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SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MAJOR NOVELS

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Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist. His second novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), won the Booker Prize in 1981 and was deemed to be “the best novel of all winners” on two separate occasions. Much of Rushdie's fiction is set on the Indian subcontinent. He combines magical realism with historical fiction; his work is concerned with the many connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations.

Rushdie's epic fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), was the subject of a major controversy, provoking protests from Muslims in several countries. In 1983 Rushdie was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the UK's senior literary organization. He was appointed Commander de l'Ordre des Arts et des Letters of France in January 1999. In June 2007, Queen Elizabeth II knighted him for his services to literature. In 2008, *The Times* ranked him 13th on its list of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945.

Since 2000, Rushdie has lived in America. Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus* (1975), a part-science fiction tale, was generally ignored by the public and literary critics. His next novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), catapulted him to literary notability. This work won the 1981 Booker Prize and, in 1993 and 2008, was awarded the Best of the Bookers as the best novel to have received the prize during its first 25 and 40 years. *Midnight's Children* follows the life of a child, born at the stroke of midnight as India gained its independence, who is endowed with special powers and a connection to other children born at the dawn of a new and tumultuous age in the history of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of the modern nation of India. The character of Saleem Sinai has been compared to Rushdie. However, the author has refuted the idea of having written any of his characters as autobiographical.

*Midnight's Children* deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of British India. It is considered an example of postcolonial literature and magical realism. The story is told by its chief protagonist, Saleem Sinai, and is set in the context of actual historical events as with historical fiction. But, his style of preserving the history with fictional accounts was self-reflexive which he himself explained with a term chutnification. The frequent intertextuality between his story-line and bollywood films gives it a flavor of a pastiche. Therefore, this novel is an example of postmodern literature.

Various influences are there in Rushdie's writing of *Midnight's Children*. These influences include India's freedom movement, India's partition, Vedic literature (texts like Kathasaritsagars), magic realism, Kashmiri diaspora, fantasy, modernism, telepathy, history and folklore, and several other postcolonial trends in themes and techniques.

After *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie wrote *Shame* in 1983, in which he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan, basing his characters on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. *Shame* won France's Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (for the Best Foreign Book) and was a close runner-up for the Booker Prize. Both these works of postcolonial literature are characterized by a style of magic realism and the immigrant outlook that Rushdie is very conscious of as a member of the Kashmiri diaspora.

Like most of Rushdie's work, this book *Shame* was written in the style of magic realism. It portrays the lives of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Iskander Harappa) and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (General Raza Hyder) and their relationship. The central theme of the novel is that violence is born out of shame. The
concepts of 'shame' and 'shamelessness' are explored through all of the characters, with main focus on Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyám.

Shame discusses heritage, authenticity, truth, and, of course, shame and shamelessness, as well as the impact of all these themes on an individual, the protagonist Omar Khayyám.

This story takes place in a town called "Q" which is actually a fictitious version of Quetta, Pakistan. In Q, the three sisters (Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny Shakil) simultaneously pretend to give birth to Omar Khayyám Shakil. Therefore, it is impossible to know who Omar's true mother is. In addition, they are unsure of who Omar's father is as the three sisters got pregnant at a house party. While growing up, Omar becomes mischievous and learns hypnosis. As a birthday present, Omar Khayyám Shakil's "mothers" allow him to leave Q. He enrolls in a school and is convinced by his tutor (Eduardo Rodriguez) to become a doctor. Over time, he comes in contact with both Iskander Harappa and General Raza Hyder.

There are various influences on Rushdie in writing this novel Shame such as Islam as a radical religion, dream vision, Pak government, mafia and the like.

Rushdie's most controversial work, The Satanic Verses, was published in 1988. The publication of The Satanic Verses caused immediate controversy in the Islamic world because of what was seen by some to be an irreverent depiction of Muhammad. The title refers to a disputed Muslim tradition that is related in the book. According to this tradition, Muhammad (Mahound in the book) added verses (Ayah) to the Qur'an accepting three goddesses who used to be worshipped in Mecca as divine beings. According to the legend, Muhammad later revoked the verses, saying the devil tempted him to utter these lines to appease the Meccans (hence the “Satanic” verses). However, the narrator reveals to the reader that these disputed verses were actually from the mouth of the Archangel Gibreel. The book was banned in many countries with large Muslim communities (13 in total: Iran, India, Bangladesh, Sudan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Thailand, Tanzania, Indonesia, Singapore, Venezuela, and Pakistan).

The Satanic Verses consists of a frame narrative, using elements of magical realism, interlaced with a series of sub-plots that are narrated as dream visions experienced by one of the protagonists. The frame narrative, like many other stories by Rushdie, involves Indian expatriates in contemporary England. The two protagonists, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, are both actors of Indian Muslim background. Farishta is a Bollywood superstar who specialises in playing Hindu deities. (The character is partly based on Indian film stars Amitabh Bachchan and N. T. Rama Rao.) Chamcha is an emigrant who has broken with his Indian identity and works as a voiceover artist in England.

