, *picaros* deliver a
rather subtle discourse, attacking oppression and discrimination indirectly and, perhaps, less effectively than the bolder approaches of Cervantes and Rushdie.

In contrast to the gentler tone of the picaresque, then, Cervantes and Rushdie mount more powerful denunciations of intolerance by focusing their criticism on the censors and the misappropriation of religion for purposes of thought control and socio-political domination. In their struggle for freedom of thought and speech they attack those repressive figures who perpetuate despotic systems. Their condemnation of sectarianism and intransigence has the power of the dissident voice, and indeed both Cervantes and Rushdie can be read as 'counter-canon' authors. They employ similar strategies to convey their subversive critiques, one of which is itself subversion: of romances and religious texts respectively. Moreover, they both make antiestablishment discourses from minority voices audible, whose references to oppressors and censors are concealed within literary devices such as parody. Their writing exemplifies both 'hybridity', in the extensive use of pastiche, and 'liberty', which is constantly reflected in the praise of freedom from constrictive literary impositions, a celebration of Renaissance and postmodern authorial freedom. Thus, in some ways one might say that not only have manifestations of thought control occurred at different points in time, but writers such as Cervantes and Rushdie, finding themselves writing under such conditions, have employed similar means to oppose control and to celebrate freedom.
Chapter V

From the Peripheries to the Centre: Multiculturalism and the Appropriation of the Picaresque

Chop Suey is when you’ve bought something to whose authenticity you cannot attest. Usually because you’re ignorant. Usually because the vendor has contrived to culturally mug you!


[My] name is Estebanillo González, flower of criminality. And I warn you that [my life] is not pretended like that of Guzmán de Alfarache, nor full of tales like that of Lazarillo de Tormes and it is not the alleged one of [Pablos] but a truthful recount.

_The Life and Facts about Estebanillo González, man with a good sense of humour, written by himself_, 1646: 13.57

5.1 The end of a genre and an age

In the previous chapters, I have made a genre comparison within two distinct multicultural contexts: Renaissance Spain and postcolonial Britain. I have also examined how the book trade has commodified ethnicity, and how the academic world has contributed to this process of commodification. In this chapter, I will analyse the decline of the Spanish Golden Age in the seventeenth century and the way in which the picaresque is appropriated by the centre, and will show how the production and perception of multicultural literature in contemporary Britain undergoes a similar change.

The picaresque novel arose in Golden Age Spain, and was, as Reed notes, 'perfectly capable of declining there as well, or of passing into other kinds of literature' (Reed 65). While its emergence as a counter-canonical critique of the literary tradition has been extensively analysed (Castro, Bataillon, Reed, Rico), its 'disappearance' has received less attention (Dunn 1952; Goytisolo 1990).

Fifteenth and sixteenth century Spanish literature was enriched by the contribution of many conversos (Castro 1966a: 208). However, the representation of minorities such as conversos subsequently became diluted in mainstream culture, and their gradual absorption by the centre (both socially and as writers) was perhaps one of the factors in the decline of Spanish literature. The rigid and oppressive nature of the centre-margin dichotomy of previous decades began to break down, and prominent dissident voices vanished, as sites of resistance lost the principal feature of their power to confront. At the same time, the expulsion of the moriscos (1609-1614) contributed to this gradual cultural homogenisation of the country and its self-image. Other minority voices, such as those of women, remained marginal for centuries. Indeed, the position of women writers in the Spanish literary canon of the time is so peripheral that it is surprising to note how active this minority was, with Old Christian authors such as Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-1660), a pioneer in the defence of women's rights, the converso female writer Saint Theresa of Ávila (1515-1582), and the Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695).

The social and literary marginality of the pícaro can only be expressed outside established literary codes. Lázaro is not only an illustration of the social parasites of sixteenth century Spain, he is also an antihero in reaction to outdated chivalric novels. However, from the sixteenth century to its decline at the end of the seventeenth century, the picaresque was adopted as a literary model by a wide variety of writers, who by their very nature existed at the centre. In early and middle
seventeenth century, Dunn points out, ‘few writers could exist without aristocratic patronage or ecclesiastical benefice’ (Dunn 1993: 289). The original formula became something of a cliché, with the low-born hero wandering in search of food and (occasionally) work, and encountering a predictable series of marginal characters - orphans, beggars, crooks and gentlemen without income. Reed points out that a number of Spanish texts clearly derived from the picaresque moved well beyond the novel into the miscellaneous ‘literature of roguery’ (Chandler). For example, Marcos de Obregón (1618) by Vicente Espinel (1550-1624), The Confused Greed (1619)58 by Carlos García (c. 1580-?) and El siglo pitagórico (Vida de Don Gregorio Guadáña, 1644) by Enríquez Gómez (1600-1663), employ only the most basic narrative structure of the picaresque. In other cases this ‘blurring and merging of genres’ (Dunn 1993: 286) included picaresque novels fused with Italian novellas, of both the courtly and adventurous types, such as Cervantes’ La ilustre fregona (1613), Salas Barbadillo’s La hija de la Celestina (1612) and Castillo Solórzano’s La niña de los embustes (1632) and El bachiller Trapaza (1637).

Hence, a genre which according to Reed had originally grown out ‘of an ethical and religious critique of literature’ (Reed 30), became standardised, and this standardisation, together with the assimilation of its converso authors into Spanishness, contributed to its exhaustion. The very success of the picaresque led to a domestication of its transgressive, subversive nature and attenuated its satirical power; as the reality of Spain’s decadence became ‘painfully manifest in the streets’, this decadence ceased to appear in writing (Cruz 206).

58 Translated through the French into English by W.M. London in 1638 as The Sonne, or, the Politick Theefe. With the Antiquities of Theeves by Don Garcia and in 1657 as Lavernae, or the Spanish Gypsy. The Excellency of Theeves and Theeving; Carlos García, La desordenada codicia de los bienes agenos, ed. Giulo Massano (Madrid: Porrúa, 1977) 63-64.
This process of decline through cultural and religious absorption might help to explain the drastic loss of vigour which was seen in Spanish fiction in the eighteenth century. However, other factors need to be taken into account. The end of the Golden Age in Spain coincided with the death of King Charles II (1665-1700) and the decline of Habsburg Imperial rule. Philip V (1700-1746) brought fresh political and cultural ideas, including the establishment of new literary rules and sensibilities. Within a framework of Neoclassicism and Preromanticism, earlier Baroque conceptions of art and literature became obsolete, and with this shift of ideas, genres such as the picaresque were overshadowed.\textsuperscript{59} Literature now acquired a highly didactic tone, and there was a growth in the belief that art existed as a means of transmitting ideas rather than simply as an end in itself. The literary fashion of the picaresque, however, continued to develop and flourish in other parts of the New World (Cruz), and in other European countries. Examples include a German sequel to \textit{Guzmán de Alfarache} by Martin Frewden (1626), Le Sage's \textit{Gil Blas} (1715-35),\textsuperscript{60} and Daniel Defoe's \textit{Moll Flanders} (1722).

Despite the change of monarchy, and the establishment of the Bourbon line, the spirit of the Counter Reformation persisted. Spain had become a country suspicious of progress, culture and counterhegemonic ideas. According to Dunn, its isolation from contemporary intellectual European currents 'helped reinforce and was in turn reinforced by the intensive chauvinism and the heavily institutionalised forms of religious belief and practices'. The Spanish literate population was 'intensely suspicious of foreigners and novelty, having a collective image formed by a peculiar sense of honour based on purity of blood (an image validated by the past

\textsuperscript{59} The most remarkable authors of the period would be essayists such as Feijoo y Montenegro (1676-1764), Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811), or Sarmiento (1695-1772); dramatists such as Leandro Fernandez de Moratín (1760-1828) and poets like Jose Cadalso (1741-1782).

