Chapter IV

Thinking over Space: Heterogeneity and Diasporic Appropriation

The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture. (Raban 4)

The labyrinth itself was a place of pure madness. It was built of lost fragments of London Above: alleys and roads and corridors and sewers that had fallen through the cracks over the millennia, and entered the world of the lost and the forgotten. (Gaiman 305)

Since the Second World War, the rapid, astonishing, and innovative development of technology (the communication technology in particular) accelerates the widespread phenomenon of global circulation and intercontinental movement. The large-scale movement of population, information, money, and commodities along the surface of the earth all contributes to the tremendous transmutation of social, cultural, and economic structures in society as a whole. Movement across space gives rise to an ineluctable process of uprooting, dislocation, dispersion, and regrounding. In the process of transnational, trans-territorial, and wide-ranging global circulation, the spatial displacement and the subsequent transplantation of exotic cultures gradually attract social theorists’ attention. By degrees, critics become aware of the spatial significance when it comes to globalization, migration, and contemporary identity formation. The significance of space lies in the fact that the spatial configuration, together with its unique characteristics and the peculiar culture intrinsic
to such space, indeed makes a great impact on identity formation. Under the influence of postmodernity, space is depicted as heterogeneous, unstable, indeterminate, mutable, and discontinuous. The heterogeneity of space in the postmodern era destroys the long-standing belief in the homogeneity, integrity, and consistency of space. Moreover, the heterogeneous nature of space enables diasporic subjects to reshape, reconstruct, and reorganize the originally established space in the imperial center. Their agency to appropriate the space of the imperial center represents their resistance to the West. In this chapter, the major objective is to explore what kind of inspiration space gives to human beings in general and diasporic subjects in particular, to gauge whether the concept of space in the postmodern era helps encourage the agency of inhabitants, and to examine how Salman Rushdie represents the metropolitan urban space of London by means of diasporic immigrants’ multiple experiences depicted in *The Satanic Verses*.

In the second chapter, with the influence of postmodernity on the diasporic condition in *The Satanic Verses* thoroughly scrutinized, the mobility, mutability, transience, disintegration, and uncertainty of the contemporary world are drawn to the foreground. By exploring diasporic subjects in postmodern and post-imperial London, we clarify and bring to light the concept of diaspora which we so ardently wrestle with. Then in the third chapter, we focus on the phenomenon of hodgepodge taking place during the course of diasporic border crossing. With regard to diasporic subjects, the inescapable cultural hybridization and the clandestine appropriation of the imperial language both echo the confident announcement that we are now in a world in which singularity, authenticity, fixity, and hegemony inherent in the Western metanarrative are doomed to collapse. Or, to put it more specifically, contemporary people face up to a world which is now characterized as mongrel, disjointed, disjunctive, and kaleidoscopic. By the same token, the principal kernels underlying the entire thesis—the postmodern condition and diasporic experiences—receive much attention in this chapter, but they are explored from another aspect: this chapter intends to investigate
the process of diasporic identity formation in terms of space, especially heterogeneous urban space which comes into being due to the condition of postmodernity. The concept of heterogeneous space reveals the nature of space as unstable, incomplete, indeterminate, and diversified. Besides, it helps deconstruct the already established city space, and at the same time it reinforces the potential agency of diasporic subjects to appropriate metropolitan urban space in the West.

In *The Satanic Verses*, there are altogether three major urban spaces: London, Bombay, and Jahilia, each with distinctive characteristics. Through the perusal of these three spaces in the text, readers are able to comprehend the attributes and nature of space which Rushdie attempts to communicate. In the meanwhile, readers are capable of detecting the profound influences of postmodern consciousness on the production of spatial meanings, for the spaces under Rushdie’s depiction are endowed with such postmodern features as transience, kaleidoscope, inconsistency, and heterogeneity. Furthermore, among these three spaces, the urban space of London is brought to the forefront, for it serves as the fundamental location which diasporic subjects appropriate so as to survive the harsh reality of racism and around which the entire story of transnational “uprootings/ regroundings” revolves. In order to go deep into the configuration of space in *The Satanic Verses*, this chapter in the first place probes into the general concept of space, the notion of heterogeneous space in particular. Simultaneously, the cartography of urban spaces in the text—London, Bombay, and Jahilia—is carefully examined so as to estimate the far-reaching influences of postmodern consciousness on the idea of space. Furthermore, since the urban space of London takes up a remarkable and momentous position in the entire text, the historical survey of metropolitan London is beneficial for our study of space. Hence, the second part of this chapter concentrates on the cartography and spatial history of metropolitan London. Last but not least, what the space signifies for diasporic subjects in metropolitan London and also the possibility of other spatial application and arrangements within the space are paid much
attention to in sociology. Thus, the last part of this chapter tackles the diasporic appropriation of space in Western metropolises. In the meanwhile, migrants’ multiple perspectives of London and diasporic subjects’ appropriation of space in *The Satanic Verses* are thoroughly explored in order to sketch the contours of diaspora space in metropolitan center.

**Heterogeneous Space: Rethinking Postmodern Space**

As a result of the flourishing development of capitalism and the overwhelming trend of globalization in the twentieth century and afterwards, the contemporary world has entered an unprecedented phase called postmodernity, the most distinguishing characteristic of which is the emphasis laid on space\(^1\). As Fredric Jameson contends in “The End of Temporality,” theorists and critics nowadays tend to have confidence in “the dictum that time was the dominant of the modern (or of modernism) and space of the postmodern” (696). By the same token, Michel de Certeau considers that “functionalist organization, by privileging progress (i.e., time), causes the condition of its own possibility—space itself—to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology” (95). Also summarizing the evolution of the relationship between time and space, Edward W. Soja presumes that the late nineteenth century witnesses “rising historicism and the parallel submergence of space in critical social thought,” (Soja 4) while subsequently with the onset of post-modernization, the mid twentieth century can be seen as an epoch “highlighting the reassertion of space that is complexly intertwined with it” (Soja 5). In other words, critics recently attach great importance to the idea of space in the postmodern era\(^2\), including the

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\(^1\) In “Racism and the Postmodern city,” Malcolm Cross and Michael Keith state that “the tie between accelerating technological advance and the radical restructuring of late capitalist economies has created a new ‘postmodern city’” (2).

