CONCLUSION

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But I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding 'choose', 'chose'. I buck, I snort, I whiney, I rear, I kick....I refuse to choose.

(East, West 211)

While proclaiming his allegiance to those novels that attempt radical reformulations of language, form and ideas in the essay "In Good Faith", Rushdie seems to be exploring what Naipaul was really seeking for— 'the enigma of arrival'. But, in fact, he presents a different set of problems than those posed by the more colonially centered narratives of Naipaul. He even seems to have provided some clues to answer at least some of the problems of Naipaul's discourse. What can be more enabling than the idea of openness to the 'new', the marginal, the ambiguous? Such openness for reformulation – it appears at first glance – shifts the entire debate from the controversy between authenticity/mimicry, center/margin, conventional/experimental or old/new to exploration and celebration of the second part of these dualities.
As far as the idea of openness is concerned, however, two things are involved: the one, 'expression' which Rushdie "In Good Faith" identifies as "language and literary forms in which the experience of formerly colonized, still-disadvantaged peoples might find full expression", but the other, 'originality' appears not only cumbersome but also controversial. Originality definitely means an innovation in contrast to an imitative respect for tradition. Most of the Third Worldist migrant novelists partake in a mixed, hotchpotch literary tradition, combining their acquaintance of the Western culture with their own stories, legends, myths, worldviews, and different narrative techniques. Coming from the 'synchronic space' of the sociocultural matrix of the Indian subcontinent, which seems to have permeated deep into his self, Rushdie appears to be experimenting with the 'diachronic alternative of imagination' to go beyond all kinds of signs of divisions and make a symbiotic existence with both— the East and the West. As a result of this combination, his linguistic and literary expressions also acquire newness in contrast to the worn-out fields of metaphors and over-wrought topics. The reader can always hear in Rushdie's novels the voice of the writer rising in tone to remove limits, borders, thresholds, the 'edges'—signs of division and separation—to draw closer to a potential idea of the 'wholeness' of man.

In fact, Rushdie has been exploring edges, thresholds and boundaries in his story collection *East, West*, looking for 'links' and 'bridges'. Having analysed the two worlds from different perspectives— ironic in the 'East' section and parodic in the 'West' section, but both symbolizing "the moral decay of our post-millennium culture" (94), the writer seeks a harmonious fusion in the last section of the book: "a way of making a bridge between here-and-there, between my two otherness, my double unbelonging (141). This feeling of "double unbelonging" has been symbolically suggested when the old nurse Certainly-
Mary is seen roped by two different loves—pulled this way or that, but never quite certain which one to choose—between India and England, Bombay and London. No doubt, it is the relationship on the synchronic level—history, politics, current affairs—which Rushdie deals with in these stories. But there is a clear hint of making a ‘bridge’ for a diachronic relationship, exploring alternative possibilities of redescription through imagination. The voice of the author assumes irrepressible proportion: “In that world of magic and power there seemed to exist the kind of fusion of world-views, European Amerindian Oriental Levantine, in which I desperately wanted to believe” (141).

Of course, many will object to Rushdie’s worldview of multiplicity as Aijaz Ahmad and Timothy Brennan have done in their books. Both of these critics bring out the ideological and/or elitist positioning of Rushdie’s discourse of ‘newness’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘multiplicity’. But it is basically the idea of ‘multiplicity’, with its connotations of migrancy, which has come under heavy fire by Ahmad. He observes:

Rushdie’s idea of ‘migrancy’, which is quite central to his self-representation both in fiction and in life, has come to us in two versions. In the first version, fully present in Shame and in the writings that came at more or less the same time, ‘migrancy’ is given to us as an ontological condition of all human beings, while the ‘migrant’ is said to have ‘floated upwards from history’. In the second version... this myth of ontological unbelonging is replaced by another, larger myth of excess of belonging; not that he belongs nowhere, but that he belongs to too many places.