At the beginning of the novel, both are trapped in a hijacked plane flying from India to Britain. The plane explodes over the English Channel, but the two are magically saved. In a miraculous transformation, Farishta takes on the personality of the archangel Gabriel and Chamcha that of a devil. Chamcha is arrested and passes through an ordeal of police abuse as a suspected illegal immigrant. Farishta's transformation can partly be read on a realistic level as the symptom of the protagonist's developing schizophrenia.

Both characters Farishta and Chamcha struggle to piece their lives back together. Farishta seeks and finds his lost love, the English mountaineer Allie Cone, but their relationship is overshadowed by his mental illness. Chamcha, having miraculously regained his human shape, wants to take revenge on Farishta for having forsaken him after their common fall from the hijacked plane. He does so by fostering Farishta's pathological jealousy and thus destroying his relationship with Allie. In another moment of crisis, Farishta realizes what Chamcha has done, but forgives him and even saves his life.

Both return to India. Farishta kills Allie in another outbreak of jealousy and then commits suicide. Chamcha, who has found not only forgiveness from Farishta but also reconciliation with his estranged father and his own Indian identity, decides to remain in India.

Embedded in this story is a series of half-magic dream vision narratives, ascribed to the mind of Farishta. They are linked together by many thematic details as well as by the common motifs of divine revelation, religious faith and fanaticism, and doubt.

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The Moor's Last Sigh, a family epic ranging over some 100 years of India's history was published in 1995. The Moor's Last Sigh is the fifth novel by Salman Rushdie. It is set in the Indian cities of Bombay and Cochin.

The Moor's Last Sigh traces four generations of the narrator's family and the ultimate effects upon the narrator. The narrator, Moraes Zogoiby, traces his family's beginnings down through time to his own lifetime. Moraes, who is called 'Moor' throughout the book, is an exceptional character, whose physical body ages twice as fast as a normal person’s does and also has a deformed hand. The book also focuses heavily on the Moor's relationships with the women in his life, including his mother Aurora, who is a famous national artist; his first female tutor; and his first love, a charismatic, demented sculptor named Uma.

Works Cited:
O my body, make of me always a man who questions! (Frantz Fanon, 1952)
So I went on with my devilment, changing verses. (Rushdie, 1988, Satanic Verses 368)

Rushdie's Satanic Verses is a kind of critique of Islam. In 1988, after a short creative detour to Nicaragua in his travelogue The Jaguar Smile, Rushdie published his fourth novel, The Satanic Verses. Like Midnight's Children and Shame before it, The Satanic Verses is a strongly satirical text that takes, as one of its dominant socio-political agendas, the condemnation of the abuse of power and authority by state and church. Unlike the two earlier novels, however, The Verses shifts its attention away from the abuses committed by South Asian political leaders towards the abuses that flourished under Margaret Thatcher's Prime Ministerial watch in the 1980s Britain. Specifically, the novel, in its dominant narrative line, sets out to explore (or expose) the impact upon Britain's minority communities of lingering Falklands-era jingoism, and of systematic, institutionalized racism in organizations such as the police force and the media.

This aspect of the novel's politics is to the fore in the scenes that concern one of the novel's two main protagonists, Salahuddin Chamchawala, the Bombay-born actor who has, after an English public school education, settled in England, endeavoured to become 'a good and proper Englishman', and Anglicized his name to 'Saladin Chamcha' (the surname of which, by unfortunate but revealing linguistic accident, translates from Hindi and Urdu as 'spoon', an idiom for a sycophantic toady).

Chamcha, in this incarnation, is representative of a class of migrants well-theorised in discursive accounts of post-colonial diasporic identities. Saladin is a near relative of the psychologically traumatised 'native intellectual' in Frantz Fanon's writings, who has internalised the racism of a dominant white culture to such a degree that he attempts a 'hallucinatory whitening'. In this role he is a descendant of earlier fictional avatars of the compliant migrant, such as the 'mimic men' of V. S. Naipaul's 1967 novel of that name who 'become what they see of themselves in the eyes of others', or Harris in Samuel Selvon's The Lonely Londoners who likes 'English customs', dresses like 'some Englishman going to work in the city and is ashamed of the behaviour of his compatriots ('Only thing/ Selvon's narrator wryly observes, 'Harris face black'). Mimic men are a legion in the fiction of the third world.

Saladin's naive vision of a benevolent England, the reader learns, has survived years of contact with such racism. However, a terminal blow is delivered to his faith in this myth of England at the start of The Satanic Verses, which begins in medias res with Saladin and his co-protagonist Gabriel Farishta entering England (re-entering in Saladin's case) after plummeting from an exploding aeroplane to land on Hastings beach, site of an earlier conquest of the isles in 1066. Saladin's unorthodox reentry into the UK signifies a precipitous expulsion from the Eden of his comfortable middle-class life in England, and his entry into a lurid fallen world in which he is able, finally, to see England - or specifically London - as it is experienced by less economically fortunate migrants than himself: an England that is 'visible' for those who are prepared to look for it, but remains largely 'unseen' by the willfully blind citizens of the modern metropolis.

