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# Roaming, Wandering, Deviation and Error: Dialogues Between *Paradise Lost* and the Novels of Salman Rushdie

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## Abstract

This doctoral dissertation proposes a reading of *Paradise Lost* and four novels by Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Attempting a more nuanced comparative reading of these texts, one that goes beyond a linear paradigm, Jacques Derrida's term *destinerrance* will be taken up as a means for thinking how the work of this "successor" dialogues with Milton's, conferring on the epic an elusive kind of afterlife.

*Destinerrance* will be taken here to signal an ongoing process of re-signification of texts that does away with the notions of adhesion or similarity to an original, central point. In the case of Milton and his "successor", the fictional work of Salman Rushdie will be seen as constituting sites in which collaboration and contestation in relation to the epic are simultaneously and continually staged. Rushdie can then be seen to interweave Miltonic images of Eden, of the fall and a Satanic discourse of transgression to write territories and characters constituted in the crossings of domains of difference, territories in which colonial past and contemporary cultural formations and power structures are continually questioned and negotiated. In this way, his work enacts a re-signifying of Milton's text, mediating, in these deviations, the way it reaches us today.



Key Words: Milton, Rushdie, *destinerrance*, influence



## Resumo

Esta tese propõe uma leitura do poema épico *Paradise Lost* e quatro romances de Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Fury* e *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Buscando uma leitura comparada mais nuançada destes textos, uma leitura para além de um paradigma linear, o termo *destinerrance* cunhado por

Jacques Derrida, será usado para pensar como a obra desse "sucessor" dialoga com a de Milton, conferindo ao épico um tipo de sobrevida elusiva.

*Destinerrance* aqui sinaliza um processo contínuo de re-significação textual em que as noções de adesão ou similaridade a um ponto original, central, se desfazem. No caso de Milton e seu "sucessor", a obra de Rushdie será vista como espaços em que colaboração e contestação em relação ao épico são simultânea e continuamente encenadas. Rushdie então costura a imagética do jardim do Éden e da queda e um discurso satânico de transgressão para escrever territórios e personagens constituídos nos cruzamentos de domínios de diferença, territórios em que passado colonial e as formações culturais e as estruturas de poder contemporâneas são continuamente questionados e negociados. Desta forma, sua obra pode re-significar o texto de Milton, mediando, nesses desvios, a forma como este nos chega hoje.

Palavras-chave: Milton, Rushdie, *destinerrance*, influência

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# 1. Introduction

> *Good literary criticism, the only worthwhile kind, implies an act, a literary signature or counter-signature, an inventive experience of language, in language, an inscription of the act of reading in the field of the text that is read. (Derrida, Acts 52)*

The field of literary studies today arguably finds itself informed by a wide array of critical standpoints. Among the most influential trends in critical analysis in recent years, post-colonialism has opened to literary studies new lines of inquiry into the alignments between literature, the political, the cultural and the sphere of criticism. As such, post-colonialism has re-directed much literary analysis, particularly in the field of comparative studies, as well as grounding a wide variety of contemporary writing practices.

Post-colonial critical theory, generally speaking, seeks to uncover and revise those structures of thought underscored by colonialist discourses, structures that, for our purposes here, have informed not only literary texts themselves but also their critical analysis. It is this larger framework opened up to analysis of literary texts that will remain, to a lesser or greater extent, a backdrop in this dissertation in its proposal of reading a canonical English epic poem like John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the novels of a "post-colonial" writer like Salman Rushdie.

Post-colonial critical thinking and post-colonial literatures, as Rushdie's novels exemplify, challenge the structures of imperial and colonial discourses of difference, identity and subjectivity. For the kind of comparative reading of the texts chosen here, texts situated across the former colonial divide, this challenge and its attending implications become a kind of point of departure. On the one hand, it signals how a historicist paradigm of original/descendant has haunted cultural products like literary texts, a paradigm which is then mapped onto a global context of national literatures emerging from colonial domination, and on the other hand to how this paradigm may

be undermined. Following the latter implication, and more to the point of this dissertation, the work of post-colonial critics like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, focusing on dialogism, interdependence and alternative systemizations of knowledge and critical positionings, has in turn helped illustrate how a text such as *Paradise Lost*, occupying as it does the "center" of an English literary canon, may be accessed, re-signified and eventually dislodged in its relations to contemporary fiction like Rushdie's.

The epic *Paradise Lost* is a re-writing of the founding Western myth of the fall of Man. Four centuries after his death, Milton's life, his political affiliations, religious values and his literary references have been exhaustingly discussed, and the poet appears as a formidable influence over those writers who follow him. However, in light of all the critical attention Milton received and continues to receive today, there is still a lack of studies on what these "successors" bring to his work and of how their own work can be seen to dialogue, on an equal footing, with his. Looking at these relations between Milton and his post-colonial "successors" outside a founding or originary paradigm would then not only refine discussions of issues such as literary influence, but would also enrich the field of comparative studies in English literatures.

This doctoral dissertation, then, proposes a study of *Paradise Lost* and four novels by Salman Rushdie (*The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*). The goal is to provide a more nuanced comparative reading of these texts, a reading that goes beyond the kind of linear or historicist paradigm post-colonial critical theory has denounced. Thus, departing from the problematic signaled by critics like Said, Bhabha and Spivak, the aim is to appropriate Jacques Derrida's term *destinerrance* as an alternative critical approach or path for reading Rushdie's work beside/against Milton's epic. *Destinerrance* here will be understood and employed as proposed by Luiz Sá (2009) and J. Hillis Miller (2006), for whom the term may help to re-think the directions of comparative studies, more

precisely of literary influence, bringing it into the processes of intense revision in the field began in the twentieth century towards a more critical view of its objects and its methodology.

It is important to clarify that what is proposed here is a tentative sketch of a critical approach that simply allows us to read Rushdie's appropriations of Milton's epic, appropriations that, while they recover also deviate its renditions of Eden, its rhetoric of transgression and its depiction of its satanic protagonist. In other words, in the afterlife we are arguing is afforded the poet via Rushdie's novels, the discussion undertaken here does not aim at a critical refining of such broad (and arguably problematic) fields as comparative and influence studies. So although influence and its related issues, its *status quaestionis,* remain as a backdrop in the entire dissertation, we do not specifically propose tackling this problematic in depth. But, nevertheless, as it is a term that is unavoidable when we look at the tradition of Milton studies, influence will persistently come up here, haunting the text as both the umbrella word for an obsessive-compulsive search for sources or originary semblance that, for critics like Eduardo Coutinho have dominated a large part of comparative studies, but also, via Derrida, as a term that can be placed under erasure.

In a series of essays on Comparative Literature Coutinho analyzes its constitution as a discipline, the theoretical principles that grounded its development and their implications to the literatures produced in Latin America. For Coutinho (and his argument could be extended to other territories that have undergone a process of colonial domination), in Latin America, a territory hampered by a colonialism that is still in place today both economically and culturally, comparative studies, in their beginnings, functioned as yet another element of ratification of this dependence (11). For the author, the intense process of revision which the discipline has undergone in the continent in the last few decades, fueled by the issues of (post-colonial) cultural

difference raised inside the continent itself, is part of a series of profound changes introduced in comparative literary studies worldwide.

Still according to Coutinho, initially comparative studies were based on a linear, historicist order and on a notion of influence as source survey and analysis (15). Coutinho's criticism is that this kind of analysis becomes restricted to binary approximations or to the constitution of literary families[1], while the local contexts in which texts were produced were ignored. For the critic, this homogenizing discourse, passing over the processes of cultural, economic and political domination inherent in literary texts themselves, was built also into the model or form of their study.

To free comparative literary studies from this role of ratifier of a cultural neo-colonialism, Coutinho argues, these principles had to be put into question. In this process, the bases that define the relations established between texts were modified. Now, in comparative studies of literary works,

> Contrary to what happened before, the second text in the process of comparison is no longer simply indebted to but is also responsible for the revitalization of the first and the relation between them, instead of one-directional, acquires a sense of reciprocity[2]. (20)

Instead of a continuous time line that attributes to the first text the status of origin or source and to the "successors" that of passive receptacles, what these revisions in Comparative Literature have ultimately meant is that a dialogue on equal terms can now be established between different literatures.

Coutinho's overview of comparative studies worldwide thus voices the same concerns already put forth by critics like Said. Indeed, his (Said's) is a body of work that

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[1] Coutinho's discussion of literary families sees them in terms of affiliation and resemblance to an original. Reading intertextual relations via derridian *destinerrance,* although the word embarks notions of destiny and inheritance, constitutes a decisive move beyond such a critical outlook.

[2] Agora, contrariamente ao que ocorria antes, o texto segundo no processo da comparação não é mais apenas o "devedor", mas também o responsável pela revitalização do primeiro, e a relação entre ambos, em vez de unidirecional, adquire sentido de reciprocidade.

has been instrumental in operating the shifting of perspectives Coutinho defends and which, ultimately, guarantees the kind of transversality that, for both critics, would be essential to a comparative reading of literary works from across the former colonial divide.

This renewed interest in re-orientating the bases of comparative literary studies has also touched discussions of literary influence. Twined since at least the nineteenth century, the historicist paradigm Coutinho critiques as consolidated inside a colonialist cultural framework has also, for him, grounded discussions of literary influence. One of the main problems with this combination of historicism and a particular, consolidated power structure then is that certain authors (for example the poet John Milton) and certain literary traditions are centralized and awarded a founding status, beside which what follows comes draped in the epithet of "successor."

It is this view of influence that seems to have dominated, in more or less stressed terms, the field of Milton studies, be it in critical analyses of those authors that inform his poetic project or of those who are, on the other hand, formed inside it.[3] Nowhere is this process of centralization through the particular, linear notion of influence pointed out by Coutinho more visible than in Harold Bloom's treatise *The Anxiety of Influence.* Bloom's arguably polemic thesis owes a great deal to Milton. It is perhaps for this very reason that the critic so well exemplifies, and concomitantly helps further consolidate, this centralizing of Milton's work and the critical tendency of looking at it and at those other texts with which it may dialogue in terms of an overreaching power or influence.

Bloom defines literary influence as a struggle between an author and his/her predecessors marked by anxiety. Literature would be defined and would move according to the paralyzing sensation each poet feels before the greatness of his

[3] As we depart from this tendency that has been more or less prevalent in those readings of Milton's work and its influence, we will not detain ourselves on this critical fortune but will mention only Bloom's exemplary work with Miltonic influence.

predecessor's work, at the moment when he/she realizes that everything has already been named by the former. For Bloom, the strong writer is moved by the urge to remove these names and to re-name everything again, a gesture of self-creation in which he/she emerges through *his/her* own work and not from the reading of the predecessor's.

