

Picasso, Rushdie and the Fragmented Woman

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The essential relation is therefore immediately the relation of *whole* and *parts*—the relation of reflected and immediate self-subsistence, so that both sides only are as at the same time reciprocally conditioning and presupposing each other.

— Hegel's *Science of Logic* (513)

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) is acclaimed as one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century. According to *The Dictionary of Art*, he “was central in the development of the image of the modern artist. Episodes of his life were recounted in intimate detail, his comments on art were published and his working methods recorded on film” (712). He experimented with different artistic styles throughout his life and “adopted particular styles as a form of criticism” (725). Furthermore, he was one of the major figures that helped develop Cubism, described as “one of the most radical re-structurings of the way that a work of art constructs its meaning” (712). Some of his output was eclectic and comprised “fragments of different styles,” and some “works of strikingly different appearance may date from the same moment” (725). Although Picasso is often associated with modernism, his work reflects elements of postmodernism as well.¹ In *Picasso et les femmes*, Ingrid Mössinger writes: “This simultaneous co-existence of different styles, found in so-called ‘Post-Modernism,’ was demonstrated by Picasso’s work sixty years earlier” (10). She adds: “Many artists . . . recognized that Picasso was always ten steps ahead of the rest of them” (10).

Salman Rushdie (b. 1947), on the other hand, born more than a half century after Picasso, is often affiliated with postmodernism. His novel, *Midnight's Children*, is representative of a postmodern work in many respects. One salient aspect is the rewriting of a monumental time in world history: India’s independence from Britain in 1947. In *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*, it states:

Midnight's Children exploits complex narrative techniques of allegory, fable, fantasy, and textual self-consciousness, coupled with detailed realism in the depiction of personal relationships and certain key historical events, to illuminate what, in Rushdie’s view, has gone wrong in India since Independence, particularly attacking the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. (584)

Furthermore, Ferozo Jussawalla writes: “The unwieldy chaotic language of the large dialect passages in *Midnight's Children* attempts to be a reflection of the unwieldy chaotic form which in turn attempts to reflect the content, the chaotic history of India and Pakistan since independence” (40). The novel includes fragmentation which is found in both modern and postmodern works. In fact, fragmentation can be considered a common link between the two periods.

In *Midnight's Children*, Dr. Aadam Aziz falls in love with Naseem as she is presented

to him in fragments. The young woman's father, Mr. Ghani, arranges for two husky female servants to hold a large white sheet between Adam, the doctor, and Naseem, the patient. A hole, "about seven inches in diameter" (19) has been cut out in the middle of the sheet. As Adam approaches the sheet he asks, "Ghani Sahib, tell me how I am to examine her without looking at her?" Ghani explains, "You will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there. And so, in this fashion the thing may be achieved" (19). The first day, Naseem has a stomach ache, so Aziz first becomes acquainted with her stomach. As time progresses he is introduced to such parts as her ankle, toe, calf, hands, armpit, and so on, until he comes "to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts" (22). This "partitioned woman" becomes "glued together by his imagination" (22), and he becomes intoxicated by the beauty of her parts.

Both Picasso and Rushdie are intrigued with the fragmented woman in their work. Picasso is famous for his portrayal of women in bits and pieces presented from a variety of vantage points. In a sense, he anticipates and prepares the way for Rushdie who creates the character Naseem, a woman who is introduced to her future husband in pieces. Thus Picasso and Rushdie experience a symbiotic relationship in that the former sets the stage for the latter, and the latter further develops the work of the former. In this essay, I compare and contrast the depiction of the fragmented woman by both Picasso and Rushdie, and assert that the modernist experiments of Picasso anticipate the postmodernist writing of Rushdie, and that Rushdie's work furthers the work of Picasso.²

Pablo Picasso was instrumental in laying the groundwork for postmodernism. Fragmentation, a feature of both modernism and postmodernism, is one of the prominent features in many of his works, particularly his Cubist creations. Natasha Staller, in *A Sum of Destructions: Picasso's Cultures and the Creation of Cubism*, writes that "Picasso's Cubist images...are among the most magical, most mysterious, most playful, most moving and most epochal images that he or anyone else ever made" (1). Not only does one find styles that "war against each other," but purposeful fragmentation as well. Staller explains that "Cubist works shimmer with fragments—where a disembodied mustache or glimpse of guitar glints out of shadowy mists; where bodies, objects, the 'space' around them, and often the materials used to depict them—all are shattered into shards" (1).³