\textsuperscript{60} Le Sage includes episodes drawn from \textit{Estebanillo González} in \textit{Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillana}, (Cid in Carreira and Cid 1, 1990) cxc.
rather than open to the future)’ (Dunn 1993: 289-90). The popular belief that ‘culture’ was somehow related to Jewishness began to generate a widespread contempt for literature; trade and commerce, still associated with conversos, was often shunned and left to foreigners. Hence, as late as the eighteenth century Spain was still labouring under the need to prove itself to be ‘Old Christian’. A crisis was inevitable.

Under the Bourbons, particularly Charles III (1759-1808), Spain saw advances in the arts, science, philosophy, technology and economic and political thought. However, imported ideas of the enlightenment had relatively little influence (Castro 1966a; 217). Writers such as Feijoo y Montenegro and Jovellanos promoted culture and scientific research, yet they were battling against an intellectual atmosphere in which Aristotle’s ‘Old Christian’ science was still the orthodoxy and Newton and Galileo were seen as dangerous heretics (Castro 1966a: 209). Indeed, the Inquisition continued to function, and although inquisitorial trials and punishments declined in number in the eighteenth century (Llorente 1811), progressive thinkers continued to encounter problems.

At the same time, the territories of the future Great Britain were seeing the emergence of the industrial revolution, along with the spread of enlightenment ideas, which came to influence political and economic thought. By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain began to reap the rewards of these changes and entered its (economic) Golden Age. We might perhaps generalise here and say that the principal difference between the basic cultural orientations of Spain and Britain in the last three hundred years lies in Spain’s burdensome ‘ethnic’ and religious heritage, its division between those advocating progress and those attached to tradition.
The evolution of cultural sensibilities in late twentieth century Britain offers a strange variant on that in seventeenth and eighteenth century Spain. In Spain, the marginal disappears either by moving towards the centre and becoming absorbed in it, with ‘multicultural’ and ‘ethnic’ categories coming to occupy the mainstream; or by the gradual emigration of minorities, as in the case of Mateo Alemán and Luis Vives. In contemporary Britain, by contrast, these ‘minority’ voices have become highly profitable. The category ‘ethnic’ shifts in time and place, as does also the label ‘ethnic’. Nowadays authors may be tempted to search for ‘exotica’, to adopt false ethnicities or to exploit the victimised element of a particular identity, since commodified forms of the celebration of difference, not only in literature but also in music, musical theatre and the film industry, have become commercially irresistible.\(^6\)

Graham Huggan’s term ‘staged marginality’ (derived from Dean MacCanell’s ‘staged authenticity’) denotes how marginalised individuals or minority groups dramatise their ‘subordinated’ status for the imagined benefit of a majority audience. However, Huggan suggests that “staged marginality”, far from being a form of self-subordination, may function in certain contexts to uncover and challenge dominant situations of power’ (Huggan 2001: xii; 87).

In a strange sense, the decline of genuine pluralistic discourses in late seventeenth and eighteenth century Spain might be seen as being repeated in contemporary Britain. However, as we move into the twenty-first century perceptions of margin-centre are shifting faster. Marginality now occupies a central location in our culture, whilst ironically one of its functions is to serve as a basis for

the production of putatively counter-hegemonic discourse: ‘In contemporary cultural theory, marginality is often given a positive value, being seen less as a site of social exclusion or deprivation than as a locus of resistance to socially imposed standards and coercive norms’ (Huggan 2001: 20). The centre itself has become an alleged site of resistance, perhaps not a genuine one, as Farrukh Dhondy suggests in *Bombay Duck* (1990). In past decades, such ‘staged marginality’ (British-Caribbean poetry and drama, for example) might have been a powerful tool to challenge narrow concepts of Britishness. However, in the context of contemporary Britain, which has in many ways matured and developed as a multicultural society, ‘staged marginalities’ are coming increasingly to be seen as meretricious. Indeed, Meera Syal, in her coming of age novel about race and class, *Anita and Me* (1996), confounds the reader’s expectations by refusing an easy presentation of marginality. The first-person narrator is dramatised within a loose picaresque form, and from the start, Syal uses her Indian narrator, Meena, to make it clear that *Anita and Me* is a work of invention. ‘I’m not really a liar, I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history, sometimes need to turn to mythology, to feel complete, to belong’ (Syal 10). Meena becomes a member of a ‘minority’, an ethnic ‘other’ who feels that she belongs nowhere: ‘I knew I was a freak of some kind, too mouthy, too clumsy and scabby to be a real Indian girl, too Indian to be a real Tollington wench, but living in the grey area between all categories felt increasingly like home’ (Syal 149-50). At first she longs to identify with the white working-class community (Anita), but she eventually realises that it is Anita who is powerless and marginalised, whilst Meena has a stronger sense of place: ‘The place in which I belonged was wherever I stood and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forwards and claiming each resting place as home’ (Syal 303). Meena manages to move on, whereas Anita remains in Tollington without a future (Syal 328). In this
sense, it is the white working class community - seen in stereotypical terms - which Syal depicts as the victimised ‘minority’.

Can we draw parallels between the evolution of ‘minority’ fiction in contemporary Britain with the development of marginal discourses in seventeenth century Spain? Might we even predict the future direction of multicultural literature in Britain by such a comparison?

The commercialisation of the picaresque may have been one factor in its decline and eventual exhaustion. There is evidence that Cervantes, more than anyone, was aware of this, and deliberately did not follow the picaresque mode (Chandler 1907, I: 9). Whereas no writer paid more attention to Guzmán de Alfarache than Cervantes (Casalduero 1963), Américo Castro insists that Don Quixote was in fact a reaction against it (Castro 1966a: 66-75; Márquez 1995: 244 n. 8). Indeed, Cervantes’ contribution to the picaresque was limited to inserting picaro characters in novellas which otherwise did not follow the picaresque model, such as La ilustre fregona (The Illustrious Maid, 1613), and his only direct contribution to the new literary trend was Rinconete and Cortadillo (1613), a novella about a guild of pícaros. So, whereas the presence of the picaresque can undoubtedly be seen in his work, Cervantes was arguably ‘deconstructing’ the genre rather than merely employing its conventions (Dunn 1982, Reed 1981). On occasion he was overtly critical of the fashion for the picaresque (Lázaro Carreter 1972: 226-28), and perhaps we might interpret this as a rejection of the pressure to follow such a profitable genre. Don Quixote’s taste for obsolete, traditionally ‘Old Christian’ chivalric romances is in contrast to the new marginal literary trend. Thus, in Don Quixote Cervantes not only creates a radically different version of the novel form,

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62 Maggie Gee also examines race and class issues in The White Family (London: Saqi Books, 2002) where the white working-class is also the victimised minority.
but does so by very deliberately standing apart from the new, fashionable genre.

It was at the time of Cervantes that ‘[t]he great epic was replaced by entertainment literature’ (Lukács 101-103). Such literature of entertainment, the picaresque, became, according to Peter Dunn, ‘a literature of consumption, whose prevailing form [was] the novella of a length that [was] appropriate to an evening’s reading’ in a bourgeois household. Dunn notes how many Spanish authors from the late 1620s onwards ‘purveyed fiction shaped to formulas that offered a predictable range of situations: Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, Matías de los Reyes, Juan de Piña, Bartolomé Mateo Velázquez, Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo’ (Dunn 1993: 284-286). At a time when the literate Spanish public seemed unable to respond ‘to intellectual risk’ or ‘to welcome verbal probing of what lay behind the many masks of authority, and behind acceptance of authority’ (Dunn 1993: 289-90), literary innovation was shunned and novelty seen as undesirable. Indeed, originality was reduced to literary game-playing (for example, writing a novel without using a particular letter); ‘at this point it [was] almost impossible to find extended narrative of any originality’, and ‘the direct encounter with otherness [had] disappeared from Castilian fiction’ (Dunn 1993; 287). In recent multicultural Britain, a pluralistic culture might be seen to be undergoing a similar process of ‘normalisation’ at the expense of originality; when everybody is ‘different’, everybody is the same and otherness disappears.