\(^2\) According to Soja, “[t]he first insistent voices of postmodern critical human geography appeared in the late 1960s” (12).
configuration of space, the politics of space, and the production of space. However, space is by no means a handy, clear-cut, and easily comprehensible concept. On the contrary, the notion of space is rife with ambiguity, intricacy, and diversity. As Michael Keith and Steve Pile make clear in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, a bunch of space-related terms are frequently employed, and consequently demonstrates the multiplicity and complexity of space:

- position, location, situation, mapping; geometrics of domination, centre-margin, open-closed, inside-outside, global-local; liminal space, third space, not-space, impossible space; the city. Such terms are used to imply a complexity which is never directly explored or confronted. (1-2)

To put it simply, critics in general are inclined to contend that in no circumstance should space be a static, undialectical, passive, and empty arena which torpidly waits to be stuffed and occupied.

In spatial discourses, a common consensus is reached nowadays that “space is not an innocent backdrop to position, it is itself filled with politics and ideology” (Keith 4). As Soja articulates,

> We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (6)

That is to say, space is not in the least a transparent and indifferent “environmental ‘container’ of human life” (Soja 79). It is the foremost symbol of a particular culture which is “inherent in political institutions, religious myths, ethical ideals, principles of science, and

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3 In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre makes a special effort to ruminate over the production of space and the essential hypothesis underlying the entire book is that “[s]ocial space is a (social) product.” (Lefebvre 26) Generally speaking, Lefebvre claims that social space as a social construction is able to affect spatial practices and perception, and therefore each society is bound to develop its own spatial meanings and social configurations.
the forms of painting, music, and sculpture” (Kern 138). With the political dimension of space being drawn to the spotlight, social theorists assert that the configuration of space certainly sways spatial meanings and spatial practices, such as urban planning, architectural design, and cartography. Simply put, “the understanding of space as social space” (Farrar 106) dominates social critics’ thoughts. In addition to depicting space as political, ideological, and strategic, social critics such as Soja and Lefebvre also claim that space is socially produced (Lefebvre 1991: 30). In order to accentuate the relations between space and society, Soja even explicitly states that spatial meaning is “a product of social translation, transformation, and experience” (Soja 80). Moreover, when space is conceived of as a social product, two relevant issues are underscored: for one thing, natural space no longer exists; for another, the social relations of production and reproduction are “space-forming and space-contingent” (Soja 81). In a word, with regard to the concept of space, contemporary critics rivet their attention on the notion that “[s]pace is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies” (Lefebvre 1976: 31).

When the political dimension of space is brought to light, another aspect of space should also be intensified and examined, that is, the nature of space in a postmodern time. As mentioned in Chapter II, the condition of postmodernity and the ensuing postmodern structure of feeling affect architecture, painting, literature, and urban space design. Accordingly, the sense of space undergoes a series of transformations and modifications. Benjamin Genocchio in “Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference” indicates that at the outset the concept of space revolves around Cartesian spatial order, which is assumed to be “a fixed, ordered space” (35). Afterwards, this Cartesian spatial order is pungently criticized by postmodern discourses, and then succumbs to a more heterogeneous, flexible, and dynamic perspective on space. In the main, postmodern space is characterized as unstable, indeterminate, mutable, and discontinuous. It is a dynamic area rife with “a large number of fragmentary, possible, though incommensurable orders” (Genocchio 37). Therefore, it is
difficult to delimit fixed boundaries for postmodern space, for “any boundaries are permeable” (Pratt 27). In “(Not) Belonging in Postmodern Space,” John Lechte also highlights the elements of uncertainty, unsettledness, contingency, and randomness in the features of postmodern space (101).

Profoundly swayed by the postmodern consciousness, Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses* communicates the postmodern penchant for the heterogeneous, contested, indeterminate, and mutable nature of space. Otto Cone on his deathbed shares his insight on the essence of the contemporary world with his daughter, Alleluia Cone. As he elaborates,

> Anybody ever tries to tell you how this most beautiful and most evil of planets is somehow homogeneous, composed only of reconcilable elements, that it all adds up. . . The world is incompatible, just never forget it: gaga. Ghosts, Nazis, saints, all alive at the same time, in one spot, blissful happiness, while down the road, the inferno. You can’t ask for a wilder place. (295)

Through these remarks, Cone’s perspective on space is revealed: space is definitely not homogeneous, continuous, and consonant. Rather, space is full of rifts, tears, contradictions, and incompatible elements. The coexistence of inconsistent and irreconcilable elements, for one thing, destabilizes the steadfast, homogeneous, and unitary space in traditional sense. For another, it underscores the heterogeneous, contested, indeterminate, and mutable nature of space and the impossibility of authenticity, absoluteness, and consistence.

In *The Satanic Verses*, three discrepant spaces—London, Bombay, and Jahilia—are represented as having constitutive, positive, and productive functions. Rushdie’s descriptions of these spaces cannot be simply interpreted as the indifferent and innocent background information. In other words, the distinctive portrayals of these spaces suggest that space in the narratives is no longer a negative, passive, inactive, and inessential backdrop whose purpose of existence merely consists in intensifying the foreground. On the contrary, Rushdie strives to manifest how the configuration of space exerts its impact on culture,
identity formation, and social practices. Through the exquisite and penetrating accounts of distinguishing features and appearances of spaces, Rushdie conveys that disparate spaces give rise to cultures, customs, lived experiences, and spatial practices which vary from society to society, for space in general is “a product of social translation, transformation, and experience” (Soja 80).

At the beginning of The Satanic Verses, after the mysterious but comical air crash scene brings forth abstruse issues such as diasporic predicaments, metamorphosis, and disintegration of the postmodern, the major storyline abruptly shifts to adolescent Gibreel’s lived experience in Bombay, “a hungry city” (Rushdie 1988: 18) from his perspectives. By arranging Gibreel to dwell in a shabby shanty at Santacruz⁴, Rushdie obliquely indicates the colonial past of Bombay. The inner meaning of this toponym represents that Bombay is a postcolonial space in which imperial effects and indigenous elements go through a process of hybridization, implosion, collision, negotiation, and reconciliation. Owing to the creolization and intersection of foreign and native factors, postcolonial space—in this case, Bombay—is characterized as motley, contested, heterogeneous, and hybridized, rather than unitary, congruous, and unvaried. Postcolonial space as motley and hybrid also makes a great impact on the entire national culture; a culture which is “based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest” (Rushdie 1988: 52). In addition to being a postcolonial city imbued with miscellaneous, mongrel, and diverse factors, Bombay has different spatial meanings for Chamcha. Coming from a bourgeois family, Chamcha the Anglophile imagines Bombay as a city of “dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumoured singing whores of Grant Road” (Rushdie 37).