In her text, Staller explores Picasso's background, and discusses some of the influences of his early childhood. In a section of the book called "The Fetishized Fragment," she writes: "Picasso, the future maker of a Cubist art of fragments, spent his first ten years in a culture that was fascinated, almost obsessed, with body parts—parts often believed to be charged with higher meaning" (19). In Málaga, Spain, for example, where Picasso lived as a young boy, Malagueños prayed to the remaining fragment of a late sixteenth-century statue of Christ, the holy head "with its dark brown skin, black beard and hair" (19).⁴ Other holy relics important to Malagueños included body parts such as St. Justin Martyr's leg bone, St. Luis Obispo's back bone, and St. Sebastian's "arm" (19). Malagueños also prayed

to metal images of body parts called *ex votos*. The various parts, “arms, eyes, hands, breasts, legs, feet” (20), were displayed in the chapel, and usually hung from ribbon or nails.⁵ Furthermore, body parts that were cut, particularly fingernails, were associated with superstitions. For example cutting fingernails on Friday would result in “bad luck, even insanity”; cutting them at night was affiliated with “the devil’s work” (20). Staller explains: “Such body fragments belonged to the realm of the potent, the magical, the marvelous”(20).

Staller also points out that isolated body parts were prominent in two late 19th-century paintings by the artist Enrique Simonet y Lombardo (20-21). In his *Decapitation of St. Paul* (1887), which is housed in the Málaga Cathedral, St. Paul’s head lies on the ground, apart from his body, after having been chopped off. In another painting, *The Autopsy* (1890), a doctor stands by the partially naked body of a dead woman lying on a table, and holds the heart he has removed from her body.⁶ This work, which hangs in the Museo de Málaga, emphasizes and, in some ways celebrates, an individual body fragment. Although both paintings are representational, they anticipate the more radical and thorough fragmentation of the human body which takes place in the 20th century. The latter work, which includes a woman partially covered by a sheet who is being studied part by part by a doctor, also foreshadows Rushdie’s Dr. Aziz who examines the fragments of Naseem’s body through a perforated sheet.

Picasso, like Simonet and many other artists, features women in numerous paintings. Some of his works of women are representational and somewhat traditional. For example, an early work, *The Young Girl with Bare Feet* (1895), depicts a girl sitting in a chair. The youth is wearing a red dress and has a white cloth draped over her shoulders. Another painting, *Portrait of Benedetta Canals* (1905), features the face and upper torso of a woman in a tan dress. Dark-haired, she wears a black veil on her head and is positioned against a burnt orange background. Considerably later, in 1942, Picasso painted *Portrait of Dora Maar*, which is also somewhat representational. It focuses on the face and upper torso of a woman with reddish brown, shoulder-length hair. She is attired in a green and orange striped dress with a white collar, and is situated against a blue/black background. The features of the woman’s face have been influenced by African art, but are relatively symmetrical and balanced.⁷

Picasso, however, is best known for his renditions of women who are fragmented, with asymmetrical facial features and body parts. In *The Visual Grammar of Pablo Picasso*, Enrique Mallen paraphrases Robert Rosenblum and writes that “impelled to an ever greater fragmentation of mass and a more consistently regularized vocabulary of arc and angles, Picasso will treat even the human figure with a coherence that finally confounded the organic and inorganic” (139). He explains further: “The fracturing of mass into overall faceting tends towards annihilating the integrity of the human form” (139). In *Woman with a Guitar (Ma Jolie)*, painted in 1911-12, the female is presented in neutral tones and geometrical shapes that are so fragmented it is difficult to distinguish the human being from the guitar. Yet not all of his portrayals of women were equally fragmented. His *Woman*

with Pigeons (1930) depicts a woman sitting on a ladder whose face includes both a profile and two eyes as though viewed from the front. She appears to be reaching toward pigeons, revealing one side of her body, yet both breasts, presented as asymmetrical circles, are included. In a later work, *Seated Woman in a Yellow and Green Hat* (1962), Picasso portrays a woman created with geometrical shapes, yet unlike *Woman with a Guitar*, the artist uses bold colors and makes it fairly easy to see how the various parts and fragments fit together to form a human being.⁸ Mössinger writes: "What characterizes Picasso's work, particularly his portrayals of women, is the refusal to accept limitations" (10). Through fragmentation, whether it be to completely annihilate the woman in geometric forms, or present her in bold asymmetrical sections from multiple yet simultaneous points of view, he broke the barriers and limitations of convention.

