Migrancy as Metaphor

Peter Pandimakil [1]
University of Saint Paul, Ottawa
ORCID: 0009-0005-0161-763X
pandimakil@gmail.com

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Abstract: While migration has marked the twentieth century, it continues to inhabit in various forms the current century too and does not seem to decelerate in the future. Perhaps for this reason, novelists have highlighted and incorporated migrancy as a crucial tenet of human existence.

This essay presents the perspective of Salman Rushdie with respect to contemporary global migrancy as depicted in his novels and discussed in his non-fictional writings. Though he shares the topic with Günter Grass, Milan Kundera and others, the complex and insightful discussion by Rushdie may serve as a *framework* to analyse the phenomenon within and among countries. Further, a depth study of migrancy might approach the realm of anthropological constant, re/deconstructing it as a human prerequisite to walk on nimble feet. It would hence constitute a prolegomenon to empirical case studies.

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[1] Pandimakil, G. Peter. Retired Prof., Conflict Studies, Saint Paul University, Ottawa

Bio sketch

Pandimakil, G. Peter is an Augustinian. Now retired, he was an associate professor in the School of Conflict Studies, at the Faculty of Human Sciences of Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada; and a professor of phenomenology and history of religions at Estudio Agustiniano, Valladolid, Spain. He also taught various sessions of philosophy and missiology for a period of five years in Tanzania, in the Major Seminary of Peramiho, and at the Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Morogoro.

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Hence the present study, gives special attention to migrancy as both *voluntary* and *forced*, thus concretizing, as far as possible, the novelistic configurations in Rushdie's works. Literary imagination enhances and complements lived realities which on social, political, legal, and economic analysis may be restrained by evidentiary requirements.

Keywords: metaphor, forced migration, interstitial existence, transformation through translation, innovation and authenticity.

Migración como metáfora

Resumen: Aunque la migración ha marcado el siglo XX, sigue habitando de diversas formas también el siglo actual y no parece que vaya a desacelerarse en el futuro. Quizá por ello, los novelistas han destacado e incorporado la migración como un principio crucial de la existencia humana.

Este ensayo presenta la perspectiva de Salman Rushdie con respecto a la migración global contemporánea, tal y como se describe en sus novelas y se analiza en sus escritos de no ficción. Aunque comparte el tema con Günter Grass, Milan Kundera y otros, el complejo y perspicaz debate de Rushdie puede servir de marco para analizar el fenómeno dentro de los países y entre ellos. Además, un estudio en profundidad de la emigración podría acercarse al ámbito de la constante antropológica, re/deconstruyéndola como un requisito humano para caminar con pies ágiles. Por lo tanto, constituiría un prolegómeno a los estudios de casos empíricos.

De ahí que el presente estudio preste especial atención a la migración, tanto voluntaria como forzada, concretando así, en la medida de lo posible, las configuraciones novelísticas de las obras de Rushdie. La imaginación literaria realza y complementa las realidades vividas que en el análisis social, político, jurídico y económico pueden verse limitadas por requisitos probatorios.

Palabras clave: metáfora, migración forzada, existencia intersticial, transformación por el movimiento, innovación y autenticidad.

El sueño de la razón produce monstruos
(The sleep of reason brings forth monsters)[2]

Introduction

Migration has been a global phenomenon in the twentieth century, and it continues to be so in the current century too. The most recent data counts 304 million *international migrants*[3] in 2024, with five host countries (USA: 52.4 million, Germany: 16.8 million, Saudi Arabia: 13.7 million, United Kingdom:11.8 million) holding the highest value.[4] Migrancy occurs for various reasons: due to wars, exemplified by the First and Second World Wars which occasioned the UN to design the refugee protection policies;[5] due to poverty and search for jobs, better education and living conditions,[6] etc. all of which confirm that it is a phenomenon of multiple interconnected causes and none of which is adequately addressed without including the rest. The above-mentioned UN report further clarifies that

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[2] Rushdie 2015, frontispiece: "*(Los Caprichos, no. 43*, by Francisco de Goya; the full caption in the Prado etching reads: "Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels.") [*La fantasía abandonada de la razón produce monstruos imposibles: unida con ella es madre de las artes y origen de las maravillas*.]

[3] "From a statistical perspective, international migrants are defined by the intersection of two key dimensions: space and time. To be considered an international migrant, a person must have moved across an international border and changed his or her country of residence. In addition, a threshold, usually of 12 months, is used to specify the amount of time a person must have lived continuously in another country to qualify as a migrant. The statistical definition of an international migrant makes no reference to the reason for migration or to the legal immigration status of persons changing their country of residence. The international migrant stock is a measure of the number of persons who are considered international migrants at a given point in time". https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2025_intlmigstock_2024_key_facts_and_figures_advance-unedited.pdf p. 1, note 1. (accessed on 2024-03-26).

[4] Ibid p. 2.

[5] For details and updates, see: Costello et al. 2021; McAdam 2017.

[6] https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement

despite the great number of international migrants, they constitute only 3.7 percent of global population,[7] which however does not diminish the challenges migration poses and the advantages it entails.

Migrancy in all these cases bases itself on concrete, measurable data, though possibly inaccurate; it is both *voluntary* and *forced*.[8] Both types constitute the '*content and form*' of literature adding a new dimension to migration studies of all sorts irrespective of the authors themselves are migrants or not.[9] Günter Grass (1927-2015), Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932-2018), Milan Kundera (1929-2023) and Salman Rushdie (1947-) stand out among contemporary *migrant authors*; however, Rushdie has made migrancy *the* central feature in his various novels and non-fictional writings. This essay highlights *the core ideas and phases of migrancy* Rushdie develops and deploys, including their socio-political significance and the complexity built into their depictions so that a constant and "profound renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging and home"[10] becomes a requisite.

In the present study, special attention is given to migrancy as a *broad concept* as well as *forced migration*, thus concretizing the novelistic configurations in Rushdie's works both pre- and post-fatwa.[11] As a methodological choice, this study prioritizes Rushdie's pre-fatwa literature to

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[7] "Despite robust growth in the absolute number of international migrants over recent decades, their share of the world's population remains small: in 2024 just 3.7 per cent of people globally were international migrants, having increased only modestly from 2.9 per cent in 1990" ibid.

[8] "Forced migration … involves limited choices by people who are forced to move through colonization …, slavery …, human trafficking …, or to flee due to conflict, human rights abuses, persecution or environmental degradation …" Clark-Kazak 2024: *introduction: in/to Canada* 6.

[9] Frank (2008: 2-3) argues for the terminology *migration literature* over *migrant literature*, thus shifting the focus from author to content, an issue not analyzed in this essay.

[10] Frank 2008: 1.

[11] On 14 February 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against the novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and its author. Three other novels, namely *Grimus* (1975), *Midnights Children* (1981), and *Shame* (1983), were published before this incident. While the fatwa forced Rushdie to go into hiding, he continued to write and publish during and after fatwa but eventually *moved* to New York at the turn of the century. To what extent the fatwa shaped/altered Rushdie's literary production is yet to be examined thoroughly;

highlight his conceptualization of migrancy; it is followed by brief analysis and discussions of select post-fatwa novels. This essay argues that while migrancy constitutes the central theme of most of his literary production, a shift in emphasis from political to ontological and epistemological perspectives is observable despite the geographical scenario of Indian subcontinent continues to occupy prime place in his novels. Besides this enlargement of the content aspect, Rushdie's post-fatwa novels deploy new techniques of storytelling, privileging especially the narrative style of *dastan*, a point often ignored in Rushdie scholarship.[12] Literary imagination enhances and complements *lived realities* which on social, political, legal, and economic analysis, to mention a few, may be restrained by evidentiary requirements.[13] An overall view of interstitial phases shall be obtained from a literary perspective which would cement other perspectival analyses. Hence the relevance of highlighting *forced migration* wherever possible.

