EXILE AND EMPIRE:
POST-IMPERIAL NARRATIVE AND THE NATIONAL EPIC:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
RUSHDIE’S THE SATANIC VERSES & VIRGIL’S AENEID

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exile and Empire:
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A Comparative Study of
Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses and Virgil’s Aeneid

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This dissertation juxtaposes Virgil’s Aeneid with Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses in order to explore how epics, which question and upend our very ideas of civilization, represent a crisis in culture and anticipate new ways of imagining community. This juxtaposition, developed from allusions to Virgil found in The Satanic Verses, examines how Virgil’s epic imagines empire and how Rushdie’s work, as a type of epic, creates a narrative that I term, ‘post-imperial.’

Post-imperial narrative is defined as part of the evolution of the epic genre and its ways of imagining community. To create this definition, I represent a genealogy of epic traits both structural and thematic, arguing that epic themes express totalizing perspectives and changes that irrevocably alter the world. This genealogy reveals how epics imagine communities by creating self-definition traits, historical and cosmological contexts, and anticipated futures.

I argue that the Aeneid, an epic concerned with the founding of Rome, a new type of imagined community, provided a central basis upon which the British Empire imagined itself and based its imperial aspirations. The Aeneid is examined within three
contexts: first, how it imagined and subverted the ‘national’ ideals of the nascent Roman Empire; second, how it was interpreted and used by the British Empire to justify aspirations of conquest and subjugation; and, finally, how it was rejected by post-colonial British writers for its role in imagining empire.

As a post-imperial text, The Satanic Verses is situated and analyzed in relation to the ways that Virgil’s Aeneid was recognized as the national epic from which Western imperial ideals have been drawn. As such, I shed light on the epic, explore the ways the Roman and British Empires are understood, and introduce the post-imperial as a way in which texts have begun to supersede Western narratives of empire.

Finally, this dissertation argues that the trope of the exile makes such epics possible, proposing that the ‘national’ community imagined in Virgil’s Aeneid requires a protagonist who is both foreign and native, but regarded by many natives as an outsider. It concludes that post-imperial texts also require a similar type of protagonist.
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Introduction

…when a new work of art is created…something…happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it….the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

T.S. Eliot, Tradition and the Individual Talent

This dissertation has its roots in two separate works that I have read and reread often over the years: the Aeneid and The Satanic Verses. The first work, by the Roman poet Virgil, is well known and has been much analyzed, parsed and categorized over the past two millennia. At the same time, in a nod to the possibilities exposed through post-modern theories of literary study, this text has proven resilient and resistant to fixed notions of meaning and technique. It is taught (most often) as a national epic.¹ However, quantifying and qualifying this category has only served to extend and broaden the yield of the text –to state that it is a national epic is to begin discussing it, not to have reached a conclusion; in addition, the very limits imposed on it by this consideration serve only to reveal the biases and shortcomings of this approach: what is meant by epic? what is meant by national? However, such questions are not often plumbed in the courses where students are usually exposed to this work.

The greater majority of students are introduced to the Aeneid not in the Classics department, but rather in a literature or English department. This work is most often taught as part of a survey course, such as Introduction to Literature, World Literature,

¹ This is not to diminish the fact that it is taught as a literary or “secondary” epic that responds and reacts to Homer’s “primary” epics. However, once the discussion examines why the Aeneid was written, the national issue inevitably becomes part of the conversation or reading. The significance of the “national” epic will be discussed below in Chapter Four.
Introduction to Mythology, the Classical Tradition, Humanities, or a “Great Books” course. In fact, the greater majority of students of literature are only given a glimpse of this work in a perfunctory manner: it is one of those texts taught most often using a New Critical approach—the lecture or discussion focuses on what the Aeneid is about, as though we have figured it out. In the end, Virgil’s poem is regarded as one of those texts that one has to read, and little thought may go into why it should be read and what the text can yield.

As a last resort, we read it because it is a “classic.” So what is a classic?

Unfortunately, the Aeneid is a classic along the lines that Mark Twain detailed in a speech given in 1900 entitled, “Disappearance of Literature;” in this speech, Twain noted concisely that a classic is “something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read” (194). T. S. Eliot, one of the most fervent and most staid of admirers of the Greco-Roman-British tradition, struck quite a different tone in his well-known address, “What is a Classic?” He defined the classic in far more sober terms which, in a way, were far-reaching in their implications. In this essay, Eliot focused on the notion of a “universal classic” (10)—which, for him, is Virgil’s Aeneid. He noted how this “universal classic” has a “peculiar kind of comprehensiveness…due to the

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2 Twain’s address “Disappearance of Literature,” delivered at the Nineteenth Century Club at Sherry’s in New York City on November 20, 1900, included well-known scholars in its audience. This short piece, typical of his barbed wit, appears in Mark Twain’s Speeches (1910). Here is the fuller context of the quote:

Professor Winchester also said something about there being no modern epics like Paradise Lost. I guess he’s right. He talked as if he was pretty familiar with that piece of literary work and nobody would suppose that he never had read it. I don’t believe any of you have ever read Paradise Lost and you don’t want to. That’s something that you just want to take on trust. It’s a classic just as Professor Winchester says and it meets his definition of a classic—something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read. (194)
unique position in our history of the Roman Empire and the Latin language [; since it was] an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves” (28-29).

With a nod to Eliot’s ideas, the late Frank Kermode detailed how this “imperialist view” of the classic “rests on the notion of a moment privileged, timeless yet capable of contemporaneity with all others, a classic in which all lesser classics participate” (117). More recently, David Damrosch’s *What is World Literature?* distinguishes between the classic and the masterpiece. Echoing Kermode (and Eliot) and working explicitly from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s evolving views on World Literature, Damrosch points out that there is “an established body of *classics*…an evolving canon of *masterpieces*,” along with a third type of world literature which provides “multiple *windows on the world,*” that is, glimpses into “foreign worlds” (15, his emphasis). In a more particular sense, Damrosch notes how the “classic’ is a work of transcendent, even foundational value, often identified with Greek and Roman literature (still taught today in departments of Classics) and often closely associated with imperial values.” Moreover, a “‘masterpiece’…can be an ancient or modern work and need not have had any foundational cultural force” (15). Damrosch proposes, contrary to prior views that restricted a work of literature to one of these categories, that “a single work may effectively be classified under two or even all three headings” and concludes that

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3 This quote is from Kermode’s well-known work *The Classic*. Further on in this text, Kermode notes that we should “abandon the notion of the absolute classic” (117), that is, move beyond the view of the classic that is beholden to this “imperialist view” (117). He states that in such a perspective a classic “has been secularized by a process which recognizes its status as a literary text; and that process inevitably pluralized it, or rather forced us to recognize its inherent plurality. We have changed our views on change” (139).

4 Goethe’s evolving perception of world literature (the word *Weltliteratur* was coined by him) is recounted from Johann Peter Eckermann’s, *Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of his Life*, originally published in German in 1835.
“Virgil’s *Aeneid* is the very type of a timeless classic, but it is also a masterpiece of its genre [and it] is a window on the world of imperial Rome” (15); fulfilling, in differing degrees, each of these categories.

Unfortunately, all too often, a text like the *Aeneid* (much like most Classical Western literature) is taught by people who have little to no background in such texts or such traditions—we do not call in a Classicist to teach this work but persons who are trained in literature, often specializing in another area. Such works are taught as part of an inherited tradition, the patrimony handed down by previous generations of scholars, a way to introduce students to the breadth of literature and some of the historical contexts in which such works of art are created. It is taught, as Damrosch notes, as a classic or as a masterpiece or both; and yet when taught in such courses, it seems to have its life sucked out of it or to have been rendered inanimate, as though it were a fossil that one admires and studies in a natural history museum.

These problems are linked to what might be called the great divorce in the study and teaching of literatures. In the world of colleges and universities, classical texts have long been separated from the non-classical—each is taught distinctly, with little reference of one to the other beyond considerations of precedence and influence. The Classicists have their own domain (though many have made avid use of newer theories of literature, gender and culture) of the Hellenic, Hellenistic and Roman traditions, along with others who work in associated Indo-European traditions. The non-Classicists mark out their territory by excluding the study of works that are earlier than the late medieval period, when vernacular literatures gained traction.
While a whole series of studies should be devoted to addressing this divorce and discover ways of mending this separation (in relation to the pedagogical and scholarly issues), of course one easy way to help bridge this divorce is to explore how texts from both sides of the divide talk to each other. They do talk to one another quite often. However, we do not often notice or comment on this fact—it is just that we do not allow them to talk freely—and perhaps, due to the divorce, we do not readily ascertain when and how and where there is a conversation between the classics and modern works. There are numerous modern and postmodern authors who converse with the classical past.

One author who celebrates and instigates such textual conversations is Salman Rushdie. In fact, for a work as notorious as his *The Satanic Verses*, such playful code-switching is a *sine qua non* for the narrative; unfortunately, this quality has been overshadowed by the fatwa scandal that still grips and smothers this work some twenty years after it was first published. Or this work is viewed and discussed as an exemplar of postcolonialism in that Rushdie himself has said that this book is “about migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London and Bombay” (qtd. in Netton 22).

What is often overlooked is how this work bridges the divorce between classical texts and modern texts, much as Rushdie’s other works, including *Midnight’s Children*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, do. They are in the

5 These comments do not discount the fact that there are scholars, books, and journals that examine these relationships: some of these journals include *Classical and Modern Literature*, published by the Classics department at the University of Missouri; *Arion*, published by the Trustees of Boston University; and *Comparative Literature*, published by the University of Oregon (this latter one is the official journal of the American Comparative Literature Association).
here and now, but their very possibilities spill forth from classical sources quite directly and, in same cases, overtly, as in the case of the opening of The Ground Beneath Her Feet, which uses the Aristaeus epyllion from Virgil’s Georgics as one of its motivators—so much so that it is impossible to get a good handle on their meaning unless one becomes schooled in or familiar with their bases. However, the scholarly divide mentioned above disables such overtures or limits their progress or yield. Therefore, exploring the relationship and dialogue shared (and struggled with) between The Satanic Verses and one of its motivators, Virgil’s Aeneid, would help reconnect the broader dialogue and encourage more fully the necessary conversation that should be had between postmodern works of fiction and classical works. It also helps us move beyond viewing this work as reactive solely to Islam and Muslims and toward a better understanding of how it speaks to and about England, Englishness, India, Indianness, the West, the East, empire and moving beyond empire, along with the conflicts and shared affinities that they offer one another. Overall, it is necessary to include and expand our study of the classics (not restricted to Indo-European cultures and languages) to inform,


6 See discussion below, detailing how the first chapter of this work, “The Keeper of the Bees” explicitly refers to Virgil’s Georgics.

7 There has been much attention paid to the Muslim world’s reaction to the publication of The Satanic Verses, known as the Rushdie affair; however, only a few scholars have grappled with the ways that Rushdie’s text interacts with and reacts to both the Qur’an and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad). The former is the “classic” text of the Islamic world, while the corpus of texts that make up the latter are constantly referenced in Islamic society as a basis for behavioral practices and literature. Some of the scholars that have examined Rushdie’s interaction with and reaction to these texts include: Feroza Jussawalla’s “Rushdie’s "Dastan-e-Dilruba": The Satanic Verses as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam,” Srinivas Aravamudan’s “Being God's Postman Is No Fun, Yaar: Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses,” and Gregory Rubinson’s “Revisiting The Satanic Verses: Rushdie’s Desacralizing Treatment of the Koran as a Literary Intertext.”
contextualize and create a greater appreciation of the continuities and discontinuities in the literatures that grew out of and react to these earlier traditions.

This dissertation should be considered, therefore, as an addition to the growing number of dialogues that occur between classical and post-modern works. While it may begin by referencing more obvious connections, it seeks to tease out interpretations that are less direct, yet which have greater implications for how literature is read, written and interpreted in this one of many postmodern eras. In order to accomplish this, I address four pivotal questions, in order to reexamine more fully their interconnections and their potentialities: what is an epic, what is an empire, what comes after the post-colonial (which is, after all, a vestige of empire), and what is the role of the exile in works that deal with epic, empire and the ways of thinking that develop as we move beyond the age of empire?
Chapter One

Bookends? Virgil, Rushdie: Tears in Things and the Story of the Vase

…one day in my fifteenth year… I quite abruptly lost my faith…. The moment of awakening happened, in fact, during a Latin lesson, and afterwards, to prove my newfound atheism, I bought myself a rather tasteless ham sandwich, and so partook for the first time of the forbidden flesh of the swine. No thunderbolt arrived to strike me down.

Salman Rushdie, “‘In God We Trust’”

This germ of this dissertation lay within a quote from the Roman poet Virgil: sunt lacrimae rerum. And the quote was in, of all places, Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses. The context is somewhat disarming. The protagonist Saladin Chamcha, an expatriate from Bombay who yearns to be English in every manner possible, has just returned to his home in Notting Hill, London and finds that his English wife, Pamela, is pregnant by his friend Jumpy Joshi. Shortly after this abrupt return, at which point he realizes that he never shared Pamela’s tastes, has “simply fallen out of love with her” (402), and will give her the divorce that she has long wanted (403), he retreats to a corner of their house to be alone. Being alone, he ruminated on the fact that “he and Pamela had once disagreed, as they disagreed on everything, on a short-story they’d both read” (404).

The story involved two friends—a man and a woman—and the internal brokenness that the man experiences after the woman smashes a vase that she had once given him: the vase had been given to him when the two were twenty-one years old and poor “as a joke, [as it was] the most horrible, cheap glass vase she could find.” Some twenty years later, they quarrel, the vase is broken “beyond hope of repair” and the man
forsakes any further contact with the woman. On her deathbed, the woman begs for forgiveness from him, sending messengers and entreaties. Yet forgiveness is not forthcoming for, as the man states, “she never knew how much I valued what she broke” (404).

Chamcha argued with his wife over the meaning of the story of the vase; we are informed that “she thought the man in the story petty and cruel, but Chamcha had even then appreciated the curious privacy, the inexplicable inwardness of the issue. ‘Nobody can judge an internal injury,’ he had said, ‘by the size of the superficial wound, of the hole’” (404). Both have read the same story, but Pamela, confined in her privileged English perspective, cannot comprehend Chamcha’s perspective on this story. In many ways, this story is a metaphor for his life in England, which has revolved around both his compulsive attraction to the superficial aspects of English culture and the compelling way that English society has rejected him: he has been injured to the very core of his being and yet such injuries cannot be seen by Pamela—only the superficial wounds.

The brief story metaphorically spells out the resolve that Chamcha has, as well as the injuries that Chamcha has endured in all of the preceding passages in *The Satanic Verses* that lead up to the recollection of this story and the reactions that he and Pamela had. He may not appear wounded but the gravity of his inner harm is profound. The recollection of the story ends, and his disagreement with Pamela ends. ‘Nobody can judge an internal injury…by the size of the superficial wound, of the hole’” (404).

Then a line from Virgil: “*Sunt lacrimae rerum*” (404).

This passage and this line are located at a turning point in the narrative, a point at which the protagonist recognizes the consequences of the choices he has made in the
past—most of which revolve around identity and his inability to accept his past and understand his place in British society—and moves him toward a future in which further change and choices are irrevocable, and he becomes more accepting and open.

This brief line from Virgil makes us pause for a moment. It seems, at first, a curiosity. After all, the short story that preceded it was sentimental, wavering between pathos and bathos. So we go from one extreme to another, with the added qualification of a classical Western reference.8

Rushdie pauses to translate the phrase for us (albeit in an indirect manner) “Sunt lacrimae rerum,” he tells us, is “the tears in things” (404-405). This classical phrase is awkwardly married to a short story which seems to be a patchwork pastiche of sentimental short fiction by de Maupassant or Chekhov.9 Again, just as Rushdie pairs Shaitan, Saladin and Peter Sellers (commingling horror, hero and hilarity, to say the least), so too does he conjoin postmodern sentimentality with classical pathos here. The story would coax a response from a contemporary audience, while the unattributed quote from Virgil gives the passage added breadth, depth and gravitas (even without knowing that it is Virgil, one would recognize that it is a Latin phrase).

The context of this Virgilian phrase can help us understand why Rushdie borrowed it. Aeneas has just landed at Carthage, after a years-long odyssey throughout

8 Such playfulness and resourcefulness are commonplaces in Rushdie’s work, which has the energy and synergy that brings together Shaitan, Saladin and Peter Sellers without skipping a beat in The Satanic Verses, thrashes a hybrid Freddie Mercury/Kama/Orpheus in The Ground Beneath Her Feet, and signals the birth of the nation of India with the tic toc sound of a clock that also metaphorically declares that everything is all right (as in the phrase “teec-toc” in Hindi/Urdu, which signifies “okay” or “all right”) in Midnight’s Children. Rushdie’s work has a pattern, for better or worse, of making strategic choices when using allusions, metaphors, and samples from classical texts. Placing this phrase from Virgil is no exception.

9 Though it may resemble their works, the story itself cannot be traced to either author.
the Mediterranean, and he wanders unseen to a grove wherein lies a temple devoted to Juno. On this temple are panels that detail particular events from the Trojan War and Aeneas reacts, asking his companion Achates, “is there any place on this earth that is not filled with our sufferings,” quis iam locus...quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris (I.459-460).10

What follows is an ecphrasis; a vivid description of the panels: compellingly, we see or imagine the events described through Aeneas’ perspective as he reacts to and breathes life into these lifeless panels (pictura... inani).11 Aeneas begins this imagining, stating:

Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi, 
Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt
Here too there are due rewards for glory, 
Here are tears for human happenings and mortal sufferings touch the heart.
(I.461-462)12

This ecphrasis reveals two things, as R.D. Williams points out: we are given “an impression of their effect on Aeneas,” who imposes his view of them upon us, and we are made to feel that “Aeneas is recollecting [his experience of viewing] afterwards; that the pictures are coming to us through the mind of the beholder, coloured and interpreted by his own emotions” (“The Pictures” 45). The scenes portrayed on these panels become not only a way to represent a storied past, as they seem to be for Dido and her people, but they are also a way for Aeneas to relive and “re-imagine” this past as a present, as events

10 My translation. Unless otherwise noted, all succeeding translations are mine.
11 Compellingly, W.R. Johnson argues in Darkness Visible, his study of the Aeneid, that inani pictura reveals the “essential fraudulence of art and of the realities that art mirrors” in the sense that inani “also means ‘deceptive, illusory, empty, meaningless”’ (105).
12 This translation comes from Williams’ commentary.
that had happened and are still happening. The pictures are more than artifacts or the things that one views in a gallery; they become a touchstone through which Aeneas actualizes the past and is able to marry the past with the present.

This problem regarding point of view and subjectivity is explored in Alessandro Barchiesi’s essay, “Virgilian Narrative: ecphrasis,” which concludes with the notion that “when description has a focaliser, that is to say a character in the narrative who views the artifact, the reader needs to be aware that her perception of the images is mediated by the narrative voice, or voices, as well as by the perspective of the focaliser” (280). That being stated, sunt lacrimae rerum is prescriptive in the sense that we are being told how to read the panels (seemingly by an eyewitness to these events), just as we are being informed by Rushdie and by Saladin Chamcha how we are to read the story of the vase and how we are to imagine the world that Saladin lives in as we share the “ample opportunity [he had] in the next many days to contemplate tears in things” (404-5).

Importantly, according to R.D. Williams’ commentary on the Aeneid, sunt lacrimae rerum “is often detached from its context and quoted to summarise the note of pathos in the Aeneid” (Aeneid I-VI 196). In other words, (if the reader did not realize it at first), you are reading epic material, you are being asked to sympathize with the actions and the characters in certain ways: as such, this passage and the work of which it is a part is representative of this rarest of literary forms.

13 R.D. Williams comments that the use of language “suddenly transforms the pictures into events, and three times we hear of aspects of events which are not portrayed in the pictures, indicated by different tense usage” (45). Hence, my claim that Aeneas is reliving and not only remembering the past here.
14 Williams also notes that detaching this phrase from its context is beneficial only if “it is understood that the meaning is ‘people are sympathetic’, not the ‘the world is full of sorrows, is a vale of tears’” (196).
Thomas Greene’s essay, “The Natural Tears of Epic,” surveys and explores the use of this motif in *Gilgamesh*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *Paradise Lost*, *Beowulf*, the *Divine Comedy*, *Orlando Furioso*, and *The Fairie Queene*, as well as the *Aeneid*. His study argues, on the one hand, that the *telos* of tears in “primary epic as a genre is not so much concerned with heroic achievement in itself as with the affective cost of achievement” (192); on the other hand, he argues that secondary epics share in a “continuity of grief with their forebears,” which is problematized by the need “to clear a past cluttered with history,” and to incorporate the “shifting ethical codes” of its writers and the readers (197).

Therefore, we must ask, what role does this phrase play here? Does Rushdie’s text unnecessarily inflate the meaning of the story of the vase? Or does it refract the story and, at the same time, increase the intensity of its meaning as being about, as Chamcha emphasizes, the depth and resilience of horrors internal and unseen? Is that an epic theme? Or, finally, are both the story of the vase and the quote to be seen as metaphors for the whole action in *The Satanic Verses*? That is the conclusion I have reached. So, by extension, the text as a whole is about, *sunt lacrimae rerum*, about the tears in things, the stuff of epic. That is not to limit this work, but to give us permission to read it in a new way.\(^{15}\)

Rushdie’s work certainly reads like the stuff of epic and, at the same time, like so many other things. So, in order to approach it from this perspective, it has become

\(^{15}\) In short, to read *The Satanic Verses* as epic is to expand how we read this text and yield more from it—it is not to narrow how we should read it.
necessary to reconsider what epic is and what kind of story an epic tells in order to read
The Satanic Verses as an epic.

If it is an epic, we have to ask what kind of epic it is. After all, there are various
types of epic. One clue has to do with this work’s overall focus, and two themes come to
mind: the first is the oft-repeated “what kind of idea are you?” that resounds throughout
the Mahound section and is offered once in the Ayesha Section; the second is the ongoing
concern that Chamcha has with Englishness and Indianness, nation/empire and exclusion,
inside and outside, center and periphery, the native and the exile. Tears in things.
Chapter Two
The Problem of Epic – Definitions & Apprehensions

The real question is whether any epic development beyond Virgil is possible. But one thing is certain. If we are to have another epic it must go on from Virgil. (37)
C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost

What we think of when we hear or read “Epic”

I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to her self, though of highest hope, and hardest attempting, whether that Epick form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model: or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be follow'd, which in them that know art, and use judgement is no transgression, but an inriching of art.
John Milton, Preface to Reason of Church Government, Book II

John Milton’s brief consideration of genre in the preface to Book II of his essay Reason of Church Government (1642) influenced and afflicted his perceptions on genre (and how he wrote his epic) along with succeeding Western considerations of genre.

Some twenty-five years later, he would publish his eclectic poem, Paradise Lost (1667), a work ripe with Satanic verses, which looks to Homer, Virgil, Judeo-Christian scriptures, Ovid, Dante and a host of other sources and influences. In due time, of course, his name would stand alongside the ones he lists as using the “Epick form.”16 Milton

16 John Dryden had little hesitation when joining Milton’s achievement with that of Homer and Virgil – his epigram on the frontispiece of the fourth edition (1688) of Paradise Lost states:
Three Poets, in three distant Ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The First in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
The Next in Majesty; in both the Last.
The force of Nature cou'd no farther goe:
To make a third she joynd the former two.
acknowledges and looks to the past and its influences, he also innovates and revises how we read and write epic. In hindsight, he had an advantage, having been both literary critic and an epicist (that is, a writer of epic).

While Milton’s four former choices regarding epic seem obvious, the latter one, “the book of Job,” has endured raised eyebrows and outright rejection. That Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey are epics is argued first and most influentially through Aristotle’s Poetics and several of Plato’s dialogues—notably The Republic and the Ion. These two philosophers use Homer and his works as points of reference, as that unshifting basis or foundation from which other art (particularly poetry) is judged. Milton’s use of Homer some two millennia after his works were written down merely remarks on the continued influence of this poet\textsuperscript{17} and the ways in which Western thought had continued to conform to certain strains of perception and interpretation. Milton’s list of epics, though stark, has not been much enlarged on in our current era, since we see epic in a way that is less forgiving and less flexible than Milton’s was.\textsuperscript{18}

Part of this problem stems from our resignation that epic is an ossified form, and the complementary view that other forms of writing, such as the novel, not only have an elasticity that suits our times—our perceptions, thoughts, moods, etc.—but that the epic is reserved for particular uses that are no longer warranted.

\textsuperscript{17} “This poet” is stated for convenience not to presume or deal with any conclusions regarding who wrote these poems.

\textsuperscript{18} Franco Moretti’s Modern Epic is an exception. However, this work studies epic by redefining its characteristics, focusing in particular on the role of digression, insofar as it represents “synchronic breadth,” or “epic dimension.” Such is why he concludes that Goethe’s Faust, as well as, James Joyce’s Ulysses, are epics, or “world text[s]” since they aspire to and “…search for spatial totality” (237).
Similarly, when C.S. Lewis’ *A Preface to Paradise Lost* was published first in 1942, his preface points out that his friend and colleague, Charles Williams, had begun “the recovery of a true critical tradition [of examining John Milton’s works] after more than a hundred years of laborious misunderstanding” (v-vi). Lewis continues this discussion in the first chapter, declaring that there has been a “misunderstanding of the species (epic narrative),” which he hopes to remedy, since he believes that any study of “Milton’s epic must therefore begin with a study of epic in general.” Correspondingly, any study that explores how and why a work, such as *The Satanic Verses*, is an epic should also begin by defining this “species (epic narrative)” (2).

In some ways, Lewis had an advantage when it came to being a critic and scholar—he was also a writer of fiction (which included allegory, children’s fiction, satire, poetry, science fiction and modern fairy tale, but no epic)—a trait he shared with Milton. This advantage helped him approach the problem which confronted Milton, whom he imagines asking ‘What kind of poem do I want to make?’’ when the latter began to create *Paradise Lost*.¹⁹ This kind of question is very important. It reacts to the expectations that are formed by contexts of genres and themes and other classifications that inform the reading/writing experience.

Indeed, Lewis begins with the premise that "every poem can be considered in two ways — as what the poet has to say, and as a thing which he makes. From the one point of view it is an expression of opinions and emotions; from the other, it is an organization of words which exists to produce a particular kind of patterned experience in the readers"

¹⁹ This does not make him a better reader of Milton; it just allows him to approach it differently. Lewis himself criticizes T.S. Eliot’s view that poets are the only “jury of judgment” of earlier poets (9).
The former portion he associates with the “mass of experience, thought, and the like, inside the poet” while that latter he associates with the “pre-existing Form (epic, tragedy, the novel, or what not) which he meets in the public world” (3). This pre-existing form is inherited or passed down by the epicists as well as the philosophers and critics. This patterned experience and the pre-existing form of which he writes is derived from Homer and Virgil and Milton, but also from Aristotle and T.S. Eliot; thus, he takes into account both the poets and the critics.

Therefore, this section of the study will examine both critics (philosophers) and epicists, detailing the key perspectives that have influenced both how we read epic and what we expect it should be both structurally and thematically. This examination will reveal some of the shortcomings of the critics and how they have compelled us to read epic in very closed and fixed ways. Overall, my hope is to introduce another way to read epic or, as it might be phrased, introduce the possibility of enlarging how we read texts to include epic as one of the many ways to approach particular texts.

Epic is rooted firmly in the past, rigid and unyielding it seems as an ancient mountain oak. And, like such an oak, it appears unchanging and lacking pliancy—it would sooner shatter than allow its roots or limbs or trunk to be shifted. Overall, epic seems both weighty and weighted down; it seems to possess both ungainliness and elegance at the same time. This weightiness seems almost sacral and there is an illusion

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20 When Lewis published this work, Eliot had not yet given his famous address, “What is a Classic?” which would be delivered in 1944 (see discussion of this address below, pages 164ff.).
21 In his A Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis examines Homer (Chapters 3-5) and Virgil (Chapter 6) as a way of understanding Milton; he references Aristotle throughout (4, 5, 6, 50, 54, 70, 71, and 74) his discussion. In addition, he refers to T. S. Eliot (9, 10, 56, 61, 137).
of timelessness (“being ancient, it has always been there”) about it. We tend to glamorize and romanticize our perceptions of epic.

In fact, I knew that my own views of this genre were overwhelmed by these perceptions when I took a seminar titled “Epic” with Professor Robert Fagles upon first entering graduate school. The course covered Homer’s two works, Virgil’s Aeneid, John Milton’s Paradise Lost, John Keats’ Hyperion and James Joyce’s Ulysses. It seemed as though this was the weightiest course I had ever had the good opportunity to come across. For good measure, perhaps Tasso’s Jerusalem Delivered could have been included (as the syllabus was rather traditional and “canonical” in its exploration of epic as a Western phenomenon –and it would have reflected well on Milton’s take on epic); however, there were only fifteen weeks, so much to digest and discuss and a need to focus on the marquee names –the exemplary choices. Indeed, if a literature student were asked to name an epic or two or three, he or she usually comes up with several stock exemplary works –especially if one is limiting the purview of the discussion to the European tradition (as this seminar did).

If the net had been cast wider to take into account broader Indo-European traditions (Mahabharata and Ramayana), other European (Luís de Camões’ Lusiads), African (Mazisi Kunene’s Emperor Shaka the Great), East Asian (the Japanese Heike Monogatari or the Southeast Asian The Tale of Kiêu), and Semitic (Gilgamesh and, as Milton suggests, Job), the reading list may have doubled in size, though it would have remained a “best of” approach, focusing on canonical works with a touch of flexibility.

22 This recent work was proposed in the concluding chapter of Simon Dentith’s study, Epic and Empire in Nineteenth Century Britain (see especially pages 205-208).
On the other end of this best of approach, which gives a list of some fourteen works, we find perhaps the broadest catalog of epics on Wikipedia, which lists some one hundred seventy plus under the general heading of “epic poetry” (“Epic Poetry”). While the list has expanded quite a bit, it still pales in relation to the seemingly countless novels, works of short fiction, dramas and other written works that are in libraries, homes, stores, online, etc. It is still a small list considering that Wikipedia is created through the collaborative efforts of volunteers who “do not need specialized qualifications to contribute” (“Wikipedia: About”). Thus, when removed from the keeping of the literati and scholars, the list remains small. And while it may seem odd to reference Wikipedia, it is necessary to do so since this website has become, more often than not, the first resource to which students and laypeople turn nowadays for such definitions. Scholarly, no; influential, yes.

Even taking the Wikipedia list into account, we must conclude that either very few epics have been written or very few pass muster, especially since critics and writers (and collaborative volunteers) have set the legitimizing bar quite high as they have made the definition of epic so particular and distinct. Many epics have been completed and many more attempted, yet so many fall flat and others are recycled from older material. In fact, many of the other epics listed on the Wikipedia site may be read only by scholars and graduate students. For example, in general, we do not read (or are not even assigned

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23 As a minor point of comparison, a Wikipedia entry that would list novels or short fiction, as it has with epic, would be an exercise in futility.
24 The Pew Research Center vouches for the growing and heavy reliance on Wikipedia for general information, noting that it is “especially popular among the well-educated and the college-aged” in their study “Wikipedia: When in Doubt, Multitudes Seek It Out.” Other basic resources include answers.com and about.com. I am not vouching for their accuracy or depth but rather noting the practical ways in which they are used by people.
to read) N.H. Wessely’s Shire Tiferet or Statius’ Thebaid or the anonymous Life of al-Zahir Baibars or Miklós Zrínyi’s Peril of Sziget (Szigeti Veszedelem). (Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses is not on this list.)

An equally general but more traditional source for students and laypeople is the Encyclopedia Britannica, which provides a brief list of exemplars, followed by a longer catalog that is broken down by story type—“Arthurian,” including the works of Chrétien de Troyes, Parzival by Wolfram Von Eschenbach and Tristan by Gottfried von Strassburg; mode—“oral,” such as the Iliad and the Odyssey; or “written,” such as Virgil’s Aeneid and Lucan’s Pharsalia (both noted for being written in Latin); national affiliation—“Sumerian,” such as Gilgamesh; or historic context—those “Chansons de Geste” whose action takes place “during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate successors;” or chronologically—those later written epics, such as those penned by William Morris, whose “fidelity to the genre […] is found primarily in their large scope and their roots in a national soil” (“Epic”).

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25 Wikipedia is nothing if not whimsical. As of February 4, 2010, this work had been removed from the catalogue of works listed under “Epic Poem.”
26 Changes in copyright and publishing laws, coupled with the proliferation of texts available online will alter the dissemination of such texts. “Marginalized” texts have become more available and more widely used to the point that canon-based courses are less common. As such, the course I took on epic may have been one of the last of its kind; new courses in epic look beyond traditional Western notions of canon.
27 The exemplars include Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey (both noted for being oral); the written epics are organized according to the language in which they were written, including Virgil’s Aeneid and Lucan’s Pharsalia (in Latin), Chanson de Roland (in medieval French), Ludovico Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso and Torquato Tasso’s Gerusalemme libera (both in Italian), Cantar de mio Cid (in Spanish), John Milton’s Paradise Lost and Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene (both in English).
28 Thus, the Encyclopedia Britannica breakdown is broad and diverse, following the categories noted above, and includes the Sumerian Gilgamesh and the Akkadian Enuma Elish under the heading “Ancient Middle East;” there are Beowulf and Hildebrandslied under “Germanic works.” With regard to later written works, Encyclopedia Britannica mentions Dante’s Divina Commedia, Lusiads of Luís de Camões, as well as long narrative poems written by Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Morris and Herman Melville (whose “fidelity to the genre…is found primarily in their large scope and their roots in a national soil”) and Elias Lönnrot’s Kalevala, a Finnish work that was
Similarly, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory also provides a traditional breakdown of epics, further delineated using specific subgenres, including:

- heroic epic (Babylonian Gilgamesh, Sanskrit Mahabharata, Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey)
- romantic epic (Apollonius Rhodius’ Argonautica)
- national epic (Virgil’s Aeneid)
- historical epic (Silius Italicus’ Punica)
- chivalric epic (Beowulf, Nibelungenlied, Poemio de mio Cid, Chanson de Roland)
- Christian epic (Dante’s Divina Commedia, Milton’s Paradise Lost)
- allegorical epic (Spenser’s Faerie Queen)
- satire epic (Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso) (138)

The fact that so many works are shared across these three lists reveals not only how common our assessment of epic is, but also reemphasizes the fact that what we know and think of epic is sharply skewed and narrowly focused. Epic has occupied and continues to occupy a privileged place in the world of art even when the definitions and catalogues are open to the masses.

The Myth of Resemblance

Thomas Greene’s The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity begins with Homer and Virgil and works his way to Milton, focusing on the role of “the descent of an emissary god or angel from heaven bearing a message to earth” (7). He begins with the consideration of resemblance—as implied by the conception of renovatus or “regeneration”—a late medieval ideal which emphasized that an epic’s form should not merely emulate the Iliad or the Aeneid, it should resemble it, straitjacketing inspiration and innovation within the confines of dogmatic rules to which neither Homer nor Virgil

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29 Here is where Moretti’s approach to epic is refreshing; by redefining the characteristics of epic, he gives us another way of looking at such works anew. See note 18 above.

comprised of popular folk songs strung together in a narrative (this last work is considered both oral and written through the way it was compiled).

Interestingly, there is still a decided emphasis on Western works, with some references to the Indian Mahabharata and two Japanese works, the Hōgen Monogatari and the Heiji Monogatari.
were confined. Greene points out that European poets, such as Boccaccio (in his work *Africa*) and Ronsard (in his *Franciade*), failed in their attempts to emulate the glory and success attributed to the Homeric and Virgilian epics, falling prey to a myth concerning what epic is, was and may be about. Greene notes that

> [t]he myth which deceived all of these victims was the same. For each of these painful comedies [of failure] was symptomatic of a greater delusion which beclouded the collective mind of literate Europe for more than three centuries. From Petrarch’s youth to Milton’s age Europe awaited the poet and the poem which would demonstrate the equality of the modern age to antiquity. The hope in itself would not have been delusory had it not involved the corollary of *resemblance*: really to count, the new work would have to look like the *Aeneid*. (3)

This delusion continues today and it has resulted in a shift in how we speak and write about epic. Though current writers no longer attempt narratives that literally resemble the *Aeneid*, it has become more of a case of having pushed the problem away and ignoring epic within our midst precisely because we expect that it *should resemble* Virgil’s or either of Homer’s poems. When works have explicit allusions to earlier exemplars, just as Milton’s *Paradise Lost* does and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or, more recently, Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, it is easier to begin the process of linking them within the continuity of epic. However, when allusions are fleeting, it becomes necessary to reconfigure how we read epic, and we need to convince and compel our peers that other works can be and should be read within this continuity.

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30 Milton explicitly references his epic models at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, detailing how “[t]he Measure is English Heroic Verse without Rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and Virgil in Latin” (his italics). The poem itself is filled with allusions to both Homer’s epics and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. The most comprehensive discussion of these allusions and emulations can be found in Francis C. Blessington, *Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic*. Many of the epic qualities in Joyce’s *Ulysses* are discussed at length in Andras Ungar’s *Joyce’s Ulysses as National Epic: Epic Mimesis and the Political History of the Nation State*. Robert Hamner’s *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott’s Omeros* is an excellent argument for this recent work being received as an epic.
This notion of resemblance has retreated while persisting in some very determinate ways. In his study of Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, titled *Epic of the Dispossessed*, Robert Hamner describes the irony of how “the term ‘epic’ has degenerated to egregious hyperbole” (8-9). The use of the term has shifted, “the genre [Virgil et al.] is alien to modern society” (9) while the popular use of the term has subsumed or appropriated, as we will see below, so much that was overblown or overwrought about the genre. In his *The Art of the Aeneid*, William Anderson concurs, describing how “the word ‘epic’ still possesses some power, especially for advertisers of historical novels and the historical extravaganzas of Hollywood” (qtd. in Hamner 8).

Anderson is taking into account the Barnumesque profligacy that marketers have employed with the word epic. Correspondingly, the film critic Roger Ebert has stated that

> the word *epic* in recent years has become synonymous with *big budget B picture*. What you realize watching *Lawrence of Arabia* is that the word *epic* refers not to the cost or the elaborate production, but to the size of the ideas and vision. Werner Herzog’s *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* didn’t cost as much as the catering in [Michael Bay’s] *Pearl Harbor*, but it is an epic, and ‘Pearl Harbor’ [though billed as an epic] is not. (Ebert’s emphasis)

Ebert concisely sums up the tension concerning “epic” in the film industry, deploring how the use of the term has shifted, revealing a parallel to the problems that persist in our views on epic literature. Nowadays, what we expect of epic is quite different than what Boccaccio and Ronsard had, much less Virgil and Horace, so it is necessary to ask once again: what is an epic?
Is it an agglomeration of all of the historical and critical baggage, a veritable hodge-podge that on one end invites sniggers (“it’s a really big work”) or conjures up solemnity and awe (as in the qualifier “Homeric”)? If we are to lean toward the latter consideration, it will be necessary to review some of the major works that have commented on epic and figure out how we have allowed these comments to straitjacket us so that we look upon epic as Jean Racine looked upon drama, bound by rules and freighted only with the burdens of classical mythologies and histories. At the same time, within these confines, much of what is discussed regarding “norms” amongst the various critics and scholars is contradictory or divergent in ways that requires either uncomfortable synthesis or an outright cutting away in order that we might arrive at what may be termed a *recipe* for epic.

Before Greene took on the task of elaborating the essentials of epic in his study, he offered the caveat that epic “norms in themselves have been variously described by critics throughout the centuries and perhaps it is hopeless to look for unanimity about them” (5-6). The more effective approach will mimic the spirit elaborated by Greene, who declares that “the norms of a genre like the epic have to be violated if its vitality […] is to remain vigorous” (5). Therefore, we have to acknowledge that there may be some shared affinities or qualities amongst epics; however, as readers/writers we have to afford epic more flexibility than seems reasonable, which is why the word recipe may be more appropriate. Recipes are flexible and open to improvisation—they are open to shifts

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31 This consideration calls to mind the critical perspective that “a big book is a big evil,” attributed to Callimachus (c. 310-240 B.C.)
though they are not given to wholesale alteration: ingredients can be altered and cooks often take into account changes in context when preparing their dishes.

In the end, we may well run smack into the conclusion reached by Paul Merchant in his slim study, *The Epic*, which concludes by stating that

The world ‘epic’ will perhaps never quite be defined; we [in this study] began with formal hexameter poems and end with collage. The element which all these works have in common is a kind of expansiveness, the ability to open up, however briefly, the whole landscape as far as the horizon in every direction. (93)

So, to pull together this recipe, we should not be restricted to hexameters nor look for collage, but explore the historical role of structure and form to discern if and how the themes in epic are expansive and engender an opening up.

To arrive at such a recipe, some of the major works and scholarship will be reviewed in order to address three essential elements of the epic. First of all, structure will be considered; secondly, theme will be considered; thirdly, growing out of the discussion of the first two elements, the relationship between epic and romance will be examined—since the latter form is often compared to epic and defined as that which is not epic.\(^3^2\) Once these considerations have been tackled, it will be possible to reveal how Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is an epic; once this is argued, it will be possible to reveal how this work responds to and moves beyond the specific epic subject, which is, as C. S. Lewis points out, “Virgil’s invention [, in that] he has altered the very meaning of the word epic” (*A Preface* 33).\(^3^3\)

\(^3^2\) There will be no discussion of the difference between primary (oral) and secondary (written) epic since such a discussion would only digress from the subjects being treated here.

\(^3^3\) It is surprising how little attention is given to epic and religious (primarily, the *Bible* in the West) texts in current literary instruction. Though Rushdie may use and choose from both types of texts in a hodgepodge
What does an Epic look like? - A Recipe for Epic Structure

In the beginning of his essay, “In Good Faith,” Salman Rushdie calls The Satanic Verses a novel, and remarks that this work like the others he “care[s] about the most are those which attempt radical reformulations of language, form and ideas, those that attempt to do what the word novel seems to insist upon: to see the world anew” (393, his emphasis), but such a definition only serves to challenge preconceptions we may have concerning what novels should look like or be about and points perhaps to the work having moved beyond “the novel,” just as Joyce’s Ulysses had notoriously done when it was first released. Such a perspective can be seen in Stephanie Ravillon’s “An Introduction to the Hybrid Aesthetic: The Satanic Verses,” which describes The Satanic Verses as a novel (363), then comment on the “layering of stories” in the work, which “confirms Rushdie’s indebtedness to the art of [oral] storytelling” to which he was exposed as a boy (365), and, finally, concludes that it is “indisputably a modern Menippean satire” (369). It is a work that escapes simple categorization; rather, Rushdie declares that The Satanic Verses is thematically, ideologically and structurally “Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that” (“In Good Faith” 394).

Indeed, the notion that Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses is an epic appears to fly in the face of so much that has been written, repeated, reinforced and recited since genre classification was formally begun under Aristotle. Perhaps Rushdie himself would reject manner, he has a comprehensive understanding of these texts and their influences on literature. Unfortunately, students are often blind to epic and religious references in this and other works.

34 John Clement Ball’s Satire and the Postcolonial Novel also discusses this connection.
such an overture since, in an interview given shortly after the release of his novel *Shame*, in describing how he came to write about India and Pakistan, he states:

It seemed to me that if you had to choose a form for that part of the world, the form you would choose would be the *comic epic*. It seemed like the obvious, the most natural form. And it seemed amazing to me that when you looked at the literature that had been produced about India, it seemed dated and delicate, and I wondered why these dainty, delicate books were being written about this massive, elephantine place? (Kaufman, my emphasis)\(^35\)

When Rushdie mentions “comic epic,” he may be referring the *Margites* of Homer, which merit a brief mention in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; more likely, he has the introduction of Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* in mind. In this latter work, Fielding declares that his work is a “comic epic poem in prose,” reasoning that his “comic epic” is to “epic” what comic drama is to tragedy; moreover, he reasons that “when any kind of writing contains all its other parts, such as fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction, and is deficient in metre only, it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic.” However, his introduction notes that with regard to characterization, comic epic highlights the inferior; with sentiments it focuses on the ludicrous; and with diction, the burlesque. Fielding was having a delightful time peddling his prose and parodying *Pamela*, Samuel Richardson’s novel, which had been released a year earlier. Yet he was also building on a tradition and practice of genre that looked back to Aristotle as the authority.

\(^35\) Fawzia Afzal-Khan argues that *Midnight’s Children*…is an epic…in the sense that it tries to describe, or “contain,” an India whose stories are too innumerable to be contained” (150). She continues by noting that “the epic, mythic form Rushdie uses ironically [in his works] becomes, then, a “strategy of liberation”—but a “comic” one because the tragedy it masks is too painful to be otherwise expressed” (151). Her first comment is ironic: the impossibility of rendering nation does not make something comic; it may show the incompatibility between this type of nation and the epic ideal. The latter comment may seem a bit presumptuous since there are several epics, including the *Aeneid*, the *Iliad* and the *Ramayana*, that represent tragedy that “is too painful to be otherwise expressed.”
Rushdie is onto something similar, as he describes the “elephantine place” that is the Indian subcontinent—in his *Midnight’s Children* (India with a bit of Pakistan) and *Shame* (Pakistan with a bit of India). Being elephantine, it is larger than life, giving us a sense of expansiveness, while stopping short of “open[ing] up, however briefly, the whole landscape as far as the horizon in every direction” (see Merchant, quoted above on page 31); instead it is constraining and collapses in on itself, as the characters and their surroundings are buried under the burdens of history.\(^{36}\) Such inclinations, as will be discussed below, are romantic. *The Satanic Verses*, on the other hand, encompasses the elephantine subcontinent, along with the tawdry fragments of the British Empire and the usurping grasp of Islam—all much larger than life—and yet, the whole of the work is thematically focused on being born again and opening up; sloughing off and coming to terms with the burdens and blessings of history, so that it is possible to read the past in a new and different way as the future itself becomes attainable.

Merchant’s conclusion regarding epic, ironically, encourages us as readers and writers to open the landscape of epic to the horizon when our views on epic have, so often, been confined in a well-appointed, but rather smallish garden.

Traditionally, a student in America has been let into this “garden” in predictable ways, being introduced to epic by reading parts or the whole of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid* or Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. *Paradise Lost* was required reading when I was in twelfth-grade Honors English, while we read a watered-down version of

\(^{36}\) *Midnight’s Children* ends on an exhaustive note, its protagonist will be “trample[d]…underfoot.” Having dutifully recorded the past (pickled it in jars), Saleem Sinai, the protagonist, narrates how he cannot do the same for the future (“it cannot be preserved in a jar” (550)) and he will be overwhelmed: the millions marching will be “reducing me to specks of voiceless dust…to be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes” (552).
the travels of Odysseus in middle school. While the latter was fun and adventurous, the
former seemed to operate thematically on a higher plane: it was rife with rich imagery
and was wrought in a syntax that was both confusing and inspiring. Armed with Milton’s
epic, I tackled both the Aeneid and the Iliad on my own as I began studying literature in
college. They were long and dense and I was daunted…and amazed. They read like
nothing else, in that they both fulfilled and baffled my preconceptions about epic.

Theodore Steinberg’s Twentieth-century Epic Novels confronts many of the
preconceptions that we have concerning epic in his examination of “novels that employ
certain elements that have been characterized as epic” or “epic novels” (9). Right from
the outset though, before he even entertains a consideration of genre in earnest, Steinberg
notes that “the definition of ‘epic’ is often …based on formal elements that are more
properly thought of as optional ornamentation” including the use of “particular verse
forms…kinds of heroic behavior, the involvement of deities, and the like” (9).37 The
mention of “the like” seems to include in medias res, the use of catalogues, epithets,
extended (“epic”) similes, an invocation to the muse(s), etc.38 In his important study,
Epic and Romance (1897), W. P. Ker describes the failings of Boccaccio’s Teseida, and
yet he also describes how it has “the best classical traditions require[d] in epic—
Olympian machinery, catalogues of armies, descriptions of works of art to compete with

37 In general, for verse forms, we can look to Horace or Milton as proponents, though Aristotle takes a more
measured approach; for heroic behavior, there is C.M. Bowra’s important Heroic Poetry; for the
involvement of deities, there is Thomas Greene’s The Descent from Heaven. In addition, Encyclopedia
Britannica defines epic along such lines, detailing how they are frequently “legendary narratives about the
glorious deeds of their national heroes.”
38 When we are first introduced to epic, usually in high school or in a survey course on World Literature,
we are taught to be familiar with the structural or formal elements—at the least, literature teachers (and
students) are expected to be able to tick off the list of items given above—for some, they form a checklist
of characteristics. Indeed, we are quizzed on these formal qualities and often asked to give examples
confirming that we can see them in Virgil or Homer or Milton or Joyce.
the Homeric and Virgilian shields, elaborate battles, and epic similes, and funeral games” (365). And that is his only consideration of these traditions. In The Epic, Merchant focuses on “the double relation of epic, to history on the one hand and to everyday reality on the other,” giving only small consideration to formal qualities (1). Finally, Peter Toohey’s Reading Epic: An Introduction to the Ancient Narratives, describes what I call “formal qualities” when he defines the “technical features” of mythological epic, which include “similes, battles, set speeches, invocations of the Muses, councils of the gods and of the leaders, and the description of shields and other artefacts” (3).

Each of these scholars take the tradition of practice—since these elements can be found in greater or lesser degrees in Homer, Virgil, Tasso and Milton among others—and combine it with the notion that these elements are part of epic but are unrelated to the essential condition of what an epic is. Steinberg’s dismissal of these formal or technical features so casually as “optional ornamentation” follows the argument of W. A. Camps, who argued in his Introduction to Homer that things like epic similes were “purely decorative” (qtd. in Toohey 16). However, such a perspective avoids the essential contribution of these formal qualities of epic—it is akin to stating that they are like how the tailfins or chromed bumpers or hood medallions or pinstriping were for cars, fashionable perhaps but unnecessary. To avoid discussion of these characteristics is to move away from the conception that epic is a way of telling a story since it seems that a

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39 Merchant states that “the power of the Iliad does not rest finally either on its theme or on its details as much as on the stark opening (‘in medias res’, as Horace comments) and the superb final books” (17). Interestingly, as discussed below (pages 41ff.), Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses does begin in medias res. 40 Interestingly, Toohey explains that one of these technical features of epic, the simile, in that it is “a peculiarly paratactic mode of expression” (16), is “a key feature of Homeric style” (14) which may be essential to shaping Homer’s poems (15).
combination (not necessarily the totality) of these elements comprises a large portion of
the formal structure of an epic. After all, if we were to strip some or most or all of these
formal qualities away, what would we have? Would we recognize such a thing as epic?

One of the most common ways of recognizing a work of writing is by identifying
its verse form (or lack thereof): we recognize an elegy or a haiku or a ghazal due to
characteristics of meter and/or rhyme, the uses of certain tropes and the reuse of certain
images and narrative situations. Moreover, each of these forms is associated with a
theme or narrative: the elegy with mourning, the haiku with seasons or nature, and the
ghazal with unattainable love. Thus, the form is connected with a function, as each of
these forms is created and evolves with a glimpse to the past (or perhaps a long look);
however, such glimpses are done to help the reader or listener understand the piece better,
to create a context within which the work can be comprehended and not to limit the
theme or the narrative of the piece. Moreover, that each one has historical forms and
themes should not be considered proscriptive but prescriptive.

Similarly, it is helpful to consider the sonnet, which Western readers generally
break down as being either Shakespearean or Petrarchan. Each has its own particular
rhyme scheme, particular meter (iambic pentameter, alexandrine or hendecasyllable), and
each has fourteen lines which are divided roughly between an octet and a sestet, along
with a “turn” (volta), that point in the poem at which mood, tone or theme shifts. So
when we look at Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “What lips my lips have kissed, and where,
and why,” we recognize, without having addressed its theme or its meaning, that it is a
sonnet. Does this impact the way we read this poem or any other sonnet? Certainly, especially since the form has been chosen to intimate or convey certain expectations to us; moreover, in a complementary manner, we expect it to do so too. On the other hand, if we consider such ornamentation to be optional—the number of lines, the meter, the rhyme pattern, the “turn”—and remove them, we have to consider that, at some point, we will arrive at a work that is no longer recognizable as a sonnet.

Jacques Derrida states that genre “play[s] the role of order’s principle,” (qtd. in Steinberg 20) making sense of things for us. Similarly, Gian Biagio Conte remarks that “Genre… is allusion on a massive scale, an intertextual frame which ‘constitutes a field of reference within which, by means of comparison and contrasts, the author can direct the specificity of his texts and the addressee can recognize it.’” (qtd. in “Virgilian Epic” 151). So, Millay’s choice of the sonnet form alludes to other sonnets in order to cultivate and stir up ways of wanting to read this poem. The same holds true for the epic.

Epic form is discussed side-by-side with theme in Aristotle’s Poetics and Horace’s Ars Poetica. Aristotle begins by noting that it is necessary to examine “the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation” in order to understand the

41 As is discussed below, form is chosen to suit a particular theme or subject; one usually does not (though one can) choose a sonnet form unless one wants to speak of that which sonnets address. There are some exceptions, as when form gets “lost in translation” one might say. Such would be the case with well-known and regarded Japanese writer/poet/translator Shuntaro Tanikawa, who has published a collection of sonnets, titled 62 Sonnets, all of which conform to the metrical rules of this form; however, Tanikawa’s subjects in these poems range from love to loneliness to solitude (the latter two treatments do not touch on love or the absence thereof) which may be due to his unfamiliarity with what the sonnet was about (thanks to my brother, Brian Sammond, for this reference).

42 In his Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye notes that “the purpose of criticism of genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were not context established for them” (247-48). Frye’s consideration is notable in that it point toward genre as evocative rather than constrictive: it helps us see possibilities rather than shutting off possibilities (though the latter reaction can and does occur).
principles that underlie this art. Both considerations, though somewhat scattered and rambling, provide the critical bases upon which our understanding of epic is built—and it will be helpful to review briefly how they discuss form, matching it up with Steinberg’s list of “optional ornamentation” to examine its relevance to this exploration.43

In section I of the Poetics, noting that it is relevant to distinguish between the use of verse and the thing called poetry, Aristotle tackles the issue very quickly, stating that

People do, indeed, add the word 'maker' or 'poet' to the name of the meter, and speak of...epic (that is, hexameter) poets, as if it were not the imitation that makes the poet, but the verse that entitles them all to the name. Even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of poet is by custom given to the author; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the meter, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet.

Certainly, there was a concern with meter in the creation of both epic and epyllia (plural for mini epics)—Homer used dactylic hexameter, as did those who imitated his form, including Apollonius Rhodius, Ennius, Catullus, Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan, among others. Horace’s comments on epic, written in his Ars Poetica shortly after Virgil’s death, cemented what had by the first century B.C. become tradition, for he states that “Homer showed the meter in which the deeds of leaders//And kings, and the sorrows of war, may be written” (73-74).

Milton too was preoccupied with the use of verse in constructing his epic, devoting a prefatory section, titled “The Verse,” to describe the use of the poem’s “Measure [as] English Heroic Verse without Rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and Virgil in Latin” (italics in the original). Milton was aware not only of the poets but

43 The discussion of “kinds of heroic behavior, the involvement of deities” will be considered in the succeeding section on theme and genre since they have more to do with what the story is telling us rather than how a story is told.
of the critics who gave the imprimatur to such stylistic choices. And the European Renaissance and Neo-Classical eras had no lack of such critics: each writer had to craft his poem according to the expectations of his audience.

Interestingly, on the subject of verse, Steinberg agrees with Aristotle, in that the mode of imitation (verse) is not what makes a work epic; rather, it is other elements that have this effect. While critics, in general, accept that James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) is an epic and some, including Theodore Steinberg and Paul Merchant, refer to more recent works such Lawrence Durrell’s four-volume *Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1960) as an epic, both works are not written in verse—here are cases where the notion of scope supersedes concerns that may be had regarding the necessity of verse in epic. Epic has been written in various types of verse and in prose, too; as writing evolves, so has the form—despite consistent historical claims to the opposite (other than Aristotle), verse is an option. Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is collage rather than verse, though this shift is part of the trajectory that Merchant describes in his work *The Epic*. Each epic work merely conveys its subject using a different rhythm and a different sense of rhythm.

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44 Merchant notes that cubism, “which shares a boundary with epic…gives effective shape to Lawrence Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet*” (76). Steinberg argues that this tetralogy “only partially meets [epic] criteria but […] is, nevertheless, a work of epic scope” (190).

45 Merchant refers to collage in *The Epic*, detailing how it is a “natural development of epic’s all-inclusiveness and discursiveness” (83); however, he does not explicitly define it in the text. According to the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, the term collage “denote[s] a text constructed wholly or partly from fragments of other texts or parodically re-employing linguistic or literary usages from other times or cultures” (369).

46 For example, Homer’s use of verse is indicative of its oral roots—the verse constructions aided reveal shortcuts or cues that enhanced the oral telling of the story: Adam Lord and Milman Parry described how the verses and the narrative structure reveal the use of certain formulae that include the use of particular repetitive phrases (“rosy-fingered dawn”) or stock sequences such as a warrior girding himself for battle. The theory is represented well in Lord’s *The Singer of Tales* and in *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, edited by Adam Parry.
Aristotle’s distinction regarding verse works against preconceptions that people have regarding poetry. To work from his example, which contrasts Homer with Empedocles, one could write an investment analysis or a medical report in verse – to do so might seem strained (or strange), but it would not qualify as poetry: Aristotle states that it is the act of creating (ποίειν) within the realm of probability that makes one piece a work poetry as opposed to a work of history (or science or medicine, etc.). It is a case of the probable versus the actual. In Book IX of the Poetics, Aristotle states:

the poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen.

In other words, two different works might share common verse style (hexameter) and yet one of them might not be considered poetry due to its content or what it represents, since it conveys “what has happened.”

Virgil’s Aeneid is poetry because it represents a probable origin of Rome, of Empire—of the here and now—and it is a work drawn from inspiration: the muse is invoked for causes (Musa, mihi causas memora) so the story can be sung. In the Iliad, the muse was invoked for the story itself: “Rage, sing O goddess, the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles” (I.1). Similarly, the bespectacled narrator of The Satanic Verses provides an alternate invocation, which makes us think not of any of the seven muses, but of that

47 Works such as Lucretius’ De Rerum Natura fall into a quirky middle-ground. Most modern scholars describe it as a didactic poem; however, it makes use of many of the formal conventions associated with epic (including beginning with an invocation); moreover, based on its scope, Monica Gale argues that “the scope and scale of the De Rerum Natura point…to a strong affinity with the ‘totalizing impulse’ (Hardie 1993: 1) of heroic epic” (440).
misguiding spirit of many turns invoked by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in their 1968 song “Sympathy for the Devil,” as the narrator states:

I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and –potence, I’m making no claims at the present, but I can manage this much I hope. Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed. Which was the miracle worker? Of what type – angelic, satanic – was Farishta’s song? Who am I? Let’s put it this way: who has the best tunes?” (10)

This narrator is his own muse and seemingly more than that as he later describes himself as “multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridization of such opposites as Oopar and Neechay, or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here” in response to Jobian queries asking who he is. (317-318) This Oopar/Neechayvala reference uses Urdu (“Above”/“Below doer”) as a way of conflating and confusing who the narrator is and what his motives are. Is he Satan or God or a little of both? The earlier reference is clear—the devil has the best tunes and is the best inspiration.

Just as Milton invokes the “Heav’nly Muse” at the beginning of Paradise Lost and James Joyce uses/parodies the Catholic mass in his invocation at the opening of Ulysses, so too does Rushdie invoke his muse, who is a collage of the sacred and the profane, as well as both terrible and comical.

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48 The oopar/neechay-vala reference is a way of both conflating and confusing who the narrator is and what his motives are. Is he Satan or God or a little of both? That he resembles Rushdie (the narrator is described as “balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses”) adds to this hybrid hodgepodge and parody of the divine. And at the same time, we are informed that “This Deity might look like a myopic scrivener, but It could certainly mobilize the traditional apparatus of divine rage. Clouds massed outside the window; wind and thunder shook the room. Trees fell in the Fields” (318).

49 Milton’s invocation at the beginning of Paradise Lost stridently invokes the God of Moses while hinting at the muses of Homer and Virgil:

Sing Heav’nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd… (I.6-8)
Now the muses are not discussed in the Poetics; however, Horace references them briefly after remarking how one should not begin writing an epic, then proceeds to reveal what works by offering a Latin translation of the first two lines of Homer’s Odyssey. Thus, Horace does not prescribe—rather the invocation to a muse in later epics is more of conscious imitation of earlier models stemming from Homer’s invocations, a practice which became accepted as normative over time.

The muse is invoked at or near the beginning of an epic. Right from the opening of such a work we are plunged into both the scope and theme of the work. Virgil begins the Aeneid: arma uirumque cano “I sing of arms and the man” (I.1). Homer introduces the themes of the Iliad with the opening word: μήνιν “Rage” (I.1). Rushdie hastens us into the middle of the story at the outset, “‘To be born again,’ sang Gibreel Farishta tumbling from the heavens, ‘first you have to die.’” (3).

Thus, Horace does not prescribe—rather the invocation to a muse in later epics is more of conscious imitation of earlier models stemming from Homer’s invocations, a practice which became accepted as normative over time.

Joyce’s Ulysses begins with this mock invocation:

Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. A yellow dressinggown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him on the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned:

—Introibo ad altare Dei.

The lines proceed as follows:

Quanto rectius hic, qui nil olitur inepte:
"Dic mihi, Musa, uirum, captae post tempora Troiae
qui mores hominum multorum uidit et urbes"

How much more to the purpose he, who attempts nothing improperly
“Sing to me, O Muse, of that man who, after the destruction of Troy
Saw the ways of many men and cities.” (140-42)

These lines are an example of collage, combing religious notions of rebirth with lyrics from a song by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. The line “first you have to die” is adapted from Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill’s “Alabama Song,” written for his Mahagonny-Songspiel in 1927 and later used in his The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930). The song was notably covered by David Bowie (1978) and the Doors (1967). Later on, the refrain of the song is sung by Gibreel “I tell you, you must die, I tell you, I tell you,” (Rushdie 6, his emphasis). The notion of being “born again” is rooted in both Christian (cf. John 3.3: “no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again”); in many religions in the Indian subcontinent (including Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism), which incorporate the notion of samsara (the cycle of birth, death, rebirth; literally, “wheel of rebirth” (Brodd 46)). In addition, Hinduism also has a concept of dvija which,
find Aeneas is topsy-turvy in the Mediterranean sea; at the beginning of the Iliad, we hear that Achilles has been slighted by Agamemnon during the ninth year of the Trojan war; in The Satanic Verses, we are midair with the protagonists as we are informed that

[j]ust before dawn one winter’s morning, New Year’s Day or thereabouts, two real, full-grown, living men fell from a great height, twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without benefit of parachutes or wings, out of a clear sky. (1)

Here the “two actors, prancing Gibreel and buttony, pursed Mr. Saladin Chamcha, fell like tidbits of tobacco from a broken old cigar” and are plunging toward the watery abyss (1-2). 52 We begin in the middle and, through storytelling and flashbacks, we become informed of the contexts that lead up to and conspire to put the actors in their places.

Indeed, Horace simply recommends that we follow Homer’s lead in beginning an epic:

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according to the Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, means “twice-born,” and is a notion applied to certain higher castes. The notion of being reborn or “born again” is not in Islam.

52 The references to Milton’s Paradise Lost are unmistakable here: the plane, Bostan is named after one of the gardens in paradise (according to Islamic belief); thus, the two fall, Gibreel Farishta (“the Angel Gabriel”) and Saladin, much like Milton’s Satan and Beelzebub, who had been cast out from the heavens after rebelling against God. Satan and Beelzebub are first described in this passage:

As far remov’d from God and light of Heav’n
As from the Center thrice to th’ utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o’rewhelm’d
With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam’d Beelzebub.
To whom th’ Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav’n call’d Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began (I.73-83).

Later on in Paradise Lost, the Angel Raphael describes the fall of the rebellious angels as follows:

Nine dayes they fell; confounded Chaos roard,
And felt tenfold confusion in thir fall
Through his Wilde Anarchie, so huge a rout
Incumberd him with ruin: Hell at last
Yawning receavd them whole, and on them clos’d,
Hell thir fit habitation fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and paine (VI.871-877).
do not begin your story of the Trojan war with Helen’s birth (*gemino...ab ouo*)\(^{53}\) exaggerating the notion that the ultimate cause of the war was not her seduction by Paris, but the fact that she was even born.

In so many ways, we are seduced through the way an epic begins *in medias res*: if there is not already an understanding of the greater context within which the story is situated, so much of the ending is proclaimed at the outset that it becomes necessary to suspend our knowledge of how things will resolve themselves, along with who will live and who will die. *In medias res* helps build the tension by compelling us to anticipate the action, even when there is familiarity with the plot: that Adam and Eve will eat the forbidden fruit and lose Eden, and that the infernal serpent will lose his vain attempt on heaven (*Paradise Lost*, I.1-49); that Odysseus will make it home as the gods had decided it was high time his troubles were to end (*Odyssey* I.1-94); that Aeneas will found a city to which he will bring his gods (*Aeneid* I.1-9). Moreover, as Chamcha and Gibreel of *The Satanic Verses* fall from the recently exploded *Bostan*, we know full well that the latter will survive the whimsies and trials of his orphaned childhood as well as his scandalous and meteoric rise to movie stardom; we also know that the former will have survived his estranged and eclectic upbringing, the crossing of continents and that he will have mastered his mimicry of the English.\(^{54}\)

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53 Horace writes:  

\begin{quote}
* nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ouo;  
* semper ad euentum festinat et in medias res. (147-48)
\end{quote}

nor does he begin his tale of the Trojan war with two eggs; always he hastens us into action and in the middle of things.

The reference of the “two eggs” is to the birth of Helen and Polydeuces along with Castor and Clytemnestra...after all, it was the birth of Helen herself that begat the war.

54 Thus, the use of *in medias res* is a pretense: it sets up the narrative, providing both a trajectory for the storyline and a recognizable point toward which we form anticipation. Any suspense created is ironic: will
The use of the epithet is the final formal element that will be considered here. Aristotle does not discuss epithets in the Poetics though he examines them extensively in Book III of his Rhetoric—in which there is a brief reference to Homer’s use of epithets, when Aristotle recommends “‘rosy-fingered morn’, [as opposed to] ‘crimson-fingered’ or, worse still, ‘red-fingered morn’” (124). In the Ars Poetica, Horace maintains that if we are to assign epithets to characters, they should be consistent and in line with expectations. He states that one should have a “fierce and wild Medea,” (Medea ferox invictaque), adding descriptive characteristics or qualities that influence how we should read the person or thing being represented; just as Virgil created a pious Aeneas, “pious Aeneas” (Aeneid I, 220.305.349; IV.393), Homer had Ἐκτῶρ ἰπποδάμος, “Hector, Breaker of Horses” (Iliad XXIV.804, and Milton had “fair angelic Eve” (Paradise Lost V.74). Equally so, Rushdie has created a cast of characters who are supplied off and on with what are modern equivalents of epithets—nicknames and phrases that are tagged on (epithet means attributed or added on).

Aeneas fall for Dido and forsake Rome; will he survive the tempests that Juno visits upon him? We know full well that Aeneas is fated to found Rome but, at the same time, we endure his trials and the possibility that he might somehow be thwarted. 55 Horace’s advice is conservative, which is emblematic in the stock examples of epithet he provides:

 Aut famam sequere aut sibi conuenientia finge,
 scripтор honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
 impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer
 iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
 Sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
 perfidus Ixion, Io uaga, tristis Orestes.
 Either follow tradition or craft with harmony.
 So, to be a respected writer, create too an Achilles
 Who is unrelenting, quick-tempered, relentless
 Fierce, above the law, never surrendering.
 Make Medea fierce and wild, Ino doleful,
 Ixion deceitful, Io wandering, Orestes sad. (119-124)
For example, Salahuddin Chamchawala becomes Saladin Chamcha, Salad-baba, Spoono. That Salahuddin becomes Saladin signifies that he is a “keeper of the faith” (such is the meaning of this name; the use is ironic since Saladin does not know his faith) and calls to mind Saladin Yusuf ibn Ayub (c. 1138-1193), the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty who conquered Jerusalem from crusaders led by the English King, Richard the Lionheart. That he is called “Salad” by Gibreel and Zeeny both signifies how mixed and hodgepodge he is as a person; “Spoono” is a variation of his anglicized last name, Chamcha (“spoon” in Urdu)—a word which signifies how he is a “yes man” or sycophant.56

In addition, we are informed that the character Gibreel Farishta was born Ismail Najmuddin.57 His stage name Farishta (“Angel”) was from his mother, as he confessed to Chamcha, “who else was it who started the whole angel business, her personal angel, she called me, farishta…” (16). That he becomes an angel (and gods) in cinema, in dreams and in the pseudo-actualities of the incident of the satanic verses, which add to the significance of this name. It has an ironic quality similar to the epithet, “breaker of horses,” which is given to Hector only after he has been buried, having been dragged and

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56 Rushdie’s well-known essay, “The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance,” published in the London Times in July 1982, describes the etymology of the word “chamcha,” which is a commonly used euphemism in Urdu. The passage prefigures some of what we are to expect from Saladin Chamcha: A chamcha is a very humble, everyday object. It is in fact, a spoon. The word is Urdu; and it also has a second meaning. Colloquially, a chamcha is a person who sucks up to a powerful people, a yes-man, a sycophant. The British Empire would not have lasted a week without such collaborators among its colonized peoples. You could say the Raj grew fat by being spoon-fed. Well, as we all know, the spoon-feeding ended, or at least ceased to be sufficiently nourishing, and the British left. But the effects of the Empire linger on.

57 There is some irony here in that his first name is the same as the Muslim prophet Ibrahim’s son Ismail, whose name means “God will listen.” When he descends into madness, he believes (since he is an angel) that God listens to him. His last name, Najmuddin, means “star of the faith,” which refers to Surah 53, Al-Najm, the source of the notorious “satanic verses,” according to Islamic tradition. See also note 443 below.
broken in a chariot pulled by Achilles’ horses—Gibreel is called an angel by his mother and comes to believe, through his dreams and his mental illness, that he is the Angel Gibreel. He is also called “Gibreel janab” by Rekha Merchant; such is an ironic honorific (since janab means something akin to “old chap” and he was anything but that to her) when he is wandering around London (323).

Finally, there are other characters that are given epithets or nicknames: Ayesha is Madonna of the butterflies, and kahin and pir; there is Osman the clown or, alternately, Osman the bullock-boy. Epithets are like nicknames that describe a person—each of the attributes given to the characters helps round out and define who they are for us, conveying, to a large extent, their intrinsic qualities.

Many of the other formal elements listed above in Ker, Toohey and Merchant also can be found in The Satanic Verses, including the council of the gods, ecphrasis, involvement of the divine in human affairs (Ker’s “Olympian” machinery), and elaborate battles. An additional quality, which none of them mention, is the elaborately developed journey to the underworld, the nekuia.

That each of these formal elements can be found in the Aeneid needs little discussion: providing a brief listing of some examples may work most effectively here. This epic is bookended with councils: Venus and Jupiter at the outset and Juno and Jupiter at the conclusion (Aeneid I.223-296; XII.791-842). It has notable uses of ecphrasis including the detailing of the temple of Juno in Carthage and the description of the shield of Aeneas (I. 456-493, VIII.608-731). While the whole of the plot of the Aeneid hinges on the role of Jupiter and fate being involved in human activity—particularly the founding of Rome—there are notable instances where the gods explicitly
intervene: Venus guides Aeneas safely to Carthage under cover of a cloud and Mercury glides down as an emissary from Jove to remind Aeneas that he must leave Dido and Carthage in order to found Rome (I.305-417, IV.238-278). There are elaborate battles, including the destruction of Troy described by Aeneas and the slaughter of the Trojans and their allies by Camilla and her peers (II. 298-558, XI.648-915). Finally, the nekuia is a carefully wrought passage: Aeneas descends into the underworld guided by the Sybil and facilitated by the golden bough; this whole passage is a complex consideration of the role that fate plays in Aeneas’ life, providing glimpses into the past and visions into the future: here Aeneas sees the furies as well as Dido, his abandoned lover, and Charon, the boatsman who takes the eager souls across the River Styx and Acheron into Hades (VI.264-892).