The poet must then appropriate the predecessor through what Bloom calls poetic misprision, a reading of the predecessor's work that is, in fact and always, a misreading (30). This first step would constitute a detour, an implication that the work is accurate up until a certain point, from which it should have moved precisely in the direction in which the successor moves in an act of creative revision. For the critic, a text is then necessarily about another, and the previous text is responsible for what Bloom calls "poetic incarnation" in the successor writer. The anguish arising from this sense of being late in relation to the predecessor means that all of the successor's literary imagination is linked to mechanisms of self-preservation and self-definition. And the great predecessor of all modern writers in English, for Bloom, is John Milton. Milton would be a central figure marking all of the writing that followed him because, in Milton, his predecessor returns commanded by him, by the greatness and power of allusion of his writing. Miltonic rhetoric would correct the predecessor against whom Milton battled, something no other writer would have been able to accomplish in relation to Milton himself (32), and the poet towers above his successors as a powerful influence.

Apart from the problematic centralizing of Milton and of his work, a motion that one could argue to be couched precisely on the structures of thought post-colonial theory has worked hard to uncover, another problem with Bloom's reading of *Paradise Lost* in particular is that he sees the entire epic as an allegory precisely of the dilemma Bloom himself describes in his work. And this dilemma, in Bloom's assessment is, of course, played out by Satan, that character who wants to be the creator of himself in

defiance to an omnipotent God. Bloom's reading of influence, particularly as it relates to *Paradise Lost,* thus seems to function rather as self-fulfilling prophecy.

Treating the whole text of *Paradise Lost* as an allegory of the conflict Bloom himself is arguing on a broader scale is further problematic because, in the end, Milton's puritanism is inextricable from his poetic production; thus, any treatment of the story of the fall of man as merely allegorical would be at odds with his entire literary project. It is a reading Bloom falls into because ultimately he gives too much credit to Satan, that is, he aligns the character's self-perception to the perception the poem as a whole works to produce. In other words, in *Paradise Lost*, Satan's image of himself and his rebellion against God is one thing and the poem's take on them is another, something Bloom does not seem to take into account.

Bloom's views on literary influence and its operation, although resting on apparently very particular categories, thus still echo a problematic, although today rather outdated, train in comparative literary studies, one which, as Coutinho has suggested, has served, within a (neo)colonial cultural framework, as ratifier of a discourse of cultural dependence grounded on a historic belatedness. Bloom's work illustrates how this paradigm may still be seen to be pervasive, at least in Milton studies. In their critical positioning, readings such as Bloom's help to confer a kind of founding status on Milton's work, consolidating a notion of its influence as indissociable from the power of Miltonic rhetoric.

For Arthur Nestrovsky, another fundamental problem with Bloom's work is that it posits that a text ceases to have immanent meaning, that is, the very idea of an individual text disappears. And as for Bloom there are no longer texts, it would follow that there are no longer any authors and, most importantly, no longer any readers, except as interpreters of previous interpretations. Thus, for Nestrovsky, Bloom's theory becomes a no-way-out-theory of the impossibility of the act of reading itself (113). Whether we agree with Nestrovsky's assessment of Bloom's assertions or not, the

consequence of critical positionings such as Bloom's is that they still condemn those authors who follow Milton to being always/already his debtors, formed inside his writing. It is true that Bloom confines his discussion to European and North-American writing, but this fact alone demonstrates an unwillingness to look beyond this tradition, which in turn implies a view of its establishment as a kind of literary universe closed in on itself, a notion that writers like Rushdie have attempted to undermine in their literary practice. Bloom's work, contrary to what Rushdie seems to attempt in his fiction, simplifies the processes of constitution of cultural formations, ignoring the flux of peoples and texts opened up by the colonial experience, and persistently sees intertextual relations in a vertical way.

In order to trace the possible articulations/deviations between Milton's epic and Salman Rushdie's fiction, an in-between fiction inhabited by characters in transit, this idea of influence should perhaps be replaced by a more nuanced view of its operation. And here the notion of intertextuality, which could be seen to hover around the critical thinking of figures like Said, may open up a less narrow theoretical point of departure towards the operative term that will concern us here, that is, *destinerrance*.

The idea of intertextuality has perhaps most notoriously been put forward by Jorge Luis Borges and Julia Kristeva. Although it is explored by them in different ways, their remarks may still be placed alongside each other and may open the field of analysis of the relations between *Paradise Lost* and its post-colonial "successors" to more fruitful and less theoretically constricted inquiry. In a brief essay on Kafka and his precursors, Borges reveals a rather more complex approach to comparative reading. In his readings of Kafka, Borges comes to recognize not the influence of previous authors in his work; surprisingly, it is the voice and the habits of Kafka he distinguishes in different texts from different periods. This leads him to say that

> In the critical vocabulary the word *precursor* is indispensable, but it should be purified of any polemic or rivalry. The fact is that every writer

> *creates* his precursors. Their work changes our conception both of the past and of the future[4]. (Borges 90)

Borges thus emphasizes not over-determination but reading and reception in thinking (inter)textual relations. For him, the writer is, first and foremost, a reader of his predecessor's work. But in Borges this reading is not passive, neither does it submerge the writer in a universe of texts inside which he/she necessarily and inevitably dissolves. Borges thus re-defines influence in terms of transversality and dialogism, an intertextual play in which notions of first/second, original/descendant no longer hold up because both are simultaneously transformed at the moment of contact.

Thus, instead of an affirmation of a literary tradition in terms of vertical literary affiliations, for Borges (contrary to Bloom) influence is more a creative act. And the role of the critic is to gather these points of contact in an exterior intertext. Influence, for Borges, becomes a dynamic process in which the uses, revisions and the focus (the afterlife) the successor brings to the precursor's work revitalize it, and ultimately inform also our reading of both.

This emphasis on the creative reception of a text in another is also given by Julia Kristeva. Unlike Borges, however, Kristeva openly proposes the term intertextuality to characterize it, which she defines in the following way:

> Any text is constructed as a mosaic of citations, any text is the absorption and the transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality substitutes intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as, at least, double. (37)

Kristeva seems to understand signification as a field of transpositions, making texts necessarily plurivocal. Her notion of intertextuality thus evades the implication of textual

[4] En el vocabulário crítico, la palabra *precursor* es indispensable, pero habría que tratar de purificarla de toda connotación de polémica o de rivalidad. El hecho es que cada escritor *crea* a sus precursores. Su labor modifica nuestra concepción dela passado, como há de modificar el futuro.

relations with source analysis, an implication critical work like Bloom's indirectly endorses. Focusing not on literary texts *in themselves* but on the processes in which all textuality is implicated, Kristeva can then posit signification as process, as something that is not single and complete, but is instead plural, fragmented and, as Borges would have it, creative in the sense of being less derivative. [5]

Commenting on Kristeva's definition of intertextuality, Sá affirms that, by introducing the notion of transposition, she manages to avoid the reduction of intertextuality to traditional notions of influence or simple context study. He argues that "relationness" is at the center of intertextuality, as Kristeva understands it, and of its many networks of interaction. In this space, what follows is that no text can act as a Greater Signifier and dominate another. In Sá's assessment, Kristeva's work means that

> As a galaxy of signifiers and not a structure of signifieds, intertextuality has no beginning and no end. Reversible and accessible through multiple points of entry, in which none dominates another, the codes intertextuality mobilizes reach as far as the eye can see, they are indeterminable. In short, it [intertextuality] is not the comparison of one text to another through simple juxtaposition or phenomenological adding up, intertextuality for Kristeva is rather a different "positioning."[6] (Sá, *Atos* 120)

5 Despite this "liberation" from source survey, in the aftermath of colonialism a challenge that could be raised to Kristeva's critical maneuver of replacing notions such as (inter)subjectivity for intertextuality is that it ignores the violent processes of constitution of colonial subjectivity, a critical act that, in itself, could be seen to perpetuate this violence. And although the aim here is not to push a post-colonial reading of Rushdie, Milton or influence, this is a difficulty that persists in Kristeva's argument for intertextuality. However, although politically problematic, intertextuality still does (attempt to) unburden cultural products like literary texts and their analysis from a colonialist "mapping", and in this unburdening it becomes relevant as a critical point of departure for the kind of reading attempted here.

[6] Como uma galáxia de significantes e não uma estrutura de significados, a intertextualidade não tem começo nem fim. Reversível e acessível via entradas múltiplas, em que nenhuma sobrepuja a outra, os códigos que a intertextualidade mobiliza vão tão longe quanto os olhos

Kristeva's work with intertextuality, as Sá attests, unburdens it from source analysis and binary textual comparison. In terms of the textual relations explored in this dissertation, Kristeva's work point to how the anxiety rooted in a consciousness of debt described by critics such as Bloom, whose work implies a situating of *Paradise Lost* as the Greater Signifier in relation to writers such as Rushdie, may be turned into a more positive, de-centered, multi-directional dialogism that is constituted as much by difference and deviation as it is by approximation and reference.

Borges and Kristeva move beyond a historicist paradigm in comparative literary analysis, treating the relations between texts as points of contact, departure, crossings and creation. Their theories dissolve the divisions between a center, with its attending national literary tradition, and its marginal descendants. Their work allows us to see that in the same way there is no true, whole, founding text, there is no single, correct, final reading or interpretation. This perspective, in turn, can help dislodge a text like *Paradise Lost* from its position of formidable predecessor, making it only another point in an endless network of appropriations, approximations and distancing/difference.

The perspectives on intertextuality opened by Borges and, especially, by Kristeva, thus shift the focus from the text as self-contained entity to signification as a process constantly in motion, a process in which there is no first and founding text and in which meaning never stands still. Their work thus echoes concerns found also in Jacques Derrida's work with textuality. These concerns are implied in the term coined by Derrida himself, *destinerrance*, a critical positioning that will guide the comparative reading of the epic poem and the novels selected here.