I. Migrancy: basic vision

Despite varied precisions about migration in academic research and literature in general, the conception of migrancy Rushdie embraces is straight forward, seemingly simple in form, complex in content and well explained in his writings. The primary notion denotes *crossing-across*.

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however, as far as migrancy is concerned the basic theoretical vision is retained, adjusted and amplified.

For a discussion of the event and its aftermath, see Mondal 2023, who argues that "[t]he civilizational 'clash' that emerged as a consequence of the controversy over *The Satanic Verses* … is the *effect* of a political performativity enacted by constituencies positioned on either side of a border set up between 'Islam' and the 'west' by the dynamics of the controversy itself" (36, italics in the original). For Sharma (2001: 615), "the Rushdie affair brought to the fore class-tensions that pre-existed in the Asian community in Britain, it served to highlight different aspects of immigrant life and migrancy … The uniformity of the immigrant experience has been called into question."

[12] Anonymous Author 2020; for new techniques, see: Falconer 2001, Crăciun 2023, Frank 2024.

[13] Coburn 2024

1. Borne across humans

While acknowledging himself as a South Asian migrant in Britain, Rushdie conceptualizes the migrant in *open* terms, better the migrant/migrancy is a *metaphor*. In the non-fiction *Imaginary Homelands,* he writes:

> *… migration … offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age. The very word metaphor with its roots in the Greek words for bearing across [meta-pherein], describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants - borne across humans- are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples.*[14]

This *non-literalist* sense of *crossing boundaries* allows Rushdie *not* to discriminate against any category of migrants/refugees; legal/illegal entrees;[15] as well as to include human/divine spaces, and eventually to substantiate them thanks to the artistic feature of imagination: *spatial, temporal and imaginary crossing of frontiers matter, and the postcolonial migrant experiences testify to that*.[16] Migrants as 'metaphorical beings' denote hence the totality of human *experience* (of crossing fron-

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[14] Rushdie 1991: 278-279 (italics in the original). Rushdie (2021: *wonder tales* 13, 15) considers the *Arabian Nights* as a 'migration narrative' and acknowledges: "As a migrant myself, I have always been fascinated by the migration stories." During the partition of India, Rushdie's parents moved from Delhi to Bombay where he was born in 1947; for studies he goes to England in 1961, initiating his migrancy. His parents relocate to Karachi, Pakistan, in 1964, and Rushdie joins them there in 1968 after his graduation but returns to England in the same year. Since 2000 he resides in New York, inaugurating the 'American Phase'. "Moving to New York in the year 2000 was an integral part of [security] … But this, the second transcontinental migration of my life, had its own problems" Rushdie 2024: Chapter 4: Rehab – 22-23/45.

[15] Despite the possible exception of exile, as argued in *The Satanic Verses*: "Exile is a dream of glorious return." Rushdie 1988: 205.

[16] Sharma (2001) *rightly* highlights 'the ambivalence of migrancy'; however, the non-fixity of this concept shall be seen as a literary strategy by Rushdie.

tiers) derived from physical and mental activities wherein imagination plays a central role.[17]

The above given quote from *Imaginary Homelands* occurs in the middle of a discussion of the migrant status of Günter Grass whom Rushdie considers "as a double migrant: a traveller across borders in the self and in Time" offering a *migrant's vision* in all his writings. Grass represents the quintessential migrant with *triple* dislocation/disruption: loss of roots, language and society all of which however enabling a vision that *reality is an artefact* which exists only if made but can be made well or badly as well as unmade. Doubt and uncertainty are characteristic of this vision alike making and unmaking of reality. And it consists of a positive dimension: "To experience any form of migration is to get a lesson in the importance of tolerating others' point of view." Rushdie considers Grass' migrant life as that of a snail for he "lives more comfortably in images, in ideas, than in places" making him "a metaphorical being." And Rushdie claims: "When the world is seen through ideas, through metaphors, it becomes a richer place."[18] Does this imply that the *migrants' vision* is *more* innovative, more rich, more unique, more beneficial to host nations as well as to home countries, establishing a *dynamic relationality* between destinations and origins?

Before engaging with the question in full, we shall specify briefly how migrancy as metaphor shapes up in Rushdie's novels and thereby assumes a basic structure. The triptych - *The Midnights Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses* - provides a pattern repeated in all his novels and is encapsulated in the complex notion of *diasporic migrant*. While boarder crossing and diaspora constitute only partially the topic in *The Midnights*

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[17] With respect to Rushdie's memoir, *Joseph Anton*, Malreddy (2023: 19) writes: "… *Joseph Anton* sums up his early youth as *triply* displaced. This *migrant metaphor* [emphasis added] … becomes an expression of 'frontier crossing' in Rushdie's autobiography. Correspondingly, the generic transgression from first- to third-person narration in *Joseph Anton* could be best described as just another 'frontier crossing' which produces a 'perspectival positional shift … casting the clandestine part of his existence aside and surfacing in order to recover his writer's name and reputation in a renewed form'."

[18] Rushdie 1991: 280-281.

Children,[19] *Shame* highlights mass migration and traces the very foundation of Pakistan back to migrants – the *muhajir*s - during the Partition. The narrator of *Shame* reveals:

> *I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will). And I have a theory that the resentments we mohajirs engender have something to do with our conquest of gravity. We performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds, that is to say, we have flown. I am comparing gravity with belonging. … When individuals come unstuck from their land, they are called migrants.*[20]

Further, *liminality* characterizes the protagonists such as Omar Khayam Shakil, "a creature of the edge, a peripheral man" and Farah Aziz, dweller of the frontier, "exhibit[ing] aspects of fragmentation."[21] And *The Satanic Verses* engages entirely with the migrant's *diasporic condition*. The key characters of *The Satanic Verses,* Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, enter Britain as if from thin air, as a consequence of explosion of the London-bound *Bostan* Flight AI-420. "They were the only survivors of the wreck, the only ones who fell from *Bostan* and lived. They were found washed up on a beach."[22] The novel "conveys migration as a process of *transformation*, employing the magic-realist genre Rushdie is known

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[19] "For Rushdie, diaspora is a negotiation between what is gained and what is lost, frequently expressed through bodily and sensory exertion or alternation … *Midnight's Children* … is the novel that most closely resembles the author's own migration history; protagonist-narrator Saleem is *forced* to move multiple times in the novel … While in India, Saleem develops a telepathic connection … [which is ineffective in Pakistan], suggesting the arbitrary but inflexible nature of the border. In Pakistan … Saleem is bereft of telepathy but gains a sense of smell …" Ramone 2023: 194 (emphasis added). The legal notion of *forced migration* thrusts forth in *Shame*, in *The Satanic Verses* it appears in the imaginative descriptions of UK immigration structure, processes and official interactions.

[20] Rushdie 1995: 85-86, emphasis added.

[21] Rushdie 1995: 24; Ramone 2023: 194.

[22] Rushdie 1988: 10.

for."[23] Although the three novels centre on the postcolonial Indian subcontinent, its interior and exterior *fragmentation* forces the creation of a diaspora. In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie focuses on "contemporary international migration,"[24] placing belonging, home, and identity at the centre.