⁴According to Paul Brians’s “Notes for Salman Rushdie: The Satanic Verse,” Santacruz signifies “Holy Cross” in Portuguese. The place name “Santacruz” suggests that Bombay was once under Portuguese reign “before it was given as a dowry to the British” (15). Hence, the toponym which remains serves as a “[reminder] of the colonial past” (15).
Although Bombay under his fantasy is indecent, crude, and promiscuous, real Bombay is even worse. Zeeny Vakil cynically pierces to the truth that Chamcha, as a well-bred and privileged bourgeois, stands no chance of catching the authentic reality of Bombay:

“What do you know about Bombay? Your own city, only it never was. To you, it’s a dream of childhood. Growing up on Scandal Point is like living on the moon. No bustees there, no sirree, only servants’ quarters... That wasn’t Bombay, darling, excuse me. That was Wonderland, Peristan, Never-Never, Oz.” (55)

Brought up in the elegant residential district in Bombay, Chamcha does not recognize unnoticed shantytowns which are permeated by impoverishment, communal violence, and famine. In other words, slum areas are thoroughly eliminated from Chamcha’s perception of space of Bombay. Generally speaking, the appearances of Bombay space—diversified, mixed, and heterogeneous—echo the culture of Bombay. At the same time, the uneven distribution of wealth as well as the segregated spatial arrangement reveals the lived experience of people within this space.

Another significant space in *The Satanic Verses*, Jahilia explicitly embodies the indeterminacy, capriciousness, and transience of the postmodern space. As a substitute for historical Mecca, Jahilia is built in desert region, and accordingly it is well-known for its unique ambiance of aridity and barrenness. As Rushdie demonstrates,

The city of Jahilia is built entirely of sand, its structures formed of the desert whence it rises. It is a sight to wonder at: walled, four-gated, the whole of it a miracle worked by its citizens, who have learned the trick of transforming the fine white dune-sand of those forsaken parts,—the very stuff of

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5 According to Brians, bustees are slums in Hindi. (21)
6 According to Brians, Jahilia means the period before the revelation of the Koran. Therefore, being used with contempt by Muslims, Jahilia stands for “ignorance or barbarism” (32). But here, Rushdie uses it to replace Mecca.
inconstancy,—the quintessence of unsettlement, shifting, treachery, lack-of-form,—and have turned it, by alchemy, into the fabric of their newly invented permanence. These people are a mere three or four generations removed from their nomadic past, when they were as rootless as the dunes, or rather rooted in the knowledge that the journeying itself was home. (93-94)

Founded on insecure, rootless, contingent, and changeable sand, “these vain sandcastles” (Rushdie 94) of Jahilia bears the characteristics that are unique to the postmodern condition: metamorphosis, instability, indeterminacy, and ephemerality. As a city grounded on uncertainty, Jahilia seems vulnerable to be reduced to nothingness. In the second chapter, we have already ruminated over air space which serves as the quintessential epitome of the postmodern world and which is employed by Rushdie to subvert the general and long-standing confidence in an earthbound identity. Now with the mirage city of Jahilia, Rushdie once again reminds readers that even a space grounded on the earth is unlikely to escape from “the vertigo of an age without foundations” (Gane 21) in a postmodern age. Inextricably and irretrievably, the space of Jahilia—the sandcastle—is destined to be in a condition of unsettlement, contingency, changeability, and fluidity.

In comparison with heterogeneous Bombay and unstable Jahilia, London receives much greater attention in the study of space, for Gibreel and Chamcha’s inscrutable and world-shaking landing on London brought forth the happenings afterwards, including Gibreel’s schizophrenic revelation and Chamcha’s monstrous metamorphosis. In a word, London space—its appearances, attributes, and configuration—serves as a dynamic arena which positively and actively affects, constitutes, and manipulates inhabitants’ lived experience, state of mind, and identity formation. When Gibreel first comes to London, London space under his depiction is confusing, phantasmagoric, and kaleidoscopic: even though he did not have any idea of the true shape of that most protean and chameleon of cities he grew convinced that it kept changing shape as he ran
around beneath it, so that the stations on the Underground changed lines and followed one another in apparently random sequence. (201)

Leaving Gibreel puzzled, frustrated, and exhausted, the “most protean and chameleon” (201) city space of London refuses to be pinned down. Its ever-changing, ambiguous, and unsettling nature aggravates Gibreel’s schizophrenic state of mind and forces him to “plunge back into that hellish maze, that labyrinth without a solution” (201). Subsequently, when Gibreel’s mental condition is deranged and out of control, London space once again becomes distorted, amorphous, vague, and unpredictable:

London had grown unstable once again, revealing its true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city that had lost its sense of itself and wallowed, accordingly, in the impotence of its selfish, angry present of masks and parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable, unrejected burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future. (320)

The disturbing and changeful nature of London space exerts its power on Gibreel’s psychological condition, and reciprocally Gibreel’s schizophrenic state of mind compels him to regard London as a “tortured metropolis whose fabric was now utterly transformed” (Rushdie 320). In addition to transience, instability, and kaleidoscope, London space is also characterized as contested, heterogeneous, and diversified. Cone expresses his recognition of this character of London space:

“The modern city” Otto Cone on his hobbyhorse had lectured his bored family at the table, “is the locus classicus of impossible 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. (314)

In a word, London space is a dynamic arena in which incompatible and contradictory
elements coexist. The encounter of these incongruous factors (or, to put it more specifically, the encounter of the West and the Rest) inevitably results in a condition in which “each makes the other decompose, boom” (Rushdie 314). The process of interpenetration, hybridization, and contradiction of incompatible elements in London space is best embodied in diasporic subjects’ identity formation. Once again, Rushdie insinuates to readers that space in *The Satanic Verses* is by no means an innocent, indifferent, and insignificant background. It is, contrarily, imbued with Rushdie’s political purpose, a purpose to disclose how the condition of postmodernity as well as the postmodern consciousness has a great impact on the nature of space.