Derridean *destinerrance*, as taken up here, points to the latent impossibility of words, hence also texts, remitting to one single, closed meaning. In Derrida's work, the term expands and problematizes the ideas of addressee and of destination, conflating

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podem alcançar, eles são indetermináveis. Em suma, ela não é a comparação de um texto com outro(s) por meio de mera justaposição nem mera contabilidade fenomenológica -, intertextualidade para Kristeva é bem outra "posicionalidade".

within it the notions of a roaming destiny/destination and roaming as destiny/destination. This move allows Derrida to see a fundamental possibility of error/erring[7], misdirection, misreading and deviation underscoring all textuality, a roaming motion that, for him, is an inextricable aspect of language. It is through this perspective that the appropriations of *Paradise Lost* in Rushdie's novels, enacted in terms both of an activating of Edenic imagery, the fall motif and a satanic rhetoric of transgression, but also of their strategic deviation and of the introduction of marked difference, will be read here. This reading unburdens Rushdie from the role of successor (and indeed Milton himself of the role of predecessor), affords *Paradise Lost* an afterlife but also allows Rushdie to respond responsibly to and engage with the particular issues his fiction is concerned with.

To this end, Chapter One of this dissertation will present *destinerrance*, both as it is defined by Derrida himself and as it may be brought to bear on a comparative reading of such diverse texts as *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's novels. Chapter Two attempts to trace common concerns in Rushdie's fiction and in post-colonial critical thinking. As Rushdie's work has consistently been linked to post-colonialism, and as post-colonial theory has underscored new critical perspectives opened in comparative literary analysis, it will be necessary to situate somewhat these points of contact. Chapter Three presents a reading of the four novels chosen here in their *destinerrant* relations to *Paradise Lost*. Through his *destinerrant* appropriations of the epic, this chapter argues, Rushdie is then able to dialogue with an "English" literary Tradition while at the same time responding to the cultural formations that characterize the (post-colonial) spaces and times his fiction chooses to depict.

[7] The term "error" will appear connected to *destinerrance* throughout this dissertation. The term is here associated to others, such as errancy and erratic, and to a lack of a definitive telos, rather than to the commonplace association to the word "wrong", which would only confirm, by reverse, a teleological positing of the "right/correct" (reading, interpretation, etc.).

## 2. Derrida's *Destinerrance* and the Roaming/Wandering/Erring of Miltonic Influence

> *The word – apostrophizes – speaks of the words addressed to the singular one, a live interpellation (the man of discourse or writing interrupts the continuous development of the sequence, abruptly turns toward someone, that is, something, addresses himself to you), but the word also speaks of the address to be detoured. (Derrida, Postcard 4)*

In a special issue of the *PMLA* (2010) dedicated to a discussion of the (im)possible future(s) open to literary criticism in the twenty-first century, Richard Klein puts forth the rather controversial view that this future will necessarily be derridean, or it simply will not be. And even if criticism should find itself exhausted, unable to posit new critical frameworks in which to operate, in short, even if it ceases to be, Klein goes on to argue, it will still have been derridean since it was Jacques Derrida who first envisioned critically the possibility of a future from which literature – and, a fortiori, its criticism – might be absent (920). Although Klein's overall argument is perhaps an overstatement that runs the risk of over-crediting Derrida, his article, appearing as it does in such an issue of a reference publication like the *PMLA*, still points to how literary criticism, if not in years to come at least as we know it today, simply cannot bypass Derrida's work, even if only to contest it.

Klein's article is thus another recent example or reminder of just how far Derrida's thinking in general and his critical work have impacted literary criticism since the last century. But for Derrida himself, the space of literature seems to be a curious one, at once the site of an instituted fiction but also "a fictive institute which in principle allows one to say everything" (*Acts* 52). Materialized in/through language, undercut by power relations that define so-called high and low brow literature, literary traditions and canons, "literature", for Derrida, poses also a principle of open-endedness he finds very appealing and which perhaps accounts, to some degree, for his prolonged interest in it.

Although his theoretical work continuously engages with the literary, Derrida is quick to clarify that while the phenomenon we call “literature” appeared at a particular moment in European history (a time and place of origin and a constitutive history being two key elements that ground and legitimate all institutionalized forms of discourse), this does not mean that one can identify the literary object in any rigorous way. In other words, it does not mean that there is an essence of “literature” or a measurable degree of literariness to texts. In fact, for Derrida, it means quite the opposite.

> Given the paradoxical structure of this thing called literature, its beginning is its end. It began with a certain relation to its own specificity, its absence of object. The question of its origin was immediately the question of its end. Its history is constructed like the ruin of a monument which basically never existed. It is the history of a ruin, the narrative of a memory which produces the event to be told and which will never have been present. Nothing could be more “historical”, but this history can only be thought by changing things, in particular this thesis or hypothesis of the present. (Derrida, *Acts* 42)

“Literature”, for Derrida, designates at once a process of institutionalization (enacted in academic literary criticism, publishing houses, copyright, book launches, etc.) and a textual universe constituted precisely on the kind of “lack” he foregrounds. The site of an apparent paradox, “literature” can then be seen by Derrida as antithetical to metaphysical notions of historicity and their attending conceptions of presence and subjectivity. “Literature”, in a derridean perspective, would rather reveal to the close reader a perpetual, a-static, multi-directional shifting of instances of meaning that would, to an extent, “betray” the drive towards the very institutionalization that legitimates it precisely as “literature”.

Thus, for Derrida, the existence of something like a literary “reality” in itself is and always will remain problematic. Constituted as the ruin of a monument that was

never really “there”, Derrida argues, the literary text is an “improbable”, hard to verify event, for no internal criterion can guarantee its essential literariness. And if one proceeds to analyze all the elements of a literary work, one will never come across “literature” itself, “only some traits it shares with or borrows, which you can find elsewhere too, in other texts, be it a matter of the language, the meanings or the referents” (*Acts* 73). And even if consensus allows for an agreement as to the “literary” status of this or that textual phenomenon, this consensus remains precarious, unstable and always subject to revision.

Of course this shiftiness of meaning is not an exclusive characteristic of “literature”, one which would separate it from all other forms of discourse (a notion that is dangerously close to positing the kind of essentialism that runs contrary to Derrida’s thinking). Rather, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that, for Derrida, literary forms of writing, which in turn call forth literary acts of reading unencumbered by verification of truths and referentiality, are strategically poised so as to bring this shifting motion, constitutive of all discourse and all textuality, to the fore.

Setting aside Derrida’s broader discussions of textuality, and suspending for now this problematic surrounding the literary object, what all this suggests is that the forms of writing we have conventionally come to recognize as “literature” are, for Derrida, fundamentally plurivocal, constituted in and by shifting intertextual and power negotiations. This particular brand of or perspective on textual “relationness” put forth in derridean thinking, taking the cue from J. Hillis Miller and Luiz Sá, could be read under the portmanteau word *destinerrance*, a critical perspective that will be explored here in the comparative reading of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the novels of Salman Rushdie.

Scattered throughout Derrida’s writing, *destinerrance* is never unequivocally defined but perpetually staged and suggested. In French, the term contains at once the ideas of addressee, destination and of roaming, wandering. *Destinerrance* translates

as "roaming destination, or vague destiny, that which roams, wanders, vagabond, inconstant, uncertain, indistinct, confused, uninhabited, unoccupied, derelict" (Sá, *Atos de Leitura* 122), roaming as destiny/destination and also its error, the possibility of misdirection, of deviation. As such, *destinerrance* could be seen to signal more a motif or a positioning rather than a concept to be applied, another notion that runs contrary to Derrida's line of critical thinking. In this way, *destinerrance* may constitute, if not a future for literary criticism as Klein would have it, at least a viable place from which to look at textual negotiations that cut across problematic economic, cultural and political divides, such as those produced inside or in the aftermath of European colonialisms.

More to the point of this dissertation, derridean *destinerrance,* in its ambivalence to the idea that texts carry in themselves, *a priori*, stable, definitive meaning, which in turn grounds the notion of founding texts and the dynamic of literary indebtedness based on historic belatedness, could help provide a more nuanced look at the shifting textual negotiations between a "text of power" like John Milton's seventeenth-century epic *Paradise Lost* and its post-colonial "successors". Specifically, *destinerrance* may provide a viable critical standpoint from which to assess how the fiction of Salman Rushdie, grounded in a former colonial outpost, in its interpolations of *Paradise Lost* and in its own *destinerrant* wanderings (into the text of this dissertation, for example), deviates, de-contextualizes and re-signifies the epic, curiously providing it with a kind of afterlife.

It is important to highlight here that, although we propose a discussion of *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's novels via derridean *destinerrance,* the term itself does present some critical challenges. *Destinerrance*, as both J. Hillis Miller and Derrida himself stress, should not be confused with a critical method or reading tool that can simply be applied to a body of texts. This feature, although consistent with Derrida's overall critical standpoints, when coupled with the term's lack of a strict definition and its sheer broadness of scope could, however, make its operability problematic. This

issue is indirectly raised by Jonathan Culler in his reading of Klein's article, published in the same issue of *PMLA*. In light of this looseness of definition and of Klein's claims as to the place of derridean thinking in the future of literary criticism Culler asks, "what would it mean to take Derrida as a model for literary criticism of the century or even the next decade?" (909).

According to Culler, literary criticism, which before the 1850s had almost never been interpretive, has increasingly claimed since then the task of telling us what works of literature "really" mean. If the work is what he terms expressive, then criticism elucidates what it expresses, be it "the genius of the author, the spirit of the age, the historical conjuncture, the conflicts of the psyche, the functioning of language itself" (906). For Culler, this expressive model has opened a vast range of possibilities for literary criticism, culminating in the efflorescence of criticism seen in the second half of the twentieth century. In a critical climate in which texts are seen to express everything from the ideology of a historical situation to the fundamental negativity of language or the impossibility of literature itself,

> Literary criticism has given itself immense scope, an array of possible "approaches" that may seem to have little to do with one another or even to be antagonistic, though they derive from the same principle – the principle that makes literary criticism fundamentally interpretive yet hostile to the idea that the work has a message but a variety of configurations that the work may express. (Culler 906)

For Culler, it is inside this expressive model that not only the appropriations of Derrida's work but also his own critical performances must be placed, however ambivalent those performances may be towards it. This take on what Culler terms the models of literary criticism may be open to questioning. However, the challenge he poses to using derridean terminology and critical perspectives, stressing that not only does his work not manage to escape the concerns underlining contemporary critical theory but also

that one would be hard put to find in Derrida's writings a critical method for literary studies that would ensure its own operability beyond those texts and critical analyses signed by Derrida himself (Culler 909), should not be overlooked.