Five of Picasso's works of women in particular can be associated with Rushdie's scenes of Dr. Aziz and Naseem.⁹ For example, his painting *Science and Charity* (1895-6) depicts a doctor examining a female patient lying in bed who is covered by both a sheet and blanket.¹⁰ The sick woman is being offered something to drink by a female attendant, who holds a young child in one arm and a cup in the other hand. Although visual fragmentation is not evident in this early work by Picasso, the theme of a doctor examining a female patient covered by a sheet, with a woman standing nearby, anticipates Rushdie's portrayal of Aadam's examinations of Naseem while women servants oversee his work as they hold a sheet. In Picasso's painting, the sheet provides not only comfort and warmth to the woman who is ill, but also functions as a shield covering the female from the gaze of the male doctor.

Another work by Picasso, *The Painter and His Model* (1914), created almost twenty years later, during the time period he was producing Cubist works, is not particularly fragmented.¹¹ In this piece, a male artist observes his nude model whose body is partially covered by a white sheet. Although this is not a scene involving a medical examination, the woman's body is being meticulously observed by the trained male artist in a professional relationship. One point of interest regarding this painting is that the woman and the upper background directly behind the woman are presented in colors. The artist, the chair on which he sits, and the other objects in the room are rendered in black and white, and appear to be sketched rather than painted. The focal point is clearly the woman who stands holding a sheet around her thighs. In this case the sheet acts of the barrier between the male examiner and the nude woman, which is the case with Aadam's professional visits with Naseem.

In *The Artist, His Model, Her Image, His Gaze*, Karen L. Kleinfelder points out that the actual canvas can act as the divider, or 'sheet,' between the artist and his model.¹² She writes specifically of Picasso:

Picasso's erection of the canvas barrier brings the figure of the antithesis into play The canvas as an upright boundary subdivides the spatial field, mapping out occupied territories, personalizing placement. Situated respectively on each side of the canvas-divide, the artist and model find

themselves assigned to opposite camps. But the presence of an obstacle also opens up the possibility of transgression. A foot extends beyond the easel legs, and the canvas threshold is trespassed. (72)

In Picasso's *Painter and Model* (4.12.64), a canvas separates the artist on the left side of the picture and the nude model on the right side. [See Figure 1] Kleinfelder writes of the "binary opposition that hinges on the bisecting canvas edge" (73). She explains:

As the center of the composition, the canvas governs the structure, determining the play of elements within the total design. Pictured in profile as a partition, however, the centered canvas closes off the play it initially had opened up by blocking interaction; the canvas becomes the censor. It detaches and polarizes artist from model, paralleling their differences: man/woman, active/passive, aged/youthful, clothed/naked, dark/light The prohibitive canvas barrier thus makes interplay between artist and model a taboo. (73)

In fact, even the written slash (/) between the specific binaries can be viewed as a metaphorical canvas or sheet. The white cloth in *Midnight's Children* which separates Aadam Aziz and Naseem makes a similar binary division, and also acts as a censor between male doctor and female patient.

Not only does Picasso construct a dividing line between artist and model, but in many works, he also presents the female in fragments. For example, in *Painter and Model* (7.2.64), the model on the other side of the canvas is portrayed in segregated parts. [See Figure 2] Kleinfelder writes of this particular work:

. . . the figure of the model becomes a disassembly of anatomical parts, sprawling in all directions in chaotic disarray. Detached body parts acquire their own autonomy as the body mechanism goes haywire. A leg bent at the knee begins to look unfamiliar, even bizarre. The knee becomes a coiled spring that connects to an abnormal formation of a rounded heel with two prodding, tubular appendages for toes. The model's head assumes the form of a three-leaf clover encasing a long, slender nose over a tiny, tight-lipped mouth, with two large eyes attached as appendages. Her forehead is indicated by a protruding little orb on top that sprouts some scraggly hairs, looking more like a turnip than a brain-center. (77)