After the rough sketch of the concept of space and relevant examples in the text are laid out, the heterogeneous nature of space should be further explored, for this aspect of space is closely related to the emergence of diasporic subjects in metropolitan London. With the preliminary understanding of space as a political, ideological, and social-oriented construct, the idea of space as heterogeneous is definitely not difficult to comprehend, especially when we have already realized the current condition of postmodernity which is characterized by instability, heterogeneity, and capriciousness. Among those critics who delve into the nature of space, Stephen Kern is one of the most prominent predecessors in this field. In *The Culture of Time and Space*, Kern provides a detailed, innovative, and brilliant exposition of the heterogeneous nature of space. In the chapter, “The Nature of Space,” Kern begins by elaborating on the past history of the concept of space. Originally, space is regarded as singular, uniform, complete, quiescent, and continuous as Newton defines: “[T]his ‘absolute space’ [is] at rest, ‘always similar and immutable” (Kern 132). However, in the early

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7 Related issues of diasporic identity formation are discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III.
8 Providing a general cultural history of the turn of the century, *The Culture of Time and Space* probes into the way in which new comprehensions of time and space wield a lot of power in philosophy, architecture, literature, painting, and technology. It brims with brilliant insights, pertinent evidences, and convincing examples. For instance, Kern gives a vivid account of the evolution of the concept of space by means of painting. From Monet’s Impressionistic paintings, Cézanne’s *Still Life*, to Picasso’s Cubist *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, the heterogeneous nature of space and the notion of multiple perspectives are gradually displayed. Likewise, Robert Delaunay’s *Eiffel Tower* (1910-11) is considered to embody the idea of heterogeneous space as well.
twentieth century, the Bolshevik philosopher, A. Bogdanov, brings up an idea that various
forms of time and space will adapt themselves to human beings’ lived experiences (Kern 135).
Hence, his assertion interrogates and undermines the obsolete faith in “one and only one real
framework of time and space” (Kern 135). Subsequently, the zoologist, Jacob von Uexküll⁹,
extends his insight and contends that

> Although all animals live in the same environment, they have their own
> surrounding world (*Umwelt*). Each species responds to the outer world in its
> own way, and that response creates its special inner world (Innenwelt). . . Thus
> the inner worlds, surrounding worlds, and counterworlds vary with the “building
> plans” of each animal and constitute different senses of space. (Kern 137)

After referring to Bogdanov’s and von Uexküll’s notions of space, Kern discloses the
heterogeneous and fragmented nature of space. In his point of view, the notion of
heterogeneous space has two connotations. On the one hand, the sense of space “varies
from society to society” (Kern 138) and on the other hand, even within the same society “it
has different properties in different regions” (Kern 138). Likewise, Spengler considers that
“different cultures had a unique sense of space”⁴⁰ (Kern 138). To put it simply, as divergent
animals have different senses of space due to their respectively unique living environment,
disparate societies, communities, and cultures undoubtedly develop miscellaneous
comprehensions of space, each incompatible with others. The idea of heterogeneous space
brings to light the “silenced spatiality” (Keith 17) of diasporic communities and decomposes
the homogeneity, integrity, and consistency of Western imperial space.

In *The Satanic Verses*, the concept of heterogeneous space is embodied in the different
lived experiences of first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants, or to put

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⁹ Von Uexküll is deeply influenced by the Russian physiologist Elie de Cyon, who proclaims that the sense of
space rests on “the semicircular canals of the ear,” and therefore it is by no means “a priori category of the
mind” (Kern 136). Accordingly, Von Uexküll supposes that “the sense of space of all animals . . . varied with
their unique physiology” (Kern 137).

ⁱ⁰ Kern gives an account of discrepant senses of space through the examples of Egyptian space, Chinese space,
and Greek space (Kern 139).
it more specifically, in the implosive conflicts within the Sufyan family. As an epitome of the diasporic experience, the Sufyan family faces the inescapable generation gap which takes place in the process of migration. The distant homeland, Bangladesh, provides the first generation with the spiritual strength. Hence, what the first generation strives to achieve is the maintenance of the homeland culture and the alienation in the host country. Sufyan, for instance, accentuates the unchanging old self and Hind immerses herself in “Bengali and Hindi movies on VCR” (Rushdie 1988: 250), for this is her way to cling to the homeland culture. Nevertheless, the spatial experience of second-generation immigrants is completely opposite to that of first-generation immigrants. For example, Mishal and Anahita, “who were growing up refusing to speak their mother-tongue,” (Rushdie 1988: 250) have already been assimilated into the English culture and they earnestly take London as their home. Holy Bangladesh for the first generation is transformed into nothing more than a place name—“Bungleditch” (Rushdie 1988: 259)—for the second generation. Although the first generation and the second generation live in the same place, the spatial experiences are quite disparate. That is to say, the sense of space varies not only from culture to culture but also from generation to generation. The concept of heterogeneous space is thus clearly demonstrated.

**Metropolitan London: A Historical Survey**

As mentioned above, the urban space of London takes up an outstanding, momentous, and indispensable position in *The Satanic Verses*, and therefore a historical survey of metropolitan London is constructive, beneficial, and essential. In the eighteenth century, the landscape of England went through an unprecedented transformation. The commencement of the Industrial Revolution, with the reformative mode of production as its momentous kernel, subsequently led to modernization as well as urbanization. The embryo of an urban city thus progressively took shape. Owing to tremendous consequences brought about by
industrialization and urbanization, London in this phase became a city of clock time, of engines, of efficiency, and of speed. Nevertheless, the rapid and overwhelming transformation of London city space generated a great many social problems at the same time. Consequently, during the nineteenth century, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, another wave of urban renovation took place so as to amend myriads of social problems brought forth by the Industrial Revolution of the last century. In the late nineteenth century, after the accomplishment of London drainage system\textsuperscript{11}, the metropolitan London made its debut in the world history, and then it became the most prosperous and formidable urban city afterwards.

With unbearable feculence and obscene dilapidation well camouflaged into the underground, Londoners—or to put it more specifically, the upper- and middle class Londoners—preferred a clear-cut, unequivocal, and irreconcilable dividing line which separated themselves from the filthy Other—the working class, ragpickers, vagrants, whores, and Third World immigrants (Stallybrass 193). Spontaneously, a concentration of such eyesores as the poor and immigrants in the East End of London seemed to serve as an exquisite way to maintain the integrity of the upper- and middle class Londoners and also to tackle the extreme overcrowding of population. Henceforward, East End, in noble Londoners’ mind, became “the sinister heart of London”\textsuperscript{12} (Chen 232) and symbolized “the general decline and degeneration of the English national identity” (Chen 232). That is to say, the “popular imagery of the East End as a ‘dense concentration of dangerous difference’” (Westwood 9) aggrandized the impression of East End as the dark slum. The tendency to

\textsuperscript{11}In the middle of the nineteenth century, London had gone through a great deal of social reforms due to an epidemic of cholera and other diseases generated by the Great Stink in 1858. Sir Joseph Bazalgette’s renovation of London drainage system contributed to the great rebuilding of London cityscape, with all the unbearable smudginess and baneful pollution obliterated and concealed into the underground of London.