Similarly, The Satanic Verses has a two nekuia, including the fitful experience Chamcha has in “Purgatory, or Hell [which resembled] Sussex” where he fully transforms into a “supernatural imp” (158) and meets a menagerie of animals that are denizens of the city unseen in London (151-171); there is also the underworld of Shepperton Studios58 to which Chamcha descends, a place complete with Furies, the ghosts of abandoned lovers and Gaffer Hexam, a Dickensian character who appears to be a ghoulish stand-in for Charon (416-431). There are elaborate battles that encompass the whole of London, if not the whole of England, as Gibreel wreaks terror amidst his

58 This sequence focuses on describing the sets and actors who are performing “Friend!,” a musical based on Charles Dicken’s novel Our Mutual Friend (1864-65).
apocalyptic cleansing (320-331, 457-469). The interaction between Gibreel and his “vision of the Supreme Being” along with the whole of the Ayesha episode represent the role and power of fate and the influence of the divine on peoples (318-319, 473-507).

There are ecphrases, which tell a story by describing a work of art, such as when the hoardings, cardboard effigies and portraits of Gibreel (festooned and plastered all over India, promoting his movies) flake, decay or assume a hollowness, coming to life and imitating the life of their subject when he disappeared after his mistress, Rekha Merchant had committed suicide with her children (14-17); the Hamza-nama cloths in Changez Chamchawala’s art collection are described, providing visceral detail of what Saladin calls “the sheer barbaric love of pain” (69-70); and there is the extensive Shepperton studios sequence detailing the elaborate sets constructed for “Friend!,” the musical adaptation of Charles Dicken’s novel, Our Mutual Friend (The Satanic Verses 420-431). Finally, there are divine councils, most of which revolve around Satanic verses and the words of Allah given through the angel Gibreel: the prophet/businessman Mahound converses with Gibreel to determine the worth and strength of the Satanic verses, the angel speaks to the man and the man informs the angel what divine writ should be, blurring distinctions—who is the source of divine argument, the mouthpiece of Allah

59 The opening sequence of this book (1-87) is literally a war in the heavens with armed terrorists having hijacked an airplane filled with passengers. As Paul Brians points out in his Notes on The Satanic Verses, this sequence is a: conflations of elements based on two different events. On June 14, 1985 a TWA flight was hijacked by a band of Shiite terrorists, from Athens to a series of airports, ending in Beirut, where the plane sat on the runway until July 1, with people being released at various intervals. On June 23, 1985, Air India (AI) Flight 182, en route from Canada via London to India, crashed into the ocean 120 miles southwest of Ireland, killing all on board. Sikh separatists were suspected of having planted a bomb (see Jiwa). After the publication of the novel, on December 21, 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 was blown up by a terrorist bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all on board in a manner strikingly reminiscent of the Flight A 1-420 explosion (10).
(Gibreel) or man himself (Mahound)? There is the whole deliberation between Mahound and Gibreel, along with the discussions that Mahound has with Bilal, Khalid and Salman, which work as a reflection on the dialogue between Allah, the three goddesses (Al-Lat, Uzza and Manat), and Shaitan (The Satanic Verses 91-126).

To reiterate an earlier point, this catalogue of the uses of formal qualities in epic is not meant to reveal that Rushdie’s work is imitating Virgil’s. Rather, it shows a use (whether intentional or not) of those techniques that we associate with epic and which we do not find, to a large degree, in longer works of fiction, be they modern or postmodern. As such, this work may be perceived as part of the evolution of epic style. It is similar to how we may look upon a specific building, such as Le Corbusier’s 1954 Chappelle Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France, and immediately recognize features that we associate with older forms. From a frontal perspective, this Chapel visually imitates the effect of sails or wings (reminding worshipers perhaps of Psalm 91); this church also includes altar as the focus of the interior and stained glass windows, both of which add to the impression that we have come upon a Roman Catholic house of worship. The incorporation of such features, a bricolage of styles, is common in postmodernism: in different measures, such works honor, alter, and subvert preconceptions of style and structure. A similar effect can be had when an older structure is adapted for a newer use and we cannot help but see what it had been, as with the former “Limelight” nightclub in the Chelsea section of New York City—that it formerly was a church (now deconsecrated) is evident from a variety of formal (technical) perspectives. Its structure,

60 See especially verses 3-4, which evoke the imagery of a bird with outspread wings: God will rescue you from the fowler's snare, from the destroying plague/ Will shelter you with pinions, spread wings that you may take refuge; God's faithfulness is a protecting shield.
material choices, layout and windows reflect a traditional idea of what a church looks like; however, the idea of what the structure was to be used for had shifted markedly.

In literature, we only need look as far as Alexander Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* to see how the effective parody of epic is served to a large degree by how he emulates and thwarts formal epic conventions. His effort is regarded as a mock epic in that it employs epic style to treat a trivial subject. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* works along similar lines—and yet, it is a work that makes contrasting impressions: it implies epic influences in its use of names and the playful flouting of formal conventions; at the same time, it is a hodgepodge of prose, drama, and verse that seems at tension with any attempt to define it as epic. Nonetheless, it has become accepted as part of the epic canon, being taught in graduate school courses about the epic; in *The Epic*, Paul Merchant suggested that *Ulysses* “may even in time be regarded as the greatest of all secondary epics” (78). ⁶¹

Overall, our anticipation of narrative and narrative action is closely linked to the expectations conveyed through a compounded effect of formal qualities. Merely including an invocation or an ecphrasis may be a nod or an homage—it is the compounded effect of formal epic qualities (it is a measure of degree) that makes us perceive a work such as *Ulysses* as an epic. It is this compounded effect that requires us to see epic techniques (or formal qualities) as parts of a recipe: you should have most of this and that…and that, however, it is not necessary to have *all* these techniques—nor should a writer feel constrained to use them only as they have been used before. In such

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⁶¹ Interestingly, in a 1920 letter to Carlo Linati, Joyce related that *Ulysses* was “…an epic of two races (Israelite-Irish) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life)” (qtd. in Seidel 101). More recently, this consideration has been expanded on in Andras Ungar’s book-length study, *Joyce’s Ulysses as National Epic: Epic Mimesis and the Political History of the Irish Nation State*.  
a case, as Steinberg points out, “lesser writers…include [generic conventions or
techniques to] declar[e] their affiliation with a particular tradition. The greatest writers
…do not simply include them. Instead they use them, manipulate them, and play with
them; ultimately they create something new with them” (19).

Discussing the study of genres in his Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye points
out that “all art is…conventionalized” (96). He cautions that we live in an age where we
believe that every [new] work of art is an invention distinctive enough to be patented,“ which avoids the notion that what we write now is not only an imitation of nature but an
imitation of the works that have preceded us (95). The difficulties related to this notion
of convention are complex: in so many ways, we have banished epic to the dust heap of
literature—according to Mikhail Bakhtin’s harsh assessment, (in his essay “Epic and
Novel”) it is “already completely finished” and we are conscious of its conventions as
they are “well-defined and real” (39); however, once we accept it as “completely
finished” we disable our perceptions or we have reinforced our preconceptions. Being
completely finished, it is no longer viable; as it is no longer viable, it is not being written
now (or seen as being written now). It is like one of those tricks that psychologists can
play on people—using misdirection or the inducement of “change blindness” to reveal
how we see based largely on what we think we will see.

Form creates expectations of content, scope and theme. Pope’s Rape of the Lock
takes advantage of these expectations, as does Joyce’s Ulysses; so too does Tasso’s
Jerusalem Delivered and Milton’s Paradise Lost. To consider the implications of these
expectations, it is necessary next to broaden the discussion to encompass a consideration
of the type of story that an epic tells.
What Kind of an Idea is Epic? Scope, Theme & Content

Near the beginning of the Mahound section of The Satanic Verses, we are introduced to this “businessman-turned-prophet” (named Mahound) and “[t]here is a voice whispering in his ear: *What kind of idea are you?*” (95). This question haunts Mahound throughout this story: in fact, it must haunt this character since Rushdie is operating under the conceit that he himself is teasing and whispering to his characters, egging them onward and aside and backward, playing with them as they make decisions. This question is one of the driving forces behind this narrative, compelling doubt and uncertainty amongst the various players. It is also a pointed question about this narrative in particular and narratives in general – *what kind of idea are you?*

In other words, what is the connection between idea and representation? Or, what is the link between theme and form? (If I am a prophet, how should I speak, act, think, dress, scratch, sniffle, gesture; with whom should I consort; against whom should I inveigh? If I am a prophet, what kind: salvific, condemnatory, milquetoasty?) These strategic questions bog down and compel the creation of personalities as much as they do buildings, literary works, music, and other works of art. What is the relation of function to form?

C.S. Lewis’ essay, “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s to Be Said,” is a good place to understand this concern, by revealing how he approached creating imaginative works as a writer of fiction. Near the beginning of the essay, Lewis notes how
In the Author’s mind there bubbles up every now and then the material for a story. For me, it invariably begins with mental pictures. The ferment leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for a Form: verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not. When these two things click you have the Author’s impulse complete. (45)

Some might quibble that this description reduces the creator’s activity due to its direct summation of what Lewis terms “the Author’s reason [for writing an imaginative work]” (45). Yet every story has a form and, as Lewis emphasizes, certain forms are best married with certain stories. Hence, the response to the question “what kind of idea are you” helps one choose the very form that one is going to take.62

At the beginning of his A Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis states how he approaches form as a scholar, pointing out that “the first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is” (1). He is right on target. His tangible examples help us recognize that we combine expectations and senses to determine what something is; similarly, when new forms of these items are created, they often build on these expectations without remaining slavish to older forms.63 Indeed, literary forms evolve just as architecture evolves—even so rigid a form

62 I dealt with this question in great detail during my Honors Comic Books and Graphic Novels course, held during the Spring 2009 term at Fairleigh Dickinson University, in which we examined how sequential art complemented with text tells a story differently than a poem or a novel or a work of short fiction or a drama—and, moreover, why it was the best way to say what needed to be said. For example, the fabulistic nature of Art Spiegelman’s Maus may verge on parody, while its metaphors and fabulism would be neutered if it were told simply as a traditional prose novel.

63 For example, the Metrokane Rabbit Corkscrew (an award winning design in 2001), functions as an ergonomically effective bottle opener that is made possible by its novel look—it resembles a rabbit, ears and all; it does not resemble the traditional corkscrew. An example of a structure that builds on older forms is the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, NJ (built 1899 – 1954): it has French Gothic and Romanesque motifs, but its “bones” are comprised of steel girders and it is complemented with a copper-covered steel roof. Then again, there is the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, CA (built 2005-2008), which can be categorized as eclectic late twentieth-century abstract architecture. Constructed using pre-cast concrete, steel and glass, it resembles a cone that has been cut in half, at a horizontal angle, about two-thirds of the way up. The former “looks” like a cathedral though its underlying structure is much like any large office building.
as religious architecture (the creation of churches, synagogues, masjids) which has more constraints due to the requirements imposed by ritual, scripture and tradition.

The “what it is” for literature and architecture is not constant and unchanging, but part of a series of snapshots, which help reveal a continuity of form, use and expectation that is subject to shifts in fashion, whimsical influences, the turgidity of culture clash and mesh, and the retreats to Spartan simplicity. The momentum and the trajectory are not simple, but stages and measures of where we have been at certain points and how the form has evolved.

To a degree, Lewis takes for granted that we understand and categorize different things or ideas from the practical to the spiritual; similarly, it is part of our practice of teaching and analyzing literature—we situate works within genres. Overall, we have a fairly regimented way of defining written works and are discomfited ourselves with works that do not fit into one category or another: even in the postmodern era, we still try to fit written works within one framework/form or another (or multiple forms, in some cases). We are genre-obsessed creatures.

In his study, Twentieth-century Epic Novels, Theodore Steinberg begins by focusing on genre, detailing how “[g]eneric classifications raise certain expectations in the knowledgeable reader, and those expectations themselves become important aspects of a literary work” (19). We read Homer’s Iliad or Milton’s Paradise Lost as epics—indeed, it would be rare to find a person who would come across one or the other of these works without some general context regarding how they fit into genre (they are packaged erected in the early twentieth-century. The latter, though more abstract, retains certain elements—pews, baptistery, tabernacle, etc. including the cathedra (the bishop’s seat)—that one thinks will be in such an edifice.
with introductions, prefaces, jacket notes or comments; they are categorized in library,
online bookstore or storefront bookstore as belonging to specific categories of writing).

Steinberg qualifies his consideration by quoting from Jacques Derrida’s essay “The Law of Genre,” which concludes:

The genre has always in all genres been able to play the role of order’s principle: resemblance, analogy, identity, and difference, taxonomic classification, organization and genealogical tree, order of reason, order of reasons, sense of sense, truth of truth, natural light and sense of history. (qtd. in Steinberg 20)

Typical of Derrida, he nods toward the role of genre as ordering principle though he wants us to be conscious of the gap or emptiness upon which we impose such categories.

Nonetheless, Derrida’s reasoning restates much of what has been obvious since genre classification of epic was ossified in Aristotle’s Poetics—our need to classify and categorize in order to clarify, qualify and quantify occurs in all areas of discussion, be they sciences, humanities or theologies or even foodstuffs.

In fact, Steinberg prepares us for this discussion of genre by telling an anecdote about the displeasure a friend had at a potluck dinner—the friend had eaten a morsel which she assumed was a brownie, but it was, in fact, a stuffed mushroom: as a brownie it was terrible, however, as a stuffed mushroom it was “pretty good” (19). Such instances are often grist for comedy but they say so much about how expectations form our interpretations and experiences—they are played out in blind date scenarios, game shows, talent contests and musical performances. We expect one thing and are given another—the very imposition of our expectations changes the ways thing tastes, looks, and tells a story. As such, we should better understand how genre informs our understanding(s) of
literary works in order to understand how we allow ourselves to understand works in general.

Genre is tricky. As noted above, it “constitutes a field of reference” with regard to how a story is told and what the story is telling and to whom it is directed. As such, a particular genre includes in its field of reference the probable relationships to certain texts and certain uses—though we should interpret these as historical trends of reading rather than as natural ways that things should be read. That is, there is no pure state or idealized genre, as both Greene and Conte detail; rather, each genre is:

subject to many possible deformations: it can be combined, reduced, amplified, transposed, and reversed; it may suffer various types of functional mutations and adaptations; the content and expression of one genre may become associated with another. (Conte 5)

There have been attempts to maintain a status quo for genre categories, but all have proven short-lived; what we can find are strains, traces, connotations and trends that represent, over the long term, continuities in the evolution of genres.

It is necessary to examine what have been termed “snapshots” to discern the continuities of the epic and discover where its definition may have narrowed as it evolved. Moreover, it is helpful to address those perspectives that have most influenced our appreciation and understanding of what epic is. To frame these perspectives, let us consider two fairly recent discussions of epic: the first, which summarizes much recent scholarship, is Peter Toohey’s primer on classical Western epic, titled Reading Epic: An introduction to the ancient narratives; the second is Joseph Farrell’s essay “Walcott’s

64 Toohey’s work is very traditional, focusing solely on ancient Western narratives—that is, Greco-Roman texts. His only mention of the epic in relation to modern literature can be found in a paragraph with the header “The Modern Novel and the Epic,” which is buried in his book’s appendix.
Omeros: The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World,” which criticizes many of the definitions of epic that grew out of German Romantic tradition.

Toohey starts off by defining epic following Paul Merchant’s basic definition:

[for Greece and Rome this is the simplest explanation: it is a long narrative written in hexameters (or a comparable vernacular measure) which concentrates either on the fortunes of a great hero or perhaps a great civilization and the interactions of this hero and his civilization with the gods. (1)\(^{65}\)

Soon after he states this definition, Toohey backpedals necessarily, admitting that defining epic is no simple task as there is no *simple* definition for epic—as much as we would like there to be. He points out that both Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, which has “no hero, no gods, and its regard for ‘civilization’ is scant” and Hesiod’s *The Shield of Achilles*, an *ecphrasis* which includes gods, a hero and civilization, are also considered epics (1).\(^{66}\)

Most often, as can be seen here, when confronted with the dilemma of what an epic is, we opt for the broadest path (which is the more constrained definition) –though we still make allowances for other works that do not quite fit the mould.

Having introduced the *problem* of definition, Toohey turns to the earliest sources to help classify epic, including Aristotle, Quintilian and Manilius. He does not include Horace’s brief but important comments since this Roman poet reserved most of his comments with regard to form or style.

Toohey points out how Aristotle had the greatest influence on how later writers and critics came to perceive epic; however, he cautions that the account given in the *Poetics* “does not provide definitions capable of embracing the full range of ancient epic

\(^{65}\) Merchant’s *The Epic* is a helpful, short, general introduction, which briefly considers Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Dante, Chaucer, Langland, Spenser, and Milton, with even briefer coverage of works from Pope to Tennyson; it is capped off with a discussion of “modern epic.”

\(^{66}\) See also the discussion on this topic in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (519).
literature” (2). Certainly, the Poetics are limited by their historical context and their points of reference. Due to their continued influence, it is helpful to summarize some of these characteristics, most of which are in Books 23 and 24 of the Poetics. Comparing it to tragedy, Aristotle states that an epic should have:

- its plot constructed on dramatic principles with a single action (with beginning, middle and end) as its subject
- organic unity and produce the proper pleasure
- reversals of the situation (peripeteia) recognitions (anagnorisis) and scenes of suffering (pathema).

His consideration is very straightforward but helpful to the extent that it provides a basis upon which it is possible to expand on the recipe for epic detailed in the previous section.

In Book V of the Poetics, Aristotle points out in that “Epic poetry…is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type…is narrative in form [and] epic action has no limits of time.” We can leave aside his mention that the form “is an imitation in verse” (my emphasis) since he had previously remarked (in Book I) that both Homer and Empedocles use verse, however, they “have nothing in common but the meter, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet” due to the differences in what they are representing and how they are representing.

He sums up this argument in Book IX, presenting an idea about poetry which seems at odds with people’s conceptions: to most, poetry is about verse (whether metrical or not), but for Aristotle it is about the type of story that is told in relation to its probability:
it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity…. [and it] clearly follows that the poet or ‘maker’ should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions.

That poetry is “what is possible” reveals that it uses histories, phenomena, politics, religions, etc. as a basis for representing what could have happened. As such, any discussion of poetry is a consideration of scope, theme and content.\(^67\) That Toohey does not include this consideration of poetry is common and its absence is part of a continuing line of thought regarding what epic should be like. Moreover, it does not fit it with his breakdown of epic into subgenres, which he notes is represented by Quintilian (Institutio Oratoria 10.1.46ff. and 10.1.85ff) and Manilius (near the beginning of Astronomica II) including mythological, didactic, pastoral and miniature (2). Toohey warns us in advance that his “discussion ‘essentializes’ epic subgenres [for] simpler apprehension [since] in real life [sic], genres and subgenres are constantly evolving and transforming (2). In fact, the whole process of discussing epic has proven troublesome due to an overreliance on essentializing. But the danger lies perhaps not in giving definition or classification to things (such as epic) but in the rigidity with which we go about it. Thomas Greene goes so far as to claim that “it isn’t really clear that all those various [canonized] poems [in the European tradition] can legitimately be huddled under a single generic umbrella” (“The Natural Tears” 189).

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\(^67\) Obviously, the Iliad, the Aeneid, and Paradise Lost make no pretense with regard to representing what actually happened and neither does The Satanic Verses—however, the latter text is a lesson in what may happen when a writer tests the waters of the probable in ways that are perceived as threatening or provocative. In some ways, writing such a text is a “revolt against history,” a phrase that Rushdie reacts to in his essay, “In God We Trust.” The phrase is from Ali Shariati, one of the ideologues of the Iranian revolution of 1979, and it implies, according to Rushdie, that “history is characterized as a colossal error and the revolution sets out quite literally to turn back the clock” (383).
Aristotle may be broad but he is prescriptive, though he most often has been viewed as prescriptive. He is practical; however, due to contexts through which we have inherited his ideas and his interpretations, they have become like the branches of an old oak, unyielding until they shatter where once they may have had the suppleness of the twigs of a willow. Though Aristotle’s thoughts on epic may seem spare, they do provide a helpful way through which we can begin to understand the way that newer texts allude to older texts and provide one of many ways to read them.

One final caution regarding Aristotle’s definitions of epic. Through habit and tradition, we extract his definitions from the Poetics as though they were scientific principles that have been discovered based upon repeated experimentation, like the law of inverse squares or Kepler’s laws of planetary motion. However, as Gregory Nagy states in his study “Epic as Genre,” Aristotle’s definitions are dependent on Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey to the exclusion of other authors and traditions (21). Nagy goes so far as to conclude that “the criteria for determining the status of epic as genre [may] vary from culture to culture, even from period to period within a culture” (28). What Aristotle relates regarding epic has to do with the political/social and historical contexts that inform his reading of these works; that he became the authority for reading epic has to do with the ways that he has been read. Moreover, that he “remains the stable foundation for the theory of genres” (Bakhtin 8) in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries informs us about how we want to read epic as well as how aware we are of the ways that such texts have been read since the Poetics were first written.

Joseph Farrell’s essay, “Walcott’s Omeros: The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World” is terse and reacts strongly to so many of the preconceptions of epic that have
taken root in academia—and he takes to heart Nagy’s critique of how we see epic as genre. Farrell contends that our genre classifications have misinformed more than they have assisted in helping us read texts. Though not particularly concerned with Aristotle’s classification, he proposes that the “traditional definitions [of epic] are wholly inadequate” and that

a good deal of the modern theoretical discourse that concerns itself with epic…formulations, descended from Schiller [including] Hegel, Lukács, Auerbach and Bakhtin—shows a pronounced tendency to employ a discursive caricature of the genre [which] has resulted in a number of pernicious literary-historical misconceptions, not least of which is the absurdly one-dimensional idea of the epic genre that many students of literature regard as axiomatic. (279)

Farrell’s main concern, which he does not adequately develop in this essay, is the acceptance of certain theories of epic as axiomatic. Axioms are self-evident or universally recognized truths and we have as few of them in literature as we have had in mathematics—nonetheless, the study of literature and, separately, the application of mathematics are based on the acceptance of certain axioms in order to make things testable or to make things “click.” Just as Kurt Gödel’s article, "On formally undecidable propositions of Principia Mathematica and related systems,"\(^{68}\) showed how the axioms that formed the basis of math had no formal proof within the system of mathematics, so too have postmodern thinkers,\(^{69}\) torn down the scaffolding and revealed the tenuous foundations upon which genre theory, textual construction and human thought in general

\(^{68}\) Gödel’s work was originally published in German in 1931 as “Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme, I.” This paper responded to the efforts of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead’s three-volume Principia Mathematica (1910-1913), which attempted to clarify and define all of the axioms necessary for a complete system of mathematics.

\(^{69}\) The list of postmodern thinkers is extensive. Some basic foundational texts include Michel Foucault’s The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), Jacques Derrida’s “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (1966), Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” (1968), and Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949). There are so many others, too numerous to mention here.
are based. Yet the axioms must remain—so we can apply math and study literature. However, as in the sciences, some axioms are dismissed or modified after they have been shown to be unwarranted, irrelevant and/or untenable.

To reveal the shortcomings of an axiom or to understand its relevance and logic, it is necessary to lay out its principles or definitions and test them. Such is Farrell’s proposal—that we deconstruct epic theory rooted in German Romanticism (Schiller through Bakhtin, noted above) which has come to dominate so much of what we think of works described as epic currently. Indeed, this strain of thinking has become as fixed in our consciousness as Aristotle’s earlier conceptions and, in many ways, much more limiting since it provides a much narrower reading of these works.

Farrell charges these modern thinkers with a diminished understanding of epic, since they examine it merely “as a foil for making clearer the…“open” characteristics of other genres, especially the novel” (279). He outlines, as particularly troubling, three characteristics of epic associated with this strain of thinking, including

…*authority*, the idea that the stories told by the epic narrator are objectively true; *transcendence*, or the idea the authority and truth of the epic narrative are wholly independent of any historical or cultural contingency; and *originality*, the idea that epic is in some sense a source of a subsequent culture, particularly as the embodiment of a nation’s character. (279-280)

The sense of *originality* is rooted in the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) whose works focused on the notion of the “Volk,” which was “conceived of as a social collective or nation that was a patriarchal construction…where history, language, and

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70 The relevant works of Herder include the *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772) and “Extract from a correspondence about Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples” (1773).
culture are interrelated and shared” (Beissinger 70). According to Herder, “For every distinct community is a nation…having its own national culture as it has its own language” (White 5). Herder’s notion of the Volk, translated as “nation” or “people” in English, had a remarkable effect on subsequent perceptions of not only folk practices, but also ancient works such as the epics of Greece and Rome, which came to be conceived as works about national character, an incipient notion in the late eighteenth century.\footnote{The incipient nature of nationalism will be discussed below in Chapter Three, which focuses explicitly on the origins of this idea and its relationship to the idea of empire.}

The notions of \textit{transcendence} and \textit{authority} can be linked to Friederich Schiller’s 1795 treatise, “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry,” which aligns the naïve with nature and correspondingly with truth. Homer is the naïve poet, the “true genius” who is one with nature, for, as Schiller declares, “[t]he ancient poets touch us through nature, through sensuous truth” (201). There is a tenuous link between what Schiller states here and how Aristotle discusses nature in the \textit{Poetics}, wherein the latter ascribes poetry as having come from two causes—imitation and rhythm—both of which are instinctual, or from nature (Book IV). Yet it is a dramatic shift in thinking that compels Schiller to represent nature as a cause of truth in (naïve) poetry, of which Homer’s works are the exemplars since he is closest to nature.\footnote{See Schiller, \textit{On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry} 198-199, 203.}

In many ways, Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel’s \textit{Aesthetics} (1835) represent a grand synthesis of exploring these ideals of originality, transcendence and authority that can be found in Herder and Schiller. This broad work discusses the “general conception and the reality of beauty in nature and art: true beauty and true art or…the Ideal” (613),
focusing on how art expresses or reveals the spirit of particular nations or peoples. Hegel continues by stating how “in the whole of the genres of art the nature of art unfolds the whole of the aspects and factors inherent in its own essence” (621). The third art he examines is poetry, which is “the absolute and true art of the spirit and its expression as spirit” (626). His reading of art is wholly unlike Aristotle’s and yet it does not contradict it—overall, it is more expansive in that it broadens the scope of what art is discussed and, at the same time, more particular because it designates distinct qualities to epic and other arts which are endemic only to his own milieu, not to Homer’s or Virgil’s periods, etc.

His discussion on epic is lengthy (some seventy pages) and begins with the premise that epic brings before us a “topic in the entirety of its existence” in “all its relations and events [and] the sweep of all the circumstances and their development” (1040). As such, Hegel proposes that “the content and form of epic proper is the entire world-outlook and objective manifestation of a national spirit presented in its self-objectifying shape as an actual event” (1044). This sentiment, repeatedly discussed by Hegel, echoes Herder’s ideas, as it builds toward the notion of “the spirit of an age [(or Zeitgeist) being] the underlying efficient cause of an epic” (1049). For Hegel, all epics have become nationalist manifestos. As such, they are considerations of customs and laws that have developed and organized to the point that they reveal not only the world of a “particular nation; [in addition,] it must be such that what is universally human is firmly impressed at the same time on the particular nation described and on its heroes and their deeds” (1057-58, his emphasis). Thus, Hegel’s perspective is particularly constraining and well-nigh traumatic in its expectations of what an epic should achieve: he proposes that epic narratives present a people in a synecdochic manner –the single
group represents the whole—thus, according to Hegel, the Greeks in the *Iliad* stand for the whole of what is true and universal for an age.\(^73\)

There are two problems with Hegel’s consideration. First of all, he must exclude a whole host of epic works in order to make his nationalist perspective work and refine the works that he considers. For while the *Aeneid* may be interpreted as having an imperial agenda, representing the spirit of the Romans per Augustan fiat, Homer (on whom he focuses primarily) describes not a nation of Greeks (grouped under various general terms including Achaeans, Danaans or Argives) but rather a loose confederation of various tribes each distinct and separated in particular geographic regions and ruled by different kings or chiefs: Achilles leads the Myrmidons, Odysseus rules the Island of Ithaca, etc. While the term Achaeans is (most commonly) used to describe the various tribes that had banded together to retrieve Helen from Troy, there is nothing of the idea of the nation inherent in the term or in its use in Homer.\(^74\)

The second problem relates to Hegel’s broad strokes at discussing how epic represents what is “*universally* human.” He qualifies this claim by comparing the “preponderantly specialized” traits of the *Ramayana* to the “the undying and eternal

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\(^73\) Hegel justifies the clashes of cultures and the differentiation of values and perspectives by pointing out that “in almost all the great epics we see peoples different in morals, religion, speech, in short in mind and surroundings, arrayed against one another; and we are made completely at peace by the world-historically justified victory of the higher principle over the lower which succumbs to a bravery that leaves nothing over for the defeated” (1062). In a seeming ironic turn, he echoes the approach of Thrasymachus in Plato’s *Republic*, arguing that might has made right.

\(^74\) In *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, C.S. Lewis examines the nine instances in the *Iliad* where the word *παναχαεοι* (all Achaeans or all-Greeks) appears (according to the Oxford *Iliad*), he notes that on eight of the occasions, it is preceded by aristheis or aristhas—‘the champions of the Panachaeoi’. There is no contrast suggested between the All-Greeks and the Barbarians; only between the All-Greeks, the Greeks as a whole, and their own best men. In the ninth passage (IX, 301)… the ‘All’ seems to point a contrast between the totality of the Greeks and one member of that totality: there is no idea… of Greeks united against the Barbarians. (28)
presence of …the whole of existence” that we find in Homer (1058). He is caught in the very trap that Nagy and Farrell present—he privileges Homer above comparable texts to create a sense of it not merely representing a *Zeitgeist*, but a seeming *Weltgeist* since it supersedes the age of which it is a part and represents the whole of civilization.\(^7\)

The perspective found in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* is compounded in György Lukács’ *The Theory of the Novel*.\(^7\) This work, which focuses on describing the epic in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the novel,\(^7\) states how

> great epic writing gives form to the extensive totality of life…[He proposes how]

For the epic, the world at any given moment is the ultimate principle; it is empirical at its deepest, most decisive, all-determining transcendental base; …epic [is] life itself. (46-47)

His tone is a strong mix of Hegel and Schiller, by turns bookish and sentimental, though his overall goal is focused on revealing how “the novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God” (88)—concluding that the former has superseded the latter.

One of the key things that he emphasizes is the epic hero, who is “never an individual…[since]…one of the essential characteristics of the epic is the fact that its theme is…the destiny of a community” (66). Overall, this destiny of the community is connected to a “world destiny [which] gives the events of the epic their content” (67).

\(^7\) Franco Moretti’s *Modern Epic* establishes a different take on Hegel, focusing on three foundations that he finds in the *Aesthetics*: the breadth of action of the story told, the totality of the story in relation to a nation and an epoch, and the totality’s relation to “a living attitude of mind, not separated from the single individual as such” (Hegel qtd. in Moretti 11). We will see this perspective repeated in Lukács’ work. Moretti’s study reacts to these foundations; he concludes that according to Hegel’s perspective, “the nearer we come to the present, the more epic loses any meaning” (12) since state or national life dissolves the unity of the universal with the individual.

\(^7\) Lukács’ 1962 preface to *The Theory of the Novel* comments that in writing this work, “his starting point was provided by Hegel, Goethe and Romanticism” (20). In addition, he also states earlier that “the first, general part of [The Theory of the Novel] is essentially determined by Hegel [and] Goethe’s and Schiller’s analyses [which] fill out and concretise the general Hegelian outline” (15).

\(^7\) According to Lukács, the “novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God” (88).
The more Lukács develops this discussion, the more confined the hero becomes. From this perspective, the hero (in addition to the epic poem and poet) has become an authority who is transcendent and original, and he becomes the basis from which the nation (from which he is indivisible) comes into being and realizes its destiny. Thus, the fate of a Hector or an Aeneas or an Eve or a Leopold Bloom would have to be connected “by indissoluble threads to the community whose fate is crystallized in his own” (67). Here again the synecdochic relationship that Hegel detailed—here the individual’s fate and destiny—are the destiny of a community, and the community’s destiny represents that of the world. The first three examples are very direct—there is the notion that Troy will only fall if Hector is killed, that Aeneas must defeat Turnus to found Rome, and that Eve must be tempted and eat the fruit of the forbidden tree for humanity to fall. That it is essential that Leopold Bloom complete his odyssey through Dublin and return home to Molly in order for the Irish nation to come into being may be seen as more tenuous and perhaps parodic; after all, how might this seemingly mundane event be likened to the destiny of a people (and of the world)?

This question can be addressed more effectively if we move from Lukács to Mikhail Bakhtin, whose essay “Epic and the Novel,” which was first translated into English as part of the collection The Dialogic Imagination in 1981. Bakhtin’s essay has done more than any other critical work to reinforce this strain of German Romanticism that was developed by Schiller and Herder and worked its way through Hegel and

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78 In his Postscript to Aspects of the Epic, Tom Winnifrith notes that “the great epic poems succeed in spite rather than because of their heroes” (within this context, he recalls how both Dryden and Pope, the one former translating the Aeneid and the latter the Iliad, were embarrassed by their respective “heroes” — Aeneas has his lapses from grace and Achilles, according to Pope (in his preface to Dryden’s translation of the Iliad), “is not as good and perfect a prince as Æneas.”
Lukács. So much so has it reinforced our way of thinking about epic that many of his ideas seem oddly compelling until you step back and reexamine primary texts he seems to be addressing.

For example, Bakhtin states that

epic as a genre… may, for our own purposes, be characterized by three constitutive features: (1) a national epic past [is] the subject for the epic; (2) national tradition [is] the source for the epic; (3) [there is] an absolute epic distance separat[ing] the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives. (13)

He further qualifies these three features by noting how the epic’s national heroic past [is] a world of ‘beginnings’ and ‘peak times’ in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of ‘firsts’ and ‘bests’… the transferral of a represented world into the past and the degree to which this world participates in this past. (13)

The epic hero he describes resembles the one detailed by Lukács: we are informed that “outside of his destiny, the epic… hero is nothing” (36); correspondingly, “the epic hero lacks any ideological initiative” (35). My first encounter with these ruminations was divorced from the tradition of which they were a part (except for Bakhtin’s scattered references to Goethe, Schiller and Hegel), so these ideas appeared innovative and concise in that they explained quite a lot about what epic was or could be about in ways that I had never encountered. Throughout this essay, Bakhtin seems to be discussing the Iliad, and, by turns, examining the Aeneid; in other ways, he could be referencing Paradise Lost or, as Andras Ungar has argued, Ulysses: since “the culminating instant of [the] “Penelope” [episode in Ulysses] belongs to myth, the fixity and generative force of the occasion

79 Though he does not reference Bakhtin, Lukács or the German Romantic thinkers in his Heroic Poetry, C. M. Bowra was also influenced by them, particularly with his consideration of the hero. Bowra effectively reworks epic as “heroic poetry,” which “works in conditions determined by special conceptions of manhood and honor [the latter which is pursued] through risk” (14).
recall Mikhail Bakhtin’s univocal order of “beginnings…fathers…founders of families…‘firsts’…‘bests’” (80).80

However, with the exception of a brief mention of the Iliad,81 Bakhtin does not specifically name or reference any of these works when setting forth these constitutive features of the epic. So, what epic is he discussing? Or is he creating an idealized epic that draws more from theoretical tradition than from the works themselves? In his comprehensive survey on theories of epic, titled Epic Grandeur, Masaki Mori concludes “it is obvious that Bakhtin manipulates the epic in order to offer an insight into the nature of the novel” (38). A different perspective comes from Gregory Nagy’s comment that “Bakhtin’s hermeneutic model of ‘epic’ if we follow through on his criteria [would] fit the Iliad only” (28).82 Ultimately, his interpretation of epic is the narrowest and most specific; however, if it suits one epic only then it provides little to no insight regarding the epic as it has been performed and written, or as it has evolved in diverse ways. And yet, as one of the preeminently recognized figures regarding epic, his ideas have come to play a central role regarding how we have come to think about epic and what our expectations are; moreover, they do not allow epic to evolve.

We have come to believe that epic is about nations and peoples, that it is about heroes and their destinies, that it represents a world that is distant to us—“a past that is to

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80 This train of thought may explain the significance of Leopold Bloom getting home to Molly. See Ungar’s Joyce’s Ulysses as National Epic, especially the Introduction and Chapter 6.
81 In his only concrete mention of an epic, Bakhtin states: “The Iliad is a random excerpt from the Trojan cycle. Its ending [the burial of Hector] could not possibly be the ending from a novelistic point of view. But epic completedness suffers not the slightest as a result” (32).
82 Lukács is in complete agreement with Bakhtin: near the beginning of The Theory of the Novel he declares: “…. no one has ever equaled Homer, nor even approached him—for, strictly speaking, his works alone are epics…” (30).
[the author] inaccessible” (Bakhtin 13). So, it should not seem strange to us, beholden as we still are to this strain of thinking, of which Farrell is so critical, that an epic written in the twentieth century should conform just as much to what is in texts identified as epics as it is by the critics and scholars who have influenced our preconceptions regarding what this genre is and what it should be. Thus, if an epic is to be penned nowadays, it most probably will bring with it a sense of authority, transcendence and originality: it will embody truth in its pronouncements, provoke with a sense of destiny, and embody the character of a people. Or, shifting and evolving, as epic must do, it may provoke doubt as a means to truth, shatter a sense of inevitability in order to confirm the ways that fate is fulfilled, and exploit the ways in which people define themselves in order to reveal the ways in which a people are created.

There is one final caution with regard to Bakhtin’s definition of epic. Near the beginning of his essay, he states that epic “as a genre…has come down to us already well defined and real. We come upon it when it is already completely finished, a congealed and half-moribund genre” (14). To reason or accept that epic is “completely finished” is to work against our very understanding of how art is created and will continue to be created – for just as there are no origins or beginnings of which one can speak, there can be no end points or ways of describing genres or arts as finished or complete. There are only snapshots, which can reveal where we are at a distinct point, though it can not disclose the trajectory or the “momentum” of a genre. Art is continually already generative –forms are never (in his hyperbole) “completely finished.” At the same time,

83 I am thinking here of Werner Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle,” which defines how one cannot know both position and velocity of a particle with any degree of certainty.
that it is “completely finished” forms part of our preconceptions—we do not look for it being created in our current milieu, so we most probably will not recognize it. Thus, we not only have to read epics differently, informed of the conditions and contexts that affect our reading—which will inevitably alter which works we perceive to be epic—we also have to read the scholars and critics differently, avoiding predilections for essentializing genre and recognizing the limits of criticism within its own historical contexts.

Subject / Desire / Grandeur

The final three things that are necessary to discuss are the epic subject, epic’s relation to romance, and the concept of epic grandeur. The subject of epic is intrinsically linked to the grandeur it possesses and both contrast with the very idea of romance.

Both Virgil and Horace agree that the subject of epic is war and the deeds of kings. In his Ars Poetica, Horace declares that “Homer showed the meter in which the deeds of leaders//And kings, and the sorrows of war, may be written” Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella//quo scribi possent numero, monstrauit Homerus (73-74); similarly, in the third book of Virgil’s Georgics, the narrator (taken to be the poet) proclaims how “Soon however I will gird myself to recite the fiery fights//Of Caesar and make his name glorious for all time” Mox tamen ardentis accingar dicere pugnas//Caesaris et nomen fama tot ferre per annos (3.46-47). Here we have the intimation of the arma uirumque cano that opens the Aeneid, the epic subject succinct and direct. After reading this passage, Virgil’s readers (and listeners) knew an epic was
for what other type of writing speaks of war, has the reach across time with names writ large due to their broad impact?

Yet Virgil does not merely retell the subject of the Iliad and the Odyssey; rather, he reads Homer through the lens of his own time and the tumultuous experiences that his society has endured. He also changes the Western conception of epic forever. C. S. Lewis responds to this shift in storytelling, subject and process by detailing that “the epic subject, as later critics came to understand it, was Virgil’s invention; he altered the very meaning of epic” (Preface 33). Lewis proposes that Virgil took

one single national legend and treat[ed] it in such a way that we feel the vaster theme to be somehow implicit in it. He… deal[s] with a limited number of personages and make[s] us feel as if national, or almost cosmic, issues are involved. He… locate[s] his action in a legendary past and yet make[s] us feel the present, and the intervening centuries, already foreshadowed. (34)

Working from a learned and self-conscious tradition, Virgil combined, altered, compressed and enlarged upon the texts and contexts he inherited. For him, at least, it was not a genre that was “already completely finished…congealed and half-moribund.” He accomplished, in retrospect, what good artists hope to achieve, a mostly successful manipulation and invigoration of a genre. As Tom Winnifrith concludes, “great epic poets are original, very often overturning their predecessors’ values while apparently imitating them” (110). Theodore Steinberg similarly concludes that the “greatest writers manipulate genre” (21); finally, Thomas Greene states that “the norms of a genre like epic have to be violated if its vitality…is to remain vigorous” (5). That Virgil manipulated and violated and overturned convention is central to the healthy evolution of epic—that Europeans have continued to want to read and write epic in the same way has
been deleterious to this genre: in so many ways, it seems an attempt to maintain the
purity of the form and the few authors to whom to the label could be made to fit.⁸⁴

Using Alaister Fowler’s *Kinds of Literature*, which examines genres and modes of
literature, to expand his discussion on the perceived limits of genre classifications,
Steinberg suggests that

More recently we seem willing to consider works from multiple generic viewpoints. [For example,] *The Tempest* may fulfill the conventions of a
comedy, a romance, an apology for colonialism, or other generic classifications,
and our understanding of the play increases as we grasp each possibility; but
unless we understand at least some of these possibilities, we stand to miss a great
deal. (21)

Similarly, the ways in which we read Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* or C. S. Lewis’
*That Hideous Strength*—as two examples of so many possibilities—guide, narrow or
broaden how we read them. The former could be read with Homer’s *Odyssey* or Mark
Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad* or Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22* or James Frey’s *A Million
Little Pieces*; the latter could be read as science fiction in the vein of H.G. Wells’ *The
First Man on the Moon* or as a Christian allegory or as a “modern fairy tale,” as suggested
by the subtitle Lewis provides in the work. Similar concerns may complicate and expand
how we read Hesiod’s *Works and Days* or the “Song of Songs.” Indeed, the complexities
allowed by such reading can encourage one to fall into the trap that has befallen persons
influenced by German Romantic philosophic trends—Homer’s works do seem to be
preeminent in that they form the basis from which so much of genre definition in the

⁸⁴ One can only imagine what could have happened to the novel if, having already been written, it had been
classified in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. 
West proceeds—as such, they appear to be one with nature, true and essential. Moreover, that way of reading is much more direct and clear-cut.

When Virgil created the *Aeneid*, there were so many diverse types of literature that could and did inform his work—epic, idyll, didactic, elegy, chronicle, pastoral, ode, and tragedy (there is little to nothing resembling comedy in this work). By the time we arrive at Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, the repertoire of influences has expanded and, correspondingly, so have the ways in which we can read this work. Merchant might have categorized this work as an epic novel, as he did Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, because it “can be said to exist against a background of a whole civilization” (75), as it takes the breadth of the epic subject into account. Steinberg might suggest that we read this work as an “epic novel,” which may constitute one way of reading. All the same, it may be read as magical realist novel,85 Islamic allegory,86 or as an epic that responds to and supersedes the imperial epic first set forth by Virgil. In the end, epic is both a way of writing and a way of reading a work. However, that does not mean that we can read just any work as epic; rather, for us to read a work as epic, it should fulfill and conform to some of the expectations that we have of such work—whether these expectations are formal (having to do with style) or central (having to do with theme, scope and

85 The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory states that magical realism “is a genre of contemporary fiction in which a limited number of fantastic elements appear within a preponderantly realist narrative” (281). In their introduction to Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris note that *The Satanic Verses* is “the most controversial magical realist text of all” (9). Gayatri Spivak’s “Reading *The Satanic Verses*” is highly critical of Rushdie’s use of magical realism in this work, noting that “Vintage magical realism - Asturias or Marquez - has taught us to expect a more intricate mosaic” (84) than can be found in this work.

86 Feroza Jussawalla’s “Rushdie's 'Dastan-e-Dilruba': *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam” interprets this work as an Islamic allegory.
content). This points toward an acceptance of genre as organic—it evolves and shifts and, ultimately, resists universalizing, essentializing and schematization.

In his “Postscript” to Aspects of the Epic, Tom Winnifrith states that there are dangers when one attempts to schematize literature by genre. Focusing his remarks on Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism, which Winnifrith thinks can lose us with its “polysyllabic definitions,” he concludes that Frye’s approach and his analysis “seems curiously old-fashioned” (117). In many ways, it is Frye’s attempt to be all-encompassing—to place different types of literature in grids and tables—that seems dated. Nonetheless, Frye differentiates romance from epic, arguing how

The essential element of plot in romance is adventure… At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses. We see this form in comic strips, where the central characters persist for years in a state of refrigerated deathlessness. (186)

Here we have the story of the Odyssey—in fact, near the end of the poem (Book XXIII), Odysseus reveals to Penelope that he must embark on yet another adventure, to come to a country that does not know the sea and when there, to propitiate the gods. The Odyssey itself ends (Book XXIV) with a forced reconciliation, brokered by Athena, between Odysseus and the families of the slain suitors. Steinberg intentionally excludes the Odyssey from his discussion of epic for comparable reasons, though he emphasizes that this work is not about an individual and not a community (49-50).

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87 Such a consideration does not reduce these characteristics to constants; rather, it accounts for the fact that epic has evolved and we should be able to recognize some of these characteristics as being part of or derived from epic form and/or scope.
88 Frye does not make such a distinction himself—he includes Homer’s Odyssey as both an “epic of return” and as “a romance of a hero” (319).
89 The Odyssey itself ends (Book XXIV) with a forced reconciliation, brokered by Athena, between Odysseus and the families of the slain suitors.
90 Steinberg intentionally excludes the Odyssey from his discussion of epic for comparable reasons, though he emphasizes that this work is not about an individual and not a community (49-50).
stories include the ongoing Superman comics published by DC (the hero and his tales continue, in various incarnations, most of which have outlived their creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster) or the Alex Cross novels of James Patterson. The stories are cyclical in nature and there is no significant shift or transition that cannot be backpedalled or forgotten when the next installment is published. Ultimately, what the character accomplishes or what the plot advances has little bearing on the overarching sense of what transpires in the imagined realm of the romance. A romance is similar to the premise of the Harold Ramis’ film Groundhog Day, in which a weatherman finds himself repeating the same day over and over again.  

Epic is quite a different kind of story. While there may be adventure as part of such a story, a community and the world are altered irrevocably by the action(s) represented in the epic. As detailed above, Achilles’ slaying of Hector makes the fall of Troy inevitable; Aeneas arriving at Carthage leads to the bloody and protracted Punic wars, his arrival at Latium and subsequent slaying of Turnus leads to the founding of

91 In his 1985 essay, “On Adventure,” Salman Rushdie eschews those “wandering heroes of the classical epoch (Jason, Ulysses, unspeakably pious Aeneas)” who undertake what he equates with a “spiritual quest” (222-23), noting how contemporary literary travellers tend, [in our] anti-heroic age, to be more Huck[leberry Finn] than Chuck [Yeager, the astronaut].” Of course, what differentiates Rushdie’s conception of the adventurer or the Romantic pícaro is the notion that he or she “can, after all, gain knowledge that is not available elsewhere, and then, by living to tell the tale, offer that knowledge to us” (225). His proposal of the accumulation of knowledge seems bent on breaking the cycle and allowing the character to move beyond the scope of his or her adventures, suggesting what resides in the interstices between Romance and Epic; however, his primary example is of “[Don] Quixote, maddest of pícaros, [who] sees himself ridiculous at last” (225), without pointing out that this recognition comes only when adventure and story are at an end—and what remains alone is for Cervantes to have his character move on to death. There are no stories after his recognition; there is only the reading of a will and an epitaph.
Imperial Rome;\textsuperscript{92} the temptation of Adam and Eve leads to expulsion from Eden and the redemption of humanity by Christ.\textsuperscript{93}

Similarly, in The Satanic Verses, Mahound renounces the verses from Shaitan, affirming certainty over doubt—thus, altering the very course of history (123-126). Moreover, Chamcha matures into the acceptance of responsibility (542), the embrace of doubt (546-7), and anticipates the future (547), all of which which is emblematic of the \textit{post-imperial}, a politically necessary shift to regain one’s narrative, that is the narrative of one’s person, one’s people or the very definition of who one is or who one’s people are.\textsuperscript{94} It signals and acknowledges the moving beyond the post-colonial and, as such, anticipates narrative that moves beyond the age of empire.

Steinberg sums up this idea of the pivotal moment, noting that “the epic deals with the lives of individuals and communities at pivotal periods in the histories of those communities” (47). Epic is more interested in fracture or shift, while romance is interested in maintaining things as they are. The former is dynamic while the latter is static. Here is how The Satanic Verses reveals itself as an epic and not merely, as may be concluded, a mock epic: it uses epic conventions not merely to flout them or to tell a story that is trivial; moreover, though the text is riddled with humor and absurdity, it is

\textsuperscript{92} The Aeneid moves from epic to romance and back again depending on the purpose of the narrative (different narrative sections of this work call for different approaches); as such it uses these two approaches to represent the contexts and choices that make empire possible. As long as the narrative of the Aeneid remains entrenched in romance, as when Aeneas stays with Dido, empire is not possible; however, the epic shift occurs when Aeneas leaves her and undertakes the voyage, battles and decisions necessary to found Rome.

\textsuperscript{93} Lewis mentions that “the fall of Troy was inevitable after Hector’s death,” however, he denies that Homer had such a notion in mind since he believes that “Primary Epic simply wants a heroic story and cares nothing about a ‘great national subject’” (29). His thoughts here echo Bowra’s and much of the work done in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which linked epic to nationalism—though his notion contrasts sharply with the Hegelian tradition of reading epic.

\textsuperscript{94} The notion of the \textit{post-imperial} will be defined fully in Chapters Three and Seven.
not so at the expense of the profound themes with which he wrestles; rather, Rushdie grapples with many of the most trying issues that troubled humanity at the end of the twentieth century—doubt, mortality and anticipation.

To sum up this consideration, Homer’s Iliad is an epic because it shows an immutable shift—where the status quo is permanently upset—while the Odyssey is a cyclical adventure story of return, a setting back to a status quo. One is the fulfillment of desire, the other a putting off of desire. The former establishes and critiques the identity of a people, while the latter reinforces identity and does not critique it. To further understand the implications of epic fulfillment and critique, it is essential to include Susanne Wofford’s proposal that the poetic language of epic enables it to “‘express and define an entire cultural system while also revealing its contradictions and the costs of its ethical paradigms and political solutions’” (qtd. in Steinberg 45). There will be no simple way to read epic. As Steinberg concludes, “epic is subversive” (45).

And yet epic is often seen as anything but subversive: teachers and students alike repeat the notion that the Iliad is about heroes and the heroic code; the Aeneid is simply a propaganda piece about the nascent Roman Empire; Paradise Lost is a paean to Christianity. And yet Winnifrith points out, “An epic is not simple, but it is single” (116). In fact, to read epic on such simple terms is to situate only one way of reading; instead, we must conclude that “the great epics of world literature […] pose more questions than they answer” (Steinberg 44).

Finally, reading and understanding epic must take into account Aristotle’s notion of grandeur, described near the end of Book XXIV of the Poetics:
Epic … has … a great—a special—capacity for enlarging its dimensions … owing to [its] narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem. The Epic has here an advantage, and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes.

Here is the most captivating element of epic, which differentiates it markedly from tragedy. Masaki Mori’s study, Epic Grandeur, uses this idea of as the basis to explore a comparative poetics of epic and pursue an analysis of two transnational epics. Mori proposes that “epic grandeur stems mainly from three thematic elements: the hero’s attitude toward his mortality, his communal responsibility, and the dual dimension of time and space he and the entire work must cope with” (47). For the first element, he states that “the hero’s human limitations…center on the problem of mortality” and the destructive effects imparted by change (47); for the second element, he believes that “the epic protagonist…has to solve a grave problem of the community to which he or it belongs,” and while the problem “appears beyond his capacity, he somehow overcomes the difficulty in the end” (48); the third element, involving the “double expanse of time and space,” is represented temporally through “references to a people’s history, either annalistically or through recollections and prophecies,” and spatially through “reference to contemporary geographic circumference” (48-49).

Mori’s proposal has profound implications. The problem of mortality and destructive mutability confronts heroes from Achilles to Eve to Leopold Bloom; it is the concern that weighs down Gilgamesh, Dante and Aeneas; it is also a central theme of The Satanic Verses, which catalogues deaths as numerous as any war epic, its protagonist, 

95 In contrast to tragedy, Lukács declares that “there is such a thing as a great epic literature” (49).
96 Mori examines John Keats’ The Fall of Hyperion (1819) and Kenji Miyazawa’s A Night on the Galaxy Railroad (1927).
Saladin Chamcha, having cheated death and having been forced to confront the “tears in things,” until it is revealed at the very end, that “he was getting another chance” (547).

Each of these protagonists confronts the destructive mutability differently and, in each instance, the way in which the protagonist grapples with and confronts it signals a shift in the way that the community defines itself and understands itself. As mentioned above, Chamcha contemplates and is forced to face the “tears in things,” the grave problems and pressures that confront the exile, and overcomes them and, in so doing, confronts the very dilemma of how the exile is defined in time and space.

That Chamcha gets another chance at the end of The Satanic Verses is significant. Unlike Gibreel, his sometime companion and foil, Chamcha does not revolve back on himself, repeating the errors and hopes of his past; rather he seeks, answering Zeenat Vakil’s suggestion, “Let’s get the hell out of here” with the forward looking response, “I’m coming” (547). To build on Thomas Greene’s conclusion regarding secondary epic, Chamcha endures and supersedes the dilemma of community posed by empire with its conflicting and cluttered histories, and its shifting and contradictory ethical codes. To address this dilemma it is necessary first to explore the idea of community and identity that are represented by empire. This task will be taken up by the next chapter.

97 “The Natural Tears of Epic,” discussed above on pages 15-17.
Identity & Invention

When we first encounter Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses, he is in a pickle. No, it is not that he is falling toward the English Channel, having been thrown from an exploding plane. Surviving that is the stuff of miracles. He is in a more confounding pickle. He is cluttered and conflicted in his historical affinities; he has shifting and contradictory ethical codes. When we first meet him, the world he knows is on the cusp of a new era, a time when the British Empire is gasping out its last feeble and fetid breaths; ironically, in this time, he ennobles the attitudes, mannerisms and the whole way of material living that is the English. Having fled from his hometown Bombay to England when he was in his teens, Chamcha returns to the city of his birth as he nears middle age and falls under the spell of his old friend Zeenat (Zeeny) Vakil, who becomes his first Indian lover. She toys with him and mocks the whole sense of who he is trying to be, accusing him of being “a deserter is what, more English than, [with his] Angrez accent wrapped around [him] like a flag” (53).

Ironically, Chamcha has become the inverse of George Orwell’s narrator in “Shooting an Elephant.” This narrator is a sub-divisional police officer in the British Raj. Due to the situations he finds himself in, this narrator remarks that he has become “a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of [white man’s] rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives,” and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and
his face grows to fit it.” Orwell is allegorically depicting the straits that he found himself in—a situation wherein he was “all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British,” though he could not openly admit to having such sentiments. He inevitably becomes the “white man [who] turns tyrant” because he believes it is expected of him. The mask that Chamcha wears has grown to fit his face. As Zeeny says, “don’t think it’s so perfect, [your accent] slips, like a false moustache” (47). Chamcha, “the Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice” (60), who can mimic British speech affectations perfectly, has come undone. He is a man who is paid to “imitate [the British], as long as they don’t have to look at [him]” (60). In short, Chamcha or “Toadji” (58) or “Mister Toady” (48), has a dilemma with his identity. And, no wonder, considering the state of things in England at the time.98

The Satanic Verses was created in the milieu to which Rushdie was reacting in his 1982 essay, “The New Empire within Britain.” This essay examines the problems of identity that raged through the United Kingdom in the early 80s during the tenure of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It is a ringing indictment of British imperialism within the post-colonial era that is bookended by two considerations critical of British society and its ideas of history, empire and civilization. The first consideration, given at beginning of the essay, notes that “Britain is undergoing […] a crisis of the whole culture, of society’s entire sense of itself” (129). The second consideration closes the essay; it is a quote from Mahatma Gandhi who, when he “came to England….was asked

98 This comparison also recalls Virgil’s description of Aeneas when he speaks to the Trojan survivors after they have made landfall in Libya: spem vultu simulate, permit altum corde dolorem; “He simulates hope on his face, and he presses the sorrow deep in his heart” (I.209). Williams comments that Dryden imitates these lines in Annus Mirabilis 73, “His face spake hope, while deep his sorrows flow” (Aeneid I-VI 176n209). These lines also recall the lesson of the story of the vase recalled by Chamcha.
what he thought of English civilization, [to which] he replied: ‘I think it would be a good idea’” (138). It is helpful to begin this consideration of identity with these two quotes since they take into account the very basis upon which empire and “national” epic are constructed and deconstructed: a crisis of culture and the idea of civilization. It is a time of urgency and possibility. It is at such junctures, described by Rushdie in his essay, that a society wrenches itself from the static and blossoms into the dynamic. It is a moment when the act of representation calls attention to itself, as a people forge an idea of what and who they are.

Perhaps such situations (which result from political, cultural and economic changes) are similar to tectonic shifts, when earthen plates move after years (or thousands of years) of stasis: the whole of a land erupts and quakes, the land is remade in ways small and large as sections drift apart or are smashed together, and subsequently, a new stasis is attained until another shift occurs. Until the land is remade once more, we perceive it (all too quickly) as the norm, as always having been this way, or as part of a natural and requisite progression. In a way, each of these interpretations is right and wrong since all of our perceptions are limited not only by what we see, but how and why we see it that way. We do not notice the fact that the land or our culture is always already in flux—that tectonic plates are always on the move in small ways (that are indiscernible except to geological surveyors), and that culture, as we are constantly reminded currently, is always already also on the move—though in far less determinate ways.

Through these bookended considerations, Rushdie presents the possibility of an idea and the irruption of that idea, that moment when a society’s entire sense of itself
falls apart: the very fictions on which it is grounded and bred are deconstructed and reinvested (the drifting apart and the smashing) with alternate fictions. There is a slipping away from the way things were, but not without tremors or quakes, and, with the same violence, a hybrid is forged and/or forced.

In such situations and especially in the case of the shifts that occurred to the British Empire in the mid-to-late twentieth century, the center of the empire becomes the last colony (as Rushdie paraphrases E.P. Thompson in the same essay), the fictioned exiles now run (over? into?) and rule (over? with?) with the fictioned exilers. The empire Rushdie reflects on is no more (except perhaps in name and the persistence evident through habits of patriotism), even the last colony (at the center) has expired or has been transformed; ultimately, as a result, fictions are created that represent a way of thinking, acting and creating that can be characterized as post-imperial. The empire is no more. Moreover, there comes a time when the colonial past to which the empire was shackled (and the imperial past to which the colony was shackled) is effectively sundered—a point (different for each relationship between colony and colonizer) when the post-colonial reaction has run its course. The post-colonial is a residue of the imperial experience, which inevitably taints or affects the way a society describes itself. The post-imperial is that period during which this residue becomes one among many and is no longer inevitable; rather, there is an urge to create or imagine community that is no longer intrinsically beholden or reactive to the imperial legacy.

Such a moment is an epic moment, in the sense that something irrevocable and defining has occurred that creates an identity for a people—something hostile or benevolent has transpired which changes a people’s perception of themselves and of the
world. This epic moment occurs when the static is foregone and the situation has become dynamic; it is that moment of crisis which requires a people to reconsider all of the ways of defining themselves, their history, their future and the world in which they live. It is at such a moment that epic works are created since the previous sense of identity has been savagely undermined and assumed protean qualities—it is in flux and it no longer provides the stability and anchoring that each person and each community requires. The epic provides a measure of that stability and anchoring by giving voice to and representing these new ways of defining and imagining community.

Our identities are dependent upon the way(s) we imagine our community, be it family, tribe, empire or nation. Identity is central to our understanding of ourselves: how we represent ourselves and form relationships with people, nature, and the cosmos (ideas of fate, destiny and providence) are all dependent upon the ways in which we imagine ourselves. While there is no solid and unshifting basis upon which we can establish our connection with these things, there are multiple (temporary) ways upon which people rest their sense of identity in order to create a sense of solidity (for lack of a better word). Overall, each person always makes a necessary choice to situate herself or himself within a community or an idea of community. Obviously, both religious and non-religious traditions, rituals, literatures, songs, dances, artefacts and architecture have provided this sense of solidity (with the religious always having a broader and deeper impact than the non-religious—sometimes the latter is co-opted); scientific theories and discoveries have had an ever-increasing impact on our sense of identity.

Of course, science, in particular neuroscience, has a lot to say about identity. One of the better known discussions is the essay, “A Matter of Identity,” by the neurologist
Oliver Sacks, which focuses on the necessity of creating stories about our presents and our pasts in order to inform our identities. Sacks states: “we have, each of us, a life-story, an inner narrative—whose continuity, whose sense, is our lives. It might be said that each of us constructs and lives, a ‘narrative’, and that this narrative is us, our identities” (110, his emphasis). He notes further that “a man needs such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self” (111). A neurologist’s measure of perception and the world is quite different than that of the historian, the literary critic or the poet. In many ways, it is reassuring since it provides a systematic and alternative perspective on this need to construct and imagine ourselves in relation to a variety of contexts which we call ‘community.’

So, we need a narrative, constructed through the bits and pieces of religion, socialization and/or science that we encounter. Of equal importance is the fact that we have to accept the fact that certain narratives are privileged above others and that certain narratives are constructed (and are successful!) with the intent of providing the narrative necessary for a community that is being formed, recast or re-imagined. Just as every person “needs a narrative,” so too does every community to which an individual belongs or is an outsider. Such narratives are more essential when old ways of conceiving and representing the world have shattered or have become insufficient.

99 Katherine Toll’s article, “Making Romanness and the Aeneid,” (which will be discussed in Chapter Four below) references Sacks’ ideas as part of her consideration of Roman identity.
100 Sacks’ essay discusses people who have Korsakov’s syndrome, a type of amnesia that includes apathy combined with ongoing confabulation. His key interest here is that the people who have this syndrome are continually trying to imagine themselves anew—where the norm is to have a more static or grounded narrative—a person with Korsakov’s “must literally make himself (and his world) up every moment” (Sacks 110, his emphasis).
Nonetheless, it is only in the irruption or the tectonic shift that all seems awry, as it is a time when abrupt change is viewed as outside the natural or normative order of things. Such times are transitional, as described by Ernest Gellner, in his Nations and Nationalism, or liminal, as described by Homi Bhabha, in his The Location of Culture. It is during transitional or liminal periods in cultures that a whole new sense of identity is created and negotiated using a combination of vision, prophecy, and bric-a-brac along with the most desired and desirable elements of the past. A community looks to its past (or a past) in an attempt to regain some “lost” sense of identity; in many cases, it uses a chosen portion of the past as a part of its means to create a whole new sense of identity, so it can sufficiently imagine itself as a totality in relation to other peoples, nature and the cosmos.

Thus, this chapter will examine the idea of imagined communities, developed by Benedict Anderson in his study Imagined Communities, in order to explore: 1) how the idea of empire was negotiated and generated during the Augustan era (and in general from the first century B.C. through the fourth century A.D.); 2) how the British used and envisioned Rome as a basis for their own imperial aspirations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (along with how the colonies reacted to this perspective); and 3) how communities (both Great Britain and its former colonies) coming into the post-imperial era look to the germ of this idea of imperial authority as part of the hodgepodge of the past in order to create and imagine themselves as totalities and with solidity.  

This notion of solidity has to do with the confidence and tangible means through which a community invests itself with identity. For example, the Res Gestae Divi Augusti (“the Deeds of the Divine Augustus”) were memorialized throughout the Roman Empire on buildings as ways of representing Roman identity and community; architecture has often been used to solidify identity (for example, a good portion of the
The imagined community of empire made conscious use of artistic fictions, including (among other possibilities) architecture, ritual, sculpture, calligraphy, painting, clothing, song, dance, poetry, the epic (in some cases, the novel), and the minting of coins, in order to legitimize their power and effectively negotiate their power relations with the peoples in their domains. The use of artistic fictions can be broadly seen in Louis XIV’s France, the Rashidun and Umayyad Caliphates of Arabian Muslims, Akbar’s Mughal Empire, João III’s Portuguese Empire, the Ottoman Empire of Mehmet II and the British Empire of Victoria and Albert. And of course, Imperial Rome of Caesar Augustus, which is the preeminent example due to the fact that it preceded all of the other empires mentioned above, all of which were aware of the ways and means through which Rome exercised its influence on the people that were part of its dominions.

Overall, each of these powers crafted and negotiated fictions of identity with various tribes, religions and subcultures represented among the people they conquered and colonized. Such practices helped to reinforce and legitimize their rule over these peoples. The fictions of these imperial conquerors gave them ways to represent their hegemony and create a central narrative which aimed to marginalize, diminish or quash government buildings in Washington D.C. are Neo-Classical, with the intention of associate the power and grandeur of America with that of the Roman empire. In addition, solidity is achieved also through the ability to represent identity in a particular written language, which explains why there is often tension between official languages of states, which propound national narratives and other alternative languages (often banned since they propose alternative ways of narrating identity).

However, it is not that each of these artistic fictions is requisite. Even epic is not necessary. The name associations represent the most common ways we identify these empires. In some ways, the associations represent either the originating leader or the leaders under which the empire reached its apogee. Interestingly, as we will see below, only the British Empire (and to a much lesser degree, the Ottoman) falls within the range of Anderson’s study of imagined communities; while he looks back to communities from the pre-national era (pre-1776), it is only as a means to understand how the nation, as an “artefact,” came to be conceived distinctly from the modes of imagination that preceded it.
all other perspectives (fictions) of identity. Moreover, to adapt Homi Bhabha’s notion of
nation as narration, we can see that to study the nation or, in this case, empire provides a

positive value… in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct
the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life….For the nation, as a form of cultural elaboration …, is an agency of ambivalent narration that
holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for ‘subordinating, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding’. (Introduction 3-4)

Bhabha’s note on ambivalence is not related to disinterested representation versus
overt propaganda, but how discourse of the nation or the empire is created in an in-between or “Janus-faced” way: “meanings may be partial because they are in medias res;
and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made” (3).

Indeed, as we continue to reread Augustan Rome and its influences, we can see
that these meanings remain partial and the history remains in process; for what the post-imperial narrative proposes is a different way of reading its antecedents, which are recognized as unprivileged, partial and in process.

Imagining Identity, Creating Community

“All colonies inherit their empire’s sin”

Derek Walcott, Omeros

Empires are older than the Bible, while nations are younger than Tristram Shandy.
Such a remark points to simplified and generalized historical contexts –proposing that imperial rule and its attendant colonization preceded the written word of God: this takes
into account the fact that the Torah was written following the flight of the Hebrews from Pharaonic Egypt in the twelfth century B.C. and that both the Old Assyrian and Hittite Empires date back to the fifteenth to twentieth centuries B.C. 104 Moreover, it also takes into account the fact that the romance we hold dear of a nation, its land and its people succeeded the bawdy musings of distracted man we find in Laurence Sterne’s novel The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759-69): after all, the United States of America was created in 1788 and the Republic of France in 1795. 105 In many ways, such a broad assessment may help reveal why the Bible explains as much as it does (it seems to many all-encompassing to the extent that some peoples will base their identities on it) and why nations and their people are in the slow process of discovering what they are, much less explaining what they do. The postmodern West (and to a much lesser degree, the East) creates its national identities without having sloughed off the influences of either the Bible or the Roman Empire—we just read them differently in our postmodern age than we did a century ago. Similarly, this relatively new thing, termed the nation, which seems as organic and natural as the trees in the Adirondacks, has grown out of a particular way of reading religion and empire as they have informed our identities. As such, exploring the way that nation is constructed provides a way of

104 In fact, according to The Torah: A Modern Commentary, “most critical scholars would give 950 through 450 B.C.E. as the years during which the literary process and the Torah’s redaction took place” (xli).

105 The U.S. Constitution which formed the republic was ratified on June 21, 1788. The French Republic was proclaimed on September 22, 1792. Both inventions were rather novel, as discussed below in this chapter. Benedict Anderson comments on the self-awareness that the French had with regard to the novelty of their undertaking, noting how soon after the republic was declared there was a “decision, taken by the Convention Nationale on 5 October 1793, to scrap the centuries-old Christian calendar and to inaugurate a new world-era with the Year One, starting from the abolition of the ancien régime and the proclamation of the Republic” (193).
examining both and providing perspectives on the role that religion and empire have had in imagining identity and community.

The claim that nations are so young is most often met with shock, alarm and disbelief since so many presume that identity is static: identity seems rooted in that place or those places whence our ancestors came, the place where our genealogies thin out (it is like tracking a river to its headwaters) due to a lack of evidence or wonders of forgetfulness. When I proposed such a thing in class once, a student from Sri Lanka declared that her neighboring country India (\textit{Bhārata Mātā} – “Mother India”) was perhaps the oldest of nations, confusing as many must the idea of what may be discussed in classical verse (some have attempted to hint that the notion of Mother India can be found in the \textit{Ramayana})\footnote{Though there have been claims that the phrase and idea \textit{Bhārata Mātā} – “Mother India” can be traced back to Hindu scriptures, such an attribution has been held in doubt; it can be seen in Kiran Chandra Bandyopadhyay’s play, “\textit{Bhārata Mātā},” performed first in 1873. According to Sadan Jha’s recent article, “The Life and Times of Bharat Mata,” “The genealogy of the figure of Bharat Mata has been traced to a satirical piece titled \textit{Unabimsa Purana} (\textit{The Nineteenth Purana}),” by Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, first published anonymously in 1866. Bharat Mata is identified in this text as Adhi-Bharati, the widow of Arya Swami, the embodiment of all that is essentially ‘Aryan.’”} with the nation that was created from finally having cast off the British Raj in the summer of 1947. The time between the first recording of presumed scriptural verse describing a motherland and the creation of modern India is littered with the histories, joys and travesties of various empires, kingdoms and fiefdoms, all of which inform and trouble what it means to be Indian and what India is in the process of becoming. After all, the nation in verse is but one of the many necessary choices made in constructing the democratic state first ruled and declared by Nehru.

But I should not digress much to avoid stressing this point: this student’s declaration was not an exception. Most anyone outside the nations in the Americas and
Australia will declare that their country is founded and exists on land that is intrinsic to the identity of their people. The people are part of the land and they have always been part of the land; hence, the autochthonic myth that drives the identity and the identification of modern nations and their people. In fact, it is ironic that the oldest of nations, the creole United States of America, can lay no such autochthonous claims but has overtly and consciously constructed its own myths or fictions—even if the masses are often unaware of their construction (such a loss of memory seems to strengthen the bonds and patriotisms endemic to national identity)—including the most blatant ones, such as

107 Indeed, as Nehru declared in his speech “On the Granting of Indian Independence” which was broadcast on August 14, 1947,

At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength….The appointed day has come-the day appointed by destiny-and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. (my emphasis)

Nehru does not quibble—Indian is merely “awake” once more to fulfill her destiny begun at “the dawn of history.” What we have here is merely the continuation of the epic story of the nation. Nehru’s manner of conceiving the nation is echoed in Ernest Gellner’s consideration that “Nationalism sees itself as a natural and universal ordering of the political life of mankind, only obscured by that long, persistent and mysterious somnolence” (47). Salman Rushdie parodies Nehru’s speech in Midnight’s Children when Hanif Aziz informs Saleem Sinai that “this damn country has been dreaming for five thousand years. It’s about time it started waking up” (292).