In his response to Klein's article, what Culler finds so problematic to appropriations of Derrida's work by literary criticism is precisely its (intentional) lack of a critical narrowing down of its operational terms, among which *destinerrance* would also figure. And although Klein stresses the variety of derridean critical interventions as sufficient grounding for his arguments, Culler goes on to argue, it may be *only* because it is not easy to say exactly what these essays, signed "Jacques Derrida", actually *are* that Derrida might fulfill Klein's prediction as a general model or repertoire of critical possibilities (909).

A possible response to these challenges facing literary criticism in its appropriations of a derridean critical terminology/perspective is tentatively offered by Culler himself, though not fully embraced by him. For the critic, a redemptive aspect of all of Derrida's prolific critical writing is that it at least attempts to respond to the singularity of the texts he reads, a critical positioning that tries to do justice to the objects Derrida treats. While on the one hand, according to Culler, this critical response accounts for what has come to be perceived as a methodological shortcoming in Derrida's work, on the other hand it does signal at the very least an enhanced critical (self) awareness.

Thus Derrida's critical performances, Culler argues, remain partly consonant with the notions underscoring the field of contemporary literary criticism he identifies, and according to which one of the tasks of criticism is to celebrate the uniqueness of each literary work. What distinguishes Derrida's critical work is that, for him, this singularity is necessarily divided. Stressing this aspect of singularity as opposed to a traditional notion of uniqueness, "Derrida never claims to offer a reading of a text as an organic self-contained whole but rather undertakes to write 'a text which, in the face of

the event of another's text, tries to respond or to countersign'" (Culler 909) it. Although far from embracing a derridean critical perspective unreservedly, Culler nevertheless still attempts to qualify the methodological critiques aimed at it. However, he stresses, as this derridean critical move remains a tall order to follow, Derrida's critical writing and his overall conceptions of textuality and language, although impactful and highly relevant, are not likely to be seen in the future as a model for literary studies in general (Culler 909).

Culler's questioning of derridean thinking, highlighting the methodological difficulties posed by its slippery use of terminology and the problematic position occupied by his critical work, poised between an underlying dominant critical mode and an ambivalent stance towards it, re-launches the major critiques directed at the body of Derrida's work. What could be argued in turn, however, is that this questioning, although it does raise issues that should not be bypassed when one attempts to read it, should itself be qualified. Culler continuously faults Derrida for his lack of a more consistent critical methodology. What this fault-finding seems to ignore is that this is not an oversight or shortcoming on Derrida's part, but rather a stance that is consistent with the entire framework of derridean thinking, a framework that rests precisely on a critique of the forms and categories of thought that make applicable critical methodologies possible (not to mention compulsory). As for the problematic position derridean theory occupies within the general climates of literary criticism, at least in Culler's view, it is a problematic that has never been overlooked by Derrida but fully acknowledged and negotiated. In other words, Derrida never seeks to problematize theory and its attending issues outside the scope of theory itself, but rather seeks to make it, in his writings on particular literary texts, question itself more attentively.

That being said, the challenges posed by terms such as *destinerrance* and their appropriation in critical debates surrounding literary texts persist. If we take J. Hillis Miller's opinion that, rather than a concept *destinerrance* refers more to a motif

spanning all of Derrida's work (893), one could then ask just how valuable is it as a tool for reading literary texts and the complex web of textual negotiations they weave? This, along with the questions posed by critics like Culler, are all issues that must at least be acknowledged and that remain as a backdrop to the reading of *destinerrance* enacted here, even if we do not pretend to hope to answer them fully. Rather, in a more derridean move, what this dissertation attempts is a more "localized" answer. In the case of *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's novels, *destinerrance* can help to open up a critical path that points to another logic of allusion operating in Rushdie's work, that is, allusion to or appropriation of a Christian epic tradition that has largely been overlooked in critical approaches to this work in favor of those terms that are more easily readable: cosmopolitanism, hybridity, mimicry, etc. It is through this logic of deviating allusions opened up by *destinerrance* that Milton's text, surprisingly, can still be seen to come across to us, twenty-first century readers, negotiated via/in Rushdie's particular (mis)readings of it.

In other words, the appropriation of derridean *destinerrance* enacted here to read the work of Milton and Rushdie alongside/against each other does not attempt to answer the broad challenges posed to Derrida's work. It does not seek to posit *destinerrance* as an applicable reading tool in literary studies in general as Klein would have it, neither does it intend to represent a thorough and exhaustive reading of that work (Derrida's) itself. Rather, the aim is merely to activate Derrida's term in a reading, itself also *destinerrant*, of those points of contact between Rushdie's work and Milton's epic to discuss how, in the novels, *destinerrant* deviations of *Paradise Lost* can be constitutive (among others) of the kind of ambivalent, shifting and contemporary brand of fiction Rushdie produces.

But even if it is not the purpose here to make overarching statements about Derrida's work in general or to offer a critical commentary that spans all of that work, once we start to trace the workings of derridean *destinerrance* it is possible to say, with

Derek Atttridge, that its implications can be spotted everywhere. In his assessment of Derrida's work on literature, Attridge argues, against the transcendentalizing and universalizing tendency of literary criticisms in general, Derrida tries to do justice to the literary text as radically situated – written and read and re-read at particular times and places – in short, as possessing a singularity (each time) that can never be reduced by criticism or theoretical contemplation. This means that

> For Derrida the literary text is not, therefore, a verbal icon or a hermetically sealed space; it is not the site of a rich plenitude of meaning but rather a kind of emptying out of meaning that remains potently meaningful; it does not possess a core of uniqueness that survives mutability, but rather a repeatable singularity that depends on an openness to new contexts and therefore on its difference each time it is repeated. Derrida's writings on literary texts are therefore not commentaries in any conventional sense, not criticism, not interpretation. They do not attempt to place, or master, or exhaust, or translate or penetrate the literary work [...] Like all valuable readings of literature, they seek to make the text strange (or perhaps strangely familiar), offering not a reduced and simplified version of the text but one which operates at its own level of difficulty. (Attridge, *Acts* 17)

For Derrida, according to Attridge, there is thus a divided singularity linked to a principle of iterability operating in literary texts which undermines abstractionisms and the truth-seeking of say philosophical texts in their particular engagement with language. A corollary of this repetition in difference that is a feature of the literary text is that it becomes open to accidents. In other words, neither the text itself nor its author can set limits to the ways in which it will be read, nor can the accidents (deviations, roaming, wandering) which "befall" it simply be separated from some essence these accidents would unfortunately betray (Attridge, *Acts* 22). In Attridge's assessment of

Derrida's work, these features of iterability, difference and contextuality, which in turn allow Derrida to see texts as events of language rather than self-contained purveyors of a meaning that is finally arrested in a referent, imply the workings of *destinerrance*.

Each "event of language" or text would, in turn, call forth certain responsible responses in its reader every time it is taken up and read. And each response, like the literary text itself, is situated in a particular context and is itself also iterable, but in an iteration that is always produced in and, at the same time, productive of, a difference, a slippage. These iterations, or in Attridge's terms the accidents that befall the text and that he refers to under the name of *destinerrance,* are thus constitutive of the broad network of signification, permanently in construction, inescapably plurivocal, that Derrida understands as textuality.

Attridge's comments on Derrida's critical interpolations of the literary texts he reads suggest the extent to which Derrida is constantly aware of the workings of *destinerrance* and also how he attempts to play them up in his own strategies of reading (strategies that, as Attridge attests, can only be approached as slippage, in terms of what they are *not*, not commentary, not interpretation, not criticism). Taking up *destinerrance* to read Milton and Rushdie, this dissertation attempts to perform the same critical move. In other words, it does not to propose a final, exhaustive interpretation of *Paradise Lost* and of Rushdie's work, a fleshing out of what these texts mean or try to say; rather the aim is to intercept these texts at the points in which they activate certain discourses and use a specific imagery to understand how a contemporary novelist like Salman Rushdie can be seen to respond responsibly to Milton's epic. This response, however, is only possible if it is constitutive of a difference and if *Paradise Lost* itself is always/already open to this coming of an other; in other words, if the epic, like all texts, is itself always/already roaming, always/already *destinerrant*.

Attridge's reading of Derrida's critical work highlights just how much *destinerrance* is both implied and implicated in it. But it is another Derrida critic, J. Hillis Miller, whose work will be more instrumental to understanding the term's place within derridean critical thinking. Miller takes *destinerrance* as a key term for entering Derrida's work, seeing it as a motif that persistently haunts all of Derrida's thinking. In an article dedicated to elucidating its place inside derridean criticism, Miller starts off asking the question: what is destined to happen to the corpus of Derrida's works? What fate will befall them? For the critic, Derrida himself had already put the reasons he had for worrying about what would happen to his legacy after his death precisely under the aegis of that striking neologism, *destinerrance* (Miller 893). For Miller, the concern is justified for, if *destinerrance* signals the ongoing, inescapable shiftiness of meaning, it seals the "fate" of texts to roaming and erring once their authors are no longer present to (attempt to) authorize their interpretations. It is to this fate that Derrida himself knew he must relinquish his own texts.

But, Miller asks, just what is *destinerrance*? Although the critic also acknowledges that, much like all derridean terminology, it resists definition on strict terms (what is it?), a possible answer he offers is that

> It is a motif, or, better still, spatio-temporal figure, that connects intimately with the other salient spatio-temporal figures in Derrida's work. I call *destinerrance* spatio-temporal because, like most of Derrida's key terms, it is a spatio-temporal figure for time. It names a fatal possibility of erring by not reaching a predefined temporal goal in terms of wandering away from a predefined spatial goal. (893)

Miller thus attempts to describe *destinerrance* not in terms of a pinning down, of a "what is", but of its functioning and its implications. His "definition" of the term as a wandering spatio-temporal figure or motif not only helps to provide a critical framing of the term that makes it operable in a reading of literary texts outside of Derrida's own

writings, but it is also coherent with Derrida's critique of methodologies that operate inside what he calls the logic of presence that dominates most academic fields today.

One of the key words in Miller's discussion of *destinerrance* would be "fatal", the fatal possibility of erring because erring (both as wandering and as possibility of mistaken interpretation) is inevitable, it is built into the very fabric of language and of signs themselves. Fatal because it kills off all expectations of whole, complete meaning being communicated by a subject to another or of a message unequivocally passed on in a text. Looking back to the texts that specifically concern us here, this fatality of (inter)textuality ultimately means that notions such as historicity and historic belatedness go out the window and we may begin to look at the negotiations of *Paradise Lost* and its contemporary "successor" texts outside of a predecessor/successor, center/margin paradigm.