To what extent, then, can this help to illustrate the situation in which contemporary British multicultural writing finds itself? What are the consequences when ethnic and minority literatures become incorporated into the literary status quo? Market forces have tended to position multicultural writing as culturally central in Britain, and the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century *conversos* find themselves not only an accepted part of the literary panorama, but indeed the
most prominent feature within it. The most powerful form of control which a writer now experiences is the huge pressure to work within this new market, where literary representations of alterity (of any kind) are eagerly sought. The case of the publication of *Down the Road, Worlds Away* (1987) by ‘Rahila Khan’ is interesting in this context. Three weeks after publication it was discovered that the author of this collection of short stories for teenagers was not an Asian woman but white English parish priest Toby Forward. When its feminist press (Virago) learnt about the fake minority identity of the author, the book was withdrawn. Why did Virago cease publication? Literary merit was clearly not the criterion, so their motivation must have had to do with a concept of authenticity of authorship, in which a work must not only fit the multicultural pattern, but its author also; that is, its author needs to be seen as part of the multicultural product.

Multiculturalism, as Bhabha points out, has become ‘a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to Chicano/a fiction - [...] the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterise contemporary *Kulturkritik* [and the] multicultural ‘a floating signifier’ whose enigma lies less in itself than in its discursive use to mark social processes where differentiation and condensation seem to happen almost synchronically’ (Bhabha 1996: 55). Hence, at a time when ‘cultural difference is being globally commodified’ (Huggan 2000: vii), and when there are fewer boundaries left to transgress, we might wonder if hybridity can continue to exist as such in the twenty-first century, or if it will be strangled out of credible existence, to become a pastiche of itself, as in the case of the picaresque.
5.2 *Pícaros, ancient and modern*

From the 1960s racism and marginalisation have continued to be the common experience of many new writers of ‘English’ literature, concerned with the politics of diaspora, hybridity and conflicted concepts of ‘home’ experienced by people born in Britain but whose families originated from outside Britain: ‘Britain’s Children without a Home’. The largest and most significant body of work has been by British South Asian authors (Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdie, Amit Chaudhuri, Sunetra Gupta, Farhana Sheikh, Ravinder Randhawa, Hanif Kureishi, Farrukh Dhondy Meera Syal and Monica Ali), who have perhaps done most to challenge traditional conceptions of Britishness. Discourses of diasporic and hyphenated identities and of minorities resistant to assimilation, such as British-Asian Muslims, have become central in new British ‘multicultural’ writing. In Kureishi’s *My Son the Fanatic*, Parvez tells his wife to assimilate into Britishness: ‘You’re not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in’ (Kureishi 1997b: 125). Curiously, for some new British writers the most obvious route to literary success and thus to finding acceptance and ‘fitting in’ as a writer is by writing about those who struggle to fit into contemporary Britain.

As the amount of multicultural literature produced in Britain increased, cultural identity started to develop a kind of inertia of its own, and perceptions of ethnicity and alterity began to change. For example, in the late nineties the television comedy show *Goodness Gracious Me!* (written and performed by Syal, amongst others) managed to direct laughter at Britain’s South Asian communities, breaking the implicit taboo on satirising the cultural differences of minority communities.

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63 Title from Kureishi’s article in *The Rainbow Sign* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
64 See also Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (London: Doubleday, 2003) 21.
Such a deconstruction of an always positive Black Britishness would have been highly problematic in previous decades. Kureishi’s *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), for example, was attacked by some members of the Asian community for giving a negative image of South Asians in Britain. Kureishi had to defend himself against the charge that he had not presented a sufficiently positive image. Kureishi’s depiction of Islamism as a response to racial aggression by British South Asians in *The Black Album* (1995) and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997a) is indeed more sophisticated than, for example, Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2003), which appears to give a partial and biased tour of certain Islamic organisations, and to present a fictionalised, almost pastiche ‘melting pot’ of social and economic concerns within an economically deprived minority ghetto in London. Nearly a decade earlier, Kureishi’s second generation characters, such as drug user Chad, show an Islamist response to racial discrimination: ‘No More Paki. Me a Muslim’ (Kureishi 1995: 128). In comparison, the Islam depicted in *Brick Lane* is not presented as a reaction to discrimination but as an absurd and deceptive organisation.

In the following sections of this chapter I will consider ‘picaresque’ works from seventeenth century Spain and multicultural Britain, looking at how they evolved as their multicultural contexts changed. In particular, I will discuss the autobiographical work *The Life and Facts about Estebanillo González, man with a good sense of humour, written by himself* (henceforth referred to as Estebanillo), published in Antwerp in 1646. And from the extensive number of so-called ‘ethnic’ or multicultural works written in postcolonial Britain, I will discuss *Bombay Duck* (1990), by British South-Asian writer Farrukh Dhondy, which deals with the commodification of alterity.

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65 All quotations here in English are my translation.
Estebanillo is an unusual text, and has perhaps not received the literary attention it deserves. Some studies have focussed on historical and textual aspects of the work - as an authentic autobiography (Knapp Jones 1927), Millé 1934 and Moore 1940), whilst Bataillon (1964) and Goytisolo (1966) have questioned previous traditional literary approaches to the work and offer more innovative readings. Its detractors have criticised its long tedious passages, claiming that with Estebanillo the picaresque genre was already dead (Zamora in Goytisolo 1966); on the other hand, fervent advocates such as Goytisolo refer to it as the best Spanish novel written in the seventeenth century, with the exception, of course, of Don Quixote, and a text representative of the culmination of the picaresque genre (Goytisolo 1971: 19). Estebanillo himself is a fairly typical picaro, and the book employs the standard literary devices of the genre (Goytisolo 1966; Rico 1970). However, Estebanillo goes further in the depiction of the crudity of real life than the conventions of the picaresque generally permitted.

Bombay Duck shows a not dissimilar picaresque crudity. Dhondy’s characters Ali and Xerxes have all the characteristics of traditional picaros: they are witty, they suffer ordeals of various kinds, and they change identities and names as circumstances demand. The main difference between Dhondy’s (and Kureishi’s) world and that of Estebanillo, however, is that within the literary sensibilities of late twentieth century Britain, the condition of being marginal is a highly valued asset rather than a handicap, at least within certain sectors of society. Ali is a professional ethnic actor, and Xerxes takes pride in his religious background. The comic appeal

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of Dhondy’s work is that his characters represent multicultural Britain in a very restricted sector of society: the world of the ‘multicultural’ arts.