Kleinfelder discusses how the "straight and narrow" lines "of the artist's realm" counter "the chaotic outbreak of the model's" (78) area which contains curved, circular, and meandering lines. Picasso clearly separates the masculine, phallic space from the feminine, curvilinear domain with the canvas, which Kleinfelder says contains "both an erect phallus and an impenetrable hymen" (79). She writes: "Art, it would seem, can only intervene at this point of impasse, when union is not yet consummated and the model remains the 'still unravished bride'" (79). In *Midnight's Children*, the perforated sheet also serves as a barrier between the realm of male physician and female patient. It represents the erect phallus as it is held upright in a straight position, and feminine genitalia with the circular opening.

Naseem is the “still unravished bride” on the other side of the canvas.

Furthermore, in Picasso’s famous *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907), a relatively early work, the white sheets that partially cover nude, fragmented women act as the divider between the artist and model. The parts of these five partially shielded women are presented from various angles and perspectives.¹³ Using predominantly geometric shapes, the viewer sees the back, breasts, arms, thighs, buttocks, knees, feet, and faces of various members of the female quintet, with some parts of the body being hidden by white sheets. Leon Battista Alberti writes that the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis “thought that he would not be able to find so much beauty as he was looking for in a single body He chose, therefore, the five most beautiful young girls from the youth of that land in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in a woman” (Qtd in Rosand 24). In a similar manner, Picasso provides the viewer with a variety of fragments from five different female images.¹⁴

In regard to *Les Femmes d’Alger*, John Tytell writes that “Pablo Picasso’s first major reinterpretation of traditional perspective in painting, is a harbinger of new form in the age of Einstein and Freud and a new way of seeing” (11). Picasso’s work certainly corresponds with the development in other fields of study that occurred during his generation. Finding a new way of seeing and of viewing the world was significant throughout the twentieth century. His approach to *Les Femmes d’Alger* was startling and revolutionary in the early part of the century. Robert Hughes writes:

That Picasso could give empty space the same kind of distortion a sixteenth-century artist reserved for cloth with a body inside it points to the newness of *Les Femmes d’Alger*. What is solid? What is void? What is opaque, and what transparent? The questions that perspective and modeling were meant to answer are precisely the ones Picasso begs, or rather shoves aside, in this remarkable painting.(7)

Picasso presents five fragmented females in this painting which prepares the way for the partitioned woman in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.

However, there is a difference between the women in Picasso’s painting and the virgin Naseem in Rushdie’s novel. Picasso wanted to name his piece, “The Avignon Brothel”(8). Although the white sheets in both cases cover the parts of the female, in the painting Picasso’s sheets are intertwined with female prostitutes who invite men to participate in unsanctioned pleasure. The white cloths are similar in that they act as barriers that separate feminine and masculine domains. As long as they cover the woman, she remains separate from phallic penetration; it is only upon removal of the sheet that she becomes accessible. On the other hand, the sheet that separates Aadam and Naseem is almost ceremonial, and represents chastity, virtue, and honor.¹⁵ The actual sheet is kept by the couple as a memento and reminder of their first meetings together, in which the groom was introduced to the bride piece by piece.

Picasso has prepared the way for the reader to imagine a partitioned woman who needs to be pieced together with the imagination. His rendering and presentation of women in parts existed for decades before Rushdie’s novel was written and published. By the late

twentieth century, it was no longer revolutionary or unusual to view parts of a woman rather than the whole in a piece of work. Furthermore, not only could the perspective and viewpoint break out of the boundaries of tradition, but different perspectives could be presented simultaneously. So, when Rushdie introduces Naseem to the reader fragment by fragment, his presentation is not jolting or radical. On the contrary, in some ways, the purpose for the sheet between the doctor and patient, that of modesty, seems perhaps old-fashioned and extreme.