\textsuperscript{12}In “Out of the Melting Pot into the Fire Next Time,” Phil Cohen considers that although the same images of filthiness, impoverishment, vulgarity, and vileness are suitable for other working-class areas, East End is the target of vehement criticism, for it “was a dense concentration of dangerous difference, where poverty wore a foreign face” (Cohen 77). Simply put, the upper- and middle class Londoners project their anxiety about difference, promiscuity, and exoticness onto the image of East End.
view East End as the dark slum was interrupted when Margaret Thatcher came to reign in the 1980s. In order to comply with her policy concerning immigrants, Thatcher rebuilt the configuration of space in East End, and hence transformed it into a chief district of finance and commerce.

In *The Satanic Verses*, the history of Thatcher’s reconstruction and reformation in London’s East End is poignantly delineated so as to reflect the dominant, oppressive, and overall spatial orders regulated by the authorities. As Rushdie sarcastically and cynically demonstrates,

> What she wants—what she actually thinks she can fucking *achieve*—is literally to invent a whole goddamn new middle class in this country. Get rid of the old woolly incompetent buggers from fucking Surrey and Hampshire, and bring in the new. . . Nobody’s ever tried to replace a whole fucking *class* before, and the amazing thing is she might just do it if they don’t get her first. (270)

Through the comment of the advertising executive, Hal Valance, Rushdie criticizes Thatcher’s destructive, radical, and ruthless urban renovation. Besides, he also discloses that under the devastating reconstruction, Third World immigrants are still likely to preserve their own spatial practices by using some underground tactics. On the surface, the authorities wipe out dilapidated, filthy, and shabby East End and bring in newness, prosperity, and promise. Nevertheless, they are unable to obliterate the traces which manifest that this area is “stuffed full of fucking old *corpses*” (270). That is to say, diasporic communities in East End still stealthily and indomitably shape their own spatial framework, appearances and practices. In *The Satanic Verses*, immigrants in Brickhall, for instance the Sufyan

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13 The most distinguished instance of this kind is Brick Lane. A street located in the East End of London, Brick Lane is the nucleus of the city’s Bangladeshi community. It is an exotic and distinctive lane filled with curry houses, Indian restaurants, and bizarre groceries. It is also the center for clothing industry. The exotic atmosphere of Brick Lane designates the presence of Third World immigrants (mainly Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani).

14 According to Brians, Brickhall is a combination of Brick Lane and Southhall, two Asian immigrant neighborhoods in London.
family, echoes the residential environment and living conditions of the Indian-Pakistani immigrants in London’s East End. Compelled to live in London, Muhammad and Hind Sufyan can only make a living by running Shaandaar Café, a shabby B&B. Although their life in London is tough and precarious, they still struggle to survive through the traditional Indian-Pakistani cuisine. The Sufyan family serves as the authentic specimens who display the real lived experience, ordinary happenings, and mentality of diaspora. Moreover, the immigrants’ perception of London space exhibits their agency to appropriate the space which is originally established, regulated, and manipulated by the British authorities.

**Spatial Appropriation and Underground Tactics**

Together with the fulfillment of London sewage system and the sequential emergence of the metropolis, the concept of city comes into existence simultaneously. Urban planners, or the authorities, “make sense of the city as if it were a text to be read” (Thompson 423). By means of rational and well-organized schemes, urban designers are deeply absorbed in a desperate search for urban legibility. They endeavor to make the city pellucid, controllable, and efficient. The mentality of city planners in mid-Victorian period consist in turning London—this immense labyrinth—into a coherent, rational, and comprehensible organism. Bearing the concept of city in mind, urban designers adopt a top-down point of view in which the “elevation transfigures [city planners] into a voyeur” (de Certeau 92). From urban planners’ viewpoint, the metropolis is only a passive, docile, and inflexible space to be gazed upon, molded and manipulated. It is their desire “for a perspective both god-like and voyeuristic that can encompass all the diversity, randomness and dynamism of urban life in a single panorama or a neat collection of statistics” (Thompson, 435). Through utopian schemes, the authorities are under the impression that they are capable of dominating the

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15 In *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, Kenneth Thompson and Robert Bocock distinguish the concept of the city from the experience of the city. They define the concept of the city as “the way that the city is conceptualized” and the experience of the city as “the way that the city is experienced” (434).
entire situation and immobilizing the mobile city. However, the redesigned city—intelligible, legible, and systematic on the surface—merely manifests the purposes and ideology of urbanists. The consciousness of general users was deliberately left aside.

The urban indifference towards the agency of city users prompted the dissatisfaction of numerous theorists. Lefebvre, for instance, speculates about whether people are compliant with spatial orders (e.g. conforming to rules and regulations which designate where to shop, where to ask for advice, and where to eat, etc.). Accordingly, he brings up the distinction between representations of space and representational spaces so as to accentuate that “what is below the text to decipher (everyday life, immediate relations, the unconscious of the urban...) hides itself in the inhabited spaces” (Elden 148). Representations of space—the conceived, dominant space—is “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (Lefebvre 38), while representational spaces—the lived, dominated space—are the space of city dwellers and users. In Lefebvre’s theorization, representational spaces are “linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life” (Lefebvre 33) and are capable of subverting the controlling representations of space.\footnote{Although Lefebvre places much emphasis on representational spaces and the agency of city dwellers, he also considers that “what is above this urban text (institutions, ideologies), cannot be neglected” (Elden 148). In a word, the conceived space and the lived space should be interpenetrated and interconnected.}

Similar to Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau indicates the possibility of other spatial application and arrangements. In “Walking in the City,” de Certeau elaborates on the discrepancy between urban designers and city users. Urban designers, like voyeurs, necessarily view the city at a distance in order to acquire a single panorama of the metropolis. Observing the overall citiescape from such a lofty and separate position “makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text” (de Certeau 92). As de Certeau expresses, this kind of top-down, dominant, and overall perspective is a way of keeping aloof, by the space planner urbanist, city planner or
cartographer. The panorama-city is a “theoretical” (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices. The voyeur-god created by this fiction, who, like Schreber’s God, knows only cadavers, must disentangle himself from the murky intertwining daily behaviors and make himself alien to them. (92-93)