Rushdie[25] writes: "If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's eye-view of the world." For Sharma,[26] "it is in *The Satanic Verses* that Rushdie chooses as his literary territory the in-between space of the immigrant, with the bilingual, bicultural baggage this involves … his characters in the text are identifiably members of the postindependence immigrant communities in urban Britain." However, Indian subcontinental migrants in post-fatwa novels denote an economically *more prosperous middle class* and their concerns do not coincide with those depicted in *The Satanic Verses*, for example. "Rushdie's protagonists are thus not part of the mixed economy and later deregulated economy of India from the 1970s and the 1990s, when India was integrated into a wider global economy."[27] Still, the triptych provides a basic pattern of international migration, reflecting the legal categories such as refugee, asylum seeker, irregular migration, detention centers, repatriation, resettlement, local integration, etc. all of which constitute the *diaspora* imagined in the novels; and the *diasporic condition* they portray, and place emphasis "on structures, processes and relationships, rather than categories,"[28] thus achieving the veil of *forced migration*.

2. The Diasporic migrant: double vision and interstitial space

Migrancy impacts differently the various domains of life especially the social, political and religious, and Rushdie depicts this impact simul-

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[23] Ramone 2023: 202, emphasis added.

[24] Sanga 2001: 15; see also Kuortti 2007: 2-3.

[25] 1991: 394; see also: Rushdie 2021: *The Liberty Instinct* 16-18; "Migration, I told myself, unleashes a radical questioning of the self, and so the novel itself must embody that act of questioning. And one of the things it must challenge is religion, the assumption of the rightness of one's faith" (ibid 16-17). The quote confirms Rushdie's *new* take on migration, though it apparently has had an invisible presence in his pre-fatwa writings.

[26] 2001: 606.

[27] Bharucha 2023: 230.

[28] Clark-Kazak 2023: *Introduction*: *In/to Canada* 11.

taneously from an epistemological and ontological analysis which the imaginary narrative provides. Irrespective of the causes, migrancy implies *displacement* and challenges of *accommodation*. Rushdie writes:

> *These are the four roots of the self: language, place, community custom. But in our age, the great age of migration, many of us have at least one of these roots pulled up. We move away from the place we know, away from the community that knows us, to a place where the customs are different and, perhaps, the most commonly spoken language, is the one we do not know, or if we speak it, we speak it badly, and cannot express in it the subtilities of what we think and who we are.*[29]

The first phase of migration is hence marked by negativity (suggested in the epigraph to *The Satanic Verses*) expressing the rupture of a past and the loss of one's sense of belonging, identity, history and self-worth. Bilquis, daughter of Mahmoud and wife of Raza Hyder, in *Shame* represents this condition:

> *O Bilquis. Naked and eyebrowless beneath the golden knight, wrapped in the delirium of the firewind, she saw her youth flying past her, borne away on the wings of the explosion which were still beating in her years. All migrants leave their pasts behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes – but on the journey something seeps out … until even their owners fail to recognize them, because it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging – at any rate, my point is that Bilquis's past left her even before she left that city; she stood in a gully, denuded by the suicide of her father, and watched it go*.[30]

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[29] Rushdie 2021: *Heraclitus*, 21.

[30] Rushdie 1995: 63-64.

Migration involves also an *attempt* to recuperate/erase one's *memory*.[31] Cultural and psychological challenges of past and present faced by the migrant mark further the primary phase in the *process* of migrancy. These too expressed as aspirations/frustrations define the *diasporic migrant*. The triptych referred to above also affirms further two basic assumptions: first, diasporic migrancy engenders a radical *perspectival change*, and second, it affects *fully* the *entire existence* of the migrant, represented by Aadam Aziz in *Midnight's Children*.[32] There is a *progression* of diasporic migrancy from the first to the third novel, and Rushdie's later novels introduce *new* features as well as *highlight* the ones already detailed in previous fiction.[33]

In fact, the migrants in Rushdie's novels exist in a *location* which is new, often strange and occasionally even threatening. *Negativity*, as mentioned above, characterizes them while opportunities abound, despite most of them are to be sought out. All migrants may hence be described as *diasporic*, a centripetal notion denoting people of *collective identity* residing outside their native country. The classical understanding of *diaspora* exemplified by the Jewish people after the Babylonian exile denotes at least *three* characteristics: a *group* of people outside their country (Holy/Promised Land), alienated at least for the time-being from their central place of worship (Jerusalem), and deprived forcibly of their king/god/ally (Yahweh). In contemporary socio-political usage, it is often linked to nationalism, but in Rushdiean writings mixed with transnationalism, it

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[31] Bell (2020: 1:6) argues that Rushdie's writings "illuminate the various ways in which memory … plays a critical role in identity formation for individuals and nation-states."

[32] Aadam's situation is presented as a 'fall' and consequent 'exile' culminating in a refusal to submission; Hogan 2001: 531ff.

[33] For example, the post-fatwa triptych of "*hysterotopic* fiction" (Cr ciun 2023:70): *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017), and *Quichotte* (2019). Migrancy also enables the human *connections* Rushdie (2010: *Autobiography and the Novel* 22-23) is increasingly interested in: "For good or ill this is the age of the migrant, the time in history in which more people than ever before have ended up in places in which they did not begin, driven by economic necessity, political turmoil, or simply by the lure of the big city's bright lights. … there is a third, the one that preoccupies me more and more – the desire to show how the world joins up, how *here* connects to *there*, how the little boxes we live in now open out into other little boxes, often very far away, and how, in order to explain our lives, we often need to understand things happening on the other side of the world" .

constitutes part of his transcultural repertoire;[34] refers to *individuals* not groups but "*Shalimar the Clown* returns to this original definition ["living away from the Holy Land'"] of diaspora ..."[35] Collective identity may be attributed on the basis of trans/nationalism, desire, belief, etc. but it is perhaps better qualified as the *family resemblance* type advanced by Wittgenstein.[36] The consciousness of oneself as a migrant in any *host nation* emerges thanks to a *unique* vision of one's past and present.

The diasporic migrant is holder of a *double vision*, of double belonging, of split identity, challenged/fascinated by opposing as well as contrasting realities.[37] This is true with respect to Rushdie himself. In *Imaginary Homelands* he writes:

> *Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the culture and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain. Swift, Conrad, Marx are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy.*[38]

The diasporic migrant occupies an *interstitial space* without belonging *exclusively* to the home or host country, an *in-between existence*. Bhabha[39] observes:

> *Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present', for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness*

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[34] Heidemann 2023: 172f.

[35] Ramone 2023: 195.

[36] And the commonality exists "in virtue of features that are shared only by sub-sets of their instances in a 'criss-crossing' or 'overlapping manner' manner" Forster 2010: 67.

[37] A case in point is the double identity of diasporic Christians/Jews in Alexandria, who to escape from Roman tax had to conceal their circumcision, an identity marker especially of Early Jewish Christians, Barclay 1996: 323-324.

[38] Rushdie 1981: 20.

[39] Bhabha 1994: "*Border Lives …*" 2-3.

of the prefix 'post': postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism … [They express] subject positions … of identity in the modern world, … produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the society itself. It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest or cultural value are negotiated.

Thanks to the category of interstitiality Bhabha places the politics of Rushdiean narratives within vernacular cosmopolitanism attributed to Naipaul.[40] In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie reminds us that "the truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision."[41] The idea recurs in *Shame* and is explored *more* in *The Satanic Verses*;[42] one may conclude that it enables Rushdie to occupy simultaneously both the past and present but without subscribing to any.