But although he provides a critical framing of *destinerrance* and links the term to Derrida's concerns with the afterlife of his own work, Miller still acknowledges, along with Culler, some difficulty in tracing its workings beyond mere suggestion or implication.

> I have not yet found, in the labyrinth of Derrida's writings […] the place where the word appears for the first time, with full explanation […] Perhaps no such origin for the word exists. Perhaps the word itself is the consequence of a *destinerrance*, a wandering from locus to locus that to some degree takes for granted its meaning as something always already established somewhere else. (Miller 895)

By Miller's own acknowledgement, therefore, Derrida's referrals to *destinerrance*, despite its importance, are at best elusive. Again, this is not an oversight but signals rather a critical commitment on Derrida's part. *Destinerrance*, in Derrida's approaches to it, persistently remains an operative term that, paradoxically, is never unequivocally defined in any strict sense. In other words, Derrida's approaches to *destinerrance*

enact its very premise that meaning is always already established elsewhere, that meaning cannot be grasped or defined in any way apart from a chain of deviations and slippages in which what is perpetually signaled is not an arrest or final resting place but an implacable coming of that which is always already to come but that never really, fully arrives.

*Destinerrance*, therefore, resists presence. Looking back to Rushdie's novels and Milton's epic, reading these texts via Derrida's term does not signal a *presence* of *Paradise Lost* in Rushdie's fiction, a design that would assign to one the status of historic predecessor whose influence would come to rest on a determined, final point of destination awaiting it, any more than it designates an applicable methodological tool. Rather, *destinerrance* would allow us to see in all literary texts, not only *Paradise Lost*, a constitutive multi-directional principle of wandering, one which Rushdie explores in his uses of the motifs of the paradisiacal garden and of the fall in post-colonial/post-modern narratives, creating points of contact that are, at the same time, points of differentiation and dispersal. In this way, *Paradise Lost* is not the referent, origin or point of (ar)rest of Rushdie's take on the fall and edenic imagery, but is itself a space marked by *destinerrant* wanderings of other texts and responses, a space in/to which Rushdie's novels are always/already potentially coming. And Rushdie's fallen narratives themselves will be subject to the same principle, plunging into and fueling once more this ongoing process of (fatal) possibilities of appropriation/deviation. In this way, Rushdie's work and *Paradise Lost* can be read in their textual negotiations without activating historicist notions of original/copy and the consequent notions of predecessor/successor they entail.

*Destinerrance* thus becomes a figure for naming an ultimately fatal possibility of error, of a sign or a text not reaching a pre-defined goal. *Destinerrance*: erring as/of destiny/destination. This perspective on *destinerrance* is perhaps most strongly suggested in Derrida's work through the image of the letter, which, once sent, is

inevitably subject to the possibility of deviation from its final destination, of not arriving. For Derrida, between emission and reception letters may acquire new meanings. It is this condition, always and already in place, of a possible mis-direction, that allows for a text to acquire the excess of meanings via (mis)readings by which it survives its moment of inscription.

Out of all of Derrida's texts, the one that perhaps most explores this fatal possibility of not arriving that characterizes *destinerrance* is, thus, *The Postcard.* The book, or at least the first part of it, the "Envois", rather than a critical or analytical text, "reads [more as] a novel in letters about the way those exposed letters called postcards deconstruct […] sender, message and addressee, all three, divide them from within and scatter them" (Miller 984-85). Derrida constructs the text as letters, all addressed to the same unnamed person, and in which entire passages are irrevocably lost beyond hope of recovery. Although these letters have an addressee, in other words a point of destination, what is suggested by the text is that this person may never actually receive them because we, the readers of *The Postcard*, have instead intercepted the missives. The "letters" or *envois* thus (may) never arrive at their intended destination, they are repeatedly intercepted whenever the book itself is taken up and read by a different reader. And even if, hypothetically, they do arrive, they will still have already been subject to a possible (mis)interpretation, that of the book's reader. Paradoxically, in a self-aware move on Derrida's part, it is only in this dynamic of repeated taking up and possible "un-arrivals" that the text of *The Postcard* can even have an afterlife beyond its actual moment of composition, that it can survive the person who signs it (Derrida himself) and so continue to be relevant and legible.

Derrida's text in itself thus becomes "the proof, the living proof precisely that a letter can always not arrive at its destination, and that therefore it never arrives" (Derrida, *Postcard 33-34).* The "Envois" section then represents not a simple, isolated misfortune, but a self-aware critical performance of a principle or a movement

(*destinerrance*) to which all texts are inescapably subject. But Derrida goes further. In saying that a letter *can always* not arrive, he affirms that

> The mischance (the mis-address) of this chance is that in order *to be able* not to arrive, it must bear within itself a force and a structure, a straying of the destination, such that it *must* also not arrive in any way. Even in arriving (always to some "subject"), the letter takes itself away *from the arrival at arrival*. It arrives elsewhere, always several times. You can no longer take hold of it. It is the structure of the letter (as postcard, in other words, the fatal partition that it must support) which demands this, I have said it elsewhere, delivered to a *facteur* subject to the same law. (*The Postcard* 123-24)

For Derrida, once intercepted (and it only takes a second) a letter no longer stands a chance of reaching a determined person or any determinable place. This being able not to arrive, however, introduces a structural splitting, a condition according to which, for meaning to occur (in the way Derrida understands it to), all texts *must* never fully arrive, they must be subject to chance, to error, to being iterated in different contexts and thus produce different (mis)readings.

This principle of textuality Derrida calls the principle of the post and, in a broad sense, it could be seen as representative of the workings of *destinerrance*. Derrida thus sees built into the very structure of the letter and the principle of the post, in which letters (texts) *may always* not arrive, a fracture, a necessary partition that does away at once with notions of signatory, addressee, point of origin and final place of arrival. What is left is a movement that does not come to rest on anything or anyone, scattered over by satellites, the readers of whom the writer thinks when writing, and also those s/he does not think of but who still dictate what s/he writes at the moment they take up the text and (mis)read it.

Derrida's epistles in *The Postcard,* addressed to an unnamed reader who is *not* the actual reader of the book, illustrate to us, the willing and necessary interceptors of his letters, precisely this *destinerrant* principle of the post. Furthermore, this dynamic brings home the point that, for Derrida, the signers and addressees of a correspondence are not always identical from one *envoi* to another, that signers are not to be unequivocally identified with senders, nor addressees with receivers. Derrida's *envois* demonstrate that a letter is not the external occasion of a communication between two pre-existing and identifiable subjects. Rather, Derrida suggests that letters seem, after the fact, to have been thrown out, at the moment they are written, towards an unknown receiver. The sender, whoever it may be, does not know ahead of time who will be the recipient of his missives. And this recipient, as *The Postcard* illustrates, is not necessarily the person to whom the letters are addressed but is determined at the moment of interception or reception, at the moment the letter is deviated, taken up and (mis)read.

What follows from this theorizing of *destinerrant* letters is the conclusion that, by definition, the reader does not exist. That is, s/he does not exist before the work *as* its straightforward "receiver". For Attridge, Derrida's thoughts on texts and their *destinerrance*

> Concerns the what it is in the work which produces its reader, a reader who doesn't yet exist, whose competence cannot be identified, a reader who would be "formed", "trained", instructed, constructed, even engendered, let's say invented by the work. Invented, which is to say found by chance and produced by research […] The work`s performance produces or institutes, forms or invents, a new competence for the reader or the addressee, who thereby becomes a counter-signatory. It teaches him or her, if s/he is willing, to countersign. What is interesting here is thus the invention of the addressee capable of counter-signing

> and saying "yes" in a committed and lucid way […] this is the space in which *The Postcard* is involved. (Attridge, *Acts* 74-5)

Thus, for Derrida, a reader or receiver fully competent and ready to activate the full meaning conveyed in a text, the *a priori* subject who patiently awaits its arrival, does not in fact exist except inside the metaphysics of presence. Rather, in its wandering and its roaming, the text interpolates the reader at the very moment s/he intercepts it, instituting (only) at this precise moment this figure of the reader *as* reader. It is only in this crossing that a reader and his/her possible responses to the text (what Derrida terms competence) are in fact constituted and negotiated and not before. Derrida can thus say the addressee or the reader is "invented" at/by the moment s/he intercepts, and is in turn intercepted by, a text, a moment found both by chance *and* produced by research (in short, via *destinerrance*). Ultimately, if this is true, it follows that texts must always already be open to interception, to (mis)appropriation and (mis)interpretation, from their inscription always already roaming.

Derrida thus describes the scene of writing as a letter intercepted, a letter whose virtual addressee would have to, in the future, decide if s/he will in fact receive it, in other words, s/he will have to decide whether or not to answer responsibly to it, to see it as addressed to him/her. Authorial signature for Derrida is thus abandoned, or rather it relinquishes itself to, the responsibility of the other. Signature becomes counter-signature, a choice to choose and allow oneself to be chosen by, and thus to produce an answer to, a *destinerrant* text (and which will, itself, be subject to the movement of *destinerrance*). Signature, through *destinerrance*, becomes not a point of origin, the stamp of an authorial intention, but something that takes place at the moment(s) of reading, an arrival that is, however, never complete or final but always already en route somewhere else.

Thus, in the derridean logic of the post, a text is no longer seen as purveyor of full meaning, rather meaning constantly slips and shifts every time a reader

acknowledges a text to be addressed to him/her. Looking back to *Paradise Lost* and its post-colonial "successor", in his appropriations of *destinerrant* Miltonic imagery and rhetoric Rushdie performs this act of recognition, or as Derrida calls it, of counter-signing. In appropriating *Paradise Lost*, Rushdie enacts this accepting of the epic as addressed to him. In this act, Rushdie places himself as a fit reader of *Paradise Lost*, but in a reading productive of responses that, deviating the epic's use of imagery and fallen rhetoric and aligning them to the concerns and issues his fiction addresses, also acknowledges Rushdie's responsibility to the moment and the contexts he writes. In other words, in Rushdie's responsible acts of counter-signing, *Paradise Lost* is re-staged and given an afterlife, but not one that simply pays lip service to it. Concomitantly, in this same logic of the post proposed by Derrida, *Paradise Lost* itself can be seen to be always already open to these appropriations, to this other (Rushdie), who is always already coming but never fully arrives. This is very different from saying that Rushdie's work is formed inside Milton's, subsumed inside a linear, historicist politics of debt.