Saladin, however, remains an unwilling student of his experiences, which in turn enables Rushdie to maintain an analytical distance from the various political stances that Saladin is confronted with.
devil figure Saladin is annexed as an emblem of resistance by a black youth culture seeking to reclaim traditional models of oppositionality; but he makes it clear that he is being appropriated against his will ('This isn't what I wanted. This is not what I meant, at all', Saladin protests, with a revealing echo of T. S. Eliot's Prufrock). Likewise, when Saladin attends a political meeting in support of a black activist who has been arrested for multiple rape on trumped-up charges, he softens to the idea of grass-roots activism, but remains suspicious of the slanted and historically dubious rhetoric employed by the movement's leaders. Saladin's path, like Rushdie's own, is destined to be the 'third way' between extremes. He renounces the 'uncle Tomism' of his early career and so ceases to be a mimic man, but he does not rush headlong into radical opposition to the idea of England out court. Rather he discovers that it is possible to become neither an 'assimilationist' nor a radical 'nativist' but to embrace what Bhabha calls (in reference to The Satanic Verses) the 'liminality of migrant experience'; a discovery that allows him to live within the experience of his multiple identity without striving to reduce that multiplicity to artificial certainties.

The transformation of Saladin Chamcha into a devil-goat, and the concurrent transformation of his co-protagonist, Gibreel Farishta, into an angel, associates The Satanic Verses closely with a specific sub-genre of the satire, the Menippean, which characteristically employs fantastic scenarios and improbable transmutations to give its characters new perspectives upon the familiar world. As Philip Engblom has argued in an essay on cannibalization and dialogicality in Rushdie's novels, The Satanic Verses includes 'every one of the menippean elements enumerated by Mikhail Bakhtin in the influential definition of the genre that appears in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.

There are two central, and concurrently realized, acts of speculative intellectual enquiry taking place in The Satanic Verses. In the first place the novel conducts a searching philosophical investigation of the impact of migration upon individual identity. It sets out to discover what migrant life has been like in Britain in the second half of the 20th century, and poses what might be regarded as the principal philosophical question concerning the migrant experience, modern or otherwise: does the act of crossing over frontiers create the self-anew and destroy the prior self, or does the old self remain the same, even as identity is reshaped and remoulded by new experiences. This question is given a classical formulation in The Verses by Muhammad Sufvan, the intellectually intrepid proprietor of the Shaandaar Cafe, who finds an analogy for the experience of the modern migrant in the rival descriptions of metamorphosis offered by the Latin authors Lucretius and Ovid.

There are, in this respect, no final answers to the questions raised in The Satanic Verses, there are only negotiations of complex realities that cannot be reduced to coherent either/or solutions. 'Anybody ever tries to tell how this most beautiful and most evil of planets is somehow homogeneous, composed only of reconcilable elements, which it all adds up', Rushdie's character Otto Cone explains:

You get on the phone to the straitjacket tailor ... The world is incompatible, just never forget it...

Ghost, Nazis, saints, all alive at the same time; in one spot, blissful happiness, while down the road, the inferno. You can't ask for a wider place (Satanic Verses 295).

Otto Cone's conclusions, based upon this hypothesis, are not optimistic. In the irreconcilability of different factions, he sees only collision. 'The modern city', he lectures his bored family:

is the locus classicus of incompatible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side on the omnibus ... And as long as that's all, they pass in the night, jostling on Tube stations ... it's not so bad. But if they meet! It's uranium and plutonium, each makes the other decompose, boom. (Satanic Verses 314).

T. S. Eliot in his poem The Waste Land speaks of degeneration in Europe. The people spiritually sterile describe a purposeless circle. They flow in a crowd over LondonBridge. They inhabit an 'unreal city.' This city is like a hell.

UnrealCity,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

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A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, I had not thought death had undone so many (Eliot 2368)

Central to Rushdie's fictional premise in these interrogations is the apocryphal incident of the 'satanic verses' that has independent existence in Islamic tradition. The incident is recorded by two early Islamic authorities, Al-Tabari and Ibn Sa'd, and concerns verses that were 'delivered' to Muhammad in the course of the revelation of the fifty-third chapter of the Quran. These verses appear to allow a semi-divine or intercessionary status to three pagan goddesses, Al-'Lat, Al-'Uzza and Manat, who were worshipped in Mecca prior to its conversion to Islam. Muhammad, according to the story, initially believed these verses to be the true word of God, and delivered them to the people of Mecca. A later revelation, however, showed that the acceptance of Al-'Lat, Al-'Uzza and Manat had been inspired by Satan, and the verses were expunged from the sacred text.

*The Verses* returns the Qur'an to the historical conditions of its making, in order to show that it reflects a historically contingent set of ideological belief systems that ought to be open to critique as ideological systems. It is only by recognizing such historicity, in Rushdie's view, that it will become possible for Islam to move beyond tradition and bring the core concepts of Islam into the modern age. Solei propose:

To move beyond the obvious good and evil implicit in such easy binaries to suggest instead that *The Satanic Verses* is, from a cultural point of view, a work of meticulous religious attentiveness ... [that enables] Rushdie to extend with urgency and fidelity - his engagement with both cultural self-definition and Islamic historiography (Solei 321).

**Work Cited**