In Islam, however, chastity of women is of the utmost importance. Jamila Brijbhushan writes: "The excessive zeal with which women must be guarded and their virginity protected makes them an almost intolerable burden on the family which, naturally, makes it a point to find husbands for them and to hand them over to their in-laws as soon as possible" (47). This concern is strongly evident in *Midnight's Children* when Mr. Ghani goes to great measures to insure both the modesty and chastity of his daughter. Underlying the need for frequent doctor's visits was Mr. Ghani's desire to find a husband for Naseem. He had essentially chosen Aadam Aziz as a potential son-in-law, and manipulated the visits in such a way that his daughter was presented to her physician (suitor) in pieces. Her various aches and pains were staged to a large degree so the doctor would be introduced to the various fragments, one by one, so he would need to imagine the whole woman until she was eventually unveiled.

A sense of modesty among many Muslim women continues to exist in contemporary society. According to a case study of a 19-year-old Arabic woman who was recently examined at a Women's Health Clinic in the southeastern region of the United States, "the client was draped to provide maximum protection and modesty" (Scott 4-5). The following "Cultural Overview," was provided in the case study to help medical professionals interact with Muslim women with greater sensitivity:

Muslim women are extremely modest. For this reason, they cover their bodies, heads, legs, and sometimes their faces. They are self-conscious about examination of body parts. Muslim female clients frequently request an all-female staff. A husband usually prefers to be with his wife while she is examined A woman's modesty (hijab), chastity, and warmth (no drafts) have to be considered in all that the nurse does for the client . . ." (4).

The young woman's skin, head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, throat, neck, chest, abdomen, and genitalia were all checked. During her visit, "the client was reluctant to be touched" and politely removed the professional's "hand on examination of the thyroid, breasts, and abdomen" (6). On a subsequent visit, the client was "carefully draped and screened," and her "husband was asked to stay during the examination to help allay the client's anxiety" (9).

Women from a large variety of backgrounds, cultures, and religions typically visit doctor's offices throughout the United States. During an examination it is common for the female patient to remove part or all clothing and put on a loosely fitting paper or cloth garment. For a general exam, the physician respectfully checks the patient body part by body part. The covered areas are usually unveiled as needed and then quickly and gently

covered again. In the case of the contemporary Muslim woman described above, extra care was taken to help make her feel more comfortable and to show respect for her extreme modesty. Thus when one keeps this tradition of modesty in mind which is still practiced on various levels today, Naseem's father does not seem quite so overprotective.

As with the canvas, which partitions the space between the artist and his model, the white sheet between Adam and Naseem acts as a divider between male/female, activity/passivity, and subject/object. This binary can be found in many traditional relationships between men and women. But it can also be taken a step further and represent colonial hegemony. Adam, in a metaphorical sense, depicts the dominant culture, while Naseem portrays India, the subordinate country. In Indian society (and other cultures as well) there is a strong association between a woman, particularly a mother, and the country. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie writes: ". . . is not Mother India, Bharat-Mata, commonly thought of as a female?" (465). When Adam observes his future wife (a future mother), Naseem, in parts, metaphorically he also sees the country, India.

In the essay, "Woman, Nation and Narration in *Midnight's Children*," Nalini Natarajan states: "Synecdoche, the imagination of a whole from its parts, essential to nation construction, also becomes the way woman is perceived in *Midnight's Children*" (400). Furthermore, in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee explains that in traditional scholarship "subject-centered reason . . . proclaims its own unity and homogeneity by declaring all other subjectivities as inadequate, fragmentary, and subordinate" (xi). Although Chatterjee finds value in the fragmentary and local, he acknowledges the more standard view.¹⁶ In the case of *Midnight's Children*, Adam, the professional, represents the subject viewing Mother India, the object, in her fragmented state. There is a similar relationship between most physicians and patients during a general physical examination, when the doctor, as a whole entity, analyzes his partially covered subject part by part.

In her Ph.D dissertation, "Under Other Skies?: Writing Gender, Nation and Diaspora," Susan Koshy writes that in many of Rushdie's works "A patriarchal history records the world of public affairs in which men are the main players; women are largely invisible or appear as auxiliary figures who may gain or manipulate power through their connections with men" (102-103). Rushdie clearly situates the woman on the other side of the white sheet, or canvas, in which she becomes the patient (model) to be examined (analyzed) by the male professional (master). Although Saleem Sinai, the narrator in *Midnight's Children*, "repeatedly invokes the centrality of women to (his)tory," Koshy points out that control and power are in the hands of the certain male characters. She writes: "Historical production remains within Saleem's control and is located within the patriarchal family, so that while many women may feature prominently in the events, continuities and legacies are established through the men" (107).¹⁷ In many of Picasso's paintings, women are the focal point, but he is unquestionably the master who put them in their prominent place. Likewise, Rushdie has the power in his writing to manipulate female characters and give them precedence, but this is done within a predominantly masculine narrative and with many dominant male characters.