With his *envois* Derrida disturbs the logic of signatory and addressee, point of origin and determinable destination, working them into his logic of the post. As Derrida himself affirms in the introduction to the book, the texts in *The Postcard*, although signed "Jacques Derrida", instead of attenuating for the lack of these erstwhile certainties, rather play up the falsehoods, falsifications, fictions, pseudonyms, etc., authorized by his theory of a postal logic. *The Postcard* subsumes not only all textuality but all communication to this principle of authorization of falsifications and detours that, for Derrida, characterizes the post, a destabilizing uncertainty that cannot be done away with in an authorial signature. The letter, the text, once subject to the logic of falsification, of error, of a lack of correspondence between destination and the final recipient, in short, in their *destinerrance,* can always not arrive (and so never do)

whole. Open to the principle of not arriving, of being intercepted and (mis)read by different eyes, these letters or these texts become, in the derridean sense, postcards.

For Derrida, postcards (which are first and foremost reproductions, printed out in large numbers) are always preferable to the "uniqueness" of a "true" letter (*Postcard* 11). A postcard, in the way Derrida sees it,

> Is open to all under whose eyes it happens to fall. Anyone who intercepts it and reads it can take it as addressed to him or to her. Anyone can interrupt its passage to its intended destination. Anyone can short-circuit that passage. Anyone can make my postcard have a meaning I in no way intended. My intimate postcard can function perfectly well in all kinds of situations. My intention and the address I put on the postcard fail to limit its functioning. (Miller 900)

And just as the "I" who signs the postcard, in the act of writing, is multiplied, its recipient, no matter how fortuitously s/he may have come across or been intercepted by the postcard, is transformed by the act of reading into somebody else, the person to whom those words seem to be addressed and who, responding to them, becomes their fitting recipient (Miller 900). For Derrida, in this way, the epistle is not merely one among other literary genres but is *all* genres, is represents an inescapable feature of all genres, it is literature itself (*Postcard* 48). In the case of *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's fiction, in the scene inaugurated by the postcard and the motion of *destinerrance*, Rushdie's appropriations of the imagery of Eden in his fallen narratives make his novels the fitting recipients, in the way Derrida conceives this act of reception as response or counter-signature, and not the simple inheritors or end destinations of, Milton's epic. Analogous to what happens to the postcard when it is intercepted by different readers, these acts of approximation and differentiation multiply the possibilities of meaning and the array of intertextual negotiations into which both the

epic and the novels themselves enter, opening up a wider network of associations and other (im)possible interceptions.

Derrida's discussion of the postcard thus dislodges both signer and addressee as determinable points of origin (authority over meaning) and destination. But the postcard possesses, for Derrida, another important feature. In a postcard, one does not know what is in front, what is in the back, the recto from the verso. It is difficult to determine what is most important, the picture or the text, and in the text, the message or the caption or the address. The postcard, for him, thus becomes nothing short of apocalyptic, the site where reversibility unleashes itself.

> My postcard naively overturns everything […] Finally one begins no longer to understand what to come [*venir*], to come before, to come after, to foresee [*prévenir*], to come back [*revenir*] all mean – along with the difference of the generations, and then to inherit, to write one's own will, to dictate, to speak, to take dictation, etc. (*Postcard* 21)

For Derrida, the letter (the text) turned postcard in its *destinerrance* does not simply communicate a message, nor do its contents and its goals precede it; in other words, in a *destinerrant* letter turned postcard, once the categories of addresser and addressee are destabilized, the content itself, conceived of as a message constituted as a response to a previous act of communication, also becomes unstable. The corollary of all this, as Derrida here makes clear, is that once all of these instances are destabilized, notions couched on presence (what came before, what came after), and which have grounded comparative literary analysis in the past, are deflated and the notions of literary inheritance or literary influence take on a different hue.

Derrida's letters turned postcards mean ultimately that "inheritance is only possible there where it becomes im-possible" (*Paper* 81), where it promotes difference and error rather than simply presence and identity. As Derrida himself goes on to argue in *Paper Machine*, in his or her experience of writing a writer cannot *not* be concerned

with, interested in or anxious about the past, be it that of literature, philosophy or of culture in general. In taking account of this past in some way, the writer cannot help but consider her or himself a responsible heir, inscribed in a genealogy no matter what the ruptures, ambivalence or denials on this subject may be. In other words, account cannot not be taken, whether one wish it or not, of the past. However, Derrida is quick to clarify that this particular brand of historical responsibility is not necessarily linked to the themes of history as a linear progression in which the work of a predecessor writer is poured into the work of his successor. Literary inheritance in a textual universe constituted in/by *destinerrance* is rather a genealogical sense of responsibility, not as a historical position in relation to an earlier predecessor but an awareness of the experience of writing as inscribed inside the principle of the possible im-posssible ushered in by his postcards. In the case of *Paradise Lost*, it is only in terms of this (im)possibility of influence and inheritance as roaming and erring that we can posit a Miltonic inheritance in Rushdie's work.

Thus, the negotiations with *Paradise Lost* traced here in Rushdie's work should not be thought of strictly in terms of similarity or approximation. While Rushdie's work takes up Miltonic rhetoric and imagery, they are explored in vastly different contexts and to very different ends. After all, Rushdie is not writing in post-revolutionary seventeenth-century England. The points of contact between Rushdie's novels and *Paradise Lost* rather enact an approximation via difference and dispersal as they engage with and respond responsibly to the fall and to the imagery surrounding a literary rendition of the Christian paradisiacal space.

In Derrida's discussion of letters and postcards, in which determined points of departure and arrival of texts are questioned and in which *destinerrance,* as we have been reading it, is continuously implied, what is perpetually staged is difference. Difference announces itself in the breakdown of those stable sites of referentiality (addresser and addressee), in the shifting motion of *destinerrance* produced whenever

a text is taken up and (mis)read, in the theorization of inheritance as errancy. Implied in Derrida's discussion of letters and postcards, implicated in his own critical performances, *destinerrance* can then be seen to exemplify, along with the letters turned postcards Derrida describes, another instance of the extent to which the workings of difference within discourses of identity (among which, most importantly for us here would be notions of literary influence and inheritance) produced within Western metaphysics are a key concern in his thinking.

If we identify this paradigm uniting Derrida's postcards and terms such as *destinerrance*, it then follows that for Derrida

> There is no longer A metaphysics, (I will try to say this one more time and otherwise) nor even AN *envo*i but *envois* without destination […] In a word (this is what I would like to articulate more rigorously if I write it one day in another form), as soon as there is, there is *différance* (and this does not await language, especially human language, and the language of Being, only the mark and the divisible trait), and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating network, the possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray. (*Postcard* 66)

Derrida's theory of the letter and his discussion of the postcard thus connect to his thinking on textuality and language in a broader sense, from his ambivalence towards a Western metaphysics couched on presence to the notions of *différance,* trace*,* signs and, of course, *destinerrance*. For Derrida, from the first stroke in which a letter divides itself, it must necessarily support partition and differentiation in order even to be legible. Once this is acknowledged, it follows that there are nothing but *destinerrant* postcards, "anonymous morsels without fixed domicile, without legitimate addressee, letters open, but like crypts." For Derrida, this means that "our entire library, our entire encyclopedia,

our words, our pictures, our figure, our secrets, [become] all an immense house of postcards" (*Postcard* 52).

Derrida's closing remarks on his postcards, stressing difference, iteration and relaying, thus bring us full circle back to those notions with which this chapter opened the discussion of the workings of *destinerrance.* If we agree with Miller's broad understanding of the term, *destinerrance* can indeed be seen to signal the pathways undertaken in Derrida's entire critical "project", his critique of metaphysics, his take on textuality. But most importantly, for the more "localized" purposes of this dissertation, *destinerrance* signals a viable alternative to the critical straightjackets that have dominated comparative and, more particularly, influence studies in the past. And even if it still remains a term that is difficult to circumscribe, in the case of fictional works like Rushdie's novels, crossed by the memory of colonialism, and a text like *Paradise Lost*, *destinerrance* may constitute if not the only one at least the most responsible place from which to establish a dialogue.

This chapter has thus far been an attempt at framing *destinerrance* as a viable operative term for reading Rushdie and Milton's work by linking it to his writing on letters and postcards. However, in order to arrive at a better understanding of it the term should also be placed inside a broader theoretical framework and a critical (in the most tentative sense) "program". If *destinerrance,* like much of Derrida's terminology, departs from a concern with difference and splitting inherent to language and thus to textuality, then it is first and foremost tied to his understanding of the principle of iterability, a term that has already been cited in this discussion and that holds a particular place in Derrida's thinking taken together.

The notion of Iterability, implicated in the kind of erring we have been associating to *destinerrance* of literary texts is a feature Derrida associates first and foremost with any sign, trace, or mark, even the pre-linguistic ones. Iterability, however, for Derrida, characteristically does not mean a repetition of the same. Rather,

> The "power" that language is capable of, the power that there is, as language or as writing, is that a singular mark should also be repeatable, iterable, as mark. It then begins to differ from itself sufficiently to become exemplary and this involves a certain generality. This economy of exemplary iterability is of itself formalizing. (Derrida, *Acts* 43)

The principle or feature of iterability ensures that the same sign, set of signs, mark, trace, and ultimately also the same text, can function, can be read and activated, in radically different contexts. This iterability or limitless multifunctionality that allows for a trace, a sign, a text, to be repeated and thus repeatedly recognized, without which meaning, reading and interpretation would not be possible, at the same time also ensures that these iterations are never identical. In a derridean perspective, iterability ushers in the disquieting idea, or the formalizing principle as Derrida calls it, that every iteration is necessarily split, marked by differentiation. As it is impossible to limit, this process of repetition in difference becomes difficult to encompass and to direct, giving itself over to error and wandering.

This seemingly paradoxical principle of iterability, or as Derrida calls it of inadequation (*Paper* 89), can then be seen as the condition for response that sets off the process of signification. For Derrida, this inadequation must remain always already possible

> For a faultless interpretation, a totally adequate self-comprehension, would not only mark the end of a history exhausted by its very transparency. By ruling out the future, they would make everything impossible, both the event and the coming of the other, coming to the other. (*Paper* 89)

This "founding" inadequation thus sets in motion the *destinerrant* constructions of meaning, the derridean postcards thrown out to their uncertain receivers. Indeed, for

Derrida himself, everything he wrote under the title of *destinerrance* was written along this unsustainable line: iterability as that structuring function of language and textuality that allows for communication to occur, but only if it inaugurates a split, a slippage, a difference, erring (*Paper 8*9).