Rushdie's position as an emigrant writer can probably best be understood in terms of his occupying an in-between place, what Homi Bhabha calls the "interstitial space" … a condition that allows overlapping and displacement of areas of difference, so that from the location of inhabiting both worlds, the writing constantly shifts terrain. Rushdie therefore can belong to both worlds yet subscribe to neither.[43]

Note that this is not alone the condition of the author but also of the two protagonists of *The Satanic Verses* and as well of all migrants or migrancy in general. The challenge hence consists in *how* to inhabit/capture the interstitial/hybrid *third* condition and to make it one's home, identity and source of future possibilities.

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[40] Bhabha 1994: "Looking Back …" 12.

[41] Bhabha 1994: 0: 11; Rushdie 1995: 85-88.

[42] Bhabha 1994: 11: 25ff.

[43] Sanga 2001: 17

3. The diasporic condition: lightness, weight and palimpsest

The diasporic condition of the migrant implies both challenges and opportunities; one of its features constitutes *lightness and weight*. Alike Milan Kundera, Rushdie too highlights experiences of lightness (migrancy and diaspora) and weight (home, belonging and memory). In *Shame*, the narrator tells:

> *… I have a theory that the resentments we mohajirs engender have something to do with the force of gravity. We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown. I am comparing gravity with belonging. … to explain why we become attached to our birthplaces we pretend that we are trees and speak of roots. … Roots, I sometimes think are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places. … To fly and flee: both are ways of seeking freedom.*[44]

Unlike his critics argue, Rushdie does not present himself as a rootless, cosmopolitan migrant,[45] but employs memory to critique flight from the past and careless disaffiliation exemplified by both Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. It is in this context the literary device palimpsest comes up.

Palimpsest, an oft written over parchment, constitutes the *metaphor* in Rushdie's writings to critique both history and identity. While it requires a kind of excavation, the nationalist version embraces the pattern "take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest,"[46] eliminating trace identities of minorities and excentric groups. It should be challenged through "an ethic of overlapping hybrid influences and embracing the heteroglossic energies that motivate them."[47] This postmodernist stance does recognize no single

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[44] Rushdie 1995: 85-86.

[45] Instead of "a disconnected cosmopolitan" Bell (2020: 1:9) considers Rushdie as a centripetal migrant; for details, see ibid 4:2f. and below.

[46] Rushdie 1988: 52.

[47] Bell 2020: 3: 5/59. A critique of national identity thanks to palimpsest history constitutes *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Schultheis (2001) offers a detailed analysis, and notes:

authentic text but opts for plural, overlapping, contrasting narratives all of which originate from fragments:

> *We are all divided selves. It is in the nature of modern life that the self is a very plural, fragmented bag of selves. It may be dramatized by the act of migration, by having the self placed in conflict, in the way it has happened to me, but if it weren't true for everybody, it wouldn't be interesting to say. … The diasporic migrant thus remains "a fragmented bag of selves" composed of irreconcilable elements, and the frontier between the layers is always a permeable one."*[48]

4. The diasporic condition: translation and identity

While the diasporic migrancy is marked by interstitiality, lightness and weight, palimpsestic and permeable layering of identity, it risks two pitfalls: clinging exclusively to the past or to unilateral assimilation. The *metaphor* translation challenges these.

Translation is a "transactional and transformative process"; transformation of identity is produced through *metaphoric interpenetration*. In this process, the diasporic at the liminal zone metamorphizes into centripetal migrancy which shuttles between past and present realities, recognizes the new while acknowledging the past. As truly translated, the centripetal emerges from the metamorphic energies of migration; ensures transformation and preservation of meaning; newness through the metaphoric experience. *"Translation thus rejects both rootlessness and excessive attachment to the roots and embraces instead an ethic of engaged motili-*

"Aurora [da Gama, the mother of the protagonist and narrator, Moraes Zogoiby, called 'Moor'] like Rushdie … uses layers, diptychs, and triptychs to emphasize the multifaceted dimensions of the real and the need to look beyond the surface" (585). Further: "Rushdie presents religious nationalism and economic corruption as the tides that fill the void left by the failure of modern plurality (Aurora's vision) and Bombay's cosmopolitanism" (ibid: 587). Mendes (2023: 106) precises: "Ekphrasis – the verbal representation of visual representation – is used to illustrate the palimpsest-like character of history, in both the representation and recreation of the history of India and the family history of the first-person narrator."

[48] Bell 2020: 3: 8/59.

ty that shuttles between each state."[49] To what extent the metamorphosis works is illustrated in *The Satanic Verses*: Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta: the former succeeds while the latter fails. Hence, Rushdie claims:

> *"If The Satanic Verses is anything, it is a migrant's view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis … that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity."*[50]

Rushdie sees the question of identity as a matter of planting the self in several places. Saladin and Gibreel are both characterized by a split: national disorientation for Saladin and religious disorientation for Gibreel.

> *The Satanic Verses is the story of two painfully divided selves. In the case of one, Saladin Chamcha, the division is secular and societal: he is torn … between Bombay and London, between East and West. For the other, Gibreel Farishta, the division is spiritual, a rift in the soul. He has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so. The novel is "about" their quest for wholeness.*[51]

The literary tool enabling fullness is translation; neither of the characters embrace it, if ever they do, only partially or a little. In the diasporic condition, their *agonistic identity* is betrayed, made explicit for all to see and judge.[52] Further, "… the novel's overall politics of identity is an affir-

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[49] Bell 2020: 5: 4/57.

[50] Rushdie 1981: 394.

[51] Rushdie 1981: 397.

[52] Reminding one of the *diasporic precariousness* of Jewish identity, living *as foreigners among foreigners* in the cosmopolitan city of Rome (Álvarez 2007). In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the narrator muses: "*I am a Jew from Spain, like the philosopher Maimonides*, I told myself, to see if the words rang true. They sounded hollow. Maimonides's ghost laughed at me. *I am like the Catholicised Córdoba mosque*, I experimented … That sounded wrong, too. I was nobody from nowhere, like no-one, belonging to nothing. That sounded better. That felt true. All my ties have loosened. I had reached an anti-Jerusalem: not a home, but an away. A place that did not bind, but dissolved" (Rushdie 1995: 388, emphasis in the original).

mation of human identity as heterogenous and complementary, as impure and hybrid, not without roots, but with roots planted in several places."[53] From a literary perspective, the novel "is the epitome of rhizome. … a schizo-novel constantly migrating. … The question of identity also supports the overall rhizomatic character … in that identity is portrayed as heterogenous and complementary, as processual and decentered, and as hybrid and impure."[54] There is a collusion between translation and identity thanks to centripetal migrancy.

5. Centripetal migrancy: Postcolonialism, postmodernism and cosmopolitanism

The diasporic migrancy that Rushdie narrates in his novels and to which he himself clings on to, argues Bell, is best identified as 'centripetal migrancy'. It is best seen as the result of postcolonial, postmodern and cosmopolitan positions. For while engaging in "vociferous postcolonial critique of the abuses of colonialism and imperialist ideologies" Rushdie interrogates and destabilizes "notions of the "center" as nothing more than arbitrary constructions" of power, "reinscribes and reroutes the past in fresh ways", "acknowledges the relationship between postcolonial migrancy and postmodernism … as a centripetal migrant ensures that he always labors to construct the "ground beneath [his] feet" out of concrete memories of his past."[55] Rushdiean cosmopolitanism, postcolonialism and postmodernism shall be better predicated with centripetal migrancy for relevancy and meaning.