*Estebanillo* attacks the Spain of the Habsburgs (Goytisolo 1966), denouncing the corrupt state of the army and the nobility (Ayerbe-Chauz 1979). The identity of the author remains a mystery, although it is clear that he was familiar with army life and the dark, immoral realities of war and conquest. Bataillon suggests that the writer of *Estebanillo* was Geronimo de Bran, an Italian captain under the Duke of Amalfi, who bears certain resemblances to Estebanillo (Carreira and Cid 1990: xli). Estebanillo is familiar with fraudulent transactions of army officials, and benefits economically from war by dubious means, such as the false accounting of enlisted soldiers. He is an opportunist soldier under the Duke of Amalfi, and lives at the expense of the army. He enlists in His Catholic Majesty’s army against the French, Turkish, Dutch and Swedish, with no thought other than for his own gain: ‘I went to that war so neutral that the only thing I cared about was to fill my belly, the cooker was my crossbow, my spoon was my pike and my cannon was my revered pan’ (González I, 70-71). 67 Indeed, he later joins the French army for money. His cynicism over the future of Spain is overt: ‘I couldn’t care less if the Turkish came or the Persians arrived’. 68 Indeed, his lack of patriotism is total, and instead he advocates a kind of rootless identity without frontiers:

My mother country is as two, my father, who is in heaven, used to tell me that I was a Spaniard translated into Italian, and a Galician injected with a Roman, born in Salvatierra and baptised in Rome: one the head of the world and the other Castile’s tail, Asturias’ servants and Portugal’s sewage; this is why I regard myself a picaresque centaur,
half a man and half a horse: the man side for my part from Rome, and the horse side for the Galician part.  

Moreover, the national identity and origins of this cosmopolitan *picaro*, which also suggest Jewish background (Bataillon and Knapp Jones), give the text a European flavour. Being a hybrid Spanish-Italian born on the Portuguese border, Estebanillo feels at home in various European courts and his praise of hybridity is strikingly reminiscent of the writings of modern postcolonial authors such as Bhabha, Rushdie and Kureishi. However, Estebanillo’s praise of rootlessness is a false credo, since it is based on the principle of avoiding responsibility of any kind, whereas the modern postcolonial position is one of discovering a new cultural identity. Estebanillo sees advantages in his hybrid background only when it might be used to his own benefit, which he cynically explains as ‘taking a bit from each nation’:

[... ] I will do as I have always done, that is with two hands [... ] being a Spanish jester and a Roman pumpkin, I am Galician with Galicians and Italian with Italians, taking from each nation something and nothing from none. I certify you that with the German I am German, with the Flemish, Flemish; and with the Armenian, Armenian; and I go with whom I go, and I come with whom I come.  

Indeed, he does not consider himself totally Spanish. Similarly, Dhondy’s characters, a West Indian actor and professional Parsee, are happy with the possibilities offered by their ethnicity. Like Karim, Saladin and Gabriel, Dhondy’s *picaros* are actors and also members of an ethnic minority. Ali’s career as an actor -

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69 ‘Mi patria es común de dos, pues mi padre, que esté en gloria, me decía que era español trasplantado en italiano y gallego injerto de romano, nacido en la villa de Salvatierra y bautizado en la ciudad de Roma: la una cabeza del mundo, y la otra rabo de Castilla, servidumbre de Asturias y albañar de Portugal; por lo cual me he juzgado por centauro a lo picaro, medio hombre y medio rocin: la parte de hombre por lo que tengo de Roma, y la de rocin por lo que tengo de Galicia’; (González I, 31-33).

70 ‘[...] haré como hasta aquí he hecho, que ha sido a dos manos [... ] siendo español en lo fanfarrón y romano en calabaza, y gallego con los gallegos y italiano con los italianos, tomando de cada nación algo y de entreambas no nada. Pues te certifico que con el alemán soy alemán; con el flamenco, flamenco; y con el armenio, armenio; y con quien voy, voy, y con quien vengo, vengo’; (González I, 36-37-38).
as a modern *picaro*, we might say - commences when he is offered a role in a ridiculous reggae adaptation of *Anthony and Cleopatra* (*Tony and Cleo*). He eagerly accepts a part in the play, despite disliking both the play and the director:

‘Cool,’ I say. Beggars and choosers, and ting - and at the time I had nothing against Jamil Jamal, except I know he is a loudmouth who prides himself on put-downs. (Dhondy 1990:4)

As with Estebanillo, who is well-versed in Spanish literature and able to satirise the florid style typical of the seventeenth century, Dhondy’s characters also have a literary education, being familiar with English and Indian literature, as well as with Eastern religions. Rastafarian Ali, who makes frequent reference to European authors, excuses his accidental artistic career by quoting Shakespeare: ‘I mean, boss, that all of us are actors (check Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice*)’ (Dhondy 1990: 4). The (mis)quotation is in fact from *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 7). He also notes how trivial certain ‘multicultural’ adaptations of Shakespeare are. Perhaps we might even read in Ali’s comments Dhondy’s own opinions here:

The play had nothing to do with Egypt at all. It’s just an adaptation of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, change from Rome and Egypt to the yuppie and stockbroker culture and sleaze and drugs and street-wiseness of London and New York [. . .] The songs, truly speaking, were indifferent, no big thing, you know, not no Nobel prize lyrics, more the kind of thing that French and German and Swede peoples who buy the record will think is ‘hard,’ in a ghetto style. (Dhondy 1990: 5)

Traditionally, a *picaro* excuses his own behaviour and delivers moralising speeches to appeal to the reader’s sympathy. Guzmán, for example, often blames his mistakes on youth and inexperience (Alemán vol. I, I.i: 92; vol. I, II.i: 236). Estebanillo, on the other hand, is a liar and a crook yet never shows remorse for his actions, nor calls for the reader’s forgiveness. Indeed, he boasts of his own amorality in a way that even by the standards of a *picaro* is extreme (Dunn 1993: 286). Unlike
other *picaro* heroes, Estebanillo is not interested in associating himself with ‘respectable’ people (Lázaro), nor is he a penitent criminal (Guzmán); he chooses to be a *picaro*. He is a sycophant, happy to gain advantage by exploiting others and victimising the weak, but always submitting to the powerful. In this way he is a kind of anti-hero, ignoring the values generally accepted by Spanish society.

Estebanillo has no interest in criticising the social injustices of the time. Moreover, he lacks the anguish of the *converso* (Ayerbe-Chaux 746) which we feel so clearly in Guzmán’s fierce social resentment and Lázaro’s satirical tone. Instead he looks for dishonest ways of fitting into this discriminatory system without making false claims to a Christian background. He even feels proud that, despite his low background, he manages to provide for himself. Likewise, Dhondy’s characters are opportunists, cynical about the world they live in, and show little interest in changing it. Instead they happily become complicit in the fraud of multiculturalism.

In the tradition of the picaresque, *picaros* follow different masters, and in this way the author is able to examine society from diverse perspectives. In *Bombay Duck* the ‘master’ is both a general one - the world of show business and the entertainment media - and also specific: Ali finds an influential master within the theatre business: ‘The greatest director on earth. After Allah’ (Dhondy 1990: 8):

> Me boss, G. Blossom, alias Ali Abdul Rahman, yours truly, or crucially as we say, being an actor, recognised the man of the moment, the one and the only David Stream Esq. etc., a director, of Britannic Theatre. I knew him as a sheep knows his shepherd as a squaddie knows Winston when him pass on the beach at Dunkirk. [. . .] An actor finds a director [. . .] So I tell you how I found my director. [. . .] So it was that Mr D himself, whom I’d noticed, as maybe John the Baptist noticed a carpenter’s apprentice hovering by the stream, through his little play, came to see mine. (Dhondy 1990: 3-4, 13)

However, Dhondy’s text adds a decadent twist to the picaresque pattern. His characters have a sense of self awareness which makes them different from
inexperienced young *picaros* such as Karim or Guzmán, whose indoctrination into the skills of deceit is gained through the very experience of living. Karim learns to exploit his ethnicity, whereas when Ali encounters David Stream he is already conscious that his ethnicity is an asset to him as an actor, and knows how to exploit it: ‘The man is looking for a black, genuine negro, an actor of semantic and syntactic and interpretative arts and everything that these guys want’ (Dhondy 1990: 8). Similarly, in the second part of the novel, Cambridge graduate Xerxes proudly explains his empowered position as a member of a religious minority, the Parsee Zoroastrians:

My tutor said I’d go far. I could see him wishing. It was the age of America and Americanness, when ethnicity - Jewishness, blackness, etc - mattered to everybody. If you didn’t have that as a badge to wear in all those competing cultures, well then, you found something else for which ‘they’ victimised you. It started with wanting to be part of a victim group and move on to asserting that together you were tough. (Dhondy 1990: 157)

It may seem that Dhondy’s world has no parallel with Estebanillo’s. Dhondy’s *picaros* might consciously exploit the system and get involved in illegal affairs, but true to their function as agents of a sophisticated satire on multiculturalism they never reach the levels of crude amorality we find in the case of Estebanillo. Interestingly, however, the latter’s denial of ethics has often been seen as evidence that the Spanish text can be read as an example of ‘decadent literature’ (Parker 1967). Like Dhondy’s characters, Estebanillo takes a casually cynical attitude to generally accepted standards - though in a much cruder context than Dhondy’s. He is not unashamed of his conduct, and whilst many *picaros* remained chaste, Estebanillo boasts openly about his sexual conquests. He actually boasts about his antiheroic behaviour, saying that he survived the battle of Nördlingen because he was ‘smart’ and knew how to avoid danger by hiding in a ditch under the carcass of
a horse. When his mortally wounded commanding officer asks him why he disobeyed his orders, Estebanillo coldly replies: ‘Sir, so as not to be like you are now.’

Also in accordance with the picaresque model of a complex, episodic journey-narrative, Estebanillo travels widely within the European Habsburg empire and allied territories (Rome, Sicily, Naples, Lombardy, Spain, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Germany, Flanders, Austria, Bohemia, Poland). On many occasions he is forced to escape from the scene of his own wrong-doing, and has a series of different and peculiar jobs (soldier, cook, servant, kitchen assistant, barber, surgeon, page, messenger man, buffoon, pimp, goat shepherd).

_Bombay Duck_ also shows a picaresque enthusiasm for travel and a geographically diverse narrative (London, Edinburgh and India). However, Dhondy’s internationalism, or interculturalism, becomes a means of questioning perceptions of Indianness, of multiculturalism, and of those chosen to represent national identities, ethnicity and minorities. Ali expresses the danger of artificiality when the subaltern is represented by ‘ethnic’ actors who might have to assume different ethnicities: ‘we were the principal characters in Asian culture in Britain, me a West Indian and she an upper-class Indian who lived in Paris’ (Dhondy 1990: 78). Likewise, the tendency for festival organisers to see multicultural content as an essential requirement of any arts event is questioned:

Hanging around Edinburgh is OK but you meet all sorts and everybody’s selling, the buyers aren’t really there and then the trade-off starts [...] ‘What’s interesting about this Edinburgh is that there are seven black groups on the fringe and it’s international’ [...] Six other black shows in town. One dance group. Two comedienes, one who does a kind of mediocre rap, stereotypes mostly [...] Then the Yanks have a play about the massacre of the red man. Weird story about a black rebellion of slaves who believe they are the souls of the red man come back for revenge on the conquerors. (Dhondy 1990: 6-7)

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71 ‘Senor, por no verme como vuesa merced se ve’; (González I, 318).
Bombay Duck abounds in satire of politically correct theatre and well intentioned liberal policies. For example, David Stream’s exaggerated international cast, full of irrelevant ethnic diversity, seems to be a clear parody of the wave of multiculturalism in British arts at the time: ‘Japanese, Chinese, Red Indians, Eskimos, all sorts, boy. Like David want to make a kinda human Noah’s Ark’ (Dhondy 1990: 39). The novel clearly aims to show how these policies are often self-defeating: ‘The play attempts to fight stereotypes, but falls into the trap of reinforcing them’ (Dhondy 1990: 8). Dhondy, who was himself the commissioning editor for multicultural programmes at Channel Four (1984-1997), has recently expressed his own misgivings about multicultural programming, suggesting that its ‘politically correct agenda’ often obscures rather than reflects the complex reality of multicultural society:

You couldn’t have a Muslim or Hindi Life of Brian. It wouldn’t be considered appropriate. There is this idea that programming or articles should represent somebody. I expect my MP or my trade union leader to represent me. I don’t expect a playwright to represent me. (Dhondy quoted in The Guardian 20 May 2002a).

A year earlier, in an outspoken interview in The Guardian, Dhondy attacked the ‘Zadie Smith school of writing’ which, responding to ‘multicultural political correct demands’, forgets that ‘drama is not a vehicle of social policy, it is a vehicle of narrative, a vehicle of story’ (The Guardian 31 October 2001). Indeed, the ‘Zadie Smith school’, together with the ‘Roy phenomenon of Indochic’ (Mongia 1997, quoted in Huggan 2001: 67) have become a prominent (perhaps dominant) phenomenon in English literature.

Several British authors of South Asian background have turned East for inspiration. Such a search for the exotic might equally be a means of satisfying
Western hunger for (often inauthentic) depictions of the East. For example, Hari Kunzru’s *The Impressionist* (2002) recalls certain picaresque motifs together with plenty of Karmakolised\(^2\) clichés about India. Such predictable features now appear to be expected by Western readers, making Dhondy’s claims all the more plausible. South Asian narratives experienced a similar process, going through a gradual redefinition from anglicised or Westernised post Independence identity - the novels of Anita Desai, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English August* (1989) and Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* (1993) - to a subsequent phase, in which stronger and more urgent Western market demands for new types of exotic product are satisfied by works such as Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Manil Suri’s *The Death of Vishnu* (2001) and Ruchir Joshi’s *The Last Jet-engine Laugh* (2002).

*Bombay Duck* is particularly interesting in the context of the rise of multiculturalism in the arts because not only was Dhondy himself a leading figure in this field, but dared to portray real people, actors, directors and playwrights. For example, Loudmouth Jamil Jamal’s career seems to be modelled on that of Hanif Kureishi:

> Maybe I had my criticisms. What’s this kid Jam, randy little Pak, know about Jah culture and gangs and drugs. I mean to say, rasta, the closest him get to drugs is Alka Seltzer after three ciders. The boy saaft. But then work is work and the man was dealing the Edinburgh card, so I pick it up. (Dhondy 1990: 6)

Many of the episodes of Dhondy’s novel recall real situations in the world of multiculturalism in the media. He also anticipates the kind of issues which later arose within the broad discussion of ‘multiculturalism’. For example, in August 2002 a controversial exhibition of pigmies in Belgium was criticised by antiracist protestors, although the pigmy participants themselves claimed not to feel

objectified or exploited. Twelve years earlier, in *Bombay Duck*, Dhondy had described *Sanskrit*, a (fictitious) exhibition in London which recreated an Indian village with beggars, street performers, village dancers and acrobats, which sells a version of Indianness to white middle-class British 'cultural' consumers. *Sanskrit*, like the pigmy zoo, is attacked by antiracist protesters (Dhondy 1990: 79-80). Interestingly, the cynical tone of *Bombay Duck* makes both the reactions of well intentioned liberal protestors, and also the intentions of organisers of these 'multicultural' spectacles, equally laughable.