Simply put, urban designers contend that they are able to see through the whole metropolis and to flatten out all that is rugged and bumpy. Nevertheless, the insistence on urban discourses rather than on daily experiences will ultimately result in illusory imagination and misunderstanding. In order to avoid misunderstanding, de Certeau underlines the tactical, microbe-like practices of ordinary practitioners. As he elucidates,

The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thick and thin of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. The paths... elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. (93)

Depending on tangibility rather than visuality, everyday users of cityscape write with their bodies, not with their eyes. Although city planners have already constituted methodical spatial orders, walkers and dwellers of city space can always reshape the configuration of space which is suitable for their use. In this roundabout, tactical, and guerilla way, real actors of the city create their “own spatial meanings, producing urban space in canny and idiomatic ways” (Tonkiss 241). In other words, they are able to escape the imposition of the urban power and “[insinuate] themselves into the networks of surveillance” (de Certeau 96). Both Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s concepts suggest that city users’ poly-tonic life experiences
cannot be suffocated. Moreover, they imply that the ground we stand on is a heterogeneous space. This heterogeneous space is full of gaps and conflicts through which “marginalized communities may be able to inscribe themselves into new geographies” (Keith 36).

In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie impressively and brilliantly describes the lived experience of diasporic subjects in London not only to uncover the predicaments of diaspora, the consequential phenomenon of hybridity, and identity crisis which immigrants inescapably face up to, but also to indicate the possibility of spatial appropriation and new arrangement by these immigrants. Although the monotone of British urban planners strives to demolish opacity, ambiguity, and illegibility of diasporic communities, diasporic subjects always make their way by oblique, sneaking, and inconspicuous means. Through immigrants’ everyday practices and their idiosyncratic perspectives on London space, Rushdie articulates that diasporic immigrants have their own distinctive sense of space and spatial practices which cannot be brutally smothered by the British authorities. The title of Chapter Five—“A City Visible but Unseen”—in the first place exposes the existent, visible, and irresistible phenomenon of Third World immigrants in London, a phenomenon which white English people are inclined to close their eyes to. Then in the second place, the title expresses that although immigrants in London are often overlooked, excluded, and debased—that is, unseen—they are always there surreptitiously and covertly appropriating, shaping, and constituting their own spatial framework and social practices.

The title of Chapter Three—“Ellowen Deewen”—reminds readers of the unnoticed presence of South Asian immigrants in London as well. As the South Asian immigrants’ way of saying “London,” “Ellowen Deewen” implies that the presence of immigrants as well as their peculiar cultural ambiance is an inexorable social reality. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie intentionally makes Chamcha the Anglophile spits out the destructive

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17 According to Brians, Rushdie deems that Indian/Pakistani communities in London are unseen, for many white people somehow reject this information (49).
phrase—“Ellowen deeowen London” (Rushdie 37)—so as to further reinforce the subversive power of diasporic subjects. At thirteen, the juvenile Chamcha understands that he is “destined for that cool Vilayet full of the crisp promises of pounds sterling at which the magic billfold had hinted” (Rushdie 37). Looking forward to civilization, rationality, decency, moderation, and progress which the British Empire stands for, Chamcha inconspicuously but incessantly utters his prayers:

And his favourite game was the version of grandmother’s footsteps in which, when he was it, he would turn his back on upcreeping playmates to gabble out, like a mantra, like a spell, the six letters of his dream-city, elowen Deeowen. In his secret heart, he crept silently up on London, letter by letter, just as his friends crept up to him. Elowen eeowen London. (37)

By articulating “Ellowen Deeowen London,” (Rushdie 37) Chamcha intends to be “close enough to hear the lions of Trafalgar roar” (Rushdie 37). However, he has no idea that his ardent and wholehearted invocation precisely deconstructs the concept of Proper London at the moment of chanting. The idea of Proper London—“Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen”18 (Rushdie 38)—is disintegrated into six letters, six fragments: “Ellowen Deeowen” (Rushdie 37). As the children’s rhyme has it, “Ellowen Deeowen” (Rushdie 37) for one thing exhibits Rushdie’s pouring ridicule on Chamcha’s great aspirations. For another, the phrase represents South Asian immigrants’ transfiguration and appropriation of the Western center. In a sense, London is no longer an intact, pure, and utopian space in which filthiness, poverty, and abjection generated by immigrants are well camouflaged, out of sight. Instead, the grotesque Other always lurks in the underground and finds its way to destabilize, disrupt, and impact on London the metropolis.

In addition to the unwitting decomposition of Proper London by Chamcha the

18 These are well-known landmarks and scenic spots in London: Big Ben, Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square, The Lord’s Tavern Bar & Brasserie, Tower of London, and Queen Elizabeth II.
Anglomaniac, other South Asian immigrants also use their expediency when struggling to survive under the clutches of the Western metanarrative. Hind Sufyan, for instance, painstakingly and arduously earns a living in “this Vilayet of her exile” (Rushdie 248) by her cooking. Owing to Muhammad Sufyan’s Communist thoughts, Hind is compelled to migrate to London, a place where “she had had to endure all the privations and humiliations of the process of immigration” (Rushdie 248). Even if she has her heart filled with resentment and discontent, Hind still strives to survive by cooking the traditional Indian-Pakistani cuisine:

And what was it that made them a living in this Vilayet of her exile? . . . It was: her cooking. “Shaandaar,” it was praised. “Outstanding, brilliant, delicious.” People came from all over London to eat her samosas\(^{19}\), her Bombay chaat\(^{20}\), her gulab jamans\(^{21}\) straight from Paradise. (248)

By means of cooking, Hind shows that immigrants are capable of breaking down the rigid barriers which separate white English citizens from colored immigrants, for cooking has no boundaries. Furthermore, the traditional Indian-Pakistani cuisine serves as a gentler but more effective means to penetrate into the heart of the Western center and to impress on the white the indisputable fact that immigrants around should be paid attention to. As an underground tactic, cuisine is a soft way to infiltrate through the formerly impregnable Western center, and at the same time it is able to stealthily but successfully make the presence of immigrants conspicuous, observed, and visible. In addition to serving as a soft way to penetrate into the West, cooking is also a gentle tactic which demonstrates the female power to reverse the hierarchy of the male power. In the main, the diasporic experience is concerned with men’s lived experiences and their nostalgic state of mind. The experience of

\(^{19}\) According to Brians, samosas is a Hindi word for “[p]ockets of bread filled with spiced meat or vegetable” (42).