108 The list of nations that provide autochthonous myths or divine sanction or ancient origins is vast. Israelis claim that they can trace their origins to the Davidic Kingdom or to the Promised Land given by God to the Hebrews. Egyptians trace their current nation to the Pharaonic dynasties, the Greeks trace their origins to the Hellenic confederacy depicted in Homer. However, this sentence does not imply that this idea of nation is static or accepted by all. There are numerous independence movements throughout the world in which people hope to establish nations for their people—unfortunately, these proposed nations are part of an already existing nation.

109 Benedict Anderson identifies the United States of America, along with Brazil and the former Spanish colonies as “creole” states, “formed and led by a people who shared a common language and common descent with those against they fought” (47). In a footnote, he clarifies his use of the term creole: “(Criollo) – person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas (and, by later extension, anywhere outside of Europe)” (47n1). Thus, it was not a rebellion led by indigenous or aboriginal peoples against their colonizers, but the settlers themselves (colonizers) who cut ties with the dynastic powers that controlled them economically, culturally and politically in order to create an identity apart from the one they had had while subjected.

110 Renan discusses this notion: “Yet the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things” (11). He is discussing blood, tribe and brutality here, all forgotten for the sake of the nation. Consequently, along these lines, he recommends: “It is good for everyone to know how to forget” (16). Anderson responds to Renan’s consideration by stating that
E pluribus unum “Out of Many, One,” which is emblazoned on America’s currency and its great seal.\textsuperscript{111}

The claim that the United States is the oldest of nations is not my own, but has been proposed by Benedict Anderson in his seminal work, \textit{Imagined Communities}, which focuses on the relationship between identity and nation. At its conclusion, he states that “As with modern persons, so it is with nations [as both have a] need for a narrative of ‘identity’” (205). The narrative of ‘identity’ described here is not something that began with the rise of nations; instead, as noted by Sacks, people have always had a narrative; it has merely shifted in the modern era based upon the ways it represents and is represented.

In this work Anderson argues that

nationality [and] nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind [and that] the creation of these cultural artefacts toward the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces. (4)

These artefacts or nations, as Anderson notes, were “a new form of imagined community” (my emphasis) which first “sprang up in the Western hemisphere between 1776 and 1838 [and they were] the first such states to emerge on the world stage” (46). His basic

\textsuperscript{111} This phrase is truncated from the longer \textit{color est e pluribus unus} “out of many one color,” which is taken from the poem “\textit{Moretem}” which, until recently, had been attributed to Virgil. This particular line is about blending ingredients together—overall, the poem is about salad making. Interestingly, the other two Latin phrases on the Great Seal of the United States, \textit{annuit coeptis} and \textit{novus ordo seclorum}, are also derived from Virgil. The first phrase is derived from the \textit{Aeneid}, Book IX.625 \textit{Iuppiter omnipotens, audacibus adnue cœptis} “omnipotent Jupiter, favor the daring work I have in hand” when Ascanius prays as he prepares to shoot an arrow at the Rutulian Numanus. The second phrase is derived from \textit{Eclogue IV.4-5, Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas; magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo}, “now comes the final epoch of the Sybil’s song; the great order of the ages is born anew.” Guy Lee has stated that Scholars have noted that this poem, written circa 40 B.C., represents the hope for a peaceful new age promised after the signing of the Treaty of Brindisi, which appeared to have quelled the Roman civil wars (20-21). Kermode comments on the use of these mottoes as being part of “America’s imperial age” (86).
foundation and thesis are widely accepted by scholars ranging from Homi Bhabha to Eric Hobsbawn to Ernest Gellner to Tom Nairn to Partha Chatterjee to Doris Sommers, and they should interest scholars and students who seek to understand the roles that literature plays in imagining the communities we encounter and live in.\(^{112}\) Early on, Anderson’s study caught the attention of Salman Rushdie, who refers to it several times in his essay, “In God We Trust,” in which he states how Anderson’s consideration of the imagined communities is “important stuff for a novelist” (382).

Indeed, while Anderson’s work has already had an impact on the study of novels\(^{113}\)—it is quite telling that he refers to and analyzes “the structure of the old-

\(^{112}\) Anthony Smith, Professor Emeritus of Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics, is a primary dissenter. He remarks in *Theories of Nationalism* how “it was only after the French Revolution that the *populus*, the *people*…was recognized as the sovereign ‘nation’” (191). Smith departs from Anderson with regard to how a nation can be defined. The best summary of his thinking can be found in *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, in which Smith defines a nation as “a named population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass), a common economy and common legal rights and duties for its members.” He defines a subgroup that can exist within a nation, and perhaps be subordinate to it, as an ethnie. According to Smith, ethnies are “named units of population sharing common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites” (57). A group such as the Roma may be an ethnie, as well as the Basques. Smith’s definitions seek to elaborate further on what Anderson calls “official nationalisms” and takes into account the notion that there are subgroups within a nation that share and embody traits, practices and physical spaces that render them distinct within the very nations they inhabit.

Chatterjee, who is Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, has difficulties digesting or accepting Anderson’s conception that the imagined community of the nation, originating in the Americas and then reformulated in Europe, having “once [been] created…became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted […] to a great variety of social terrains (4). Chatterjee responds to this idea by stating that if such is true then “History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. [As such,] even our imaginations must remain forever colonized” (5). Bhabha is of two frames of mind. On the one hand, in his chapter “Of Mimicry and Men” in *The Location of Culture*, he refers to “Benedict Anderson’s excellent work on nationalism” (125); on the other hand, he critiques the limitations inherent in Anderson’s notion of the “homogeneous empty time” that Anderson states provides the trajectory or clockwork within which the nation is imagined. Bhabha believes that such a consideration of time does not take into account “a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, minority discourses that speak betwixt and between times and places” (227). See note 123 below for Anderson’s definition of homogeneous time.

\(^{113}\) See especially Homi Bhabha’s *Nation and Narration*, Franco Moretti’s *Modern Epic* and Doris Sommer’s *Foundational Fictions*. In the Afterword to the 2007 revised edition to *Imagined Communities* Anderson describes Moretti’s work as an “extraordinary example” of “studies on the transnational diffusion of books” (207).
fashioned novel” (25) to reveal how it represents “homogeneous, empty time” in which the characters are “embedded in ‘societies’” who are placed in the minds of “omniscient readers” (25-26)\textsuperscript{114}—his work and his ideas have also had an impact on classical studies in that scholars have begun to consider in particular how Imperial Rome was imagined by its denizens.

First of all, Anderson’s ideas must be understood within their context—a way to broaden and alter the understanding of nationalism—if they are to be used well, so this section will flesh out the ways in which he sees the nation as being a distinct form of imagined community; secondly, the most arresting notion in his work is the idea of the “imagined community,” an idea which is not restricted to the study of nationalism but has the capacity to help us understand the role that artistic fictions,\textsuperscript{115} including epic, play in imagining a community.

When Anderson proposes the nation as an “imagined community,” he states how he wants to “offer some tentative suggestions for a more satisfactory interpretation of the ‘anomaly’ of nationalism” (4).\textsuperscript{116} While nationalism had long been the purview of political scientists and philosophers, he takes a different approach, focusing on the role of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{114} Anderson examines three novels to present his case: José Rizal’s \textit{Noli Mi Tangere} (Rizal, who lived from 1861-1896, is considered a national hero of the Philippines), Marco Kartodikromo’s \textit{Semarang Hitam} (Kartodikromo was an Indonesian independence activist and journalist who lived from 1890-1935), as well as José Joaquín Fernandez de Lizardi’s \textit{El Periquillo Sarniento} (Lizardi was a Mexican writer and novelist who lived from 1776-1827). Anderson notes that in such works is found the “idea of a social organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time [which] is a precise analogue to the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (26). Of equal interest is Anderson’s focus—as a specialist in Southeast Asian cultures, while his work discusses Western culture, he has a broader and more inclusive historical perspective.

\textsuperscript{115} An earlier discussion of these fictions is given on page 75 above. The list includes, but is not limited to architecture, ritual, sculpture, calligraphy, painting, clothing, song, dance, poetry, the epic (in some cases, the novel), and the mintage of coins.

\textsuperscript{116} In particular, Anderson uses the word “anomaly” to begin denaturalizing the term “nationalism” in order to show that is neither a necessary progression nor a natural condition.
\end{footnotesize}
culture and technology as they inform the creation of new social and political constructs – along with the attendant identities that are formed and modified as part of these constructs: there is the nation which is constructed/imagined and there are peoples who see and create themselves as part of this nation. Anderson begins his consideration by noting how his:

Point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word’s multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (4)

Following Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes,117 Benedict Anderson argues that this artefact was created at the end of the eighteenth century through “the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces” (4) which included the “half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity” made possible or inevitable when the latter two “created monoglot mass reading publics” (43).

These conditions made a particular imagining possible, the imagining of the national community – the one within which we live and partake our imaginings – the one of which we cannot conceive the absence: it has been naturalized. With regard to this idea of naturalization, Ernest Gellner comments how

the idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a far greater strain on the modern imagination….a man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and

117 In a footnote, Anderson calls them the “twin ‘founding fathers’ of academic scholarship on nationalism” (4n7).
two ears…. having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but has come to appear as such. (6)\textsuperscript{118}

However, such is the very dilemma that Anderson is responding to with his interest in a “reorientation of perspective” on the anomaly of nationalism; moreover, he recognizes the larger implications of his project early on, throwing wide open the doors to the extraordinary possibilities of exploring and discovering the various discursive and ritual practices through which societies and cultures imagine or “invent” themselves. In particular, he states that

in fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (6, my emphasis)

Put this way, it is easy to digest the possibilities of how this idea can be used to develop an understanding of how communities are generated or created or, as Doris Sommer states, founded through fictions (hence, the title of her excellent work, discussed below, Foundational Fictions); styles can shift and the ways in which community is imagined can be altered.

Therefore, if nationality is imagined due to the aforementioned “spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces” (4) and all communities are imagined, we must seek out the various ways in which they are created, considered and invented (or imagined). There are the artistic fictions mentioned above that represent some of the more visible or aural ways community is imagined. Moreover, it must be reemphasized that nationalism is but one way of imagining community. Other ways of

\textsuperscript{118} It is in such a spirit or sense of naturalization that Edward Everett Hale wrote his famous “A Man Without a Country” which was first published in The Atlantic in December 1863.
imagining include communities organized around kinship, religion, or empire –none of
which have yet been fully superseded by nationalism.\footnote{Kinship structures are often the basis for national control, especially when tribal affinities or blood relations are used as a basis upon which nations are legitimized (among other things) –a blood test, verifying that one is of Indian descent, called the Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood, that is used by tribes recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the United States. In Islam, in particular, there is the idea of a worldwide caliphate proposed time and again which seeks to unite the \textit{ummah}, the community of believers; in Israel, the status of being a “national” as a opposed to a citizen is dependent upon either kinship and religion –as described in the 1947 Law of Return (“Acquisition”); the United Kingdom (which will be considered in detail later) is not technically a nation, but a state comprising four countries (or nations) – in fact, more often now than before are claims to being Welsh or Scottish or English or Northern Irish as distinct from being British; thus, if one declares herself British, it may be inquired, which one of the four?}

In fact, Homi Bhabha’s interest in Anderson’s ideas stems from the latter’s proposal that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (12). Thus, Anderson establishes nationalism—the nation within the greater narrative of history—as a different and new form of narrative about culture and society that grows out of (but does not dismiss or necessarily overcome) religion and tribalism and dynastic realms. Responding to Anderson, Bhabha notes that

the nation’s ‘coming into being’ as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social \textit{life} rather than the discipline of the social \textit{polity}, emphasizes this instability of knowledge….\[this\] ambivalent tension that defines the ‘society’ of the nation. (Introduction 1-2)

This ambivalent tension and this instability of knowledge run counter, as Bhabha states, to our rote ideas of what a nation and its narrative are—that they are grounded in an ever-present and perhaps omnipresent \textit{Volk}, bound to a past that was ordained and progressing forward to fulfill a destiny as vague and abstract as the missives offered by fortune-tellers who declare what the coming year or decade will offer. The nation is forever putting on
its past and putting off its future, yet “the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality” (1). Moreover, an empire too is always in process and, as such, its narrative is never completed, filled or fulfilled—nor are its pasts and presents ever rounded out fully; such is especially evident in the cases of “official nationalisms” which sought to “conceal…a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm” (110)—those nations which were created out of the shell and fragments of a dynastic power (such as Germany, Egypt or Italy).

Of great importance to both nationalisms and empires are traditions—as they are part and parcel of the imagining process—which are dissected in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger’s co-edited The Invention of Tradition. This collection of essays was published the same year as Anderson’s Imagined Communities, with which it shares many sensibilities—perhaps due to a shared influence of the ideas of Erich Auerbach and Walter Benjamin. In the Introduction to The Invention of Tradition, Hobsbawm uses the term ‘invented tradition’ to describe the ways in which societies create a sense of continuity between the past and the present, between the people of a region and the nation to which they offer their allegiance, through the creation of ritual, symbolism and other acts both civil and private. At the beginning of his introduction, Hobsbawm describes how this term covers traditions actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period [... those] set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of

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120 Anderson distinctly notes that his thinking “about nationalism has been deeply affected by the writings of Erich Auerbach, Walter Benjamin and Victor Turner. In particular, throughout his work, he refers to Auerbach’s comprehensive study Mimesis (1946) and Benjamin’s essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935).
behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past [and] where possible...a suitable historic past. (1, my emphasis)

Thus, both Hobsbawm and Anderson share the idea that the patterns of society and the ways we think about ourselves in the world are constructed, invented, fabricated, imagined... not with a sense of betrayal or falsity, but rather out of a sense of necessity. There is that need for stability and solidity, a need for a narrative that confirms and situates our identity.

Hobsbawm compounds this necessity when he describes what happens when a people are confronted with dramatic change –that time when social, political, cultural and/or natural (as in forces of nature) upheaval alter a group’s or a community’s very sense of itself. Such are times when old traditions and imaginings of links with the past and how to resolve the troubles of the present (or move forward) have lost their currency or validity. Such times are when invention is at its most brisk and the community revises it notion of itself through the invention or reinvention of ritual, symbol and act.

Hobsbawm states:

There is probably no time and place with which historians are concerned which has not seen the ‘invention’ of tradition....However, we should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable. (4)

Hobsbawm has plenty of examples in his introduction, ranging from Carols sung on Christmas Eve in the Chapel of King’s College at Cambridge University, to the uses of Gothic style architecture on the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, to the ceremonies of the Boy Scouts or of the Nazis (1-4). His primary interest is in how peoples come to conceive of themselves through the invention of traditions and how they alter their
traditions or create new ones when the old ways of thinking and living and acting no longer make sense due to “rapid transformation” and a new way of imagining oneself has become necessary. Ultimately, tradition discovered and/or acted on is a way of legitimizing one’s community and it becomes intrinsic to the way we imagine that community.121

Doris Sommer’s provocative and important book, Foundational Fictions, deals with this very situation, examining how novels were used in nineteenth-century Latin America to forge a new idea of what it meant to be a part of a particular new community and lend legitimacy and tradition to “the empty spaces…of America’s demographic and discursive nature” (10). Her work builds on Anderson’s explorations of imagined communities, interrelating his ideas with Michel Foucault’s work on sexuality, noting how “together they…help map out a context for passionate patriotism” (33) that can be seen in this region during this time. This work focuses on the ways in which romantic novels go hand in hand with patriotic history in Latin America” and notes how these “books fueled a desire for domestic happiness that runs over into dreams of national prosperity; and [the ways that] nation-building projects invested private passions with public purpose. (7)

In fact, Anderson’s ideas seem particularly well-suited to her endeavor: Sommer describes how “the writers [in these Latin American countries] were encouraged both by the need to fill in a history that would help to establish the legitimacy of the merging nation and by the opportunity to direct that history toward a future ideal” (7). Sommer adapts this idea of the imagined community and Anderson’s way of reading the novel to  

121 Among the essays included in The Invention of Tradition is Hugh Trevor-Roper’s “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland,” which examines, among other inventions, the protracted, practical, creation of the “traditional Scots Highlander” kilt by Thomas Rawlinson, an English Quaker industrialist in the early seventeenth-century (21-22).
suit her particular interest in the Romance genre and the nations that were developing in
nineteenth-century Latin America—in some ways, she seems to be developing more fully
Anderson’s brief mention of “an eroticized nationalism” that can be found in American
fiction (202-203).122

Sommer’s analysis of these Romances suggests something also about the artistic
fictions that are employed to negotiate national identity. Epic may not have been
perceived to be appropriate for disseminating these “pretty lies [that were used to]
contain the racial, regional, economic, and gender conflicts that threatened the
development of new Latin American nations” (29).

As noted in the previous chapter, Romance is a form that encourages the static,
and Sommer points out that it was central to the “general bourgeois project [being
undertaken in these nations as they sought] to hegemonize a culture in formation” (29);
indeed, the dynamism of an epic would have called the project into question as much as it
would have encouraged it. Barbara Simerka’s Discourses of Empire examines the use
“counter-epic” by writers in Imperial Spain (including Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Rojas
Zorilla and González de Bustos) to counterweigh and “interrogate imperial policy” (23);
these policies were consciously reinforced by court historiographers who were mandated
to create official histories of the Spanish Empire. These historiographers used “the

122 Anderson is reacting to the treatment of James Fenimore Cooper’s The Pathfinder in Leslie Fiedler’s
Love and Death in the American Novel (1960), stating how this eroticized nationalism can be seen in the
“male-female ‘holy loves’ in the nationalist fiction of Latin America, where Catholicism permitted the
growth of a large mestizo population” (203).
In comparison to these male-female holy loves, Anderson describes how Mark Twain’s novel Huckleberry
Finn (1881) created “the first indelible image of black and white as American ‘brothers’: Jim and Huck
companionsably adrift on the wide Mississippi” (203). Thus, a new and wholly different sense of a national
identity was being born in America.
Roman Empire…as the touchstone against which contemporary events and discourses were evaluated” (24).\textsuperscript{123} Of course, the creators of these new nations were not preoccupied with the Roman Empire and could not look to the past for the community they were imagining; rather, they were creating based on the need to slough off Imperial Spain and imagine a culture that was radically new and required a wholly different kind of solidity.

Whereas the Spanish Imperial project and its interrogators “delineate[d] both the parallels and the distinctions between ‘civilized’ and ‘barbaric’ societies” by looking to the authority of Rome (Simerka 23), it can be seen that “miscegenation [represented in the Romances] was the…way of redemption in Latin America, a way of annihilating difference and constructing a deeply horizontal, fraternal dream of national identity. It was a way of imagining the nation through a future history” (Sommer 39). The embrace of miscegenation and the disavowal of empire represented extraordinary shifts in the way that these societies imagined themselves; as such, the production of artistic fictions that would represent and reinforce this type of imagined community was inevitable.

Such an inevitability was shared by Rome during the early reign of Caesar Augustus—a period of crisis, civil war, dynamism and profound socio-economic shifts, during which the very idea of what it was to be Roman needed to be recast and reformulated. A new and distinct Roman identity needed to be formed (as distinct from Republican Rome, for example) and Augustus undertook a vast project using literature, philosophy, art and architecture to impress a cohesive and contiguous notion of

\textsuperscript{123} A similar project was undertaken by the British in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as will be discussed below in Chapter Four.
Romanness upon the people of the fledgling empire. Sarah Spence has examined the consideration of this project with regard to rhetoric, “noting that because the rhetorical paradigm of the Republic [had] begun to break down, the Aeneid [and other literature] looks toward ‘a new system—a new Roman rhetoric or art’” (qtd. in Smith The Primacy of Vision 132). So, here we have a need to create a new rhetorical paradigm, which would be part of a larger paradigm shift about how people imagine themselves and their place in the cosmos. As such there was a systemic need to create this new way of imagining Roman society: new fictions had to formulated, and old ones had to be envisioned anew or cast away. In short, people had to learn how to become Roman.

Around the time that Rushdie wrote The Satanic Verses, there was much discussion revolving around how human society was entering a new age. Within five years of the publication of Rushdie’s work, we had Francis Fukuyama’s The End of History and the Last Man, Paul Kennedy’s The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers and the declaration of President George H. W. Bush that we are entering a “new world order.” Each of these works reacted to the changes that are occurring globally and represent part of the need to envision or imagine a new sense of community.

More recently, as we have entered the twenty-first century, Eric Hobsbawm and Tom Nairn have suggested that the age of the nation has already peaked and is in decline. In addition, Kwame Appiah has theorized that we are entering the

124 Smith’s thesis is that this “new system [of rhetoric or art] is visual communication,” which will have supplanted oratory as the primary way of communicating in the empire (132).


126 Hobsbawm intimates such change in On the Edge of the New Century and Nairn in The Break-up of Britain.
cosmopolitan era—which seems to supersede national identity since it presumes that we will carry multiple identities across porous borders. Michael Hardt and Antoni Negri have proposed that we are entering a new global form of sovereignty [that they] call Empire” in which “sovereignty has taken on a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule” (xii). While these claims have been perceived as presumptuous, they have also been considered as prophetic, as peoples (especially in the digital age) attain a self-awareness of the mythologies and structures that undergird the artefact of which they are a part. We are at this time in the midst of another dramatic change, due to new technologies (broadband, wireless, satellite coupled with internet, World Wide Web and television), shifts in labor capital and production, and a new conception of time, which is both simultaneous (thanks to the new technologies) and serial.

This shift in perception and expectations allows us to imagine our pasts, presents and futures in remarkably new ways; it is a dynamic situation which looks for epic (among other artistic fictions) to imagine the communities that are currently evolving. Perhaps this new era signals the end of history or the rise of a thing called empire; more likely, at this juncture, it is an era in which we have been able to move beyond our woe-begotten reckonings of faith communities and imperial communities, as well as that adolescent artefact called the nation, and can read them in ways that make us not

127 Appiah’s Cosmopolitanism: An Ethics of Identity; Hardt and Negri’s Empire.
128 This statement is not made to dismiss faith communities and imperial communities, which continue to hold great influence; rather, it points toward the fact that we have begun moving beyond empire and faith, which implies, to a great degree, that faith communities and imperial communities are being imagined and read in different ways.
necessarily beholden to a particular past but anticipate the very possibilities afforded by the dynamism of our present situations.

**Imagining Empire: Humanitas, Negotiation & Romanization**

We are all, so far as we inherit the civilisation of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire.

T.S. Eliot, “Virgil and the Christian World”

Virgil’s *Aeneid* was written during a dynamic era in which a new type of imagined community was created. It has been difficult to ascribe a term to this imagined community—most have used nation and some have used race—but neither of these terms, developed as we have come to understand them since the nineteenth century, is technically appropriate due to the breadth and context attached to them. The modern word nation is derived from the Latin word *natio* which, according to Lewis and Short,¹³⁰ can mean “a race of people, nation, people,” as well as a “tribe;” however, Virgil never

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¹²⁹ Empires had preceded Augustus’ Rome; however, his undertaking was unique in scale, governance and the broad-based use of artistic fictions. It may be noted that other earlier texts exerted propagandistic force for their imperial aspirants: some, such as the *Argonautica*, which came out of Ptolemaic Egypt, were more geographically limited in their scope and less obvious in their aspirations –there are no claims that it was written as part of an explicit government project aimed at promoting group identity; others, such as the *Mahabharata*, exerted a similar force, though it was a much more gradual creation, generated in successive eras in multiple layers, not part of a particular propagandistic undertaking.

¹³⁰ Lewis and Short refers to *A Latin Dictionary* (1879) compiled and written by Charlton Lewis and Charles Short.
uses this word in the *Aeneid*, nor does he use the word *civis*, “citizen,” which corresponds to the political, economic and legal imagining that Rome conveyed to its people.\textsuperscript{131}

In *De Officiis* (On Conduct), Cicero, the most eloquent representative of the generation that preceded Virgil, uses the term *natio*, along with *gens*, which can also mean “a race, clan house (of families having a name and certain religious rites in common)” as well as “a tribe, people,” and *lingua* “tongue, utterance, speech, language.”\textsuperscript{132} Cicero uses these terms to describe the ways *qua maxime homines coniunguntur* “by which men are very closely bound together,” though he notes that *interius etiam est eiusdem esse civitatis; multa enim sunt civibus inter se communia* “it is a still closer relation to be citizens of the same city-state; for fellow-citizens have much in common” (1.53). To recognize that certain terms are employed or not; or that the meanings of certain terms has shifted allows us to begin a necessary evaluation of the community imagined in the *Aeneid* and in Augustan Rome. At the same time, nation or country is the only word that we can use without fabricating neologisms or engaging in overly narrow uses of the term *imaginary community*, which is used to delineate all types of founded groups.

To understand the community imagined and prophesied in the *Aeneid*, it is necessary to confront and evaluate three contexts. It must be emphasized at the outset that this consideration of these contexts will be limited in scope so as to contribute to the

\textsuperscript{131} *Civitas* describes the juridical condition that the empire granted or enfranchised to persons within its domains, which granted them specific legal and economic rights and capacities—such rights were even enjoyed in the late Republic (see A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* 143-44).

One of the best known declarations of Roman citizenship was made by St. Paul in Acts 16.37-38; 22.26-30. Sherwin-White concludes that “under the Principate St. Paul was certainly not the only citizen […] to protect himself […] by the plea of citizenship, *civis Romanus sum*” (273).

\textsuperscript{132} Both definitions are taken from Lewis and Short.
overall understanding while not distracting from the thrust of this project. In fact, a broader assessment of Rome should be undertaken, as Woolf points out, taking into account “the literature and art of the period [to] allow[] us to document in detail the means and stages by which that [Roman] people – the imagined community – was given an origin, a history, a future and a moral and cultural definition” (“Beyond Romans” 347).

First of all, it is necessary to introduce the ways in which British and Continental scholars imagined the Roman Empire historically and as a basis upon which modern nations could conceive themselves and justify their imperial undertakings,133 second of all, examining the general conceptions of Roman identity that resonated in the generations that preceded and succeeded Augustus’ reign will help us understand the overall general context within which the idea of empire was conceived; finally, it is necessary to understand the Augustan project of art, publics works and moral codes that helped create the Roman Empire during the reign of Caesar Augustus.

The Roman Empire was frequently used when nations were negotiating their identities in the nineteenth century—particularly among those pursuing “official nationalisms.” When a nation perceived its genus or its identity, it did so often in reaction to or in imitation of Rome.

Ernest Renan’s groundbreaking lecture, “What is a Nation?” was given at the Sorbonne in 1882. Renan’s lecture proposed a way to deal with Europe’s division into “nations” that had begun “since the disintegration of Charlemagne’s empire” (8). He

133 This is done to provide general context for this discussion; how Britain read and wrote the Roman Empire will be examined in greater detail in later on this chapter.
notes, as is now commonly accepted, that “nations…are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them; Egypt, China and ancient Chaldea were in no way nations” (9). His notion of what a nation is rooted in the word patrie, which means “fatherland” and is conjoined with notions of patriotism, a profound and sometimes blinding sense that one’s “nation is [one’s] soul, [that is, it is ] a spiritual principle” (19) united neither by commonalities in religious faith, language nor shared interests of particular classes of people (18). However, it is like a faith, finds its expression in a particular language and does promote shared interests. Renan qualifies the nation as being like a cult, rooted in a (legendary) past, living in the present that evokes the glories of the past and moves forward compelled by a future prophesied in that past. As such, a “nation is…large-scale solidarity” (19). Americans, in particular, look to the past in documents, leaders and heroes, each appropriately and strategically chosen, to best represent what is wrong with how we live and how it should be righted, extolling Lincoln and the Constitution and Alexander Hamilton, the rise of manumission groups and the ultimate legal freeing of slaves when promoting causes as far-ranging as gay and lesbian rights, and the rights of the unborn. We react and respond to these issues in very “American” ways, passionate in our patriotism and legends, which serve as faithful guides to our cause (which help define who we are as a people).

However, even though Renan excludes ancient civilizations, he well-nigh makes an exception for the Roman Empire, noting that it “was much more nearly a patrie” (9). He continues, stating how

134 On this last group, Renan uses the term Zollverein as a qualifier, which the translator Martin Thom defines as an educated person’s concern for (expanded) free trade within single regions to further their interests.
The empire was a huge association, and a synonym for order, peace and civilization. In its closing stages, lofty souls, enlightened bishops, and the educated classes had a real sense of the *Pax Romana*, which withstood the threatening chaos of barbarism. (9)

Renan is somewhat of a romantic nationalist in the way he is nostalgic for Roman rule and the peace compelled by force—it is telling that he reserves a true understanding “un vrai sentiment” for persons who are lofty (“les âmes élevées”), enlightened (“les évêques éclairés”) and educated (“les lettrés”). He describes that class of people who had bought into the empire to a degree and avoids the troubles of the hoi polloi, who were unlettered, unenlightened and lowly.

Renan imagines an empire that stands for solidity ("la paix romaine," better known through the Latin term *Pax Romana*) in the midst of the vicissitudes compelled by the rest of the world (barbarism). He has distilled Roman history, viewing the world through a perspective that praises Roman influence on the people it conquered. This influence, termed *Romanization*, avoids to a large degree the messiness of tribal slaughters, mass enslavement and the limited freedoms afforded to individuals in different regions conquered by Rome.

Romanization is one interpretation of Roman identity—and it is quite a telling term—since it has allowed us (as critics such as Roger Hingley emphasize) to view their past through our present, weighed down and altered through the imposition of modern and postmodern conceptions of identity. Overall, so much of how we have come to view or imagine the Roman Empire has been derived from this idea. In many ways, it is a way of simplifying Roman history by reading it primarily through the ways in which European societies wanted to view its political, economic and socio-cultural contexts.
Though it had its roots in Renaissance thought, the idea of Romanization was given scholarly traction in the groundbreaking, five-volume, *The History of Rome* (Römische Geschichte) written by Theodore Mommsen (1817-1903), who was regarded as the premier Classicist in nineteenth-century German academia. This term and the ideas associated with it have dominated historical, cultural and archaeological interpretations of Roman influence on European societies since Mommsen’s three-volume work was first published in 1854-1856.

It is difficult to discuss Romanization or any of the subsequent interpretations of Roman influence without calling to mind the dilemmas that shaped Mommsen’s scholarship. His milieu was similar to Renan’s since both lived and wrote during the tumultuous period of European history (c. 1840 – 1880) during which “official nationalisms” were sweeping the continent and the idea of what constituted a nation or a people was a paramount concern. Anderson describes how “those Habsburg emperors who sometimes fostered a policy of Germanization were…led in their efforts…by the intent of unification and universalism of their empire” (84); the model for their efforts was based on their interpretation of Roman history. Mommsen’s interests paralleled those of the Habsburgs and much of his work on Roman history reveals his attempt “to define a ‘unitary’ model of republican Italy; an image that was deeply rooted in contemporary society and politics…reflecting Mommsen’s own political desire for a

\^135 This study is discussed by P.W.M. Freeman in his essay, “From Mommsen to Haverfield.”
\^136 An additional volume was published in 1885.
\^137 The term “official nationalisms” is from Anderson, who notes that he has borrowed it from the work of noted political scientist and historian Hugh Seton-Watson (1916-1984). This term implies the practice of European dynasties to negotiate a national identity that would benefit their power structure.
\^138 So much of this strain of thinking grows out of Herder’s efforts to discern and define the *Volk* roots of peoples.
united Germany” (Hingley 31). This model helped explain “why the indigenous communities of Italy, from the third century B.C. onwards chose to abandon their traditional autonomy in favour of integration into the developing empire of Rome” (31): in short, his interests in Germanization, or the unification of greater Germany strongly influenced his views on Roman imperial and Republican policy, so much so that what he perceived to have happened in Rome reflected the tenor and concerns of his own politics and era.  

He saw in Rome (Romanization) what many sought in Germany, a policy that worked toward assimilation that was accompanied by a trend that reflected a “buy into” to these efforts. And yet, at the same time, he never explicitly defines the term Romanization despite its wide use throughout his works, though he supplies example after example of evidence describing its use or the results of this process.

These remarks are not intended to point toward a simplification of Mommsen’s work, which is still regarded as innovative: it provided a new approach to classical studies that combined “traditional literary evidence with that of epigraphy and

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139 In the introduction in Chapter One of The History of Rome, Book I, Mommsen states that “What has been called the subjugation of Italy by the Romans appears rather, when viewed in its true light, as the consolidation into an united state of the whole Italian stock—a stock of which the Romans were doubtless the most powerful branch, but still were only a branch.” (my emphasis).

140 Mommsen was a harsh critic of anti-Semitism in Germany; however, his suggestion was “Germanization,” for lack of better term, noting that a solution could be found in the example of: the people of Sleswick-Holstein, of Hanover, and of other States which have been absorbed in Prussia, [who] have voluntarily given up many of their special customs…. Mommsen suggests that the Jews…would do well to abandon some of the outward characteristics by which they have… marked themselves off from their German neighbors. (“Prof. Mommsen”)

141 Perhaps the closest he may come to defining Romanization can be seen when he defines, for example, the ways in which Sertorius (c. 123-c.72 B.C.), the Roman statesman and general, extended Roman influence in the recently conquered Iberian Peninsula. In the final volume of his Roman History, Mommsen states how this “was the first attempt to accomplish…Romanization not by extirpating the old inhabitants and filling their places with Italian emigrants, but by Romanizing the provincials themselves.” Some of the means of Romanizing included “learning to speak Latin and Greek, and to wear the toga.” This information, taken from Plutarch’s Life of Sertorius, is quite similar to a passage in Tacitus regarding the practices of Agricola in civilizing the Britons (see note 154 below).
numismatics” (Freeman 46), pointing toward a continuity of culture and cultural identity that is both synchronic and diachronic. Mommsen was able to create an idea of a Rome that was continuous and teleologically-oriented, which extended from the founding of the city to the ending of the Republic; as such, he was reinforcing a sense of historical continuity created by Roman historians who wrote during the first century of the Roman Empire.

The germ of this idea of Romanization and the techniques set forth by Mommsen had a profound impact on Francis Haverfield (1860-1919), a scholar at Oxford University, who introduced “the more extensive [use] of archaeology into the study of the Roman Empire” (46). Haverfield’s legacy rests largely upon his The Romanization of Roman Britain, which elaborated this idea of Romanization. In the opening chapter of this work, Haverfield proposed that “Rome made mankind civilized. That was the work of the Empire; the form it took was Romanization,” which was primarily undertaken in Western Europe, including Britain, since “[i]t was possible, it was easy, to Romanize these western peoples” (my emphasis). In short, Romanization was a particular process of civilizing conquered peoples; or as Jane Webster suggests, in describing the shortcomings of this concept, it is “simply another word for acculturation” (210). This notion of Romanization has had a profound impact on archaeological, historical and literary studies, since it provided a seemingly comprehensive way of understanding the influence that the Roman Empire had on peoples throughout the empire. It became a way of measuring a continuity of Roman identity throughout time and across the geography of the empire.
While this idea of Romanization created a cohesive understanding of the past and the ways in which Roman culture was spread, there were severe limitations since Haverfield’s dependency on Mommsen’s unitary model kept him from writing a “critical appraisal of Roman imperialism” (Freeman 46). Moreover, current critics have noted how Haverfield’s argument is part of a “genre of works on the Roman and British empires in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, in which…allusions to Rome had become a ‘heuristic reinforcement’ in British imperial thought” (Majeed 89).142

More to the point, while the idea of Romanization has strong links to both British and German imperial ideas and designs, it had to have been based, to some degree, on an idea of the adoption or adaptation of Roman culture and principles that existed in the empire.

Mommsen drew his inspiration from the Roman historian and politician Appian (c. 95 – c. 165), who wrote a twenty-four volume History of Rome, which described the “unification of Italy in the mid-second century A.D., [and] in the process project[ed] an anachronistic picture of Roman coherence on the early history of the empire” (Hingley 32). Of course, much of the literature that Mommsen used to discuss Romanization was written during the Augustan era or during the first century A.D., reflecting many of the positive sentiments that writers had regarding the positive nature of Roman influence.

As such, Appian was merely representing a common view held regarding Roman unity and coherence. In fact, Greg Woolf points out that

142 How Haverfield’s approach fits into the whole consideration of British imperial thought and identity will be considered in greater detail below in Chapter Four.
if this paradigm [of Romanization] resembled some more recent imperial and colonial ideologies [as set forth by Roger Hingley’s critiques of Romanization], it also owed much to the accounts of empire and civilization formulated in classical Latin literature and Roman art and rhetoric during the late Republic and early empire. (339)

Moreover, as P.A. Brunt discusses in his collection of essays titled Roman Imperial Themes, there was a cultural form of Romanization that existed in the Empire as part of a conscious effort to enfranchise locals and have them buy into the commercial and social and cultural experience of being Roman. Brunt describes a Romanization “where Latin was the language of government and education” to promote enfranchisement amongst local leaders, particularly in the West though with less success and emphasis in Hellenistic-influenced East and Near East (268-69). He cites Pliny the Elder and Tacitus, who described the Empire in the mid to late first century A.D., noting how the latter suggests that “the amenities of civilized life might accustom warlike tribes to docile submission while the former, echoing the Jovian prophecy of Rome’s eternal empire in Virgil’s Aeneid, states how it was the mission of Italy to unite and also civilize mankind” (268). In many instances, aristocratic provincials Romanized themselves since it

143 Brunt’s Roman Imperial Themes includes essays that were written between 1959 and 1990.
144 Brunt carefully comments in a footnote how “Italian [sic] writers in general say nothing of Romanization” (268), implying that Pliny the Elder and Tacitus fall into that category of exclusion. Such a consideration conveys a sense that being Roman was a conscious imagined process for each group—even though Pliny was from a region that is now part of Italy.
145 Tacitus states that to win over the Britons, the Roman general G.J. Agricola’s endeavors:

> ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quieti et otio per voluptates adsuescerent....ut qui modo lingua Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. Inde etiam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga (Agricola XXI).

By indulging them, he accustomed these straggling and rude people, quick to war, toward peacefulness and leisure, so that those who once refused the Roman language, aspired to eloquence. Hence our [Roman] habit was honored and they often wore the toga.” An adoption of character, language and dress: when one becomes Roman, one should do as Romans do.
146 According to Pliny’s Naturalis Historiae (Natural History), Italy is:
would increase their influence and lobbying powers with Roman officials and improve their capacity to trade beyond the confines of their tribal areas. Of particular interest is Pliny’s use of the phrase *humanitatem homini daret*, which declares in a very straightforward manner that Rome “brought civilization to people.” All that Rome was bringing to the people seemed bound in a continuum that stretched back to prophecy and strategy set forth during the Augustan era; each of these writers could look back a hundred years or more to discern the ways in which Roman civilization came to be.

The term *humanitas* was rarely used prior to Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.), though it received much discussion in his writings and speeches.147 Greg Woolf notes that by the late first century BC *humanitas* had been formulated as a thoroughly Roman concept, embodying concepts of culture and conduct that were regarded by Romans as hallmarks of the aristocracy in particular, yet also appropriate to mankind in general. *Humanitas* thus distinguished an elite as cultivated, enlightened, humane and so fitted to rule and lead by example, but it also encapsulated a set of ideas to which all men might aspire. (Becoming 55)

Though Cicero’s description of this term relates primarily to the notion that “man [should] recognize that he, individually and universally, has been endowed with reason and with that excellence which puts him above the plane of the mere brute” (Nybakken 403), the process of Roman imperialism extended the definition and utility of this idea, setting forth that “it was Rome’s destiny and duty to spread humanitas to other races, tempering barbarian practices and instituting the *pax Romana*” (Webster 210).

147 An excellent discussion of Cicero’s exposition of humanitas, its context and limitations can be found in Oscar Nybakken’s “*Humanitatis Romana*.”
At the same time, the idea of destiny and the practicality of spreading *humanitas* were totally different. Romans did not believe that they had an exclusive right over this concept, rather “it enabled the empire to absorb into its structure a variety of other peoples from the societies it encountered...by defining its cultural rules in such a way that they could be adopted by others” (Globalizing 63). The empire was not dogmatic with regard to its notions of what was to be Roman, whether it had to do with cultural practices, conceptual ideals, or religious beliefs and rituals. There were prescribed limits set forth by imperial policy, however, particularly in the Augustan era since, as Karl Galinsky points out “*Imperium* was an elastic concept that required no dogmatic fixation on a particular plan or strategy” (368). In short, there was no set or single way of being Roman—not through the whole of Empire and not during the Augustan era; in the latter, there are evident a series of successive stages through which the empire evolved. It was neither fixed nor static, as many have perceived it to be.  

The Augustan era was particularly revolutionary—and though it drew on precedent and tradition, it was willing and capable of innovating in order to meets its needs and goals. In fact, in his study, *Augustan Culture*, Galinsky describes how “Augustan government and administration were an ongoing experiment in pragmatism and the negotiation and renegotiation of precedents with regard to new needs and...
changing circumstances” (363). These precedents were not limited to Roman Republican or “Italian” practices, but can be seen in the broader sphere of regions and peoples conquered. Roman flexibility and negotiation (as witnessed in the above description of humanitas) avoided the binary polarities so evident in nineteenth-century European nationalism (which we have a tendency to “read” into Roman history), which posited two cultures at odds with one another. In fact, Greg Woolf’s recent studies of the influence on Roman Gaul reveal that “rather than conflict, competition or interaction between two cultures, we [witness] the creation of a new imperial culture that supplanted earlier Roman cultures just as much as it did earlier cultures of indigenous peoples” (“Beyond Romans and Natives” 341). He continues by concluding:

Gauls were not ‘assimilated’ to a pre-existing social order, but participated in the creation of a new one…. [Indeed,] we are dealing with the emergence of a new, highly differentiated social formation incorporating new cultural logic and a new configuration of power. (347)

Jane Webster’s recent work on Romano-Celtic religious artifacts reaches similar conclusions, reinforcing her claims that the Roman provinces were creolized, that there was a form of “resistant adaptation [from which there] emerge[d]… not a single, normative colonial culture, but mixed cultures” (105).

It is easy to presume, as some have criticized,149 that this implies that the whole of Roman Gaul was creolized in a similar way; however, there were varying degrees of adaptation to Roman influences. As Brunt describes, aristocratic classes throughout the empire were more likely to imagine themselves as Roman and were more directly an intrinsic and active part of the creation of a new social order. The lower classes had

149 See Whittaker 149.
varying degrees through which they lived and experienced themselves as Roman. The
influences were evident and part of a deliberate process that did “not… replace…
diversity with uniformity so much as…replace… a diversity generated by local choice
with diversity ordered by imperial power” (“Beyond Romans and Natives” 344).150 In
the end, the assumption of Roman identity was “not a matter of a person’s ethnicity,
nation, linguistic group or descent, but a status that had been inherited, achieved or
awarded” (Globalism 56).

The locus of these changes (which were both deliberate and flexible) toward a
Roman identity can be found in the reign of Caesar Augustus. These changes were part
of an evolving process that was focused on the “cultural regeneration” necessary in the
early years of the empire following decades of civil war and what was perceived to be the
dissolution of public values.151 This cultural regeneration was indivisibly part of the
Augustan invention of empire and it was achieved through a “combination of texts, art,
infrastructure and propaganda—through which the first emperor established the image of
a new political system that was intended to administer a vast empire” (Globalizing 57).152
Augustus claimed he was restoring the res publica, the commonwealth of the people,
which meant that he was the “conscious return to and rearticulation of the[…] basic
values and principles” (Galinsky 7) that had formed the core of Republican Rome,

150 In his “Imperialism and Culture: the Roman Initiative,” C. R. Whittaker describes how regions as far-
flung as the Maghreb, Gaul and Italy “may have worshipped a different repertoire of gods in their rural
shrines, but the form, idiom and dress was firmly Roman” (155).
151 Whittaker cleverly terms the chaos of the late Republic as resulting from “private greed and public
sleaze” (143).
152 This brief catalogue represents part of the broader use of artistic fictions espoused and supported by the
various Augustan regimes.
accompanied by “the consolidation of the imperium Romanum into a much more unified entity that a collection of provinces” (6).

These principles included four virtues, *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas*, each of which was described having been inscribed on the golden shield given to Augustus by senate decree in 27 B.C. Galinsky remarks that the choice of these virtues is not “canonical, nor did it become so. It represents the usual Augustan combination of tradition and individual innovation” (81). While *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas* will be examined below in the treatment of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, it is necessary to explore *virtus*, which is not elaborated on explicitly in that work though it is central to the Augustan ethos. Galinsky describes how the “mention of *virtus* on the shield looks both backward and forward” in that it embodies “individual distinction […] in the service to the *res publica*” which is achieved only through ongoing effort (84). This consideration of ongoing effort reflected both the *labor improbus* (“immense labor”) that was required of Augustus, the senate and the Roman people if they were to regenerate their culture. Indeed, the *aurea aetas* or “golden age,” which later became synonymous with the Augustan age, is only possible through “ongoing labor and moral effort rather than

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153 As detailed in *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 34 (text inside the brackets reveals scholarly completions of gaps):


> “a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia whose inscription testified that the Senate and the people of Rome gave me this recognition in honor of my valor and clemency and justice and piety.”

154 The only mention comes in *Aeneid* I. 565-6, when Dido greets the newly arrived Trojans, declaring:

> *Quis genus Aeneadum, quis Troiae nesciat urhem, virtutesque virosque, aut tanti incendia belli?* (my emphasis)

> Who has not heard of the people of Aeneas, the city of Troy, and her heroes and her men, or the great fires of war?
[through the] celebration of easy fulfillment” (106). This age, which is represented near the beginning of Virgil’s *Georgics*, is “identified with the existence of the farmer, [as it] is full of stress and depends on ongoing effort; it is not finite or god-given”; similarly, this conception includes the notion that it is impossible or even undesirable to return to the stagnant past. (121).155

Just as this theme reflects the tenor of Augustan society, so too did it resonate in the works of the poets of this *aurea aetas*. Indeed, according to Galinsky, Augustan poetry exemplifies “the many dimensions of the Romans’ view of themselves both as individuals and collectively.” This poetry is “Augustan” in the sense that it is filled with “dynamic interactions and autonomous processes that characterized the culture of the period and, in fact, made it so influential” (225-6). The many poets with which we are familiar, including Virgil, Horace, Varius, Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius, were eclectic in their borrowings from Greek precedents, innovative in the ways they evolved poetic form and, in more recent scholarship, they are seen as being neither “ideological supporters nor cryptocritics [of the Augustan regime], but as purveyors of ambivalences, ambiguities and ironies on a rather massive scale” (“Making Romanness” 245). However, these latter qualities merely point out that they are like so many other good poets. Nonetheless, they do, to a large extent, inform our sense of how Rome was an imagined community through the ways in which they reacted to “real world” issues of love, morals, struggle and the

155 Galinsky makes much use of *Georgics* I.121-46 and reminds us that Virgil wrote this piece, which describes the ideals and labors associated with the Augustan age, in 30 B.C. prior to the formation of the empire.
vicissitudes of change.\textsuperscript{156} They praise the virtues exhorted by Augustus, allude to them and parody them. They reflect the concerns of this age and were conscious of the past, at the same time as they reflected the Augustan practice of negotiating and renegotiating form and meaning in order to react to and convey the shifts that their culture and their society was enduring.

Virgil’s works, particularly the \textit{Aeneid}, stand out among the accomplishments of his peers: some may argue it is his use of language or his metrical control or his way of telling a story. More importantly, it is his ability to imagine community that makes him stand out, providing the very things in his works that Greg Woolf pointed out were central to the imperial project: he provided an “origin, a history, a future and a moral and cultural definition” that embodied the complexities and contradictions of what it was to be Roman.

This discussion has attempted to capture the many facets of the many contexts in which we would have to view the imagined community formed during the Augustan era. It is meant to provide necessary points of reference from which we can understand and examine the \textit{Aeneid} as part of a greater project and a greater historical circumstance—both of global impact—that accounts for the ways in which empire was imagined during the Augustan era, its precedents and the long view established by Roman writers and the ways in which Western scholars have interpreted the Roman empire. Indeed, a wholly separate project would have to be undertaken to fully construct how the imperial community was imagined in relation to the technology, conception of time and the

\textsuperscript{156} In his \textit{Virgil’s Aeneid: A Critical Description}, Kenneth Quinn states that “there is that note of confident nationalism which we detect in the \textit{Odes} of Horace: Actium and the conquest of Egypt symbolized … the coming of age of Rome as a cultural power with a national literature of her own” (46-47).
linguistic demands. Recent studies undertaken by Karl Galinsky, Jás Elsner, Greg Woolf and others have established the extraordinary shift or evolution that occurred during the Augustan era—to the extent that one might conclude that a similar project could not have occurred a generation or two earlier. Overall, the reach of artistic fictions, including coinage, architecture, roads, literature, ranged from modern-day Britain and Spain to the modern-day Palestinian territories and Egypt. These fictions represented Rome using a common conception of time and impressed upon the people views that shared a common aesthetic and logic (in architecture, alphabet, statuary and painting) in a common language (used for legal, economic, artistic and private purposes).

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One other primary concern remains regarding the Roman Empire as imagined community. Renan had remarked that Rome was “a huge association, and a synonym for order, peace and civilization.” Yet, it is necessary to ask: what was this association to which Caesar Augustus addressed himself in his Res Gestae Divi Augusti? Some ten times in this work, he speaks of or to the Romanus Populus, the Roman people; at other moments he discusses specific Roman groups (equites, equestrian class; plebs, the non-patrician citizen body; civis, citizens; exerticus, army). This work’s use of these phrases is intended to confirm the identity of a Roman people, link them to the historical process outlined, and create a sense of continuity and fraternity amongst them.

157 Galinsky’s Augustan Culture is dense but approachable; Elsner’s Art and Text in Roman Culture is directed to both literary and art history audiences; Woolf has a number of articles and books studying Roman influences on its provinces, particularly Roman Gaul, which have great breadth, taking into account archaeology, history and literature. Other notable works include Paul Zanker’s The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus and Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus, edited by Anton Powell, both of which explore the use of propaganda in the early Empire.
The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, which catalogued the deeds and accomplishments of Caesar Augustus, provided visual reinforcement for the power of Imperial Rome and offering a narrative that linked the various parts of the empire together as one. Jás Elsner has described how:

*As a monument*, the Res Gestae was sent out of Rome into the provinces and inscribed into the cities of the empire….like the coins which depicted Augustan buildings, it portrayed the city of Rome and city’s view of the world to the world which Rome controlled. It is this monumental act of imperial rhetoric—the extraordinary dissemination and inscription of an entirely Romanocentric discourse into provincial centres whose citizens were likely never to have been to Rome—that constitutes its supreme act of geographic imperialism. (48-49)

As such, the Res Gestae constitute one of the many overt means through which Augustus exerted his imperial vision on the people of the empire. Elsner notes how these inscriptions were placed in areas that were both public and sacred, which heightened their utility at speaking of the Roman Empire to it people and its citizens (48), reminding all literate people of the power of Rome and the identity that they shared with other parts of the empire. It is a powerful amalgamation of text, architecture (in some cases, statuary) and public space that was intended to create and/or reinforce a sense of the community amongst the people of the Empire: the idea was to engage the readers or viewers so they could conceive of themselves as a member of the *Romanus Populus* detailed time and again so generously. Thus, the Res Gestae offer a profound example of a complex artistic fiction used to create an “association.” But was it akin to what we call a nation? And how did it differ from received ideas of tribe or family or language that preceded the founding of the empire?

Obviously, the Roman Empire was comprised of many cultures, many languages and many faiths. Though it imposed its imprint on the different conquered peoples who
lived in its provinces and territories, the empire’s flexibility and elasticity extended not only to literature and politics, but to the uses of language, the practice of religion and the local ways of life practiced throughout the empire. In fact, Galinsky proposes that Augustan culture provides, in general, an elastic framework that influenced all aspects of imperial society. Elastic also, or perhaps liberal, was the notion of the citizenship in the empire during this era; it is more difficult to comprehend how the Romanus Populus relates to our understanding of nationalistic fervor or endearment, such as can be found in patriotism.

F.W. Walbank’s study, “Nationality as a Factor in Roman History,” describes the effect of this elasticity, though this study is broad, taking into account both Republican and Imperial Rome. He notes at the beginning of his article that “to define a nation is not easy” though he proposes, following Renan to a degree, “that ultimately men constitute a nation because and when they believe they constitute one” (146) and adds “that federalism is one important way to the birth of a nation” due to the fact that it works to supersede tribal, ethnic or racial distinctions.

Walbank describes how Rome used citizenship and imposed a type of federalism to create a sense of Romanness:

The success of Rome in imposing acceptance of her rule over so vast an area and in assimilating so many different peoples and cultures was achieved partly through crude violence, debellare superbos, partly through understanding once the issue was decided, parcere subiectis, and partly through the ingenious use of her elastic citizenship to unify and win over the ambitious to Roman ways. (163)

This practice of assimilation and incorporation grows out of the Ius Latii or “Latin rights,” traceable back to 338 B.C. which played an important political role at the close of the Republic and the beginning of the empire, as citizenship was expanded dramatically
throughout Roman territory. The purpose of the ius *Latii* was "to mediate the transformation of *peregrine* into Roman citizens" (268). Sherwin-White states that *ius Latii* was an instrument of Romanization, without the implication of any idea of race or nationality, [which evolved] due to the curious character of the bond then established between Rome and the remaining ‘Latin peoples’, and extended to the new members of the Latin Name created during the following century and a half [following 338 B.C.]. (96)

Citizenship was extended time and again during the Empire; during Augustus’ reign it was extended into regions outside of Italy. Augustus followed Julius Caesar’s approach of using synoecism, a process of incorporating conquered territories and their peoples under political enfranchisement, in that the expansion of citizenship accompanied the expansion of territory. As Walbank points out, this process itself was not novel for Roman leaders, as it had been used in the expansion of Attic city-states; however, “in the case of Rome…it continued to be used in a world of developed cities, and…it recognised no territorial limitations” (152). Overall, as noted above, Rome was strategic and was always in the process of negotiating its cultural impact on conquered regions; at points, even extending the rights of citizenship to newly conquered regions within a single generation. Ultimately, “Rome had to reach out,...adapting, rather than adopting, what was new, and [brought] a new nation to birth” (Harroff qtd. in Walbank 152).

Finally, this process of adaptation, so much a part of the Augustan flexibility, avoided the entrenched binary oppositions having to do with race—binary perspectives that are commonplace still in current Western society, as they had been during Classical Hellenic culture. In fact, Walbank remarks that
There is one thing common to...Roman references to people of foreign nationalities [sic], they never make that rigid differentiation which the Greeks of the classical period made between themselves and the barbarians. Indeed, this distinction meant so little to the Romans originally that they were even prepared to accept the Greek valuation and count themselves as Barbarians. (158)

There was no us and them. There were degrees of civilization (humanitas) and one group or individual was never excluded.¹⁵⁸ In fact, Roman writers were so bold as to portray their empire as representing the world (using the word orbis), excluding none but encompassing all. However, there was some differentiation between tribal associations and the broader association that the Roman Empire encompassed: Walbank comments that the word nomen, as in the phrase nomen Albanum,¹⁵⁹ suggesting that it “could well be a term adopted after 338 [B.C.] to describe the new sort of Latins whose Latinity had a juridical rather than an ethnic basis” (149-150).

Nonetheless, while Augustan flexibility and elasticity were able to strengthen and embolden the empire, it may have had a limited sense of patriotism, which is invoked in relation to a common patrimony and an excluded other.¹⁶⁰ That may be why “The Roman Empire seems never to have evoked any active patriotism from the vast majority of its citizens” (Jones qtd. in Walbank 167). Ultimately, the Roman community that was imagined during the Augustan age, particularly during its early stages, suffered from the very fact that its very definition had too little fixedness and was too much in the process of discovering what it was and where it was going. By the time Aelius Aristides

¹⁵⁸ Note that this conclusion is focused solely on tribalism, ethnicity and “nation.” The empire certainly excluded based upon gender and class, which would be the subject of other analyses of how Rome was imagined and how Rome adapted itself.
¹⁵⁹ Used in Livy 1.23.4.
¹⁶⁰ This consideration is made with regard to Voltaire’s observation that “It is a sad case, that often there is no being a good patriot without being the enemy to other men” (128).
delivered his panegyric on Rome in the second century A.D., which describes the empire as “like one continuous country and one race, all the world quietly obeys,” a fixed notion of empire has begun to set in. As we will see in the next section, Imperial Britain had very particular ideas of what the Roman Empire had been and what it stood for; and they were to ground their own grand claims to superiority and their civilizing goals in these ideas, though they did not extend to the rights of citizenship to the colonized peoples who were subjects of their empire.

*Imperium et Libertas: Britain angles in on Empire*

Who was it but our English Constantine that baptiz'd the Roman Empire?…Who but Alcuin and Wicklef our Country men open'd the eyes of Europe, the one in arts, the other in Religion. Let not England, forget her precedence of teaching nations how to live.161

John Milton, “The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce” – “Address to Parlament (sic)”

A study of the British view of Rome in relation to its own maturing imperial aspirations has inspired one book-length study, Norman Vance’s *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*, which examines “ancient Roman influences in Victorian life and letters” (vi). But Vance cautions that “the Roman heritage [in Victorian Britain] is still largely unexplored”; still, the larger consideration of what Rome meant to the British during the imperial years (roughly 1858 – 1947)162 has been touched upon by diverse authors163 and

161 Patrides notes that “Constantine the Great was erroneously thought to have been born in England” (120n23).
162 The years span from beginning of the British Raj until the independence of India and Pakistan.
still requires a much more comprehensive treatment. This current exploration will add to this discussion but will not endeavor to be too expansive. It will focus on three areas in which Britain reached back (or failed to reach back) to Rome for justification, inspiration and guidance (lest Britain repeat Rome’s errors): 1) the notion of empire itself; 2) the influence of ideas of race and its link to citizenship; 3) the particular role that literature (among all of the artistic possibilities) played in creating their idea of empire.

The Roman Empire had a long, grand, contemptible, and complex history which included a slow and intermittent decline, punctuated by revivals grand and small—Britain’s own imperial aspirations were just one of many that inflamed Europe from the Renaissance onward. Edward Gibbon’s multi-volume The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (published from 1776-1788) should have been a deterrent to Britain’s imperial aspirations; rather, it was “the essential guide for Britons anxious to plot their own imperial trajectory” (Brendon xv). Indeed, Britain and the British should have absorbed and heeded Gibbon’s sober warnings that “the history of empires is the history of human misery” (qtd. in Brendon xix). Despite the overall tenor of Gibbon’s work (in some ways, the title of his history of Rome should have sufficed as a caveat), this alignment or inheritance, Rome to Britain, was intended to lend legitimacy to the new empire, imbuing it with a sense of continuity and cohesiveness.

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163 Piers Brendon’s The Decline and Fall of the British Empire: 1781 - 1997 is an excellent general survey of the empire across the globe. Other works that have focused on the relationship between Rome and the British Empire include studies by Raymond Betts, Victoria Tietze Larson, Javed Majeed, Phiroze Vasunia, P. A. Brunt and Richard Hingley, all considered or referred to below.

164 Brendon is quoting Gibbon’s Essay on the Study of Literature, published in English in 1764 (it was originally written in French).
Britain, like so many other European societies in the nineteenth century, was bitten by the nationalist bug while maintaining a dynasty and dreaming of being the next great empire. During this period, all of Europe was aflame with the need to detail people’s origins, patrimony, their divine consent and the promise (and premise) that future glory would be gained. Herder’s ideas concerning the *Volk* were a tremendous influence. The fictions that were created or “discovered” (in some cases), supplemented by additional socio-cultural structures, infected the Anglo-psyche and were exported to the far-flung regions of the empire where they altered the psyche of those people colonized by the British.

In a speech given at Trinity College, Dublin in 1946, the British statesman and conservative-nationalist Enoch Powell declared that “the life of nations no less than that of men is lived largely in the imagination” (qtd. in Nairn 254). Powell notes, however, that this way of imagining is linked to its past and future and the context of other peoples and nations—there is the implicit idea that the way a nation is conceived as part of the “corporate imagination” must conform to the expectations of others. Otherwise, it is merely a fantasy—it is Camelot or Eden or Shangri-la, the place of dreams.

Interestingly, Powell, who was the most staunch of British nationalists, concluded his speech at Trinity College by deploring how

the British people…came to believe instinctively, implicitly, that they had an empire—a belief that was to colour their thoughts, emotions and actions for the next 70 years and to set a gulf between them and the rest of the world, the same gulf which exists between a man in the grip of a hallucination and those around him who do not share it. (255)

England had long had dreams of empire. Just a cursory review of English ambition and history of the past 500 years reveals how purposefully colonial expansion
was undertaken on every continent in a way that mimicked Portugal, Spain and France, other early aspirants to the mantle of Rome. In fact, it is quite surprising that it took England so long (1876) to fulfill its imperial aspirations in title (Victoria regina et imperatrix, “Victoria Queen and Empress”) and the fact that the era was called, as early as 1880, the Pax Britannica, which alluded to the Pax Romana established under Caesar Augustus.

Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister who engineered the Royal Titles Bill of 1876, granting Victoria her status as Indiae Imperatrix (“Empress of India”), had an imagination filled with imperial connections, all of which looked back to Rome.

Defending the peace that the British maintained, Disraeli declared:

> So long as the power and advice of England are felt in the councils of Europe, peace, I believe will be maintained for a long period...I know [the citizens of London] will not be beguiled into believing that in maintaining their Empire they may forfeit their liberties. One of the greatest of Romans, when asked what were his politics, replied, Imperium et Libertas. That would not make a bad programme for a British Ministry. (qtd. in Vance 230-231)

Rome was a convenient and seemingly logical connection for British authors throughout the nineteenth-century—it did not matter, as Vance points out, that there was

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165 According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest use of the term Pax Romana was reported in 1853 [in] Fraser's [Magazine,] Mar. 291/1. Within its ample circumference [sc. the Roman world] the Pax Romana abode securely.”

166 The Pax Romana itself was an idea developed by British historian Edward Gibbon in the first volume of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (published in 1776); it was not an idea developed during the time of imperial Rome. In the beginning of the first chapter of this work, Gibbon states:

> In the second century of the Christian era, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilised portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. (41)

Even so, there had been a sense of the pax Romana during Augustus’ reign: he notes during his Res Gestae, that aram [Pacis Aug[iustae] senatus pro]redit[i]u meo consa[c]randam [censuit] ad campam [Martium]. “When Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius were consuls [13 B.C.], the senate voted to consecrate the altar of August Peace in the field of Mars for my return” (II.12).
no Roman who stated Imperium et Libertas.\textsuperscript{167} What mattered more was what Britain should be (how it was imagined) and how the British idea of Rome formed.\textsuperscript{168} Disraeli merely read his Roman texts and their attendant history as he hoped they should be read.\textsuperscript{169}

Running counter to Disraeli’s claim, and to so many other similar national/imperial claims, Salman Rushdie declares how “imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect” (10). This comment appears in his essay, “Imaginary Homelands,” which reacts to his experiences of going back to India in order to write his novel Midnight’s Children. Overall, this essay focuses on how one constructs (or “imagines”) one’s “homeland” based on fragments and scraps, some of which are

\textsuperscript{167} As Vance points out (231), Disraeli may have had Cicero in mind, though this Roman orator and statesman preceded the creation of empire and was one of the most fervent defenders of the Roman Republic. Cicero did state phrases that were similar to what Disraeli had in mind, pointing out that the state should be concerned with imperio ac libertate (“dominion and liberty”) as represented in “In Catiline 4.24;” he did praise Decimus Brutus for resisting Mark Antony and thus cum senatus auctoritatem populique Romani libertatem imperiumque defendat “defending the authority of the senate and the liberty and sovereignty of the Roman people” in “Philippica 3.37.” It is tempting to translate imperium as empire, even during the Republican era, though its meaning is not so basic. See also Tietze Larson’s discussion 18-19.

\textsuperscript{168} This way of imagining the past in relation to the present is probably best known through the formulation found in Edward Said’s Culture and Imperialism. Near the beginning, Said remarks that: appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animate such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. (3)

The past continues: the Pax Romana has become the Pax Britannia.

\textsuperscript{169} Disraeli’s reading of history has the same narrowness that can be seen in the quote from John Milton’s “Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,” which introduces this section. In that quote, Milton rhetorically questions, “Who was it but our English Constantine that baptiz’d the Roman Empire?” Such a question allows him to combine Rome and England, so his England becomes like the veritable city on the hill, providing light to all nations. As such, we have an England that is somehow divorced from the everyday world since it has transcended the world—that is, it has provided the true faith and the true way of living. This England described by Milton carries with it a sense of providentiality since it came to consciousness as part of the Puritan Revolution of the mid-seventeenth century. Thus, English identity was a compelling mixture of faith with an embryonic nationalism. Hans Kohn’s “The Genesis of English Nationalism” treats this subject at length, describing the ways in which King Henry VIII weaned England from European influences and, ultimately, how Oliver Cromwell rode the crest of a greater sense of establishing what it was to be English, though with a decidedly religious sensibility.
desirable or desired, and others which are horrific or banal or accidental. Rushdie introduces the subject of his essay by recalling and imagining his life in Bombay from when he was much younger. In many ways, Rushdie recalls the city and his life there as he would want it to be—though with a bit more sense of the humor, irony and the tragic than many might find there. Rushdie points out that when he returned to the city of his birth after being away for “half [his] life” (9), he “was gripped by the conviction that [he] had a city and a history to reclaim” and yet he is overly aware of the fact that he “will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” but that he will instead “create fictions…imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.” He cannot get at India itself, but merely creates or imagines “a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions.” But still he recognizes that it is imagined and that “imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect” (10).

The connection between imaginative truth and the creation of Midnight’s Children is pertinent to this discussion since this novel is a magical realist allegory on the creation of modern India. We might claim that Disraeli’s empire “lived largely in the imagination”; however, as Rushdie points out, the closer you get to the present day of a nation, the more elusive “truth” becomes and the more you realize you have a natio ex machina (or gens ex machine, “people or race from the machine”) rather than a natio de fato (“nation [ordained] by fate”) or, in the case of imperial England, imperium dei gratia (“empire by the grace of God”).

Rushdie’s protagonist of Midnight’s Children describes this elusiveness of the truth with the following comparison:
Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up…until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into the dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions;…it becomes clear that the illusion is reality. (qtd. in “Imaginary Homelands” 13)

Correspondingly, to complete this consideration, Rushdie notes how this novel itself “as it nears contemporary events, quite deliberately loses deep perspective, becomes more ‘partial’. Part of his purpose here is to avoid the pretense of grasping the whole or pretending “that it was possible to see the whole picture” as one gets closer to the present. One must be afforded the necessary distance to begin to see the greater picture and to make some sense of it as part of ongoing shifts, contexts and actions.

Disraeli’s age was an inverse of what Rushdie describes here since there still remained an idea (or perhaps the arrogance) that it was possible to grasp the whole of things during nineteenth-century England. As such, it was necessary to give wholeness to these fragments. There was a sense of fixedness and continuity, especially since politicians and scholars in England, whether they agreed or disagreed with Britain’s imperial enterprise, drew their understanding of the present from a common trough (their classical education).

To a degree, Disraeli’s imaginative truth represents the paradox upon which national or imperial identity may be grounded—that it is necessary to compel fragments into a cohesive and sensible totality. Moreover, this identity must be grounded in the past and be oriented toward a destiny to which the nation or empire is being driven.

Rushdie too has a profound imagination; however, contrary to Disraeli’s perspective, he takes comfort in the richness afforded by doubt, noting how
human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved. (12)

So when Rushdie creates India in *Midnight’s Children*, it is, as he describes “‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundred of millions of possible versions” (10). Rather, India is for him, long fled from Bombay, the India of Saladin Chamcha of *The Satanic Verses* since both “create fictions… invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10). His India is no more privileged than any other and not any more or less true.

There are hundreds of millions of versions of India, each imagined a bit differently both by the natives, the visitors, the foreigners, the expatriates, the immigrants; each imagined in poetry, song, film, novel, email, story, drunken reverie, newspaper, blog, photograph, travelogue, etc.

Though each is just a version, just as his is one, there is a strong tendency to valorize one or several versions over others. Certainly Nehru’s India, described in his speech “On the Granting of Indian Independence,” is a narrative privileged in discourses about India’s past, future and the present in which it was delivered. This speech is part of the foundational fiction that has made the modern nation of India possible. As with other national discourses, it cannot help but fit it into earlier imaginings of India and a contrived continuity that is linked with destiny and the origins of humanity. In addition, the status of India within the British mind constituted a special case due to its vastness in numbers of peoples, languages and land mass—as well as the political, economic,
religious or cultural complexities that were found there. This status helped with the
metamorphosis of Victoria from Queen to Empress.

So when Benjamin Disraeli supervised Queen Victoria’s ascension to Empress of
India, there was a similar privileging of one version of history over another, cobbled with
layers of imaginative truth. Indeed, it is quite telling that neither Victoria nor Disraeli
had ever visited the very land which forever linked them to the some of the grossest
excesses of nineteenth-century imperialism.¹⁷⁰ Victoria Empress of India could only
imagine this land through various written, oral and artistic agencies (including
photographs, sculpture, paintings, etc.) and the occasional visiting representative Indian
who came to the British Isles. Moreover, the very choice of her title, Regina et
Imperatrix, represented on memorials and coinage and proclamations, replicates the
Roman past through the use of Latin and the way her image was reproduced, one which
became quite popular amongst British rulers in the late nineteenth century, as England
became the storied empire on which the sun never set.¹⁷¹ During his speech declaring the
Royal Titles Act, given on February 17, 1876, Disraeli added to the myth, pointing out
that “this vast community [India] is governed […] under the authority of the Queen, by
many Sovereign Princes, some of whom occupy Thrones which were filled by their
ancestors when England was a Roman Province” (qtd. in Cohn 184). Disraeli’s
suggestion here is that the English colony has superseded the former order by assuming

¹⁷⁰ The Prince of Wales, the future Emperor Edward VII, had visited Britain’s Indian territories during
1875-76.
¹⁷¹ Tietze Larson comments that this assumption of the title of imperatrix “was in part an act of emulation
with the Prussians, who invented the Second Reich and the role of the German Emperor […] as a kind of
renewal of the concept of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire—Rome, once again, acting as a
benchmark for concepts of empires” (24).
the mantle of power over peoples linked synchronically to Rome’s past—England is Rome by association.

These links to India and to Rome were tenuous and difficult to maintain—despite their ongoing appeal. The whole construction of parallels, vague quotes and references is more a political contrivance for a dynasty (and the government that aided and abetted it) that seeks legitimacy—as Powell suggested, it appears to exhibit the effects of a man who is hallucinating.

Critics and scholars have continued to question and, in some cases (as with Tom Nairn’s critiques) savage such pretenses. Brunt concludes that “comparisons between the two empires were in fact always rather forced…it was rather the experience of modern imperialism that influenced the interpretation of Roman history with false analogies” (111). The forced nature of the comparison becomes more apparent as the British Empire becomes more distant in time, since the tiniest details (such as Disraeli’s oblique reference to a “one of the greatest of Romans”) assume more grotesque proportions.

Following Brunt’s lead, over the past two decades, there has been significantly more interest in the British Empire’s contrived affinities with and inheritances from the Roman Empire. In addition to an overarching concern with the concept of Romanization, most of the scholarship on the relationship between Britain and Rome has focused on the idea of imperium, concerns with race and superiority, the role of Classical Studies in developing imperial administrators, and Britain’s growing interest in having an origin myth as dramatic and complete as those being contrived on the European continent.
England needed a good story. And the British had no worry of being considered a *geschichtsloses Volk*, a “historyless people,” who have to create an origin and a past since they have nothing in particular that they can latch onto for solidity and continuity.\(^{172}\)

Rather, the British Empire had quite the opposite problem. For them, it was a matter of choosing which past, which origin, or which history best suited their political, economic and socio-cultural aims.

The anonymous *Historia Brittonum* (circa eighth century A.D.) describes how “Britton” was founded by Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome; thus, providing origins that paralleled to Rome’s. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (circa 1136 A.D.) follows the origin myth in the *Historia Brittonum*, confirming that Britain has a direct link to Rome and Troy.\(^{173}\)

William Camden’s *Britannia* (published in 1586), a topographic/historical survey of Britain, removed Troy and Brutus from the origin story and provided “a detailed account of the Roman monuments and history of Britain,” creating a Britain that was “a member of the fellowship of nations who drew their strength from roots struck deep in the Roman Empire” (Piggott qtd. in “Britannia” 11).