Intertextual allusion is reflected in the way Dhondy deals with the religious tensions which arise in multicultural societies, particularly the Rushdie Affair. *Bombay Duck* depicts the riots and mob violence in India and Britain caused by ignorance and intolerance, such as the violent response to the novel *The Elephant Man*, mistakenly seen as an example of anti-Hindu misappropriation of Ganesh (Dhondy 1990: 131). In another episode, that of the reception of David Stream's play in Delhi, Dhondy makes an interesting parallel case with the Rushdie Affair (Dhondy 1990: 132, 134-35); in a controversial adaptation of the *Ramayana*, the character of Ram, the Hindu divinity, is played by a West Indian black actor bearing a Muslim name (Dhondy 1990: 146, 233). This echoes the Rushdie case, in particular the way in which Rushdie deals with Islam in *The Satanic Verses*, as well as the debate on multiculturalism which the *fatwa* provoked:

Since then there have been four deaths in India and riots in British towns. In the history of immigration to this country we have seen nothing like this before. Let there be no mistake either. It, the tragedy, the folly, is part of the story of immigration to these islands and nothing else. It fits no other scenario. If David had dreamt it up without there being a brown presence in Britain and taken a troupe of white actors to play in India, things may have turned out different. If a white actress had been killed, the incident would have been seen as an extension of nationalist war. (Dhondy 1990: 233)
Dhondy also appears to have Rushdie in mind when he describes Anjali, an Indian actress performing in the adaptation of the *Ramayana*: ‘She did have an Indian passport [. . .] but she was, by historical accident, education and choice, a mind and talent moulded in the Western intellectual tradition’ (Dhondy 1990: 234). Likewise, the way in which anti-Islamists appropriated the Affair to misrepresent the whole Asian community seems to be reflected in the arson attack:

The supreme irony is that those who launched the arson attack on the temple in Finchley did it on behalf of a “British” actress which Anjali was not. She held an Indian passport. Through martyrdom she was adopted by those she despised, the British fascists. (Dhondy 1990: 234)

The similarities between Anjali’s death and fundamentalist support of the *fatwa* are overt. For example, Jamil Jamal’s comments on the events that led to Anjali’s death reiterate the kind of anti-fundamentalist arguments which were voiced in the debate on multiculturalism following the Rushdie Affair:

It is all very well to say as the Archbishop of York says and several journalists and commentators say from the heart of liberal Britain that in the end all religions are the same, the goals of Christianity are those of Islam and of Hinduism. Alas, it’s not true. For the fundamentalists, be they Khalistanis, Hindus or Khomeinities the world is headed a different way. (Dhondy 1990: 234)

This position seems to echo Dhondy’s own.

Various writers have become interested in the Rushdie Affair and its aftermath. Amongst the most prominent of these is Hanif Kureishi, who has discussed British Muslim youth and the *fatwa* in his novel *The Black Album* (1995), and in his short story (later a film), *My Son the Fanatic* (1997a), which deals with the rise of young British fundamentalists in Bradford. Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000) also depicts Muslim teenagers being inspired by the fervour of Islamic fundamentalism arising from the anti-Rushdie riots in Bradford, and David Caute’s
Fatima's Scarf (1998) deals with the same topic. By contrast, references to the Rushdie Affair in Dhondy's book, published a year after the fatwa, are more subtle. One reason for this, perhaps, is that to have included overt depictions of extremist Islamic groups might have been difficult (and potentially dangerous) in 1990. Hence, Dhondy transposes the Rushdie Affair into another fundamentalist sector, extreme Hinduism, and substitutes Anjali for Rushdie, an Indian victim of religious intolerance.

Dhondy's world of multicultural arts seems to be the ideal setting for contemporary picaros. For Estebanillo, the army offers the best opportunities for the freeloading, amoral picaro. Indeed, he gives an unusually cynical account of the realities of war and imperialism, including looting and cruelty, and is contemptuous of the imperial task of 'civilising' new territories (Goytisolo 1971: 19). This unique attack on the brutality of a colonising army, seen through the mouth of a seventeenth century picaro, remains powerful today. If we compare Estebanillo's author with Dhondy (a former 'insider' as commissioner of ethnic minority programmes at Channel Four), we see that in both cases part of their powerful critique is derived from their intimate, insider's knowledge of their cosmopolitan world, though retaining a critical detachment from it.

Estebanillo's depictions of the nobility, full of ridiculous adulation, are those of someone familiar with life in European courts, and this insider's view suggests that an amoral individual could gain access to such places; it is a case of the successful rise of the unworthy. Likewise, Farrukh Dhondy and Hanif Kureishi seem to question the success of certain much praised multicultural directors and artists, as if their rise is partly the result of a cynical and calculated presence. Farrukh Dhondy is ideally placed to satirise the trend of multiculturalism in the British arts. Apart from his role at Channel Four, he also wrote 'multicultural' plays himself, and has
long been an established figure in the London-based literary and artistic world of contemporary Britain. In this way, perhaps, his approach can be more direct, more fierce:

Caribbean cultural plays. What the fuck is that? Cricket, Calypso, Reggae, slavery, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken)? Give us a break. (Dhondy 1990: 57)

This comment, coming from the Rastafarian West Indian actor Ali in Bombay Duck, reinforces the directness of Dhondy’s attack. Moreover, the very term ‘Caribbean cultural plays’ here relates to an attempt to acquire funding from the Arts Council in the book. Of course, Ali, who is himself Caribbean, has nothing but contempt for the official funding of such plays. His comments here recall Karim’s experience of experimental theatre, also sponsored by public money, in The Buddha of Suburbia (Kureishi 1990: 168). At this point Ali also criticises a text on the Ramayana, written by ‘some famous Indian author’. Cynically he says: ‘This is the kind of garbage I have to read before we start rehearsing a scene’ (Dhondy 1990: 57). Perhaps we might detect here the experience of Dhondy the multicultural editor, who was no doubt obliged to read a great many bad submissions of varying kinds, abusively marketed as multicultural, just as the ‘Caribbean cultural plays’ in his novel are.

Dhondy’s modern day picaresque tricksters - a West Indian actor and a Parsee researcher - play the ethnic game and profit from the generous opportunities available to the victimised. In postcolonial Britain, they have no problem in profiting from multicultural policies and, in particular, from the generous funds available for the arts:

The money for the last production in New York was by subscription from rich Americans. Yes, he’s had British money, French money,
roubles, baubles, noodles, the lot. Robbed every nation for art. (Dhondy 1990: 24)

Dhondy’s characters also share other characteristics with traditional *picaros*, such as the change of identities and names, as in the case of Ali himself, whose original name is Gerald Blossom, but who renames himself Ali Abdul Rahman in order to exploit his ethnicity. As in the original picaresque novels, they get involved in illicit business, such as baby smuggling, and, indirectly, arms dealing. Like a conventional *picaro*, Ali is wholly unreliable and lies whenever it might benefit him. His lack of sincerity can be seen in the most trivial kind of lying, for example, exaggerating the numbers in the audience (Dhondy 1990: 7).

Traditional *picaros* do not blame adversity for their socially marginal condition. Instead they believe their misadventures to be the result of bad luck. Dhondy’s *picaros*, like Spanish Renaissance rogues, are seen to be at the mercy of fortune, which is a curiously recurrent theme in the novel:

Fortune smiles. Is a routine with fortune. No guffaws, no big laughs, just Mona Lisa auditioning and being blood claat quizzical [...] In my case, boss, she came in three disguises. First as a school teacher who tell me, ‘Gerald Blossom, you have to be joking!’ I never hear this expression. I wasn’t joking but the English tell me I have to be. Maybe it was a false alarm, a mistake identity thing. I see fate and think it’s fortune. (Dhondy 1990: 3)

For months, maybe for years before, fortune didn’t smile on me at all. Like a bitch she passed me by and now and then sniffed at my ankle and pissed on my leg. I had had no luck, in other words, Jah (if you don’t mind me call you so while we still sniffing each other). (Dhondy 1990: 4)

Thus, victimisation has now become an empowering condition, where ‘fortune’ and good ‘fate’ are on the side of those members of minority groups who know how to take advantage of their marginality:
I know as well as you that a lot of crooks get funding too by calling themselves black. We call them coconuts - because they are white inside and brown outside. (Dhondy 1990: 117)

Dhondy’s *picaros* resemble Kureishi’s suburban characters. Within multicultural Britain there seems to be plenty of opportunities for those who know how to exploit them, and thus make their own fortune.

