Chapter V

Conclusion

In this thesis, we have discussed the third space in *East, West* from three aspects: diaspora space, linguistic space, and literary space (a new zone of the novel and metafictional parody). Taking the in-between space as the writing strategy and life maxim, Rushdie finds his paradoxical subject position a place in exile. First, in chapter II, I discuss four short stories in *East, West* in terms of diaspora space: the three stories in the “East, West” section-- “The Harmony of Two Spheres,” “Chekov and Zulu,” and “The Courter” and one story in the “West” section—“At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers.” The term “diaspora,” according to the historical survey, originates in ancient Greek. Its original meaning is dispersion. In the Old Testament, diaspora is used to indicate the wandering of Jewish people. With the evolution of time, diaspora generally refers to a group of people who leaves their homelands voluntarily or forcefully. However, *differences* within the term, diaspora, should be taken into consideration. The general definition of diaspora contains variant and complex forms of diasporas (African, Caribbean, Chinese diaspora and so forth), which cannot be oversimplified and homogenized into a certain narrow definition, for the formation of diaspora is composed of different social, historical, and economical backgrounds.

In addition to the definition of diaspora, diasporic identity and the politics of home are pivotal issues. Home, a contesting site where various ideologies converge, is itself an imaginary idea. It is a term employed by the dominance to crystallize its authority. Home-country is an ideologically constructed term rather than an affinity
in nature. Consequently, a dream of homecoming is a fantasy for diasporans. The narrator’s epiphany in “At the Auction of Ruby Slippers” reflects Rushdie’s ideation of home, which is a fictional and fragmented object (95). Diasporans’ atavistic desire of returning their dreaming homeland is futile. Moreover, like the definition of diaspora, diasporic identity is hard to be co-opted in the ontological definition. Diasporans often encounter the dilemma of their self-identity formation. They vacillate between their racial identity and their nationality. In the host country, they have never been accepted as members of the country; while in the homeland, they are not accepted by their hometown citizens and are accused of disloyalty to the mother country. However, in the postmodern era, the statement of a unified and continuous subject position has lost its firm stance. Stuart Hall and other theorists reverse the essentialist view on human identity. They propose that human identity is a social constructed product formed by discourse and ideology so that it is discontinuous and fragmentary rather than holistic. Thus the postmodern view on human identity helps diasporans out of the quandary of self identification, preventing them from underpinned in a certain identity. Apart from the postmodern view on human subject, diasporans also gain mobility to define themselves in diaspora space.

In the borderland of identity-as-essence and identity-as-conjuncture, the space releases a “third-time space,” diaspora space, evinced by Avtar Brah, echoing Homi Bhabha’s “liminal space.” It is an interstice where disparate cultures contest, collaborate, and negotiate. Cultural differences and hybridity are crucial points of the space. The notions deconstruct the essentialist view on identity and culture and blur the dichotomous demarcation, too. A subject staying within the in-between
space without being pinned down in a certain cultural or identity stance gains much more agency. What is more, ambivalence of the space prevents the monolithic affinity from being established again. The space is a dynamic and open system, in which diasprans will gain agency. Straddling between different cultures, diasporans are free to negotiate with various cultures and are able to produce a new culture in the process. It is a strategy for diasporans to live in the borderline without being co-opted by specific discourse or ideology.

Taking the ambivalent attitude in diaspora space as the living and freedom-seeking strategy, characters in the stories regain agency in the host country. Khan and Eliot in “The Harmony of the Spheres” embody two opposite attitudes toward the East/ West. The former, neglecting cultural differences in diaspora space, attempts to synthesize the East and the West but to no avail. The latter, insisting on separation of the East and the West, commits suicide at the end of the story. Both of them do not realize the hybrid nature of culture in diaspora space, where mélange and hybridity are celebrated. The East and the West are two in(ter)dependent cultural affinities. To clear cut or totally integrate the two cultures is unachievable. The only way for Khan, a diasporan, and Eliot to survive is to accept and acknowledge the hybrid nature of cultures. The similar situation occurs in “Chekov and Zulu.” The two India-dispatched “intrepid diplomats” face the dilemma of living in the host country. Chekov as a radical nationalist has never forgot India’s colonial past, which makes him unsettled in Britain. On the contrary, Zulu, insisting on staying in the neutral stance, lives peacefully between the two opposite cultures. He believes there must be a fairy land everywhere, even in Britain. Zulu acknowledges cultural
hybridity, choosing to live within the in-between space—the fairy land he refers to. It makes him a free agent vacillating freely between two cultures. Finally, “The Courter” manifests Rushdie’s conception of diasporan living in the diaspora space. The narrator depicts his diasporic dilemma in the host country, in which he experiences cultural confrontations and the process of self identification. At the end of the story, he announces that he refuses to take sides but decides to live within the in-between space, where he truly earns freedom instead. In the three stories above, Rushdie clarifies his idea for diasporans—only by living within diaspora space are diasporans able to find agency and freedom to define themselves without falling into the essentialist pitfall.