Thus there is a strong sense of subordination with regard to even the strongest women in the novel. Koshy explains that when Aadam first meets his future bride as “she stands naked behind the perforated sheet” (122), he is enamored by the beauty of her parts. However, “after their marriage disillusionment sets in. The rift between them develops with Aadam’s insistence to Naseem when they make love, ‘Only move, I mean, like a woman . . .’ Aadam confronts her with a relentless standard against which she is forced to define herself; either she responds as he expects or she is not a woman” (122). Furthermore, Saleem is strongly associated with colonialism in that his biological father is the Englishman and colonialist, William Methwold. This inbred alliance suggests a double subordination of women: not only are they subject to men, fathers, and husbands, but they are also subject to the colonizer. Even in their postcolonial state, the memory of the English culture and life style lingers and maintains a domineering presence.¹⁸

In addition, M K Naik writes: “The ‘perforated sheet’ motif reappears in the third generation too” (67). The white sheet, or canvas, does not just separate Naseem from her male physician and future husband, but also segregates Amina Sinai’s daughter (Naseem’s granddaughter); Jamila, from the male gaze. Jamila is a gifted singer who is allowed by her parents to perform on stage as long as she is veiled. Ahmed Sinai, her father, says to Major Latif, the person who wants to make her famous, “Our daughter . . . is from a good family; but you want to put her on a stage in front of God knows how many strange men . . .?” (Rushdie 357). Thus Major Latif provides Jamila with “her famous, all-concealing, white silk chadar, the curtain or veil, heavily embroidered in gold brocade-work and religious calligraphy, behind which she sat demurely whenever she performed in public” (358). The elegant shield (sheet, canvas) is “held up by two tireless, muscular figures, also (but more simply) veiled from head to foot” who are said to be women, “but their sex was impossible to determine” (358). In the “very center” of Jamila’s chadar, “the Major had cut a hole. Diameter: three inches. Circumference: embroidered in finest gold thread” (358-9). The family became famous through their daughter who “sang with her lips pressed against the brocaded aperture,” and whom the public “glimpsed through a gold-and-white perforated sheet” (359).

Eventually Jamila is “invited to President House to sing,” where she dazzles her audience as she performs veiled by the “perforated sheet” (360). President Ayub states: “Jamila daughter . . . your voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which we shall cleanse men’s souls,” to which she responds, “The President’s will is the voice of my heart” (360). Although the President admires her voice, which is significant piece and part of her, she acknowledges where the greater power lies: with the President (physician, artist). It is his will that she wishes to fulfill, and the success of his administration she desires to promote. Rushdie writes: “Through the hole in a perforated sheet, Jamila Singer dedicated herself to patriotism” (360-61). Thus, the sheet (canvas) once again separates the dominant male from the female who is his object of admiration. Furthermore, it is a male, Major Latif, who makes her career possible. Furthermore, Jamila’s complete appearance needs to be imagined through the beauty of her voice, and she is not presented

to the public as a whole. Both Jamila and Naseem are representative of the veiled, fragmented woman in society who are pieced together by a male author.

Thus, in many of Picasso's works and in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the canvas or sheet often represents a separating mark made by man. Picasso erects the canvas prior to painting, and Naseem's father as well as Major Latif, both males, arrange for sheets to be held to protect the modesty of the women. In connection with this separation of masculine and feminine space, the feminine is frequently fragmented and presented in parts. So on one side of the shield is a whole male, and on the other side is a partitioned woman. While some current scholarship celebrates fragmentation, such as Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments*, there are scholars who do not view the whole as equal to its parts as parts. For example, Hegel writes:

... although the whole is equal to the parts it is not equal to *them* as parts; the whole is reflected unity, but the parts constitute the determinate moment or the *otherness* of the unity and are the diverse manifold. The whole is not equal to them as this self-subsistent diversity, but to them *together*. The whole is, therefore, in the parts only equal to itself, and the equality of the whole and the parts expresses only the tautology that *the whole as whole* is equal not to the parts but to the *whole*. (516)

By presenting the woman in pieces, the man seems to disassemble her, thereby making her less equal. In *Midnight's Children*, Naseem becomes more powerful as she becomes more unified. Rushdie writes of Naseem, whom Aadam "had made the mistake of loving in fragments, and who was now unified and transmuted into the formidable figure she would always remain" (39-40). Yet even in this context, it is Rushdie, the male author, who ultimately controls and empowers her character.