While Bell links this thesis with all Rushdiean writings in general but especially with his early novels, Trivedi argues: "from 1981 to 1988, from *Midnights Children to The Satanic Verses*, was the brief but limelit period when Rushdie's reputation as a postcolonial writer was founded and firmly cemented; *he has not been so emblematically postcolonial either before or since then*." Further, Rushdie, the diasporic migrant, may be classified as "a British writer in an Indian writer's clothing," with a western literary

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[53] Frank 2008: 151.

[54] Ibid 176.

[55] Bell 2020: 1: 10, 17.

heritage and "an anglophone postcolonial of the west." For postcolonial writers in colonized countries belong generally to "two broad categories: the great majority who stayed where they had been born, experiencing the daily effect of colonial and postcolonial rule, and wrote in the languages of the country, … and a tiny minority who … lived on in India but were … hybridized … [and wrote] only in English, … [a medium of literature] "only in the twentieth century. [And] Rushdie belongs to neither of these categories."[56]

Be that it may, two features need to be highlighted: first, Rushdie's postcolonialism goes hand in hand with postmodernism; second, it is reshaped in post-fatwa novels expressed especially via the migrant protagonists. While the emphasis on centripetal *identity* defends the sense of rootedness and of home, both do *not* represent any past but *reborn* or better *imagined* newness.

> *Although Rushdie has regularly acknowledged the irretrievable loss of home in his position as a diasporic migrant, that "imaginary homeland" of the mind continues like a phantom limb to announce its presence repeatedly through his work … Having emigrated from the past, centripetal migrants [like Olga Simeonovna and Max Ophulus in Shalimar the Clown] are consumed with an inconsolable ache to return, yet ideas of the homeland carve out a new citizenship for them – one bounded not by the anthems, flags, and often fierce territoriality of the nation-state but rather the power of personal memories to construct their identity.*[57]

Bell further clarifies the point thanks to examples from *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses* and concludes with an argument based on *The Ground beneath Her Feet*:

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[56] Trivedi 2023: 294 (emphasis added), 299-301. But note the nuances and complexity implied in the *postcolonial*: "Rather than simply being the writing which 'came after' empire, postcolonial literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. As well as a change in power, decolonization demanded—and still demands—symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. Postcolonial literature forms part of that process of overhaul" Boehmer 2025: 3.

[57] Bell 2020: 1:9-10.

Having stepped outside that frame and accumulated multiple roots, centripetal migrants like Rushdie are able to increase the sum total of what it is possible to say or think. … Such an enlargement of perspective is precisely what a translated man like Rushdie believes will result when one opens oneself to the creative energies and possibilities of centripetal migrancy.[58]

II. The 'American Phase'

To what extent do the post-fatwa novels represent Rushdiean postcolonial, postmodern and cosmopolitan characteristics and how do they enact them anew? Reviewers note that since his move to New York, an 'American Phase'[59] has opened up in Rushdiean literature; it expands the sense of migration in various ways. First, by highlighting three mutually mirroring centers: Bombay, London and New York; second, by reversing the direction of migration now from West to East or by suspending the directionality thanks to questioning, and third, by emphasizing the existential aspect. "Migration is still Rushdie's central theme, but … where once there was a political urgency behind all the frontier crossing, now we are presented with 'a metaphysic of migrancy': 'an existential condition, simply not belonging"'.[60] Both *The Golden House* (2017) and *Quichotte* (2019) are cited as prime examples of this trend which impacts too Rushdie's cosmopolitanism.

While the patriarchal protagonist of *The Golden House*, Nero Golden, attempts to cleanse his criminal Indian past thanks to American business in New York, reinvents a new identity, the novel introduces a debate on transgender identity: "[it] explores the possibilities but also the tribulations of gender fluidity, attending to its liberating, transgressive qualities but also to the pressure to transition, critiquing the neoliberal implication that gender identity can simply be chosen, off the shelf as it were, at no

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[58] Bell 2020: 5:56-57; for connections with *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*, see ibid 5: 54-56.

[59] Crăciun 2023: 72.

[60] Morey 2023: 321-322.

cost."[61] This critique, argues Bell,[62] opens up questions of self, belonging and the relevance of migrancy. The answer Rushdie prefers, seems to be uttered by D Golden in the novel: "D told me a story about a hijra in Bombay who dressed as a man at home and in fact was a man for his/her mother and father and then changed her clothes and became a woman when she left the house. That should be alright. Flexibility should be all right. Love should dominate, not dogmas of the self."[63] *The Golden House* continues a topic well addressed in *The Satanic Verses* and confirms: But love too is *deficient*, except perhaps "the love of a dream."[64]

With respect to *Quichotte* too Morey[65] acknowledges the prevalence of ethics: "postmodern techniques are used to reinforce an essentially conventional message about character and destiny … It is … [an] insistent concern with ontology in an existential sense that marks the novel … the concern is … for the intertwined relationship of life and art and the writer's vocation as a challenge to mortality." In a similar vein, Ball posits Rushdie's *new* cosmopolitanism on *Quichotte* and argues that it "foregrounds the author figure," prioritizes connectivity, but eventual-

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[61] Morey 2023: 322.

[62] Bell 2020: 6: 21f.

[63] Rushdie 2017: 29:10; while she views it as a 'political novel,' Mendes argues: "Rushdie offers a prescient cultural critique of our contemporary age as one where the heroes we came to know through comic books are nowhere to be found. Still, there is hope and optimism, and the novel incites readers to action and to forging our political futures against supervillains. The capacity to resist excessive power … is complex – it involves the ability to reimagine the future" (Mendes 2023: 112-113). Similarly Resano (2022: 536) writes: "*The Golden House* possesses … political depth ... the novel invites, in my estimation, a reexamination of Americans' understanding of their own history and of their own complicity with discourses that eschew class, gender, and race as mere identity politics."

[64] Rushdie 1988: 400; Kuortti (2007: 6-7) observes: "If the ethical fault line of *The Satanic Verses*, its meaningful borderline, is fiction's importance, the overriding marker of that line is the theme of love, or failure of love. Love is … arguably the most recurring topic in the novel. There are many kinds of love … But whatever the form, there is always a critical attitude towards it … The novel makes an allusive gesture towards C.S. Lewis's book *Four Loves*, when it talks about 'a fourth and final love' … Here, however, the fourth love beside affection, friendship and eros is not agape (the love of God), but 'the love of a dream' … Saladin dreams of being loved, adored in his childhood by his father. Towards the end of the novel, then, love acquires a redeeming quality."