Secondly, in chapter three, I propose the linguistic third space as a writing strategy for Rushdie to rebel against the colonial writing hegemony. This in-between space deconstructs western cultural imperialism, cultural translation and the Standard English by employing the writing strategies of glossing and untranslated words, Indian-English grammar and special usages, code-switching and pronunciation. According to the evolution of linguistic theory, the signified-and-signifier ambivalent relation has posed questions for representation of words. Words/texts are not transparent meaning-transmitting media. They cannot represent the authentic world through literary words. Thus cultural translation, which forms non-western cultures through the western prestigious literary description, is queried. Niranjara, Said, and other scholars point out that the West, interpreting and recognizing the East from western historical or journalistic records, is unable to represent the authentic contour of the East. The images of the East are man-made and imagined. They are
misrepresented. Based on the insight, the East regains power to deny the western imposed negative images and to reinterpret their own cultures. In addition to cultural translation, the pureness of Standard English is questioned, too. The Standard English we use now is derived from one of the dialects of English in south-eastern England, a richer area of England (Talib 14). Because of its higher social status quo, it earns language dominancy. With the development of British imperialism, the language spreads its influence over the world and becomes the official language in many colonial countries. The fact makes the Standard English the only means of representing the world. Commonwealth literature, regarded as a branch of English literature, is the representative. Writers of Commonwealth literature use the Standard English to describe their home countries and personal experiences instead of using the native language, which makes them unable to express their authentic condition and thought. However, the burgeoning of hybrid views on language and doubt of representation of words (linguistic third space) help the writers challenge English cultural representation in their native tongues. In the linguistic in-between space, cultural hybridity indicates cultures and languages are formed by intertwined power relations. The notion of pureness of culture/language is untenable. The notion endows these writers with an opportunity to speak out and re-introduce their effaced cultures to the world audience. Glossing and untranslated words, Indian-English grammar and special usages, code-switching and pronunciation are strategic writing devices to deconstruct the English literary hegemony.

In East, Wes, Rushdie employs the linguistic third space as the strategy, inventing the devices above to subvert the Standard English and reveal the cultural
difference between the East and the West. By means of the devices, English
dominance is reversed and the silenced are able to speak out for themselves; besides,
Indian culture is re-introduced to the West. First, inserting Indian specific
vocabulary or usages with or without explanation in English within a text blocks
readerly complacency. Foreign linguistic elements and intersection of two cultures
enrich and open a new cultural dialogue. Seasoning English with foreign languages
propels readers to excavate other foreign cultures and enlarge readers’ worldview.
Rushdie employs the devices to show cultural hybridity, in which cultural differences
cannot be homogenized. First, glossing and untranslated words are two main
authorial writing devices to show cultural distinctiveness in cross-cultural texts. The
former displays the meaning of foreign words in the forms of footnotes, explanatory
parentheses, and glossary. Readers are able to get direct information from the text.
By contrast, the latter blocks readerly complacency by putting foreign words in a text
without any explanation. Both writing techniques remind readers the
untranslatablility of cultures and ineffable cultural differences. For example,
inserting a series of Hindi or Indian words or expressions in East,West creates an
Indian milieu in the text and defies English hegemonic cultural representation.
Secondly, Indian-English grammar and special usages are other ways to show the
specific Indian culture as well. By blending Victorian English with Indian
vernaculars, Indians successfully appropriate English as part of their culture and
develop their own unique expressions. Such mélange of word usage and grammar
manifest Indian complicated postcolonial past; it also shows the highly hybrid nature
of language. Here the myth of pure Standard English is debunked. Finally,
code-switching and pronunciation is shows cultural distinctiveness and otherness between languages within the linguistic space. Code-switching is the most common device utilized by postcolonial writers (Talib 142-43). Two languages shift between narrators and characters. The shift makes readers shuttle between two cultures and view the world in disparate perspectives. Code-switching and pronunciation, applied by Rushdie throughout the novel, are used to resist and revitalize the homogenized cultures. Especially in “The Courter,” by displaying the romance of Certainly-Mary and the courter, and communicative dilemmas diasporans encounter, Rushdie explicitly demonstrates linguistic multiplicity and cultural distinctiveness. To sum up, Rushdie takes advantage of the linguistic third space by employing the strategies mentioned above to cross the limit of English representation and shatter the illusion of essentialist view on language/culture.