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Ahmad’s prima-facie accusation revolves around the apparent lightness or easiness of Rushdie’s bourgeois self-exile as compared to the heaviness of loss and lamentation associated with actual exile and alienation. Brennan also observes in Rushdie’s novels a similar western elitist intellectual radicalism, shying away from affirmative action by ‘Other’ sections of society.

However, in all his novels, essays, and interviews, Rushdie has projected the concept of the migrant as the ‘Other’ to the traditional notion of permanent settlers. In fact, whether from one country to another, from one language or culture to another or even from a traditional rural society to a modern metropolis, all people are more or less migrants in the postmodernist sense of the term. On the complex situation of this emblematic figure, Rushdie himself speaks with unique authority, for he has embodied the outsider— the ‘Other’ — all of his life: first as a Muslim in predominantly Hindu India, then as an Indian migrant to Pakistan, next as an Indian-Pakistani living in Britain and, since the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, as a blasphemer against Islam, a man on the run to avoid assassination. Now, after the publication of the books on which Ahmad and Brennan have based their criticism, the reader feels that Rushdie’s worldview of multiplicity has become the justification for the writing of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, and more particularly *The Moor’s Last Singh*. One may, however, claim that between *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* Rushdie’s ‘openness’ in respect to migrancy and multiplicity has truly undergone a change, showing irrevocable predilection for hybridity no doubt, but with genuine concern for false multiculturalism also. Thus it will be unfortunate to accuse Rushdie of trafficking only Western secularism and universalism at the cost of his representation of the ‘Other’.
Actually *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* expose the danger that myths— which privilege some ethnicities over others, or which effectively demonize others as the enemy— and narratives, which can deliberately exclude some from having a right to share either the story or the common life. During the colonial period the British did exactly the same, created a myth about themselves to tell that they had a divine mission to enlighten, civilize and educate the non-Western, non-white, non-Christian natives. Not only did they tell the self-serving and one-sided story about themselves but they also tried to impose stories, and identities, on the colonized people. In *Midnight's Children*, Dr. Aziz revolts against this colonial imposition, thus:

He learned that India - like radium - had been “discovered” by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration for Vasco da Gama, and this was what finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors. (6)

More like Aziz, Aurora in *The Moor's Last Sigh* also shows her annoyance over the 'corruption of history':

English and French sailed in the wake of that first-arrived-Portuguese, so that in the period called Discovery-of-India— but how could we be discovered when we were not covered before? — we were 'not so much sub-continent as sub-condiment', as my distinguished mother had it. 'From the beginning, what
the world wanted from bloody mother India was daylight-clear,' she'd say. 'They came for the hot stuff, just like any man calling on a tart.' (4-5)

Even after the collapse of the Empire many of the Eurocentric attitudes still continue to influence race and community relations; many Britons even today regard the black and Asian migrants as inherently inferior. The colonial hang over and its effects have been tellingly narrativized in a scene in *The Satanic Verses* in which Salādīn Chamcha is harassed and arrested as an illegal immigrant despite the fact that he is a British citizen; one of the immigration officers scoffs at him: "Look at yourself. You're a fucking Packy billy. Sally-who? What kind of name is that for an Englishman?" (163).

Postcolonial literature, such as Rushdie's, addresses the question of national identity after Empire: what does it mean to be Indian or Pakistani now that the British have left? Rushdie's novels seem to be passionately concerned with the fate of the new India, with what sort of nation she is to be for all of her citizens. Born in India and educated and settled in Britain, the expatriate author straddles two culture simultaneously—the postcolonial India and the postcolonial Britain. More often than not he has made it clear that his loyalties are to ideas and not to places. He rejoices in eclecticism; "How does newness enter the world", he asks in *The Satanic Verses*, and continues, when "a bit of this and a bit of that" meet and mingle: "Mélange, hotchpotch ... is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that migration has given the world, and I have tried to embrace it" (394). The novel explores new and unexpected combinations of cultures, ideas, and politics. However, Rushdie's love of pluralism goes still deeper in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, with his own understanding of what is most characteristic of the Indian ethos, past, present and future,
when he finds that “the ideas of impurity, cultural admixture and mélange” are closest “to the notion of the Good” (303).