[65] Morey 2023: 325.

ly presents it as unachievable: "In this latest version of the apocalyptic deck-clearing with which Rushdie often ends his novels, cosmopolitanism remains unachieved, at least in this world, but tenacious in its hold on the imagination."[66] A third perspective on the novel highlights it as *adventure fiction* and elaborates on the possibility of immigrants embracing their "hyphenated identity."[67] Kluwick's argument centers on the incident during the road trip embarked by Quichotte and Sancho, when the Indian-American pair was challenged by a white American lady: "What's your purpose? That map. 'I'm not loving the map'". Her "fears and suspicions" are interpreted in the post 9/11 context as questioning their identity as American nationals and the right of mobility. "Indeed, by presupposing that his consultation of a map must have a sinister purpose, she denounces Quichotte's mobility as a threat to Americanness." delatar. This brings Quichotte to the realization that "the virtual world of television has left him unaware [of reality]." "In Rushdie's novel, therefore, adventure does not consist in escaping reality but in seeing it clearly, in all its bizarre craziness."[68]

One of the modes in which Rushdie's 'hold on imagination' becomes apparent is in his use of *katabasis*. This Greek topos is "about underworld descents, … employs the narrative structure of a journey to look inward, downward and back." For Rushdie it serves "to express the "life-shape" of an immigrant or emigrant in modern times."[69] The narrator of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) writes: "Our lives disconnect and reconnect, we move on, and later we may again touch one another, again bounce away. *This is the felt shape of a human life*, *neither simply linear nor wholly disjunctive nor endlessly bifurcating, but rather this bouncy-castle sequence of bumpings-into and tumblings-apart*."[70]

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66 Ball 2023: 315.

67 Kluwick 2022: 204.

68 Ibid 202, 203 & 201. But one needs ask if Quichotte realizes his own vulnerability, a point Mishra (2025: 451) raises: "Unlike Cervantes's Don Quixote, who came from a relatively unified world and whose quest for Lady Dulcinea of Toboso was defined by a closed body of late medieval romances, Quichotte's world is one where, as a migrant, he is isolated, broken, and vulnerable."

69 Falconer 2001: 467.

70 Rushdie 1999: 17: 73 (emphasis added).

After indicating the four "pressure points" of Orphic *katabasis*, Falconer argues that "[e]ach of these points represents a crucial change in "the felt shape of a human life,""[71] exemplified by the main protagonists of the novel: Ormus, Rai, Vina and Mira. Thus, they cross the threshold, confront the unknown, bounce back and rebegin. Hence, ""[t]he felt shape of a human life" in Rushdie's novel is one of continually shifting resistance; as the world exerts its centripetal or centrifugal pressures, the protagonist responds by turns contracting into, and expanding out of the boundaries of the self. The protagonist's resistance to this conflict of pressures results in one final, apocalyptic showdown; she or he *explosively implodes."*[72] Highlighting the predicament of the protagonists, Falconer concludes: "How does love or art survive death? Rushdie (the *katabasist*) replies: by repeating itself in new situations, into new attachments and passions." Further: "It is not only art that proves to be unstoppable; individuals also survive by repeating themselves, as do whole cultures and cities."[73]

Although the post-fatwa novels correspond to Rushdie's post-London or American phase, the conceptualization of migrancy undergoes constant changes. Thus, at least two more variants worth consideration: first, the overcoming of the hitherto formulations to propose *posthuman* visions, and second, a new emphasis on the nonhuman wherein violence becomes a core issue. In his analysis of *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Daniel O'Gorman argues: Rushdie's novels hitherto referred to interstitial spaces as "frontier between fact and fiction," "the imaginable and the unimaginable" but now blurs "the borderlines both within and between space and time" which results in "dissolving the frontiers between the 'now' and the 'then', between the 'postmodern' and the 'postpostmodern'"[74].

Hence,

> *"Shalimar the Clown … complicates the postcolonial metaphors of migrancy … Migration, and the crossing of lines that it entails, has attained a new, post-9/11 level of complexity: the postmodern, 'post-His-*

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[71] The four *pressure points* are: "threshold crossing, zero point, backward look and *sparagmos* (dismemberment)" Falconer 2001: 483; analysis in detail, ibid 483-498.

[72] Falconer 2001: 499-500.

[73] Falconer 2001: 502, 503.

[74] O'Gorman 2013: 81, 82, 83. The argument bases itself on Rushdie 2005: 37.

torical' 'Western' liberal democracy of the 1990s has itself been forced to step across the line between 'History' and historicity, to paradoxically migrate into a state of perpetual migration, … This results in a profound sense of disorientation and, in turn, existential self-questioning".

Further: "Through … the novel's representation of Kashmir, Rushdie ultimately shows that it is only by attempting to prevent the violence of 9/11 from 'happening *anywhere else*' – that is, by stepping across the line between 'anywhere else' and 'any*time* else' – that the terrorised present can begin to shift into a more globally hospitable future."[75]

Placing emphasis on the expression 'war of the worlds', Sankar argues that unlike in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, "in *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, written two decades later, it connotes conflict on an even larger, planetary scale involving different species and supernatural realms." Though the topos was significant in explaining 'hybridity and migrancy' it now posits a 'discourse of posthumanism'.[76] For the novel not only describes an ideological conflict between Ibn Rushd (reason) and Al Ghazali (faith), but also ""the Strangenesses": unprecedented and rationally inexplicable occurrences causing widespread catastrophe and death."[77] Adopting the fictional mode, Rushdie posits "a war against unreason" but it "prevails only after the rise of the nonhuman".[78]

Crăciun, however, argues that Rushdie reconfigures space in *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* utilizing especially "Fou-

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[75] O'Gorman 2013: 93, 95.

[76] Sankar 2025: 262, 263.

[77] Sankar 2025: 267. Further, "Strangenesses" (Rushdie 2015: 83) denote "the calamities visited upon the world by the dark jinns [,] are very real events like the thousands of terrorist attacks, government-sponsored wars, and outrages frequently involving the USA; the global refugee crisis, and the floods, tornados, and other environmental abnormalities brought about by climate change – in other words, … the "doomsday fears" … of recent apocalyptic science fiction" (ibid).

[78] Sankar 2025: 273; taking a cue from Rushdie himself, Bell (2020: 6: 19) arrives at a different conclusion part of which says: "… a creature of fantasy unites with a creature of reason. And through that union (of the jinn and Ibn Rushd), they produce these beings and that's the best way to be …".

cault's notion of *heterotopia*".[79] The concepts of space and intertextuality in the novel go beyond dichotomy, interstitiality and hybridity, hence shall be better understood as "a utopian synthesis transcending the contraries of his previous work and, its polar opposite, to explode all certainties."[80] Thus the usage, of *hysterotopia*,[81] strategically deployed in the novel, though originated already in *The Enchantress of Florence*, not only reverses the role of Scheherazade but also conjoins her with the "*Dunia-zát* … 'the people of the world.'"[82] The 'war of the worlds' referred to above and the conflict resolution strategy employed, namely the defeat of the evil jinni, amount to Pyrrhic victories: For, "we condemn ourselves to dreamlessness in the name of moral high grounds of various kinds".[83]

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[79] Crăciun 2023: 69-70. This is the case also with *The Golden House* (2017), and *Quichotte* (2019); thus the triptych forms a unit in Rushdie's post-fatwa fiction, but she analyses only the first one: *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015).

[80] Crăciun 2023: 72.

[81] "*hysterotopia*, a *place* that simultaneously allows for a form of return to the womb (a utopian version of home or of conflict resolution) and for a hysterical unleashing of forces that defy all forms of space and time constraints. This *concurrent pulling in various directions* is the main vehicle of political commentary in Rushdie's recent novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*." Crăciun 2023: 73 (emphasis added). Crăciun (ibid) refers to two possible links to or fusion of two strands in Foucault: "heterotopia of compensation" and "heterotopia of illusion". The point consists in arguing that heterotopias are inconclusive, real, magical topoi, mirroring, reversing and inverting simultaneously all references/allegories; hence the expression 'strangenesses' occurring in New York (or London or Bombay/Mumbai) applicable to every city or nation in the world of 2000s whose story is told in the novel by a narrator/author in the future 3000s. For an analysis, see: Craşovan 2020.