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\(^{172}\) Tom Nairn mentions the term *geschichtsloses Volk* during his consideration of Scottish nationalism in *The Break-Up of Britain*. Interestingly, in a footnote, Nairn describes how modern Greece (nineteenth century) had to shed its Roman past in order to recover its *true* patrimony and become a nation—in the process, we are informed that they had to “create…new myths *de toutes pièces*” in order to validate their national cause (94n13).

Nairn justifies his claim by quoting “one (notably pro-Greek) author who [stated] “those who spoke the Greek language…had no notion of classical Greece or of Hellenistic civilization of Roman times… The classical ruins were quite unintelligible to the early modern Greeks… From Roman times the Greeks had called themselves ‘Romans’ and continued to do so up to and during the War of Independence” (Dakin qtd. in Nairn 94n13).

\(^{173}\) Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account was repeated and expanded on in Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (published in the late sixteenth century).
Many others tried to link Britain’s origins to Celts descended from Adam. There was also the Celtic material drawn from the *Mabinogion* which was translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest in 1838. And there was material that could be drawn from “a range of ‘Germanic’ material, both Anglo-Saxon poetry including Beowulf” and the “various Edda and Sagas that become increasingly available as the nineteenth century progressed” (Dentith 69). There are also the many variations of the story of King Arthur, who has long held attraction to the British. His first appearance was in the eighth century *Historia Brittonum*, in which he is depicted as a Romano-British leader; during the Victorian era, the poet laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (published 1856-1885) presents an Arthur who supersedes Rome, a leader who declares to “those great Lords from Rome, The slowly-fading mistress of the world” who have come demanding tribute, that “the old order changeth, yielding place to new.” In the midst of all these is the incomplete epical allegory *The Fairie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, which includes both Trojan origins and Arthurian legend.\(^\text{174}\) This brief sampling of stories, revealing origins that could be Trojan, Roman, Judeo-Christian, Arthurian (post-Roman nativist?), shows how the whole issue of origins for England is a hodgepodge.

For the empire builders and nation builders of nineteenth-century England, the origin had to take place in a distant past that connected Britain and its people to the names and powers that mattered in the case of historical precedent; in addition, it had to be linked to a promise of a noble destiny—both Christianity and Rome could serve that

\(^{174}\) Spenser’s work makes great use of earlier material, especially by Geoffrey of Monmouth “supplemented by Elizabethan chroniclers such as Hardying, Grafton, Stow and Holinshed” (Spenser 1129). Hence, his chronicle of the kings of Britain runs from Brutus through Uther Pendragon, then from Arthur through Gloriana (Elizabeth, “the Fairie Queene”).
purpose well. In the end, despite the variations and contradictions, it came down to more of an issue of determining which origin story trumps which other ones, which one has the privilege of representing England (which one the British wanted and needed). In his “Britannia, origin myths and the British Empire,” Richard Hingley argues that “in the context of the late nineteenth century and the early years of this [twentieth] century, the Roman Empire constituted a form of origin myth in the minds of many of the British for their own Empire” (14). The Roman origin trumped the others. In many ways, it was a pragmatic choice—giving comfort and aid to how Britain wanted itself to be perceived: the British Empire was quite young (a mere twenty-one years at Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897) and Rome had lasted a millennium or more, based on liberal counting, or at least 500 years. Therefore, such comparisons invited people to imagine a British Empire that would be long-lived and peaceful (the intimation and implication seems to be: if the Pax Romana had lasted some 200 years—from 29 B.C. under Caesar Augustus through A.D. 180 when Marcus Aurelius died—how long might the Pax Britannica be?).

During this time-period, well-known scholars, many of whom were former imperial administrators, wrote books edifying Rome and its connections to their Empire, or they beckoned to Rome when discussing the current state of affairs in England. They were building on precedent established in government.

The classically trained J.C. Stobart, an important figure in British communications and education during the early twentieth century, detailed in his The

175 Cohn traces England’s modern roots to the Commonwealth created under Cromwell, yet this origin would never have worked for the Victorians since it was too recent, too vigorously documented, and too revolutionary; in addition, it lacks the magic, majesty and/or folkishness demanded of such ventures. See also note 126.
Grandeur that was Rome: “The Roman Empire bears such an obvious and unique resemblance to the British that the fate of the former must be of enormous interest to the latter” (qtd. in “Britannia” 15). Sir Charles P. Lucas (1853-1931), who was the first head of the Dominions Department in the Colonial Office and a noted scholar on geography, observed that “all or nearly all the terms which indicate the status of Greater Britain and its component parts are a legacy of Rome” (Vance 224).

Similar comparisons and considerations were developed more fully in Lucas’ Greater Rome and Greater Britain (1912), as well as Lord Cromer’s (Evelyn Baring) Ancient and Modern Imperialism (1910),176 Viscount James Bryce’s “The Roman and British Empires” (which appeared in his Studies in Historical Jurisprudence [1901]),177 along with the aforementioned, The Romanization of Roman Britain (1912) by Francis Haverfield, whose text served to reinforce the patrimony of Rome’s influence on Britain.

All of these works were published after Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and before World War I began in 1914. It was a period that was simultaneously the peak of Empire and the beginning of the seemingly unthinkable decline of empire.178 As such, it

176 Lord Cromer (1841-1917), who was born Evelyn Baring, had been the private secretary (1872-1876) of Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India; soon after, he became the British Consul-General in Egypt (1883-1907); finally, he was known as the president of the Classical Association of Great Britain (1909-1910) after he had retired from his career in civil service. Ancient and Modern Imperialism is based on his presidential address to the Classical Association (see discussion in Hingley’s. Roman Officers and English Gentleman: the Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology (34-35).
177 Viscount James Bryce (1838-1922) was a historical and legal scholar, as well as a statesman and diplomat.
178 As suggested in Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “Recessional,” which describes the inevitable decline of all empires. In line with his religious tone and theme, this poem mentions only Biblical cities (Nineveh and Tyre are mentioned in the third stanza) and avoids comparisons with Rome:

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
was a time in which it seemed most essential and practical to ground British imperial claims in a past that was both linked to England and provided a basis for ideas of empire. As we can see from the very many narrative strains that they used to identify who they were, it was difficult enough to fix the idea of English identity: that it was to be married to the notion of empire stirred up all sorts of other concerns for the betterment or worsening of the “English” people.

In addition, in her study of the comparisons made between Britain and Rome, Phiroze Vasunia argues that these “writers’ arguments about the Roman Empire are inseparable from their claims about the British Empire, and in fact reveal more about the latter than the former” (39). She notes that “these writers were all establishment figures, they were immersed in Victorian imperial culture, and they all had a personal stake in British imperialism” (39). All of these writers had received a Classical education at Oxbridge which, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, was increasingly linked to the imperial venture.

For these scholars and others who saw Rome as a model for England, there was comfort and solidity in this connection—and a sense of permanence. Norman Vance describes how nineteenth-century English society:

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Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget - lest we forget!  

On a related note, in Kipling’s *A History of England*, we can see how “history was a succession of empires; the British Empire was the culmination of world history. The Roman Empire was the first imperium …” (Raskin qtd. in Tietze Larson 27).

179 Haverfield was the founding President of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies (now called the “Roman Society”).
180 Tietze Larson points out how this type of “gentleman’s education” became necessary for access to the top ranks of the Indian Civil Service, once an open examination system replaced the patronage process in the 1850s (9).
inherited this sometimes disabling respect for classical permanency, for Latin
texts and Roman models [which] was not simply a matter of direct response to
ancient texts and traditions: it was also a way of keeping faith with the
classicizing of earlier post-classical ages. (Vance 8)

Returns to elements of classicism, such as in the Augustan or late Victorian eras,
afforded the British elite a sense of permanence that was linked to their idea of power and
their mission to civilize the world. As Tacitus, Pliny the Elder and Plutarch described, Roman leaders (during different periods of republic and empire) undertook
particular courses of action to civilize and pacify local populations (Pliny’s phrase that Rome _humanitatem homini dabet_, “gave civilization to peoples,” is the most direct
eexpression of this sentiment). Though there was this sense of permanence, there was
also a greater concern that there were insurmountable differences between Rome and
Britain—that the whole process of Empire had evolved.

Lord Cromer (Evelyn Baring), who had been the imperial Consul-General to
Egypt and later served as the president of the Classical Association, considered the
breadth of such changes in his *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*, describing how

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181 England’s Augustan age (c. 1710-1745), the most recent era in which classicizing impacted artistic
form, saw innovation married with classical form in architecture (notably the Palladian movement),
literature (especially John Dryden, Alexander Pope), sculpture (for example, John Nost’s statue of King
George II arrayed as Caesar Augustus); in addition, coins continued to be minted with images of royalty
decked out in togas with laurels gracing their temples—the perimeter inscribed in Latin (*Georgicus II Dei
Gratia*).
182 In his expansive *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, Piers Brendon offers a brief catalog of the
obvious “inheritors” of the Roman mantle, showing how:
the Britons were not alone in validating their national mythology by reference to Rome. Tsar (the
Russian form of Caesar) Ivan the Great claimed Moscow as the Third Rome. Napoleon crowned
himself Emperor with a laurel wreath of gold in a ceremony based on the coronation of
Charlemagne. (xvii)
And of course, there was the Second Reich (known as the Deutsches Reich) declared by Kaiser Wilhelm I
in 1871, which lasted until the capitulation of Kaiser Wilhelm II at the end of the First World War in 1918.
183 See note 154 for the passage in Tacitus; the passage from Pliny the Elder is given in note 155.
184 See note 150.
The great Imperial problem of the future is to what an extent some 350 millions of British subjects who are aliens to us in race, religion, language, manners, and customs are to govern themselves or are to be governed by us. Rome never had to face such an issue as this. (18-19)

In this case, though speaking of the whole of empire, Baring sums up India as a special case and would have had in mind the tactics and process of civilizing that were undertaken there by the British starting in the late 1830s.

This process of “civilizing” the peoples in the Indian subcontinent began when it was still under the auspices of the British East India Company, which controlled British interests in India until 1858, at which point the British Crown assumed control. Civilizing took the form of Anglicization, which was summed up in Thomas Babington Macaulay’s famous “Minute on Indian Education” delivered on February 2, 1835. In the “Minute,” Macaulay (1800-1859), who served on the Supreme Council of India, proposed that the British use Western languages to civilize the people of India, stating how “The languages of western Europe civilised Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo [Indians] what they have done for the Tartar [Russians].” He strongly recommended imposing English on the peoples of British India as the civilizing and standard language for law, commerce, and literature. He notes in particular that

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country…and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

There seems no better term for this practice than Anglicization, especially in light of the phrase Romanization, used by Mommsen some twenty years later in his Römische
Geschichte (1854-56) and expanded on by Haverfield some seventy-five years later. Benedict Anderson suggests that this process by which the natives might become English is a “sort of mental miscegenation” (91) as opposed to the physical miscegenation that was promoted in Latin America. Thus, British scholars were bound to see Romanization as part of the process that the Romans undertook in Roman Britain, described by Brunt as a means to “promote enfranchisement amongst local leaders” since it was part and parcel of the very acculturation project that was ultimately adopted for British India in the late 1830s. The line of thinking seems to have been: what was good for the Romans, was good for the Britons; what was good for the British, was good for the Hindoos.

This policy had its limits since enfranchisement only went so far—during the era of British rule on the Indian subcontinent, Anglicization did not confer the benefits of citizenship nor did it grant entitlements of governance or power beyond one’s locale. We can contrast these limits with Brunt’s consideration that Romanization, to the degree that it was employed, was far more liberal since

In Rome such men as Nehru and Nkrumah would have been eligible for the highest imperial offices. In the third century most senators were not Italians. From Trajan onwards [A.D. 98-117] most emperors came from the provinces and the eternal city celebrated its millennium in A.D. 247 under the rule of an Arab sheikh (sic) [Caesar Marcus Julius Philippus Augustus]. (118)

185 There has been some use of the term Macaulayism to sum up this practice. Its influence can still be recognized, as can be seen in Ramachandra Guha’s article, “Macaulay's Minute revisited” which appeared in The Hindu, an English language Indian newspaper, in 2007. I will borrow Benedict Anderson’s term Anglicization when denoting this process of acculturation.
186 This physical miscegenation is the “irresistible romance” treated in depth throughout Doris Sommer’s Foundational Fictions.
187 Such is Roger Hingley’s critique, which is best represented in Globalizing Rome.
188 Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was a founder and the first leader of modern India. Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) was the first leader of Ghana and its predecessor state, the Gold Coast. Both were educated
While Brunt charged the Victorians with forced comparisons between Rome and Britain, we might see a similar hyperbolic effect here—to the detriment of Britain. The Roman Empire existed roughly from 29 B.C. through A.D. 476, which gives interpreters of its history the ability to generalize about what it was and why it was (Rome had non-“Italian” emperors, but it took more than 100 years to get there).

Nonetheless, as was concluded in the discussion of Imperial Rome in the previous section, the diversity of rule that can be found in the later empire was rooted in a flexibility and pragmatism, initiated during Caesar Augustus’ reign (29 B.C – A.D. 14), which involved “the negotiation and renegotiation of precedents with regard to new needs and changing circumstances” (Galinsky 363).\(^{189}\) One did not have to be of a particular tribe or geographic locus in order to be a member of the ruling classes in the Empire, one merely had to be Roman—as discussed above,\(^ {190}\) such a thing was technically possible for those who desired it.\(^ {191}\)

However, the British were much less flexible than the Romans with regard to who could be citizens and what it meant to be English. They wanted the natives of their colonies Anglicized; however, these would always remain a people apart. For example, Bipin Chandra Pal (one of the early leaders in the Indian Nationalist movement) argued: “in mind and manners [I am] as much an Englishman as any Englishman” (qtd. in Anderson 92); however, “no matter how Anglicized a [person such as] Pal became, he

\(^{189}\) This whole process of negotiation is discussed above in the previous section on Imagining Empire.

\(^{190}\) See pages 117ff.

\(^{191}\) Such conclusions do not intend to create a rosy picture for what Rome was. Rome was a place of shifting contradictions, representing the best and worst of what we might call civilization.
was always barred from the uppermost peaks of the Raj. He was also barred from movement outside [the] perimeter [of the Raj]” (Anderson 93). Moreover, to extend the implications in Brunt’s reflection on the seemingly liberal nature of Roman rule, there was no chance of a person such as Pal becoming king or emperor, and little chance that one might become a member of British Parliament.\(^{192}\) The problem, as Anderson claims, was equally jurisdictional and racial since similar situations “existed in white colonies – Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa [and] anglicized Australians did not serve in Dublin or Manchester, and not even in Ottawa or Capetown…Only ‘English English’ did” (93-94).

Thus, we can see two processes at work. One involving jurisdiction—if one was born in the Punjab, one was restricted to working in the Punjab (or Queensland, as the case may be) even if one was from the Punjab; the other involved race, signified by an exchange between “us” and “them,” civilizer and native, which played an obvious role in determining how people were treated and how they were narrated as part of the empire.

In his study, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said describes how

…this division goes back to Greek thought about barbarians, but, whoever originated this kind of “identity” thought, by the nineteenth century it had become a hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe. (xxv)

\(^{192}\) Throughout its history, British India only saw three persons become Members of British Parliament: Dadabhai Naoroji (1892-1895), Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggree (1895-1906), and Shapurji Saklatvala (1922-1923, 1924-1929), all of whom were Parsees from Bombay. Sumita Mukherjee’s “‘Narrow-majority’ and ‘Bow-and-agree’: Public Attitudes Towards the Elections of the First Asian MPs in Britain, Dadabhai Naoroji and Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggree, 1885-1906,” is a good reassessment of the role that the first two Indian members of Parliament played and the cultural milieu in which they were elected.
As such, against the argument presented by Disraeli, England could not be said to have represented *imperium et libertas* “empire and liberty,” but rather *imperium contra libertas* (sic) “empire against liberty.” The former formula was the ideal represented in the metropolitan center; the latter formula was employed throughout the colonies, especially among subject non-white peoples, who were considered savage or barbaric.

Citing and quoting the leading English historians of the Victorian era, including J. A. Froude and John B. Seeley, along with the politician/writer Charles Dilke, in her essay, “Greater Rome and Greater Britain,” Phiroze Vasunia sums up imperial claims regarding race and *contra libertas*:

> the British Empire involves the rule of superior white peoples over inferior dark races [which] are incapable of ruling themselves, at least for the moment, and must therefore be ruled by Britons; such rule entails the maintenance of a despotism overseas even while Britain becomes increasingly democratic at home. (47)

These ideas of race and the contradictions they revealed in British politics and civilization were not easily digested by all in Britain. Nonetheless, such sentiments influenced everything from laws to private or public social practices.

Brendon notes that in India (and other colonies), we find that “essentially…the British sought to distinguish themselves as the dominant race, the ruling caste” (53).

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193 This notion is suggested in Betts (159).

194 See especially Seeley’s *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures*, published in 1885.

195 See especially Dilke’s *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English Speaking Countries during 1866 and 1867*, published in 1880.

196 For Haverfield, such distinctions had an obvious debilitating effect on the way people perceived Rome. At the beginning of the second chapter of *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, he remarks that the “majority of English writers” err in describing Roman Britain as a province in which “Roman and native were as distinct as modern Englishman and Indian, and ‘the departure of the Romans’ in the fifth century left the Britons almost as Celtic as their coming had found them.” He continues by pointing out how such errors have been made by recent “writers [who] have been influenced by the analogies of English rule in India.”
These practices and the ideas on which they were based may be traced back to the Greeks, as Said notes; nonetheless, it was quite unlike the Romans who, as Walbank pointed out, “never make that rigid differentiation which the Greeks of the classical period made between themselves and the barbarians. Indeed,…the Romans…were even prepared to…count themselves as Barbarians” (158).197

Lord Cromer pointed out this dilemma in his Ancient and Modern Imperialism, stating that “no modern Imperialist nation has however shown powers of assimilation at all comparable to those displayed by the Romans” (77). Ultimately, he concluded that “There has been no thorough fusion no real assimilation between the British and their alien subjects [and] From this point of view therefore British Imperialism has in so far as the indigenous races of Asia and Africa are concerned been a failure” (88-89). Or, as R. G. Collingwood, the Oxford philosopher and historian acknowledged, the British Raj was “utterly unlike the Roman Empire” (qtd. in Brendon 53).198

Indeed, the Roman idea of humanitas “civilizing,” as exemplified in Tacitus, Pliny the Elder, and Plutarch, was but a pale shadow in Britain. Macaulay and his peer, Charles Trevelyan, had aimed for assimilation through Anglicization (despite their perceptions of superiority), so much so that Trevelyan had written that Indian youths would “become more English than Hindus, just as Roman provincials became more Romans than Gauls or Italians” (qtd. in Brendon 139). However, as time wore on, such

197 See discussion above on 124ff.
198 Vance points out that:
   It was suggested that Rome had been more enlightened than Britain in that it had increased imperial security by extending citizenship to subject peoples, more or less wholesale in the west ….The sense of a common identity and common purpose in the imperial enterprise that this citizenship implied might be a way of preserving the British Empire. (233)
goals were less emphasized as they undermined the very nature of Britain’s empire. 

_Anglicization_ was certainly no _Romanization_, to the degree that the latter was employed and did succeed in broadening tribal or ethnic representation in Roman upper classes, literati and governance. It was, to alter the phrase, England’s own peculiar institution—a situation of “separate but equal.”199

Anglicization also took the form of reinforcing both the center and the peripheries of the British Empire through the acquisition and creation of all of the imagined trappings of empire. If we are to examine only the British Raj, we would find examples of the trappings, which advanced the fiction of empire through architecture, ritual, statues, coinage and writing.

For architecture, there is Edwin Luytens’ and Herbert Baker’s New Delhi (designed, planned and constructed 1912-1929) with its broad tree-lined boulevards and classically influenced buildings, which “resembled Rome as an unmistakable symbol of might” (xxi): for all who might see it, from “the Viceroy’s House, its copper dome modeled on Hadrian’s Pantheon, to the Jaipur Column, a pillar of victory inspired by that of Trajan, it was an image of dominion” (252). There were the invented rituals: the Delhi Durbars200 (assembled in 1877, 1905 and 1911) held for the coronations of the Imperial leaders, which were carefully staged events complete with parades, costumes, seating arrangements, etc. intended to “place the [British Imperial] authority upon the ancient

199 The two terms used here are usually associated with American history: the “peculiar institution” in America was slavery; “Separate but equal” was the doctrine that was ruled constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court 1896 decision _Plessy v. Ferguson_, later ruled unconstitutional in the 1954 decision of _Brown v. Board of Education_.

200 The _Oxford English Dictionary_ provides the most concise definition of a durbar: “the court kept by an Indian ruler; a public audience or levee held by a native prince, or by a British governor or viceroy in India.”
throne of the Moguls, with which the imagination and tradition of [our] (sic) Indian subjects associate the splendour of supreme power” (Lytton qtd. in Cohn 187-188).

There were the sculptures of British Royals and the leaders in the British Raj adorning Coronation Park in New Delhi, there are the statues of Victoria in the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta and at the Victoria Gardens in Bombay. There was the official coinage of the Raj denoting George V as King and Emperor.

If we follow Patrick Brantlinger’s train of thought that “imperialist writing translates experience into epic terms” (qtd. in Dentith 130), we can reason that imperialist imagining, in general, translated experience into epic terms—such was the ambition of Luytens and Baker, the vastness of the Delhi Durbars, the ubiquity of imperial statuary and the imprint of royal titles on documents, laws and currency.

Part of the problem was the inherently anachronistic nature of the national or imperial epic (Dentith 64). This poetic form stood at odds with the appreciation of ballads, novels and adventure stories; the subject (primarily martial in nature) seemed disingenuous; moreover, as discussed above, there were difficulties deciding which origin story was best suited to such a work.

At the same time, there was a: a plethora of national epics that were being rediscovered or, if necessary, invented, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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201 Martin Green’s *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* and his subsequent *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century* focus on the power and popularity of the adventure story which was considered “trivial” (*The English Novel* 10) even as it was “the energizing myth of empire” (*Dreams* xi) and the novel, which “serious” and was about “the countryside (like Hardy) [or] the city (like Dickens)” (*The English Novel* 10). The adventure story was “oriental” and exotic; the novel was about England and the ‘English’ English. Hence, in this frame of reference we can apprehend the initial shock value of E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924).
…it seemed as if no self-respecting or aspirant nation could be complete without its own national epic. (Dentith 66-67)

France had a Le Chanson de Roland, Germany a Nibelungenlied, Spain an El Cid, and Scotland was claiming the recently “discovered” Ossian. So, we cannot fault the British for trying to join the growing crowd.

The authors we might associate with creating a work that would effectively marry patriotism, origins and imperial aspirations include Alfred Lord Tennyson, T. B. Macaulay, William Morris and Rudyard Kipling. Tennyson’s Idylls of the King was a balladic pastiche that drew on Celtic lore and Arthurian origin stories; Macaulay’s Lays of Ancient Rome was a collection of narrative poems with semi-mythical figures and themes that idealized Republican Rome; William Morris’ Sigurd the Volsung was a martial epic (based on Germanic Edda and Saga themes), which was cumbersome in its conscious use of primitivistic form and theme.

It is quite telling that each of these pieces varies in form and in content, revealing acutely England’s “hodgepodgy” dilemma, for lack of a better word. There were too many possible influences: too many forms, too many origins, and too little of a sense of

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202 With regard to Greco-Roman works, one is reminded more of the stories and themes and form of Theocritus’ Idylls or Virgil’s Eclogues.

203 In November 1924, T.B. Macaulay wrote the humorous “A Prophetic Account of a Grand National Epic Poem, to be entitled ‘Wellingtoniad,’ and to be Published A.D. 2824” that echoes Alexander Pope in its burlesque treatment of the Aeneid. According to his discussion, this poem was “worthy to be compared with the Iliad, the Aeneid, or the Jerusalem” (84).

204 Simon Dentith’s Epic and Empire in the Nineteenth Century focuses on British interest in epic primitivism, focusing on Homer and the “origins of epic verse in the barbaric or ‘heroic’ stage of society” (10). (He gives scarce attention to Virgil.) His study examines the various texts that resulted from this interest, and the continued influence that this strain of thinking has had on modern English-language writers, including Derek Walcott.
what Englishness might be.\textsuperscript{205} In the end, none of these texts speaks to or speaks of England in a way that Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid} was able to embody the empire being formed in Rome. Moreover, none of them had the reach or the boldness that equated to Britain’s sense of itself during the imperial years (1858-1947). In fact, none of these pieces share the affinities for imperial Rome or imperial Britain.

But what of Kipling?

Kipling, as Dentith describes, “wrote a demotic and popular version of the epic of empire” (Dentith 3), describing India and the Raj and, in general, the aspirations and obligations that the British had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indeed, there were some hopes that this esteemed poet and writer would write \textit{the epic for the empire}. We are informed that

The Epic of England, [as] George Jones said in his history of 1897 for young readers, was waiting for England’s Homer or Virgil. Perhaps Rudyard Kipling, that ‘strong, sweet Singer of the Seven Seas’, would take on this ‘most splendid of all possible tasks.’ (MacDonald 28)

Kipling wrote short fiction, adventure stories, narrative poems and children’s stories, though there were no epics and no stabs at writing epic works. Moreover, as Martin Green describes, Kipling:

\textsuperscript{205} Such a dilemma may reflect the fact that the English had “not been ruled by an ‘English’ dynasty since the early eleventh century” (Anderson 83 n.). In fact, Benedict Anderson describes how shortly after Geoffrey penned his \textit{Historia} (c. 1135):

\hfill a motley parade of Normans (Plantagenets), Welsh (Tudors), Scots (Stuarts), Dutch (House of Orange) and Germans (Hanoverians) have squatted on the imperial throne [and that n]o one much cared until the philological revolution and a paroxysm of English nationalism in World War I. (83)

The current monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is of the House of Windsor, which was created by her Grandfather, George V, nominally in order to distance the dynasty’s Germanic links that became highly problematic during World War I. The last of the Hanoverians was Queen Victoria, who married Prince Albert of the German Royal House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.
did not write about dukes and earls, and he described very few battle scenes; he scarcely portrayed any great English men of war; he painted no full-length pictures of heroes at all....he played no official part [of empire]; he merely was the bard of Empire. (The English xvii, his emphasis)

And where in Kipling do we find England’s patrimony from Rome?

There are sparse references, all in children’s works: some of the stories in his collection *Puck from Pook’s Hill* tell of the late Roman Empire; there is the story “Regulus” from *A Diversity of Creatures* (1910) which indirectly focuses on a general and consul in the Roman Republic (the piece itself is an allegory based on a translation exercise of Horace Ode III.5 at a British public school); finally, there is his brief discussion of Roman Britain in his *A History of England*. In short, the bard of empire had little to say about this patrimony or origins or the grand fate that awaited Britain.  

206 There was no epic from Kipling.

There was no epic for England.

And yet there was an epic of empire that everyone linked to the British imperial venture in the late nineteenth century: Virgil’s *Aeneid*. The British in the early nineteenth century had mistrusted “the notion of empire, given literary currency by Virgil and political currency by Napoleon, [since it] seemed to involve European Empire and so threatened British sovereignty” (Vance 141). The perspective shifted markedly as Britain’s own imperial aspirations and achievements grew, so much so that “advocates of British Empire began to thrill to Virgil’s celebration of Imperial Rome bounding her empire with the earth” (141), as prophesied by Anchises in Book VI of the *Aeneid*. Near

206 In some ways, Kipling’s stories could have indoctrinated schoolboys in the ways of empire in the same way that, throughout the nineteenth century, “generations of public school boys, [were] taught little but classical authors, [and] were trained in Greek and Roman ideas of patriotism and the glory of death in battle” (MacDonald 89).
the end of this prophesy, Aeneas is told *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento* 
“Roman, remember to rule these people with power” (VI.851), a line, that for Lord John Russell\textsuperscript{207} and John Henry Newman,\textsuperscript{208} summed up the justification, guidance and fulfillment for empire that could be found in this work. 

There was no question regarding Virgil’s status and role in the imperial project—one either agreed with it or disagreed with it. In his essay on “Songs, Patriotic and National” (1913), Lord Cromer stated boldly that “Virgil… may almost be said to have created Roman Imperialism” (445). In his lectures regarding imperialism, Cromer noted that “Virgil was an enthusiastic Imperialist, was probably a true representative of the

\textsuperscript{207} Russell was a liberal Politician who served two terms as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1846-1852 and 1865-1866) During a speech in 1869, he declared: 
There was a time when we might have stood alone as the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Ireland. That time has passed. We conquered and peopled Canada, we took possession of the whole of Australia, Van Diemen's Land [Tasmania] and New Zealand. We have annexed India to the Crown. *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*. For my part I delight in observing the imitation of our free institutions, and even our habits and manners in Colonies, at a distance of 3,000 or 4,000 miles from the Palace of Westminster. (qtd. in Tietze Larson 17). 

When he quoted the same line from Virgil during a speech in 1841, he used Dryden’s translation: 
Rome, 't is thine alone, with awful sway, 
To rule mankind, and make the world obey. 

Tietze Larson points out that when Russell made this reference in 1841, Robert Peel, who led the Conservative opposition, sought to turn the Virgilian reference against him (17). Having both been schooled in a classical university curriculum (Russell at the University of Edinburgh, Peel at Christ Church, Oxford), their points of reference were common, even if their uses and interpretations varied with their politics. \textsuperscript{208} 

\textsuperscript{208} In lectures that were later collected in *The Idea of a University* (1852), John Henry Newman, the churchman and educator, detailed:

We count it a great thing, and justly so, to plan and carry out a wide political organization. To bring under one yoke, after the manner of old Rome, a hundred discordant peoples; to maintain each of them in its own privileges within its legitimate range of action; to allow them severally the indulgence of national feelings, and the stimulus of rival interests; and yet withal to blend them into one great social establishment, and to pledge them to the perpetuity of the one imperial power;—this is an achievement which carries with it the unequivocal token of genius in the race which effects it. 

“There is a unity in the work of administering an empire, which is shown in the administration of the imperial power. 

As Tietze Larson confirms, Newman is drawing a metaphorical parallel between the “universalist ‘imperial intellect’ inculcated by a university liberal education, which marshals, defines, and organizes information, and the good administration of an empire, exemplified by the Romans” and represented in the mid-nineteenth century by the British (18).
Roman public opinion of his day” (14). In his *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* (1901), Viscount Bryce, well-regarded statesman, Professor of Law and historian, stated that “Virgil in particular became the national poet of the Empire in whom imperial patriotism found its highest expression” (60). Cromer, Bryce and Newman, having been schooled in the Classics, were merely relating the central claim set forth by the leading Classics scholars in nineteenth century England, foremost of whom was Henry Nettleship, the eminent nineteenth century Virgil scholar, who stated that “The main purpose of [Virgil’s] *Aeneid*…is to celebrate the growth in accordance with a divine dispensation of the Roman empire and Roman civilization” (101). After all, Jove had informed Venus that Rome would be given rule without end, for which there would be bounds in neither space nor time. The ongoing influence of Virgil on the imperial imagination can be seen in T.S. Eliot’s 1957 essay, “Virgil and the Christian World,” in which he declared that

we are all…still citizens of the Roman Empire, and time has not yet proven Virgil wrong when he wrote *nec tempora pono; imperium sine fine dedi*209….It was something greater [than the historical Rome], but something which exists because Virgil imagined it (qtd. in “Ruins of Rome”).

Eliot was writing in an empire that was diminished in might and size (most notably with the loss of India in 1947) compared to the one in which Cromer, Bryce, and Kipling had lived; yet he still saw England as continuing the imperial legacy laid out in the *Aeneid*.

209 Eliot provides part of a longer and well-known Jovian prophecy about the Roman Empire from the *Aeneid* (1.278-79): *His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi*, “For them I set no bounds in space or time for their power; I have given them rule without end.”
In fact, when the British Empire underwent its precipitous collapse following the Second World War, there was an irrevocable shift in narrative; the colonial/imperial morphed into the post-colonial. In the former, there is always already a hesitance and a constant questioning of legitimacy as empire negotiates its existence; in the latter, there is only questioning, examining and fervor from patriots (from both the former colonizer and the formerly colonized). In his *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century*, Martin Green states that “Empire [for the British] meant national greatness” and he notes that both T. B. Macaulay and Winston Churchill, the former with regard to Ireland and the latter with regard to India, “declared that any dissolution of the union…would mean disaster to the imperial country. England would cease to be England if it were deprived of its overseas possessions” (11). According to Nairn, this was the dilemma that faced Enoch Powell when he aspired
to redefine th[e] national identity [of the British] in terms appropriate to the times and in particular, appropriate to the end of empire. England’s destiny was once an imperial one; now it has to be something else. [Though] Powell is not really sure what it is. (247)

Perhaps imperial England never really knew what it was—since it seemed to dwell inordinately on a variety of pasts that did not speak to its present dilemmas and possibilities.

Overall, Raymond Betts concludes that “the allusion to imperial Rome [that persisted in England] was turned to British advantage and made to serve as a heuristic reinforcement, a magnificent historical reference in a historically-conscious age,” primarily among “those who would be proconsuls or were schoolmen” (158), the ruling classes and their educators. They seemed intent on imposing an epic vision of empire on
Britain, one that did not suit the tenor of its form of governance nor its more liberal
philosophic and political principles. Brunt suggests that “modern empires [like Britain’s]
were dissolved from within because they disseminated a spirit of liberty which they could
not satisfy by any concessions short of independence” (133). Thus, the post-colonial was
for Britain’s colonies an inevitability; it was just a question of how and when.

The post-colonial seems to be a bridge, a place where identity is liminal in ways
more explicitly and implicitly hybrid than during the colonial period. It is also a time
when identity is more distinctly beholden to and reacting to the colonial/imperial
imagination. As such it is a particular way of imagining, writing and interpreting. In this
sense, the post-colonial is the Hellenistic era that grew out and/or reacted to Hellenic
influences that were compelled through Alexander the Great’s conquest, consolidation
and influence on much of the eastern Mediterranean and near East. Similarly, it may be
possible to suggest that Britain’s own imagined inheritance of Rome’s imperial mantle
was part of an earlier post-colonial process (since Britain itself had been colonized by
Rome and, until the late twentieth century, avidly saw itself as descended from Rome),
which is why the experiences of colonial and post-colonial India (and other British
colonies), are reactions to an idea of empire that was imagined first in Rome.

However, there is a point, which might be termed the ‘post-imperial’ when a
threshold is crossed—when post-colonial attitudes morph again into something different.
It is a time of definition and redefinition—when the way of imagining, writing and
interpreting has shifted. It is a discourse that culls and pulls from not one or two explicit
pasts to which a people are beholden, but allows them to imagine in such a way that it is a
process of negotiation and renegotiation “with regard to new needs and changing
circumstances” (Galinsky 363). This is the point at which a formerly colonized people effectively negotiates an identity and a community separate from its imperial precedents: at this point, the definitions of marginal and hegemonic have shifted; in this case, the formerly hegemonic power, Great Britain reconceives itself within a forever shifted context, and formerly marginalized communities, such those found in India, for example, is being reconceptualized through its artistic fictions, which look back to the past, but ever forward to the future.

This consideration recalls the image of what Tom Nairn calls “the modern Janus” in his The Break-Up of Britain, which is more appropriate in this instance than the image of Walter Benjamin’s “angel of history” that is used to close out Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities. Benjamin’s “angel of history” looks back and is propelled forward toward progress by the violent “storm blowing from Paradise” (161-62)—Britain looked back to Rome, and both the center of the empire and its the colonies were caught up in the winds of this storm, even in the turbulent post-colonial era. This angel of history represents the confines of historical reference since there is constant glancing back to the past coupled with a persistent blindness of what the future may hold. Nairn’s reference to Janus, the Roman god of doorways, who looks both forward and backward, representing breaks from the past ( endings) and new beginnings (such as why our first calendar month is named after him), reveals a move beyond such confines. The Janus image speaks to a new form of consciousness—a new way of imagining community.

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210 In The Break-Up of Britain, referring to his discussion of the “modern Janus,” Nairn describes how “national liberation and statehood is depicted as a doorway, like the gate over which the Roman god Janus gazed into both past and future” (72-3). And yet, later on, recalling Walter Benjamin’s “angel of history,” Nairn confesses that “like everyone else my back is turned to the future” (350).
Empire and its fictions lose their centrality and hegemony at this time. In addition, the post-colonial fictions created in the generation or two after the collapse of empire also lose their centrality and hegemony. It is at such junctures that this new way of imagining begins—by anticipating or looking forward, while looking backward merely as a point of reference, not in a “boxed-in” way.

Therefore, in order to examine how a text, such as The Satanic Verses, works in relation to forming identity, particularly the notion of imperial or national identity, it is necessary to examine the conceptual basis of this type of identity (Imperial Rome) and the practical or effectual basis for this identity (Imperial Britain). The Satanic Verses is a central text in this new conceptualization of identity. It reacts to empire by moving beyond the constraints of imperial discourse: it refuses to read empire in a post-colonial manner, which is one of the key reasons it resists easy interpretation—it looks backward (though not slavishly) and reveals the impulse to look forward. It suggests a new way to negotiate with the past and anticipate the future. In many ways, as Homi Bhabha proposes, it “evokes [the] ambivalent margin of the nation-space…to contest claims to cultural supremacy, whether these are made from the ‘old’ post-imperialist metropolitan nations, or on behalf of the ‘new’ independent nations of the periphery (Nation 8). In order to understand the way Rushdie’s work negotiates and anticipates and evokes, it was necessary to examine the particular ways that Greater Britain imagined itself (especially with regard to its relationship with India) as inheriting the mantle of Greater Rome, to
examine how the basis of imperial Western narrative must be addressed in order to move beyond it.\footnote{Of note here is the fact that Rushdie discusses Anderson’s examination of imagined community in his essay “In God We Trust” (381-2), which was written between 1985 and 1990. He also considers Tom Nairn’s description of the “modern Janus” in this same essay (384).}
Chapter Four

Reading the Aeneid, Reading Empire

_Aeneis Britannicae_: Arnold & Eliot/Empire & Epic

[Virgil] was from the first the prophet of the Roman Empire….He fixed for the imagination of the Roman race, and of the nations which it subdued or incorporated the limit of its aspiration and achievement, _the very sea mark of its utmost sail (14 his emphasis)._  

J.W. Mackail, Virgil and his Meaning to the World To-day

Consciousness of Virgil’s epic was ubiquitous among the scholars and statesmen in England from the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century—he was often quoted in parliament and used as a means to reflect on British imperial motives and aspirations. The British poets of these eras also knew their Virgil and none were shy in their opinions regarding him and his poetry of empire. He had been much despised by some of the English Romantics: neither Byron nor Blake nor Shelley nor Coleridge seemed to have anything good to say about Virgil; however, Wordsworth and Keats showed a measure of fondness for his works and found inspiration in them.212

212 Byron called Virgil a “miserable flatterer” (qtd. in Griffin 137) for his work for Augustus. Blake is a bit more angry, denouncing Rome along with Greece as “destroyers of all Art,” justifying this claim by stating “Virgil in the _Aeneid_, Book VI, line 848, says ‘Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do namely War and Dominion’” (qtd. in Griffin 138). Blake has in mind the much quoted dictum delivered by Anchises in _Aeneid_ VI.851-853 (though Blake cites the wrong line and alters the meaning to suit his ends):

> _tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento_  
> _hae tibi erunt artes_, _pacique imponere morem,_  
> _parcere subiectis et debellare superbos._

> ‘But you, Roman, remember, rule with all your power  
> The peoples of the earth—these will be your arts:  
> To put your stamp on the works and ways of peace,  
> To spare the defeated, break the proud in war.’

On the other hand, Wordsworth had “translated the first three books of the _Aeneid_ into English and loved the _Eclogues_” while Keats’ _Hyperion_ imitates Virgilian style (Griffin 138)
In fact, by the time Matthew Arnold had been appointed to the Chair of Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857, Virgil seemed to have been reduced to the purview of statesmen and imperial bureaucrats. Arnold, the preeminent arbiter humanitatis of nineteenth-century Britain, had some few opinions about nation and Virgil as he did about culture—sharing some of the same views that Byron and Blake had regarding Virgil. And he has very little good to say about Virgil’s Rome (though he greatly admires Roman civilization).

In his inaugural lecture as the Professor of Poetry, titled “On the Modern Element of Poetry,” Arnold proposed that his age “demanded” an “intellectual deliverance” (19). He notes that “what distinguishes certain epochs of history…. and our own amongst the number [was] the presence of a significant spectacle to contemplate [and] the desire to find the true point of view from which to contemplate this spectacle.” He continues by stating that one who has found and comprehended “this spectacle, has risen to the comprehension of his age,” then concludes with élan that the one who “communicates this point of view to his age [and] interprets to it that spectacle, is one of his age’s deliverers” (20). He believes that it is in literature that we can discover those who find, comprehend and communicate this point of view; as such, an epoch must be adequately represented in its literature in order to provide intellectual deliverance.213

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213 Interestingly, Arnold’s justification for studying such literatures in relation to their epochs anticipates the rise of Comparative Literature. He states that “no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures” (20). Ultimately though, his goal for such comparisons has an ethical basis, for he resolves that “to know how others stand, that we may know how we ourselves stand, that we may correct out mistakes and achieve our deliverance—that is our problem” (21). We must study in order to edify ourselves.
He defines such epochs as “modern,” noting that the “most characteristic outward features” of such epochs are “the banishment of the ensigns of war and bloodshed from the intercourse of civil life;” he continues by detailing that an “important inward characteristic… is the growth of a tolerant spirit; that spirit which is the offspring of an enlarged knowledge; a spirit patient of the diversities of habits and opinions” (23). Arnold calls our attention to two societies that represent this modernity, “life in Athens in the fifth century [B.C.]” (23) and the “Rome of Cicero and Augustus” (31), while anticipating or acknowledging his own era, which is “a significant, a highly-developed, a culminating epoch” (22).

Arnold had noted previously that “the literature of ancient Greece is… a mighty agent” for the “intellectual deliverance” he is describing (19-20) since this epoch has a literature adequate to its modernity. Rome, however, is something else altogether. Arnold cheers its age or epoch as great, declaring that “there is no necessity to accumulate proofs that the culminating period of Roman history is to be classed among the leading, the significant, the modern periods of the world,” for such an understanding is “universally current” (31); indeed, he declares that “the great period of Rome is… on the whole, the greatest, the fullest, the most significant period on record” (32). And yet he remarks upon its literature with shrugs, sneers and sighs, finding that there is “not a commensurate literature” (37) amongst the Romans.

214 Interestingly, as representatives of this age, Arnold posits Thucydides on the one side and Aristophanes on the other, since they have “most successfully solved for their ages the problem that occupies ours [his italics]” (21) by conjoining “a great epoch and a great literature” (22) and notes that the former gives us the “general intelligence of [their] age and nation” (26).
To prove his point, Arnold first passes over Lucretius (who is described as “modern” (33) though “morbid” (34)) and concludes with Horace (who is pegged as a “pedant” (36)). He examines Virgil and his Aeneid most fully (though avoiding direct engagement with the text itself), charging that Virgil is “not the adequate interpreter of the great period of Rome”; perhaps more disquieting, Arnold notes that since Virgil is “conscious of this inadequacy” (36), the Roman age is incapable of providing intellectual deliverance. Arnold scolds Virgil for writing the Aeneid at a “time when contemporary epic poetry was no longer possible” when his work “seems to be moving most freely” in that “portion [of his story] that has most a dramatic character; the episode of Dido” (35). He concludes that “over the whole of the great poem of Virgil, or the whole Aeneid, there rests an ineffable melancholy which is…a testimony to its incompleteness” and which reveals Virgil “conscious, at heart, of his inadequacy for the thorough spiritual mastery of that world and its interpretation in a work of art” (35-36).

Here, the great poet of Rome, though he is “the most beautiful, the most attractive figure in literary history” (36), has been reduced from being the poet who represented the founding story of Rome—*Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem!* “Such a long, hard labor it was to found the Roman people!” (I.33)—to a poet whose epic is judged based upon what is that “most interesting” according to Arnold—that is, “the episode of Dido” (35). Unfortunately, Arnold does not engage with the Aeneid. Rather, he reads it and would have us read it with the prejudices he assigns it, avoiding the ways and means in which Virgil finds, contemplates and communicates his age, eliding
Virgil’s representation of both the Augustan Age and the founding of Rome in order to propound his own affections for Hellenic poetry.\textsuperscript{215}

In \textit{Darkness Visible}, Walter R. Johnson states that Arnold’s speech is particularly relevant since it “clearly frames an attitude toward the \textit{Aeneid} that was popular for more than a century, and he is representative of a majority ” (5); and so it seemed, at least among poets. Nonetheless, we have to recognize that Virgil was viewed differently in different circles. Indeed, the \textit{Aeneid} remained resolutely popular amongst statesmen and historians. As noted above,\textsuperscript{216} Virgil was a convenient and common point of reference for all of these individuals who were heavily invested in the imperial bureaucracy.

The former group often peppered their declarations with quotes from this poem in Parliamentary debates—so much so that Jasper Griffin wryly comments that “we read of [Lord] Gladstone and his troublesome colleague Robert Lowe, in their duels in 1866, that between them they [quoted Virgil to such an extent that they] ‘almost exhausted the Second Book of the \textit{Aeneid}’ with the disasters of the Sack of Troy so thoroughly, indeed, that they ‘did not leave the Trojan Horse a leg to stand on’” (145-46). This pattern of Virgilian reference was overwrought and ripe for caricature—the wry Anthony Trollope

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{215} Arnold’s other notorious treatment of the \textit{Aeneid} appears in his poem “Geist’s Grave,” his homage to a dearly departed dachshund. In the fourth stanza, he references both the melancholy of Virgil and the \textit{sunt lacrimae rerum} as he recalls the way the dog used to look at him:
\begin{verbatim}
That liquid, melancholy eye,
From whose pathetic, soul-fed springs
Seem’d urging the Virgilian cry,
The sense of tears in mortal things—
\end{verbatim}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{216} See Chapter Three for a fuller discussion.
\end{flushright}
parodied this parliamentary showmaship in his satirical political novel *Phineas Redux* (1873).  

At the same time though, the influences of Arnold, Shelley, Byron and Blake may have bruised and tamped down Virgil’s reputation in the world of poets and writers, there were obvious exceptions. As discussed above, Kipling uses him in passing in his short story “Regulus,” which focuses on a translation exercise of Horace Ode III.5 that some schoolboys are working through, the purpose of which, according to their teacher, Mr. King, is the achievement of “‘Balance, proportion, perspective—life’” (264). At one point, Winton, one of the boys, has been caught at a prank and, as part of his punishment, is required to write out some Virgil. His teacher, King, says to Winton:

‘Hand me the Mantuan and I’ll dictate. No matter. Any rich Virgilian measures will serve. I may peradventure recall a few.’ He began:

‘*Tu regere imperio populos Romane memento*

*Hae tibi erunt artes pacisque imponere morem,*

*Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.*

There you have it all, Winton. Write that out twice and yet once again.’ (258)

Griffin notes that “it is an irony that the aesthete Kipling […] was completely blind to the pathos which is blended with [this] claim to dominion” in having King choose these often cited lines for a schoolboy being prepared for the “selfless service of empire” (140). These lines, especially *Tu regere imperio populos Romane memento,* often translated, “You, Roman, be mindful to rule the nations with your might,” when

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217 *Phineas Redux* is the fourth novel in Trollope’s Pallister Series (1864-79), which focused on the British political scene, in particular, parliamentary politics. With regard to the Virgilian excesses of Parliament, Jasper Griffin also offers the following humorous anecdote regarding Winston Churchill, who once stated during Parliamentary proceedings: “‘I must now warn the House that I am going to make an unusual departure. I am going to make a Latin quotation…’ The quotation turns out to be ‘*arma virumque cano*’” (146)

218 This selection from Virgil (translated above in note 222) was notably used by Lord John Russell and John Henry Newman as justification for Britain’s imperial designs. They are also the lines condemned by William Blake. See Chapters three and six.
coupled with the message of *uera uirtus* “true courage” of Horace III.5.29, reinforces this particular sense of the “life” for which the boys are being prepared.

Another way of reading Virgil came from the popular writer Robert Louis Stevenson. In his 1893 novel *The Ebb Tide*, which focuses on three individuals who represent some of the failings of colonialism, Stevenson describes his protagonist, Robert Herrick, as one of those well-educated young men who went out to explore casually the ways of empire. We first encounter Herrick, Oxford-educated but aimless in both ambition and endeavors, on a beach in Tahiti: he has a tattered copy of the *Aeneid* which, when consulted for *sortes*, provides him (in the very least) with “visions of England.”

We are then informed that it is the

> destiny of those grave, restrained, and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Virgil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth. (6-7, my emphasis)

Stevenson’s work is interesting due to the way that it transforms the general assumptions we have about the *Aeneid*—it is no longer a case of using the epic of Rome to justify the actions of England—the poem itself has effectively come to represent England itself.221

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219 Co-written with his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne.
220 Such is the term used by Stevenson. It is a reference to the *sortes Virgilianae* “Virgilian lottery” in which a person randomly selected a passage from the *Aeneid* in order to obtain guidance or divine a fortune, a practice begun in the Roman Empire. Stevenson literally states that Herrick “would pause on random country walks, sit on the pathside, gazing over the sea on the mountains of Eimeo, and dip into the *Aeneid* seeking *sortes*” (11).
221 Griffin comments that Herrick writes a musical phrase from Beethoven and a phrase, *terque quaterque beati/Quis ante ora patrum*, ‘thrice, four times blessed are they whose fate it was to die at home” from the *Aeneid* (1.94-95) on the “whitewashed wall of a ruined gaol” and concludes that “the novelist…in a masterly stroke of economy…can take for granted that his reader will understand and complete his fragmentary quotation. We, too, read Virgil at school” (146). Thus, Stevenson’s protagonist reveals that he is indeed “civilized.”
Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “To Virgil,” a poem of praise “commissioned for the special centenary celebrations in Mantua in 1882” (Vance 152), shifts and expands these sentiments so that the poem is no longer about England or Rome: Tennyson writes of Virgil,

Thou that seest Universal Nature moved by Universal Mind
Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind. (l. 11-12)

This former line removes Virgil from the constraints that bind all other poets and the latter line effectively transforms his melancholy into a premonitory sensibility—it is no longer the weakness criticized by Arnold, but a link to the “universal mind.”222

Later in the poem, Tennyson pays homage to the empire idealized versus the historical empire:

Now thy Forum roars no longer, fallen every purple Caesar’s dome—
Tho’ thine ocean-roll of rhythm sound forever of Imperial Rome— (ll. 15 -16)

Such is the power of this poetry: Rome may be in ruins; however, the empire lives eternally in Virgil’s works, just as Virgil himself was in touch with the eternal (“the Universal Mind”).223

222 The latter line refers to a comment Virgil makes after Turnus has killed Pallas and stripped away his sword belt. This comment reflects on the arrogant nature of humanity and its inability to reconcile its deeds with future consequences:

nescia mens hominum fati sortisque future
et servare modum rebus sublata secundis!
how ignorant are men’s hearts of fate and destiny to come,
and how to keep within bounds when uplifted by success!” (X.501-502, trans. by R.D. Williams).

Rome itself may have fallen, but its poetry and its ideals remain; in some ways it foreshadows the sentiments found in Kipling’s “Recessional,” a poem about the apogee of empire and the foreshadowing of its decline. See note 188.

223 In this piece, there are echoes of Horace Ode III.30, *Exegi monumentum aere perennius*, in which the narrator (“Horace”) declares that his poetry will allow him to outlast all other monuments.
At the same time, in his *Virgil and the Moderns*, Theodore Ziolkowski states that it is “poetic admiration alone that elicits Tennyson’s greeting” (6) when the poem concludes with the lines:

I salute thee, Mantovano, I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man. (ll. 19-20)224

And yet within two generations, the poets and writers of empire, particularly Virgil and Kipling, were held in ill repute during and after the First World War, precisely due to the fact that they had championed imperialism. The new generation of poets, who came of age during this war, read empire and its attendant identities quite differently than Kipling’s and Tennyson’s generations—they emphasized the blunt dehumanization of war and satirized the mythologies they had inherited.

One of the most notable of these poets was Wilfred Owen, one of England’s most promising young writers, who savaged Horace and Virgil, the acknowledged poets of Rome’s imperial ideals. Owen’s most famous poem, “Dulce et Decorum Est” (1917-1918) responds to Horace’s second Roman Ode. The poem describes the novel and ferocious horrors of war and juxtaposes them with Horace’s evocation of the glories of dying for one’s nation (*patria*) as “the old lie.”225 The title of Owen’s less well-known

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224 Watson also comments that “Tennyson’s tribute to Virgil […] is probably the last major assertion of the kind in our culture. It assumes a direct relationship with the Roman poet” (115) that is most evident in Dante’s *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Chapter Three discusses how such relationships are at best ironized and more often fragmented in current usage.

225 The reference is to Ode III.2.13. Owen’s poem describes the horrors of a gas attack on war-wearied soldiers who are “drunk with fatigue”; in the final four lines he calls upon his addressee to reflect on the horrors described and exhorts her:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est"

*Pro patria mori.*
“Arms and the Boy” (1917) satirizes the opening phrase in the *Aeneid*, *arma uirumque cano* “arms and the man I sing.” His fellow soldier, Siegfried Sassoon, also a poet, wrote a piece titled “Arms and the Man” (circa 1918), which satirizes Virgil more bluntly: this poem describes a soldier (“Captain Croesus”) going to see a higher up (“Colonel Sawbones”) about limb replacement—hence, “arms” and the man.

It was not until 1922, when James W. Mackail, former Chair of the Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1906-1911), wrote his book *Virgil and his Meaning to the World Today* that we finally see an affirmation (or reaffirmation) of Virgil. In this work, we are

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226 The lines of the first stanza of Owen’s poem are blunt and taut:

\[
\text{Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade} \\
\text{How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood;} \\
\text{Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash;} \\
\text{And thinly drawn with famishing for flesh.}
\]

The opening lines recall the closing scene of the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas stands triumphant over Turnus: the sword of the “man” has become the bayonet-blade for the “boy,” while the same *furor* or “rage” (“madman’s flash”) compels both “warriors:”

\[
\text{ille, oculis postquam saeui monimenta doloris} \\
\text{exuviasque hausti, furii accensus et ira} \\
\text{terribilis:}
\]

\[
\text{...} \\
\text{hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit} \\
\text{feruidus ...} \\
\text{Aeneas [that one],} \\
\text{soon as his eyes drank in that plunder—keepsake} \\
\text{of his own savage grief—flaring up in fury,} \\
\text{terrible in his rage, he cries} \\
\text{...}
\]

\[
\text{In the same breath, blazing with wrath he plants} \\
\text{his iron sword hilt-deep in the enemy’s heart.}
\]

Interestingly, the latter part of Owen’s poem recalls scenes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as transformation becomes a central theme. The last two lines, in particular, allude to the Actaeon episode, in which the goddess Diana has transformed the young hunter Actaeon into a stag and he is slain by his own hunting dogs:

\[
\text{And God will grow no talons at his heels,} \\
\text{Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls.}
\]

227 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “sawbones” means “surgeon.” The entry mentions that the earliest use of this term is in Chapter XXX of Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* (1837): ‘What, don't you know what a Sawbones is, Sir’, enquired Mr. Weller; ‘I thought every body know'd as a Sawbones was a Surgeon.’
informed that Mackail was interested in conveying a notion of “the significance of Virgil to the twentieth century” (v).\textsuperscript{228} Having been written shortly after the bloodiest and most inhumane conflict that had ever engulfed Western civilization, Mackail’s work reflected on parallels between the disrupted state of the world in Virgil’s Rome and the all-too-similar circumstances that had overwhelmed Europe during and after the First World War. He believed that “we stand now, as Virgil stood, among the wreckage of a world,” seeing Virgil more as a poet who conveys a sense of “humanism.”\textsuperscript{229} Mackail concludes that Virgil “can give light and guidance to us in the foundation of a new world upon its ruins” (141). Mackail reflects on the ubiquitous ruins of Europe, particularly France and Belgium, and hopes that something new and better can come out of the devastation wrought on Western civilization—that the poet who helped guide the Rome of Caesar Augustus can give guidance to his own times.

Mackail’s comments represent what contemporary readers would perceive as ironic reading on both Virgil’s and Mackail’s own times: while this modern poet praises the fact that a “unified and Roman Italy” has “in our time…been reborn” (140), he ignores the fact that the very ruins that litter his world are the shattered fragments of an imperial legacy and idealism inherited from Rome; moreover, lacking sibylline powers, he cannot foresee the ruin and horrors that will result from the rise of a “Roman Italy.”\textsuperscript{230}

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\textsuperscript{228} The emphasis is in the text. This comment was not written by Mackail, but the editors of the series (“Our Debt to Greece and Rome”), of which his work was a part.

\textsuperscript{229} This argument of humanism is taken up, in particular, by Brooks Otis in Virgil: a Study in Civilized Poetry.

\textsuperscript{230} Mackail’s book was published in 1922, the very year in which the fascist party undertook a March on Rome (October 1922), which resulted in Benito Mussolini’s assumption of power; soon after, Mussolini orchestrated the creation of a new Italian Empire and the rise of fascism in Italy. Mussolini was fascinated by the Roman Empire, going so far as to reconstruct the \textit{Ara Pacis Augustae}, “Altar of Augustan Peace,” which Elsner notes was used by the dictator for “overtly propagandistic purposes” (35).
While the Age of Virgil had witnessed the birth of a new type of imagined community in the Roman Empire, the age which birthed a League of Nations seemed to be giving a postmortem on the ideals and excesses of empire that the West had inherited from Rome.

As poet and Virgilian scholar, Mackail sought to resurrect the gravitas of this poet of empire, but it was not until the thirties and the forties that this role was sufficiently recognized once again. And then only through the confluence of history and serendipity did this recognition occur.  

The historical context of this change grew out of the bi-millennium celebrations of Virgil’s birth, which were carried out in 1930. These celebrations were accompanied by a sudden flurry of interest surrounding the Roman poet’s work. These celebrations, conducted in England, on the Continent (especially in Italy, where Benito Mussolini made extraordinary efforts to amplify links between ancient and modern Rome), as well as in the New World (especially in the United States and Mexico), revived the moribund influence of the Roman imperial poet. Suddenly, Virgil’s influence on humanity and European culture could not be understated.

In England, C.S. Lewis conducted his lectures on Milton’s Paradise Lost in the early 1940s, which were later published as A Preface to Paradise Lost (1942). In these lectures, he focuses first on the background of epic poetry, creating terms such as

231 Mackail was both a translator of and commentator on Latin literature.
232 It is also of interest that W.R. Johnson mentions Mackail’s “wonderful refusal to notice that there was any controversy” in the introduction to his 1930 edition of the Aeneid (155). The “controversy” regarded the Homerists’ and Hellenists’ “triumph” over the Virgilians and the Romanists; in the case of Arnold, we see this played out with the Hellenes trumping the Romans.
233 Ziolkowski discusses these celebrations in detail on pp 17-26. See also Jaś Elsner’s “Inventing Imperium,” which examines the other fascination of this era, the bimillennial recognition of the founding of the Roman Empire. Elsner begins his essay by considering Mussolini’s reconstruction of the monumental Ara Pacis Augustae “Altar of Augustan Peace” in Rome which the Italian dictator had inscribed with the Res Gestae Divi Augusti “Deeds of the Divine Augustus.”
“secondary epic” to describe the pivotal and transformative nature of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and the influence it had on later poetry. Lewis concludes “With Virgil European poetry grows up” (37) since the Roman poet took “one single national legend and treat[ed] it in such a way that we feel the vaster theme to be somehow implicit in it” (34) and “in making [this] one legend symbolical of the destiny of Rome [Virgil has] symbolized the destiny of man” (39). Thus, Virgil is a confluence of poetry, destiny and nation—the lens through which all subsequent poetry is created and interpreted.

Two years later, C.M. Bowra completed his survey *From Virgil to Milton* (published in 1945), weaving together the links of tradition and influence that Virgil had on Western civilization and European thought, stretching from the Roman epicist to a consideration of England’s best-known epic poet.²³⁴ When discussing the *Aeneid*, Bowra touches on the melancholy of Virgil,²³⁵ but reasons (following Stoic philosophy) that “the rise of such a power as Rome demands sacrifices” such as the death of Turnus; moreover, he concludes that such outcomes “are inescapable,” especially since Turnus “opposes the inevitable and predestined rise of Rome” (47).²³⁶ These two scholars link Virgil’s sense of (Roman) destiny with poetic maturation, providing an effective counterweight to Arnold’s sense of the Roman poet as inadequate; for them, he is more than adequate.

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²³⁴ Interestingly, Bowra has extended Mackail’s avoidance of the Homerist/Hellenic dilemma—he merely posits Virgil as the beginning of the Western tradition he examines. He also turns the problem of Virgilian melancholy on its head, noting that the *Aeneid* “lacks the instinctive vigour and vitality of Homer’s heroes [which is good since these] heroes like Turnus [have] individual ambitions [that] lead to destruction” (70).

²³⁵ The piece is “tinged with melancholy” due to the fact that Virgil saw “the corrupting effects of empire” (29).

²³⁶ Bowra’s *Heroic Poetry* interprets Aeneas’ actions based on an association of *pietas* with Stoicism (65-73). See also his “Aeneas and the Stoic Ideal.”. Bowra claims that Aeneas is not wholly or effectively stoic, since he is often overcome by his passions; nonetheless, stoicism remains an ideal linked to his *pietas*.
At the same time that Bowra and Lewis were adding to the Virgilian revival, the Virgil Society was being established in England. It was spearheaded by Father Bruno Scott James and the Classics scholar W.F. Jackson Knight, who hoped to “link Virgil to the growing problems of the modern world” (qtd. in Ziolkowski 129). Since its beginnings in 1943, the Virgil Society has worked “to unite all those who cherish the central educational tradition of Western Europe. [And] of that tradition Virgil is the symbol” (“Virgil Society”). Jackson Knight was “invited to serve as its first president”; he both accepted this invitation and deferred it, on the “condition that [T.S.] Eliot be asked to hold the office first [due to his] public standing as the leading man of letters in England” (Ziolkowski 44).  

Eliot accepted this leadership role and presented his famous presidential address “What is a Classic?” at the society’s first meeting, held on October 16, 1944. This lecture is often read in tandem with Eliot’s 1951 BBC radio address, “Virgil and the Christian World.” As a result of these two pieces—along with the sparse and fragmentary Virgilian allusions he has in his poetry—Eliot has become the primary voice through which we have come to apprehend Virgil in the twentieth century. 

The connections that Eliot fostered between himself and Virgil have been much discussed by Classics and English scholars. One of the earliest persons to discuss this link was his friend W.F. Jackson Knight, who emphasized that there was indeed a poetic inheritance. In his Roman Vergil, when considering Virgil’s use of rhyme and assonance, Jackson Knight emphasizes that “Mr. Eliot…develop[ed] his technically very Vergilian

237 Ziolkowski also points out that Jackson Knight’s study, Roman Vergil, was recommended by Eliot for publication at Faber and Faber, where Eliot was a director (129-131).
poetry…going even further than Vergil in a whimsical acceptance of sound” (246).

Moreover, he lists Eliot as a recent poet to be counted among those of the “English poetic tradition” including “[Thomas] Gray, Pope, and Tennyson,” all of who were influenced by the Roman poet (314). This argument is not developed more fully; moreover, when looking for Virgil’s influences on Eliot’s poetry, most scholars have addressed theme, allusion and context. Overall, though, it is difficult to discern the degree to which the Virgilian influences on Eliot’s poetry had an impact on his choice as the president of the Virgil Society.238

However, most of the criticism has focused on the interpretation Eliot offers in his two lectures on Virgil, examining the connections that Eliot drew between Virgil and the European tradition; the central place Eliot accorded to Virgil in defining a universal classic; and the ways that Eliot explores the destiny of empire in Virgil.239

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238 Contrary to Jackson Knight’s claims, which focus more on the use of sound, it has been pointed out that one is hard pressed to find more than half a dozen references or so to Virgil and his work in Eliot’s poetry. Watson states that “Eliot’s acquaintance with Virgil’s poetry…was not familiar or, at least as far as his allusions to it indicate, wide-ranging” (117). Ziolkowski states that “Eliot the poet displays surprisingly little direct influence by Virgil” (120). Martindale states that “Virgil within Eliot’s poetry…proves more fragmentary and ‘fugitive’ than the dominating and unified figure presented in the essays might have led one to expect” (240).

On the other hand, Gareth Reeves’ T.S. Eliot: A Virgilian Poet presumes Eliot to be part of a historical continuum and tradition that can be traced back to Virgil; Duncan Kennedy concludes that in Reeve’s argument “Eliot is…a Virgilian poet, but buried in this assertion is the assumption [that] Virgil is already, but not yet, an Eliotic poet” (“Modern Receptions” 50).

239 While his essays make many salient points, two critiques are levied against Eliot. For example, he does not effectively engage Virgil’s texts; in the first lecture, he avoids such engagement by confessing that such a pretense would be ill-advised since the attendees of the lecture are—for the most part—classicists, “all of whom are better scholars than I” (20).

The second critique revolves around the fact that he says nothing new, but popularizes perspectives and ideas that are drawn from Theodor Haecker’s popular Virgil, Father of the West. See Martindale (239-240) and Ziolkowski (119-129) and Johnson (6-8).

Overall, W. R. Johnson notes that Eliot’s two essays “are not samples of Eliot’s most inspired criticism” (Darkness Visible 6).
When Eliot addresses the issue of Virgil and the European tradition, he is as much reacting to the views of Arnold as he is discussing the Roman poet—what is at stake is the continuity of tradition, of which Eliot and his England are a part. W.R. Johnson describes how Eliot, who:

both loved and resented the sage [Arnold] whose mantle he spent most of his adult life snatching and donning, naturally found that Vergil was adequate not only to expressing the greatness of the Roman Empire but also to defining the greatness of Western civilization. (6)

Thus, in sharp contrast to Arnold, Eliot concludes that Virgil has become “our classic, the classic of all Europe” ( “What is a Classic?” 31): and the Aeneid is the defining work for the West. He qualifies his notion of “classic” by noting that Virgil is unique, he is a “universal classic,” limited neither by its language, period or view of life, which “can only occur when a civilization is mature” (10). Eliot concludes that Virgil’s “peculiar kind of comprehensiveness… is due to the unique position in our history of the Roman Empire and the Latin language…an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves” (28-29). Ultimately, according to Eliot, everything is to be judged in relation to Rome and everything in Rome is judged in relation to Virgil—for he “is at

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240 For Eliot, such a classic must be recognized for its “comprehensiveness,” that is, it will “within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people that speak that language. Moreover, he continues that such a work of literature has “an equal significance in relation to a number of foreign literatures [so that it may be said to have] universality” (27). This notion of comprehensiveness echoes Hegel’s and Lukács’ discussions of the role of the epic. With regard to maturity, Griffin sums up Eliot’s argument by stating how “For Eliot, Virgil is mature in thought, manners, and language, a poet by comparison with whom all European writers must feel to some extent provincial” (141).
the centre of European civilization” (29)—he is the pattern, “the standard [that has been] established once for all” (32).241

Here the term “mature” is comparable to Arnold’s “modern” and this sense of “destiny” amplifies and supersedes Arnold’s notion of epochs that share this common sense of modernity. Eliot is claiming that these differing epochs not only have a similar sensibility, but each one builds upon its predecessor, with Virgil providing the unique point from which all future works discover, comprehend and communicate themselves.242 Hence, Eliot’s claim (if we can borrow Arnold’s language) is that we must look to Virgil, to the Rome imagined by Virgil, in order to obtain an “intellectual deliverance” for our own epoch.

Building on his earlier essay, Eliot’s lecture “Virgil and the Christian World” is a more direct and expansive reading of Virgil’s poetry: it also expounds a more forceful argument regarding the role of empire and civilization. Focusing on the Aeneid,243 this piece reads, in light of the moral and social dilemmas posed by World War II, along with the recent loss of the British Raj, to stand as either a bulwark against further imperial decline or an apology for Britain’s imperial undertakings.

241 As an example of this standard, we can look at his 1936 essay “In Memoriam,” in which Eliot describes Tennyson as “a minor Virgil [who] is also with Virgil as Dante saw him, a Virgil among the shades […] the most instinctive rebel against the society in which he was the most perfect conformist” (246). Ziolkowski comments that these references “make it clear that Virgil now has come to represent considerably more to Eliot than a source of images: His reading about the Roman poet has confirmed Eliot in his conviction that Virgil has political and religious views sympathetic to his own” (124). Thus, Eliot’s reading of Tennyson reveals little of that poet but instead works to link Eliot (and Tennyson) to a European cultural tradition—Virgil is the guide for all Western poets, including Eliot.

242 Here Eliot is building on an idea initially developed in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” which underscored the notion of a poet’s simultaneous relation to “all the works of art that preceded it” (28) and the contemporary environment that is expressed in the poet’s work. The addition of any work constantly reorders and alters the way we read all the works that preceded it.

243 Though he bookends his discussion with references to the Eclogues and uses a brief reference to the Georgics, the lecture focuses on the Aeneid.
First, some context. Eliot certainly liked the idea of empire. His friend, the scholar Frank Kermode, observed that Eliot “remained in a special sense ‘an imperialist,’ and Eliot stated, only a few years after World War I, ‘I am all for empires’” (qtd. in Ziolkowski 119). Eliot became, due perhaps to his role as an metoikos (Eliot used this term to describe his condition)\textsuperscript{244}, more English than the English, championing imperialism and arguing, in 1928, that Britain was the ‘mediating part’ of Europe, ‘the only connection between Europe and the rest of the world;’ [in addition, he believed that England was] the ‘only member of the European community that has established a genuine empire—that is to say, a world-wide empire as was the Roman empire.’ (Martindale 244)

Echoing Haverfield and his peers from two generations earlier, including Sir Charles Lucas, Lord Bryce and the Earl of Cromer, Eliot signals that Greater Britain has inherited the mantle of Greater Rome—the destiny and centrality of Virgil’s imagined Rome has effectively Romanized England.

Thus, when Eliot recalls the Aeneid in his “Virgil in the Christian World,” what he chooses to recall (and how he chooses to recall it) has the resonance of a writer who longs for the better days of empire, focusing on Virgil’s “noble” formulation of the “imperium romanum, with the extension and justification of imperial rule” (141). Nonetheless, he notes that this “world of Virgil…a more civilized world of dignity, reason and order” (139-140) and “for empire in general, [was] never realized in history” (142). Declan Kiberd considers this way of reading as part of a “last-ditch attempt by an

\textsuperscript{244} The term metoikos (\textit{µετοικός}) “referred to residents of a Greek city, say Athens, who had the right to live and work in the city but, because they were foreigners, did not have full citizenship rights” (Cooper 4).
immigrant American empire-lover to shore selected fragments of European tradition against the collapse of political power in Europe” (271).

Choosing lines criticized by William Blake, offered by Kipling in “Regulus,” and quoted by both John Henry Newman and Lord Russell to justify Britain’s imperial ambitions, Eliot recalls how:

   even those who have as little Latin as I must remember and *thrill at the lines* (my emphasis):

   
   *His ego nec metas reru, nec tempora pono:*
   
   *Imperium sine fine dedi…*
   
   *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*
   
   *[hae tibi erunt artes] pacique imponere morem,*
   
   *Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*

   [He then reasons that] what Virgil proposed was the highest ideal […] for any merely temporal empire. We are all, so far as we inherit the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire. (145-6)245

   Eliot extends the prophecy of Roman imperial power and might not only to England but beyond it, attempting to buoy the political and social fortunes of Europe, and call for unity by rallying around, as Johnson states, a “*Weltdichter*” (7). The end result is that Eliot has shared with “the literate world that the greatness of Vergil’s poetry was to be measured by the truth of his vision of *Roma aeterna*” (8).