This inadequation, ushering in signification as a process of mis-direction and interception, leads Derrida to see any text as a fabric of traces which, once unfolded, at the same time reveals and opens it to other (inter)texts and readings. In the case of Milton's epic, the descriptions of Eden and the putting forth of a satanic discourse of transgression could be seen as constituting such a hinging point. They reveal in the epic an underlying discomfort of Miltonic rhetoric with the role played by colonial outposts (that exotic, superabundant, frightening "other") in British imagination, which the text translates not only (as would be expected) into its depictions of Hell, but also of that most sacred of places, the garden of Eden. Milton's references, overt or not, to this space occupied by India in British imagination, in turn, become a way of accessing the epic, as Rushdie appropriates and expands these Miltonic renditions into his particular political and literary views. Because these dispositions are not overtly referenced, Milton's "presence" in contemporary writing such as Rushdie's is thus marked by an absence of direct referral, a "presence" that is not a direct struggle, much less an original lending itself to secondary distortion, but a process of expansion of significations in which each point of contact opens up a multitude of others, operating in multiple directions.

The feature of iterability, however, has broader implications for Derrida. And while it is not the goal here to (attempt to) explore derridean thinking in all its depth and scope, these implications are also connected to *destinerrance. Destinerrance*, the movement of textual roaming at once both productive of and constituted by iterated acts of (mis)reading, informed by the constitutive idea of a constant production of difference in iteration, informs also Derrida's ambivalent response to and critique of

Western metaphysics couched on presence, a critique already touched on here but so far not fully explored in all its associations to Derrida's work with language and textuality.

According to Derrida, in metaphysics the issue of language is central. For him, the system of hearing oneself speak through what he calls the phonic substance, seen as a signifier that is neither external nor mundane, therefore neither empirical nor contingent, has dominated world history, has indeed produced the idea of world and of its origin. This perception of the power of the voice establishes a distance between the mundane and its opposite, the external and the internal, the ideal and the non-ideal, the transcendent and the empirical, a separation inside of which Western metaphysics has developed historically (*Grammatology* 7). For Derrida, phonocentrism thus becomes inextricable from a historical determination of being as presence, presence unto itself of consciousness and of subjectivity.

For Derrida it is inside this phonocentrism that logocentric metaphysics grounded on presence is born. This system would repress any thinking on the issue of writing outside the history of a technique and its constitutive mythology. Thus, in Western thought, the spoken word becomes immediately close to the logos, the site *par excellence* of the production, the reception, the uttering and the gathering of stable meaning. Ultimately, for Derrida, this phonocentrism that is at the centre of all forms and categories of Western thought creates an absolute proximity between the voice and the subject and between the voice and an idealness of meaning as something that may be caught, fixed, present unto itself (*Grammatology* 13).

Derrida thus elucidates how a particular take on language and textuality becomes the cornerstone of the models of thought that have long dominated Western culture. Once set in place these modes of thought would evolve around the notion of a structure, conceived of in terms of a center around or to which the other remaining constitutive elements of the structure refer. Center, for Derrida, thus equals a point of

presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center, the organizing principle of the structure, Derrida argues, is not only to orient, balance, and organize it but above all to ensure that what he calls the play of its elements still occurs inside of, or does not disrupt, its general normalizing form. For Derrida, “even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself” (*Writing* 278).

It is inside such centered paradigms that the many diverse fields of Western thought have organized themselves. And, for Derrida, this concept of a centered structure constitutes the framework inside which metaphysics in the West has developed. In this conception, structure “is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude [the center], which itself is beyond the reach of play” (*Writing* 279). In other words, the center both organizes and closes off the substitution of contents, elements or terms that constitute the remaining elements of the structure and provides it with a firm footing, for at the center permutation has always remained interdicted. In this way, the center, the premise upon which an entire structure of thought revolves, becomes by definition unique, constituting that very thing within a structure which, while governing it, escapes structurality. What this means is that if the entire catalogue of knowledge produced inside westernized paradigms is constituted inside structured plays then “the history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix – is the determination of Being as presence in all senses of this word” (*Writing* 279). And in this reign of being defined in terms of presence, the voice and the spoken sign bear an intimate connection or access to subjectivity that is denied the written sign.

Defining Western categories of knowledge and its forms of cultural production in terms of their relationship to language and their views on how meaning is constructed, Derrida’s concern in his own work, via terms like *destinerrance*, iterability, *différance*, trace, supplement and play, is to highlight this systematic and historic solidarity of

concepts and gestures of thought. This denouncement or uncovering informs Derrida's politics of reading and ultimately also his own perceptions of how textuality actually functions, that is, how meaning and the world are created.

For Derrida, meaning in the broadest sense is inscribed in a textuality that seems to be almost all-encompassing. Aligning his view of textuality and his foregrounding of the problematic of language to his critique of Western logos, Derrida treats the sign not as ultimately defined by a signified, the point at which meaning rests still, but as constantly shifting, continuously producing the slippages that, for him, actually constitute the *destinerrant* process of signification. The great advantage in this move would be that this logic, thus amplified and radical, is not born out of a particular logos or subjectivity but inaugurates the de-sedimentation of all meaning that springs from the particular notion of logos that has dominated Western thinking, subjecting meaning and logos itself to the workings of *destinerrance*.

It is important to highlight here, and Derrida does so, that while his critical thinking is ambivalent towards it, there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. As Derrida himself acknowledges, we have no language which is foreign to the history of this metaphysics, that is, we cannot pronounce "a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest" (*Writing* 280). Thus, Derrida's responses to or uncovering of the gestures of thought implied in Western metaphysics, in which terms like *destinerrance* play an important role, will necessarily be done inside it, by taking up and questioning its operative concepts.

Looking back at the operations of thought that ground metaphysics and its relationship to language, therefore, Derrida does not simply propose doing away with its founding notion of structurality. Rather, he proposes a "logic" in which it is necessary

to begin thinking of structures outside of the notion of center. Derrida thus puts forth another way of seeing structurality, in which

> The center could not be thought in the form a present-being, [in which] the center had no natural site, it was not a fixed locus, but a function, a sort of nonlocus, in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. (*Writing* 280)

Instead of seeing language (particularly written language) as an appendix to thought and to subjectivity, Derrida brings everything into the realm of discourse, of textuality in the broad sense in which he understands it. The absence of the transcendental signified he proposes in his theorizing of the center as a *nonlocus* ultimately extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely, subsuming it precisely to the workings of that term this chapter has been exploring, *destinerrance*.[8]

Derrida can then define discourse not outside of metaphysics but in a way that problematizes it, as a field of infinite substitutions. This field, however, is not defined by its inexhaustibility but in terms of what is missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions (the transcendental signified) and ultimately of meaning. For Derrida, this movement of play permitted by the lack or the absence of a center or origin means that totalization is impossible. Rather, the sign(s) that replaces the center, taking the center's place in its absence, occurs as a surplus. The movement of signification is then seen as a process of adding, a process that results in the

[8] It is important to highlight here that Derrida is not affirming that it is possible to think outside of or escape structure, just as he is not proposing doing away with metaphysics. For Derrida, it is important to question both and those gestures of thought that sustain them to arrive at a more self-aware critical standpoint.

realization that there is always more, "but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified" (*Writing* 289).

The derridean notion of play thus defines textuality in terms of an (im)possible structure whose center, point of origin/reference is replaced by iteration, by slippage and by substitution introducing difference. What follows, as this chapter has argued repeatedly, is that for Derrida meaning is never fixed but *destinerrant,* never fully present either unto itself or to that privileged, organizing site of metaphysics, the subject. Derrida finally concludes that

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned towards the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout his entire history, has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play. (*Writing* 292)

For Derrida, it is not a matter of simply choosing between these different takes on interpretation, signification and language that his particular notion of play brings to the fore. What could be said is that through this notion of play as the disruption of presence, in which presence becomes a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain, Derrida at once questions and illuminates metaphysics from one of its cornerstones, its relationship to language.

Derrida's critique of Western thought via its relationship to language finally leads him to a re-conceptualizing of this relationship and to a broader perception of writing beyond mere technique:

> By a hardly perceptible necessity, it seems as though the concept of writing – no longer indicating a particular, derivative, auxiliary form of language in general (whether understood as communication, relation, expression, signification, constitution of meaning or thought, etc.), no longer designating the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, the signifier of the signifier – is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus comprehends language. (*Grammatology* 7)

This does not mean that the word "writing" has ceased to designate the signifier of the signifier; rather, stranger still, it would seem that "signifier of the signifier" no longer defines only a fallen secondarity but the very condition of language itself. The notions of iterability, play and *destinerrance* outlined here all point to how the secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifiers, "affects them always already, the moment they enter the game" (*Grammatology* 7). For Derrida, there is not a single signifier that escapes the play and the shiftiness of *destinerrance*. The advent of writing, strictly understood, would simply mark more forcibly the advent of this play, "effacing the limit starting from which one had thought to regulate the circulation of signs, drawing along with it all the reassuring signifieds, reducing all the strongholds, all the out-of-bounds shelters that watched over the field of language" (*Grammatology* 7).

This critical framework we have been outlining here, tying it to the operative term this chapter has attempted to elucidate and place inside derridean thought, implies further what Derrida calls the operation of the trace. Evando Nascimento, commenting on Derrida's work, highlights the term's ambivalence, of which, according to the Brazilian critic, Derrida is fully aware and takes advantage of (140). Nascimento affirms that the French "trait" produces a slippage, containing in itself the notions of remains, imprint or mark; the verb "tracer" would remit us also to an opening of a path, an indication of a direction, the outlining of a figure, to draw. The derridean trace,

according to Nascimento, would then carry with it the possibility of inscription that, despite the shifting of signs in the chain of signification, may not always disappear but may remain, a mark or reminder of the process of differentiation inherent to all textuality.

> It is enough that something be inscribed for its trace to remain, running, of course, the risk of being erased later on. The reality of things is the trace itself. The thing itself has never existed, for what has always taken the place of an origin is nothing other than the trace[9]. (Nascimento 140)

Nascimento's use of the word "reality" in this context is rather problematic. However, presumably that what he means by it is that there is no referent or signified awaiting somewhere, after all Derrida's notion of the trace, the inscription of the sign, does not derive from an original non-trace of which it would constitute an empirical mark; on the contrary, what Nascimento seems to be saying along with Derrida is that the trace signals precisely a place from which the origins and the originals have disappeared. In other words, whether it remains visible or is erased, the trace remits us to the idea that an origin can never be retro constituted except by, paradoxically, a non-origin, another trace.