[82] Rushdie 2015: 11; 2008: 19. He was Adam's heir, not Muhammad's – 46-47/88. Vallury (2019: 112) reads *The Enchantress of Florence* as 'utopic geopoetics and geopolitics' as well as a discourse on humanism seen in the figure of Akbar: "Perhaps this idea of self-as-community was what it meant to be a being in the world, any being; … Perhaps plurality was not exclusively a king's prerogative, perhaps . . . it was accordingly inevitable that the men and women over whom he ruled . . . were all bags of selves, bursting with plurality just as he was" (Rushdie 2008: 3. At dawn the haunting sandstone palaces – 10-11/26)

[83] Crăciun 2023: 76. Rushdie (1988: 374) has already in *The Satanic Verses* warned his readers of wars of *words* leading to wars of *worlds*: "your words against the Words of God."

1. The *Dastan* Genre and *Victory City*

In fact, Rushdie's plot in *Two Years* is complex, fails "in terms of content and structure,"[84] if not read as *dastan*: a long story of the present world, seen from a future; it's possible plight, if not resolved rationally, would endanger the world or deprive it fully off any storytelling capacity. This warning is presented allegorically as the war between reason and faith, the war of 'wor[l]ds', represented by Ibn Rushd and Al Ghazali. For the Anonymous Author (henceforth AA), Rushdie's novel incorporates 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' characteristics of the *dastan* genre. These are not only the *juggling* format and "the use of the magical/supernatural or fabulous"[85] but also 'linguistic fluidity' together with an array of intrinsic factors:

> *Rushdie works in similar fashion [to Dastan-e Amir Hamza], to include history, mythology, religion and cultures to make stories that are neither sacred nor profane, neither true nor untrue. They all hover a little above the ground, intermingling and creating new stories and forging new identities ... To be grounded in specificities of genres, histories, or plot is a didacticism that Rushdie avoids as a storyteller.*

Thus, in *Two Years* Rushdie develops a plot "beyond the realms of truth and falsehood; … a story about the potential of the fantastic and the uncanny in narratives; about the belief in miracles and fairy tales; and a desire for a secular space for storytelling, myth-making and legendary heroism."[86] The AA links details given in the novel to the tradition of *dastan* clarifying the relevance of Dunia, Zumurrud Shah, Omar Ayyar, etc. "Like the storytellers of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* Rushdie makes the his-

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[84] Craşovan 2020: 34.

[85] AA 2020: 304.

[86] Ibid 307. "The story begins in the future, almost a millennium from now, when Duniyazat have gained knowledge that jinn – "creatures made from smokeless fire" – do indeed exist. In fact, perhaps, says the narrator, many of the readers are born of Ibn-Rushd, the philosopher, and Dunia, the jiniri. … The suggestion here is that the inhabitants of the world are … half-jinn and half-human, but being jinn are more susceptible to the rational and the logical. Albeit they are infected with the "story-parasite," an incessant desire to hear and tell stories. The novel's protagonist, Dunia, is an amalgam … In 1195 C.E., Dunia,

tory and the fiction of the story a thing of the remote past and absolves himself of the truth or fiction of the story he is concerned with."[87] Rushdie's "fantastic stories and digressions,"[88] reinstate, hence, at least partially the little known but rich storytelling tradition.

Does this genre work also for explaining the import of Rushdie's latest novel, *Victory City*? The answer would be affirmative if the rapprochement of its plot to Hindu mythical genre resembles *dastan*. The story[89]

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the jinn princess, had fallen in love with the Muslim philosopher Ibn-Rushd and given birth to dozens of his children or the Duniazát, who, being half-jinn had inherited one peculiarity: they had no earlobes. Abandoned by Ibn-Rushd one thousand and one nights later, Dunia goes back to Qâf and the "slits" between the two worlds become "overgrown by the unimaginative weeds of convention and the thorn bushes of dull material". Meanwhile, the Duniazát with their "itchy feet" multiply and spread around the world. A thousand years later, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a storm in New York reopens the "slits" and the dark jinn led by Zummurud Shah … who has been let out of the bottle a millennium earlier by the Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali enters the world to wreak havoc with "irrationality" "strangenesses" and "bizarreries." … Dunia cannot let this happen to her children and comes down along with Omar the Ayyar … to fight an epic battle against the dark forces in the War of the Worlds that lasts two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights." Ibid 308; all quotes ("…") are from Rushdie 2015: 6, 14.

87 Ibid 309; A quote from *Two Years* confirms this claim: "We tell this story still as it has come down to us through many retellings, mouth to ear, ear to mouth, both the story of the poisoned box and the stories it contained. This is what stories are, experience retold by many tongues to which, sometimes we give a single name, Homer, Valmiki, Vyasa, Scheherazade. We for our part, simply call ourselves 'we'. 'We' are the creature who tells itself stories to understand what sort of creature it is. As they pass down to us the stories lift themselves away from time and place, losing the specificity of their beginnings, but gaining the purity of essences, of being simply themselves" Rushdie 2015: 182.

88 AA 2020: 310. Embellishments include references to Afghanistan, Taliban, bin Ladens, Hindu extremists and Ibn Rushd as anti-Scheherazade, ibid: 309.

89 Rushdie's latest novel *Victory City* invents a legend on the rise and fall of Vijayanagar, a southern Indian empire/city, a UNESCO declared World Heritage Site in Hampi, Karnataka. The protagonist of the novel is Pampa Kampana, a village girl who at nine remained orphan as all women (including her mother) immolated themselves after their men were killed in battle. A goddess of the eponymous name gave her exceptional powers and promised a long life of 247 years. While in refuge in a cave with a young holy man, named Vidyasagar "a knowledge ocean", she was visited by her two brothers Hukka and Bukka Sangama; she entrusted them with magical seeds to plant a miracle city, Bisnaga, whose first kings the brothers became. She married them in turn though her real

of Pampa Kampana, the main protagonist, manifests multiple layers in *Victory City*: annihilation of a village and its culture, birth, rise and fall of empires represented by Bisnaga, creation and alteration of national histories, within country migration, brevity and in/significance of human life, critique of religious politics, questions of gender in/equality, wars of expansion between Muslims and Hindus, etc. but above all the enduring power of imaginative words.[90]

Bohovyk and Bezrukov's analysis highlight's the role of transcendent imagination in the novel, and concludes: "Transcending, as an ontological and epistemological dimension of transcendence, is the ultimate human aspiration to the fullness of being. … the transcendent can be defined as a sphere of absolute potentiality … *Victory City* is a kind of epic chronicle of a fictional empire that arose around a single city. … In his novel, framed as a fictional translation of a Sanskrit epic, the writer proposes a new mythology to explore the epistemological problems of religious tradition and to harmonise human ideals attempting to reconcile them with imperfect humanity. Transcendent reality is experienced and conceived in human life in order to move us into imagining new ways of being."[91]

Be that it may, besides this grand theme, what indications enable us to consider the novel within the category of dastan? The following shall be listed: as foundational myth it resembles, Greek, Roman and Indian traditions. Cadmus' founding of Thebes and the myth of Oedipus remind the reader of Bisnaga's origin from "Pampa Kampana's enchanted seeds";[92] Bohovyk and Bezrukov rightly refer to the similarities between

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lover was a Portuguese horse trader, Domingo Nunes. Three girls and sons were born to Pampa; for the girls she attempts to establish equality but it creates dissention in the court, and later invasion of the kingdom and exile of the womenfolk in a magical forest. Eventually, they return and Pampa becomes the advisor of the latest king Krishnadevaraya. As a result of intrigues, rages and internal fights, the monarch goes mad and Pampa was blinded. She takes refuge in a cave; after the monarch's death the kingdom is ransacked and destroyed; Pampa confines herself in a room and waits for the goddess to release her from this earth, and buries her written history in a pot, with which the novel ends.