   And yet historically, in 1951, this link to the *Roma aeterna* seemed tenuous since we are at the twilight of the British Empire: the British Mandate of Palestine had ended with the creation of Israel and Jordan; Burma, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan had all become dominions en route to independence;246 within the next twenty years, the

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245 His choice of these lines (taken from *Aeneid* I.278-279; VI.851-853)—they are as subtle as a swung sledgehammer—would almost read as satire had Eliot’s prose and purpose not been so straightforward.

246 The Balfour Declaration of 1926, defined dominions as follows:

   *They are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a*
remaining colonies of substantial population and size (primarily in Africa and Arabia) would achieve independence. Perhaps Eliot’s vision was needed more than ever at this time since the work of “nation-building,” in England itself and its colonies abroad, was being undertaken by necessity. Johnson points out that Eliot’s conclusions relate to the ideal that

Vergil himself was fated to live and work in a crucial moment in Western history when History itself, the birth and death of nations, the concept of national destiny, and, finally, the high price of civilization, were questions that could at last be fashioned with a fair amount of precision. (10)

Eliot was living in an era where this sense of national identity was paramount and the high price of civilization had been experienced in ways that defied comprehension. He represents, in many ways, an extreme of what has come to be known as the German school of thought, reflecting an optimism for an ideal of civilization, providing traction for those poets, scholars and writers who shared the belief that “both classic and empire exist within history, but also transcend history” (Martindale 239).

What would follow in the collapsing empire and its center was certainly not reflective of the Virgilian ideals that Eliot and his circle held. To paraphrase W.B. Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming,” the center had not held and mere anarchy seemed loosed upon the world. In the end, his message was that if Virgil and his vision of empire

common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. (II, emphasis in original)

Until independence, India was not considered a dominion, but had “special status” according to the Government of India Act of 1919 (“Balfour Declaration” III). Dominion status served as a bridge between rule by England and complete independence. In the first couple of years of dominion status (1947-48), both the heads of the armed forces and governors-general of India and Pakistan were British.

247 This poem describes the atmosphere of despair and apocalypse immediately following World War I. The well-known and much-quoted first stanza reads as follows:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
transcended history, then the contemporary historical circumstances in which the British Empire found itself could be reoriented and could therefore reclaim its destined role as a “genuine empire.” And yet, his call to arms for men and women of the empire was to signal the beginning of the end for the old order, as poets and writers sought to move on to a post-Virgilian world.

Post-Virgilian Inheritances & Fragments

Then he made me learn Virgil’s *Aeneid*
Off by heart for my Roman History class

It’s all about the founding of Rome. And it’s Oh, only twelve books long. Contemporary

‘cos it’s oh, only over two hundred years old.
You should hear him go on about Virgil.

Noster maximus poeta, about how
The *Aeneid* will still be a classic text

In two millennia from now. *As if.* (84)

Bernardine Evaristo,248 *The Emperor’s Babe*  III. *Ab Asino Lanam*

Among the British, the First World War yielded many scholar warriors who were also poets, including C.S. Lewis, C.M. Bowra, and Robert Graves. 249 Each of these

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

248 Bernardine Evaristo is a British writer “born in Woolwich, south east London…to an English mother and Nigerian father….She became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2004, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2006, and she was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List in 2009” (“Evaristo”). Her “novel-in-verse,” *The Emperor’s Babe*, one of six books she has released, was published in 2001.
scholars was interested in expressing his opinion regarding Virgil’s role in relation to
epic poetry and the idea of the nation and empire.

In his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis had underlined the necessity of
understanding Virgil’s role in the genealogy of epic, revealing how European poetry
came of age in the Roman poet’s work. Bowra was an ardent admirer of Virgil and wrote
much that related the work of the Roman poet to Stoic philosophy, attempting to temper
the passions of his work.²⁵⁰ Graves was diverse, focusing on Greek myth and
popularizing Roman history through his well-received *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*
novels. He was also a harsh critic of Virgil, particularly the Virgil of *imperium Romanum* who had so enamored T.S. Eliot.

Echoing Byron and Blake, Robert Graves considered the *Aeneid* a work of
propaganda due to its “strong sense of national identity and destiny” (Merchant 22). It
was a reprehensible poem by a detestable person—it represented the poet’s collusion with
a national apparatus.²⁵¹ His 1962 article “The Virgil Cult,” based on his lecture “The
Anti-Poet,” which was given early on during his tenure as Chair of Poetry at Oxford,
responds directly to Eliot, whom he calls a “Romano-British imperialist” (14) and the
“Senior Churchwarden of Literature” on whom “has devolved the task of restoring the

²⁴⁹ The latter two, like Matthew Arnold and J.W. Mackail, held the Chair of Professor of Poetry at
²⁵⁰ Both are discussed above in Chapter Three.
²⁵¹ Ziolkowski notes that Graves shared a “Virgiliophobia” with the Americans Henry Miller and Ezra
Pound (238). In particular, Miller declares that “I say without blushing or stammering, without the least
confusion, regret or remorse that recess in the toilet was worth a thousand Vergils, always was and always
will be” (qtd. in Ziolkowski 193). Pound warned “Not Virgil, especially not the *Aeneid*, where he has no
story worth telling, no sense of personality” (qtd. in Ziolkowski 191). Blunt assessments.
Virgil cult...to the high altar of the English-speaking peoples” (13).\footnote{In his conclusion, Graves declares “I contradict the whole line of Virgilians from Propertius...to Tennyson, who survived into Mr. Eliot’s childhood” (38). In fact, Graves has nothing good to say about the Roman poet, being a far more fierce and trenchant critic than Arnold could have hoped to be. A good portion of his attacks are ad hominem, as he decries Virgil for being a “dark-complexioned, heavily-built man [who had] weak digestion...and girlish shyness” (14-15), all qualities which seem to make him incapable of being inspired by the muse.} Graves, fiercely against empire and its necessarily attendant wars, inveighs against Virgil for his “pliability; his subservience; his narrowness...his perfect lack of originality, courage, humor, or even animal spirits—these were the negative qualities which first commended him to government circles and have kept him in public favour ever since” (14). Graves amplifies Arnold’s charge that Virgil was inadequate—the Roman poet is completely lacking in noble qualities, neither his verse nor his subject nor his person have any redeeming value; and yet, that is precisely why Graves persists that Virgil was a stooge for the government.

To drive his point home, he quotes those lines (from the Aeneid I.278-9) which thrilled Eliot:

\begin{quote}
His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempor\textit{a} pono
\textit{Imperium sine fine dedi}
\end{quote}

However, we may find that much of Graves’ disgust regarding this imperial prophecy comes from his own youthful complicity of buying into the “heady doctrine,” which “Mr. Eliot still cherishes” (14).

To further implicate Virgil, Graves charges him with working for “Maecenas, Minster of Literature, Propaganda, and the Fine Arts” (22).\footnote{Maecenas was an important confidant and advisor to Augustus, as well as a patron for poets and other artists. For Graves, the Imperial Rome of Augustus is echoed in the Third Reich of Adolph Hitler: thus, Virgil is the Leni Riefenstahl to Maecenas’ Joseph Goebbels.} He then parodies Maecenas’ counsel to his poet, recommending (tongue angrily-in-cheek) that the Aeneid

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be crafted as “an appeal for national unity, peace, and hard work under the aegis of Augustus Caesar” (26); an appeal which, he contends, always finds takers “whenever a golden age of stable government, full churches, and the expanding wealth dawns among the Western nations” (13). Graves may conclude that we may all be “citizens of Rome,” as Eliot proclaims; however, such a claim has little merit when it is based on the “Roman’s task…to rule the world, to crush rival powers, and to impose a magnanimous peace upon the survivors” (14). And yet, ironically, the time in which Eliot gave his speech and, even more so, the time in which Graves gave his lecture was no golden age—rather, it was a time marked by destabilized governments, diminishing wealth and the devolution of empire. Nonetheless, he concludes that if our lives are ordered or ordained by such as Virgil, then we need to move on to other poets for our guidance and prophecy.

While Graves would have us discard Virgil, his fellow poet William H. Auden (who preceded Graves as Chair of the Professor of Poetry at Oxford) would have us read and reread Virgil’s *Aeneid* in a more ironic manner; one that may be regarded as post-colonial. His well-known poem, “Secondary Epic,” was published in his 1960 collection *Homage to Clio*. While Eliot found that Virgil’s epic prophecies were fulfilled

254 A translation of the other lines (from *Aeneid* VI.851-853) quoted by Eliot in “Virgil and the Christian World.”
255 Of course, to provide justification for his argument, he quotes from the *Aeneid*, using Hecuba’s desperate lines to the aged Priam when he dons his arms to fight Neoptolemus: “*non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis* ‘not with help such as that, not with those defenders’” (Graves 38, his emphasis)
256 Such a reading may be viewed as post-colonial within the confines of Gayatri Spivak’s biting and broad definition that “[i]n post-coloniality, every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the post-colonial is citation, re-inscription, re-routing the historical” (79). One cannot help but read this poem as dislodging or debunking the grandeur of Rome “pre-figured” in the Shield of Aeneas. The poem cites, reinscribes and re-routes the historical, bringing it to bear on the pretenses of this ephrasis, effectively undermining it.
through Christianity and Christian Europe, Auden’s poem explores the ecphrasis of the
Shield of Aeneas which portrays Augustus’ victory at Actium, and challenges our reading
of the Aeneid as it reacts specifically to the Rome prophesied by Virgil. He begins his
first stanza:

No, Virgil, no:
Not even the first of the Romans can learn
His Roman history in the future tense.
Not even to serve your political turn;
Hindsight as foresight makes no sense.

In the second stanza, he creates an Aeneas who is not merely compliant with the
gods’ wishes, but begins to develop a more nuanced and complex perspective. At the end
of the second stanza, Auden suggests that, having seen the prophecies outlined on the
shield,

Wouldn't Aeneas have asked:--'What next?
After this triumph, what portends?'

As Jasper Griffin points out, this poem “ridicules the whole idea of [the Aeneid being]
such a prophetic poem on history” (142), juxtaposing the recent events of World War II
with the pageantry of Roman victory represented in Virgil’s well-known ecphrasis of the
shield.

Theodore Ziolkowski concurs, stating that that the “irony [of the poem] is
produced…by the discrediting of any interpretation of history that seeks to justify present
reality through past events” (141). Of course, Auden’s poem, in questioning the
prophetic power of the Aeneid, also calls into question the whole imperial and nation

257 In addition, the title of this work reacts to the consciousness of creating this type of epic, outline in
Lewis’ A Preface to Paradise Lost.
258 Ziolkowski comments how Auden created an analogy between the Visigoths who laid siege to Rome in
A.D. 408-410 and the Germans who laid siege to Europe in World War II (140).
project undertaken since Rome (including, certainly, Eliot’s)—every nation and empire seeks to imbue itself not only with a mythic past, but with a destiny toward which it is being driven. In every such case, it is a situation where “Hindsight as foresight makes no sense.”

Both Graves’ savaging of Virgil and Auden’s suggestion that we read Virgil (and other such prophetic texts) in a way that departs from the “scripted” and “approved” version were part of a larger movement that drew the Western world away from consulting the Roman poet and the classics as bases for justifying imperial or national action.

In fact, viewing their reactions to Eliot and Eliot’s Virgil, we find that the sortes Virgilianii and the prophecies entrenched in the Aeneid had become exhausted. Like the Europe of post-World War II and the process of decolonizing that much of the world was enduring throughout that era, Virgil has become both fragmented and re-imagined. The empires of Europe were all in a shambles and nothing, not even the “Mantuan,” could put them together again. The periphery drifted apart and, as noted above, the center had not held.

Part of this change of reading, of course, also had to do with the diminishing requirement of a “Classical Education.” Overall, though there emerged a sense that Virgil had little more to say to us and we had little need to consult him (since consulting him had not been to our benefit, the human cost of empire having revealed that all too jarringly).

259 Consider how Lukács and Hegel consider destiny as central to “national” identity (pp. 57ff.). Note also how Benedict Anderson states that “It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny” (12).
However, when Virgil was consulted during this era, as he was by Enoch Powell, it was brief and memorable. Powell, an infamous British statesman who was profoundly libertarian\textsuperscript{260} and a scholar who was classically-trained,\textsuperscript{261} was unabashedly devoted to the “half-submerged nationalism of the English” (Nairn 247). As a champion of “the ability of the [English] people to get what they want through peace, capital, profit and a competitive market” (qtd. in Greenleaf 320), he believed that England’s immigration policies and population presented “a mortal threat to the British (or rather to the English—for he pointed out that in practice only England is concerned’)” (Nairn 245, his emphasis). This latter view came through most strongly when, on April 20, 1968, he made a speech in Birmingham regarding the consequences that continued immigration would have on England and the English. At its climax, Powell declared:

As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'. That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect. Indeed, it has all but come.

Powell’s speech, like so many of his others, was well-crafted.\textsuperscript{262} In fact, as Tom Nairn points out, Powell was “a figure whose every speech [was] awaited with eager interest and anxiety, who may be adored or hated but is universally felt to be important” (245). The unnamed “Roman” in the speech is Aeneas from Book VI of the \textit{Aeneid}; the line is adapted from the sequence involving the Cumaean Sybil, who is prophesying the coming wars that Aeneas and the Trojans will endure as they found Latinus’ realm.

\textsuperscript{260} Powell served as a Member of Parliament for nearly forty years (1950-1987) and was a minister in the governments of Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath.

\textsuperscript{261} He became a Professor of Greek at the University of Sydney at the age of 26.

\textsuperscript{262} He was well-read, as well as a poet, historian and translator of Classical Greek.
Powell’s allusion is to line 87, though the context of the Sybil’s speech compels us to take line 86 into account:

\[
\textit{sed non et uenisse uolent. bella, horrida bella, et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno.}
\]

but they will wish that they had not come. War, horrible war, and I see the River Tiber foaming with much blood.

As such, the allusion has wider implications, which influenced the reception of the speech so much that it came to be known as the “Rivers of Blood” speech by the British press. What had been a warning to Aeneas of what he would have to endure in order to help found empire, has been transformed into a warning to immigrants (\textit{sed non et uenisse uolent}) and the tribulations that will be endured by all in order to maintain Englishness in England. Such a great price must be paid to forge an English identity.

Having been scorned by Graves and rendered irrelevant by Auden, Virgil became toxic by association with Powell’s speech. Indeed, in their forced retrospection, Eliot’s speeches seem almost quaint now after these three readings of Virgil. All of these writers were born soon after the height of empire; yet they were best known for the work they produced in the post-colonial era, in which ideas of empire, civilization and historical continuity had shifted abruptly: Eliot strived to maintain the old ways and Powell fought to stem the tide of change; Auden shook us to our senses and Graves was embittered. So, after these reactions, what has become of Virgil and his vision of empire?

If we encounter Aeneas and Virgil now in England, it is most often through translation, not through lectures on the merits of empire or Christianity or culture, nor is
he quoted in the Houses of Parliament—and there have been at least ten complete translations of the *Aeneid* into English within the past twenty years. Interestingly enough, Colin Burrow, in his recent study “Virgil in English Translation” points out that “When [Virgil] is translated into English, he more usually gives voice to those who feel that they are on the outside of a dominant culture” (36). If so, then Virgil’s language of empire has been transformed into the language of the colonized or the exile.

Ziolkowski concludes somberly that “we do not live in Virgilian times” since “recent works are too discrete to constitute any groups or to display patterns other than the negative pattern of fragmentation” (235). Perhaps this fragmentation of Virgil is merely symptomatic of the larger fragmentation experienced in our postmodern world: we may not see Virgil in recent texts because the way he is alluded to or quoted is unfamiliar due to its fragmented nature—we are predisposed to seeing him emulated or imitated in certain ways.

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263 An article by Ann Treneman’s in the *Times of London*, dated May 22, 2008, describes how Virgil was quoted by London’s Mayor Boris Johnson during a meeting with London Assembly members—much to the dismay and annoyance of a member of the opposition. The exchange was described as follows: Boris was being hammered by some Labour members about not following the correct process for appointments to his financial audit board.

“*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus!*” cried Mr Mayor (an incomplete quote from the *Aeneid*, which means something like, as Hecuba would confirm, “this is ridiculous.”)

“Speak English!” the member shouted back.

Mr Mayor didn’t like that. After all, no one ever said that to Virgil. As of March 2010, the *London Guardian* reported that Mayor Johnson was exhorting his fellow Tories, to take "class out of the classics" and put Latin on the state-school curriculum" (Mulholland). Interestingly, compare Johnson’s use of this line to Graves’ reading of it (see note 255).

264 ‘English’ translation is a loose term since it applies across national borders. Notable translations within the past twenty years have been completed by Frederick Ahl, Robert Fagles, Stanley Lombardo, Sarah Ruden, and David West.

In “A Golden Bough,” the opening piece in *Seeing Things*, a collection of poems devoted to his father, Seamus Heaney translated *Aeneid* VI.98-148, (the episode in which the Cumaean Sybil tells Aeneas that he must obtain the golden bough in order to travel safely through the underworld).
Sometimes, he is merely a passing reference, as in Bernardine Evaristo’s free verse novel, *The Emperor’s Babe*, where Virgil is being taught as part of a Roman history lesson and described as:

\[
\text{Noster maximus poeta, [and] about how} \\
\text{The \textit{Aeneid} will still be a classic text} \\
\text{In two millennia from now. As \textit{if}. (84)}
\]

Evaristo, with obvious irony, describes her protagonist Zuleika (the “Emperor’s Babe,” as a child of “Sudanese” migrants growing up in Londinium [Roman London] who catches the eye of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus [ruled circa A.D. 193-211]), being prophetically made conscious of the fact that Virgil will still be read far into the future, perhaps due to a sense of *imperium sine fine dedit*.

However, due to the constraints imposed by the ways we are taught to read texts and the ways that have seen texts historically disseminated, we expect Virgil to be read and quoted and alluded to just as he had been prior to Eliot’s manifestos. Why should the *Aeneid* be different than any other text?

Virgil comes to us now obliquely, where formerly he was damningly obvious. As the epic poet of empire, he seemed to speak clearly and forcefully of the imagined community that would rule the world, impose civilization, spare the defeated, and break the proud in war. As we enter the imagined community of the post-imperial, our sense of

\[\text{__________________________}\]

\[265\text{ Two of the more blatant references or readings of Virgil include the recent holocaust novel, *Beatrice and Virgil* (2010) by Canadian writer Yann Martel (who won the Man Booker prize in 2002 for the *Life of Pi*). In this novel, “Beatrice” is a taxidermist’s stuffed goat and “Virgil” is a stuffed red howler monkey—both are imagined as characters in the taxidermist’s stories. The more obvious reference here is not to the Virgil of the \textit{Aeneid}, but to the Virgil of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. In addition, there is Ursula LeGuin’s novel \textit{Lavinia} (2007), which re-imagines the second half of the \textit{Aeneid} from Lavinia’s perspective.}\]
relation to the historical and artistic/literary past has shifted, and so too has our sense of recounting the past and creating our own epics. In order to understand more fully how these past conceptions of history and empire continue to inform our post-imperial imaginary, we should seek to include the *Aeneid* in our readings of texts and their fragmented and eclectic references—as he was the poet of empire, so too must he be read as “the last colony of the British Empire” is still being transformed into a new imagined community. Therefore, this reading of *The Satanic Verses* will require an examination of scholarly approaches to the *Aeneid* and a close reading of how the *Aeneid* itself reveals or imagines nation in order to understand how Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* reads, reacts to, and reimagines this thing we call nation.

**Imposing Nation?**

*Nil patrium nisi nomen habet Romanus alumnus*
*Sanguinis altricem non putet esse lupam.*  
A young Roman has nothing from his ancestor but his name  
He wouldn’t imagine that a she-wolf nursed the blood from which he sprang.  
Propertius, IV.1A.37-38.

When Ernest Renan declared that the Roman Empire “was a huge association, and a synonym for order, peace and civilization,” he denied that it was a nation. Yet if it was not a nation, at least as he understood it, then it was a novel association (for its time) that relied not on tribal or familial affiliation; rather, it imposed an *imaginary community* of “the Roman” upon all the peoples in its domain. There was no blood or marriage bond that made one Roman (though one could be born Roman); more importantly, depending
upon different time periods, one could become enfranchised as a Roman and/or choose Roman-ness.

However, the process of becoming Roman or determining “Roman-ness” was never static and its history is complex. It was a constantly evolving condition, particularly in the early decades of the empire, when territorial gains reached a zenith not seen again until the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117) and vast swaths of territory had their peoples granted citizenship. The Roman poets—of special interest are Propertius (c. 45-15 B.C.), Ovid (c. 43 B.C. – A.D. 17), Horace (c. 65 – 8 B.C.), and Virgil—who detail the rise of Imperial Rome were aware of these fluctuations and the Augustan mission to create a sense of Roman-ness. Their works about Rome and Romans reveal a consciousness of the evolutionary process of which they were a part.

The first two, Propertius and Ovid, were young poets of the new empire, having been born within a year or two of Julius Caesar’s assassination. They were teens in 31 B.C. when the Battle of Actium was fought and won by Caesar’s stepson Octavian (who would become Caesar Augustus) and when the empire was declared by him. Each of them was effusive in his praise of Rome and Augustus---and yet, at the same time, each

\[266\] On the variations of citizenship in the Roman Empire, see A. N. Sherwin-White’s *The Roman Citizenship*. Early on, he describes how:

Caesar [Augustus] was more cautious than is usually admitted, and followed the policy, initiated by Pompeius Strabo, of inserting a preparatory period of Latin status before the elevation of purely foreign communities to the full citizenship. The condition of a grant of Latin rights appears to have been the possession of a certain degree of Latin or Roman culture. (233)

Note also the discussion above regarding the changes in the early Augustan period, especially Galinsky’s consideration of the ongoing process of negotiation and renegotiation (*Augustan Rome* 100-110). However, the general public most often encounters Roman society in films that have generalized “Romanness”—everyone looks and acts Roman (inevitably, one can recall the importance of the “insistent fringes [that are] simply the label of Roman-ness” as described by Roland Barthes in his essay “The Romans in Films”)—and yet if we were not told the time period, we would not be sure which period of empire the film portrays. Some examples include Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator* (2000), William Wyler’s *Ben Hur* (1959), Mervyn LeRoy’s *Quo Vadis?* (1951), and, of course, Joseph Mankiewicz’s *Julius Caesar* (1953), the movie discussed by Barthes.
also exhibited an overtly subversive and contrarian attitude. Propertius held Augustus in esteem in his earlier elegies (Book II); however, in his later poems (Book IV), he came to satirize, play with and openly question the fictionalizing of nation that was taking place in the early years of the empire. Ovid had lampooned Augustan moral laws in his *Ars Amatoria*; he later became notorious for having been exiled to the very ends of Roman civilization by Caesar Augustus himself due to, as Ovid termed it, *carmen et error* “a poem and a mistake.” And yet, this was the same poet who concluded the final book of his *Metamorphoses* with the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and greater praise to Augustus.

Horace and Virgil grew up in the generation prior to the other two poets. Each was in his twenties during the assassination of Julius Caesar; in addition, each had experienced the tribulations that afflicted people under Roman rule during the nearly twenty years from the assassination through Octavian’s victory at Actium and the subsequent rise of the empire. They were the most notable of the poets who found favor with Augustus and each was commissioned to write works on his behalf.

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267 Regarding Propertius’ purpose in Book IV of his elegies, W.R. Johnson describes him as being among those “poets who have no interest in praising the system of signs they find themselves born into; those poets who will gladly turn to demystifying that system and its signs” (“Propertius 4.11” 164).

268 Tristia 2.207

269 Ovid portends the eventual apotheosis of Augustus in the closing of this poem, having placed him in the company of Jove, Achilles, Agamemnon and Theseus (sons who had superseded their fathers):

> tarda sit illa dies et nostro serior aeo,
> qua caput Augustum, quem temperat, orbe relict
> accedat caelo faveatque precantibus absens! (Metamorphoses XV.868-870)

I beg that this day be slow to come, and beyond our own lifetimes, when Augustus will rise to heaven, leaving the world he rules and there will listen, with favor, to our prayers!

Ovid can never be read as straightforward though. While Brooks Otis (“Ovid and the Augustans”) and L.P. Wilkinson (Ovid Recalled, especially 225-240) read this praise as genuine, Charles Segal (“Myth and Philosophy in the Metamorphoses: Ovid’s Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion to Book XV”) and Carroll Moulton “Ovid as Anti-Augustan: Met. 15.843-79” read this section as parody and as subversive.
Horace’s “Roman Odes,” which are the first six selections in the third book of Odes, are unabashed in their praise Rome and the achievements of Augustus; his *Carmen Saeculare* (Secular Hymn) was commissioned for the *Ludi Saeculares* (Secular Games) that were revived by Caesar Augustus in 17 B.C.

Yet it was Virgil, perhaps the most ambitious of these poets, who had initially drawn the attention of Maecenas, and was commissioned to write an epic about the origins of Rome and describe its distinct and extraordinary destiny in relation to the world and the universe.

To reveal what it was to be Roman—an evolving identity suited to dynamic times—Virgil drew from poetry and history, which were understood in his era as distinct ways of representing the world. Fortunately, his efforts were aided due to the fact that an accepted formulation of the early history of Rome had been well-established and accepted by the time the Republic was nearing its end. In his study, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, Erich Gruen states how the Roman historians Livy (c. 59 B.C. – A.D. 17), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60 – 7 B.C.) and Sallust (c. 86 – 34 B.C.) detail that Trojans (under the leadership of Aeneas) and “aborigines” had founded Rome (23). This connection to Troy was beneficial since it allowed the Roman upper

270 Virgil made a quick leap from adapting Theocritus’ *Idylls* in the *Eclogues* to taking on Hesiod’s *Works and Days* in the *Georgics*; in hindsight, the fact that he chose to Homeric epic as his next model seems logical and obvious.

271 Such is the tradition assigned by Suetonius in his *Vita Vergili*, *Life of Virgil*, especially lines 27-41.

272 Gruen notes that applicable passages are Livy, 1.1-3, 1.23.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Roman Antiquities* 1.52-99, 1.66 and Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 6.1 (23). “Aborigines” is the Latin term used by Livy and Sallust; the same term Άβοριγίνας is used by Dionysius: “There are some who affirm that the Aborigines, from whom the Romans are originally descended, were natives of Italy, a stock which came into being spontaneously.” Hence, the aborigines are autochthons, born of the land itself. He also notes earlier precedents in the historical works of Fabius Pictor (circa 254 B.C. - ?) and Cato the Elder, who lived circa 234 – 149 B.C. (26, 31-34).
classes to appropriate their own particular take on the rich cultural legacy of Hellenic society. As such, they claimed to have descended from a culture that was on a par with Hellenic society without having the complications that came from being directly associated with Hellenic society itself (which was still a thriving, active participant in Roman rule). As Gruen reveals, this choice sharpened a sense of [Roman] identity and laid a foundation for a national character. Troy proved especially serviceable in this quest. Its glorious past lay in remote antiquity, its people no longer extant, its city but a shell of its former self. Troy persisted as a symbol, not a current reality…Romans could mold the Trojan image to their own ends. (31)

And that is exactly what Virgil accomplished as part of his process of describing the founding of Rome: he forged a hybrid of history and poetry, foreigner and native, past precedent and present circumstance to represent the novel association—the Roman Empire—that was actively and constantly being negotiated throughout the early reign of Caesar Augustus.

To appreciate the ways in which we have come to understand nation and empire in the Aeneid, it will be necessary to consider some of the general trends that can be seen in a variety of Virgilian scholarship and isolate the work undertaken by scholars who have taken a closer look at these ideas, yielding analyses upon which future consideration of this epic has been based.

First, we should consider the general trends, which can be seen by examining the introductions written for translations directed to general audiences. For example, in the introduction to his important prose translation of the Aeneid (1956), W. F. Jackson Knight describes how this poem is “a legendary narrative, a story about the imagined origin of the Roman nation in times long before the foundation of Rome itself” (12); this
perspective is echoed in Jackson Knight’s vivid and consistent use of the word “nation” in the translation of the poem itself. Jackson Knight, who had worked closely with T.S. Eliot to found the Virgil Society in 1943, was influenced by the German school of interpreting Virgil, associating this poet, as Eliot did, with the greatness of Rome and its imperial legacy.

By the time Allen Mandelbaum first published his translation of this work in 1961, we can see the influence of the Harvard school of interpreting Virgil. In the introduction to his translation, Mandelbaum notes, “I saw in the Aeneid the underground denial—by consciousness and longing—of the total claims of the state and history: the persistence in the mind of what is not there, of what is absent, as a measure of the present” (xi). Here, the work has become more psychological and has implications of the subconscious undermining and questioning the surface narrative.

W. R. Johnson’s introduction to Stanley Lombardo’s recent translation of the Aeneid finds a way to blend these two perspectives by exploring the sympathetic connection Aeneas has with his people. In a brief consideration of pietas, Johnson notes how the pious person, represented by Aeneas,

in sacrificing his individual self to [a] widening collectivity of needs and duties and emotions becomes more than himself; he becomes the incarnation of his family, his tribe, his nation; he becomes one with….the Roman State in all its power and glory and hoped-for permanence. (xxxii)

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273 When Jackson Knight provides the word nation, he is usually translating one of two words—more often it is genus (I.6 et passim), gens (I.282 et passim), at other times populus (I.21 et passim).
274 The Virgil Society was founded by Fr. Bruno Scott James shortly after celebrations of the bi-millennium of Virgil’s birth.
275 Where Jackson Knight used the word “nation” at I.6, I.21, and I.282, Mandelbaum uses the word “race.” A more in-depth discussion of the various terms that have been translated as “nation” or “race” can be found below in notes 309 and 310.
Ultimately, in such interpretations, Aeneas is a metonym for the idealized Roman. And yet he is more than that—because we must recall that he is not merely a symbol of the Roman nation or people; his actions not only represent what it is to be Roman, they reveal what happens when a person subsumes his or herself to nation, becoming indivisible from it—the man (the *uir* of the proem’s subject) is the “nation” or “race” (the *genus* of the proem). As such, he is a synecdoche for the Roman nation.

Similar to the broad perspectives afforded in these introductions are the brief summations provided in recent surveys of epic and classical literature. In his encyclopedic study, *Latin Literature*, (first published in Italian in 1987, then translated into English in 1999), Gian Biagio Conte describes the *Aeneid* as a “single massive work that subsumes all earlier ones and provides an epic mirror for the destiny of a nation” (289). He also states how “the *Aeneid* is the story of a mission willed by fate that would make possible the foundation of Rome and its salvation by Augustus”; moreover, this “poem is a national epic, in which a collectivity needs to reflect itself and feel itself united” (283).

In *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, a recent survey of works from the classical Western world, Llewelyn Morgan describes the *Aeneid* as “both a national epic and a poem honouring Caesar” (392) and continues by noting how

> if the *Aeneid* is a nationalistic poem, it is never a simple national anthem. Though it certainly did aim to celebrate the political position of its patron, Augustus….the *Aeneid* is in every respect a more subtle [poem, as it confronts] the devastating effect recent history had had upon the educated upper classes of Rome. (394)\(^{276}\)

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\(^{276}\) Morgan’s chapter, “Creativity out of chaos: Poetry between the death of Caesar and the death of Virgil” is devoted solely to Virgil’s *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. One earlier chapter, Christina S. Kraus’ “Forging a national identity: Prose Literature down to the time of Augustus” examines the role orators and
Such perspectives are drawn from an ever-growing industry devoted to exploring notions of nation in Virgil’s epic, which echoes Suetonius’ claim that Virgil’s poem had a “diverse and complex theme” *argumentum varium ac multiplex.*\(^{277}\) Thus, there are no simple justifications or answers for what nation is or should be.

In his brief but insightful survey, *The Epic*, Paul Merchant informs us that “the *Aeneid* is written with a strong sense of national identity and destiny—so strong, in fact, that it has been called ‘nationalistic’ and ‘propagandist’ by its detractors” (22). Masaki Mori’s *Epic Grandeur* follows Robert Curtius’ consideration that “‘the great theme of the *Aeneid* is [...] the destiny of Rome,’” concluding that this “*imperial* epic [requires the hero] to think about his own life [solely in relation to] the significance it bears on his own community” (65, my emphasis). The difference in terminology—imperial versus national—seems beside the point, both are rooted in the notion of an individual’s destiny being necessarily subsumed to the greater responsibility of the greater imagined community.

The notion of Virgil’s complexity and subversiveness is shared by Theodore Steinberg, who concludes that historian had in “creating and preserving” the memory of Rome’s past (329). Kraus describes how such histories “created an image of the Roman past that the Roman present wanted to use” (329), a consideration which could just as effectively apply to Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

\(^{277}\) The *Aeneid* is described in the brief *Vita Vergilii* of Suetonius (c. A.D. 70 – 130), which comes down to us through Aelius Donatus, the 4th c. A.D. grammarian. Of the *Aeneid*, we are informed:

*Novissime "Aeneidem" inchoavit, argumentum varium ac multiplex et quasi amorum Homeri carminum instar, praeterea nominibus ac rebus Graecis Latinisque commune, et in quo, quod maxime studebat, Romanae simul urbis et Augusti origo continetur.*

He began the *Aeneid* last, it had a diverse and complex theme and seemed as though it were an image of both of Homer’s poems; in addition, it showed persons and things—whether Greek and Latin—as similar; because he was particularly talented, at the same time, he blended together the origin of the city of Rome and of Augustus.
it was undeniable that Virgil loved Rome and that his poem glorifies the new-born empire, but it is an error to view the Aeneid as Roman propaganda or as a justification for anything Augustus did. Certainly Virgil praises Rome and Augustus, but he also offers criticism and warnings. (45)

These discussions of nation, empire and identity were framed by the schools of thought to which various Virgilian scholars were aligned. The optimistic German school informed one perspective, while the “pessimistic” Harvard school influenced its opposite perspective. Neither focused on nation or identity specifically; rather it was the questions they asked and the answers that they sought, with regard to technique, outcomes, influence and representation, that had an impact on how they read the Aeneid.

S. J. Harrison includes a detailed discussion of these opposing schools of thought in his excellent survey “Some Views of the Aeneid in the Twentieth Century.” He describes how the German school promoted the notion that “the Aeneid asserted the values of order and civilization by depicting their eventual victory” (5); this perspective grew out of Richard Heinze’s Vergil’s Epic Technique, and Eduard Norden’s Commentary on Aeneid 6, both of which appeared in the early twentieth century; more recent scholars associated with the German school include Victor Pöschl, Brooks Otis, and Francis Cairns.

Otis’ Virgil, A Study in Civilized Poetry, published in 1964, declared that “we can…look upon [Virgil’s] conception of the ‘Augustan Hero’ as a kind of hopeful

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In particular, Steinberg is reacting to the recent criticism levied against Virgil in David Quint’s Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton and Elizabeth Bellamy’s Translations of Power: Narcissism and the Unconscious in Epic History. The latter describes epic narrative as “the aesthetic tool of imperialist ideology” while the former declares that the Homeric epic was appropriated “for the ends of empire: as a source of inspiration or authorizing model for political domination on a mass scale” (qtd. in Steinberg 45). Referring to both critiques as “monologic,” Steinberg defers to Susan Wofford’s conclusion that “epic poetry should not be ceded to interpretations that are univocal or idealizing” (qtd. in Steinberg 224n52). Such interpretations have a straitjacketing mentality since they compel us to read Virgil one way.

\[279\] The Art of Vergil: Symbol and Image in the Aeneid.
prophecy, his elucidation of an ideal which represented Rome’s best and true reason for being” (390). Ultimately, the idealism that infuses Otis’ perspective leads him to conclude that “Virgil is a civilized poet” (393) and that this poem and its poet represent all that is good in Western civilization. While he does not focus on nation or empire, Otis’ consideration of *humanitas* (“civilization”) speaks to the ways in which he views the Roman conception of self and nation.\(^2\)

In 1977, Cairns published a short study, “Geography and Nationalism,” which expanded discussion on the role of the “nation” in the *Aeneid*. Though scholars and critics had long mentioned and, to a large degree, accepted the idea of nationalism as central to Virgil’s epic, this article represented a shift in the degree to which this idea was explored, focusing as it did on Virgil’s “strategies in claiming Italian nationality for his hero and the import of that claim” (109) which includes “the italianisation of Aeneas and the Trojans [and their] acknowledge[ment of] Italy as their *patria*” (128). This article broadened the discussion with regard to the way that identity—imperial, national, ethnic and tribal—was perceived and conceived of in this work.

To a large measure, this study takes up the idea of *Romanization* first set forth in Mommsen and Haverfield,\(^2\) proposing that the *Aeneid* served as a basis upon which Roman identity was grounded and propounded. Cairns’ study was developed more fully and incorporated into a larger study, *Virgil’s Augustan Epic*, published in 1987, which “explores Virgil’s embodiment in the *Aeneid* of some of the political and literary ideals

\(^{2}\) Otis defines Virgil’s sense of *humanitas* (a word that never appears in the *Aeneid*) as the “moral understanding and...sense of tragedy” that “reconcile[s] passion and work, the individual and the state” (189)—a way of justifying Aeneas’ actions and his relation to the newly founded Rome.

\(^{2}\) Discussed above in Chapter Three.
of early Augustan Rome” (ix), placing the work within the larger context of its times. He emphasizes that “Roman citizenship (civitas) was not a racial but a legal status” and that “Virgil was, if anything, an internationalist” (122). That he highlights such things points toward the optimistic, asserting the positive values of civilization.

At around the same time that Cairns was writing Virgil’s Augustan Epic, Niall Rudd wrote “The Idea of Empire in the Aeneid,” a taut and reactionary piece, which examines how Virgil’s “aim was to present the Augustan age as the culmination of a long historical process” (32, his emphasis), in which the “struggle itself [for empire]…inspired him” (34). Ultimately, he concludes that the Aeneid is “an imperial poem, but without the attitudes normally associated with the ideology of a Herrenvolk [master race]” (42). Rudd believes that the Aeneid is an ambiguous piece, an “epic of human endeavor” rather than a paean to the noble people who are Romans. His approach echoes Roland Syme’s contention that “Virgil was engaged in writing an epic poem that should reveal the hand of destiny in the earliest origins of Rome, the continuity of Roman history and its culmination in the rule of Augustus” (462).

According to Philip Hardie, who takes these notions of destiny a step further, Virgil’s poetry, especially the Aeneid, represents the notion common in ancient thought that “the state is analogous to, or even in some way identical with, the natural universe” and that Virgil’s “fascination with the cosmic implications of Roman history is typical of

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282 Gilbert Cuthbertson’s spare consideration of the Aeneid strikes a different tone, noting how “Aeneas himself focuses the cultural ideals which are to bring order and peace to the Roman community. Aeneas as a great mythic man serves as a folk leader, subordinating his private desires to his people’s needs” (56). Unfortunately, his conclusion forces Aeneas into a Volkish context that cannot be found in Virgil’s poem.  
283 This quote from Syme is taken from his groundbreaking The Roman Revolution, published in 1939 on the eve of World War II; this work examined how the rise of Caesar Augustus ended “a century of anarchy” through imposing the stability of empire, and brought “manifold blessings to Rome” (2).
the age” (Virgil’s *Aeneid: Cosmos* 2). For Hardie, Virgil’s imperial Rome has cosmological implications and ramifications, not only for its initial audience, but for the generations of readers and interpreters who were influenced by it. He notes early on in his argument that “the *Aeneid* is a universal poem: its essential theme is the history of a city which realizes universal empire. The apparently localized theme of foundation, *ktisis*, becomes universal by virtue of the fact that all things and peoples must eventually be seen in relationship to the one city and people of Rome” (25). Taken to this extreme, the *Aeneid* represents the most significant shift that has occurred—the colonizing of the entire world. If epic represents how a community and the world are altered *irrevocably* by the action(s) represented in the epic, then the *Aeneid* is the *primo supra alii*. In his later study on *The Epic Successors of Virgil*, Hardie describes this “Roman epic as the new *Weltgedicht* [achieved] through an act of appropriation or of literary imperialism” (*The Epic Successors* 1). Not content to represent the culmination of Roman history, this perspective enlarges the possibilities of this poem and the age it represented, idealizing and attaining the conclusiveness that epic aims to embody.

Hardie is perhaps the most avid positivist, representing Virgil’s achievement of representing empire and nation as having cosmological significance. His views and those of others in the German school are tempered by the pessimism or stark realism of the Harvard school, which was evidenced first in Adam Parry’s “The Two Voices of Virgil’s *Aeneid*,” Wendell Clausen’s “An Interpretation of the *Aeneid*,” and Michael Putnam’s *The Poetry of the Aeneid*, all of which appeared in the 1950s and 1960s. These scholars proposed that Virgil’s epic mingled triumph with regret, which undermined the positivism set forth by the Germans (“Some Views of the *Aeneid*” 5).
Clausen contended that the *Aeneid* is a Roman epic: as such, it “is instinct with Roman sensibility…an expression…of the meaning of Rome” (139). More recently, in his *Virgil’s Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence*, Putnam “observe[s] how Virgil regularly creates a friction between what we might call loyalist and subversive ways of understanding its meaning” (2). As such, we have a poem that “aim[s] history toward the manifest destiny of Augustus [and] support[s] the imperial status quo” (2)\(^{284}\) or the promotion of nation and nationalism, and yet, in the end, the poem’s hero succumbs to “irrational violence…as he allows private passion to supersede any larger gestures of magnanimity” (3).

In between these two poles are British scholars, including R.G. Austin and R.D. Williams, who found a middle ground between both strains of thinking (“Some Views of the *Aeneid*” 6-7). The introduction to Williams’ two volume critical commentary on the *Aeneid* describes how Virgil composed this “poem to express Rome’s national greatness and destiny by means of the story of her legendary origins” (xi). Moreover, Williams stresses that Virgil’s first requirement for the poem was that it “should be national…and yet [he] avoided the inflexibility of a historical subject…or annalistic treatment” (xiii).\(^{285}\)

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\(^{284}\) Note how Putnam’s perspective is grounded in a solid imposition of American ideals onto Rome. W. A. Camps holds quite the opposite view, stating that Virgil had “no idea corresponding to that of Manifest Destiny” (10). The full discussion is above on pages 164ff.

\(^{285}\) With these two nods, Williams notes he is looking forward to Lucan’s *Pharsalia* (historically-based and driven) and looking back to Ennius’ *Annales*. His ideas echo Henry Nettleship’s consideration that “the main purpose of the *Aeneid* as has been seen by several critics is to celebrate the growth in accordance with a divine dispensation of the Roman empire and Roman civilization” (101). Nettleship, finishing the work begun by John Conington, had prepared the first modern commentary of Virgil’s works, including the *Aeneid*.

In addition to the Conington-Nettleship commentary, Clyde Pharr compiled a commentary on the first six books of Virgil’s epic. In his introduction, Pharr states that this poem “stir[ed] the feeling of Roman patriotism and pride of race” (2).
Finally, one of the more interesting perspectives came from W.R. Johnson: in his book *Darkness Visible: An Interpretation of Virgil’s Aeneid*, Johnson reacts to both schools, pointing out how both ask the same question, but come armed with opposite solutions and that there is a shared view that the *Aeneid* promotes a sense of nation or empire.  

The argument set forth by Putnam is shared in David Quint’s *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton*, an ambitious study that traces the influences of the *Aeneid* and its epical descendents ranging from medieval epic through twentieth-century film. Echoing Putnam’s perspective (later reiterated by Steinberg), he declares that “if Virgil is a propagandist for emperor and empire—the position that he and his epic have occupied for the ensuing epic tradition—he is far from an uncritical one” (11). While he is concerned with the ways in which Virgil acted and reacted to Augustan purposes, he is just as engaged in the ways that the *Aeneid* was read by his epical descendents.

As such, his study loosens Virgil’s epic from the grasp of the classicists in order to establish a political genealogy of the [epic] tradition….to show how the meanings of any one epic (the *Aeneid*, for a salient example) that originally were determined by a particular occasion (the ascendancy of Augustus) become “universalized” and codified as epic becomes part of a larger literary history—and how that tradition, now already freighted with political ideas and expectations, becomes, in turn, an inseparable constituent of the political meaning of other epics that need themselves to be brought back to their own original occasions. (13)

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286 See especially, pages 16ff., where he uses Karl Jasper’s notion of the dualistic “cipher” upon which most perspectives are based: one cipher views things as fundamentally harmonious, while the other views things as frauds and based on devilry.

287 He devotes parts or wholes of chapters to Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Luis de Camões’ *Lusiads*, Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*, the Ossian poems by James MacPherson and Sergei Eisenstein’s *Alexander Nevsky*. 
Quint’s approach was fresh, providing a way to understand more fully the ways in which the *Aeneid* influenced how we read epics and how we interpret history, since we are seemingly incapable of divorcing post-Virgilian epics from the biases and weight impressed upon this form by Virgil.

Thus, when “the *Aeneid* recounts the story of Aeneas’s defeat in Troy and victory in Italy as the founding events of a Roman history that culminated in world empire and in the rise to power and the new principate of Julius Caesar’s heir, Augustus” (7), we have naturalized it—that is, come to accept it as part of the necessary progression of human and universal history. As such, all subsequent epics look back, not only to Virgil’s form and scope, but inevitably to the subject and circumstances in which he wrote, idealizing them.

Ultimately, the broader discussion that Cairns and Quint encouraged was soon expanded on by a newer generation of Virgilian scholars. Equally important was the way in which the ideas set forth in Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* influenced each of these succeeding discussions of nation in the *Aeneid*. Both Katharine Toll and Yasmine Syed make explicit reference to Anderson’s work as a basis from which they make their argument—in addition, W.R. Johnson’s (though he is not of this “newer generation”) recent “Imaginary Romans: Vergil and the Illusion of National Identity” makes obvious reference to Anderson’s book (the title is a nod to it, if nothing else) even though he does not directly quote or cite it.

In 1991, Toll published her study, “The *Aeneid* as an Epic of National Identity: *Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant*” which explores the *Aeneid* as “a poem of Italian nationhood [since] the unity of Italy was recent and unsteady when Vergil was writing”
due to the civil wars and the recent admission of some of the more far-flung regions of Italy (3), including Virgil’s own Cisalpine Gaul. She presumes that “Vergil was the more ready and able to consider Italy as a new entity and to frame for it a new myth of nationhood” (4) that is a “composite of an actually attained but forever-to-be-revised sense of the realities of national self-hood and a sense of its ideality, always to be striven for and never to be attained” (7). Her focus echoes the examination of national identity set forth by Mommsen, who expressed an interest in the Italian national legacy that could be traced from the nineteenth-century back to the Roman Republic.288 In addition, it also continued the discussion set forth more recently by Cairns, who had a similar consideration of Italian nationhood.

Toll revisited this line of study by shifting from a focus on Italian to Roman identity in her 1997 paper titled “Making Romanness and the Aeneid.” This paper focuses on how Virgil created and conceived of Roman identity as “an open category, one no single person could expound or circumscribe [in order to] help the Romans meditate on the duties, problems, dangers, and possibilities of a new national identity” (34).289 She qualifies her use of the term national, conscious of how it seems imposed upon an era and society to which it is not suited. She qualifies the use this term, noting that she “intend[s] these terms to impute to Rome…a combination of strongly felt affiliation, or incorporation, with acknowledged and esteemed homogeneities in a very

288 Discussed above on pages 109-114. Joshua Whatmough had a similar focus in his The Foundations of Roman Italy.
289 This paper was presented at the Heller conference, titled “Creating Roman Identity: Subjectivity and Self-Fashioning in Latin Literature,” which was held in September 1995 at the University of California, Berkeley. Three of the papers presented were later published in Classical Antiquity 16.1. Two of the papers focused on the Aeneid, one focused on Roman education.
large group of people” (35). As such, the term nation seems to stand for the idea of an “imagined community,” the very thing that was being created, considered and invented during the Augustan era in relation to and in reaction to the greater cultural forces at work in the Empire that was in the process of being created. It was a case wherein a particular vision of culture and government and destiny were being imposed on the people who were within the confines of the empire.

Toll concludes that “the new nationhood [the Aeneid] envisions aims at unity and harmony, but not at either simplistic partisanship or conclusiveness about its values [since] this program [of nationhood] is fraught with difficulties and traps” (52). Her shift to discussing “Roman-ness” as opposed to her earlier consideration of the Italian nation (or “Italian-ness”) has allowed her to examine the Aeneid within its Roman cultural context more fully by moving beyond the place-names and similes that attest to the Aeneas’ Italian heritage. Such connections can only go so far since, within the context of the Aeneid, they do not designate a culture or a moral code.

Yasmine Syed, who had organized the conference at which Toll had given her paper, published Vergil’s Aeneid and the Roman Self in 2005. This book, which grew out of her PhD dissertation, examines individual and collective identity in Roman society, with a specific focus on “the level of subject and the level of ethnicity and gender” (3) in order to represent how the “Aeneid’s articulation of Roman identity is not just a literary issue, but has an impact on the Romans’ cultural identity” (13). Ultimately, she contends...
that “the Roman identity that emerges from the poem can best be compared to the modern concept of nationhood, as it strives to unite within itself various ethnic groups to form a whole unified by common language, customs, and religion” (220).

W.R. Johnson’s “Imaginary Romans: Vergil and the Illusion of National Identity” appeared in Sarah Spence’s 2001 collection of presentations, essays and interviews, titled Poets and Critics Read Vergil. This collection grew out of a conference that focused on the ways in which we read, translate and comprehend the classics, such as the Aeneid, coming as we do from various distances represented by time, space, politics, culture and gender (among others). In her introduction, Spence writes that

Johnson suggests that the problem of how Vergil is to be read and understood is unsolvable because the diffuse mission of founding, of defining “Rome” is inscribed in the epic itself, a question posed by its plot and reenacted by every subsequent audience. (xiv)

Johnson juxtaposes verses from Virgil and a young Propertius, the elegiac poet and new Roman, in order to flesh out the way that so many of the Romans who came of age during the reign of Caesar Augustus were “caught between two sign systems” (9) since “their families had [only] recently become naturalized Romans” following decades of war, both civil and social.

He emphasizes that this was a period during which there was “a struggle between an old and a new sign-system, and that that struggle determined, in large measure, who they were and therefore how they read what they read, how, in particular, they read the verses in question” (9). There was no unified, monolithic Rome or Roman, rather there

292 This conference, “After Grief and Reason,” was held at the University of Georgia in March 1995. W.R. Johnson’s essay was not one of the works presented at the conference.
was, as Galinsky describes on ongoing process of “negotiation and renegotiation of precedents with regard to new needs and changing circumstances” (Augustan 363). So often, there has been a tendency to read classics, such as the *Aeneid*, as working within a fixed sense of identity—as though Virgil merely had to collate all of the proper materials that represented what was perceived to be the ideal Roman, not taking into account the conflicting political, economic, philosophic and social crosscurrents and contradictions that inflamed the Augustan era.

More recently, there has been a shift to exploring the ways in which the gaze, or the use of focalization, is used to represent things in the *Aeneid*. Such approaches explore the ways that a scene or a situation is represented subjectively through points of view. Recent scholarship includes Alden Smith’s exploration of Aeneas as *voyant-visible*, which states how Aeneas “future, like his past, is to be a national venture” (14), creating a link between the way the Trojan prince sees things and how he empathizes with what he sees—thus revealing another way to examine how Aeneas represents and participates with the whole of Rome: through vision.

J.D. Reed’s *Virgil’s Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid* uses “the gaze [as] a central trope”—particularly, the gaze of the “desirous viewer”—to explore the “narratology of the poem” and discern the “provisional and perspectival” sense of identity constructed in this epic (2). He focuses on the idea that assimilation is central to

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293 Discussed above on pp. 100ff.
294 In his *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid* Smith sums up the idea of Aeneas as *voyant-visible* by stating how “he is in the world as see-er and as one held up as an icon in the midst of those with whom he interacts. He is a participant in and an engager of his surroundings, not existential or removed from them” (10). While Smith derives this idea of the *voyant-visible* from work Merleau-Ponty, his overall thrust extends the ideas and interpretations of Augustan Rome found in Zanker and Galinsky.
Roman conceptions of identity, so much so that “there is no essence, no absolute center, no origin that exclusively authorizes Romanness” (2). His work advances ideas of Romanness that were seen in Toll, Syed, Johnson and Cairns, cementing further the notion that “there is no essential Roman in the Aeneid; that ethnicity that unavoidably, historically, is to be attached to the ‘self’ in the poem is endlessly reducible… it is constantly deferred to other, mediating representations of ethnicity” (3).

Overall, there seems general agreement from these diverse and conflicted groups of scholars—that an idea of nation drives the Aeneid and is described within its confines. And yet, at the same time, that a concrete or fixed sense of what it is to be Roman can not be nailed down or defined, exhibiting as it does that Augustan tendency toward flexibility. There is also the conviction that this formulation was part of a larger process through which the artists and other peoples of Augustan Rome represented what it was to be Roman. 295 Within the past twenty years, there has been significant growth in studying such themes, which has accompanied growing interest in applying theories of nationalism and postcolonialism to the Aeneid, Roman literature and other aspects of Roman culture and society. 296

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295 Many terms are used to sum up this quality, including Roman-ness (used by Toll and Reed) and Romanitas (used by Gruen, Galinsky, Syed, Adams and Cairns). Gruen uses the term to denote “the articulation of Roman distinctiveness” (141); Galinsky also uses the term to emphasize the need to understand the Aeneid “in light of Roman customs and the Roman experience which the Aeneid is meant to sum up” (“Vergil’s Romanitas” 986). The latter term, Romanitas, was first used in the late empire by Tertullian: Quid nunc, si est Romanitas omni salus, “Why at this moment, if Romanness is salvation for everything” (De Pallio IV.1).

296 The intersection of post-colonial scholarly perspectives with the classics can be seen in some recent collections of essays, including: Roman Imperialism: Post-colonial Perspectives, which includes papers given at a symposium held at Leicester University in November 1994. Other texts include Classics and Colonialism. Half of the essays in this work are devoted to Latin literature and the remainder to Greek literature. Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds, published in 2007, has some interesting approaches to
Thus, current considerations of nation in the Aeneid have developed out of a long scholarly tradition that designated the Aeneid as a national epic or epic of empire. For the larger group of scholars and critics, the Aeneid is evocative of nation. In this first camp, there are two tendencies: the first uses the term nation as an accepted and acceptable way of discussing Virgil’s conceptualizing of Rome and its founding myths. For these critics and scholars, it is something that has been settled or discussed elsewhere, or perhaps a term of convenience, since the term is used as a basic qualifier.

Thus, when the theme of nation is examined in Galinsky’s vast study of Augustan culture, the role of the Aeneid is accepted as being “a spiritual and poetic reflection of the Roman national experience, and it is an honest one at that” (Augustan 246). And such a phrase sits easily with us because it is not perceived as a novel or atypical point of view, but because it has become commonplace.

While Galinsky aligned Virgil with an idealized Rome in his Augustan Culture, his more recent article, echoing the work of Philip Hardie, “Virgil’s Aeneid and Ovid’s Metamorphoses as World Literature,” moves beyond the scope of the national epic. He notes that “Vergil’s vision was wider. [As such,] the Aeneid is an extended meditation on the Roman experience [and] the Roman condition [and it] becomes a paradigm for the human condition” (345). Galinsky has effectively broadened out the purpose of the Aeneid: it is not merely a national poem or a poem about empire, but a universal poem, a classics; however, with few exceptions it is devoted solely to exploring links between Hellenic culture and literature, as opposed to Roman culture and literature.
way of examining and describing oikumenē (“the inhabited world”), a “cosmopolitan variety of peoples and cultures [that] lived under the aegis of a ruling power” (341).297

Moreover, in the context of the trends of Virgilian scholarship, we can see how Galinsky’s view echoes Francis Cairns’ notion that “the Aeneid is the epic of Augustan Rome, embodying the aspirations, the pride and the self-image of the rulers of the world” (Augustan 105); their similarities may be due to shared philosophical outlooks and shared subjects—both are of the optimistic German School and are intent on understanding this poem in relation to “the political and literary ideals of early Augustan Rome [my emphasis]” (ix).

At the same time, it seems possible that we could get lost in the ways that different terminology is used and referenced. Is there a difference between empire and nation, other than the words employed—imperium on the one hand and gens, genus or populus on the other hand? Or are they, ultimately, just different ways of detailing the same idea or representing the same way of being?

The consideration of the imperial connection is obvious since the word imperium is used designate “empire” some seven times throughout the Aeneid, solely when it is being prophesied.298 As such, the imperium of the Age of Augustus is foreseen and

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297 Galinsky is discussing Alexander’s short-lived empire in this last section, though he uses this example as a way of introducing and exploring the intention and effects of the Augustan project.
298 The word empire (imperium) is used to describe Rome prophetically throughout the Aeneid (as in I.279, 287; VI.782, 795, 812, 851; X.42; XI.47 [that Aeneas says this here may seem anachronistic, though Anchises had prophesied in book VI that Aeneas would found a kingdom that would become an empire—in this instance, the word could be rendered as either empire or kingdom]); interestingly, with the exception of XI.47, all uses of imperium meaning empire are given solely by the gods or by Anchises—the word is never used in sense of empire by mortals on terra firma—and in each of these instances, they are foretelling the future. In other instances, the same word (imperium) is used to denote power or force or rule (as in I. 54, 138, 230, 270; III.159; V.235, 726, 747; VI.819, VII.654; VIII.482, 509; IX 449 [though there is the implication of empire here], 675; XII.58, 193 ); in other cases, it stands for kingdom (I.340; II.191, 352;
foretold by the gods and by Anchises. However, Cairns’ treatment imposes terminology that is seemingly anachronistic, since he is using the word “nation” in its modern sense—designating a people and their link to a land—to discuss tribal and family relations in this poem. The word most often rendered as nation is gens, which also means “people,” though we should not misconstrue such terms with ideas that originated largely in the nineteenth century.\(^{299}\)

Nancy Shumate’s study, *Nation, Empire, Decline*, focuses on “tracing the lines of continuity between Roman and later European articulations of [Roman ‘nationalist’ and ‘colonialist’ texts]” (13) in order to discern and examine the trajectory of these discourses and how they are read, apprehended and reacted to in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\(^{300}\) She notes that Virgil, along with Cicero and Caesar,

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\item III.159; VI.264; VII.240; in others, almighty or command (IV.239, 282, 295, 577; V.784; VI.464, VII.487, VIII.381; IX.716; XI.235; XII.719 [the only case in which this word appears as a verb]), while in other cases it is ambiguous (IV.220) where it could mean kingdoms, empires and leaders.
\item According to Lewis and Short, the word *gens* means “race, clan, house (of families having a name and certain religious rites in common”; it is used in such senses and in the greater sense of a “people,” though it may signify nation at *Aeneid* I.17, 33, 282, 602; III.1; IV. 235, 425; VI.73, 788; VII.85, 131, 149, 203, 220, 237, 268, 282, 304, 367, 671, 708, 746, 750, 803; X. 202 (could be read as tribe or nation, intentional ambiguity, note the use of same word in line 228 with different implications: “clan”); XI.48 (see note 285); XII.191, 840.
\item The word *genus* has similar connotations (Lewis and Short state that it means “a race, stock, family, birth, descent, origins); in the specific sense of a particular race, tribe or stock it is used multiple times throughout the *Aeneid*, including: I.6, 28, 339, 526, 565; III. 168, 675; IV.40, 230, 622; V.117, 285, 737; VI.766; VII.98, 196, 219; VIII.51, 114, 321, 487, 512, 724; IX.510, 603; X.201; XII.838. In other instances throughout the poem, it implies descent, lineage or birth.
\item With regard to discussions of national identity in the *Aeneid*, she points out the work of Toll and Syed; she also mentions Hardie and Rudd (160n8).
\item This study focuses on Juvenal, Horace and Tacitus, considering them as templates for modern discourses on nationalism and imperialism.
\end{itemize}
She revisits the problem of nation posed by Toll, who qualified her study by noting the distinction between modern nations (as discussed by Anderson and his peers) and Roman conceptions of nation. Shumate concludes that to be a Roman and specifically to be a Roman citizen anywhere in the empire involved sharing a cohesive political and cultural identity with other ‘Romans’, even if that identity was inflected by local colouring. This common sense of identity was moreover bound up with an allegiance to the Roman state, regardless of one’s geographical or ethnic origins. (11-12)

Thus, following Shumate’s conclusion, we can accept these uses of the word nation if we take into account the notion that Virgil, working within the context of the Augustan project to invent (and, in some cases, reinvent) Roman society, had a social construction similar to nation in mind—a place and people sharing an identity across geographies and tribal affinities.

Moreover, the concern of these critics and scholars, as W.R. Johnson states, is civilization. Indeed, he proposes that the Aeneid is “not so much about human beings as they may [his emphasis] be as it is about human beings as they are [my emphasis] in their efforts to live together, in groups and in nations” (134). Thus, the overarching consideration that has evolved from reading the Aeneid relates intrinsically to the very idea upon which Roman imperial thought was grounded, an idea of civilization, a revolutionary idea at that, in that it effectively crossed territories, amalgamating differing tribes and clans under its umbrella.

Hence, both the trends in Virgilian scholarship and the continuity of the interpretation of nationalism in the Aeneid point toward a continued need to reread and reexamine the ways in which we read identity and its connection to ideas of nation in this work. As such, it will be necessary to explore the particular strategies employed to
represent identity and nation in order to better understand how it has informed and influenced the ways that we have created empire, nation and self since the Aeneid first had an impact on Roman culture and mores. Indeed, such a reconsideration will help us understand how for “hundreds of years, the Aeneid served as an extraordinarily successful ideological vehicle, a vehicle which could work to explain and to justify a colonialism as diverse as that of the Germans in Papua and Englishmen in India” (Toohey 122).

Roman Virgil – Virgil’s Roman

Some Qualifications on Views of Virgil’s Rome

In the introduction to her collection of essays titled Becoming Roman, Catherine Edwards asks us: “what did (and does) Rome stand for?” She proceeds through a catalogue of broad meanings that invest our understanding of what Rome, “the eternal city,” was and is for us: there is “the high culture of Cicero and Virgil”; the “resolute republicanism of Horatius […] or Regulus”; the “pernicious decadence of Nero and Heliogabalus”; and the “city of St Paul and St Peter” (5). It is a city that stands for a way of being, and has a “seemingly boundless capacity for multiple, indeed conflicting, signification” (5). Virgil’s Aeneid, the richest Roman text that has come down to us, is like the eternal city, having this seemingly boundless capacity for signification—often our readings are conflicting and always this text refuses any attempts to force it into one of those interpretive boxes that renders it monolithic, monochromatic and monological.
Yet over time, through the accretion of meanings, the *Aeneid* has become a type, just as Rome has become a type—it has become figurative, extracted from its own contexts and situated in other contexts (the antitype), to which it becomes intrinsically linked. For example, Duncan Kennedy has noted that “‘Rome’ can become the type of empire, made such in various narratives by whatever is asserted by its antitype, say, the British Empire or [St. Augustine’s notion of] the City of God” (“A Sense of Place” 31). The *Aeneid* too has come to represent a type of epic; it is a national epic or it is, as T.S. Eliot argued, “the classic of all Europe.” We hear these claims so often that we approach this text as a type, effectively coloring any readings we may have of it. Of course, the *Aeneid* has become a type of imperial epic—the British thought that this poem spoke of a nation or empire much like theirs and that this text spoke as much about their own empire-building as it did about Rome’s. After all, as many of their writers, scholars and politicians conjectured, was not the British Empire merely a continuation of Imperial Rome?

The British understood well the ideological and rhetorical power that texts such as the *Aeneid* wielded, which is why it was so often referred to in discourses regarding their imperial ambitions. However, as imperial ideology fell out of favor and as empire declined or collapsed in the twentieth century, so too did much of the rhetoric which used the *Aeneid* as a *sortes*; handily, it was transformed into a “national” epic, better perhaps to suit modern times when the nationalist yearnings seemed to have infested each and every region of the world. However, it has been difficult to shrug off the associations

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302 See note 230. Also, compare the discussion on page 164.
the *Aeneid* has with empire even when it has put on the clothes of a nation. Ultimately, the poem is a little of both—it prophecies an “empire” without bounds (*imperium sine fine*), which is a newly conceived community that is defined through its own virtues, mores, origins and destiny.

What distinguishes this community from so many others of its age—and those communities that preceded it—was that it was a vast (spatially) and lengthy (temporally) amalgamation of diverse peoples who were brought together through conquest and political will. At the same time, these people, the Romans, were conscious of the way that communications, commerce and politics informed the very ways in which their community was being negotiated and imagined. The Rome about which Virgil wrote reflected and reacted to this society that was being created during the early Augustan empire. It is a Rome that is conscious of its creation, a Rome that blends diverse peoples and pursues a destiny that has been fated, a Rome that negotiates the differences among the various tribes and peoples it encounters.

In her essay, “Making Romanness and the *Aeneid*,” Kate Toll states that the Rome about which Virgil wrote was “a combination of strongly felt affiliation, or incorporation, with acknowledged and esteemed homogeneities in a very large group of people” (35n1). This very large group of people has the homogeneity of what has been termed “Romanness,” the way of acting or behaving like a Rome; a way of being which supersedes or, in some cases, stands alongside any other affiliations that citizens and non-citizens alike derived from their geographic regions, religion, tribes and/or clans. Hence, when J.D. Reed’s essay, “Vergil’s Roman,” focuses on how the *Aeneid* is an etiological poem, he builds on this broader homogeneity, describing how its
narrative aims at a Roman nation distinct from other nations, particularly from the Trojans from whom it originated, the Greeks whom the Trojans fought and whom the Romans were to conquer, the Carthaginians who threaten Roman ascendency, and the Italian peoples among whom Rome arose. (66)

At the same time, each of these peoples is introduced in the poem as being like Romans, who are described as descended from Trojans, Italians and Greeks, and yet Romans are a little more or a little better: Troy was sacked and burned, Rome never—the former was merely a city, the latter the center of a world empire; Italy had been an assortment of differing and sometimes conflicting savage tribes, the empire represented civilization and preeminent power; the Greeks had been conquered by the Romans. At the same time, the Carthaginians are viewed as civilized, like Romans, (cf. Aeneid I.418-438) and yet they equally embody the fierce passion that consumed Queen Dido (cf. especially the outcome of Aeneid IV); in addition, Rome is seen as a young upstart, creating something new amidst the preexisting tribal differentiations that these four groups had regarding one another.

As Syed points out:

the Aeneid uses the concept of the community of citizens descended from citizens (polis concept), but also expands it: descent is a symbolic rather than a literal category. This is what distinguishes Romaness in the Aeneid from other group identities [, since] Romaness has been cut loose from descent as a necessary condition for membership in the group. In this the concept of Roman identity can best be compared to the modern concept of nationhood (219).

303 Syed is referring to the fact that Roman citizenship was a juridical rather than an ethnic association; the liberal expansion of citizenship had begun under Julius Caesar and

303 Here she is elaborating on the process of synoecism discussed in F.W. Walbank’s “Nationality as a Factor in Roman History,” discussed above on pages 123-125.
became more qualitative under Caesar Augustus, who undertook the complex and massive project of formulating a Roman identity that corresponded to the need to rebuild a fragmented society into a more cohesive whole—such needs were practical since they yielded economic, political and social benefits. In the end, within the poem itself, there is the awareness that the *Aeneid* is part of an idea of Romanness as cultural construct—“an identity that can be learned” (216).

To elaborate this notion, Syed examines two etiological passages in the *Aeneid*. The first is the *ludus Troiae*, a ritual that is described as part of the funeral games and is later learned by the Romans as an ancestral custom: *hinc maxima porro accepit Roma et patrium seruauit honorem* (V.600-1). The second is the practice of the opening of the Gates of War, a custom (*mos*) which originated in Hesperian Latium before Rome was founded, though we are told it is now practiced in this greatest of cities: *nunc maxima rerum Roma colit* (VII.602-3). She emphasizes that this representation of the diverse origins of Roman customs and rituals “signals that Romanness is an aggregate of practices from various different cultures, some Trojan, some Latin” (217)—each acknowledged openly and reverently.

Thus, Rome is an imagined community on a grand scale: just as Caesar Augustus was said to have declared, “I found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble,” *ut*

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304 As will be stated below, this section of the dissertation will focus on oracles and prophecies concerning Rome and Romanness in the *Aeneid*—an approach that is markedly different than the one undertaken by Syed. Her study focuses on the use of the terms Rome and Roman in the *Aeneid*, apart from their uses “in prophecies and other passages that anticipate Rome’s future.” Rather, she focuses on etiological accounts of Roman cultural practices, examining “an apostrophe the narrator addresses to Nisus and Euryalus after his account of their deaths” and “two epithets applied to Aeneas and Ascanius.” She concludes that these passages “connect the notion of Rome more intimately with the narrated world of the poem, a world in which Rome is not yet in existence [and yet] these passages serve to establish the concept of Romanness as an inclusive category, able to supersede the more narrowly ethnic categories that abound in the poem” (215).
so too could he have declared that he inherited a Romanness imagined through elegy and chronicle, then bequeathed a Romanness wrought anew through epic.

The *Aeneid* is epic, but it was also a type of *ktisis* or “foundational” poem for Romans; to use another term, it was an etiology of Rome and Romanness, describing how one is Roman and how Rome became possible.

But what kind of Rome and what kind of identity are represented that have appealed to both imperial and national sentiments? What Rome is envisioned or imagined that compels W.R. Johnson to declare that “it would be more nearly correct to say that the *Aeneid* created the Augustan age than to say that the Augustan Age produced, in any way, the *Aeneid*” (*Darkness Visible* 136).

At the outset of her study, *Vergil’s Aeneid and the Roman Self*, Yasmine Syed declares that

if there is any literary work that embodied and defined a cultural identity for the readers of its time, it is Vergil’s *Aeneid*…. [This epic] had a significant impact on its Roman readers’ sense of self as Romans and…the poem articulated Roman identity for them through the reader’s identification with and differentiation from its fictional characters [at two levels,] the individual and the collective. (1-3)

Virgil does not represent this association with any particular term or phrase, but uses words that are commonly applied to all peoples, tribes and clans; however, he does represent being Roman as an idea and as a people with a particular history, customs, legends and scenery that are imagined as a community distinct from all others—not in the

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305 This consideration brings to mind T.S. Eliot’s declaration that it is the classic for all of Europe (and the world) for as long as we inherit the *Aeneid*’s ideals of empire, written by Virgil to be *nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi* (VI.853). See translation and discussion above on pages 174ff.
sense that Romans were one type of tribe, but rather that they overwhelmed, superseded (or ignored) tribal or regional affiliations.\textsuperscript{306}

Indeed, Syed concludes that “the \textit{Aeneid} wrestles with the concept of nationhood, struggling to define a common ground for inhabitants of the Roman Empire to serve as a point of identification” (222) as it “strives to unite within itself various ethnic groups to form a whole unified by common language, customs, and religion” (220) and “articulate Roman identity as a concept that allowed for ethnic diversity” (223).

To understand how the \textit{Aeneid} imagines a type of community that may best be termed “Virgil’s Rome” (a proper noun seems more adequate than a generic designation such nation, country and empire), it is necessary to examine how this community is represented in the text in relation to power, mores, virtues and ethnicity. Ironically, since Rome is first imagined through prophecy, as “a composite of an actually attained but forever-to-be-revised sense of the realities of national self-hood and a sense of its ideality, always to be striven for and never-to-be-attained” (“\textit{The Aeneid} as an Epic” 7), it is essential to focus on those passages which envision this idealized actuality of Rome and Romanness.\textsuperscript{307}

As Toll discusses, peoples’ beliefs about their origins and histories contribute crucially to their sense of their existence as a people and of what sort of people they are.... People both regard

\textsuperscript{306} Similarly, W.A. Camps points out how “Virgil, in the course of his poem certainly expresses the idea of Rome and Italy, which to him are mutually complementary concepts, in terms of history, people, customs, legend and scenery” (18), concluding how “the \textit{Aeneid} is in a real sense the poet’s tribute to his country” (19).