5.3 ‘Britain’s Children without a Home’ but with a publisher

[... ] she was just buying, window shopping in the High Street of culture - and we were selling, me and my orientalisms, Tilak and his patter about a poor but rich nation. (Dhondy 1990: 162)

Seventeenth century Spanish writers were aware that they exploited the picaresque. Estebanillo, for example, insists that his autobiography is not comparable to that of Guzmán and Lázaro; and Pablos, Torres de Villarroel’s eighteenth century imitation of a *picaro*, also warns the reader that he is ‘different’ from such predecessors as Guzmán de Alfarache, Gregorio Guadaña and Lázaro de Tormes (Villarroel 16), and indeed his fossilised version of the picaresque lacks the crucial power to confront those of Guzmán and Lázaro.

The picaresque, then, became a fashionable genre for Spanish writers, regardless of their background, or whether they intended to engage in social critique. Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), for example, follows picaresque conventions from a central position. In *Story of the life of Buscón. Example of wanderers and mirror of misers*, written circa 1608 and published in 1626, Quevedo seems to satirise the very idea of social mobility through Pablos’ struggle to become a

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73 Henceforth referred to as *Buscón*.
gentleman, implying a social conservatism, and giving the novel a conformist dimension.

*Buscón* lacks the self analysis and introspection of a picaresque narrator. Those parts dealing with Pablos’ narration of his own life lack the double perspective found in *Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzmán de Alfarache* or indeed *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Lázaro, Guzmán and Karim all possess the ability to form judgements about their own actions as they retell them. Quevedo’s characters, however, lack this sense of perspective, and simply operate as unreliable first person narrators. Pablos is used principally as a means of satirising a society in which mobility had become a dominant feature: ‘I wrote home saying that I did not need to go to school anymore, although I could not write well, since to be a gentleman what was required was to write badly’.\(^{74}\) In *Bombay Duck*, the behaviour of Dhondy’s characters also serves as a comic means of satirising shameless self-promotion, in this case within the ‘multicultural’ arts.

A recurrent theme in the Spanish picaresque is the *converso* background of its characters. Guzmán, Pablos and less openly Estebanillo, are New Christians. Quevedo relegates the *converso* issue, frequently treated in the picaresque, to a rather tame story of social mobility. Pablos energetically rejects his own *converso* blood (Quevedo 96-97) in a vain attempt to become a gentleman. Such ambition to move upwards socially is also seen in the characters of more traditional *picaros* Lázaro and Guzmán. However, ‘the alliance of the high and the low found in *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán* is explicitly rejected in *Buscón*’ (Reed 69). This may be read as Quevedo’s prejudice against social mobility, or at least seen as evidence of an

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\(^{74}\) ‘Escribí a mi casa que yo no había menester más ir a la escuela porque, aunque no sabía bien escribir, para mi intento de ser caballero lo que se requería era escribir mal’; Francisco de Quevedo, *La vida del Buscón llamado Don Pablos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1992) 113.
absence of the sympathies of converso writers or any serious interest in questioning social injustice.

In Estebanillo the function of the cruel anti-Semitic episodes can probably be explained by the author’s background; he is generally thought to have been Jewish. Estebanillo is seen to hide his father’s relation with Roman Jews - literally ‘Christ’s persecutors’ (González I, 47). On one occasion he leaves a Jewish man for a day in a cold well to force him to pay him (González II, 65-66); on another he tricks a group of Jewish tradesmen who are escaping from Portugal, telling them he is carrying the ashes of his father burnt by the Inquisition, and they are so moved that they offer him money, which he then spends at the next tavern (González I, 247-50). On the one hand, these episodes are so clearly anti-Semitic that they seem to appeal directly for the reader’s complicity. There is even an apparent pleasure in certain of the anti-Semitic passages. For example, in Vienna, Estebanillo pretends to be a famous surgeon and extracts the tooth of one of his Jewish partners, then explains the cruelty he has committed: ‘This sufferer is a Jew and his companions Hebrews, and what you have seen I did it on purpose and not for not knowing my trade’ (González II, 94). It is possible, however, that so blatantly negative a treatment of a minority is a means by which a minority writer could conceal his background, a common phenomenon during Spain’s ‘conflictive age’ (Castro 1963).

Traditional picaros express the fury of the conversos’ invisible lives (Castro 1967: 121), but this is one of the characteristics of the genre which can be lost as the picaresque becomes diluted and commercialised. In contemporary Britain also, texts exploiting marginality and ethnicity are common, yet they do not always emerge

75 [H]idalgos del prendimiento de Cristo’; (González I, 47).
76 ‘Adviertan vuesas mercedes que el doliente es judío y sus camaradas hebreos, y que he hecho aposta lo que se ha visto y no por ignorar mi oficio’; (González II, 94).
from the pen of the ‘victimised’, at least in any reasonable understanding of the term (Zadie Smith, Meera Syal, Monica Ali). The Westernised Dhondy, for example, has never claimed to feel like an outsider, and neither do his characters. Indeed, depictions of alterity in texts such as *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *Bombay Duck* involve the empowering of the ethnic and marginal condition. For Karim, ethnic empowering involves a search for his ‘Indianness’, and for Ali the empowerment is simply that he possesses the ability to take advantage of his blackness. The title of Dhondy’s novel itself refers to this fraud of commodified ethnicity; ‘Bombay Duck’ is not a duck at all, but fish. In fact, it should be spelt *Bombay Dak*. ‘Dak’, the Hindi for ‘mail’, is found in the expression ‘Bombay Dak’, the mail trains which went from Bombay inland and which, in addition to the mail, carried fish. Dhondy uses this and many other examples of Anglo-Indian cuisine to illustrate the confusion surrounding the marketing of ethnicity:

‘I love chicken tindaloo, man. Hotter the better. Killer tindaloo like Ullah makes’

[...] ‘There’s no such a thing, of course.’(Dhondy 1990: 50)

There’s no such a thing as ‘onion bajee’. What they hand out under that name is onion pakodas, or onion bhajias as they are known in Bombay.

Popadom is a corruption of the south Indian word. In the rest of India, the crisp, brittle biscuit is called ‘paapud’. (Dhondy 1990: 240-241)

A sign of the development of ‘ethnic’ writing appears when ‘ethnic’ writers evolve and adopt other themes, instead of being absorbed by a single artistic *raison d’être*. According to Farrukh Dhondy, Hanif Kureishi ‘made a career out of Multiculturalism’ (Dhondy 2002c). Nevertheless, Kureishi has managed to avoid treating ethnicity as the only theme of his work. After an early period in which
Kureishi depicted the South Asian experience in Britain, he broadened his scope as a writer by moving away from ethnic and racial issues, which by that time he had come to perceive as less urgent than they were in the 1970s and 1980s, noting in an interview in *The Guardian* that although racism would probably never disappear, ‘the whole country had become more liberal’ (Kureishi 2000). However, in his recent work - two novels *Intimacy* (1998)\(^\text{77}\) and *Gabriel's Gift* (2001), the collection of stories *The Body* (2002), and the filmscript *The Mother* (2003) - he has not lost his original non-conformist tone, but has overcome the constrictive ethnic label. In a sense, one might argue that Kureishi has moved on from being an ‘ethnic’ writer, taking advantage of the privileged position offered to minority writers in the late twentieth century, to develop a successful mainstream career as a novelist, playwright and screenwriter.