In conclusion, the sense of the fragmentary, so prominent in *Midnight's Children*, is in many ways an extension of the fragmentation made famous by Cubist artists like Picasso. The geometric bits and pieces that were presented from multiple perspectives in Picasso's work, particularly the depiction of women, anticipated the fragmented Naseem (and Jamila) described in *Midnight's Children*. Therefore, creative artists such as Rushdie are indebted, to some degree, to their predecessors and past. Lyotard, for example, writes that the postmodern "is undoubtedly a part of the modern" (79). John McGowan explains: "Every distinguishing feature of postmodernism can be located in an era prior to our own" (587). He continues to say:

Postmodernism begins to seem a rhetorical creation, a way of constructing a historical 'other' that allows us to define a desirable present by contrasting it to a past (or to denigrate the present for being inferior to the past) Postmodernism, then, is just part of the very complex rereading of history taking place in the current climate of a critical questioning of the Western tradition. (587)

Linda Hutcheon concurs that postmodernism includes "some sort of historical grounding, however ironized" (612).

Furthermore the boundary, wall, sheet, or canvas that segregates the male artist, physician, professional, president from the female object serves as a metaphor for relationships of power. The most salient of these are the male/female, artist/model, physician/patient, colonizer/colonized, and president/citizen binaries. Boundaries can be realigned or even demolished into fragments.¹⁹ Binaries can be negotiated and mediated in a Hegelian sense, in which the thesis and antithesis (contradiction) result in a synthesis, or resolution. Hegel writes:

Thus all oppositions that are assumed as fixed, as for example finite and infinite, individual and universal, are not in contradiction through, say, an external connection; on the contrary, as an examination of their nature has shown, they are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their Notion's own reflection.(833)

He also writes the "the first also is contained in the second, and the latter is the truth of the former" (834).

Kleinfelder writes: "With the removal of the intervening canvas, the way is cleared for the artist to approach his model directly" (88). The sheet, canvas, wall, (/), between modernism/postmodernism (or any binary) is weakened through fragmentation, which acts as both a common denominator and a mediator capable of bringing about a potential synthesis. Thus Picasso's fragmentation is one of the driving forces that weakens the wall between modernism and postmodernism, and Rushdie's woman in parts, in turn, also aids in the demolition of the wall between the two epochs. Furthermore, his fragmented female also confirms the geometric feminine forms in Picasso's pieces. Through fragmentation of the divider, the marriage of the bride and groom can be consummated, and produce offspring to represent parts of both sides. In this respect, fragments that are combined to create one whole, can potentially represent a synthesis, a unity, and a combination which is greater and more ideal than the left or right side of the sheet. Although there are times when boundaries are desirable and appropriate,²⁰ there are many instances in which they should be crushed to bits and pieces.²¹

Notes

¹⁹In his seminal text, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-François Lyotard explains the difference between modernism and postmodernism. He writes that "modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure" (81). He says, for example, that from a literary standpoint Proust and Joyce "both allude to something" in their work "which does not allow itself to be made present," and that this sense of allusion can be associated with the "aesthetic of the sublime" (80). Proust, however, "calls forth the unrepresentable by means of a language unaltered in its syntax and vocabulary and of a writing which in many of its operators still belongs to the genre of novelistic narration" (80). Joyce, on the other hand, "allows the presentable to become perceptible in his writing itself, in the signifier. The whole range of available narrative and even stylistic operators is put into play without concern for the unity of the whole, and new operators are tried" (80). Thus the postmodern "puts forth the unrepresentable in presentation itself" and "denies itself the

solace of good forms” (81).