\textsuperscript{307} This seemingly contradictory phrase (“idealized actuality”) reflects the notion that Virgil formulated an ideal of Rome and Romanness in the \textit{Aeneid} based upon the historical contexts of Civil and Social wars that had shattered Roman society for over a generation, as well as the very real, ongoing foundation of Augustan Rome, in which he played a central creative role.
the shared past as very intimately theirs, handed down to them like a legacy, and always think of themselves as belonging to it. (“Making Romanness” 41)

To examine the relationship between the Roman people, their origins and their legacy of power, mores, virtues and homogeneity, this section will focus on certain prophetic sections of the *Aeneid*:

- the proem (I.1-33);\footnote{While the proem is technically removed from this narrative sequence since it serves as a vessel in which the story is contained, it is read at the beginning of the story, creating our expectations, particularly setting the audience up for the events which immediately follow its concluding line: “such a great labor it was to found the Roman people,” *tantae molis erat Romanem conderet gentem* (I.33). Compare the beginning of the Odyssey, which focuses on the struggles or sufferings that Odysseus endured: *πολλὰ δ’ ὦ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὄν κατὰ θυμόν, “he suffered much pain in his heart on the sea”* (I.4). Odysseus struggles to return home and could not save his own comrades in this journey and regain the old; for Aeneas there is a wholly new undertaking, his great labor is for the future—to provide a new home for a new people.}
- the Jovian prophecy given to Venus (I.223-296), later expanded on by Anchises in the underworld (VI.752-853);
- the oracle of Faunus (VII.45-106, 421-434; prefigured by the Sybil at VI.93-94), which is clarified in Jove’s concordance with Juno (XII. 791-842).

Focusing on these prophetic sections will provide a firm basis on which we can define and analyze Virgil’s Rome, his imagined community, in order to reveal how it constructed an identity that conflated origins, mores, histories, virtues, and how it was made possible solely through the participation of different tribes and clans which were, in different ways and in different degrees, superseded in this new identity. The Romans’ sense that destiny guided their community’s actions was central to this identity; hence, any persons who worked against this destiny or worked to thwart the will of Jove were
cast down with a vengeance, as can be seen in the cases of Mark Antony (represented on the Shield of Aeneas in Book VIII) and Turnus (represented in Book XII). The Aeneid begins with its hero driven by fate to found Rome and, as may be guessed, though there may be great toils (tantae molis erat Romanem gentem condere), we learn that nothing would stand in the way of the founding of the eternal city and the empire without boundaries.

The Proem – Laying out the Boundaries

W. R. Johnson’s well-known study, Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil’s Aeneid states how “in writing this poem, Vergil sought to imagine a world – or, rather, a complexity of worlds” (115-116, my emphasis). He is considering the fact that there are no clear-cut heroes or villains in this work. This consideration can be expanded to approach the whole of the poem on two levels: first of all, it responds to the cheapness and hurriedness with which critics and teachers have often approached this poem, in that they have placed it on the level of a “ephemeral movie” (116) – they want quick and easy answers for an overly complex work; second of all, the use of the word imagine here resonates especially due to the role that the Aeneid plays in linking the origins of the

309 The same holds true, of course, for the Iliad. Neither Achilles nor Hector can be cast as either hero or villain: they are far too complex characters. Their particular acts may be villainous or heroic, but these acts do not as a whole define their characters.

310 See my comments above regarding the way in which the word epic is tossed around so loosely. An example, perhaps, of an ephemeral movie, may be any of the “epics” churned out by Michael Bay, such as Pearl Harbor (2001) or Transformers 2 (2009).
Roman people to the originating sensibility of the Augustan age, in that it provides an origin, a history, a future and a moral and cultural definition for the Roman people.  

This imagining of a world or “complexity of worlds” does not allow for pat answers or the simple ascription of villain or hero to the varied players in this epic. While some characters are narrowly drawn or, in some cases, barely sketched in at all, Aeneas especially resists our ready categories. In some instances, he may be seen as a stock character or he may fulfill a particular type that we recognize from Homer or Apollonius Rhodius; however, he more often makes decisions and chooses paths that defy convention, challenging and subverting the very ideals of Romanness that Virgil appears to set forth.

Virgil’s Rome, this imagined world, is constructed in condensed form in the proem (I.1-33) of the Aeneid. In fact, the first seven lines of the proem introduce the main themes and set the contextual boundaries within which we are to read this work. These contextual boundaries include the type of work we are reading: the opening phrase arma uirumque cano “of arms and the man I sing” refers, respectively, to Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, the two poems regarded as the foundations of Western epic. Hence, the scope of the work is set immediately with gusto.

311 This list is from Woolf’s “Beyond Romans and Natives.” See discussion above, page 93ff.
312 While Virgil uses the uirum (the accusative case for “man”), which refers to the opening word of the Odyssey, he offers the more general arma (arms) to refers to the Iliad—which allows him a broader consideration of the causes and effects of battle; of course, he echoes the opening word of the Iliad μῆνιν (“rage”) in the concluding sequence of the Aeneid, Book XII, 946-7, where Aeneas is described as furiis accensus et ira terribilis, rising up in fury, terrible in his rage.”
313 And a smattering of hubris since Virgil takes credit from the outset by bluntly stating cano “I sing,” whereas Homer invokes the muse who sings in both the Odyssey Ἀνδρα μοί ἐννεπε, Μουσα “Sing of the man, muse” and the Iliad, μῆνιν αείδε, θεά “Sing of rage, goddess.” In his second book of elegies, Propertius recognized the obvious connection when he declared:
Virgil also immediately introduces the protagonist and antagonist. Only the latter is named; it is Juno who is introduced enraged already (I.4 *saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*, “on account of the wrath of savage Juno”) toward the man who has been *fato profugus…multum ille et terris iactatus et alto ui superum*, “exiled by fate and buffeted much on land and sea” (I.2-4). The poet begs the muse *mihi causas memora,* “to give the causes” (I.8) of Juno’s rage and *genus unde Latinum Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae*, “describe the Latin people, the Alban fathers, and the high walls of Rome (I.6-7). Soon enough, mindful of the seeming conflict of fate and this divine rage, the poem offers a Jobean plea: *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* “Can such rage inflame the gods’ hearts” (I.11). This question is juxtaposed with the resolution of the proem, which declares (placing the protagonist of the *Aeneid* in the company of Hercules, another man despised by Juno—albeit for different reasons) *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem!* “So much labor it was to found the Roman people!” (I.33).

The protagonist has come from an ancient and mythical city (*Troiae qui primus ab oris*, “who first from Trojan shores” (I.1-2)) to a pre-historic Italy (*Lauiniaque uenit*...*qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitat arma*...

*qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitat arma*

*iactaque Lavinis moenia litoribus.*

*cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai!*

*nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.*

He, who now brings to life the battles of Trojan Aeneas, and the walls that he built on Lavinian shores.

Give way you Roman authors! Give way you Greeks!

Something greater than the *Iliad* is being born. (II.39-42)

314 This question has consequences that reach beyond the bounds of the poem or of Virgil’s Rome, except insofar as it is directly linked to the particular role that Rome is prophesied to have in the universe.

315 Hercules invited Juno’s ire by being the offspring of one of Jove’s many liaisons with mortal women. The parallel of this protagonist with Hercules, as celebrated heroes of the Latins, is developed in *Aeneid* VIII.184-279.

316 This declaration also reflects on Virgil’s description of the *labor…improbus* “immense labor” (*Georgics* I.145-6) that was required of Augustus, the senate and the Roman people as they set about regenerating their culture.
"litora, “he came to Lavinian shores” (I.2)) in order to found a city (dum conderet urbem, “whence he founded a city” (I.7)) from which the Latin people and the high walls of Rome would be founded (I.6-7, see above). Thus, in this brief section (from lines 1-33), mythic/divine perception is conjoined with historic perception, the probable is juxtaposed with the actual, and discernible causes are explored in relation with what was recognized as a fulfilled destiny. The poet sings of that pious man who came from mythical Troy to Lavinian shores to found the very city that was now the center of empire—he was fated to do so; however, the gods made his going rather difficult.

In the chapter on “Romanitas” in her study, Vergil’s Aeneid and the Roman Self, Yasmine Syed emphasizes that as a founding fiction, the Aeneid approaches a subject “that is not shared by any other extant epic”; in addition, she emphasizes that Virgil’s proem juxtaposes the city of Carthage with Rome in order to differentiate it from Roman society; at the same time, it juxtaposes Troy with Rome in order to conflate the two societies. Rome is not Carthage in the sense that the latter would succeed si qua fata sinant “if the fates were willing” (I.18), though they were not, for sic uoluere Parcas, “the fates had ordained” (I.22) success to the Romans; Rome, though, is Troy to the extent that “Romans are referred to as the offspring of Trojan blood (I.19 progeniem ... Troiano a sanguine duci)” (210). These juxtapositions are used to denote the evolution from a mythic past to a historic past effortlessly combining the two into a common

317 This connection may be derived by correlating Virgil’s vision of history with his contemporary Livy, whose Roman history, Ab Urbe Condita, From the Founding of the City [of Rome] begins with the city’s creation by Aeneas and “aboriginal” Italians. Williams states that “the use of the subjunctive [conderet] indicates the purpose of [Aeneas’] endurance” (Aeneid I-VI 158) or labors.
318 As such, she agrees with C.S. Lewis and Walbank (see above pages 146-47) that “the Homeric poems … do not reflect on Greekness as such, nor do they give accounts of the origins of the Greeks” (205).
historic thread, along with a simultaneous consciousness of an ancestry that is both acknowledged and abandoned as limiting—the Romans are not merely Trojans who have moved to another land.319

Moreover, as J.D. Reed proposes in Virgil’s Gaze, the discussion of Trojan and Latin shores demarcates Aeneas’ transition” from being a Trojan to being a Roman (7).320 This transition is essential in that it represents not only a cultural or moral shift, but also intimates the Roman practice of synoecism, which allowed people to become Romans without reference to or preference for their particular ethnicity or race.321 In fact, Toll points out that

Vergil was the more likely to have considered things from the point of view of the populace of the new citizens now officially Roman but not yet so in earnest, and to have understood that the newly enfranchised still needed reasons and motives to conjoin themselves heartily to Rome and identify themselves as Romans. (“Making Romanness” 40)

Thus, the Aeneid becomes a central element of this process of synoecism by providing reasons and motives, along with the provision of divine fiat, to encourage these newly enfranchised to buy into the Roman imperial project.

Thus, we can see how this world is imagined on many different planes: that of fate, that of the ordained past, and that of the historical present in which the listeners and readers of Rome would have understood themselves. Unlike Troy or Colchis, a faraway land fettered with the air of the exotic and myth, Rome was the center of the Empire from

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319 Such is the case with Helenus and Andromache, who rebuild a Troy (Aeneid III.294-355, esp. line 336) And with earlier attempts of Aeneas to found a new place for the Trojan refugees he is leading. Quint discusses these abortive attempts of Aeneas to found a new Troy, concluding that to “live in the past is to inhabit a state of death” (58)
320 In addition, as discussed above on pages 192f., “The embrace of Troy…enabled Rome to associate itself [with a] wider cultural world (Gruen 31).
321 This practice is discussed in detail above on page 124.
and through which Roman commerce, law and the arts were realized; moreover, Rome became, by association with Troy, the place through which a specific essential mythic past was mediated. We can only imagine the initial Roman readers’/listeners’ reactions to the poem (other than what Suetonius, Horace and Propertius tell us): here they were reading of their own origins, and of the toils and trials that were endured to create their place in the world. This was the real thing…and it so reflected their own recent experiences. And here we are informed that their Roman Empire was fated to be by the gods themselves.

Finally, we have our protagonist (who is unnamed in the proem), buffeted on land and sea, who is drawn in very simple but profound terms—he is both an exile driven by fate (I.2 *fato profugus*) and he is known for his piety (I.10 *insignem pietate uirum*); as such, his life is compelled and has been ordered by fate and he has been recognized for “accept[ing] the responsibilities put upon him by his position as destined leader of his men and saviour of Troy’s religion, as well as the ordinary social responsibilities towards family and friends” (*Aeneid* I-VI 159n10). He is represented, at the outset, as “built largely on a Stoic plan…though he is not only this” (Bowra 65) and on him “the whole burden of Rome seems to lie” (70). Therefore, this hero (the *uir* of the proem’s subject) is, as argued above, a synecdoche for the community or “nation” (the *genus* and *gens* of the proem) of Romans—as noted above, he is not merely as symbol for the Romans, he is the person who makes it possible *Romanam conderet gentem* “to found the Roman people” (I.33).

Interestingly, Syed notes that the poem “reflect[s] on the nature of Romanness, as well as recounts Rome’s origins” (205), a view shared by W.R. Johnson, who suggests
that this poem is “about the nature of history” (Darkness Visible 133). As we can see, the proem is not merely about the founding of Rome, but about the very nature of imagining the past and the communities in which people live. This juxtaposition and synthesizing of imaginings set forth in the proem are not to be read in a closed way; rather they are intended to call attention to the complexities and contradictions of this foundational fiction that is Virgil’s Rome. As such, it is a sophisticated and somewhat “postmodern” ktisis (or “foundational story”) that is acutely aware of:

- its construction as foundational fiction (hence, I. 8, mihi causas memora);
- its place in the genealogy of poetry (hence, I.1, arma uirumque cano)
- its link to the historic past and present with its consideration of Rome’s antagonistic relationship with Carthage (I. 13, Karthago Italiam contra), which would end with the latter’s defeat and the rise of the Roman people (I. 33, Romanam condere gentem);
- the role that fate plays in creating the Rome that is to come (and is being realized by the Aeneid’s audience (I.22 sic uoluere Parcas);
- the moral and cultural prescription for its people—that they should be pious (I.10 insignem pietate uirum), excellent warriors (I.21-22 hinc populum late regem belloque superbumuenturum) and capable of enduring great toils (I.33 tantae molis erat).

Ultimately, Johnson declares that this “poem is not so much about human beings as they may be as it is about human beings as they are…since the poem is about what happens in history” (134), showing the good, the bad and the ugly of the founding of Rome and the nature of the Roman people.
Scope Infinite: Jovian Prophecy and Roman Pageantry (I.223-296; VI.752-853)

Aeneas, fated exile and founder of Rome, is first introduced to us tempest-tossed on the seas, *soluunter frigore membra* “his limbs slackened with a chill” (I.92), helpless as his men are being killed and ships shattered while they endure the rage of Juno, who has coaxed Aeolus to churn up a furious storm. Sicily was barely out of view (I.34 *uix e conspectus Siculae telluris in altum*) as they rounded it to make the final run to Italy when the storm hurled ruin on them; they escaped to the Libyan shores only when Neptune had calmed the tempest.

After they make landfall, confident of previous oracular pronouncements,322 Aeneas reassures his comrades of their fate:

*Per uarios casus, per tot discrimina rerum tendimus in Latium, sedes ubi fata quietas ostendunt; illic fas regna resurgere Troiae.*

Through so many misfortunes, so many perils
We hold a course for Latium, where the fates promise
a peaceful dwelling for us; there divine will decrees
Troy will rise once more (I.204-206).323

His confidence is telling and plays off well against the ensuing drama that is revealed in the next scene, which pans back to an Olympian perspective. In this scene, we see Jove surveying the struggles of the Trojans; and, as though Venus was responding to a plea from Aeneas, we find an angst-ridden Venus confronting Jove regarding her

322 Williams states that these oracular pronouncements are made at III.94f, 154f., 376f., and that though these oracles “had told him of Italy, of Cumae and of a river past Circe’s isle… the actual word Latium had not been used” (*Aeneid* I-VI 176). These pronouncements are recalled when Aeneas is telling Dido of his travels and travails.

323 We should accept that, having not yet been privy to the prophecies in the underworld, Aeneas is still convinced that he is, at this point, a Trojan who will merely found a new Troy.
son’s fate. Interestingly, Jove’s response to her affirms the very confidence that Aeneas had revealed.

When Venus presses him regarding the fate of the Trojans, from whom the Romans will someday be descended (I.234 *certe hinc Romanos olim uoluentibus annis*), Jove replies that he has not changed his mind regarding their specific fate (I. 260, *neque me sententia uertit*) and proceeds to outline “the Roman mission, first conquest and then civilisation and peace” (*Aeneid* I-VI 177).

Just as Aeneas reassured his men, so too does Jove declare to Venus that Aeneas will succeed—following great trials of war—and establish a way of life and walls for his people (I.264 …*moresque uiris et moenia ponet*). These lines are the central focus of what Williams (“The Purpose of the *Aeneid*”) proposes as the description of “a new way of life, a new non-Trojan, non-Homeric way of life” (35). Johnson suggests that these lines in particular would have had a profound impact on the “original readers” of the *Aeneid* who:

will have consisted of an intricate spectrum of origins, perspectives, sympathies, desires, values…and that not a few of these readers had some share in a *post-colonial mentality*, that is, that they or their families had recently become naturalized Romans…and that many of these people felt, to some degree, conflict between their new and their old “communal” identities (“Imaginary Romans” 8, my emphasis).

While Johnson recognizes the post-colonial mentality amongst Romans, more importantly, he anticipates the notion that there will be a new communal identity which
supersedes the old identities—it is wholly new and necessarily derived from older ways of living and thinking.324

In short, Virgil was imagining their new community, which was a hybrid of societies and a synthesis of various origins: the Roman people had come from diverse tribes and regions, but had been incorporated into this new entity. Toll also points out that “the unity of Italy was recent and unsteady when Vergil was writing” due to the civil wars and the recent admission of some of the more far-flung regions of Italy to citizenship (“The Aeneid as an Epic” 3), including Virgil’s native Cisalpine Gaul. Hence, Virgil’s description includes the experience that his family and the people of his region endured.

Jove continues by describing how Romulus, one of Aeneas’ descendants, will give the Romans their name (I.277 Romanosque suo de nomine dicet). And then, through the lines that “thrilled” T.S. Eliot—and which were used by statesmen and schoolmasters to justify British imperialism325—Jove describes the scope of Roman might:

\[
\text{His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;}
\]
\[
\text{imperium sine fine dedi.}
\]
For them I set no bounds in space or time for their power;  
I have given them rule without end (I.278-9)

Hence, the original readers (and all succeeding “citizens of Rome,” to borrow Eliot’s phrase) are made privy to divine will—at the same time, they are immersed within

324 This acknowledgement parallels Zeeny Vakil’s idealized consideration of hybridity—she declares that the “entire national culture [of India has been] based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit” (52). There may be elements of Indian society and Roman society that have been based on this principle of borrowing, but so too can this practice be seen in other cultures, including British (see note 409 for a short list), Japanese (with its heavy Chinese and American influences) and Brazilian (which incorporates Portuguese, along with various African and indigenous tribal influences). For more discussion on Zeeny Vakil’s consideration, see pages 272ff.

325 See the discussion above of Eliot’s interpretation on pages 178ff., as well as the consideration of Robert Graves on p. 186f.
and playing a part in the divine will as it unwinds. As such, it can easily be seen how these lines inspired some sense of patriotism amongst Romans: the original readers and listeners of *Aeneid* were overly conscious that they were participating in the new age that had just begun; a new community is being imagined by the Roman principate, conscious of its historical position and the need to promote a sense of commonality in morals, communication and commerce.

At the same time, Virgil’s phrasing is not wholly idealistic since Reed suggests that the word *res*, used here (I.278) to designate “state, power, empire” looks forward to the phrase *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* “here are tears for human happenings and mortal sufferings touch the heart” (I.462). He also links it with Virgil’s less polemical phrase in the *Georgics*, *res Romanae perituraque regna* “Roman power and the realm fated to perish” (2.498), in which the end of Rome is anticipated, as all things and all nations must decline and pass away. He further concludes that while Aeneas’ *sunt lacrimae rerum* “glosses…the fallen power of Troy…by analogy it touches any future empire as well,” including that of Rome (*Virgil’s Gaze* 147). In fact, Reed emphasizes the fact that Jove points out that *he* will not set any limit on their power (*ego…pono*), not that the Roman empire will not have limits. This emphasis works well since Venus had approached Jove regarding his own thoughts and decisions—and the king of the gods affirms that he will not interfere as Juno has done. Toll comments

326 The coming of this new age was celebrated over five days in 17 B.C. at the revived *Ludi Saeculares* (Secular Games). See brief mention above, page 119.
327 Williams also notes how this mention in the *Georgics* “contrasts sharply with the patriotic notes of the *Aeneid*” (*Eclogues and Georgics* 174).
328 He reemphasizes this point by stating that there will one day be a Trojan Caesar whose empire will be bound by the ocean and whose fame will be bound by the stars (I.296-7: *Nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar, imperium oceano, famam qui terminet astris*).
that this expanding imperium prophecied by Jove will make all “externi…. less foreign to Rome, becoming part of an entity of which Rome also is a part, just as Vergil and some of his first audience had” (“Making Roman-ness” 49).

In addition to learning about the establishment of the mores of his people, their name and the seeming absence of spatial and temporal boundaries, Jove also gives us a short cultural reference that was equally relevant to his original readers. We are informed that their fashion-sense will communicate their intentions, as he states how the “Romans, the lords of this world will be a toga-wearing people,” Romanos, Rerum dominos gentemque togatam (I.282). This line would have reminded listeners and readers of a quote in Cicero’s De Officiis: cedant arma togae “let arms yield to the toga” (I.77); that is, let war yield to peace. The toga was a civilian garment, which signified the absence of military practice by its wearers; therefore, it was associated with peace. Thus, Jove’s description of Romans prescribes two distinctly different stages of Roman civilization: R.D. Williams suggests (looking forward to the prophecies of Book VI) that the Romans first of all would undertake “military conquest, and then peace and a civilized way of life for the conquered” (Eclogues and Georgics 36). Indeed, the military bent of Romans is based on Aeneas’ many battles and the fact that the founder Romulus was the son of Ilia, a descendant of Aeneas, and Mars, the god of war (cf. I.273-4). The transition from war to peace is reemphasized at I.291, where we are told: Aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis, “then wars will be laid aside and the fierce age grow gentle.”

In sum, the proem and Jove’s sharing of the divine will tell us three things about this new imagined community: 1) Aeneas, who is a synecdoche of the Roman people, is fated to found a new settlement with a new people and a new way of life; 2) this people,
called the Romans, will have neither spatial nor temporal limits placed on them by Jove;
3) just as they transition from being Trojan (a particular tribe) to Roman (a hybrid of tribes), so too will they transition from being a warlike people to being a peace-loving people.

Later, having finally made landfall at Cumae in Italy, Aeneas seeks out the Sybil, who will accompany him on a visit to the underworld, where he receives prophecies of the might, destiny and exempla of the Roman people. Aeneas descends into the underworld where he is reunited with his father, who presides over visual pageantry of those bright souls who will be their successors: *inlustris animas nostrumque in nomen ituras* (VI.758). This pageant, accompanied by Anchises’ narration, reinforces the scope of Rome laid out in the proem and portrayed by Jove to Venus, as we are told only of those particular souls who best represent Virgil’s vision of his Romans.

Anchises exhorts Aeneas, *hanc aspice gentem Romanosque tuos*, “behold this people, your Romans” (VI.788-9) as he begins narrating the pageant of notable Roman men who will make the empire equal to the whole earth and its spirit to heaven: *imperium terris, animos aequabit Olympo* (VI.782). These notable Romans range from Silvius Aeneas (Aeneas’ son by the Latin princess Lavinia) through Caesar Augustus, from the legendary to the historical—all of whom are combined together in an extraordinary imagining that provides divine origins and, as Hobsbawm detailed, “continuity with the past [and] where possible…a suitable historic past” (Introduction 1). As noted above, the Roman notion of a historic past, as seen in Sallust or Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus—historians all—was generally consistent with regard to Roman origins
and was less discriminating regarding distinctions between legend and history while discussing the remote past.

The parade of heroes focuses on specific exempla that give “form and shape to his emotional and intellectual presentation of the character of Rome” (Aeneid I-VI 505n752f.), providing justification of the good while recognizing the pitfalls that can undermine these individuals. In particular, Anchises spends some time describing Brutus, the founder of Republican Rome (whose descendant was a leader of the conspiracy to kill Julius Caesar). Of this founder, we are given a double-edged qualification: *uincet amor patriae laudumque immense cupidot*, “love of country conquered him as well as a great desire for praise” (VI. 823), which implies that one should be devoted to one’s community, but maintain a stoic sense of calm, since this yearning for praise undid Brutus and threatened to undo Rome.329

At the culmination of this parade of great Romans, when Anchises’ catalogue of noble Romans becomes almost a rapid-fire sequence, he delivers the lines that have come to represent the very purpose of the empire and its continued role in Western civilization:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento} \\
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem, \\
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos
\end{align*}
\]

But you, Roman, remember that you are to govern people with your might (such are your arts), to add civilization to peace, To spare the defeated and the break the proud in war. (VI.851-853)\(^{330}\)

329 These lines remind us of Virgil’s more famous *omnia uincit amor* (Eclogues X.69) and *labor omnia uicit* (Georgics I.145).
330 In some ways this exhortation runs counter to Anchises’ earlier plea that Julius Caesar should forsake civil war with Pompey, declaring to Caesar:

\[
\begin{align*}
Tuque prior, tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympe, \\
Priice tela manu, sanguis meus!
\end{align*}
\]

you be first be merciful, you descended of my blood
These lines are often read with Jove’s pronouncement to Venus that he has given the Roman rule no boundaries in space or time (I.278-9). These are the lines that inspired Eliot and were the lines with which Kipling’s teacher, Mr. King, summed up empire. Moreover, R.D. Williams comments that “this idea that empire was the destiny which the gods had laid upon the Romans is dominant throughout the Aeneid, and seems to have been widely believed in Virgil’s time” (Eclogues and Georgics 39). The emphasis here, as Williams and other critics have pointed out, is the emphasis on Rome’s destiny and particular capabilities to impose peace and stability upon the world (40). There is, of course, a certain irony here in that Anchises’ narration has shifted, so that the addressee, who had implicitly been Aeneas earlier, could now be Aeneas (if we can accept him identified as a “Roman” here), but it is more logical to see the addressee as the contemporary readers and listeners of the poem—we might even interpret these Romans as those people, who, as Eliot declared, are “still citizens of the Roman Empire” as long as they inherit Rome’s culture.

Kate Toll takes a more ironic and pessimistic approach by pointing out that the goal of the poem’s strategies is to bring to self-consciousness the creature to whom 6.851 (tu regere imperio populus, Romane, memento) can be justly addressed….The Aeneid addresses the ethics of regnum at its source, and warns of its ethical traps and difficulties, in the hope of contributing to the building of a new nation less susceptible to furor, more capable of harmony. (“Aeneid as National” 6)

—-from Olympians—throw down your arms! (VI.834-5)

331 See discussions above, pages 153, 164f and especially 176ff.
332 King recites those lines, then states: “There you have it all…” See discussion above, pages 164ff.
333 Williams points out that “Horace says (Odes 3.6.5): Dis te minorem quod geris imperas (‘Because you are servants of the gods, you rule on earth’)” (The Aeneid 39).
334 See discussion above, pages 155 and 177.
As will be seen below in the discussion of Book XII, this warning is much warranted; moreover, the British and other European colonial powers which used these lines to justify their imperial zeal saw no caveats in these lines. However, Toll’s reading of this line must be seen in light of post-colonial readings of the *Aeneid*, such as Auden’s, who saw the pitfalls of empire within the very fabric of the prophecies that were said to have given it voice.

On a more optimistic note, James Zetzel has argued that this address, coupled with the seeming anachronistic representations of Tartarus, signals Virgil’s awareness of the new age (*saeculum*) that was about to begin, which corresponded with the rise of Augustan Rome (“*Romane Memento*” 278). As such, Anchises’ exhortation is prescriptive to the Augustan Romans, not merely (or even) to Aeneas, reaffirming their role as leaders and peacemakers in the world.

These prophecies compound the earlier one given by Jove; however, at this point Aeneas too becomes privy to his destiny and how the fate and future of *his* people depend upon him proceeding. The exhortation that the Romans have a specific art, *pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*,\(^{335}\) which will give them a distinct role in world affairs and, by extension, cosmic affairs should not be read as though they had *carte blanche* to wage war and expand their power and territory in a manner unchecked. Camps qualifies this consideration by stating how, contrary to later interpretations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

There is in Virgil no idea corresponding to that of Manifest Destiny or of the White Man’s Burden or to the supposition that ‘God has called us to civilize the

\(^{335}\) Translated above as “to add civilization to peace, to spare the defeated and the break the proud in war.”
world.’…[He merely] affirms that Rome’s greatness has been willed by fate from the beginning. (10)

Camps’ mention of these two well-known beliefs, the former American, the latter British, reinforces the fact that such readings of expansion and domination had a profound impact on these particular societies and modeled how they read this passage in the Aeneid. Rome will civilize where it has conquered, but it has not been called to go forth and conquer.

To address these prophecies alone is to avoid a large part of the narrative in the first half, much of which (Books II and III) is taken up with Aeneas telling the story of Troy’s fall and his initial wanderings, which were occupied with refounding Ilium. It was cyclical and follows the theme of Romance described by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism: an attempt to revisit and relive the past. Another large portion is taken up introducing Dido and having Aeneas fall for her (and having Dido fall for Aeneas). This section is also cyclical since he avoids engaging with the destiny we are introduced to in Book I and which Aeneas first encounters in Book III.\textsuperscript{336} The new imagined community can only become possible when Aeneas has forsaken his attempts to relive the past and pursues his fate. The stark newness of this imagined community becomes evident immediately when he first arrives at Latium and upsets the status quo, as will be discussed in the next section.

\textsuperscript{336} See note 277 above.
When Virgil invokes the muse at beginning of Book VII, he describes Aeneas and his refugee Trojans as *advena... exercitus* “a foreign army” (VII.38-9), echoing the earlier invocation in the proem, which declared the protagonist *fato profugus* “an exile by fate” (I.2). This invocation sets the tone and situates the main narrative strains of the latter half of the *Aeneid*, as he asks the muse to inspire him, *tu uatem, tu, diva, mone* (VII.41), to recall the battles and peoples so he may plunge us instantly into the *tempora rerum*, “historical situation” (VII.37)\(^{337}\) that is concurrent with Aeneas’ arrival in Italy.

Virgil describes how the towns and fields of ruled by King Latinus, Lavinia’s father, have long been at peace: *iam ... longa placidas in pace* (VII.46); however, the Cumaean Sybil had warned the Trojans that when they come to this realm there will be a marriage with a stranger once again: *externique iterum thalami* (VI.94) which will cause much grief and repeat actions of the recent past.\(^{338}\) Immediately, the narrative describes a flurry of events at Latinus’ palace: a swarm of bees masses on an old laurel and the young Lavinia is wrapped in flames as she accompanies her father to light torches at an altar. To understand these signs, Latinus seeks out the oracular help of his father, Faunus, who informs them:

> ‘Never seek to marry your daughter to a Latin,
> O my son, nor trust a readymade marriage
> Strangers will come to be your sons, whose

\(^{337}\) This translation follows the suggestion by Williams in his commentary, *Aeneid VII-XII*. This coupling of *tempora rerum* provides another way of reading or reacting to *lacrimae rerum* in Book I.

\(^{338}\) The situation is described as *iterum* (“again,” or “a second time”) to recall the ill-fated snatching of Helen, a foreign bride, by Aeneas’ cousin Paris. In this case, *externi* could refer to either Aeneas being a stranger to Italy, or Lavinia being a stranger to the Trojans—either way, it is an exogenous union.
Blood will bear your name to the stars,  
Their sons' sons will see  
—wherever the sun in its daily journey  
Looks on the ocean, East or West—  
The whole world under their feet both overturned and ruled.”

‘ne pete conubiis natam sociare Latinis,  
o mea progenies, thalamis neu crede paratis;  
externi uenient generi, qui sanguine nostrum  
nomen in astra ferant, quorumque a stirpe nepotes  
omnia sub pedibus, qua sol utrumque recurrens  
aspicit Oceanum, uertique regique uidebunt.’ (VII.96-101)

While we have already heard or read of the promise of empire and rule extending out to the boundaries of the oceans, the brief sibylline pronouncement of a marriage with a stranger is given clarity and confirmation here: moreover, this empire is made possible only through the commingling of these two people. Trojans will not merely rebuild their old way of life here nor will they conquer the Latin people. The implication is that the Trojans will overwhelm, as the swarm does, but they will also be absorbed by the Latins.

This commingling represents a paradigm shift. So many other Hellenic, Hellenistic and Roman stories that preceded the Aeneid used the stranger or foreigner as a foil or basis for undermining the status quo of the tribe or clan—though not for creating a new way of envisioning community. These stories, including those of Helen and Paris, Jason and Medea, Theseus and Phaedra, and others show a consistent pattern of the

339 See note 283 above.
340 This point of view is echoed when an old *haruspex* (oracle) tells the Etruscans ‘nulli fas Italo tantam suiungere gentem: externos optate duces’ “No Italian is permitted to lead our great people: choose foreign commanders” (8.502-3). Eve Adler discusses this situation in detail in her study, *Vergil’s Empire: Political Thought in the Aeneid* (174-180).
outsider being rejected or fomenting social chaos—each of these stories lacks the long-term redemption and progress that is intimated in this oracle.\(^{341}\)

Of course, the oracle is read or interpreted differently by Latinus and his wife, Amata. Amata rejects Aeneas and prefers Turnus, the local prince. She claims that the oracle is describing Turnus—he, too, has foreign blood since he is descended from Greeks: ‘et Turno, si prima domus repetatur origo Inachus Acrisiusque patres mediaeque Mycenae’ (VII.371-372). Later, she expresses fears of being “captive” to Aeneas—she cannot conceive of him being of her kind: \textit{nec generum Aenean captiua uidebo} (XII.63). Latinus sees Aeneas as the stranger or foreigner spoken of in the oracle; after all, he has come from Troy. He intends to marry his daughter, Lavinia, to Aeneas. H.-P. Stahl comments that “far from being a foreign invader, the Julian ancestor is duly welcomed by pious Latinus as the carrier of a divine mission and as a homecomer” (177). The interpretation of the oracle has come down to a parsing out who is a stranger or foreigner or outsider. Along these lines, Eve Adler concludes:

All human beings are natives, if their ancestry is traced back far enough; but natives are able [as revealed in the case of the \textit{Aeneid}], with time and distance, to become “foreigners” and, as such, to become entitled to command and to rule. (181)

Ultimately, the ensuing conflict between Aeneas and Turnus is based on the interpretation of whom an outsider is, as it has to do with Aeneas’s sense of destiny and the way he sees his fate being realized. After all, he had been informed by the Cumaean

\(^{341}\) The \textit{Aeneid} also has this type of story, too: the romance of Aeneas and Dido.
Sybil that he would marry a foreign wife, whom he and Latinus both see as being Lavinia.

More importantly, when he prepares to face Turnus in one-on-one combat, Aeneas prays aloud for all to hear and he shifts the role that he as the outsider will play if he is victorious. He states that he will not aggrandize his victory (if the gods decree victory to him), but incorporate himself and his people among the Latins, who will retain their own power. Echoing the first seven lines of the proem, Aeneas states that he will use a treaty to establish common laws amongst these different peoples, give them rites and gods, and combine his people with the Latins through marriage, which will give rise to a city that will bear his bride’s name. He declares:

‘non ego nec Teucris Italos parere iubebo
nec mihi regna peto: paribus se legibus amvae
inuictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant.
sacra deosque dabo; socer arma Latinus habeto,
imperium sollemne socer; mihi moenia Teucri
constiuent urbique dabit Lavinia nomen.’
I will not command the Italians to obey the Teucrians;
Nor do I seek the kingdom for myself: let both peoples
Unconquered submit themselves under equal laws
In an eternal compact. I will give rites and gods;
Let Latinus, as my father-in-law, keep his arms,
His established power. The Teucrians will build
Walls for me and Lavinia will give her name to my city.” (XII.189-194) 342

Latinus swears to the terms of this prayer and to its sentiments. And Turnus adds a silent prayer. Then battle ensues when Turnus’ sister Juturna urges the Rutulians to

342 In his examination of the political ramifications of the death of Turnus and its contexts, H.-P. Stahl points outs that Aeneas’ mission to bring his gods “has been his mission ever since Hector appeared to him in his dream in the night of Troy’s fall (see also 1.6): ‘Troy entrusts to you its holy objects and its Penates,’ sacra suosque tibi commendat Troia penatis (II.293)” (194).
fight. After much blood is spilled on both sides, Aeneas threatens the Latins’ capital. Fierce, like an Iliadic warrior, he urges his people, stating: *ni frenum accipere et uicti parere fatentur* “unless [the Latins] agree to accept the yoke and as a conquered people to obey us” (XII.568) that they should raze the city (as the Greeks had razed Troy). In the heat of his rage, he has forgotten the promises he had made to Latinus and the gods. Responding to the threatened destruction of the city, Turnus chooses to face off with Aeneas. They begin to fight and the scales seem weighed against Aeneas until Jove himself asks Juno to cease her hostility toward Aeneas and the Trojans.

She readily agrees but gives conditions that echo both the trajectory laid out in the proem and the conditions spelled out by Aeneas in his prayer. She asks that the Latins keep their name, language and attire:

\[
\text{ne uetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos} \\
\text{aut uocem mutare uiros aut uertere uestem} \quad (XII.823.825).
\]

Moreover, she desires that the Romans grow strong through Italian virtue and that, Troy having fallen, it should have no trace in this new community:

\[
\text{sit Romana potens Itala uirtute propago:} \\
\text{occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia} \quad (XII.827-8).
\]

Thus, Juno’s request cements the epic transition that has been building throughout the *Aeneid*, that “Aeneas and his men escape from the dream of founding simply another Troy” (Feeney 359). They are bound now to be part of a new community which, ironically, they will have conquered.

Jove consents to her requests, stating that the Latins will keep their speech and customs and that these diverse peoples will be joined in body alone:
sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt,
utque est nomen erit; commixti corpore tantum
subsident Teuci.... (XII.834-5).

Jove even makes further concessions, declaring that this new people, who will surpass all others, will speak (and write, we will presume) the Latin tongue and that he (Jove) will add to them sacred customs and rites:

….morem ritusque sacrorum
adiciam faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos.
hinc genus Ausonio mixtum quod sanguine surget,
supra homines.... (XII.836-9)

W.R. Johnson confirms that Jove’s conditions “will manifest [the Trojans’] complete unity with the natives. One in body, language, customs, soul” (“Imaginary Romans” 13). Toll echoes this perspective, pointing out how this sense of unity necessary for a “national” identity was present in Rome following the civil wars since there was “a common religion, a very widespread though not universal language, much common culture, [and] many common values” (39).

Johnson’s essay focuses on the ways that the savage and troubled unification of the Trojans and the Italian tribes in the Aeneid reflected and reacted to the very real difficulties that afflicted Rome in the years encompassed by the social and civil wars and their aftermath which gave birth to the Roman Empire. He concludes that “[e]ven as Vergil’s complex, conflicted image of a united (and new) Roman identity is coming into being [at the end of the Aeneid], the people of Rome, the old and the new, are Romans now in name only. They are all hybrids now” (12). To be Roman was to be part of something that superseded tribal and religious affiliation.
Even at the end of the *Aeneid*, Vergil’s Rome has become irrevocably present and yet only prophetic. Toll concludes that

the national identity the *Aeneid* delineates is thus a composite of an actually attained but forever-to-be-revised sense of the realities of national self-hood and a sense of its ideality, always to be striven for and never-to-be-attained. (“*Aeneid* as National” 7).

Virgil’s Rome can always only be viewed as prophecy, as its realization is never represented but made inevitable. Along similar lines, Syed comments that “by fulfilling and not fulfilling the proem’s promise of recounting the origin of the Latin race, the poem draws attention to the discursive constructedness of that origin” (206). This constructedness carries the burden of prophecy and “enable[d] Romans all over the empire to imagine a community of Romans with a shared past” (221), a burden of prophecy which also enabled all *externi* to become part of the empire.

First, however, ancestral blood had to be shed.

**Coda: Turnus Must Die! (Virtue, Necessity and Empire)**

The ending of the *Aeneid* is abrupt. It has both the bite of ritual sacrifice coupled with the irrevocable shift necessary to epic. David Quint concludes that “the Trojans now reach their new beginning not simply by forgetting and repressing, but by reversing and “undoing” the past as they repeat it.” This act has a parallel in Augustan ideology and practice which sought to “close off past conflict [the civil and social wars] by finally settling old scores” (67). The blunt finality may leave us with questions and a hope for
further resolution; however, it sets up the irrevocable shift from which Rome will come into being.

At the end of their long one-on-one Iliadic battle, Aeneas stands over Turnus, who has turned supplicant. Aeneas pauses when the Rutulian leader begs for mercy, and he becomes uncertain of his next move:

\[\ldots \text{stetit acer in armis} \]
\[Aeneas uoluens oculos dextramque repressit;\]
\[et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo\]
\[coeperat.\ldots\]  (XII.938-941)

Then Aeneas catches sight of Pallas’ belt now worn by Turnus, and in a fit of fury and rage: *furiis accensus et ira terribilis* (XII.946-7), he kills the Rutulian prince, ending the poem on a disquieting note. At the same time, if Rome is to be “founded,” *dum conderet urbes* (I.5) as detailed in the proem, then Turnus must die. So, at the end of the poem, he is killed by an enraged Aeneas, a sword buried in his breast: *hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit feruidus* (XII.950-1).\(^{343}\) Turnus dies not only out of political necessity but also because, according to Ward Fowler (1917), he made an enemy of Jupiter and such an enemy was for a Roman inconceivable: it would mean that you are an outcast from civilization, from social life and virtue. It was not for these that Turnus fought but individual passion, for the pride of youth, beauty, for the love of fighting. (153)

Similarly, Cairns argues that

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\(^{343}\) Interestingly, all of the young men who would have inherited the dynasties in Italy are killed: Lausus, son of Mezentius (Etruscans); Pallas, son of Evander (Arcadians); and Turnus, son of Daunus (Rutulians). The *Aeneid* looks forward, in this sense, to a unification of these various tribes: Aeneas, in marrying Lavinia, will succeed Latinus and be able to consolidate power amongst these different groups which have no successors. See James 633ff. for further discussion.
Turnus is alien to Italy...because he is devoted to discord and to the irrational and shortsighted continuation in Italy of old Greek feuds [while] Aeneas is an Italian...because he comes to Italy as the bringer of peace and concord. (Virgil’s Augustan 124-5)

This argument builds on Brooks Otis’ consideration that at the end of the poem, Aeneas stands out, more than ever before, as the one hero who has subjected his own desires to a social purpose, who wins because he has put courage and toil—duty—above success....He is the divine man (theios aner) who combines virtus with humanitas while Turnus is simply the Homeric hero who, to the very end, flaunts the trophies of his arrogant past. (381)

Thus, Virgil’s Rome, or perhaps it should be stated, Virgil’s “Roman” is embodied in this heroic type whose destiny is indistinct from that of his community—a hero different from previous eras and different cultures. Quint concludes that “the Aeneid thus redefines the epic hero, whose heroic virtue now consists in the sacrifice of his own independent will—a will independent from his national mission. It makes a virtue of historical necessity” (83). And at the same time, it conflates historical necessity with divine prophecy in that one cannot be had without the other.

Some critics have noted that any sense of virtus includes the notions of pietas and clementia. Interestingly, Michael Putnam points out, “Virgil never uses the word clementia” (Virgil’s Aeneid: Interpretation 201) in the Aeneid. Putnam, however, points out that this absence is “realized in a context of pietas [pius Aeneas], of the visible loyalty between father and son, and of the unspoken respect that operates reciprocally between men and gods” (202). As such, Aeneas’ very nature, as “the epitome of Republican Roman moderation,” invites us to associate clementia with him, without it being mentioned. H.P. Stahl’s essay “The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival,” argues that according to the ancient commentator Servius (ad 12.940), the final scene serves the glory of Aeneas in two ways. He displays pietas (piety) because he thinks of pardoning Turnus, and he shows pietas because he observes Evander’s bidding and kills Turnus. *Omnis intention ad Aeneae pertinent gloriam. (210)*

Thus, it can be argued that Aeneas’ actions represent a Roman ideal, or even a Roman conception of aristeia or “excellence,” which is usually associated with dramatic conventions that represent a hero at his best in battle (such as when Achilles girds himself for battle with Hector and fights him). Toll describes this attitude (though without reference to the idea of aristeia) as the giving of mores and moenia, e.g. “civilization,” which she calls “two-fold Roman agenda, the propagation of public order out of private rectitude” (“Aeneid as an Epic” 10).

Though Aeneas conforms to the choices given to him, he does not consistently and blindly conform to such sacrifices. His romantic relationship with Dido is a key example of him not following his virtue—
Cairns points out another way in which Aeneas, who is remarked to have Italian roots through his ancestor Dardanus (III.163ff.), becomes more “Italianised” through similes in the climax of Book XII, one of which assimilates him to the Apennines (XII.701-3: *pater Appenninus*) and another which compares him with an Italian hunting hound (XII.749-57: *uiuidus Umber*) (*Virgil’s Augustan* 109-110). Cairns continues by showing how “the reverse process is applied to Turnus, who is in three further similes of Book [XII] acquires an alien colour” as he is compared to Mars in Thrace (XII.331-6), the Thracian North wind (XII.365-7), and to a Carthaginian lion (XII.4-8), this latter reference associating him with a region renowned as the home of Rome’s fiercest opponent (111). 

Ultimately, as Reed suggests, “the Oriental image of the Italians [led by Turnus] works to erase, by contrast, the originary Orientalness of Aeneas’ Trojans” (*Virgil’s Gaze* 60).

While much of the conflict results from the ways that the oracles are interpreted differently by people with different aims, the text compels us to read them from a particular perspective. This reading is reinforced by these similes, which help us see Aeneas as transforming into an Italian and into the leader of the people who will become Romans. In fact, no doubt had remained when Aeneas is described when he comes forth to begin his final one-on-one fight with Turnus; Troy is long gone and we now have *pater*... 

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346 In relation to this idea, Quint comments that the “epic of the new imperial order places individuality in the domain of chance, at odds with the national plan that is preordained by destiny: as individual, even the poem’s hero is expendable” (94).

347 Reed similarly considers how Turnus is represented as an alien or “other.” For example, Turnus is compared to a huge tiger at IX.730, which can be compared to the Parthian Tigris River or to a tiger from India. Reed concludes that Turnus’ ethnic characteristics point to a “Oriental persona behind the fierce Italian warrior,” effectively severing him from Italy and “cut[ting] Turnus off from the future Roman polity” (*Virgil’s Gaze* 58).
Aeneas, Romanae stirpis origo, “father Aeneas, founder of the Roman stock” (XII.166). The outcome has become inevitable, even before Juno has made peace with Jove.

At the same time, Williams notes that the death of Turnus “closes the Aeneid with a feeling of sorrow and bewilderment” (Aeneid VII-XII 509). We may justify the killing of Turnus by referring to Aeneas’ pietas and yet still be dismayed by the unbridled furor that accompanies the fatal stabbing. In the end, though, we must recognize that Rome can only be founded if the old order of things is irrevocably sundered—the tenor and influence of Iliadic combat must be put to rest and new types of foedera (compacts) must supersede tribal rules: Turnus must die.

But we still may find it difficult to praise Rome’s founder and to cheer the founding of Rome at the end of Book XII. Rather, we feel overwhelmed, as though the great labors of founding this empire have wrung us out too. There is no pageantry nor is there a gallant declaration by the victor; there is certainly no ennobling ecphrasis. There is the sudden brutality of war, a final necessary act to make possible the new imagined community that is Virgil’s Rome.

More often, when we speak or read of Virgil’s Rome in the Aeneid, we think not of the slaying of Turnus, the spectacle that the poem ineluctably draws us toward; but rather, we are drawn more to the cinematic representation of the pageant of heroes in Book VI (752-853), that plays out like a silent film accompanied by an off-screen narrator; or we see the glories of empire, its virtues, destiny and history represented in cinemascope and Technicolor on the Shield of Aeneas (608-731): illic res Italas

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348 The city of Rome is described in VIII. 337-361: looking out over Evander’s small village in Latium, Aeneas imagines the Rome familiar to Virgil’s readers and listeners—complete with Forum, Capitol and Lupercal, among other sites.
Romanorumque triumphos “there is the story of Italy and the triumphs of Rome” (VIII.626) and illic genus omne futurae stirpis ab Ascanio “there are all the stock descended from Ascanius” (VIII.628-629).

The Shield celebrates the virtues of Romans by showing their conviction in creating and respecting treaties (VIII.639-645), maintaining liberty (VIII.646-662) and promoting justice (VIII.666-70). But overall, the bulk of this ecphrasis is focused on the vivid description of the Battle of Actium and its consequences; with regard to this emphasis, Williams describes how these:

illustrations of the character of Rome are preliminary to the victory [at Actium] over alien ways of life which is depicted on the centre of the shield, where Augustus’ triumph at Actium over Antony and Cleopatra is presented as a triumph of West over East. (Aeneid VII-XII 266)

This representation of Actium and its attendant descriptions of these subdued foreigners being marched through Rome seems ironic since the latter half of the Aeneid represents the conquest of the West (Rutulians, Etruscans and other “Italians”) by the East (Trojans) and their Italian allies (Arcadians and Tuscans): 349

…incedunt uictae longo ordine gentes,
quam uariae linguis, habitu tam uestis et armis
the conquered people move in a long line,
their dress-styles and their arms as various as their tongues (VIII.722-3)

Indeed, the theme of the other or externus (“foreigner”) as alien is prominent throughout this ecphrasis: Mark Antony is described as leading diverse troops and having riches of the Orient: hinc ope barbarica uariisque Antonius armis (VIII.685); the

349 The irony is quite telling in that Roman history and destiny culminates in an obvious inversion that reveals more of a sense of grandeur and pretentiousness, which gives a different sense to Anchises’ exhortation that Roman arts involve pacique imponere morem, parvere subiectis.
Egyptian gods are represented as monstrous and chaotic in opposition to the victorious Roman gods:

\[\textit{omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam tela tenent} (VIII.698-700).\]

Opposing Antony and Cleopatra is Caesar Augustus, who leads the Italians, with their people and elders, carrying his house gods and great gods:

\[\textit{hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis} \ (VIII.678-9).\]

These gods are the same ones that Aeneas has brought to Rome; all that was Trojan was subsumed except for the gods and the rites: \(\textit{sacra deosque dabo}\) (XII.192); and also: \(\textit{morem ritusque sacrorum adiciam}\) (XII.836-7). Jupiter ordains Rome’s greatness, and all who oppose his will fall: such is true in the case of Turnus or Mezentius, who fall to Aeneas, or, in the case of Antony, Cleopatra and their gods, who fall to Augustus.

Ultimately, as Toll points out, we can only make sense of these divergent perspectives of \textit{externi} with reference to “the long-range Jovian perspective.” Through such a perspective, Aeneas and his Trojans as \textit{externi} joining with Italian tribes reveals a precedent upon which Roman-ness is based—Romans are hybrid from their origins, from the time preceding the founding of the high walls of Rome. Thus, Toll concludes that “from the divinely knowing perspective on what Roman-ness is… no one is inevitably alien to Rome, all are prospective associates” (“Making Roman-ness” 50-1). Reed concurs, noting how the \textit{Aeneid} offers a “working hypothesis [that Roman] identity is always provisional and perspectival[, that] it emerges as a synthesis (in a dialectical sense) of other national identities” (Virgil’s Gaze 2). Such attitudes echo the belief and
practice described by Sherwin-White, who argued that “the Roman state is an expanding state, with room to spare for all who are prepared to serve her and imitate her truly” (115-6). Aeneas serves as the exemplar here: he has Italian ancestry, but is a foreigner; he is the father of the Roman stock, but is not Roman; it is only mixing with the Latins that he will create a new people; he represents the morals and mores of a Roman, but he and his people are prophesied to give neither to this new people.

While the founding of Rome, as described in the Aeneid, is destined, the notion of Romanness prophesied is achieved through negotiation and the need to be flexible. Moreover, unlike the nations described in Ernest Renan’s lecture “What is a Nation?,” which are founded on the basis of communal forgetfulness, the Aeneid pointedly makes its listeners and readers ever aware of the blood, rage and miscegenation that are part of Rome’s founding—thus, they are constantly reminded that their society is a complex raft of “impurities,” a society that is hybrid (a word derived from the Latin hybrida, which means “mixed blood”) through and through as it constantly negotiates and generates its “Roman” identity. Hence, Virgil’s Rome, much like the Augustan Rome described by Galinsky, was always in the process of inventing and adapting itself.

However, as the British Empire grew, this understanding of Virgil’s Rome lost its flexibility and this sense of invention, as it became a template or a basis from which imperial conquest and rule was justified. It was only when that empire collapsed that the

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350 Focusing on France in particular, Renan points out that “every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century” since “forgetting …is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” (11). Anderson also discusses this forgetfulness at length, concluding that Renan must have taken into account (on behalf of his fellow Frenchmen) that all of these various different tribal, dynastic or religious groups participated in what could only be interpreted (in the national lens) as participants in fratricidal wars, that is, they were “fellow Frenchmen” (200 his emphasis).
text has become fresh once again and capable of being read, as all texts are in this postmodern era, with a flexibility and a sense of invention that had formerly been lost.
Chapter Five

Exiles and Empires: Aeneas & Chamcha

The frontier is an elusive line, visible and invisible, physical and metaphorical, amoral and moral. . . . To cross a frontier is to be transformed.


Human history is filled with exiles. That much is obvious.

The exile, described by Michael Seidel as “someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another” (ix), can be found in all eras and all cultures. Indeed, it is all too easy to put together a short list of well-known historic exiles: Muhammad, Eve, Ovid, Ho Chi Minh, Karl Marx, Wole Soyinka, Aung San Suu Kyi, Jeremiah, Siddhartha Gautama, and Chief Joseph. Of course, a much longer list of exiles that would include both the well-known and those who are unremarked—except in personal histories and memories—would number in the hundreds of millions or perhaps billions.

351 This definition begins Seidel’s 1989 study Exile and the Narrative Imagination. He notes that his definition is derived from Paul Tabori’s 1972 analysis, The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study, which defines an “exile as someone who conceives of his or her displacement as temporary even ‘though it lasts a lifetime’” (qtd. in Seidel 201n1).

352 In brief, Muhammad (circa 570-632), the final prophet of Islam, was exiled from Mecca, to which he later returned; Eve was cast out of the Garden of Eden for eating forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (as recounted most notably in Genesis and Paradise Lost); Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 18) was exiled from Rome by Caesar Augustus to the town of Tomis on the Black Sea; Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) from Vietnam to New York, Paris, London, Moscow and Shanghai; Karl Marx (1818-1883) from the Kingdom of Prussia to Brussels (briefly) and then London; Wole Soyinka (1934- ) has endured imprisonment and was exiled in France; Aung San Suu Kyi (1945- ) has been internally exiled under house arrest in Burma (Myanmar) for fourteen of the past twenty years; Jeremiah (circa seventh to sixth centuries B.C.) was the Jewish prophet exiled with his people to Babylon under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar II; Siddhartha Gautama (circa sixth to fifth centuries B.C.) chose exile by becoming an ascetic; Chief Joseph (1840-1904) of the Nez Perce tribe was exiled to the U.S. garrison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and then to Indian territory (in what later became the state of Oklahoma in 1907).
Just as history is filled with exiles, so too is literature. There are exiled authors (such as Dante, Gabriel García Márquez, Buchi Emecheta and Salman Rushdie) and works with exilic themes (such as *Gilgamesh*, *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih, and *Aurora Leigh* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning), and characters and peoples who are exiles. Seidel’s *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* studies the theme of exile in novels, concentrating on its role “as an enabling fiction” (xii) in which “exilic space is the metaphoric terrain of projected adventure, and exilic time a resource for narrative repatriation” (198). He notes how “chroniclers from Moses to Homer, from Ovid to Joyce, have memorialized the primacy of the exilic fable in narrative” (2). Such exilic fables can be found in all genres and with great range of meaning: there is the parable in which the prodigal son willfully exiles himself, only to return home to a joyous father; there is the Aristaeus epyllion in which Eurydice is twice exiled to the underworld, at first given a chance at return, then forever sundered from the upper world; there is the comic book series in which Kal-El is exiled as a newborn from the planet Krypton just before it is destroyed and becomes a hero on his new homeland, Earth.

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353 Dante, born in Florence in 1265, was permanently exiled from the city of his birth in 1301. García Márquez was born in Aracataca, Columbia in 1928; “in 1954 he was sent to Rome on an assignment for his newspaper, and since then he has mostly lived abroad - in Paris, New York, Barcelona and Mexico - in a more or less compulsory exile” (“Gabriel García Márquez”). Emecheta was born in Lagos, Nigeria in 1944 and moved to Britain in 1960 where she has since resided.

354 Rushdie emphasizes that there are two fates for a writer: “the nation either co-opts its greatest writers (Shakespeare, Goethe, Camôens, Tagore), or else seeks to destroy them (Ovid’s exile, Soyinka’s exile)” (“Notes on Writing” 59).

355 Seidel’s study examines novels by six Western post-Renaissance authors who wrote in English: Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Laurence Sterne, Henry James and Vladimir Nabokov.
In his essay, “The National Longing for Form,”\textsuperscript{356} Timothy Brennan conflates modernist conceptions of exile (particularly the relationship that has been fomented between exile and artistic creation) with the idea of nationalism, positing the “topos of ‘exile’ [as] nationalism’s opposite [since they] are conflicting poles of feelings” (60) which result in a “simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it” (63). Brennan argues that recent authors (including Rushdie and Mario Vargas Llosa) both thematize and demythify the centrality of nation-forming (64), a theme central to postcolonial and magical realist literature. However, as has been argued, the same sense of thematization and demythification are to be found not only in the representation of modern nations in modern literature, but also in the representation of Empire in literature, at least as far back as Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}, which was the central founding myth of Rome.

Nico Israel’s recent \textit{Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora}, is focused on examining the “interstitial area” (which he terms “outlandish”) that is “between exile and diaspora” (3) in the works of Joseph Conrad, Theodore Adorno and Salman Rushdie, since “their work is often viewed as representing literary historical turning points” (4).\textsuperscript{357} Ultimately, his examination of these interstices, which he terms the “tropics of displacement” (5), is geared toward the consideration that such writing is oriented toward revealing “multiple histories” as well as providing “potential glimpses of something…” on

\textsuperscript{356} This essay (in slightly different form) became the first chapter in Brennan’s \textit{Salman Rushdie and the Third World}.

\textsuperscript{357} At the beginning of his study, he expands the consideration of exile to include the mythic, the religious, the romantic or picaresque, the philosophical, and the historical/political, which expand the list of exiles even further (2). Interestingly enough, if we combine the perspectives of Seidel and Israel, it would remain difficult to conceive of persons who are or were \textit{not} exiles in some way.
the horizon” (21). As such, he appears to be reacting to and building on Homi Bhabha’s notion of the “poetics of exile” (Location 7), which examines how a “boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing” (7). This notion takes into account the Janus-like feature of exile, in that it can look backward and forward simultaneously and that it can anticipate what lies beyond while attempting to comprehend the multiplicities of what has happened and is happening.

Israel begins by noting how

‘Exile’ denotes banishment from a particular place in an institutional act of force; but appropriately for a word that probably derives from the Latin ex salire, it also expresses a sense of “leaping out” toward something or somewhere, implying a matter of will. (1)359

This interpretation measures out that sense of anticipation described by Bhabha’s “poetics of exile.”

And yet there are those exiles who have been banished from their people, or their homeland (be it country, nation, region or city) though they remain resistant to “leaping out”; instead, they leap back or look back and, in so doing, remain rooted and confined to their past space, place, and race. They indulge in preferred and limited (and limiting) readings of the past, are ambivalent about the present (except as it may recover their past), and avoid the future. In his essay, “Imaginary Homelands,” Salman Rushdie describes such exiles as having a “physical alienation” from their country and, since they

358 Israel reviews several texts that examine exile, primarily in relation to twentieth-century authors, including George Steiner’s Extraterritorial, Lezsek Kolakowski’s “In Praise of Exile,” Terry Eagleton’s Exiles and Emigrés, and Hélène Cixous’ Exile in James Joyce, emphasizing how they are all focused on the link between exile and modernism, where issues of translation as well as the politics of describing foreign and domestic are preeminent (180-81). In Salman Rushdie and the Third World, Brennan also includes a brief consideration of Exiles and Emigrés, commenting how Eagleton “is surprisingly reluctant to address the effects of colonialism on the concept of exile itself” (62).

359 Seidel begins his study of exile and narrative by referencing the very same etymology.
are not “capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost,” they look back, “creating fictions” or “imaginary homelands” (10), which are often idealized representations of those places, spaces and peoples from which they had come.360

There are also those exiles who have been banished and have become fully uprooted—they are divorced from the peoples, spaces and places of civilization (in effect, they have become rootless). Such persons have been exiled by their people due to specific reasons (often in response to the perpetration of taboo acts), which also prevent them from effectively becoming part of another space, place or people. To a degree, it can be argued that such people neither leap out nor leap back; rather they have exceeded the confines of civilizations (usually, they are the loners, “guns for hire,” mercenaries or outlaws in literature, film and television).361 Then, there are those who have been banished and have accepted the lot that has been chosen or forced upon them; such persons may to varying degrees leap forward or step gingerly: they recall the past, but affirm that it is the present and the future which are relevant.

Finally, there are those exiles who consciously leap out from the past into new spaces, places and peoples. They are aware of their pasts but are not confined by them; they have been banished from one civilization, but not excluded from all of civilization; they accept what fate has forced upon them and anticipate the future—that sense of which

360 This essay confronts the dilemmas Rushdie faced in recreating the India that was represented in Midnight’s Children. He compares his situation with that of the many émigrés from India, who are forever creating “Indias of the mind” (10).
361 Such persons have become standard issue heroes in American movies, particularly Westerns, such as George Steven’s Shane (1955), Sam Peckinpah’s The Wild Bunch (1969), or Sam Raimi’s The Quick and the Dead (1995). These characters cannot be part of society, but they are forever going in and out of it, until they are killed—quite dramatically in Peckinpah’s film.
Bhabha writes, in which an exile’s “boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing.”

Of course, the exile must be banished from a space, place or people to which he or she is intrinsically linked. Eve and Adam were exiled from Eden and from God—both space and place.362 Ovid was exiled from the city of Rome to the hinterlands of the empire, having only his writing to link him with the people, place and spaces he once had been intimate with. Aeneas was exiled from the city of Troy when it was destroyed, but anticipated the creation of a new people, place and space, which was to be the Roman Empire. Saladin Chamcha is doubly exiled—self-exiled from the people, places and spaces in Bombay, India, where he was born and raised, and exiled by the England which became his adopted country;363 however, he anticipates and participates in the “newness [that is] com[ing] into the world” (8), superseding these exilic narratives.

Ultimately, exile is a consequence of choice or force—or a combination of the two. However, despite the predisposition of modernists in the twentieth century, who chose exile and provide for us the “predominant image of the modern artist who lives as a literal stranger in a foreign and impersonal city and who…uses the condition of exile as a basic metaphor for modernity” (Ahmad 134),364 our histories and literatures have been

362 Some could argue that they were exiled from their people too, since Genesis describes “the LORD God [as] moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day” (3.8), an anthropomorphized image of the deity.
363 The notion of him being exiled by “England” has to do with the love he had for the imagined England. See discussion below, Chapter Six.
364 Further on, referring to the distinction that Raymond Williams made between exile and vagrancy—“there is usually a principle in exile, there is always only relaxation in vagrancy…” (qtd. in Ahmad 157), Ahmad comments on the irony that Rushdie himself, formerly a self-exile or “vagrant” (having left Pakistan in 1970), “has turned, paradoxically and tragically, into a full-scale exile” (157). Of course, Ahmad charges Rushdie, along with a host of earlier writers of being such “vagrants,” including “[Henry] James, and [Joseph] Conrad, [Ezra] Pound and [T.S.] Eliot, [Pablo] Picasso and [Salvador] Dali, [James]
truly enraptured and constructed by those persons who were exiled by force, those who were banished—the Muhammads, the Eves and the Ovids—and whose banishment resulted from a “leaping out” from the confines imposed on them.365

As with literature and life, the Aeneid and The Satanic Verses do not lack their exiles either, and each ends inconclusively, with their protagonists leaping out and looking forward to those spaces, places and peoples that can only be anticipated: as the former piece worked to create empire where there had been none,366 the latter work begins to shed the burden of the very same empire while beginning to presence (to use Bhabha’s turn of phrase) a way of being that has moved beyond exile and beyond empire.

Exile & the Empire: Aeneas et co.

The Aeneid is filled with characters who have been driven from one land to another. As he journeys from the ashes of Troy to found Rome, Aeneas encounters men and women who are strangers or exiles to their ancestral lands and who seek to create a new sense of, or reimagine, who they are and what their identities are in their new lands.367 In the Aeneid, exile is represented four ways. First of all, there those who are

Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and so on” (134). One would guess from Ahmad’s choices that the precedent for vagrancy is Western and (with the exception of Stein) male.  
365 Muhammad leapt from the “constraints” of polytheism, Judaism and Christianity to recite and preach Islam. Eve (and Adam) leapt from the limitations imposed on them by the will of the Lord God. Ovid made his leap through writing poetry and committing a minor unnamed crime, moving beyond the confines imposed in Augustan Rome: see brief consideration above, page 190 and note 269.  
366 See W.R. Johnson’s consideration above that “the Aeneid created the Augustan age,” implying that its creative capacity enabled or effectively imagined the nascent Roman Empire.  
367 There are very few autochthons in the Aeneid. Inevitably, all such people are described as uncivilized. For example, the people of Latium are described by Evander as being of the land, having sprung from the trunks of oaks—as such, they were a people lacking customs and culture: gensque uirum truncis et duro robore nata, quis neque mos neque cultus erat (VIII.315-6); it was Saturn, who had been forced into exile by Jove, who had given these wild people civilization:
captive to the past from which they have been banished—these characters, including Dido, Helenus and Andromache, do not “leap out” but rather they “leap back” to that past in order to maintain a type of stasis; as such they remain trapped within a view that is akin to Romance, constantly repeated and recycling familiar tropes and actions. Second of all, there are those, such as Mezentius and Camilla, who are exiles from civilization as a whole; they have bounded beyond the confines of law, custom and

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**primus ab aetherio uenit Saturnus Olympo**

**arma lovis fugiens et regnis exsul ademptis.**

is genus indocile...legesque dedit. (VIII.319-322)

Only the Latins, along with Iarbas, the African king who has been scorned by Dido (cf. IV.36f, IV.196-218), and, perhaps, the Cyclopes (III.588-691) are represented as autochthons; all others are exiles, having been driven forth from the land of their birth.

368 When first making landfall near Carthage, Aeneas is met by his mother, Venus, who describes how Dido rules this great new city that she and her followers have built, having fled her brother in Tyre, Imperium Dido Tyria regit urbe profecta, germanum fugiens (I.340-1). She represents the exile by flight—a mode of banishment that presumes ill consequences if she does not depart. In some ways, she is an opposite of Aeneas: her husband, Sychaeus, has been killed by her brother (Aeneas’ wife has been killed); her husband appears in a dream warning her to flee (as does Creusa); she comes from the East and founds a civilization that will oppose and threaten Rome’s fated rule (Aeneas comes from the East fated to found Rome). The tragic interaction of these two founders, Aeneas and Dido, is represented as a cause for the three Punic wars that ultimately resulted in the destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C. The other cause is Juno herself, which is discussed by Feeney in “The Reconciliation of Juno.” See especially 359-362.

369 In Aeneid III.294-505, Aeneas recounts his meeting with Helenus, son of Priam, who is now married to Andromache; together they rule over part of Pyrrhus, the kingdom formerly ruled by their captor Neoptolemus, Achilles’ son. In exile, they strive to recreate their old home, which Aeneas describes as a little Troy (parum Troiam), having a citadel much like Troy’s own Pergama (simulataque magnis Pergama), an empty riverbed called Xanthus (et arenem Xanthe cogonomine rivum) and a Scaean gate (Scaeaeque amplector limina portae)—all of these places have been reconstructed to recall their destroyed city (III.349-351). These exiles recreate anew their imaginary homeland and cannot move beyond it, they are trapped in a static cycle of endless re-creation—Helenus has married his older brother’s wife, Andromache, who is first encountered as she pours libations over the empty mound that honors her dead husband, Hector, who is Helenus’ older brother. The significance and symbolism of this meeting is discussed in Bettini.

370 Mezentius, the Etruscan leader, who is given the epithet contemptor diuum “scorn of the gods,” (VII.648) ruled his people (who had previously flourished) with brutal savagery, committing unspeakable crimes on them, hanc multis florentem annos rex deinde superbo imperio et saeuis tenuit Mezentius armis (VIII.481-2). His own people rose up against him and he barely escaped, finding safety with Turnus. at fessi tandem ciues infanda fiorentem armati circumsistunt ipsumque domumque, obtruncant socios, ignem ad fastigia iactant.

**ille inter caedem Rutulorum elapsus in agros configurere et Turni defendier hospitis armis.** (VIII.489-493)
culture, evoking the ideals that are represented in the Homeric type of hero. These two types of exiles are barriers or detours for Aeneas, preventing or delaying him from fulfilling his destiny. The former group offers him the false succor of their own type of exile to the “leaping out” that he must grasp in order to found Rome; the latter group actively works to upend the designs of the fates and the gods.

Turnus has the Homeric attributes of Camilla and Mezentius. He also represents what Williams calls “uiolentia, [as he is aggressively an] opponent of destiny” (The Aeneid 124), a word only used to describe him. He is first described by the Sibyl as ali...Achilles, “another Achilles” (VI.89), the warrior in the Iliad who is inspired by rage; he relishes his role as a warrior, which is particularly emphasized in his aristeia in

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Returning this favor, Mezentius becomes an ally to Turnus in the war with Aeneas, wreaking havoc on the Trojans and their allies—as savage to them as he was to his own people. Ultimately, though, he dies alone, exiled from his people, and with his only son having been killed in battle by Aeneas. More than any other character, Mezentius represents the unbridled savagery of the uncivilized man, the man fully lacking humanitas (the trait focused on by Otis in Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry) and pietas—thus, the opposite of Aeneas. Indeed, he is a leader who was an exile among his own people since he put his own whims and concerns above them, and even at the expense of them. While Mezentius represents an exile among people, Camilla represents the exile who stands alone or away from people; she had been carried away as a baby by her father, the arrogant King Metabus of the Volscians, when he had been dethroned and cast out by his people:

\[
pulsus ob inuidiam regno uirisque superbas
Priuerno antiqua Metabus cum excederet urbe,
infantem fugiens media inter proelia belli
sustulit exilio comitem, matrisque uocauit
nomine Casmillae mutata parte Camillam. (XI.539-543)
\]

Like Mezentius and the Rutulian leader, Turnus, she is a Homeric type of hero who exults in battle and is renowned for her aristeia, or excellence in battle. Having been brought up in the wild by her father (XI.567-9: non illum tectis ullae, non moenibus urbes accepere (neque ipse manus fertitate dedisset), pastorum et solis exegit montibus aeuum), she is beyond the rules of civilization and remains devoted only to the goddess Diana (XI.582: sola contenta Diana). As Reed points out, she is also “emblematic of the lost young generation of a family,” (Virgil’s Gaze 40) which is childless and includes Lausus, Nisus and Euryalus, and Pallas.

371 In his commentary, Aeneid VII-XII, Williams emphasizes this point (for Mezentius see 369n.689; for Camilla see 421n.648).
372 The role of uiolentia is also discussed in Camps p. 38-40 and Otis p. 372-4.
Book IX, when he attacks the Trojan camp, and in Book XI, when he kills Pallas, the son of Evander.

This predilection toward Homeric-type heroism, combined with his opposition to fate and the gods, make him an exile to the very ideals of Rome—he lacks pietas. Brooks Otis sums up his argument by describing Turnus as the “man who flaunts the trophies of his arrogant past” (381), as the man who represents “impietas and uiolentia” (392). As Cairns points out, Turnus becomes metaphorically exiled from his “land” as he becomes more alienated from his “Italianness.” Otis notes how Turnus “breaks the solemn engagement (the foedus) and, once again, deserts the main battle and his companions at the hour of their greatest need” (392), thus becoming an exile from his own people, though in a degree different from Camilla and Mezentius. He is a man consumed with his ends alone. At the same time, as soon as Jove and Juno become reconciled (XII.791-842) in the midst of Turnus’ one-on-one contest with Aeneas, the Rutulian prince becomes exiled from the gods. He readily acknowledges this situation, declaring to Aeneas that he fears the gods and his foe, Jupiter—not the Trojan leader ‘non me tua feruida terrent dicta, ferox; di me terrent et Iuppiter hostis’ (XII.894-5), knowing that his death is imminent. In the end, the compounded effect of his actions makes his death necessary—like Camilla and Mezentius, he is rooted in the past and is incapable of “leaping out” to embrace or accept the changes that have been fated.