Perhaps Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* (1999) could be seen in the same light, as Seth’s final move out of Indianness. We might wonder, then, if a similar evolution as a writer awaits Zadie Smith, whose second novel, *The Autograph Man* (2002), does not belong to the ‘multicultural’ or ‘ethnic’ category in a strict sense, and hence whether *White Teeth* (2000), given its enormous success, has served as means of launching a writing career, rather than an early statement of the author’s commitment to issues of ethnicity. We might also wonder if new work by Ardashir Vakil, author of *Beach Boy* (1997), the comedienne Meera Syal, and Monica Ali will continue to be read as ‘ethnic’, or if they will side-step the category completely. Sadly, for Rushdie, forced to live in a cocoon in which social interaction is severely limited to writers, literary agents, journalists and security guards, the situation is more complex. It is impossible for Rushdie to escape the effects of the *fatwa*, and he

\(^{77}\) Screenplay by Patrice Chéreau (2001).
will always be labelled as a British writer from India. Somewhat ironically, he will never escape the state of victimhood which he did so much to challenge.

The deterioration of the interaction between central (West) and marginal (East/Islam) leads to an increase in the list of authors threatened by zealous communities opposing negative (hence ‘offensive’) depictions of their own identity. For example, one of the consequences of the 11th September attacks in 2001 and the ‘War on Terrorism’ which followed is likely to be an expansion of anti-Western Islamism throughout the World. This in turn may recall the effects of the Rushdie Affair (1989), providing a focus for cultural racism in Western countries, intensifying the marginalisation and victimisation of Muslim communities in Europe and, of course, in the United States, where until now Muslims have had a less prominent voice. Nowadays, cultural racism is particularly aggressive towards Muslims, since they are no longer perceived simply as a ‘minority’ but seem sufficiently numerous to become a threatening community, a situation exacerbated by recent extremist Islamist terrorism against Western targets. In Britain, for example, although racialised boundaries are breaking down in many areas, with the cultural assimilation of South Asian and middle-class African-Caribbean communities, culturally ‘different’ Asians, Arabs and even white Muslims are now seen as a threat to Western values, to the state, and an enemy to good race relations. The beginnings of similar unease can now be seen in France, Spain and other European countries. Such prejudice might also generate another wave of ‘victimised’ writers and theorists, given new justification to speak out not only on issues relating to Islam, but more broadly as members of a newly marginalised, or re-marginalised minority.
5.4 Summary

As I mentioned in chapter 1, 'minority voices' always run the risk of being assimilated and subverted by the dominant discourse. The assimilation of marginal voices into the Spanish canon and the decline of the picaresque resulting from the standardisation of the genre are being echoed in contemporary Britain, as the absorption of cultural difference has developed alongside the commodification of minority literature. In today's market cultural 'exotica' is highly prized, and the demand for marginality perhaps leads some writers to search for self-victimisation. Such subalternisation, rather than challenging hegemonic discourses, weakens 'minority' voices by subordinating them into mainstream discourses. Thus, the Other becomes the Same, losing its counter-hegemonic force. In Britain the 'normalisation' of hybridity and 'marginality' is making cultural and racial hybridity increasingly ordinary and unremarkable. This is exactly what happened to the picaresque, a genre which emerged in order to challenge and provoke, but whose shift to the centre and standardisation diluted its confrontational tone.

Such a process is, perhaps, inevitable. The Indian academic Spivak has used the term 'exmarginal' to refer to those academic theorists and writers who speak out on issues of 'marginality', yet who in fact enjoy the 'luxuries' of 'academic self-marginalisation' (Spivak 1985: 121). Aijad Ahmad describes such Third World writers as 'an urban intelligentsia which produces most of the written texts and is itself caught in the world of capitalist commodities' (Ahmad 1992: 107). Both Spivak and Ahmad reject both the exploitation of cultural difference in the academy and the commercialisation of marginality in the literary marketplace, arguing that these are merely the profitable effects of a growing global trade of alterity. Such a
trade, they say, does not provide effective or even meaningful ways of speaking for the marginalised.

The decline of the picaresque can be seen as an earlier example of a similar phenomenon. After the second part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1604), Mateo Alemán abandoned the form, while Cervantes, the greatest writer of the period, never employed it. In contemporary Britain both Hanif Kureishi and Salman Rushdie (to a lesser extent) have escaped the limitations of ‘ethnic’ and ‘multicultural’ writing at a time when exploiting the marginal seems to have become central to the literary canon. However, this ‘canon’ is perhaps a misleading term, because dominant literary trends are now so intimately related to fashion that the status of a literary work as ‘literature’ has ceased to be of primary importance. Farrukh Dhondy suggests that some ‘multicultural’ new works, such as those by Meera Syal, ‘are not real books, that’s immigrant writing’, he insists (Dhondy 2002c, my italics). Recent discourses of immigration and poverty, like Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, recall previous ‘multicultural’ texts such as Farhana Sheikh’s *The Red Box* (1991), Hanif Kureshi’s *The Black Album* (1995) and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997a) through a gallery of stereotypes: ‘recently imported imam[s]’ (Ali 2003), South-Asian taxi drivers, oppressed Muslim wives, semi-picaresque characters, together with racial riots and rebellious young British-Asian Muslims. In *My Son the Fanatic*, an older Muslim refers to non-conformist second-generation Muslims: ‘They stand up for things. We never did that’ (Kureishi 1997b: 58). Yet the second and third generation writers which we might still call ‘ethnic’, possessing the confidence to question and confront, are so thoroughly ‘integrated’ into British society as to make their attempts at representing marginalised community problematical. Monica Ali, for example, is an Oxford-educated woman, who has worked in publishing and also in a design and branding agency. Hence, *Brick Lane*, set amid the impoverished, voiceless
Bangladeshi community - one of the most marginalised, 'socially deprived and racially harassed groups' (Modood 1990b, 1997) of Tower Hamlets - seems to have been informed by something other than first-hand experience.

In the 1990s in Britain, the developing nature of alterity led to it being positioned at the cultural centre. The profitable selling of 'ethnicity' has transformed perceptions of multiculturalism, and authors such as Zadie Smith and Monica Ali now seem to be almost too adept in their role, too conscious of their 'multiculturalism', indulging in a delightful but perhaps less obviously committed treatment of minority issues (Smith, for example, places a colourful array of ethnicities in her writing). Where will the search for cultural difference lead us now? Perhaps 'ethnic', 'exotic' and 'minority' literature will drift into other areas: British-Kurd, the aged, the disabled, white middle-class men, citizens from new state members of the European Union, British expatriates in Southern Europe, or the aristocracy. Might these groups also be represented in the role of the marginal?

We may indeed have seen an early example in Kureishi Gabriel's Gift, in which the main character belongs to the middle class 'almost, but not quite' (Kureishi 2001; 10). Gabriel is part of a 'persecuted minority' at school, trying to 'disguise' the fact of his 'misfortune' of middle-class-ness whenever possible. There is a satisfying irony here, in the fact that Kureishi, whose contribution to multicultural writing in Britain has been so important, now confidently mocks minority self-victimisation, turning the notion of otherness back onto the very white, middle-class citizens who most eagerly consumed previous versions of the marginal. As he says: 'I am an Englishman born and bred, almost' (Kureishi 1990: 3).
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