Finally, I employ Bakhtinian thought of a “new zone of the novel” and metafictional parody to explore the literary third space, which challenges the novelistic tradition and offers multi-layered facts and critiques of the world to the reader. The space offers writers/readers a view to revalue and predict the present world outside novels. Before discussing the new zone of the novel, we have to know spatialization of words first. Elaborating Bakhtin’s thought of the status of a word, Kristeva remarks that the meaning of a word comprises three elements: addressers, addressees, and social context. Meanings of words are not determined by authors, readers or social discourse only; they are products of reciprocal influences; that is to say, a word is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (Kristeva 56). The three points construct a three dimensional ambivalent space in which
diverse discourses dialogize. Kristeva renames the concept as “intertextuality,” in which various voices, including writers, readers and texts throughout the time, interact.

A monologic novel is replaced by a dialogic/heteroglossic one. Bakhtin further asserts that the dialogic/heteroglossic novel often contains the following elements negotiating in the text: authorial speech, narrator speech, inserted genres, and character speech (qtd. in Hawthorn 152); social discourse and circumstances are integrated. The novel is not merely a literary product; it is constructed by multilayered discourses, which offer readers a new zone to predict and rethink of the contemporary society. Besides, the novel is a genre in the process which changes with time. Rushdie crosses the generic boundary by employing a new zone of the novel to intermingle the present situation with the novelistic writing. The zone gives both readers and writers a chance to criticize and re-evaluate the present social condition. It also subverts the realist interpretation on the novel. In *East, West*, the intersection of popular culture and present political situation is placed within the stories. Intermingling different contexts and materials successfully connects the present condition and reality. “At the Auction of Ruby Slippers” and “Chekov and Zulu” are two representatives. The former takes *The Wizard of Oz* and the latter takes *Star Trek* as the novelistic backgrounds. By intricately interweaving the once hit movies among the stories, Rushdie steers readers to criticize and re-evaluate the present social condition.

In addition to a new zone of the novel, metafictional parody also provides an ambivalent space for both writers and readers, which blurs fictionality/reality and literary/real world. The definition of metafiction is hard to define. Generally
speaking, metafiction is a self-conscious genre knowing itself as an artifact. The self-conscious point of view propels writers/readers to rethink of writing itself and its relation to the real world. By querying literary representation, metafiction to some extent questions the world outside fiction. It unfolds the fabricated nature of texts and ideologies. Different from other avant-garde writings, metafiction is grounded on the traditional literary convention, which will gain more readers’ resonance. Moreover, metafiction mingles criticism (author intrusion) and fictional-writing together, which starts a dialogue between literature and criticism. The innovative device interrupts the coherent and linear sequence in literary realism. It exposes fictonality of the novel and the worn-out literary tradition. Such “laying bare” or “foregrounding” literary devices defamiliarize the text of literary tradition, which destroys the reader’s expectation when reading. Parody belongs to one of the genres metafiction employs to challenge the already obsolete literary convention. Both metafiction and parody are grounded on the traditional literary work in order to mock or criticize it. Parody has long been oversimplified as slapstick or travesty, which has comic effects only. However, parody is a genre with self-consciousness, criticism, and comic effects. It uses the literary original text as its backdrop and then revises it to criticize and revitalize the original text. Straddling among the literary ambivalent space (between the original and the parodied text), parody gives the rein to writers’ creativity and at the same time problematizes the original text and worn-out literary devices. Within the ambivalent space, both parody and metafiction question worn out literary devices and keep themselves from being pinned down on a specific genre. In *East, West* Rushdie parodies the western history and literature in
“Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate Their Relationship,” and “Yorick” and then criticizes the decayed material world in “At the Auction of Ruby Slippers.” Synthesizing a new zone of the novel and an ambivalent space in metafictional parody, we know that the literary space used in Rushdie’s text endows writers with a chance to criticize and re-evaluate obsolete literary works and the present society. Both a new zone of the novel and metafictional parody functions to bridge the fictional and real world in texts.

The three kinds of third space in the thesis provide both writers and readers ambivalent room to challenge the dominant discourse or essentialist concepts. The third space also prevents them from anchoring in a certain stance. Within the space, essentialism and any mode of homogenization are in question—differences always exist. It is a site where people gain agency. Rushdie, asserting not to take sides between the East and the West and rejecting the monolithic representation of world, takes the third space as his writing strategy to exhibit his concept. The third space renders him a free agent in the exilic dilemma he has faced. It also creates a new mode in place of the obsolete and inflexible ideology/discourse. The thesis boldly explores the three kinds of third space to speculate on how Rushdie wins a stance within the ambivalent space in the dichotomous world.