\(^{20}\) According to Brians, chaat signifies fruit and vegetable in a hot and sour sauce (50).

\(^{21}\) According to Brians, gulab jamans is “a classical Indian sweet” (50).
women is often glossed over or left aside. But in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie attempts to exhibit the subversive power of the underground tactic by arranging that Hind’s cooking turns out to be the main source of their living. In Bangladesh, Hind is an ordinary housewife and Sufyan sustain the entire family. However, when they moved to London, Hind’s cuisine makes them a living and “power has been removed from his hands and delivered into hers” (Rushdie 1988: 249). Turning the hierarchy upside down, Rushdie underscores that female can play an important role in the diasporic experience as well. Cooking, as a kind of soft tactic, deconstructs both the patriarchy in the diasporic experience and the hierarchy in the experience of imperialism.

In comparison with the traditional Indian-Pakistani cuisine, the bizarre Hot Wax nightclub displays a rather furious, tumultuous, and fervent way to deconstruct the Western center. As a nightclub which immigrants resort to, Club Hot Wax symbolizes the covert and unobserved status of diasporic subjects:

Let us follow the figures... converging from all quarters of the neighbourhood to dive, abruptly, underground, and through this unmarked door. What’s within? Lights, fluids, powders, bodies shaking themselves, singly, in pairs, in threes, moving towards possibilities. (291)

“Visible but unseen,” Club Hot Wax parallels the predicaments of diasporic subjects in host countries. Consequently, it turns out to be the immigrants’ headquarters and assemblage site in which immigrants exchange their discontent with street violence, institutional racism, and governmental brutality. Although diasporic subjects in London are left aside and glossed over in this underground, unmarked, and unseen space, they still embrace hope, “moving towards possibilities” (Rushdie 291). In this concealed, unobserved, and easily negligible space, they carry out a symbolic rebellion against the harsh reality of racism by burning down waxen statues:
Maggie-maggie-maggie\textsuperscript{22}, bays the crowd. Burn-burn-burn. The doll,—the guy,—is strapped into the Hot Sea. Pinkwalla throws the switch. And O how prettily she melts, from the inside out, crumpling into formlessness. Then she is a puddle, and the crowd sighs its ecstasy: done. “The fire this time,” Pinkwalla tells them. Music regains the night. (293)

In the process of melting down the wax figure, immigrants demonstrate their potential agency and latent power “by ‘manipulating’ and ‘diverting’ those spaces which strategies alone are able to ‘produce, tabulate and impose’” (Ahearne 162). In the space of Club Hot Wax, the nocturnal tactics—characterized by “insecurity, ephemerality and a high degree of mobility” (Ahearne 162)—are carried out to affect, alter, and reshape spatial meanings and the configuration of space.

In addition to the underground space of Club Hot Wax, the grotesque detention center is also a noteworthy space in which diasporic subjects revolt against the British authorities by means of the unobserved and clandestine conspiracy. After demonized Chamcha is beaten up by the police and immigration officers, he is sent to the detention center which is set up by the British authorities in order to cure deformed, monstrous, and mutant immigrants. Operated and controlled by doctors and guards, the detention center, “or whatever the place called itself,” (Rushdie 166) stands for a space of power, domination, and manipulation. It is a space where everything is arranged, monitored, and handled according to “Doctor’s orders” (Rushdie 165). As a result of the protection (or segregation) of the “ring of screens” (Rushdie 167) between each bed, transfigured immigrants are meticulously separated and supervised. In this way, bizarre and disfigured immigrants can be transformed into “docile bodies,”\textsuperscript{23} to use Michel Foucault’s words, which submit to the imperial power. In short,

\textsuperscript{22} According to Briars, “Maggie-maggie-maggie” stands for Thatcher (56).
\textsuperscript{23} When Foucault delves into the structure of power, the operation of surveillance, and the mechanism of punishment in *Discipline and Punish*, he speaks about the idea of docility. In short, the body becomes the target of manipulation, discipline, and power. It becomes “political puppets” (Foucault 136) dominated by the authorities so as to achieve “docility-utility” (Foucault 137). Docile bodies which are produced by discipline
the detention center is a space of domination and manipulation in which the imperial center imposes rules, orders, and norms on immigrants.

Although stuck in this suffocating, disciplinary, and well-supervised institution, deformed immigrants still endeavor to alter their inferior position, to appropriate the established spatial orders, and to resist the arbitrariness of the British authorities. Taking advantage of “the night guards [who] often doze off” (Rushdie 167) those detained immigrants conspire to get away from this inhumane institution. As the manticore expresses,

Some of us aren’t going to stand for it. We’re going to bust out of here before they turn us into anything worse. Every night I feel a different piece of me beginning to change. I’ve started, for example, to break wind continually. . . I beg your pardon. . . you see what I mean? (168)

The secret intrigue planned by immigrants reveal that the detention center—a space of domination, manipulation, and power—is transformed and appropriated by immigrants into a space of conspiracy and rebellion. Primarily a space rife with surveillance, commands, and rules, it is now reversed as a space in which immigrants hold together to resist institutionalized racism and brutal abuse.

In addition to delineating immigrants’ agency and subversive power through Indian-Pakistani traditional cooking and the shadowy space of Club Hot Wax, Rushdie reverses the rigid image of London as rational, civilized, and pellucid in another way: immigrants’ distinctive way of perceiving the city. London space, in immigrants’ point of view, is characterized as unstable, ephemeral, grotesque, and hellish. In other words, diasporic subjects create their own spatial meanings, and hence disrupt the concept of Proper London as totalizing, singular, and homogeneous. In The Satanic Verses, such diasporic subjects as Hind, Gibreel, and Chamcha express their peculiar perceptions of London, and have productive forces in terms of utility, and simultaneously subject to discipline.
through their eyes readers are able to see London space from a different perspective.