[90] The novel ends with the protagonist's last words, a poem with the following refrain: "Words are the only victors" (Rushdie 2023: chapter 22 – 11/11).

[91] Bohovyk and Bezrukov 2024: 88-89.

[92] Rushdie 2023: Chapter 11 – 3/26; on Cadmus/Oedipus myth, see Levi-Strauss 1955.

the pairs Hukka and Bukka with "Romulus and Remus, the founders of Roman Kingdom," as well as the resemblance between Pampa Kampana and Rama, etc.[93] Importantly, Pampa's abstinence from meat is similarly linked to Ovid's creation narrative, thus raising commonalities between cultures as well as highlighting a migrant motif of crossing borders.[94] Further, Pampa Kampana's gift of long-life from the goddess is interpreted as a hindrance to true love: "It's hard for me to love anyone with my whole heart, because I know that they are going to die."[95] Despite the general consensus that Rushdie's novels are replete with magical realism, it is evident that he deploys more and more the techniques of *dastan* by mixing stories, allusions, and reality, to create 'cities of words' like *Bisnaga*,[96] a fiction of Vijayanagara.

Conclusion

In analyzing the topic of migration in Rushdie's novels, we have argued that the basic sense of migrancy as crossing over continues to appear in all his works. This non-literal sense applicable to boundary crossings of all kinds finds more precision in the pre-fatwa triptych where the Indian subcontinent enjoys a prime place and international migration into

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[93] Bohovyk and Bezrukov 2024: 85, 84. "It is noteworthy that the pairs of names of the founding brothers were created using phonetic stylistic devices: Romulus and Remus, Hukka and Bukka – a combination of alliteration and epiphora" ibid 85.

[94] Bohovyk and Bezrukov 2024: 85 -86: "Rushdie's realisation of the ritual of crossing the boundary between the here and the other world is expressed in the image-symbol of the pyre, which has the connotative semantics of the path to the afterlife that an individual goes through before leaving this world and gaining initial freedom (initiation by death), preceded by falls and rises that symbolise life itself: "In death do triumph and failure humbly meet. We learn far less from victory than from defeat" [Rushdie 2023: chapter 22 – 9/11]. The glimmer of the funeral fire where her mother immolated herself corresponds to the ancient Hindu practice of suttee and appears to be a clairvoyance in Faust: "There was a fire blazing in her eyes, which would not be extinguished for more than two hundred years" [Rushdie 2023: chapter 2 – 18/19]. On forced migration in the kingdom, see Rushdie 2023: chapter 11 – 5/26f.

[95] Rushdie 2023: chapter 5 - 21/24; see also Bohovyk and Bezrukov 2024: 86.

[96] The name Bisnaga results from Domingo Nunes' failed attempt to repeat the name Vijayanagar after Pampa's diction, see Rushdie 2023: Chapter 3 – 10-11/21; on 'City of Words,' see Chaudhuri 2023.

Britain becomes the core issue in his contested novel *The Satanic Verses*. Despite controversy, the book offers an in-depth discussion on the causes and effects of migration concentrating on the human condition of migrants without denigrating them to subhumans thanks to structures, procedures and detentions. While the socio-political context looms large, Rushdie shows especially in *The Satanic Verses* that the diaspora of migrants deserves close attention both for their beneficial contributions to the host and home nations but also for the unique challenges they face; for migrancy constitutes our anthropological condition.

Migrant condition is best described as diasporic highlighting the centripetal bias, expressed in interstitiality, palimpsest, lightness, weight and translation some of which constitute real challenges but inevitable to integration, survival and self-esteem. Their significance as well as the precarious conditions of the migrant are well expressed in connection with postcolonial, postmodern and cosmopolitan literary modes Rushdie employs. Whereas many critiques question Rushdie's claim to these isms, it was pointed out in the above discussion that centripetal and centrifugal changes on the part of migrants are illustrated and defended in his writings, without however subscribing to any as a fixed option. This is evidenced in proposing the migrant identity as the discovered or constantly refreshing *newness* whether it be of home or of host nation. The Bombay/Wombay of *The Satanic Verses* does not any more exist, nor can a migrant like Rushdie make Mumbai his *imaginary* home for it would only burst into flames.[97]

This dilemma is better captured in the novels written during the American phase. If reviewers and critics argue that post-fatwa Rushdiean literature considers migrancy more from a global, existential and epistemological perspective it corresponds, one may say, to Rushdie's effort to link universal, immanent, life-shaping questions to contemporary violence, intolerance, inequality, injustice, junk culture, etc. which may never be resolved *anywhere unless it occurs everywhere*. Do the religions or politics move in this direction or close themselves in their own secure ...

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[97] Bombay's status is clarified in the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*: "I had to cross oceans just to exit *Wombay*, the parental body. I flew away to get myself born." Rushdie 1999: 4.the invention of music – 35/64. Capturing the climax of "strangenesses" opens up this alternative "of blowing it all up." Crăciun 2023: 75.

selves? Rushdie seems to believe that an answer valid for all, at all places and all times may not exit, but if it does it would happen only thanks to art, its *autopoiesis*.

Interpreting Rushdie in this way does not contradict his ethical endeavors but refers back to a firm link he seems to maintain to Renaissance literature and thought. Despite its postmodern and postcolonial emphases, Rushdie's insistent thrust on imagination may correspond to the Renaissance turn to image both in art and in thought, at least in two senses: first, as offering repeated, revised versions of reality from never-ending perspectives, as highlighted by Falconer; second, in an allegorical sense similar to Giordano Bruno's fables and other writings.[98]

In his detailed study of fifteenth-century Italian art, Adrian Randolph explains that the paintings of the period, for example Botticelli's *Noli me tangere*, stand out for the relationality of experience; it is expressed thanks to touch, experience and intimacy; experience is not reduced to rationality but is vivid in corporeal expression. It highlights a *dynamic tension* between the characters (Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the painting of *Noli me tangere*) as well as between the artwork and the spectator, engendering a relational modality in both cases.[99] Rushdie succeeds in conceptualizing 'metaphorical beings' as relational and en-trenched. His emphasis on corporeality[100] reminds the reader of the cultural theory proposed as a continuation of Renaissance thought. The post-Renaissance Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) theorizes that human thought originates with culture thanks to *autopoiesis*, the core feature of imaginative universal in contrast to the rational universal defended by Imanuel Kant. This argument, further developed, may sustain intensive thought as an essential feature of symbolic pragmatism[101] in which migrancy is inscribed anew.

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[98] Falconer 2001. Hilariously reminiscent of the itinerant, legendary Mullah Nasreddin (available on internet). On Bruno, see: Rowland 2008; 2013: xi-xxxix;

[99] Randolph 2014: 1-10.

https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/noli-me-tangere/YwGRlJtVyijiyg?hl=en (accessed on 4/2/2025).

[100] As Ramone (2023: 200f.) argues, 'somatic' and 'emotional' features distinguish Rushdie's border-crossings.

[101] Pandimakil 1998: 373-376.

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