²The association of Picasso and other writers can be found in essays such as Jane P. Bowers, “Experiment in Time and Process of Discovery: Picasso Paints Gertrude Stein; Gertrude Stein Makes Sentences” (1994); Laszlo K. Géfin, “So-shu and Picasso: Semiotic/Semantic Aspects of the Poundian Ideogram” (1992); Emma Kafalenos, “Embodiments of Shape: Cubes and Lines and Slender Gilded Thongs in Picasso, Duchamp and Robbe-Grillet” (1990); Max Halperen, “Neither Fish nor Flesh: Joyce as Picasso” (1988); Naomi Ritter, “Rilke, Picasso, and the Street Circus” (1982); and Renee Riese Hubert, “Apollinaire et Picasso” (1966).

³Staller also writes that Cubist works “raid raucous snatches of popular culture (scraps of sheet music, a Suze liquor label). They dare mix materials, such as metal, paint, wood, sand, and string, and they defiantly break down the boundaries between media” (1). She says they additionally “play with hermetic signs, multiple meanings, and metamorphoses” (1).

⁴The piece is known as *El Rostro Sagrado*, and is located at the Altar de la Virgen de los Reyes, in the Málaga Cathedral.

⁵Ex votos of this type can be found at the Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares in Málaga. See illustrations in Staller, page 20.

⁶Ibid., see both illustrations on page 21.

⁷See illustrations in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 14, 69, and 304, respectively.

⁸See illustrations in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 129, 222, and 380, respectively.

⁹This small selection is extracted from numerous possibilities.

¹⁰See illustration on page 15 in *The Portable Picasso*.

¹¹Ibid., see illustration on page 142.

¹²It is interesting to note that Kleinfelder uses many postmodern sources to analyze her modernist subject, Picasso. She writes: “While my own line of reasoning may often draw from postmodernist sources, I am well aware that my subject is not postmodern in scope” (7). The fact the postmodern criticism works well in the examination of Picasso and his works, underscores my argument that Picasso has helped prepare the way for postmodernism and for Rushdie’s fragmented Naseem.

¹³See illustration in *The Portable Picasso*, pages 104-105.

¹⁴In addition, Rosand writes that in Giacomo Franco’s drawing manual from the Renaissance, *De excellentia et nobilitate delineationis libri duo*, fragments of the body are segregated for practice in drawing. So the presentation of the body in parts, as mentioned earlier in regard to some Spanish art, is not uncommon to different time periods or different cultures. A major difference, however, between Franco and Picasso is that of perspective. Artists of the Renaissance strove to produce work that was more representational and reflected more of a likeness to the bodily part. Picasso, on the other hand, threw perspective out of whack, and defied traditional rules and guidelines in many of his works.

¹⁵A white sheet is used ceremoniously in some religions and cultures during the first night a couple consummates their marriage. It is associated with chastity and purity, and some traditions require a bloody sheet to be displayed as proof of the bride’s virginity.

¹⁶Some of the “fragments” Chatterjee discusses in his book in relation to India include, “The Nationalist Elite,” “The Nation and Its Pasts,” “The Nation and Its Women,” “The Nation and Its Peasants,” “The Nation and Its Outcasts,” and “Communities and the Nation.”

¹⁷Saleem in the “grandson” of Aadam and Naseem.

¹⁸See the chapter, “Methwold” (101-117), for example, in which some families continue to follow the schedule of Englishmen even after the latter have returned to their homeland.

¹⁹In June 2003, while in Germany to participate in a professional conference, I viewed some of the remnants of the famous Berlin Wall that once strictly divided the East from the West. The wall was demolished in 1989, and in 1990, Berlin became the capital of a unified Germany. The two distinct parts are now one greater whole due to the fragmentation of that border (canvas, sheet, shield). I purchased one of the fragments at the Mauer Museum in Berlin and display it in my home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is a symbol of the power of deconstruction (fragmentation) of barriers, and of reconstruction (unification) of the two sides of the divider.

²⁰For example, in the case where a female patient is examined by a doctor, it would be unethical for

the physician to completely remove the sheet or shield which guards a woman's privacy and modesty. If the professional relationship leads to marriage, as it did in the case of Aadam and Saleem, then the cloth should be removed.

²⁴I thank Feroza Jussawalla for general suggestions in regard to this essay, and for sharing some of her ideas regarding Muslim women, doctors, and the white sheet.