The third type of exile accepts their exile changes that fate has wrought—such a person is neither captive to the past (seeking return) nor an outcast from civilization.

373 See discussion above on page 247.
374 See discussion above pages 244f.
375 Thus, to a degree, he becomes a contemptor diuum, “scorn of the gods.”
This type of exile can be seen in Diomedes and Evander, who, like Aeneas, are described as exiled by fate, and are instrumental to the founding of Rome. These two men have accepted the exile fated for them (even if the former is bitter), are guided by the gods, are bringers of civilization, and have forsaken the Homeric type of heroism represented by Turnus, Mezentius and Camilla.

Evander serves as a father-figure, ally and model (or double) for Aeneas. He is described by Virgil as the founder of the Roman citadel: *rex Euandrus Romanae conditor arcis* (VIII.313); he is also described as a man who has been driven to Italy by all-powerful fortune and unavoidable fate, spurred on by his mother and Apollo:

```
me pulsum patria pelagique extrema sequentem
Fortuna omnipotens et ineluctabile fatum
his posuere locis, matrisque egere tremenda
Carmentis nymphae monita et deus auctor Apollo. (VIII.333-336)
```

He elaborates no further, having incorporated the mention of his exile into a brief history of Latium, and continues by describing locales well known to Virgil’s readers. As argued by Papaioannou, “the emphasis on [Evander’s] Greek background celebrates the Greek exile’s contribution to the cultural and political advancement of Rome, and acknowledges the positive impact of Hellenic influence upon Italy” (681), further emphasizing the multicultural/multiethnic enterprise that was being negotiated in Rome during the Augustan era.

Therefore, when Aeneas greets Evander, the latter describes himself as an exile, *quos illi bello profugos egere superbo* (VIII.118), and, as can be expected, Evander’s son

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376 See note 320.
377 Discussed above on pp. 248ff. See also note 354.
378 Papaioannou also has an extensive discussion of the connection between Evander and Aeneas in other Augustan poetry.
welcomes the Trojan as a guest (VIII.123: nostris succede penatibus hospes)—not as a stranger (as was the case when Aeneas came to Latinus’ household). 

Similarly, Diomedes, the Argive (Greek) veteran of the Trojan War, aids Aeneas by refusing to revisit their past. Now settled in Italy, Diomedes rejects Turnus’ entreaties to help him fight Aeneas and the Trojans; he informs Turnus’ emissaries of how the gods have begrudged him the comforts of his home, altar and wife, following the victory at Troy:

\[
inuidisse deos, patriis ut redditus aris 
coniugium optatum et pulchram Calydonia uiderem? \quad \text{(XI.269-270)}
\]

He believes that his exile (and the loss of his comrades) was both fated and secured when he had recklessly attacked Venus:

\[
haec adeo ex illo mihi iam speranda fuerunt 
tempore cum ferro caelestia corpora demens 
appetii et Veneris uiolaui uulnere dextram \quad \text{(XI.275-278).} \text{380}
\]

He recommends that Turnus pursue peace rather than war, since the latter leads to unrestrained behavior, which leads to exile or death. 

Aeneas is the fourth type of exile, whom we meet at the outset of the poem. Driven by fate, \textit{fato profugus} (I.2), he is the hybrid exile whom we first encounter on the seas—that space of flux which is between lands, where boundaries, some visible and others invisible, are constantly shifting. It is a place between life and death, where

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{379} See discussion above, pp. 238ff.
\item \textit{380} Diomedes’ reckless pursuit of Aeneas and his wounding of Venus are described in the Iliad, Book V.
\item \textit{381} Diomedes gives a brief catalogue (XI.259-268) of the \textit{nostoi}, those warriors who attempted to return home following the conquest and destruction of Troy.
\end{itemize}
Aeneas claims that those who had died at Troy were lucky;\textsuperscript{382} where he is conscious of his fate, but uncertain that he will achieve it.

He is the hybrid exile, for he has been forever cast out of his land, declaring Troy to be his homeland and the land of the gods: \emph{o patria, o diuum domus Ilium et incluta bello moenia Dardanidum!} (II.241-2); but he is also returning home, stating at the outset that he is seeking his homeland, Italy: \emph{Italiam quaero patriam} (I.380).\textsuperscript{383} Driven forth by fate, \emph{fato profugus} (I.2), he is exiled by both choice and force.

He is an exile by choice: in the underworld, Anchises asks if fear will keep Aeneas from settling in Western lands, as he is fated, or if he is unsure about using his valor to accomplish the deeds necessary to fulfill the things shown in the pageant of Rome:

\begin{quote}
\emph{et dubitamus adhuc uirtutem extendere factis, aut metus Ausonia prohibet consistere terra} (VI.806-7)?
\end{quote}

Aeneas offers a silent assent, accepting his fate, making the leap toward the destiny of Rome assured.

Aeneas is also exiled by force. When he is at Carthage, he narrates the fall and destruction of Troy. Then, as he begins to narrate his travels, he sums up his predicament by stating:

\begin{quote}
\emph{est locus, Hesperiam Grai cognomine dicunt, terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glaebae; Oenotri coluere uiri; nunc fama minores Italiam dixisse ducis de nomine gentem. haee nobis propriae sedes, hinc Dardanus ortus Iasiusque pater, genus a quo principe nostrum.} (III.163-168)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{382} See \textit{Aeneid} I.94-101, where he begins by describing those who died at Troy as “three and four times blessed,” (\emph{o terque quaterque beati}).

\textsuperscript{383} Virgil uses the myth that Aeneas’ ancestor Dardanus and his brother Iasius had originally come from Italy (Hesperia) and had resettled at Troy:

\begin{quote}
\emph{est locus, Hesperiam Grai cognomine dicunt, terra antiqua, potens armis atque ubere glaebae; Oenotri coluere uiri; nunc fama minores Italiam dixisse ducis de nomine gentem. haee nobis propriae sedes, hinc Dardanus ortus Iasiusque pater, genus a quo principe nostrum.} (III.163-168)
\end{quote}
After the divine powers visited destruction on the kingdom of Priam in Asia…
We were driven by divine augury to a far off place of exile and deserted lands…
—Tearful when I set forth from the shores of my homeland,
—the haven and the plains where Troy had been. An exile on the open sea, with comrades and son, I bear my penates and great gods. (III.1-2, 4-5, 10-13)

When he arrives with his people in Italy, Virgil describes them first as *advena...exercitus* “a foreign army” (VII.38-9), representing the perspective of the autochthonic Latins, and emphasizing the outsider status that Aeneas and the Trojans initially have.384 However, Aeneas is rather bold. Having reached Lavinian shores and broken bread there, he realizes that the oracle describing the end of his travels has been fulfilled: *haec nos suprema manebat exsiliis positura modum*, “here remains the last portion measured for our exile” (VII.128-9).385 Finally, he declares to his people: *hic domus, haec patria est*, “here is our home, here is our country” (VII.122).386

While Aeneas is welcomed to this land as a guest by Pallas and his father, Evander, he and his fellow Trojans are construed in quite different terms by King Latinus and Queen Amata. A swarm of bees had descended on a laurel tree at King Latinus’ palace, a portent interpreted by Latinus’ father, Faunus, to mean that the king should:

384 A similar consideration is given to the Trojans during their battle with Turnus’ forces in Book X.158, where the phrase *profugis…Teucris*, “Trojan exiles” is used.
385 As Williams points out, the “oracle had been given to Aeneas by Celaeno the Harpy (III.250f.), who had told him that he would not found his city before hunger compelled the Trojans to eat their tables” (*Aeneid* VII-XII 175n.107f). Their “tables” are platters made of flatbread.
386 With regard to lines 2 and 5, Reed points out how “the same gods destroyed and guide the refugee Trojans [evoking for Aeneas the] sense of a split, in theodical terms, between his own fate and that of his old city” (*Virgil’s Gaze* 125). The gods who once favored Troy will now favor Rome.
never marry his daughter to a Latin,
but to a foreigner, since foreigners will come and become his sons,
ne pete conubiis natam sociare Latinis,
o mea progenies, thalamis neu crede paratis;
externi uenient generi….

(VII.96-98)

These foreigners, recognized by their ignota…veste, “strange vestments” (VII.167), are summoned before Latinus, who recalls their distant Italian origins and reveals to Aeneas the oracle of Faunus, which declared that their sons-in-law will come from foreign shores and that they will raise our name to the stars: generos externis adfore ab oris,…qui sanguine nostrum nomen in astra ferant (VII.270-272). Thus, he sees Aeneas and his people as those outsiders or foreigners who are fated to blend with his people; in the end, Latinus accepts what has been fated, and welcomes Aeneas.

Amata may be convinced of the oracle, but she has a different take on it. Spurred on by Juno, who has sent down the fury Allecto, the Latin queen rebuts her husband’s will, calling Aeneas a pirate (praedo) and bluntly asking: ‘exsulibusne datur ducenda Lauinia Teucris,’ “should Lavinia be wedded to the leader of these Trojan exiles?”: (VII.359) 387 At the same time, Allecto has also inflamed Turnus, who invokes the fear of miscegenation that has long since savaged Western civilizations, who declares: ‘Teucros in regna uocari, stirpem admisceri Phrygiam,’ “the Trojans are called to share our realm, Phrygian (Trojan) blood will mix with our own” (VII.578-9). Often, the translation of admisceri, which Lewis and Short define as “to mix up with, to add or join to,” carries the burden of the notion of miscegenation: Mackail renders the latter phrase as “a Phrygian race is mingling its taint with theirs” (163); Fagles translates it as

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387 In the same speech (VII.359-372), Amata reasons that all peoples not under Latin rule are foreigners …including Turnus, who should therefore be considered an outsider or stranger (though not an exile) and eligible for Lavinia’s hand in marriage.
“Phrygian blood will corrupt our own” (232); Jackson Knight, “that a Phrygian strain was to blend with Latin blood” (193), and Lombardo, “we are becoming Phrygian half-breeds” (181). Thus, we can see that this fear of commingling foreigner with native is very present here. Turnus’ implication is that such an act is a betrayal of the order of things; moreover, it has been interpreted by translators in a way that reflects and accentuates these fears.

However, as an idea and a practice, the *Aeneid* works toward overcoming this fear and represents it as fated and ordained by the gods. The absurdity of the conflict is set forth by Virgil near the end of the poem, as he asks almighty Jove why peoples who would live together in eternal peace should battle so ruthlessly:

\[ \text{...tanton placuit concurrere motu,} \\
\text{Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futures (XII.502-3)?} \]

Juno inevitably concedes to Jove’s will and to the fates, allowing these diverse peoples to commingle in body (*commixti corpora*)\(^{388}\) and create a new community with customs drawn from both peoples, while having a language inherited from one. They are, to a large degree, a creole people,\(^{389}\) comprised of autochthons and exiles, a people whose very identity is rooted in being of the land and strangers to the land. In the end, the protagonist, who had been both exile and foreigner, has leapt toward the future—having

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\(^{388}\) The agreement between Jove and Juno is discussed in detail above on pages 242f.

\(^{389}\) The term *creole*, as used here, is derived from Jane Webster’s consideration that the society being created here is based upon a process of negotiation with, resistance to, and/or an adaptation of styles, which ultimately serve indigenous ends (see discussion on pages 116-117). There is, in the *Aeneid*, both the negotiation of identity by the gods (the discussion between Jove and Juno which ultimately serves indigenous ends, in Book XII, discussed above on pages 241ff.) and the ongoing, evolving, fracturing negotiation and resistance between the Trojan exiles and their Italian counterparts (Books VII-XII). Webster’s definition diverges from Anderson’s to the extent that his definition is historically specific, grounded in uses and understanding particular to American and European History in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
been transformed into *pater Aeneas, Romanae stirpis origo,* “father Aeneas, founder of the Roman stock” (XII.166) in a place where the boundaries have not been drawn (though the links to the past and tribal precedent have been severed).\(^{390}\) Even so, Aeneas has already begun presencing through the combination of visions, seers and journeys—imagining a place, a people and a space that will become imperial Rome.

**Empire and the Exile: Chamcha & Co.**

How far did they fly? Five and a half thousand as the crow. Or: from Indianness to Englishness, an immeasurable distance. Or, not very far at all, because they rose from one great city, fell to another. The distance between cities is always small; a villager, travelling a hundred miles to town, traverses emptier, darker, more terrifying space.

Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (41)

Just as the *Aeneid* revolves around an exile, Aeneas, whom we first discover tempest-tossed in the waters—between homeland and the realization of empire, so too does Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* focus on an exile, Saladin Chamcha, whom we first encounter as he is being dropped into the waters—between homeland and vestiges of empire. This book opens with Chamcha and his double, Gibreel Farishta (a

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\(^{390}\) The tribal past has been effectively severed since all of the young warriors who could have led their tribes have been killed, including Lausus, son of Mezentius; Pallas, son Evander, Turnus, son of Daunus: and Camilla, daughter of Metabus. In her essay “Establishing Rome with a Sword: *Condere* in the *Aeneid,*” Sharon James focuses on two uses of the verb *condere,* which can mean both “to found” and “to bury.” The word is used in the proem of the *Aeneid* to describe the founding of Rome: *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem!* “so much toil it was to found the Roman people” (I.33), as well as at the end of the poem, to describe how Aeneas plunges or buries his sword in Turnus: *hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit feruidus,* “[Aeneas] spoke, then buried his sword in fury in [Turnus’] breast” (XII.950-1). Conflating these two uses of the same verb, she concludes that “the end of the poem enforces on its readers the awareness that Rome was established with the sword [by its *conditor,* “founder”]—the sword that took the life of a young Italian, who was pleading for mercy, whose body may not have been given a burial” (636).
fellow exile of quite different circumstances and personality), having been thrown from an exploded passenger plane (“the jumbo jet Bostan Flight AI-420” (4)),\textsuperscript{391} caught midway between the heavens and the earth, between the “Continent” and old England, between India and the United Kingdom, between one way of living and another way of life. Their plane had been blown apart (just like Aeolus, spurred on by Juno, had broken up Aeneas’ fleet just off the coast of Italy with Sicily just out of sight), shattering forever the lives of so many exiles and émigrés, who were being shuttled from one land to another. Rushdie describes the detritus of the pieces, people all:

\[\text{-- mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, [for] there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mothertongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, }\text{land, belonging, home. (The Satanic Verses} 4, his emphasis)\]

Choosing words to carefully describe the fragmentation and remnants of plane and passengers—falling “in the void”—we are overwhelmed by the description of exile: there is brokenness, sloughed-offness, severedness, violatedness, etc. all commingled with those words so treasured by outcasts: “\text{land, belonging, home.”} No one and nothing leaps out; rather all drop down through the sky: even our “[t]wo actors, prancing Gibreel and buttony, pursed Mr. Saladin Chamcha, fell like titbits of tobacco from a broken old cigar” (3).

\textsuperscript{391} Much has been discussed of the significance of the flight’s name, Bostan, which signifies one of the gardens of Paradise described in the Qur’an; in addition, much more has been discussed regarding Rushdie’s repeated use of the number 420, which refers to the Indian penal code covering “those who attempt small-scale fraud and confidence tricks; however, in the popular imagination, the scope of "420" extends to the more significant villainy of politicians and businessmen” (Aravamudan 5). Rushdie’s essay “Imaginary Homelands” also discusses the significance of this number and its connection with the Bollywood song “Mera joota hai japaani,” “My shoes are Japanese,” which Gibreel sings as he falls (11). This song is from Raj Kapoor’s famous 1955 film, Shree 420, or Mr. 420, which is about a Chaplinesque tramp who engages in fraud and confidence tricks until he is saved by his beloved wife. Rushdie’s repeated use of this number and the reference to this song are conscious allusions to the film.
Both of these men had been self-exiled—they had chosen to flee family, friends (and in Gibreel’s case, fans), Bombay—to shirk the ways of their Islamic faith and escape from the land of their birth. However, when the plane explodes, both become forced exiles who must confront the consequences that come with such situations, as each is forced to live in a “foreign” community: Gibreel hither and thither in London, though largely with Alleluia Cone, the daughter of an exile from Poland; Chamcha with London-exiled Bangladeshis who live among so many other people in the migrant community of Brickhall.  

In fact, Stephanie Ravillon points out that “the characters at the centre of The Satanic Verses all share a status as exiles, emigrants or expatriates [who] struggle to clear a space for themselves in another, and not always welcoming, country” (370). The main storyline focuses on people in London, where the exiles and migrants include Bombayites Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, the Bangladeshi Sufyans (Mohammad, Hind, and their England-born daughters Mishal and Anahita), the Indian “Jumpy” Jamshed Joshi, the Cone family (Otto, Alicja and their England-born daughters Allie and Elena), the dreamed and unnamed Imam and (on the very edge of the southern English coastline) the doubly-exiled Rosa Diamond. In the Mahound storyline, the exiles include Mahound and

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392 When Chamcha finds refuge at the rooming house in Brickhall, the proprietor Sufyan says to him: 
"Best place for you is here," …. speaking as if to a simpleton or small child. "Where else would you go to heal your disfigurements and recover your normal health? Where else but here, with us, among your own people, your own kind?"

Only when Saladin Chamcha was alone in the attic room at the very end of his strength did he answer Sufyan's rhetorical question. "I'm not your kind," he said distinctly into the night. "You're not my people. I've spent half my life trying to get away from you.” (253)

Of course, there are several levels of difference here: class, nation and culture—the Sufyans are working-class Bengalis from India.
his followers. In the Ayesha storyline, there are Ayesha and her followers, along with Osman the bullock boy and the ever-doubting Mirza Saeed.

To maintain the focus on the relationship between exile and empire, this section will closely examine four sequences at length: Rosa Diamond, the Imam, Gibreel/Mahound/Ayesha, and, most closely, the overall complexity and progression of Chamcha’s double-exile. The other exiles, including the Cones, Osman the Bullock Boy, Mirza Saeed, and the Sufyans, while relevant for their varied forms of acceptance and resistance to their exilic situations, will not be examined.

393 “A survivor of a wartime prison camp” (295), Otto Cone had forsaken his Jewishness and his Polishness when he fled to London, taking on Englishness with vigor through name changes and mimicry, his wife dressing up “to be his Cecil Beaton grande dame” (298). Otto avidly assimilated:

"I am English now," he would say proudly in his thick East European accent.

"Silly mid-off! Pish-Tush! Widow of Windsor! Bugger all." In spite of his reticences he seemed content enough being a pantomime member of the English gentry. In retrospect, though, it looked likely that he'd been only too aware of the fragility of the performance, keeping the heavy drapes almost permanently drawn in case the inconsistency of things caused him to see monsters out there, or moonscapes instead of the familiar Moscow Road. (297-98)

Otto’s mimicry can be seen as both a refuge from his camp experiences and as an example of the comic/traumatic lengths that people go to in order to be at home in their exile, transforming themselves to suit their new land.

394 It might argued that Osman is rootless or a permanent exile since he is a traveling performer and “landless” (222). However, his “conversion to Islam had been largely tactical” and he found it more beneficial to be in the “Muslim village” of Titlipur.

395 Mirza had accompanied Ayesha and her followers, from the village of Titlipur down to the Arabian Sea as they undertake their Hajj (and acting all the way as a devil’s advocate sowing doubt), fighting her to the very end of his own life. And yet, in the end,

… something within him refused [closedness and doubt], made a different choice, and at the instant that his heart broke, he opened.

His body split apart from his adam’s-apple to his groin, so that she could reach deep within him, and now she was open, they all were, and at the moment of their opening the waters parted, and they walked to Mecca across the bed of the Arabian Sea” (507).

He had been an exile to his faith and his village. In the end, it could be argued that he becomes an exile to his own heart and mind.

396 Mohammad Sufyan is the “exiled schoolteacher” (251) who presents Chamcha with the two choices (Lucretius versus Ovid) that may explain his many dilemmas: his metamorphosis, the loss of his livelihood, his wife, etc. See discussion below on pages 297f.

His wife, Hind, becomes the mistress of their household in exile (cf. 247-50). She does not accept her place in London, but prefers the “imaginary homeland” she continually constructs through her cooking, film-watching and keeping up with current events. We are informed that to deny the ghosts outside the café, [Hind] stayed indoors, sending others out for kitchen provisions and household necessities, and also for the endless supply of Bengali and Hindi movies
The Rosa Diamond sequence is one of the more interesting and much discussed cases in this work, having been considered by Steven Walker, Homi Bhabha, Timothy Brennan, and Nico Israel. Walker begins his “Scapegoating and the Xenophobic Imagination in Ulysses and The Satanic Verses,” which focuses on the migrant dilemmas faced by Chamcha, by highlighting the appearance of “an ostrich [which] appears near the site of the battle of Hastings ‘running along the midnight beach in the direction of the Martello tower.’” He emphasizes two points here: that the bird is “magical and illegal” (in that it would never be found wandering the beaches in England) and that the “Martello towers were constructed to keep foreigners out” (605). He also points out that this tower, near Hastings, “marked the beginning of a successful foreign invasion of England by William the Conqueror” (605). It is also the very site where the former self-exile, Saladin Chamcha comes ashore “splutter[ing…and] burst[ing] into foolish tears” on VCR through which (along with her ever-increasing hoard of Indian movie magazines) she could stay in touch with events in the ‘real world.’ (250-51)

See Baucom, pages 203-205, for a good consideration of this dilemma and complexities encumbered with her daughters’ “Englishness”—they refer disdainfully to their parents’ homeland as “‘Bungleditch’ (The Satanic Verses) (259). However, at the same time, Hind is mindful enough of the English, as she works their system, “raking in the cash” as she takes in “thirty temporary human beings” on an ongoing basis, “owing to the crisis in public housing…turning blind eyes to health and safety regulations, and claiming ‘temporary accommodation’ allowances from the central government” (264). They are permanent exiles in England and from their homelands, part of what Rushdie termed the “New Empire within Britain” (discussed above on pages 86ff.). Thus, while she looks back to the “real world” (which is put in quotes in The Satanic Verses) of Bangladesh and India, she takes full advantage of “the real world” (264, not in quotes) in Ellowen Deeowen.

Walker declares that “The Satanic Verses deserves…to be heralded as a postmodernist Ulysses” (606), emphasizing that further comparisons should be drawn between the two works. One similarity that should be pointed out is that Joyce’s Ulysses is another epic work by a self-exile and its protagonist is the exilic Leopold Bloom; in addition, Andras Ungár’s recent Joyce’s Ulysses as National Epic: Epic Mimesis and the Political History of the Irish Nation State considers the ways in which Joyce’s work can be viewed within the tradition of the national epic.

Rushdie is probably referring to the remaining Martello towers that are in Rye and Pevensey Bay, some ten miles in either direction from Hastings (“South Coast Martello Towers”). As Walker points out, a Martello tower figures significantly in Joyce’s Ulysses as a defense against outsiders.
(Rushdie 1992, 10), becoming what Edward Said has termed a “true exile,” since all choice in the matter of where he is and what he is has been snatched from him. Chamcha has become a refugee, an illegal (like the “ostrich” and “magical” in his survival) and, certainly incapable of conquering England in his present circumstances.

Once more on land, Chamcha and Gibreel encounter the eccentric and dreamy octogenarian Rosa Diamond, who eagerly awaits and envisions William the Conqueror coming ashore once more. Rosa is a double exile—she had been sent abroad from England to Argentina to live with her husband Henry, then forced to return “home” to England when she was caught with her Argentine lover Martín de la Cruz. Her hours are filled with ghosts, the “unfinished business” (129) of this past, most significantly this “story of stories,” this inescapable romance with Martín de la Cruz “which she had guarded for more than half a century” (151). She has imagined and cast the newly-exiled Gibreel, whom she calls “the impossible stranger” (134), in the role of Martín. So strong are her “ghosts” that they are revisited even after death has closed her eyes—she and Martín are reunited once more again down at the boathouse where Gibreel succumbs to his role while Rosa lies “down amid the random clutter of English life” (156).

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400 As such, he fails to live up to his namesake, the Sultan Saladin (c. 1138-1193) who ruled what is now Egypt and Syria and subdued much of the Holy Land. Ironically, we are informed much later that Saladin Chamcha “had idolized and come to conquer” the England of his dreams (The Satanic Verses 270). Later, Joshi comments to Pamela that Chamcha “was a real Saladin….A man with a holy land to conquer, his England, the one he believed in.” (175).
401 Though Rushdie highlights the protean qualities from the outset, as the sequence begins and ends on the sand, at the edge of the English Channel, a place where dreams and reality are confused.
402 As Rosa Diamond revisits her ghosts, she calls out “Come on, you Norman ships, she begged: let’s have you, Willie-the-Conk” (129). Spivak comments that in this section, Rushdie “stages the Norman conquest as immigration” (84), so that we are reminded that England has been “home”-ruled by foreigners since the mid-eleventh century. See note 205 for Anderson’s consideration of this dilemma.
The whole sequence is an intersection of exiles with multiple, divergent and conflicting histories/ divergent narratives about whom they are, where they are and why they are there. Rosa relives the past from which she had been exiled. The befuddled Chamcha protests to the arresting policemen, “you’ve got to believe me, I’m a British ….with right of abode” (140), as they arrest him for illegal entry.\footnote{The most telling line comes when Chamcha declares that he is “Maxim Alien” (140), a character he had voiced on television. To the policemen, he is an alien or outsider. That he is British with right of abode is a very particular point for someone like Chamcha who does not “look” or “sound” British. Formerly, under the British Nationality Act of 1948, broad citizenship rights were granted and included persons in countries that were technically dominions, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Newfoundland, India, Pakistan, Southern Rhodesia and Ceylon (Part 1,1 (3)). The full text of the bill is available online through the British Office of Public Sector Information. Early on in \textit{The Satanic Verses}, we are informed that “by the time of [Chamcha’s] graduation he had acquired a British passport, because he had arrived in the country just before the laws tightened up” (47).} Gibreel has come ashore, an exile from India, who “would have planted (had he owned one) a flag, to claim in the name of whoknowswho this white country, his new-found land,” (131) but has soon been banished to the role of imagined “foreign” lover.

These conflicting histories/narratives stress the ongoing dilemma of Englishness and, by extension, similar attempts to create closed and cohesive accounts that convey the story of a people. Who are the English? They are Normans and yet not; they are women aching for Argentina and yet not; they are Indians with the right of abode and yet not, etc. According to Bhabha, this whole section emphasizes the notion that “national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives” (\textit{Location of Culture} 242). The question is: whose national memory? Rosa is both British, and yet not, since she has exiled herself to a past that she finds most divorced from England, again and again into the tender embraces of Martín de la Cruz. In this instance, the past (place, space and people) is displacing the present. Chamcha is both British and not—he
has no passport on him and his name certainly does not sound English, as the arresting policemen inform him. In this instance, the present is displacing the past. Gibreel is caught between the present and the past, fully grounded in neither, yet vaguely aware of this dilemma as he asks himself: “what am I doing here…this is someone else’s place” (151, his emphasis), reinforcing and emphasizing Rushdie’s point that these same words could be thought or spoken by every other character in this section.

This dilemma crops up again in new forms once Gibreel arrives at Alleluia Cone’s place in London. “Even the serial visions have migrated now [and he is] staring into the future, the bearded and turbaned Imam.” The dreamed imam, we are informed, is:

An exile. Which must not be confused with, allowed to run into, all the other words that people throw around: émigré, expatriate, refugee, immigrant, silence, cunning. 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. He hangs there, frozen in time, translated into a photograph; denied motion, suspended impossibly above his native earth, he awaits the inevitable moment at which the photograph must begin to move, and the earth reclaim its own. (205)

As Nico Israel points out, the Imam, like Rosa, “cannot relinquish [a] vision of the imagined past”; however, “she preferred her overseas ‘banishment’ to life in her native country” (164), while he yearns only for the romanticized/idealized vision of his desh or “homeland.” Like Helenus and Andromache in the Aeneid, the imam is married to a specific vision of the past, because “the exile cannot forget, and must therefore simulate”

404 With regard to the names of the policemen, we are informed that “Chamcha found a scrap of anger from somewhere. "And what about them?" he demanded, jerking his head at the immigration officers [named Stein, Novak and Bruno]. "They don't sound so Anglo-Saxon to me.” (163)

Walker’s “Scapegoating and the Xenophobic Imagination in Ulysses and The Satanic Verses” treats this section in vivid detail, treating the national issue indirectly.
(208) since he is “always looking back.” As such, this exile denies the present and the future. Indeed, just as Helenus and Andromache undertook to recreate a new Troy, which was merely a copy of their destroyed city, so too does the Imam work to undo the work of time and to begin the “commencement of the Untime of the Imam” (215).

The imam’s “imaginary homeland” remains forever unchanged, recalled banally in “a small group of postcards bearing conventional images of his homeland” (206). Both this exile and his imagined community are like the photograph of a ball suspended in air, since the future of his land and the return from his exile are rooted firmly in how he imagines the past should have been. Moreover, the condition of his exile and his return spring from a revolt against history itself and the very notion of presencing or leaping out: the imam proclaims, “‘We will make a revolution …against history’” (214).

Thus, Rosa Diamond and the Imam, do not “leap out” but rather they “leap back” to that past in order to maintain a type of stasis; as such, they remain trapped within irresistible romances, endlessly repeating and recycling familiar tropes and actions.

Of course, these “irresistible romances” are produced by Gibreel, who, in the growing thrall of madness, has bounded beyond the confines of law, custom and culture, evoking ideas and ideals that are antithetical to the notion of civilization that Rushdie is

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405 The exile also never seems to look out, leap out and engage with the world in which he finds himself. In the imam’s apartment, “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” (206). There is a risk of impurity, hybridity and the very presence of an alternate way of living and perceiving.  
406 See discussion on pp. 259f. and note 369.  
407 If the imam has any sense of presencing, his bridge (the metaphor that Bhabha uses) is a Moebius-strip which is ever folding back upon itself. There is not a “beyond” which he anticipates unless it is the “beyond” which moves into the sense of history as divine fiat. The imam’s Untime is focused solely on maintaining stasis and avoiding any threat of change.
propounding. He is presented as “an untranslated man” (427) who becomes more uncompromising, more unyielding and singular as he is overtaken and overwhelmed by dreams and phone calls. His exilic themes in the dream sequences of Mahound and Ayesha reveal the extraordinary ways in which he has exceeded the confines of place, space and people. His dreamed Mahound, exiled from Jahilia for twenty-five years (359), has returning hardened and unwilling to compromise, and has become “obsessed by law” and the need to “cleans[e]… the House [of the Black Stone]” (373).

His Ayesha is the same. She leads a group of pilgrims to Mecca and will reach it by walking through the Arabian Sea. Then she is tempted to compromise: Mirza Saeed proposes “to fly [her] and Mishal [his wife], and let’s say ten – twelve! – of the villagers, to Mecca” (498). She consults her angel, Gibreel, for guidance and in the end refuses to make any concessions to Mirza Saeed. We are told that Mirza’s “offer had contained an old question: What kind of idea are you? And she, in turn, had offered him an old answer.

408 Gibreel can be compared to the Sikh terrorist Tavleen (who leads the group that had hijacked Bostan Flight AI-420 at the beginning of The Satanic Verses), who says: "When a great idea comes into the world, a great cause, certain crucial questions are asked of it….History asks us: what manner of cause are we? Are we uncompromising, absolute, strong, or will we show ourselves to be timeservers, who compromise, trim and yield?" We are informed that: “Saladin Chamcha want[ed] to argue with the woman, unbendingness can also be monomania, he wanted to say, it can be tyranny, and also it can be brittle” (81). Of course, Gibreel can also be compared with Mahound, of whom he dreams. When Gibreel wanders the streets of London, the poet Baal comes into a waking dream, asking:

Any new idea, Mahound, is asked two questions. The first is asked when it's weak: WHAT KIND OF AN IDEA ARE YOU? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accommodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? -- The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world. (335, his emphasis)

Moreover, Gibreel’s acting is intended to echo his state of mind. We are informed that in the film “The Parting of the Arabian Sea,” his portrayal of “the archangel had struck many critics as narcissistic and megalomaniac” (513).

409 See also The Satanic Verses 125f.

410 The House of the Black Stone is the Ka’aba, located in Mecca.
I was tempted, but am renewed; am uncompromising; absolute; pure” (500, his emphasis).

In the end, Rushdie’s repeated emphasis on Gibreel’s growing intransigence, in his dreams and in his waking, frantic “reality,” mocks the notion of him being an “untranslated man” for whom there exists “an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogeneous, non-hybrid, ‘pure’” (427).411 He is cannot survive in a world that demands flexibility, change, translation, hybridity. Ironically, he is the most protean of figures in this work, which is reflected in the recurring theme of doubt which infests his waking hours in London and his dreams; however, he resolves only to repudiate this doubt in his dreamed Imam, Mahound, Ayesha, as well as through his visitation of judgment on London,412 his murdering Whiskey Sisodia and Alleluia Cone,413 and his eventual suicide.414 As such, Gibreel cannot supersede exile; it is an essential part of what he has been and what he was in the process of becoming.

In fact, he came to represent the very antithesis of Chamcha, but not because Gibreel remained Indian while the latter became an “English chamcha” (83). A chamcha or “sycophant,” as the name signifies in Urdu,415 is flexible, which stands in sharp

411 Later on, in the Shepperton studios sequence (421-431), this sense of Gibreel’s inflexibility and inability to adapt is reinforced. The narrator informs us that Gibreel, for all his stage-name and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses; – has wished to remain, to a large degree, continuous – that is, joined to and arising from his past; – that he chose neither near—fatal illness nor transmuting fall; that, in point of fact, he fears above all things the altered states in which his dreams leak into, and overwhelm, his waking self, making him that angelic Gibreel he has no desire to be; – so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as ‘true’ (427).


413 See pp. 542-545.

414 See p. 546.

415 See note 58 above for the definition provided by Rushdie in his well-known essay, “The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance.” His emphasis is that a “chamcha” is “a person who sucks up to a powerful
contrast to Gibreel’s attitudes and actions. Chamcha is a translated man,\textsuperscript{416} which indicates not only his ability to become English, but more significantly, his ability to eventually become Indian while living with Bangladeshis in London, when he is exiled to the “city visible but unseen.” This significance of Chamcha learning “Indianness” has been discussed by Aravamudan, Kalliney, and Ball;\textsuperscript{417} however, none of these discussions has considered the delightful irony that a Bombayite like Chamcha learns his “Indianness” from Bangladeshis—which would never happen were he to have remained in Bombay, and could only have occurred in a city like London, where Bangladeshis, Rajasthanis, Punjabis (East—in India, and West—in Pakistan) and Biharis (from}

\textsuperscript{416} Gillian Kane’s article, “Migrancy, the Intellectual, and the City in The Satanic Verses,” discusses this notion of the translated man at length, noting how Saladin describes himself in this novel as “[a]n Indian translated into English-medium” (58); Rushdie speaks elsewhere of migrants as "translated men," pointing out that "[t]he word 'translation' comes etymologically from the Latin for 'bearing across'" ("Imaginary Homelands" 17). He points out, too, that "metaphor" has the same meaning; in a conversation with Günter Grass, he explains: "I formed the idea that the act of migration was to turn people somehow into things, into people who had been translated, who had, so to speak, entered the condition of metaphor" ("Fictions Are Lies" 77) (Kane 46n8). However, in this description, Kane does not acknowledge Saladin’s transformation from one type of translated man to another. Perhaps it could be qualified that Saladin is an Indian man translated into English-medium translated into Indian-medium (as the result of this exile).\textsuperscript{417} While Indianness may be mentioned in critical texts, its meaning is not explored fully. When giving Zeeny an explanation of how he has lost his “Indianness,” Saladin Chamcha is rather facile—deriving his definition from games (“having forgotten the rules of seven-tiles and kabaddi”), religious practice (“I can’t recite my prayers, I don’t know what should happen at a nikah ceremony”) and a sense of direction (“in this city where I grew up I get lost if I’m on my own”) (58). Interestingly, according to this definition, one aspect of being “Indian” is knowing and practicing Islam.
Northeast India and from Pakistan) might all conceive of themselves as somewhat or mostly Indian due to the condition of their exile.418

Similarly, Gayatri Spivak indirectly points toward this new way of conceiving identity when she states how Rushdie’s London is like

the post-colonial [in that it is] divided between two identities, migrant and national [, in which the migrant may] choose to become the metropolitan: this is Saladin Chamcha in his first British phase…the post-colonial may, also, keep himself completely separated from the metropolis in the metropolis as the fanatic exile. (79-80)

She remarks that neither definition is preferred; rather, she beckons toward a consideration that “the post-colonial is not only a migrant but also the citizen of a ‘new’ nation for which the colonial experience is firmly in the past” (80-1), which implies that Chamcha’s exilic experiences foreground a new way of imagining community, in which “either/or” has been superseded by “both/and.” That is, he can be both Indian and British, which means he can be adaptable to both ways of being—he must have a hybridized and dynamic sensibility, which supersedes the untranslatable and is rooted in compromise.419

Of course, Chamcha, originally self-exiled from India, had conceived of an England that, according to his wife, “bloody Britannia” Pamela, was comparable to the

418 The Sufyans are from Dhaka, Bangladesh—not from India (The Satanic Verses 243). Originally called East Pakistan, following the partition of India in 1947, it became separate from Pakistan following a civil war in 1971.
419 Hal Valance informs Chamcha (Valance is Chamcha’s boss) that he is being cut loose—that he has no contract—and that it is part of the changes that are occurring with “the bloody revolution” that is going on. Valance’s cutthroat perspective veers sharply toward the intransigence seen in Gibreel. Immediately after Valance makes his views clear, we are told: “No compromises. You're in or you're dead. It hadn't been Chamcha's way; not his, nor that of the England he had idolized and come to conquer. He should have understood then and there: he was being given, had been given, fair warning” (270).
Imam’s Desh, all picture postcards and the like. She describes to Joshi how, for Chamcha, it was: “‘Him and his Royal Family, you wouldn't believe. Cricket, the Houses of Parliament, the Queen. The place never stopped being a picture postcard to him. You couldn't get him to look at what was really real’” (175). Britishness for Chamcha has that museum-like aura that seems both beyond reproach and unapproachable—like a picture-postcard: idealized and pure, an imaginary community. As such, Chamcha was self-exiled from both Indian and from England until he turned toward hybridity and away from exile.

This turn comes when he visits Bombay for the first time in twenty years and encounters Zeenat (Zeeny) Vakil, whom he associates with “eclecticism, hybridity” (288). She takes credit, with her friends, for beginning his change toward eclecticism, as she says “‘You could say we cracked your shell’” (57). His first Indian lover, Zeeny, is the Bombay physician who was also an art critic whose book on the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straitjacket which she sought to replace by an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take--the-best-and--leave-the-rest (52, my emphasis).

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420 Ian Baucom begins his consideration of Chamcha’s mimicry by comparing it to V.S. Naipaul’s refusal “to countenance his knowledge of the [English] nation’s transformation” (191) away from empire through the “confusions of...postcoloniality” (190). Many would find the comparison apt, since Naipaul has often been viewed as an apologist for colonialism and neo-colonialism.

421 With regard to the latter, we are informed that Chamcha was “abandoned by one alien England, marooned in another” (270); the one alien England being the coarse and brutal world bullied by the police and immigration workers, the other being the migrant world in Shandaar café and “Bed and Breakfast” (263).

422 Earlier, when considering the Hamza-nama tapestries in the Chamchawala art collection, we are told that “The pictures also provided eloquent proof of Zeeny Vakil's thesis about the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic Tradition” (70).

423 One could have fun with the British tradition in the same way, listing all of the various interlopers which contributed to what was to become England, including Celtic, Roman, Norman, German, American, Indian, Pakistani, Jamaican, Kenyan cultures, etc.
Zeeny’s eclecticism detailed here evokes an ideal of hybridity. As Nicole Thiara argues in her recent Salman Rushdie and Indian Historiography, this way of thinking “represents India as exemplary in embodying a functioning (but increasingly contested) hybridity” that represents India’s “multiple and syncretic heritage” (160).\(^{424}\) All exiles could find a home in such an India...if such a place existed outside of Zeeny’s imagination.

Of course, Salahuddin Chamchawala\(^{425}\) finds this “India” in Zeeny: a place, a space and a person with whom he can “leap out” from being only English or only Indian. We may not admire him for his culpability in Gibreel’s suicide and murders, since he is, as we are informed, “a creature of selected dis-continuities, a willing re-invention; his preferred revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, ‘false’” (427). And yet, in the end, he is as much an Indian Chamcha as he is an English Chamcha, willing to adapt and take what he can from both cultures in all of their multiplicities and divergent narratives. Such is why at the end of The Satanic Verses, he can beckon the bulldozers coming to lay ruin to the past, arguing that “if the old refused to die, the new could not be born” (546). Just the same, we could say that Aeneas had

\(^{424}\) Rushdie himself implicates Indian society’s varying levels of intolerance regarding syncretism in The Moor’s Last Sigh, Midnight’s Children, and quite bluntly in the introduction to his collection of essays titled, Imaginary Homelands. In this introduction he describes how an eminent Indian academic delivered a paper on Indian culture that utterly ignored all minority communities. When questioned about this from the floor, the professor...allowed that of course India contained many diverse traditions—including Buddhists, Christians and ‘Mughals’.” The characterization of Muslim culture...was a technique of alienation. For if Muslims were ‘Mughals’, then they were foreign invaders and Indian Muslim culture was both imperialist and inauthentic. (2)

Of course, partition itself and the subsequent restructuring of Indian states during the 1960s based on religious, cultural and linguistic lines represents the fierce other side to Zeeny’s argument.

\(^{425}\) Salahuddin Chamchawala is his given birthname, which had been truncated to Saladin Chamcha when he went to England, which is a common practice amongst migrants who move from one region or country to another.

The meaning of the first name is no different. With regard to his first name, see note 58. The addition of “wala” alters his last name to mean “spoon seller” or “spoon hawker.”
bulldozered the past (as fate had driven him) in that the Latins, Italians and Trojans had to abandon the old in order to make way for the new. Unlike Rushdie, Virgil had the benefit of history and could have his exile anticipate the coming empire (the form and presence of which was being negotiated while the Aeneid was being written).

Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* does not have this advantage; rather it can only look to the past histories of empire and colonization, “borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit,”—privileging none and valorizing all—while anticipating a future that is open-ended and multiple. It is a future that veers far from the confines of Chamcha’s self-exile and is oriented by the forced exile that shocked him into recognizing and accepting “the conflicting selves [that are] jostling and joggling within these bags of skin” (519). Near the end, Chamcha resolves: “I must think of myself, from now on, as living perpetually in the first instant of the future,” even as the “present moment of the past” (535) surges about him in all of its myriad forms and narratives—as the seeds of revenge that he had sown in the past had developed roots and had climbed above the surface.

Even so, at the end of the narrative, he realizes that “he was getting another chance” (547), as he leaps out of the confines of empire, the imaginary homelands and Naipaulian mimicry of the postcolonial, and begins to imagine an eclectic future that supersedes empire and its postcolonial vestiges.
Chapter Six

Reading The Satanic Verses, Reading Empire?

“The modern city…is the locus classicus of incompatible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side upon the omnibus. One universe, on a zebra crossing, is caught for an instant, blinking like a rabbit, in the headlamps of a motor-vehicle in which an entirely alien and contradictory continuum is to be found. And as long as that's all, they pass in the night, jostling on Tube stations, raising their hats in some hotel corridor, it's not so bad. But if they meet! Its uranium and plutonium, each makes the other decompose, boom…


The British Empire, just like the modern city, was a locus classicus of incompatible realities. Such is one of the premises of postcolonialism and its diverse ways of reading and interpreting those literatures, histories and sciences that impact and have impacted those peoples and realms who had been part of the empire. Ellowen Deeowen—Rushdie’s imaginary London—buffeted, compelled and, in some ways, reaching toward modernity,⁴²⁶ has merely become a condensed version of these incompatible realities as it—perhaps more than any other British locus, since “‘London’ served as a metonym for imperial power itself” (Ball 4)—has drawn so many former colonials to its ever-adapting and shifting communities.

One result of this irrevocable shift of culture and people to this former metropolitan center is a crisis of culture and the idea of civilization, which Rushdie discusses in “The New Empire within Britain.”⁴²⁷ This crisis is fraught with notions and

⁴²⁶ “Ellowen Deeowen” is Rushdie’s way of spelling out London, L-O-N-D-O-N. It is also the name of Part III of The Satanic Verses.
⁴²⁷ Discussed more fully above in Chapter Two
strategies for reining in change and holding onto those myths of the past that enable a community to imagine itself as whole, continuous and anticipatory of only living in an idealized and “authentic” past—such notions, strategies and myths are the stuff of romance. The crisis itself crawls, claws and crescendos toward the epic as irrevocable change—whether it will be called metamorphosis or dynamism or hybridity—overwhelms society. As noted above, it is also a moment when the act of representation calls attention to itself, as peoples labor greatly to forge an idea of where, what and who they are anew.

Just as the *Aeneid* represents such a crisis through its account of Virgil’s Rome, which created a condition for thinking or imagining a hybrid empire that had no bounds, so too does Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* help create the condition for imagining communities that look beyond such imperial confines, that look beyond both the imperial and the post-colonial. That is, when we read Rushdie here, we are reading empire—as it was and as it is becoming something wholly else.

Such a perspective demands that we broaden our consideration of empire and the post-colonial beyond their traditional confines since each successive regime in Europe whose territories and peoples had been part of that empire has imagined itself as having either inherited, superseded or overcome the affectations and afflictions that Roman conquest and colonization had on their societies. The degree to which the Roman Empire is imagined as part of these different societies has directly impacted the ways in which they have imagined their own identities.

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428 Imperialism is often marked out within the historical and economic framework of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Eric Hobsbawm’s *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* is more restrictive in its time frame.
And if, as Jaina Sanga states, “postcoloniality refers to a condition as well as a predicament in which formerly colonized people attempt to mark out their place as historical subjects” (2-3), then the history of Europe itself should be read, to a degree, as postcolonial. Obviously, there were shifts in economics, religion and in the sciences; however, they could be read as following particular and largely continuous paths during which the episteme, the conditions of possibility for thinking certain ways, shifted dramatically. However, the shift away from imperial aspiration (always looking back to Rome!) only began and accelerated fitfully in the twentieth century, most remarkably with the dramatic and bloody creations of India and Pakistan in 1947. Hence, the postcolonial condition resulting from the “expansion of European states and the dissemination of European ideologies during the nineteenth and early part of the

429 See Jaina Sanga, Salman Rushdie’s Postcolonial Metaphors. One of the difficulties with postcolonialism is that the definitions each differ (sometimes dramatically) from scholar to scholar. Sanga views it in temporal and spatial terms. In Maps of Englishness, Simon Gikanda argues that the failures of postcolonialism to move beyond the dilemmas posed by colonialism are rooted in “its failure to recognize how its grammar of radical critique was already inherent in colonial culture itself” (226). In “Reading the Satanic Verses,” Spivak views the postcolonial as that a means through which “every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the post-colonial is citation, re-inscription, re-routing the historical” (79), which implies a strategy of discourse (this quote is also discussed above, see note 266). In The Location of Culture, Homi Bhabha states that “it does not lie in the popular use of the ‘post’ to indicate sequentiality” but rather toward an ability to “transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (6). Dennis Walder’s survey on Postcolonial Literatures in English reaches a similar conclusion when he states that the postcolonial “carries an unignorable historic weight” which can give us ‘an awareness of the voices of others [that] must be brought back to a recognition of the forces—historical if nothing else—which have shaped their exclusion, as well as their own positions” (190). Finally, Peter Kalliney begins his discussion of globalization in The Satanic Verses by describing how:

In literary studies, the term "postcolonialism" suggests at least three related meanings. In its first sense, it implies a political position: postcolonial scholars participate in and extend anti-colonial praxis and theory. In its temporal and historical sense, it describes the social and cultural conditions of the postimperial world. As a critical category, it both encapsulates and exceeds its political and temporal connotations: postcolonial theory purports to interrogate not only the logic of colonial domination but also the capacity of theory to articulate viable critical alternatives. (50) This broad review accounts for both the self-criticism that Gikanda and Walder discuss as well as the political meanings represented by Bhabha and Spivak, along with the temporal approach described by Sanga.
twentieth centuries” (Sanga 1) is part of an older postcolonial condition to which many European countries were confined.\footnote{Along the lines of T.S. Eliot, much scholarship seems to take Roman inheritance and influence as part of a natural and logical condition of European arts, sciences and beliefs rather than as an imposed and unnatural conditioning. More recent scholarship, discussed above in Part II, has focused on the ways in which local societies used, reacted to and resisted Roman influences.} In the minds of such European societies, Rome maintained a hegemonic presence linked to identity; that is, to their sense of origins, histories and destiny. Such is why Salman Rushdie can describe Saladin Chamcha as hearing “the ghostly footfalls in [London’s] streets of Roman feet” (398) since it bespeaks the very conditions upon which his postcard England is imagined—one empire genealogically (for lack of a better word, the intention is ironic) descended from another. Britannia has not transcended its colonizers ab Romano Imperio, that is, from the Roman Empire; rather, the traces of Roman influence remain and are intrinsically linked to the present-day England.\footnote{John Ball describes how the Canadian novelist Kate Pullinger’s When the Monster Dies (1989) “indirectly links [the] postmodern, neo-imperial transformation [of London] both with a much older version of London as a Roman colony and with London’s own nineteenth-century imperial might. The city’s spaces reveal the material histories of several empires” (94). Such an imagined London takes into account the multiple traces that impact how London is read and performed.}

One of the more interesting things to evolve from Indian (such as Rushdie), Pakistani (such as Hanif Kureishi) and Caribbean (such as Derek Walcott) postcolonial writing has been its ways of fomenting transition and destabilization among the most rooted colonizations—that of Rome. Such writing does not only reconfigure the way that, for example, the British view the formerly colonized, but also the ways that they view themselves and their situatedness (their origins, history and destiny), which is intrinsically linked to Imperial Rome.\footnote{One contrasting parallel to this perspective has been addressed by Feroza Jussawalla, who proposes that another colonialism is not taken into account by Western readers (who privilege readings that emphasize}
Critical of the notion of postcolonialism, Ghanian writer Ama Ata Aidoo has commented that “colonialism has not been ‘post’-ed anywhere [since that] posits a notion of something finished” (qtd. in Gikandi 14, his emphasis). Thus, the postcolonial is, as Gikandi suggests, “the term for a state of transition and cultural instability” (15), or a continuation of the colonial. Echoing Gikandi’s views, Homi Bhabha focuses on how postcolonialism embodies restless and revisionary energy” that participates in the performative now that “touch[es] the future on its hither side (6,10, his emphasis). If we accept Aidoo’s critique and Bhabha’s optimism, then it is possible to understand that we have begun to enter an era in which it is possible to imagine a world that has evolved or shifted beyond empire and beyond the transitional (temporal and spatial) phases of postcolonialism. Moreover, it is only in retrospect that we can begin to see how a work like The Satanic Verses helped create conditions through which such imaginings were possible. As such, when we read this work by Rushdie, we are reading the traces and influences of empires (British, Islamic, Roman, etc.), yet we are reading beyond empire and anticipating what awaits us next.

Perhaps an analogy would clarify the distinction here between postmodern readings and what lies beyond postmodernism and postcolonialism. When Robert Graves (The Virgil Cult”) and W. H. Auden (“Secondary Epic”) read/wrote about Virgil and the Roman Empire (and in so doing, were reading the British Empire), they used whole Western colonization)—that of the Muslim conquest of the Indian subcontinent, which resulted in such hybrids as Gibreel Farishta (a Muslim who plays at being Hindu gods), Zeenat Vakil (another Muslim who embraces eclecticism), and Rushdie himself. In her most pointed remarks, Jussawalla comments that “migration and hybridization are not just conditions of recent postcoloniality. They are in Rushdie’s work metaphors for the Prophet, who himself was a migrant who took shelter in exile. Rushdie parallels their migration with Mohammed’s emigration to Yathrib, where in exile he rethinks his sense of identity” (60). Taking the conquest of India into account broadens the possibilities of interpretation quite a bit.
fragments of reference, with the expectation that their audiences would know the contexts and texts from which their poems and essays were drawn—the poignancy and power of these works lies in a shared affinity with boys and girls schooled on Virgil, Rome and Empire from an early age.

We are past such reactions and such ways of reacting to the British Empire. *The Satanic Verses* was published some forty-one years after the dissolution of the British Empire on the Indian subcontinent—for the greater majority of Indians and Pakistanis and Bengalis, the British Empire has been relegated to the stuff of history, anecdote or the imagination.

So what is it that Rushdie’s work (unwittingly perhaps) guides us toward? What has he anticipated that we can discern through his references? What sort of community is imagined that steps and looks beyond empire and, to a degree, beyond nation? What rootedness of origins remains or should remain? What histories matter or should matter? What sense of destiny imbues the vision of the characters? Where prophecy once guided and confined the imagined community, what guides or confines now? Or is moving beyond empire and colony merely a different way of reading them and writing—doing so in a way that does not valorize the past but revels in forgetting and doubting the validity of the past?

To a large degree, that is how Rushdie would have us read empire in *The Satanic Verses*. We do not have to be schooled in postmodernism or Virgil or Islam or Bollywood or the influence of the British Empire around the world. Moreover, we are encouraged to forget and doubt their roles, so that they cease to be the “unfinished business” of the past. Similarly, the readers’ encounters with the “classics” in this work
are often unwitting—presuming a forgetfulness (they are not familiar nor should they be familiar) and/or a doubtfulness (if they are familiar, they are not considered truthful or preeminent). In fact, unless we are cued by Mohammad Sufyan, the in-text scholar of *The Satanic Verses*, we would not recognize many of the Western classical references. And yet, as such, the “classical” reference is read within the performative context of the narrative itself, encouraging us to read the past through the doubting, forgetful and anticipatory present as opposed to reading the present through the lens of the destiny-driven past (as Virgil was read in the British Empire in the nineteenth century), the past that compels us to doubt this destiny-driven past (as Graves and Auden would have us read the *Aeneid*), effectively reworking the ways “classics” had been read.

So, what’s a classic? Some non-Virgilian Allusions & the Constancy of Change

It is one of the great paradoxes of this war [between the myths of stasis and metamorphosis] that the Sword wins almost all the battles, but the Pen eventually rewrites all these victories as defeats.

Salman Rushdie, essay on “Christoph Ransmayr”

“In the Voodoo Lounge,” Salman Rushdie’s pumped up review of a Rolling Stones concert at Wembley stadium in 1995, he works toward his conclusion with the remark that “it was the classics that really got us going; inevitably, because this music…has sunk so deep into our blood that we may even be able, by now, to pass the knowledge on genetically to our children, who will be born humming…those old satanic verses, ‘pleased to meet you, hope you guess my name.’ (90)
While the reference to the Rolling Stones’ satanic verses is an obvious wink, what is more relevant here is Rushdie’s description of these “classics.” His emphasis is that “these songs are not museum pieces [but rather that] these songs are alive” (90), giving sharp insight into how Rushdie views the classics and the classical—as living and essential, so much so that they seem to alter our very DNA.

While Rushdie may riddle us with classical references (both Eastern and Western) in his writing, he does not do so with the sense of homage that we find in the writings of that other famous exile to Britain, T.S. Eliot. For Eliot, a classic was not alive in the sense that Rushdie views it; rather it is a way of glimpsing past the present into a pure world of signs—for how else could he have concluded in his lecture, “What is a Classic?” that Virgil had a “peculiar kind of comprehensiveness” which provides “the standard [that has been] established once for all?”

Eliot believed that Virgil was the immutable basis for judging literature and society, the “universal classic” that stood at the heart of European civilization—in some ways, Virgil’s classic becomes like a mathematical formula, abstracted out and capable of judging external events and actions. Such a

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433 The reference is to the refrain of Mick Jagger and Keith Richard’s “Sympathy for the Devil” (1968). Rushdie also alludes to this song in Part V. “The City Visible but Unseen” when the “image of the dream-devil started catching on” in Brickhall, inspired by Chamcha’s transformation into devilish goatman. The narrator states, “Sympathy for the Devil: a new lease of life for an old tune…pleasechu meechu, the radios sang, hopeyu guessma nayym” (286).

434 Interestingly, this consideration of a classic echoes Kermode’s discussion of Sainte-Beuve’s admiration of the classics and the Latin imperialists. Kermode states that “the classic belongs to a privileged order of time and history [and that] for [Charles Augustin] Sainte-Beuve [who wrote “What is a Classic?” in 1850] this order is continuous, almost genetic” (19).

435 This essay is discussed above in detail on pages 172ff.

436 Eliot’s interpretation is important because it provides one of the more common ways in which people apprehend the “classics,” in particular those works that must be translated into a vernacular for the greater majority of the reading public. The translation may change, but the popular perception (which does not take the work of philologists and other scholars into account) remains that the classical text is fixed and unchanging. These works, whether they are satire or epic or idyll or tragedy or comedy or novel or elegy or gospel or psalm or surah, are perceived as having a peculiar kind of comprehensiveness; they provide the
perspective merely seems to make the classics tyrannical and drains them of the aliveness that Rushdie found so invigorating in the Rolling Stones concert.

As such, the classics have become like the “Sword” that Rushdie has signified as representing tyranny and stasis—and it is only through art, through the creation of works such as *The Satanic Verses* that the pen upsets this stasis, this “dream of eternity, of a fixed order in human affairs” (“Christoph Ransmayr” 291). Writing with the Classics as part of his repertoire has become a deliberate way for Rushdie to unfix or destabilize the meanings of these signs, playing with standards and unraveling their seeming comprehensiveness; he recharges, revives and reenergizes poems, novels and dramas that have long been exiled to the domain of classicists or other scholars.

As discussed earlier, Rushdie relishes the opportunity to mash up classical literature, philosophy and religion, along with pop culture, post-pop, postmodern, postmortem, the morbid and the mordant—mindful of the past and beckoning toward the beyond. In his works, the classics, like all other references and metaphors he offers, may have the power to conjure; however, they are effectively destabilized from their fixed realms and brought into new and often not entirely appropriate circumstances. They occupy spots both comfortable and discomfiting amongst all the various other references all hodgepoded and jammed helter-skelter in among each other.

Eliot’s view of the classics can be better apprehended in relation to Benedict Anderson’s conception of “sacred languages” which have been used by different religious groups to signify their distinct relationship with “the superterrestrial order of power” (13). Anderson points out that during the era in which sacred language held particular sway “the deader the written language – the further it was from speech – the better: [since] in principle everyone has access to a pure world of signs” (13). Eliot’s lecture, “What is a Classic?” and his use of the classics intimates that they possess this certain fixedness and immutability.
One strong example of this hodgepodge/helter skelter can be found in Midnight’s Children, Rushdie’s post-colonial novel that examines and questions the founding and maturing of modern India. The work begins, ironically enough, with a recitation of “Al-Fatiha,” the opening surah of the Qur’an—a traditional way of beginning a work of literature in Islamic culture. This recitation is acted out by Aadam Aziz, the grandfather of the novel’s protagonist Saleem Sinai, as he begins his fajr namaaz or morning prayer. In this scene (10-12), the very act of the prayer is turned inside out and made profane as Aadam’s recitation of Al-Fatiha is invested and infected with memories, trifles, fragments and burdens, all of which compound the complexity of his efforts to submit to Allah. He ends it all by “decid[ing] then and there that never again will he bow before God or man” (12). Hence, he looks back to precedent and the possibilities of unshakable faith, the stasis; his novel begins by imitating the pretense of the Qur’an, the classical work and foundation of Islamic belief and culture (that very Islamic sense of the ummah “community” which has never completely been overwhelmed or superseded by colonialism and nationalism), but exploits and subverts its practice and potential—the prayer morphs into something else altogether: as such, it is prayer and yet not, it is more than prayer and yet other than prayer. His reference to and use of this recitation is obvious; however, unless one is familiar with Islamic prayer and practice, the way in which Rushdie subtly imposes this classical reference upon us is lost, as are the meanings that can be perceived.

437 Aadam Aziz’s dilemma is echoed in Rushdie’s essay, “Imaginary Homelands,” in which he discusses our “fractured perceptions” and how “meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, […]” (12). The problem with Aziz is that his very actions emphasize the shakiness of meaning and memory.
This example represents how Rushdie’s narratives are, as Fawzia Afzal-Khan describes, a “mishmash of conflicting genres and modes…in which the Comic and the Tragic, the Real, Surreal, and the Mythic all ‘defuse’ each other so no one genre can predominate and ‘unify’ the others” (139),\textsuperscript{438} which is a “way of rejecting the narrative ‘strategies of containment’ inherent to Western novelistic forms” (Engblom 295) while also rejecting narrative strategies of containment inherent in Islamic and Indian forms.

Overall, The Satanic Verses is one thing as well as another; it is satire, storytelling and novel; it is also, as discussed above, an epic—not to the exclusion of other genres or categories—but, like James Joyce’s Ulysses, in addition to other categories; a work that is epic in scope, epic in contention, epic in scale. Just the same, while it includes so many contemporary or popular cultural references, it is also infused and suffused with a variety of “classic” or “classical” references that are placed side-by-side with (or in-between) so many other genres.\textsuperscript{439} It is a hodge-podge of Rushdie’s own version of “take--the-best-and--leave-the-rest” that Zeeny Vakil voices early in The Satanic Verses.

There are “classic” show tunes from Broadway musicals and notorious Bollywood movies;\textsuperscript{440} “classic” ghazals and Persian poetry;\textsuperscript{441} as well as “classic”

\textsuperscript{438} Afzal-Khan also states that “the description of Aadam Aziz [praying interrupted and scattered] is in the comic epic tradition” since it portrays a loss of faith “in mythic and surreal terms” (152).

\textsuperscript{439} The modern literary references are quite numerous and important, but will not be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{440} There are numerous direct and indirect references to Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe’s My Fair Lady (62, 298, 424) and Raj Kapoor’s 1955 film Shree 420 (5). See note 404 on the latter film’s reference to “420.”

\textsuperscript{441} One notable ghazal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz’ “Do not ask of me” is quoted (334-35). In his Tanner lectures, given at Yale in 2002, Rushdie mentions that he has fond memories of Faiz, who attended his sister’s wedding and who was a close friend of his aunt (371-373). He references the Persian poetry of Sa’di (circa thirteenth century) who wrote the didactic works Bostan and Gulistan—the names of the planes that
Western nursery rhymes and fairy tales. There are references to both the classical literary works that form the foundation of Islam belief and thought: the Qur’an an and the Hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammad). There are brief asides to the Indian epics: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. There are also explicit and endearing references to well-known “classic” English works of literature, among them William Shakespeare’s Othello and Julius Caesar, along with an extensive sequence that is based on Charles Dicken’s novel, Our Mutual Friend. In addition, there are allusions to John Milton’s Paradise Lost and William Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Tracing the line of descent further back in the West, there are Classical references or allusions to Roman literature, including Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Lucretius’ De Rerum Natura (On the Nature

Saladin Chamcha rides: the former on his trip back to London (The Satanic Verses 1ff.) and the latter on his second return to India (512).

Saladin uses nursery rhymes to drive Gibreel over the edge, culminating in a rhythmic jumble of words that Gibreel rambles before he kills himself (544-45). There are multiple references to Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood.

Such form the bases for the “Mahound” and “Return to Jahilia” sections of The Satanic Verses. The notorious “satanic verses” in this book are a variation of Surah 53, An-Najm, “The Star” (The Satanic Verses 114, 123).

Gibreel stars in an adaptation of the story of Hanuman the Monkey King from the Ramayana (25) and later makes a “blasphemous” version of the story of Rama and Sita, also from the Ramayana (539). Mishal Sufyan describes the streetfighting in Brickhall with comparisons to the Mahabharata (283).

Othello is referenced several times (62, 248, 315, 398, 428, 466) and Julius Caesar is referenced when Allie says to Gibreel, wrapped in a bedsheet, “You look like Brutus, all murder and dignity […] the picture of an honourable man” (316). Other plays referenced include Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra and The Merchant of Venice.

This sequence (421ff.) involves the staging of Dicken’s novel as a Lerner and Loewe-style musical (in particular, “My Fair Lady!” with a brief reference to Rex Harrison), titled “Friend!” The sequence describes how Shepperton Studios in Surrey has been made up to conjure Dicken’s London. It is here that Chamcha and Gibreel encounter one another for the first time since they were at Rosa Diamond’s house.

These are perhaps two of the most appropriate references in a work called The Satanic Verses; the other (modern) source is Mikhail Bulgakov’s 1967 novel The Master and Margarita. The influence of Bulgakov’s novel on Rushdie’s work has been examined by Radha Balasubramanian.

When Rekha Merchant (on flying carpet) confronts Gibreel as he wanders the streets of London (322-324), the narrator quotes Milton’s Paradise Lost extensively (VI.800-803, 888-890) as part of a hodgepodge of references which describe Shaitan (Satan); the other references here are to the Qur’an, Deutero-Isaiah, and the Book of Chronicles.

When Gibreel finds Allie’s copy of William Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he quotes several lines (304-5).
of Things), Lucius Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* (also called, *Asinus Aureus* or *Metamorphoses*) and Virgil’s *Eclogues, Georgics* and *Aeneid*. Finally, there are also references to Greek myths, including mentions of Procrustes, Circe, and the Olympians.\(^{448}\)

Amid all of the hubbub surrounding the fatwa and the charges of blasphemy which became known as “the Rushdie affair,”\(^{449}\) there appeared a short article by Beert Verstraete titled “Classical References and Themes in *The Satanic Verses*,” which focuses on the “modest” but “significant role [of Greco-Roman contributions] in the narrative and thematic framework of Rushdie’s novel” (327). To date, it remains one of the few considerations of the contribution these references play in the text.

\(^{448}\) Procrustes (405) “laid out travelers on his bed, stretching them until they fit (if they were too short) or cutting off the parts that extended (if they were too tall)” (Brians 73). He appears in Plutarch’s *Lives* (and other texts). Circe is the minor goddess who enchants Odysseus and his crew in *Odyssey* X. The Olympians is a generic reference to the Greek pantheon (also used by Roman writers, cf. *Aeneid* II.779, where Jove is called *superi regnator Olympi*, (“the ruler of lofty Olympus”).

\(^{449}\) The “Rushdie Affair” has received much press and scholarly attention and it will not be discussed at length here other than to acknowledge the impact it had on the reception of *The Satanic Verses*. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the charges of blasphemy, the fatwa and the attendant response by artists, theologian, and politicians have done a disservice to this work, to the extent that they have pigeon-holed our perception of *The Satanic Verses*. It is almost impossible to read this work, as Gayatri Spivak attempts in her 1989 article “Reading *The Satanic Verses*,” “as if nothing has happened since late 1988” (79). Even Spivak can only give a nod and a wink to the controversy surrounding the book, firmly reminding her readers of the controversy while claiming to avoid it.

In his article on Rushdie published in late January 1989, Gerald Marzorati summed up the initial reaction to *The Satanic Verses*, which was first released in October 1988: “In England, [the book] has also been vilified and even burned at rallies by Islamic fundamentalists. The controversy […] is not just England’s controversy; the book has been banned in India, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.” Some two weeks after this article was published, the “Affair” peaked when the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini delivered his fatwa on February 14, 1989, which called for Rushdie’s death on charges of blasphemy. Since then, much has been written about the “Affair,” its relevance, meaning and causes. Daniel Pipes’ *The Rushdie Affair*, written from a decidedly libertarian perspective, was the first major work to respond to the fallout from the affair. The major context, reactions and responses are included in Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland Ed. *The Rushdie File*; other discussions include M.M. Ahsan and A.R. Kidwai Ed. *Sacrilege versus Civility: Muslim Perspectives on The Satanic Verses Affair*, which provides different perspectives on this issue. More recently, Paul Weller’s *A Mirror for Our Times: ‘The Rushdie Affair’ and the Future of Multiculturalism* appeared. This work focuses on how “the original controversy…can be better evaluated within the historical perspective that is provided by the passage of twenty years” (9). It also provides a substantial bibliography (though the majority of non-scholarly references are from British newspapers and magazines and do not take into account other Western and Muslim perspectives).
Verstraete’s essay points out that Rushdie’s use “of classical references represents one means whereby the novel is ultimately successful in presenting an artistically ordered and humanistically purposeful aspect to the thoughtful reader” (328). He points out many of the classical Western references listed above, from Apuleius to Lucretius to Ovid, all of which are used to explain or justify the metamorphoses—demonic and/or angelic—that inform The Satanic Verses.

Just as Lucius in The Golden Ass undergoes metamorphosis and endures abuse, so too does Saladin Chamcha, though the latter’s experience “carries a more powerful undertone of social commentary and satire” than the former (329). Ultimately, though, this emphasis relates more closely to the choice one can make between submission to absolutism and the stasis that accompanies it (which Rushdie equates with tyranny), or submission to metamorphosis.

But which kind of metamorphosis? Mr. Mohammad Sufyan, an “ex-schoolteacher, self-taught in classical texts of many cultures” (243) offers two types: the Epicurean-Lucretian (from the De Rerum Natura) and the Pythagorean-Ovidian (from the Metamorphoses) (276-7). The former suggests that there is “no abiding reality save the indestructible atoms” while the latter emphasizes that “there is indeed an enduring spiritual essence, or soul, that survives a physical change” (Verstraete 331). Faced with these choices, Saladin “chose Lucretius over Ovid,” accepting the belief that we

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450 See the epigraph at the beginning of this section. With regard to the reference to tyranny, see Rushdie’s “A Declaration of Independence” in which he remarks, “The poetry of Ovid survives; the life of Ovid was made wretched by the powerful” (251).

451 In his 1996 interview with the London Consortium, Rushdie reiterates this dilemma, stating how “the question is whether or not there is an essential centre. And whether we are just a collection of moments or whether there is some kind of defining thread” (“Salman Rushdie Talks” 58).
possess an “inconstant soul” and that there is only “the mutability of everything” (The Satanic Verses 288). However, Duncan Kennedy notes that “Chamcha is at this moment disposed to side with ‘Lucretius’, but as the story progresses and Chamcha loses his goatish form and is reconciled with his father back in Bombay, ‘Ovid’ prevails” (“Recent Receptions of Ovid” 329). Chamcha sides with Lucretius because it makes more sense with his situation—he had concluded that his very self had been destroyed in the disasters that had befallen him, since everything else that had grounded his existence had been severed; the reconciliation cements the continuity of self and soul despite the changes. In the end, it is Sufyan’s logic that wins out.

In his 1999 lecture entitled “Influence,” Rushdie points out that The Satanic Verses is “a novel whose central theme is that of metamorphosis, [and that he had] evidently learned much from Ovid” (68). In addition, in a 1996 interview with the London Consortium, Rushdie noted that “The Metamorphoses of Ovid were quite useful. It’s one of my favourite books and after all this is a novel about metamorphosis” (“Salman Rushdie Talks” 58). His 1985 essay, “Travels with a Golden Ass,” is a cheeky and reflective piece comparing the declining Roman Empire with a declining America. In this essay, Rushdie describes how the “narrator of The Golden Ass…is transformed…into the tale’s eponymous donkey, and his ass’s-eye view of his age

452 Kennedy’s “Recent Receptions of Ovid” examines Rushdie’s interpretation and use of Ovid’s Metamorphoses in The Satanic Verses, as part of a continuity of Ovid’s overall influence on other late twentieth century writers. The other writers discussed in this essay are Christoph Ransmayr (The Lost World), and various poems and essays by Joseph Brodsky.
453 When he first proposes the two choices, Sufyan states: “for me it is always Ovid over Lucretius” (277).
454 In this same essay, Rushdie states that Suetonius’ The Twelve Caesars provided a basis for Shame, his novel about Pakistan and the bloody and terrible relationship between Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia ul-Haq (644-45).
reveals a world of ubiquitous cynicism, great brutality, fearsome sorcery, religious
cultism, banditry, murder” (365)—a world very similar to our own and the one depicted
in *The Satanic Verses*.  