No doubt, the global media and markets have significantly contributed towards appropriation and celebration of the worldview that Rushdie has projected in his novels. They will continue to shape people’s lives and beckon them to a world beyond boundaries and belonging. But the civic resources people need to master these forces, or at least to contend with them, are still to be found in the places and stories, memories and meanings, incidents and identities. In such system where people remain encumbered in their local communities, they also recognize other loyalties, and negotiate their way intelligently between them. It seems that Rushdie has made this sort of a reformulation in Haroun and the Sea of Stories and The Moor’s Last Sigh over his earlier worldview. In The Ground Beneath Her Feet the author makes new experimentation by fusing myth with rock-and-roll reality; the two characters— Ormus Cama and Vina Apsare, have actually become ideal citizens of a global system, despite having their cultural roots in India. They belong to the self-conscious group of Rushdie’s narrators, telling more of ideas than places, and passing on stories to future generations in order to ensure that a civilization lives on in memory long after it ceased to exist.

Thus, it is better to say of Rushdie that he has roots in both ‘East’ and ‘West’; that is what in his writings he seems to want the reader to say of him. Not only is he “neither this nor that, a half and halfer”, to quote Tai’s description in the Midnight’s Children (18), but he is also both “this and that”. The crucial expression here is not Rushdie’s refusal to choose any particular culture but his choosing of “neither, and both”. The reader feels awkward to grasp this except in concrete narrativization. One may very much ask the question, for
instance, if in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie actually plays out the duality between East/Revelation/superstition and West/Reason/secularism, to West and to the East. In the earlier chapters, the author seems to have established the two major conflicts that preoccupy him by personifying the opposites in the characters of Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. However, the opposite characteristics of the two tumbling heroes are dissolved in the mind of Chamcha, who is most aware of the difference, and the quality of metamorphosis and hybridity stressed. The two are separate, but they are also one. They are one at the moment, twined around each other; they are again and again made ‘one’ as the novel progresses and their qualities prove more interchangeable and more symbiotic. The reader feels that the author has left some cracks open, and it is through these cracks that the characteristics of the two seep out and intermingle throughout the novel. Rushdie has really been able to suggest ‘newness’ by situating his narrative sympathies with the bewildering synthesis that al-Ashari had achieved in the Middle Ages when he brought a brilliant synthesis between the Hanbalities and the Mutazilities, between Reason and Revelation.

Likewise, Rushdie’s use of Hindu and Islamic theology and myths in *Midnight’s Children, Shame* and *The Satanic Verses* is symbiotically overcharged with symbolic notions. On one level, it is a highly ‘open’ use, for he is not only mixing up separate traditions but also coming up with different interpretations and versions of established myths. But there is a common strand running not only through variously used Islamic and Hindu mythology but also the sociopolitical history of the nation. As Brennan has pointed out, Rushdie’s use of the classical myth of Hinduism, however ironic, serves to reinforce the traditional and mainstream Hindu concept of “the world as a series of irresolvable dualities” and, hence, eternally the same. Similarly, Rushdie uses the Quranic literary tradition which, as opposed to the Western tradition, is “radically non-
narrative" to imply not only anonymity and a causality but historical repetition. The dismal history of Pakistan as narrated in *Shame* thus creates a sense that the story is already written; like the Quran long ago transcribed from the words of Allah, the 'impossible' country has lost its purity under the colossal corruption of its contemporary political and religious fanatic leaders. However, though essentialist, this notion of the 'state of being' never guarantees any sacrosanct position to 'history' which remains for Rushdie and his narrators to be "peeled off" endlessly to give a richer sense of 'meaning' and 'wholeness' to the otherwise chaotic nature of life and reality.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