Having her heart filled with indignation and unwillingness, Hind considers that life in London consumes her soul and makes her “extinguished, like a lightbulb with a broken filament, like a fizzled star, like a flame” (Rushdie 249). In her point of view, London space is unfriendly, hostile, and cruel to foreign comers:

They had come into a demon city in which anything could happen, your windows shattered in the middle of the night without any cause, you were knocked over in the street by invisible hands, in the shops you heard such abuse you felt like your ears would drop off but when you turned in the direction of the words you saw only empty air and smiling faces, and every day you heard about this boy, that girl, beaten up by ghosts. –Yes, a land of phantom imps, how to explain. (250)

No longer characterized as rational, civilized, and moderate, London in Hind’s eyes turns out to be a wicked, malicious, and violent space. Even though the conditions are harsh, Hind still strives to survive in London—a dreadful city where she has to “emit these alien sounds that made her tongue feel tired” (Rushdie 249) and where the cherished customs are forever lost. In order to keep away from ghosts, monsters, and well-dressed villains in this “land of phantom imps,” (Rushdie 250) Hind has her own measure. In addition to penetrating the Western center with her traditional cuisine, Hind has other ways to avoid the intrusion of Western evil:

To deny the ghosts outside the café, she stayed indoors, sending others out for kitchen provisions and household necessities, and also for the endless supply of Bengali and Hindi movies 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”. (250-251)

Stuck in this ghastly city where “she had sunk into the anonymity, the characterless plurality,”
(Rushdie 250) Hind quietly and inconspicuously carries out underground tactics so as to make herself regain the connection with “the village of her youth and the green waterways of home” (Rushdie 249). By attending to her own culture “as a field of practical operations,” (Highmore 4) Hind bit by bit creates her own lived experience, social ambiance, and spatial meanings.

Transfiguring into a demonized figure with “new, goaty, unarguable horns” (Rushdie 141) after the inscrutable air crash, Chamcha goes through a series of painful metamorphoses—a process that forces him to realize the harsh reality of racism in London. The former identification with Englishness and the favorable impression of London are broken into pieces during the process of racist abuse and inhumane treatment. “[T]hat dream-Vilayet of poise and moderation” (Rushdie 37) turns out to be an infernal city from Chamcha’s perspective:

Yes: this was Hell, all right. The city of London, transformed into Jahannum, Gehenna, Muspellheim24... First light; and the dawn chorus began, chattering of road-drills, chirrup of burglar alarms, trumpeting of wheeled creatures clashing at corners, the deep whirr of a large olive-green garbage eater. From beneath the earth came tremors denoting the passage of huge subterranean worms that devoured and regurgitated human beings, and from the skies the thrum of choppers and the screech of higher, gleaming birds. (254)

What the morning of London demonstrates is no longer the brisk tempo manifested by “a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket” (Woolf 2) on London streets. On the contrary, the formerly jubilant, dynamic, and bustling cityscape is superseded by all sorts of discordant, acute, and uncomfortable noise. The Underground, which is primarily regarded as the emblem of progress, is now a wormlike, frightful, and monstrous creature

24 According to Brians, Jahannum, Gehenna, and Muspellheim are the Muslim hell, the Jewish hell, and the Norse hell respectively (51).
which “devoured and regurgitated human beings” (Rushdie 254). Besides, when Chamcha escapes from the grotesque detention center, he perceives that “[t]he city thickened around them like a forest” (Rushdie 255). The presumed legibility, orderliness, and clarity of London space become obscure, opaque, confusing, and complicated. Together with the tormenting process of metamorphosis, the spatial meanings of London for Chamcha undergo a series of transformation, reconstruction, and reinterpretation—a process which deconstructs the false impression that London space is homogeneous, continuous, and consonant.

In comparison with Chamcha and Hind who reshape their own spatial meanings and spatial practices, Gibreel has an entirely different experience. When Gibreel suffers from serious schizophrenia and further sinks into the crevice between waking life and dreamlike revelation, he confirms that he is the incarnation of the Archangel Gibreel. Therefore, he decides to carry out a series of spiritual renovation. For one thing, he attempts to reverse the imperial project of the British Empire and to “tropicalize” London: “I am going to tropicalize you” (Rushdie 354). For another, Gibreel resolves to purify, enlighten, and convert the irreverent city of London into something better:

He drew out of the right-hand pocket of his overcoat the book that had been there ever since his departure from Rosa’s house a millennium ago: the book of the city he had come to save, Proper London, capital of Vilayet, laid out for his benefit in exhaustive detail, the whole bang shoot. He would redeem this city: Geographers’ London, all the way from A to Z. (322)

The attempt to pin down, to see through, and to dominate the cartography of London space is a significant and symbolic act in overturning the imperial project of the British Empire, for “spatial practices of mapping and naming” (Jacobs 19) is an indispensable means in territorial expansion under imperialism. Mapping the cartography of postcolonial space becomes “the over-determined signifier of the spatiality of the imperial imagination” (Jacobs 20). In order to “tropicalize” London, Gibreel becomes the cartographer whose plan is to place a rational
spatiality on irrational, insolent, and disrespectful London. However, the dynamic, amorphous, unstable city space cannot be pinned down by Gibreel who adopts a top-down point of view:

But the city in its corruption refused to submit to the dominion of the cartographers, changing shape at will and without warning, making it impossible for Gibreel to approach his quest in the systematic manner he would have preferred. . . In this pandemonium of mirages he often heard laughter: the city was mocking his impotence, awaiting his surrender, his recognition that what existed here was beyond his powers to comprehend, let alone to change. (327)

The grand aspiration to turn London into a coherent, rational, and comprehensible map is doomed to failure, for the indeterminate, mutable, and transient nature of space as well as everyday practices of inhabitants frustrates Gibreel’s urban scheme. Urban space of London is by no means a docile, agreeable, and passive arena which submits itself to the surveillance of urban planners. On the contrary, inhabitants are able to appropriate, reconstruct, and reconstitute the primarily fixed space.

In this chapter, the characterization of space in *The Satanic Verse* is thoroughly examined so as to gauge how the nature of space affects diasporic subjects and explore how diasporic subjects demonstrate their agency within the space. In the first place, space is characterized as heterogeneous, unstable, indeterminate, mutable, and discontinuous under the influence of the postmodern consciousness. Space in postmodern era is uncertain, dynamic, political, and ideological. Awfully unmappable, this postmodern space makes its inhabitants, on the one hand, afflicted with vertigo due to a sense of disorientation and on the other hand, keenly and delightedly recognize their potentiality and agency to appropriate the originally given, established space. In the second place, the agency of diasporic subjects is highlighted in order to reveal the inevitable absence of a definite contour of London. The distinction between urban planners and city users are used to underline the possible
transgression of the everyday life. Although the city planners—in this case, the British government—have already established a sanctioned pattern, diasporic subjects are still capable of searching out their own space and weaving their own stories within the field of strategy.