**So, that’s a classic? Virgilian Allusions…& Irrevocable Change**

Rushdie rarely mentions Virgil in his writing. In his essay “Influence,” he
mentions the obvious role that Virgil’s story of “Orpheus and Eurydice” plays in *The
Ground Beneath Her Feet*, his novel of a globalized rock’n’roll history (68). But there
is little else. And that sums up what Rushdie has to say overtly about Virgil’s influence.

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455 When Chamcha, having been transformed into a goat, is dragged into the Shandaar Café and rooming
house by his friend Jumpy Joshi, Rushdie gives an obvious nod to Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*—beginning
with a quote and then with a direct parallel:

"Once I’m an owl, what is the spell or antidote for turning me back into myself?" Mr. Muhammad
Sufyan…responded to the now-indisputable horns on the brow of the shivering fellow whom
Jumpy, like the cat, appeared to have dragged in, with the above impromptu quip, stolen, with
commendable mental alacrity for one aroused from his slumbers, from Lucius Apuleius of
Madaura, Moroccan priest, A.D. 120–180 approx., colonial of an earlier Empire, a person who
denied the accusation of having bewitched a rich widow yet confessed, somewhat perversely, that
at an early stage in his career he had been transformed, by witchcraft, into (not an owl, but) an ass.

Petya Tsoneva Ivanova’s “Metamorphosis and Identity Construction in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic
Verses*” discusses the influence of Apuleius in great detail. This article considers:

   two possible and conflicting explanations of metamorphosis [: the first view reveals it as] a
   liberating experience that allows for new beginnings and celebrates life’s flexibility and
   productivity [in the physical world and another view that shows how] constant shape shifting may
   entail identity crisis and expose the fluid self to the risk of vanishing into virtual worlds. (51).

456 In the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the tail end of the opening chapter, “The Keeper of the
Bees,” explicitly references the Aristaeus epyllion (mini-epic) from Virgil’s *Georgics* IV.315-558. Umeed
Merchant, the photographer/narrator of this work, compares himself with Aristaeus, by describing how he
can “spontaneously generate new meaning from the putrefying carcass of what is the case [through] the gift
of conjuring response” (22)—that is, by taking pictures. This narrator gives us a short lesson on Virgil’s
most dense poem, asking

   Do you know the Fourth *Georgic* of the bard of Mantua, P. Vergilius Maro [whose] treatment of
   the Orpheus story is extraordinary: he tells it in seventy-six blazing lines [lines 453-527], writing
   with all the stops pulled out, and then, in a perfunctory thirty lines more, he allows Aristaeus to
   perform his expiatory ritual sacrifice [for having killed Eurydice] and that’s that, end of poem, no
His fiction tells a different story—there is not necessarily an expansive use of Virgil, but one that is economical and relevant to his overall thrust.

That he admires Virgil is clear.

Virgil’s very first appearance in Rushdie’s work is on the first page of Rushdie’s first novel, *Grimus* (1976), a soft science fiction work that reinterprets the twelfth-century Sufi poem “The Conference of the Birds.” The Virgil in this piece is more from Dante (as he guides Flapping Eagle, the Amerindian protagonist of *Grimus*, through the straits and narrows of his journey) than he is the Roman poet who penned the *Aeneid*. And yet, at one point, when he is talking to Flapping Eagle, this Virgil offers a smattering of Latin from the *Aeneid*: “*Timere Danaos et dona ferentes*” (62), a version of the well-worn phrase: “to beware Greeks bearing gifts.”

The *Satanic Verses* also has a few allusions to Virgil’s work, and like the Latin phrase just quoted above, these allusions are commonplaces that have, for the most part, been largely divorced from their contexts in Roman literature and culture. They have in them perhaps a bit of the irony that Winston Churchill had when he made his “unusual

more need to worry about those foolish doomed lovers. The real hero of this poem is the keeper of the bees [Aristaeus]. (22)

Virgil’s Aristaeus epyllion is also referenced briefly in Rushdie’s “Imagine There’s No Heaven,” a letter about belief and being. It is also alluded to in the Tanner Lectures on Human Values that Rushdie delivered at Yale in 2002, in which he compares the music of freedom to the music of Orpheus (“Step Across” 366-67).

In general, a “soft” science fiction work is not based on the hard sciences, such as chemistry, physics, biology and astronomy; it is H.G. Wells (soft science) rather than Jules Verne (hard science).

In *Grimus*, Rushdie’s Virgil, a “Mr Virgil Jones, [is] a man devoid of friends and with a tongue rather too large for his mouth [who was] something of a pedant and interested in the origins of things” (13). In his Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Rushdie briefly compares the noted Indo-Pakistani ghazal singer Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) to Virgil, as he is “showing us poor Dantes the way through Hell” (“Step Across” 373).

Rushdie has the Trojan priest Laocoön’s famous dictum from *Aeneid* II.49 “beware of Greeks bearing gifts” in mind (he is not keen on their “parting” gift of the Trojan Horse), though he alters the quote slightly, offering the infinitive *timere* for the original *timeo*. Rushdie’s use of Latin here is contrived and forced, as is much of this novel as a whole.
departure” during parliamentary proceedings and then quoted the opening phrase from the *Aeneid*—these Virgilian references (perhaps left over from Rushdie’s schooldays at Rugby) are resonant in the postmodern world because they have been fully recontextualized in our living and performative culture—especially if some of them have become clichés. They are alive, like the classics of the Rolling Stones, in that they are (to borrow Rushdie’s phrasing on this subject), “sunk so deep into our blood that we may even be able, by now, to pass [this] knowledge on genetically to our children.”

As with Rushdie’s other references, they are part of the *mélange* and hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that [which] *is how newness enters the world* (“In Good Faith” 394); they are appropriate for a world that has largely forgotten that Virgil had “prophesied” an empire without limits, an idea that exercised a particular influence on the British Empire and its colonies.

These allusions to Virgil’s works include the famous tags *sunt lacrimae rerum* “here are tears for human happenings,” “Love conquers all,” as well as the now infamous (in the United Kingdom) tag “rivers of blood,” an adaptation of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and a brief mention of the golden bough. Verstraete points out and discusses

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460 See note 227 for a fuller discussion of this reference.

461 Rushdie had his secondary school education at Rugby. Ironically, under the guidance of Head Master Dr. Thomas Arnold (father of the poet Matthew Arnold), the Rugby School in Warwickshire became renowned for “emphasising subjects that were a good ‘preparation for power’ [and] his disciples spread his ideas throughout the United Kingdom and Empire” (“History and Traditions”). When Rushdie, one of the last children born in the “jewel in the crown” of this empire, attended Rugby some 120 years after Arnold’s tenure, the place retained the vestiges of Britain’s imperial outlook—even though the empire itself was, at that point, more reminiscence than reality. For Rushdie and his peers, it remained a place where the curriculum was grounded in traditional Western classical learning. However, Rugby was, bitterly so, also a place where Rushdie discovered that he was a foreigner (Haffenden 32), and a wog (Tripathi 20).

462 This quote is from Rushdie’s review of a Rolling Stones concert, “In the Voodoo Lounge,” discussed above on 297f.

463 Discussed above in full detail in Chapter Four.
the one allusion, *sunt lacrimae rerum* (333, 334) and Ambreen Hai offers an indirect parallel to the *Aeneid* when discussing Rushdie’s “horror of closure” (298). Otherwise, there has been no other discussion concerning any Virgilian connections in *The Satanic Verses*. That being said, the following sections will use these Virgilian references to explore and better apprehend both the loss of empire and the anticipation of those places, spaces and people that are just beyond empire but already coming into play.

**Love & England:**

*Omnia uinct amor* (“Love conquers all”), Eclogue X.69

*uinct amor patriae laudumque immense cupido*

“love of country conquered him as well as a great desire for praise”

*Aeneid* VI. 823

“Don’t you know that one always grips a hock glass by the stem? What a nation of illiterate and unmannerly creatures Britain has become.”

Nirad Chaudhuri464

The final reference to Virgil in *The Satanic Verses* is “Love conquers all,” spoken by Mrs. Qureishi to Mirza Saeed in Part VIII, “The Parting of the Arabian Sea,” Rushdie’s magical realist account of the Hawkes Bay incident.465 This phrase is from the

464 This line is taken from an anecdote shared in British scholar Ian Jack’s Introduction to a 2001 edition of Chaudhuri’s *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. The entire anecdote runs as follows:

We were having lunch—roast beef prepared by his Bengali wife, Amiya. The Chaudhuris were far from rich, but a splendid effort had been made. Different glasses for the red and white wine, for the water, for the cognac. I gripped one of them by the bowl. A small Bengali hand, created far away in Kishorganj in 1897, reached across the table and slapped me on the wrist. Chaudhuri scowled. “Don’t you know that one always grips a hock glass by the stem? What a nation of illiterate and unmannerly creatures Britain has become.” (xi)

Chaudhuri (1897-1999), a controversial Bengali writer and historian, is discussed in further detail below, see pp. 304-305.

465 Rushdie’s story in “The Parting of the Arabian Sea” is about a young Muslim woman who leads the villagers of Titlipur on a pilgrimage to Mecca, having the intention to walk through the waters of the Arabian Sea, which separates Pakistan from Saudi Arabia. The passage culminates when the pilgrims
conclusion of Eclogue X (line 69), a poem which juxtaposes the ideals of poetry (tamen cantabitis, Arcades…soli cantare periti (l.31)) with the subject of an unworthy love (indigno...amore (l.10)). However, plopped into this new context, the notion that “love conquers all” has been transformed into cliché, the phrase becoming linked to a series of pop tunes—“Love is a Many Spendoured Thing” and “Love Makes the World go ‘Round” (487)—whose titles have also become clichés.\(^4\) That love—of empire, city, father, women, men, friends—is one of the major themes of The Satanic Verses is sometimes overlooked: Rushdie claims that it is “one of the book’s real themes...how human beings really become whole: through the love of God or through the love of their fellow men and women” (“In Good Faith” 395).\(^5\) And while these songs are referenced in the Ayesha storyline in The Satanic Verses, spoken in conversation with Mirza Saeed—a double for Saladin Chamcha—any of these clichés could also be applied to the

plunge into the waters and drown; leaving only the five members of the village who had lost faith in the journey and had not entered the waters with the pilgrims (though these five did jump in after them in order to try to save them). Mirza Saeed is the ever-doubting member of the pilgrimage who is ever-desiring Ayesha, the leader of the pilgrims. Mrs. Qureishi is Saeed’s mother-in-law. Rushdie’s narrative is based on the Hawkes Bay incident which occurred in Karachi in 1983 when some thirty-seven Shia Muslims followed their leader on a march into the bay, believing they were going to miraculously travel through the waters to the pilgrimage site of Karbala in Iraq. Eighteen of their number drowned, the rest were pushed back by the waves. This incident is discussed in detail in Akbar S. Ahmed’s “Death in Islam: The Hawkes Bay Case.” Ahmed describes how “rich Shiahs, impressed by the devotion of the survivors, paid for their journey by air for a week to and from Karbala. In Iraq, influential Shiahs, equally impressed, presented them with gifts, including rare copies of the Holy Quran (Ansari 1983: 6)” (126-27).

Ironically, what happened in reality is more fantastical and magical than what happens in Rushdie’s version of the story.

\(^4\) The first pop song (1955) was written by Sammy Fain and Paul Francis Webster and was a number one hit for the Four Aces; the second song (1958) is by Ollie Jones and was a hit for Perry Como. This whole section is littered with song references—perhaps to play on the fact that Ayesha, who leads the pilgrimage, admits that "The archangel [Gibreel who guides her] sings to me…to the tunes of popular hit songs" (497). Interestingly, “Love conquers all” is only listed as a song title after the publication of The Satanic Verses. \(^5\) This quote is from “In Good Faith,” Rushdie’s apology and defence of The Satanic Verses.
love that Chamcha, the consummate sycophant, had for England, London and the
English. 468

Saladin Chamcha had sought from an early age to arrive and conquer “his beloved
Ellowen Deeowen” (42) and become a “goodandproper Englishman” (43). His love for
England—after Andrew Marvell, grew “vaster than empires.” 469 And, indeed, it was love,
we are informed time and again. After all, when Chamcha has returned to his house in
Notting Hill, a cosmopolitan section of London, the narrator informs us succinctly that “it
all boiled down to love”; for “in his time [Saladin] had loved widely, and was now (he
had come to believe) suffering Love’s revenges upon the foolish lover. Of the things of
the mind, he had most loved the protean, inexhaustible culture of the English-speaking
peoples” (397-8 my emphasis). Even more than the young Salman Rushdie, who grew
up “with intimate knowledge of, and even sense of friendship with, a certain kind of
England: a dream England” (“Imaginary Homelands” 18), Saladin Chamcha loved this
many-splendoured postcard England, which his wife mocked as being made up of
“museum-values” (The Satanic Verses 399); this place and this people who made his
world go round.

Saladin’s first three loves had been “culture, city, wife” (400), all of which
embodied his “love of civilization” (401), represented in “ye olde dream-England which
he [had] so desperately wanted to inhabit” (174). Indeed, in an odd mix of self-

468 Mirza Saeed, a man of the world who was childless and had just turned forty, could be read as a double
for Saladin Chamcha. Moreover, Mishal, his wife, who “was dying of cancer…her breasts…full of the
malign nodules of death” (232), is also a double for Zeenat Vakil, who “had watched her mother die like a
bird being carved for dinner, first the left breast then the right, and still the cancer had spread. Her fear of
repeating her mother's death [had] placed her chest off limits [to Chamcha]” (53).
469 From Marvell’s well-known poem, “To His Coy Mistress.”
affirmation and protean narcissism, “he had given his love to this city, London,…its
conglomerate nature mirroring his own” (398); in loving London and England he found a
way to meet his “need for love” (174). London had been the center of empire, round
which the world turned, and he could conquer and “possess it and so, in a sense, become it” (398); thus, he too would become the center. He believed that love would conquer all
and that he, like London, “would be a site of fulfillment” (Gikandi 205). And yet, as he
reflects on all that he has endured—he has been captured, beaten, institutionalized and
marooned in an England not his own (and yet entirely his own)470—he finds that “his
love of [this] civilization [was] broken on the wheel” (401).471

Chamcha’s love for England, London, and the English had been idealized. In
fact, the narrator tells us that Chamcha:

had been striving, like the Bengali writer, Nirad Chaudhuri, to be worthy of the
challenge represented by the phrase Civis Britannicus sum. Empire was no more,
but still he knew ‘all that was good and living within him’ to have been ‘made,
shaped and quickened’ by his encounter with this islet of sensibility, surrounded
by the cool sense of the sea. (398)

In these “rhapsodic celebrations of empire and England,” Simon Gikandi recognizes

“Tennyson, Ruskin and other Victorian apologists for empire” (222). Yet the qualities
most indicative are those phrases quoted and borrowed from Chaudhuri, a self-professed
Anglophile, whose The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian began with the dedication:

To the memory of the British Empire in India,
Which conferred subjecthood upon us,
But withheld citizenship.

470 The narrator tells us that Chamcha, at the Shandaar rooming house, had been “Abandoned by one alien
England, marooned within another” (270).
471 Here is a brief reference to Ixion, who appears in the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in the Georgics:
atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis, “and the circleg of Ixion’s wheel was halted by the wind” (IV.484);
he is also mentioned at Aeneid VI.601. There are multiple mentions of Ixion in earlier Greek myths.
To which yet every one of us threw out the challenge:
"Civis Britannicus sum"  
Because all that was good and living within us
Was made, shaped and quickened
By the same British rule. (v)  

There is an ironic sensibility here which is combined with the bittersweet. Chaudhuri genuinely admires the British but is slighted by having been transformed into a “subject” who cannot exercise his full capacity as citizen and person. His turn of the phrase Civis Britannicus Sum is taken from a speech given by Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister of Britain, in 1849 when he responded to the Don Pacifico Affair. In Palmerston’s

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472 Describing the reactions and changes that were occurring in Great Britain during the passage of the Nationality Bill in 1971, Time magazine published a brief article, “Civis Britannicus Non Sum,” which noted—in what seem ironically nostalgic tones—how
In the bygone days of Empire, the Australian sheep farmer, the Gold Coast witch doctor and the Bengali peasant shared a common bond. All owed allegiance to the British sovereign; all were British subjects by virtue of that allegiance. As Edmund Burke put it, these were ties "which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron." (“The World”)

473 Chaudhuri’s autobiography covered the first fifty years of his life—from his birth in 1897—the year of Empress Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee—to 1947—the year in which India and Pakistan were granted independence. Always yearning to write history, Chaudhuri ended up becoming famous for describing the history that he lived through, focusing on the conflicting and complex duality of being both Bengali and British, each in greater or lesser degrees.

474 The article “Civis Britannicus Non Sum” also emphasizes how “in a moment of difficulty or danger, a man's British citizenship could easily be his most valuable possession” and to accentuate this value highlights the Don Pacifico Affair—a most interesting and ironic example—describing how:
In 1849, when Don Pacifico, a Jewish merchant of Malta, was refused compensation by the Greek government for injuries he had suffered at the hands of some of its citizens, Lord Palmerston, Britain's Prime Minister, sent the British navy to blockade Piraeus. British subjects the world over, Palmerston told the House of Commons at the time, could boast as proudly of their citizenship as St. Paul did when he said: “Civis Romanus sum.”

As discussed above, St. Paul’s citizenship was a rare and valuable thing (rare especially in the sense that persons from the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire were less interested in citizenship); Lord Palmerston must have relished the comparison concocted here between Britain and Rome—with the full implication that a person could proudly boast “Civis Britannicus sum” and receive the protection of the growing British empire.

The “Don Pacifico” affair is discussed in greater detail by Vance (225-228). Interestingly, Vance notes an alternate example where “Civis Romanus sum” was invoked by a Roman who had been captured, as
speech, the phrase intentionally calls to mind St. Paul’s well-known (in educated circles) declaration *Civis Romanus Sum*, “I am a Roman citizen.”475

The experience of Saladin Chamcha echoes these lines quite vividly. He had his *Civis Britannicus Sum* moment when he confidently declared “I'm a British… with right of abode,”476 when he was captured by the police outside Rosa Diamond’s house. But Chamcha, much like Chaudhuri, had his citizenship withheld—after all, when he declares his name, he is told “Look at yourself. You're a fucking Packy billy. Sally-who? -- What kind of name is that for an Englishman?” (163). He is legally British, but as far as the immigration officers are concerned, he does not look British and his name, despite its modifications, *certainly* does not sound British.

And yet Chamcha had worked so hard and so consciously to remake himself into the thing that he loved—a “goodandproper Englishman” with his bowler hat and ascot and his way of sounding English—he was in his London, which reeked of “imperial echoes – the Empire Way, the Empire Pool” (398), all that was proper.477 After all, as

475 See the discussion above in note 140.
476 The notion of the “right of abode” was written into British law with the passage of the Nationality Act of 1971, which was further modified by the Nationality Act of 1981. According to these laws, only certain persons were guaranteed the “right of abode,” which was originally defined in 1971 via patrial status—that is, those with a British-born father or grandfather; according to section 2(1)(c)) of the British Nationality Act of 1981, the definition was enhanced to include:

- CUKCs [Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, in relation to a time before 1 January 1949] who were ordinarily resident in the UK for any continuous period of 5 years before 31 December 1982 (time spent subject to immigration conditions can be included but the conditions must have been removed before completion of the 5 years).

Since Chamcha was born prior to 1949 in a British Dominion, he was considered a CUKC and he had lived in England for more than five years.

477 Through these two references, Empire Way and Empire Pool (now, called Wembley Arena) it is possible to see how London came to represent the imperial in name; ironically, the most obvious physical manifestations of empire in a city were to be found in New Delhi in India, which was designed by Edwin Luytens and Herbert Baker (see discussion above on pp. 149f.)
John Ball points out, “the material and sociopolitical remnants of empire are visible in Rushdie’s mid-1980s London” (202) and Chamcha thrives on these associations: indeed, Chamcha’s England is built on an idealized social “memory of the British Empire,” that place and that way of being that he would conquer and possess.478

Indeed, it is only when he is challenged, shaped and quickened through his odyssey from mid-air above the English Channel to his return to Notting Hill that he begins to discover that this love, like so many others, merely “represent[s] transitory realities” (Ball 202).

Yet it is also with the loss of this love of England, London and the English that he is able to apprehend his past and anticipate the future. In his essay “In Good Faith,” Rushdie juxtaposes Gibreel and Chamcha, noting that “Chamcha survives. He makes himself whole [at the end of the book] by returning to his roots and, more importantly by facing up to, and learning to deal with, the great verities of love and death” (398). The sycophant survives because, in the end, he is open to the challenges and losses of love: he learns to “fall in love with his father after…long angry decades” and “felt hourly closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins -- or rather Salahuddins -- which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices” (523). As with Aeneas, so with Salahuddin, the old had to die so that the new could be born: empire was no more and so is the Bombay of “childhood memory that makes [him] both nostalgic and sick.”

478 Ironically, Chamcha could be compared to Lucius Junius Brutus, the traditional founder of the Roman Republic. When Brutus appears in the Roman pageant described in Aeneid VI, we are informed that “love of country conquered [Brutus] as well as a great desire for praise” uîncet amor patriae laudumque immense cupidō (l. 823), an apt description for Saladin Chamcha too.
Indeed, he is encouraged by Zeeny to “embrace” Bombay and “becomes its creature; belong” (541). And yet his return to Bombay should not be construed as a return to his roots. When he had returned to Bombay after an absence of a quarter of a century, he had visited his father; while there, he “caught sight of a forty-year-old walnut-tree. ‘Cut it down,’ he said to his father. ‘Cut it, sell it, send me the cash’ (69). This had been his birth tree, which, roots and all, was ripped from the soil: the old had to die. Instead, Chamcha returns to Bombay as a chimerean graft—he is like a tree that could put its roots down anywhere.479 So it is with this sense of presencing that he can answer Zeeny’s cue at the very end with the simple “I’m coming” (546). All that remains with these final words is anticipation.480

479 Discussed in detail below, pages 329-331.
480 Spivak’s “Reading The Satanic Verses” focuses on Rushdie’s “anxiety to write woman into the narrative of history” (82). As such, she reads this ending quite differently, noting that “The Satanic Verses must end with Salahuddin Chamchawalla's reconciliation with father and nationality, even if the last sentence records sexual difference in the idiom of casual urban fucking” (83). Moreover, that Salahuddin has returned to Bombay does not adequately reflect a reconciliation with national identity—as discussed above, he learned and reacted to Indianess by living in the Bangladeshi Sufyan rooming house. Instead, Salahuddin’s “return” is a coming to terms with how things are, since he “become[s] its creature,” it is not merely a reinvention of how things were or should have been.

It also should be pointed out that this ending has a positive connotation that is absent from the Aeneid. A recent paper, “The Judgment of Paris and Iliad XXIV,” M. Davies has well described the way in which Homer’s final book establishes a contrast between the ability of men to achieve reconciliation with each other, and the relentless nature of the gods’ animosities: “[The Aeneid] ends not as the Iliad does on a note of mortal reconciliation and reintegration, but surprisingly and distressingly on a note of continued hatred, hostility and rage” (qtd. in Feeney 347).

In The Satanic Verses, the suicide of Gibreel acts as a final motivation to compel Saladin beyond the hatred and rage that had tormented him from the beginning of the work toward a compounding sense of mortal reconciliation.
Anarchy in the UK:

_Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno_, “I see the river Tiber foaming with much blood,” _Aeneid_ VI.87

….The most tedious lot are you British....This war…is the result of 2,000 years of European greed, barbarism, superstition, and stupidity.


Hanif Johnson, well-known lawyer and denizen of the Shandaar rooming house, declares: “‘Upstairs on [Jumpy’s] desk there’s a piece of paper with some verses written on it [by Jumpy Joshi]. And a title: The River of Blood.’” Johnson proceeds to read aloud one line: “‘In our very bodies, does the river of blood not flow?’” And then, with emphasis, Rushdie completes the connection, pointing out the reference: “Like the Roman, the ferrety Enoch Powell had said, ‘I seem to see the river Tiber foaming with much blood’ (186).481 This phrase, the most recalled part of what came to be known as the “Rivers of Blood” speech, was delivered by the nationalist Powell in July 1968; it was in this speech that he crystallized the nativists’ worst fears regarding what it was to be English and what England should be. The phrase alludes to _Aeneid_ VI.86-87; yet when hearing this phrase, who would know or even think of Virgil except that rare person who has endured a school that provides a classical Western education, grounded in the Greco-Roman tradition?

Jumpy certainly has Powell in mind. Indeed, this phrase, much like “love conquers all,” has been effectively divorced from its immediate Roman contexts and

481 Discussed above on pages 134f., 155f. and 185ff.
reinvested with meaning that is wholly part of British identity. For Powell, it spoke of the lost Empire having been stricken and overwhelmed by barbaric outsiders; at the same time, due to Powell’s preoccupation with the notion of investing in or creating a true English identity, this passage hearkens back to Virgil with its vision of the various turmoils that must be endured to found a nation. Indeed, Powell’s use of this imagery signals a call to arms as he tries to posit himself as Aeneas against the barbarian interlopers who are prepared to tear down civilization.

Powell not only tries to play the role of Aeneas here—where he can be both the founding figure, Aeneas (the unnamed “Roman,” as far as Powell is concerned), who is given the opportunity to look ahead and glimpse the future and understand his role in making his people attain their destiny; and also the Cumaean Sybil, wracked with the uncanny ability to offer visions of the future—for it was actually she who was filled with foreboding.

These words are part of the Cumaean Sybil’s pronouncement to Aeneas that fierce conflict, comparable to what he had lived through in Troy, would be compelled upon him and his people in order for their destiny to be fulfilled. As part of Powell’s speech, this phrase has a divisive and troubling history in England—as it evoked and seemed intended to provoke a coming bloody conflict between the recent migrants to England and the “natives.” In truth, Powell’s use of this line positioned him as Turnus (who may be conceived of as the anti-Roman), who had looked upon the arriving Trojans (driven by fate) as unwanted outsiders, anticipating coming strife and seeking to keep these

\[\text{\footnotesize 482} \] For Powell’s considerations of empire and nation, see above especially 156f. and 185ff.
\[\text{\footnotesize 483} \] For a full discussion of Powell’s speech, see pages 185-186 above.
\[\text{\footnotesize 484} \] See discussion above, pages 245-251.
people at bay. Yet Virgil’s text anticipates strife as part of the great labors that these exiles had to endure to found their empire—a process that culminated in inclusion and hybridity.

In appropriating Powell’s notorious Virgilian allusion, Jumpy had hoped to “reclaim the metaphor…turn it; make it a thing we [immigrants] can use” (186), which Rushdie later commented was part of the “central purpose of” this work, which is “the process of reclaiming language from one’s opponents” (“In Good Faith” 402). More compellingly, Jumpy’s use of this image on the behalf of migrants and exiles looks back to the role that it plays in the Aeneid, since the outcome of that sense of foreboding was to be an empire which blended foreigners and those native-born (autochthons).485 Ian Baucom shares this perspective when he states: “Adopting but estranging Powell’s metaphor, Rushdie revels in the effervescence of blood, tropes the street as capillary influence, and offers the migrant as England’s life-sustaining transfusion” (208). Thus, in this reading, commingling is inevitable and Powell’s “rivers of blood” allusion is an indirect acknowledgement of this fact.

Jumpy’s stilted reading not only attempts to reclaim this metaphor positionally—it is a warning to exiles of their tribulations—but he also reorients the metaphor in a way that reminds us of Shylock’s catalog of the shared humanity that Jews have with Christians, “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” 486 Overall, this conflation of Virgil with

485 Notably, Jumpy’s “reclaiming” responds explicitly to Powell’s reading of Virgil’s Aeneid.
486 The much referred to quote is part of a lengthier catalog that Shylock makes at the beginning of Act II, Scene I in The Merchant of Venice, put below in greater context:

... I am a Jew. Hath
not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs,
dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with
Powell with Shakespeare reacts not only to the sense that there is a shared humanity that migrants have with natives, but also to the sense that British law shifted from *ius soli* (“law of the soil”) to *ius sanguinis* (“law/right of blood”) in the 1970s and 1980s, altering nine centuries of practice.\(^{487}\) The further irony is the fact that the very same fear of miscegenation declared by Turnus in the *Aeneid*\(^{488}\) is revisited indirectly here through this reclaiming of metaphors, since racial miscegenation had been a primary fear of the British Empire and its successor nation.\(^{489}\)

In fact, both Gikandi and Baucom have both shown how “Powell and the newly restrictive nationality legislation he helped bring about\(^{490}\) severed ‘Englishness’ and ‘Britishness’ from an empire with which they had once been seen as coterminous” (Ball 187); there had been a loose sense of identity had been intrinsically shared by all of the people who had been subjects of the empire—merely due to their subject status.

Later on, after Hanif Johnson gives a speech to a gathering of immigrants in Brickhall, a “pretty young Asian woman” launches into Bob Dylan’s song, “I Pity the Poor Immigrant,” with its lines describing “how [the immigrant] was obliged to ‘build his

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the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

\(^{487}\) Rushdie’s essay, “The New Empire within Britain,” written as a reaction to the British Nationality Act of 1981, declares that “right to citizenship by virtue of birth, the *ius soli* [was] a right you had possessed for nine hundred years [and it] was being stolen from you” (136). See also Baucom’s discussion of this essay and the *ius soli*, esp. 197-98.

\(^{488}\) See discussion above, pages 268f.

\(^{489}\) See discussion above of the British Empire’s attitudes toward race on pages 146-155.

\(^{490}\) Powell was instrumental in the passage of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968 and the Nationality Act of 1971, which severely restricted the rights of individuals Commonwealth nations with regard to citizenship and entry into Britain.
Chamcha thinks about how “Jumpy, with his versifying attempts to redefine the old racist image of the rivers of blood, would appreciate that” (416). Here we have allusion layered upon allusion, some direct, others less so, looking back to the Sybil’s premonition that the Trojan exiles would meet resistance from the “natives,” from which eventually a new society and an empire would be born.491

Jumpy returns to the dilemma of how to use language to shape this argument and reclaim this metaphor, thinking about

*The real language problem: how to bend it shape it, how to let it be our freedom, how to repossess its poisoned wells, how to master the river of words of time of blood: about all that you haven't got a clue. How hard that struggle…”* (281, *italics* used to delineate Jumpy’s thoughts).492

Indeed, as Baucom notes, Jumpy has “an acute understanding of the productive values of an act of cultural misprision [though] he is a weak poet” (208).493

Ball’s final consideration here encapsulates the dual notion of rivers of blood represented by the Cumaean Sybil: they represent both the commingled blood that is shed

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491 Baal, the satirist of Jahilia, is introduced early in Part II, “Mahound,” of *The Satanic Verses*. Describing Baal’s poetry, the narrator states that “if rivers of blood flow from the cuts his verses inflict, then they will nourish him” (97), prefiguring the coming conflict between Mahound and Hind. This act of the poet also works to redefine the image sketched by Powell. Aravamudan comments how “Baal’s attitude acknowledges that satire ‘cuts,’ and cuts close to the bone; the ‘rivers of blood’ it lets loose are testimony to the performative nature of language, its magic” (10).

492 The words used here, “how hard that struggle,” are focused on the complexity and violence associated with immigrants becoming part of British society. In some ways, they reflect Virgil’s consideration *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*, (“how great a struggle it was to found the Roman people”). For this quote, see discussion above, pages 162f. and 223f.

493 John Ball discusses Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” speech in relation to Kamal Markanday’s novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972)—the novel begins in 1968—and reaches a conclusion that also is relevant to Rushdie’s allusion to this speech in *The Satanic Verses*. He begins by noting how “if a metaphor is etymologically a bearing across, a bridging of differences in meaning” –a sense of metaphor that Rushdie uses in his Conversation with Günter Grass titled “Fictions are Lies” (77-78)—then:

Powell’s river of blood metaphor, however unwittingly, acknowledges the ways imperial history bridges distances and differences between people and places….as a metaphor ‘blood’ can signify racial hybridity (or impurity) as strongly as ‘river’ signifies geographical and spatial fluidity, especially when different bloods are imagined combining in one river. (Ball 188-89)

Such is how Powell’s metaphor represents two fears that would undo and undermine his vision of an “English nation that can be conceptualized without external attachments” (Gikandi 74).
in war and the miscegenation that will occur following the Trojan defeat of the Italian tribes led by Turnus. Equally so, they represent inevitabilities when it comes to British society—there will be strife and there will be mixing. In fact, the very contradictions upon which empire was grounded and the British nation advanced—a sense of liberty combined with suppression; an ideal of egalitarianism combined with racism—made these two outcomes necessary. Indeed, this inevitability is further signaled by Hanif Johnson when he comments to Jumpy: “‘The ol’ poetry not goin great, bra….Look like that river of blood get coagulate [cause] everybody’s so goddamn angry” (287 his emphasis), as the tension rises throughout Brickhall over the Granny Ripper killings.

Soon after, Gibreel Farishta, “walking in a world of fire,” sets about tropicalizing and remaking London, orchestrating (in his mind) a greater conflagration, as Brickhall is the epicenter of rioting among the Asian and Black communities. The narrator describes how “the Street has become red hot, molten, a river the colour of blood” (462)—it has become, as Baucom comments, an “event in the street, an act of riot” (208), which fulfills and dramatizes Powell’s dread foreboding. 494

494 Paul Brians argues that there is one more allusion to Enoch Powell’s “rivers of blood” image and speech (82), which occurs in Part VIII, “The Parting of the Arabian Sea.” When the Ayesha pilgrims have been confronted by the “No Islamic Padyatra [pilgrimage] street mob” in Sarang, suddenly the “an ocean fell down from the sky,” flooding streets, the mob and the pilgrims. In the aftermath, the roads of Sarang became like canals and “[t]he water had an odd, reddish tint that made the sodden populace imagine that the street was flowing with blood” (492). The image is similar to Jumpy’s reimagining of Powell’s allusion; however, the religious connotations recall another story of pilgrimage in the Book of Exodus and do not respond or react to the ideals and contentions of Powell’s speech. In particular, this image seems to be derived from Exodus 7.14, 16-17: “Then the LORD said to Moses…‘Say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you with the message: Let my people go to worship me in the desert. But as yet you have not listened. The LORD now says: This is how you shall know that I am the LORD. I will strike the water of the river with the staff I hold, and it shall be changed into blood.’” The story is also told in Surah Ar’af (7.133) in the Qur’an. The extraordinary flood in this passage may also be an allusion to the story of Noah in Genesis 6-8 and Surah Hud (11.25-49) in the Qur’an.
These riots—“stage-managed, in a way, by the British police” (Goonetilleke 83)—are a manifestation of the crisis of culture that Rushdie discusses in the “The New Empire within Britain,” the crisis which, according to Michael Gorra’s *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie, cannot imagine an England that includes blacks and whites, a failure that grows from the belief that blacks and Asians are relative newcomers to what has in the past seemed a racially homogeneous society, [that] their culture must inevitably remain distinct from that of white England. (172-73)

It is the same fear that inflamed Turnus, who, in turn, provoked war with the newly arrived Trojans when he declared: *Teucros in regna uocari, stirpem admisceri Phrygiam*, “the Trojans are called to share our realm, Phrygian (Trojan) blood will mix with our own,” (VII.578-9). As discussed above, these are the very same fears embodied in Powell’s recontextualization and reinterpretation of the Cumaean Sybil’s pronouncement. In the end, Rushdie’s act of reclaiming this metaphor realigns it with the violent acts (tribal warfare) and hybrid tendencies (the mixing of peoples) that are ultimately advanced in the *Aeneid* and lay the foundation for the Roman Empire.

Hence, it is in this spirit that Rushdie, addressing the white “natives” of Britain in his essay, “The New Empire within Britain,” states how the “citizens of [this] new, and last, Empire [within Britain] will be obliged to struggle against you”—indirectly reminding the English of the efforts to which Powell referred. Ultimately, Rushdie concludes here that these citizens “are required to embark on a new freedom movement” (“New Empire” 138)—that sense of anticipation and newness which drives *The Satanic*.

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495 See a fuller discussion of this quote above on page 267f.
Verses: it will be, as Hanif Johnson concludes, “an event in the history of Britain. About the process of change” (469).

Gibreel Ascending:

Facilis Descensus Auerno, “The Descent to Avernus is Easy”

Aeneid VI.126

Near the middle of Part V, “A City Visible but Unseen,” Gibreel receives a visit from “the Supreme Being,” whom he sees “sitting on a bed” in Alleluia Cone’s apartment (318). Unsure if this vision of the god (ooparvala, “the fellow upstairs”) is true—or if perhaps it is a vision of the devil (neechayvala, “the guy from underneath”), Gibreel expresses his doubts and receives a prompt Jobean “dressing down” from this deity, who declares: “Whether We be multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridization of such opposites as Oopar [upper or above] and Neechay [below or beneath], or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here.” It is this vision which spurs him onward and outward, convinced that “there’s work to be done” (319).

496 Ooparvala (literally, the “above doer/maker/salesman”) and neechayvala (literally, the “below doer/maker/salesman”) are Romanized Urdu. The former indicates God and the latter, the devil. The explanation which follows (The Satanic Verses 319), describes how the two poles of good and evil were said early on in early Judaean belief to exist in one supreme being:

This notion of separation of functions, light versus dark, evil versus good, may be straightforward enough in Islam -- O, children of Adam, let not the Devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them their clothing that he might show them their shame -- but go back a bit and you see that it's a pretty recent fabrication. (320, his emphasis)

497 This deity, a “myopic scrivener,” resembles not the God that Gibreel had expected, but looks like none other than Salman Rushdie himself (the author as god, god as author):

Gibreel's vision of the Supreme Being was not abstract in the least. He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses (318).
So Gibreel sets out and wanders the streets of London to save souls, accompanied at first by the ever-present Rekha Merchant on her flying carpet, who curses him (‘‘Now I'll see you down there: Neechayvala's Hotel.’’ (318)), and looking “the most wretched and bedraggled of archangels, his garments filthy, his hair lank and greasy, his chin sprouting hair in uncontrollable tufts” (328)—in this description, more a Charon-figure than angel.498 He comes to the Angel Underground station where he encounters its tragic lovers, Orphia Phillips and Uriah Moseley, Rushdie’s early take on the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, which first had been narrated fully by Virgil in the Aristaeus epyllion of the Georgics (4.315-558).499

In the Georgics, the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of love and madness,500 when this story is later referred to in Book VI of the Aeneid, which is of equal relevance here, it is also linked to doubt.501 The context of this latter reference is important. It occurs when Aeneas is exhorting the Cumaean Sybil to allow him to descend into the underworld: to back up his case, he offers several leading and incomplete examples of why he should descend, rattling off a catalog of heroes who had gone to the

498 Charon is the boatman at the River Styx in Virgil’s underworld, where he is described as being in terrible squalor with a scraggy beard, and vestments dirty and ragged:

   terribili squalore Charon, cui plurima mento
   canities incula iacet, stant lumina flamma,
   sordidus ex umeris nodo dependet amictus (VI.299-301).

499 As noted above, Rushdie retold this story in his novel, The Ground Beneath Her Feet. See brief mention above, pages 206f. See especially note 469. At present, there are no critical discussions of this adaptation of the Orpheus and Eurydice story.

500 Virgil combines the two ideas in line 488—the very line which reveals why Orpheus looks back and loses Eurydice: cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem, “when suddenly the reckless lover was overcome with madness.” Eurydice later charges Orpheus with furor, ‘madness” (IV.495).

501 The same can be said for Ovid’s burlesque retelling of this story in Metamorphoses X.1-63. See especially lines 56-7:

   hic, ne deficeret, metuens auidusque uidendi/
   flexit amans oculos,

   here, fearing he might lose her and eager to see her again,
   this lover turned his eyes.
underworld—Orpheus, Theseus, Pollux and Hercules. Then he sums up his argument by asking why he should be any less capable than they since he is descended from Jove.⁵⁰²

Aeneas’ first example of Orpheus should be read as ironic: Orpheus may have descended and summoned forth the spirit of his wife: *potuit manis accersere coniugis* Orpheus (VI.119). However, he returned empty-handed. So this is not the most apt or effective comparison for Aeneas to draw on—especially since the lesson Aeneas should heed, according to the Sybil, is that: *facilis descensus Auerno* “the descent to the underworld is easy” (VI.126); however, *sed reuocare gradum superasque euadere ad auras, hoc opus, hic labor est,* “retracing one’s steps to the upper world is truly a labor” (VI.128-29).

At the same time, Aeneas is wracked with doubt at this juncture: he has finally arrived in Hesperia (Italy) but has not yet committed fully to founding Rome. This is evident when he searches for the golden bough (VI.185-204) and he calls upon his mother for assistance in this moment of doubt: *dubiis ne defice rebus* (VI. 196). It is also evident in the underworld, when he meets his father Anchises, who asks Aeneas if he doubts his fate, *et dubitamus adhuc uirtutem extendere factis* (VI. 806).⁵⁰³ So, in sum, Aeneas’s own doubt may be reflected in his choice of Orpheus, a character who embodies the very doubt that threatens Aeneas’ ability to move forward and fulfill his fate.⁵⁰⁴ And yet, quite unlike Orpheus, Aeneas has his doubts overcome: in response to

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⁵⁰² *Aeneid* VI.123: *‘et mi genus ab Ioue summo’*, “I too am descended from highest Jove.”
⁵⁰³ See full discussion above on pages 264ff.
⁵⁰⁴ Echoing the madness (*furor*) that Orpheus has in the Aristaeus epyllion, Aeneas is also consumed with madness or frenzy (*furor*)—notably in the closing sequence in the *Aeneid* when he kills Turnus, inflamed with fury, *furis accensus* (XII.946). In the *Georgics*, Eurydice had accused Orpheus of madness, saying “what utter frenzy” *quis tantus furor* (IV.495) after he looked back at her.
his prayer to Venus, twin doves lead him to the golden bough; in response to his doubts, Anchises reveals a glorious pageant of the Rome to come, and *incenditque animum famae uenientis amore*, “fired [Aeneas’] heart with love of the glory to come” (XII.889).^{505}

Like Orpheus in the *Georgics* and Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, Gibreel is tormented by doubt when he comes upon these tragic lovers—Orphia^{506} and Uriah. He too asks for divine guidance and just before he enters the Angel Underground station, he “pleaded with the Deity for a further sign [for he] feared that his energies might, in truth, never be equal to the task” demanded of him (327). In the station, he encounters the lovelorn Orphia.

When he meets Orphia, he informs her, as a way to anchor his identity, “I am the archangel, Gibreel.” She pours out her heart to Gibreel and confesses how she still pines for Uriah after she “had been ‘grounded’…. and boxed into the ticket booth” since she was caught embracing him.” Gibreel believes that this encounter with Orphia is restoring the archangelic functions to him, including the quality of “being joined to the one to whom he appeared” (329). So, he makes her move forward to pursue Uriah, who is in the “lower depths” (330) with his new love, “the station beauty, Rochelle Watkins” (329). Guided by Gibreel, Orphia reaches out to Uriah and “he began to walk toward her, dreamily, leaving Rochelle flat.” In contrast to the Orpheus myth, where divine power required him to not look back at his wife, Orphia “never look[ed] away from [Uriah] for

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505 There is the trope of Aeneas looking back, like Orpheus, in the sense that he seeks not to move forward to create a new civilization, but to recreate an old one—which he attempts to do in Crete (II.121-208).
506 Here is perhaps another minor parallel to the story of Orpheus as told by Ovid. In *The Satanic Verses*, Orphia’s sister is Hyacinth Phillips, the physiotherapist who aided Saladin Chamcha and helped him escape from the hospital. The story of Hyacinth (in this case, a young boy) is narrated by Orpheus in Ovid’s Metamorphoses X.162-219.
an instant;” until she notices that “he wasn’t walking anymore” (330) and he reveals that he will not be coming with her. That is when Orphia learns that her “obeah” (330, 331), or magic, does not work down there. Angry, she curses Gibreel, calling him a “no good devil bum” (331).

Immediately, the very sentiments that drove Orpheus to lose his wife forever—doubts and madness—overwhelm Gibreel, who is dismayed because “even the halo has gone out, like a broken bulb, and I don’t know where’s the store” and he “found blasphemies surfacing once again” (331). In the end, he only looks like a Charon and imagines himself as an angel; he is like Orpheus, the lover who needed faith but was wracked with doubt and madness; he is not like Aeneas whose faith grew and whose doubts shrank with each new vision. Rekha Merchant appears again, after he has ascended from the lower depths, and says she will stop haunting him if he compromises. She entreats him by saying: “I have come to say that compromise solution is always possible;” all that he has to do is “say that he loved her” (333). As an untranslated man, a “ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion” (335), he is unwilling to compromise, and, as such, is incapable of merely declaring love (after all, he is an actor) to escape from madness. It is at this point that he descends into a “tyranny of his enemies” from which there will be no further compromises and no ascent.
to Hybridity and Beyond!

_Sunt Lacrimae Rerum_, “Here are tears for human happenings”

_Aeneid_ I.462

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.


In his article “Glorious Peace: The Values and Motivation of Virgil’s Aeneas,” Gary Miles argues that

Aeneas’ contemplation of the temple doors at Carthage [the _sunt lacrimae rerum_] is the first step in a mental journey backwards into his past and to a revitalization of the traditional values rooted there….He now looks back at individual events from a distance and in large perspective.

Miles points out that Aeneas’ recollections of his experiences “contribute to the gradual clarification and consolidation of values that began with despair and sorrow of the Trojan arrival at Carthage and will culminate in the very different spirit of their arrival in Italy” (141). According to Miles’ consideration, _sunt lacrimae rerum_ speaks of a particular condition that epic conveys—tears of things compel what he describes as a change of spirit; it is that moment of crisis which requires a people to reconsider all of the ways of defining themselves, their history, their future and the world in which they live.

Similarly, in the postscript to his recent translation of Virgil’s epic, Robert Fagles notes how “Virgil’s world of tears, like that of Keats, may become a ‘vale of Soul-making’ after all, a place to restore ourselves and our societies to wholeness, health and peace” (399). Fagles reveals _sunt lacrimae rerum_ as redemptive and couples it with a
longer view that seeks to marry our solace and our goodness with a more ennobling sense of who and what we are—that is, our identities.

Both Miles and Fagles follow the German School of thought,\textsuperscript{507} an optimistic view of life and identity which, ultimately, is shared by Rushdie in \textit{The Satanic Verses}. That is why it is appropriate that the Virgilian tag, \textit{sunt lacrimae rerum}, is what Mohammad Sufyan—the most optimistic and accepting of the characters in \textit{The Satanic Verses}—would have said. Sufyan is described as having a “pluralistic openness of mind” and having “swallowed the multiple cultures of the subcontinent” (425-26). As such, the placement of this phrase cannot be viewed as being merely a castoff or orphaned afterthought, it should be seen as an appropriate summation of not only the story of the vase, but more importantly the greater narrative for which this story serves as an allegory.

Overall, the story of the vase, which focuses on the internal brokenness that a man experiences after his friend smash a vase that she had once given him, reveals profound differences between the ways that Chamcha and his wife Pamela view the world. More importantly, it also emblematizes everything that has gone wrong with his friendship, his love, and his devotion to all things English—which includes his perception of himself. It signals the beginning of Chamcha’s bitter and troubled looking “back at individual events from a distance and in large perspective,” from which he begins in fits and starts to both clarify and consolidate his values.

Verstraete sees the Virgilian tag as subservient and having a calming effect, noting that its use is “mostly ironical, encapsulating Saladin’s attitude of helpless rage

\textsuperscript{507} This is one of the two primary schools of thought for interpreting the \textit{Aeneid}. The Harvard School is the opposing and more pessimistic approach (see discussion of both schools of thought above, pages 197-200).
and self-pity and also reflecting sardonically on the phantasmagoric world of mutation and mutilation which he passively surveys and manipulates” (333). As such, he implies that it is subject to the metamorphic whims that permeate this book. And yet, ultimately, Verstraete concludes that the “the closing strains of The Satanic Verses” should be understood as “embrac[ing] the ethos of the full Vergilian line, ‘sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt,’ for Rushdie’s novel finally calms its tormented phantasmagoria…and proclaims a newly found meaning in ordinary human life” (334). Thus, Verstraete here reads Rushdie’s use of Virgil’s line as a contrast to or a respite from the Ovidian philosophy that “all things change and that nothing is constant.” It signals an ending rather than a beginning. It is, as Miles points out, retrospection that yields revitalization; it speaks to the William’s conclusion that this phrase should be understood as “people are sympathetic” (Aeneid I-VI 196n461-2). That is, within this reference, as unforgiving as the images on Juno’s temple are—as Aeneas recounts the many reliefs that depict the dragging and killings of Troilus and Hector and the nighttime slaughter of Rhesus and his troops, he is reliving these moments in all of their vividness and horror—there is a shared suffering that these images convey, which even the Carthaginians (the soon-to-be enemies of the soon-to-be founded Rome) can comprehend and appreciate.509

Thus, this Virgilian tag should be read not as a mere lull between changes or an end, but as a supplement to these changes—after all, as the narrator of The Satanic Verses points out, this comment responds to and reacts to the story of the vase, “whose

508 Omnia mutantur, nihil interit, literally meaning “all things are changed, nothing crumbles” (Metamorphoses XV.165)
509 For a full discussion of this ecphrasis, see above on pages 10-14.
theme was precisely the nature of the unforgivable” (404). Of course, the unforgivable weighs heavily on such a connection, since Chamcha recalls the story of the vase soon after he has discovered that his wife, Pamela has been sleeping with his friend, Jumpy Joshi.

She had asked him, “‘I suppose…that what I did was unforgivable, huh’” (403)? To which he responded, “that particular response seems out of my control; it either operates or it doesn’t and I find out in due course” (403). He is sympathetic—though he is unwilling to admit it—for he realizes that he too “had simply fallen out of love” with her (402).

In fact, this theme of the unforgivable is revisited throughout The Satanic Verses—and always in relation to Saladin Chamcha. Twice the narrator asks “What is unforgivable?,” when Chamcha encounters Gibreel at Shepperton Studios (426); it is the first time they have seen one another since the former character was abandoned by latter outside Rosa Diamond’s house. Here again also is the very same conclusion that Chamcha reached about the story of the vase—“*You can’t judge an internal injury by the size of the hole*” (426, his emphasis). Later on, the narrator describes how Chamcha’s brief and unsavory phone calls drove “Gibreel Farishta to do to Allie Cone what he had previously done to Saladin -- namely, the Unforgivable Thing” (443). Then when Chamcha returns to Bombay once more to see his dying father, his thoughts turn inevitably to Zeeny Vakil and the narrator asks: “Had he, by leaving her, by not returning, by losing touch for a time, done the Unforgivable Thing?” (519-20).

This narrator offers a few glimpses into this “unforgivable thing,” describing how this “Inexpiable Offence” (426) is nothing but “the shivering nakedness of being wholly
known to a person one does not trust” (427), as Chamcha had been to Gibreel when they fell from the heavens and the former was caught by the police. Indeed, one of Gibreel’s consistent traits is that he has no sympathy for anyone—even his dreams are driven by individuals, such as the Imam, Mahound and Ayesha, all of whom are guided by a radical sense of inflexibility and an inability to sympathize or empathize with anyone else.

On the other hand, Chamcha, true to his name, tries to be sympathetic—though it all too often seems to be a veneer or an act; and he hopes for sympathy, but it will not always be had from English (Bruno, Stein and Novak) or Indians (Gibreel). That is why Gibreel’s “treason” and “silence” resound so fully in Chamcha. However, it is not until he returns home to Notting Hill following his brief sojourn in the Shandaar rooming house, that the narrator in The Satanic Verses describes how Chamcha “had ample opportunity in the next many days to contemplate the tears in things.” (404-5). He “lounge[d] back in his Parker-Knoll recliner chair… and idled across the channels” on the television, contemplating the world in which he lives and of which he is a part; he too was able to look “back at individual events from a distance and in large perspective” just as Aeneas was—according to Miles’ interpretation. What follows is an ecphrasis of “televisual images of hybrid tragedies” (406). Switching through the channels, he finds there are Mutants on Dr. Who, a new show called the Mutilasians, reports of a “fully formed merman” in Guyana, a discussion of the genetic possibility of centaurs, reports of Lycanthropy in Scotland and a “classic” rerun of the Aliens Show (405-6). A catalog of hybrid tragedies.

510 In particular, there is the instance where Chamcha affects “sympathy and shock” (432) when Allie seeks his help with Gibreel. Of course, he is all ears and willing to help, thinking: “Once he betrayed my trust; now let him, for a time, have confidence in me” (432).
These hybrid tragedies echo his experiences in the “medical facility at the Detention Centre” where he had been detained by the police after making landfall on the beach at Rosa Diamond’s house. The facility is described as holding a menagerie of elaborate hybrids: mutated migrants who have “succumbed to the pictures [the English] construct” (168).511 Created by “the power of description,” these hybrids include a water-buffalo, a manticore, a wolf, and a ferocious man-tiger, “with three rows of teeth” and Saladin, the “Packy billy” (164-71). Ambreen Hai notes that in this section, “Rushdie conveys [how] the power of dominant racist discourse [has] transformed [the] reality” of migrants (208). In fact, Saladin’s contemplation of the tears in things “put[s] a severe dent in what remained of his idea of the normal” (406), as he begins to connect the power of representation on the television with that of English society in general.

However, amidst all of these hybrid tragedies Saladin “was given…one gift.” Through this gift, he is able to understand and accept the clarification and consolidation of values that began with the journey back to India in which he became frighteningly aware of his hybridity. This one gift was how the TV series Gardeners’ World had shown how to achieve something called a "chimeran graft"….a chimera with roots, firmly planted in and growing vigorously out of a piece of English earth: a tree, he thought, capable of taking the metaphoric place of the one his father had chopped down in a distant garden in another, incompatible world. If such a tree were possible, then so was he; he, too, could cohere, send down roots, survive. (406)

511 An inverted double of this menagerie can be seen in Rushdie’s representation of the “last night of the festival of Ibrahim” in Jahilia under the rule of Abu Simbel and Hind: here we find: “men and women in the guise of eagles, jackals, horses, gryphons, salamanders, wart-hogs, rocs; welling up from the murk of the alleys have come two-headed amphishaenae and the winged bulls known as Assyrian sphinxes. Djinns, houris, demons populate the city on this night” (117). The whole atmosphere is carnivalesque. It is, though, a place where people succumb to the pictures they construct of themselves and, as such, is an inversion of the medical facility at which Chamcha is held.
He sees in this last example not hybrid monstrosities, but rather something like himself; something that can be rooted and settled in the different and seemingly incompatible worlds that he inhabits—England and India.

This acceptance of his hybridity compels him down two paths. One of these paths drives him inevitably and irrevocably toward revenge on Gibreel. He had hoped that “love was more durable than hate” (407) and that “his passionate desire to re-establish ordinary life” would help him move beyond “his animosity toward Gibreel” (406). However, soon enough he “understood that… he had been living in a state of phoney peace, that the change in him was irreversible” (418), he began to plot and seek revenge, which culminated in Gibreel’s suicide—a suicide predicated upon Gibreel’s inability to contemplate the tears in things, his unwillingness to compromise, and his inability to accept change. In fact, Gibreel belongs to an older order of things just as Turnus had; just as Turnus would have to die for Rome to be founded, so too would Gibreel need to die in order for Chamcha to move forward: indeed, The Satanic Verses concludes with anticipation, reflecting on the notion that “[i]f the old refused to die, the new could not be born” (546).

More important is the other path, which results in Chamcha’s reconciliation with his father. The latter and unspoken part of the Virgilian tag is et mentem mortalia tangunt, “and mortal things touch the heart,” which carries the troubles of accepting and sympathizing with human burdens—whether they are good or bad. Now that Chamcha has had time to “contemplate the tears in things” (405), he is able to look back, as Gary Miles suggests regarding Aeneas, at individual events from a distance and in a larger perspective.
Indeed, when he receives a telegram notifying him that his father is dying of cancer, he knew that “it was imperative that he reach Bombay before Changez [his father] left it for good” (511). Once he is on a plane to Bombay, he realized that “the saddest thing...was that he could not remember a single happy day with Changez in his entire life as a man. And the most gladdening thing was the discovery that even the unforgivable crime of being one's father could be forgiven, after all, in the end” (513). Thus, he could return to his father and to Bombay, much like a chimeran graft, his roots could be anchored in both India and in England. Of course, chimeran grafts and forgiveness require a measure of compromise and sympathy, which Chamcha had learned in slow measure as he endured exile.

When he finally confronts his father, who is sickly and dying of cancer, Chamcha concludes that “fall[ing] in love with one's father after the long angry decades was a serene and beautiful feeling; a renewing, life-giving thing” (523). While he is with his father and returned to Bombay, he contemplates more tears in things as he becomes “closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins – or rather Salahuddins – which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices” (523).

In so many ways, Chamcha has become like Aeneas who, when he gazes upon the reliefs at the temple of Juno which portray the Trojan War—the reliefs which convey sunt lacrimae rerum (I.464-493), recognizes himself embroiled in battle with the Greek leaders: Se quoque principibus permixtum adgnovit Achivis (I.488). As Alden Smith points out, “Aeneas’ discovery of himself here is distinct.... chiefly because he finds himself in this painting at all and because his role in the fabric of the painting ...contrasts
with that of the other participants” (Poetic Allusion 34-35).\textsuperscript{512} Aeneas’ recognition of himself in this scene confirms how he uses his past to create his present and anticipate his future; Aeneas recognition of himself, remind us that he is not a disinterested viewer, but one who is distinctly part of the sunt lacrimae rerum to which he reacts and he invites us too to react with him.\textsuperscript{513}

Ultimately, Chamcha comes to understand the idea conveyed by the sunt lacrimae rerum, which is why he can fall in love, forgive, and accept that he is no “good and proper” Englishman, but something new altogether, something chimerical, something compromised.

This slow endurance and the conflicting shift in his identity recalls W. R. Johnson’s proposal that “the use of poetic fictions is to exercise our spirits, to make us think and feel more precisely and more abundantly than we normally think and feel by reminding us vividly of the beauties and hazards of our existence” (Darkness Visible 18). At the same, in a prescriptive sense, we can also view the exercise proposed by Johnson as a sympathetic binding with human happenings and mortal sufferings that frees us or enables us to comprehend better the whole of human life.

Thus, in the end, the story of the vase not only stands as a metaphor for the profundity of internal injury, whether it is the silent recollection that Aeneas has as he looks upon the reliefs of the Trojan war, or the unwitting and horrific shame that Chamcha endures in England. It also stands in contrast to the man that Chamcha

\textsuperscript{512} See pp. 26-43 in Smith’s Poetic Allusion and Poetic Embrace in Ovid and Virgil, which has an extensive discussion of this whole passage and provides an equally extensive bibliography.

\textsuperscript{513} See discussion above, pages 18f.; in particular, Barchiesi’s reading of this passage in the Aeneid.
becomes: indeed, unlike the man in the story of the vase, who is defined as “unforgiving” until the very end, Chamcha found a way to reconcile himself with his many selves and with the many other people in his life. Indeed, as death begins to steal Changez from him, “Salahuddin did have to carry” his father out of the house to the car in order to take him to the hospital, despite the futility of the act. He became the Aeneas to his father’s Anchises, the son showing his filial piety by trying to deliver him from inescapable ruin.

It is a small but irrevocable moment, just as the catalog of shames and horrors that Chamcha endures—as migrant, Indian, Muslim, husband, son—are small but cumulative moments that reveal an incremental sense of change that is ineluctable. Unlike Gibreel, who is unwilling to compromise and who stiffens in resistance to the ever-present blasphemies of doubt, in the end, Chamcha is able to adapt to a universe in which the new philosophies and new ways of being put all preconceptions in doubt.

So what kind of identity does Chamcha embrace? After all, like all others, he has a “need for a narrative of ‘identity’” (Anderson 205). How does he move beyond empire and its post-colonial reach? He remains open to doubt and open to change—he becomes someone who no longer has the need for empire or its trappings, and, as chimeran graft, he is home in both of his worlds and yet beholden to neither.
Chapter Seven

Coda: Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* & the post-imperial

The editor came from the inner office, a straw hat awry on his brow. He declaimed in song, pointing sternly at professor MacHugh:

— *'Twas rank and fame that tempted thee,
'Twas empire charmed thy heart.*

The professor grinned, locking his long lips.

— Eh? You bloody old Roman empire? Myles Crawford said.

He took a cigarette from the open case. Lenehan, lighting it for him with quick grace, said:

— Silence for my brandnew riddle!

— *Imperium romanum*, J. J. O’Molloy said gently. It sounds nobler than British or Brixton. The word reminds one somehow of fat in the fire.

Myles Crawford blew his first puff violently towards the ceiling.

— That’s it, he said. We are the fat. You and I are the fat in the fire. We haven’t got the chance of a snowball in hell.

James Joyce, *Ulysses*

A coda is usually an ending that rounds out a discussion or a work of music. The word coda is derived from the Latin *cauda*, which means “tail.” The implication here is that we are glimpsing the tail end of the way of writing and representing that is anticipated in works like *The Satanic Verses*. Not the tail end in the sense that we have moved beyond it, but rather, in the sense that it is forging ahead and we can only begin to comprehend and grasp it. As such, this is one of many works that signify this new way of representing and acknowledging identity and change in our world. As with all changes, this new way of representing and acknowledging has been met with shock, rage, discomfort, and attempts at retrenchment. Some twenty years later, our societies may seem to have cast aside any pretenses or proclivities toward such new ways; however, the
fact that they have been imagined signals a period of negotiation and tension within which new ways of representing and being are created—those tectonic upheavals.\textsuperscript{514}

Indeed, this new way of representing anticipates and begins \textit{presencing} the all-too-problematic ideas and ideals that have been inherited from what Derek Walcott, in his Nobel acceptance speech, describes as the “sigh of history.” This Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992 was awarded for Walcott’s poem \textit{Omeros}. In his review of this work, the well-known classical scholar Bernard Knox, called \textit{Omeros} “epic in scale” even though it “[did] not look at first glance like material that calls for Walcott’s evocation of his great predecessor” (“Achilles in the Caribbean”). After all, the poem is merely “the prose of abrupt fishermen cursing over canoes … the duel of the fishermen was over a shadow and its name was Helen” (\textit{Omeros} 15, 17).\textsuperscript{515} And yet the poem realizes the complexities and contradictions conveyed in the sigh of history. For Walcott, this sigh of history can be seen in the ruins and monuments of civilizations and the catalog of their achievements; just as importantly, it can also be experienced in the vegetation, the creatures and the people which perpetuate the very life of spaces, places and peoples (who may be recognized as only fragments or insignificant elements)—all of which are continually negotiating and working to define themselves.

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\textsuperscript{514} There are many competing visions for these new imagined communities, which are often pessimistically grouped under neo-imperialism, globalization or, optimistically, under cosmopolitanism. In his \textit{Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers}, Kwame Appiah describes his cosmopolitan person as being at home among any and all people. He quotes the Roman dramatist Terence in support of his optimism: “\textit{Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto}, ‘I am human nothing human is alien to me’” (111).
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\textsuperscript{515} Similar to the \textit{Aeneid} and \textit{The Satanic Verses}, Walcott’s \textit{Omeros} exploits the themes of exile and legitimacy, which are inextricably woven into the narrative Walcott has created. Similar to Aeneas, the four protagonists in this poem, Achille, Hector, Major Plunkett and Walcott himself, are uprooted and exiled, yet each yearns for a sense of rootedness that is not found in the fragments of the empire. The poem itself is about men who are more of the sea than of the land; men who seek legitimacy yet are forever resigned to their sense of rootlessness and aware that they are not of this land itself.
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And yet there are those parts of history which, in retrospect, demand our attention for the ways in which they, like tectonic shifts, forever alter landscapes and peoples and, by implication, the universe. Such moments are when Homer sings of Hector slain by Achilles before the gates of Troy, Virgil sings of Aeneas slaying Turnus, Dante’s Virgil tells us of the crucified Jesus who had descended into hell and toward his resurrection: *ch’i’ pensai che l’universo sentisse amor,* “I thought the universe felt love” (Inferno XII.41-42)—such are the sighs of history witnessed in ruins and in the monuments of civilizations. There are also those sighs of history that we encounter in Ulysses, where James Joyce tells us of Leopold Bloom’s day in Dublin and his return home to his wife Molly, an ending ripe with anticipation, as she imagines “I drew [Leopold] down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes” (547); or The Satanic Verses where Salman Rushdie dramatizes Saladin Chamcha’s escape from death and the newness he anticipates as he answers Zeeny, “I’m coming” (547); or in Omeros (1992), where Derek Walcott sings of “triumphant Achille” (324) coming ashore with a “wedge of dolphin” for Helen and “when he left the beach the sea was still going on” (325).

Such are the “sighs of history” encountered among the people and creatures and vegetation, and even the sea itself, whether it is “wine dark” (Homer II.613-614) or “snotgreen” (Joyce 4) or “gold...flat as a credit card” (Walcott 229). Each of these works has a sense of newness, a way in which they distinctly but unmistakably represent what
Homi Bhabha has termed *presencing*,\(^{516}\) that boundary which anticipates something new, something irrevocable, and, as has been argued here, something epic. Moreover, each of these works valorizes and evaluates or questions the world it is representing. In his *The Idea of Epic*, J.B. Hainsworth states, “if an epic does not to some degree evaluate the world it describes, we feel in some degree cheated” (146).

It would be arrogant, however, to presume that the newness anticipated in these works arrives at the same time and in the same way for all;\(^{517}\) rather, what *epic is* must be reconsidered and read anew with the full acknowledgement that *it is possible* for peoples (both women and men), places, and spaces to move beyond their imperial (and post-colonial) confines—in different times, ways and stages—and that such an irrevocable shift resonates with the force that necessitates epic. Just as Virgil’s epic announced empire, so too must the “moving beyond empire” be represented through epic.

*The Satanic Verses* represents one manifestation of this way of reading epic and *Omeros* represents a very different expression of it—that both texts detailed here are by men, one originally from India and the other originally from St. Lucia, implies only the limits of this study, not the possibilities inherent in the places and people, women and men, who can create such works.

At the beginning of this dissertation, the term “post-imperial” was used to express this newness; however, this term has already been used by some scholars and critics to

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\(^{516}\) See Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, where he uses a selection from Martin Heidegger’s essay, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” as an epigraph (1).

\(^{517}\) Rushdie reaches toward such an idea in his polemical essay “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist.” He states that even for India, “it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw” (67). India may be a special case, due to its size, it variety of cultures, religions and languages, however, his implication is clear: if a single nation lacks a pure tradition, there can be no unalloyed notion of post-colonial or commonwealth literatures.
describe the post-colonial. In his article, “Globalization and Postcoloniality in *The Satanic Verses,*” Peter Kalliney states that the term post-colonialism “describes the social and cultural conditions of the *postimperial* world” (50). Luke Strongman’s “Post-Colonialism or Post-Imperialism?” describes how post-colonial texts are overtly reference and react to imperialism; however, he suggests an alternative, noting that:

> a novel of post-imperialism may make no overt reference to the relationship between settler-invader and colonised peoples but nevertheless, read contrapuntally (with recognition to what is significantly excluded, omitted, or absent from the text), implicates the imperial culture in a relationship with a complex array of international identities in the post-imperial era.

Therefore, it may be necessary to describe this newness using a term that both embraces and disowns the influences of different and conflicting histories. In his essay, the “Muse of History,” Walcott attempted to describe such a process, noting how “revolutionary literature is a filial impulse, and that maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor” (1), both the master and the slave, the subjugated and the overseer, the colonized and the colonizer, to whom he is obliged to “give a strange thanks . . . for the monumental groaning and soldering of [these] two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice” (27).

Hence, in the spirit of the *Hobson-Jobson,* the Anglo-Indian Dictionary first published in 1886, which represented the magical, absurd and sometimes forced hybridity of the language spoken and written in British India, perhaps it would be suitable to take a word, like *taazgi,* an Urdu word (Romanized here) which signifies “newness” as

518 When the *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* was published anew in 1986, Rushdie wrote of the “richnesses of what one must call the Anglo-Indian language . . . that language which was in regular use” throughout British India, but “is now as dead as a dodo” (“Hobson-Jobson” 81-82)
well as “freshness” or “verdancy,” to describe such works of art or such ways of being, so we can begin to reorient the ways in which we discuss such texts. Urdu seems a helpful choice here since it is readily used throughout much of Rushdie’s work; in addition, it also has a reputation as a “camp” language, since it is rooted in the travelling “hordes” of Genghis Khan.\footnote{In the Introduction to the Hobson-Jobson, we are informed that “it is curious to note that several of our most common adoptions are due to what may be most especially called the Oordoo (Urdu) or ‘Camp’ language being terms which the hosts of Chinghiz [Genghis Khan] brought from the steppes of North Eastern Asia” (Yule xx).} I refer to the Hobson-Jobson since it is an eclectic work that freely struggles and acknowledges the “hybrids and corruptions” (Yule xxi) of culture, language and meaning, and acknowledges how difficult and presumptuous it is to render static the ways that we represent the world.

Taazgi is a commonly used word, and has no fixed or fully-apprehendable meaning in the West, which is advantageous here since the point is to avoid familiarity and fixedness—especially since the West seems to have a lock on the critical terms used to describe and interpret literature.\footnote{Again, in the Introduction to the Hobson-Jobson, we are informed that there will be inconsistencies in describing word usages and systems, since “it never will...be possible, in a book for popular use, to adhere to one system in this matter without the assumption of an ill fitting and repulsive pedantry” (xxiii). Such an admission takes into account the excessively dynamic nature of the hybrid culture in India, while nodding to the intention to standardize and make static the use of language.} Perhaps one of the key things that should be accomplished is not merely a decentering of the texts that we read, but a decentering of the very terminology we use to interpret texts.

Thus, we have taazgi, which derived from the Urdu word taaza, a word that signifies “new.” Taazgi is used to describe fresh vegetables, fruit, perspectives, and...
readily bound by the past. So, in this sense such epical works as Omeros and The Satanic Verses might be categorized as taazgine—they have a newness or freshness or verdance of a community being born again: full of history but not shackled or handcuffed to it.

Such a change points to the necessity of shifting our vocabulary, taking into account that these artists are conscious of the fragmentation of empires and their narratives, while being familiar with the techniques, propositions and histories of empires; however, they move beyond the discomforting confines of empire, using both the master’s tools and the tools of the enslaved or colonized to create a narrative (the taazgine shift) that moves a people through the crises of definition to consider anew the very ideas of civilizations—civilizations that have already begun shifting beyond the imperial and its attendant colonial and post-colonial experiences and representations.

521 Special thanks here to Mohammed and Sajida Ali, the former originally from Tohana, British India and the latter, originally from Sialkot, Pakistan, for their assistance in defining this word. Both speak and read Urdu as their first language.
522 This notion comes from the phrase “[t]o be born again…first you have to die,” sung by Gibreel at the beginning of The Satanic Verses. Of course, part of the purpose here is to avoid using the phrase “born again,” which is sufficiently freighted in the West, particularly through its associations with Christianity, in particular, with the Pentacostal tradition as well as with the Gospel of John.
523 The latter description comes from Rushdie’s description of Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of Midnight’s Children, who is “handcuffed to history”.
524 This phrase is borrowed from Anuradha Dingwaney Needham’s Using the Master’s Tools, in which she uses Audré Lorde’s well-known idea of using “the master’s tools” “against its grain,” noting how Aimé Césaire and others sought to use such tools to “dismantle the master’s house” (30, her emphasis). Lorde is pessimistic about such possibilities; yet history has shown that using the master’s tools was an ongoing and constant effort undertaken. Indeed, many of the most honored figures in the Indian subcontinent, including Muhammad Iqbal, Mohandas Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Jawaharlal Nehru, used their masters’ tools to achieve their political and socio-economic aims. Such has been well-recorded and written about. Moreover, artists great and small in South Asia and Africa have undertaken similar practices, adapting and borrowing forms, styles, motifs, tropes and structures when creating works of literature, art, music, architecture, etc.
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