The idea of an original (uttering, meaning, text) for Derrida is thus replaced by this working of the trace. What makes the derridean trace more complex is that every sign, in its inscription, carries with it always and already the mark, the trace of the inscription of another, of what it is *not*. The trace, at the moment it helps identify the sign, marks also the site of a separation/differentiation, of its otherness in relation to a previous sign (or text), one that never fully disappears but is still carried on in the chain of signification. For Derrida, applied to literary texts, this principle of the trace helps

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[9] Basta que alguma coisa se inscreva para que o rastro dela "permaneça", correndo, é claro, sempre o risco de um apagamento posterior. A realidade da coisa é o próprio rastro (*trace*). A "coisa em si" nunca existiu, pois o que sempre ocupou o lugar da origem nada mais foi do que rastro.

guarantee a text's surviving of its presumed operator (author). Being destined to this excess over a present, the text as trace thus implies, from the start, a structure of survival. And according to Derrida, every surviving text carries the trace of this ambiguity, that is, of the present that inscribed it but in which there was already at least the possibility of a cut, a split, at once a wound and an opening. Inevitably, the text as trace is always already destined to embark on multiple *destinerrant* paths.

Taking them all together in this overall sweep of derridean terminology, iterability, trace, play and *destinerrance*, although elusive, are all linked in Derrida's critical performances and help to elucidate, *destinerrant*-like, each other. Underlining all of these terms, lastly *différance* is also linked to the operation of the trace, and thus to the process of signification in general and to the idea of *destinerrance* we have been trying to understand here. Like the latter term, derridean *différance* should not be treated as a concept. *Différance,* much like *destinerrance*, implies rather a movement that cannot be thought of outside the retention of difference in a structure of remittance. This movement of retention and remittance of difference, implied in the ambiguities inaugurated by the operation of the trace and in *destinerrant* textual roaming, remains covert, but it is nevertheless a movement always/already in place, and so no structure can possibly escape it.

For Derrida, without this movement of retention of the other as other inside a sign (as trace), no difference would ever appear; and without differentiation signification would never be possible. But, most importantly, this movement Derrida designates under the heading of *différance* defines meaning as perpetually delayed, always in construction through approximation and distancing, never fully apprehensible, and thus never present unto itself. What Derrida announces under *différance* unites in itself both the same and the other, but does so outside the logic of dialectic resolution. Signaling at once this double motion of difference and deferral, *différance* is thus also at work in

*destinerrance*, or better yet, *destinerrance,* as we have been reading it, is both triggered and fueled by this principle Derrida names *différance*.

Taken together such operative terms as *destinerrance,* trace and *différance* outlined here can be brought to bear on comparative literary studies. In the case of Milton and Rushdie, such terms may even provide studies of literary influence with an afterlife by allowing for a view of influence in terms of a de-centered play of surplus substitutions that do not add up to a final, unequivocal rendition of Eden or of the experience of the fall. Rather, this full experience is constantly delayed and relayed in the network of literary engagements with a Christian paradisiacal space and its loss. And as Rushdie's work negotiates with the *destinerrant* text of *Paradise Lost* in the name of an inheritance that is fatally contradictory in its injunctions, we as readers stand in the place of Milton's Adam and Rushdie's characters, looking outwards where to find a final place of rest/arrest, cast out of a founding proximity to God, to Truth, to presence and to stable meaning/influence.

For Derrida, the perpetual staging of the other signaled by *différance* and by the trace becomes the fundamental motion of signification, producing points of contact which are also points of dispersal. Signification thus operates as a kind of adding that does not add up, but produces constantly its excess. It is in these excesses, produced inside a process of deferral, that intertextual negotiations are staged and meaning construed. This ambivalent process signals the logic of supplementation described by Derrida. Returning to his questioning of the premises of metaphysics, the derridean supplement interrogates simple oppositions between positive and negative, internal and external, the same and the other, essence and appearance, presence and absence. It escapes marked dualisms because its specificity resides precisely in the slippages indicative of the absence of an essence. For Silviano Santiago, this notion of supplement is only possible inside the theoretical framework built by Derrida, a framework that "installs the possibility of configuration of the sign as supplement in a

play of supplementary substitutions" (Santiago, *Derrida* 88), a critical space in which the lack of center and origin are substituted by a floating sign, which is placed in a determined structure to supply this lack and occupy its place, but only (and necessarily) temporarily.

Following this logic of supplementarity, every text may be conceived of as a floating sign, supplementing another. Derrida's supplement thus translates as a haunting that adds without replacing and through whose ethereal folds something else is still partly visible. Bringing the term to bear on comparative literary studies, the supplement signals not a direct reference to or a reverence for some precursor text nor its substitution or "enlightenment" by a successor text, but rather a site of intertextuality that inaugurates expanding possibilities of re-signification.

Tying all of the terms outlined above in Derrida's thinking to the discussion of *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's novels, if we see, along with Derrida, these texts, in their roaming, wanderings and deviations, as perpetually (re)constituted by *différance*, functioning inside a logic of supplementarity, Rushdie's *destinerrant* appropriations are always/already coming in the epic's *destinerrance*, in a movement that is neither unidirectional or historical, nor final or explanatory. *Paradise Lost* then can be seen to stand as a fluctuating sign that is always and already open to appropriation, an appropriation, however, that, as soon as it takes place, signals already a departure, dispersal and difference. The epic is afforded an afterlife, but one that may exist only if inscribed in a different context, productive of other associations, which, in turn, will themselves be open to others. In this way, the afterlife afforded *Paradise Lost* may be creative, but also plural and fragmented, and its influence is never linear, paradigmatic or overreaching.

This chapter has attempted to show that derridean *destinerrance* may provide a viable critical route to a comparative reading of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the novels of Salman Rushdie. To better understand it, *destinerrance* is placed inside

Derrida's critical thinking as a whole and tied to other important derridean terms. Bringing the discussion full circle back to one of the questions with which the chapter opened, a question voiced by J. Hillis Miller, just what will happen to Derrida's writings in the future is impossible to foresee; all we know is that that future will, for sure, be discontinuous with the past due precisely to the *destinerrant* interceptions occasioned by readings of Derrida's work, among which is this dissertation. According to Miller, these interruptions (both ours and his) will repeat with a difference the original performative force of what Derrida wrote, and the responses Derrida himself produced to the demands made on him by the texts he read are now echoed in the readings of his work by others. We must therefore acknowledge, along with Miller, that in reading Derrida's texts

> They have chosen me, by a happy *destinerrance*, and I choose to be chosen. I can be sure only that Derrida's corpus is probably destined to err and to wander, like a specter, revenant, or ghost come back from the dead. That is the price of its survival, its living on, after Derrida's passing. (Miller 909)

Derrida, in his own critical performances, does not simply name *destinerrance*, neither does he simply exemplify its workings in his style of critical writing. He is himself its willing victim. In the same way, the particular reading of Milton's epic and Rushdie's novels attempted here is another self-acknowledged *destinerrant* act, a critical act that is ultimately subject to the very operation it attempts to describe as others take it up and read it.

*Destinerrance*, as proposed here, allows access to a text of "power" like *Paradise Lost* outside of a politics of debt. In *destinerrance,* the epic's possibilities of signification are multiplied in different directions, emptying it of the statute of authoritative text, one whose meaning is self-contained. Looking at the negotiations

between Milton's epic and its post-colonial "successors" via *destinerrance*, the idea of its influence becomes explosive and expansive rather than linear and restrictive.

It is important to highlight that the discussion of Derrida's work embarked on here does not intend to be exhaustive, an attempt that would, in any case, given the prolific and complex nature of Derrida's critical thinking, be doomed to failure. What is proposed is merely to delineate, very tentatively, a few "key" terms in his theoretical framework and link them to the idea of *destinerrance* and its operability in discussions of comparative literary studies. Finally, it is also important to mention that the work of a contemporary writer like Rushdie, identified (often pejoratively) as a kind of "cosmopolitan" literature, is not valued *only* when it may be discussed in relation to Milton. Also, the reading of his texts proposed here should not be understood as a desire for assimilation into a European or North-American canon, a critique directed at Rushdie by critics such as Elleke Boehmer. The danger, for Boehmer, is that writing such as Rushdie's may give the impression that *all* post-colonial literature should be cosmopolitan and bilingual. And this would affect the way other post-colonial writing is read. Rather, the aim here is to verify whether a textual negotiation can be seen to be established with *Paradise Lost* in the way Rushdie deals with the myth of the fall, with a satanic discourse of rebellion and in the depictions of edenic and infernal spaces found in the novels. Inscribed in the novels, these images and discourses may be deviated to write territories and characters constituted in the crossings of domains of difference, territories in which colonial past and contemporary cultural formations and power structures are continually and problematically negotiated. This means, ultimately, that the anxiety rooted in a consciousness of debt, which in turn implies a situating of *Paradise Lost* as the Greater Signifier in relation to a writer such as Rushdie, is turned into a more positive, de-centered, multi-directional dialogism.

Before we discuss the *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost* in Rushdie's novels, however, it will be necessary to situate his work within that broader field of post-

colonialism and its relations to post-colonial critical theory. Rushdie's fiction dialogues with this train of critical thinking and many of the terms and concerns featured in it will be instrumental in not only reading the novels but in understanding how and to what end(s) they deviate the Miltonic imagery and discourses they reference. The following chapter thus focuses on the branch of post-colonial theory that most resonates with Rushdie as a writer, trying to understand his place within/beside it.

# 3. Hybridity, Mimicry, Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism: Rushdie and "Post-Colonial" Critical Theory

> *The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (Bhabha, Location 7)*

In the aftermath of European imperialisms, it is possible to say with Edward Said that they have linked, irreversibly, the different parts of the globe, constituting an experience common to almost all populations and territories. The challenge today would be to deal with this experience without reproducing the discourses of cultural dependence it generated. It is partly to this challenge that what has come to be called "post-colonial" theory, and also a multitude of writings categorized as "post-colonial" literatures, have risen, fueling academic debates in diverse fields of study and flooding the international literary marketplace.

Although fairly well established in the jargons of academic literary studies (our particular field of interest here), post-colonial theory and post-colonial literatures engage with the legacies of European imperialisms, colonization and decolonization in such varying ways, using very different means with a view to a multitude of ends, that these remain problematic notions, both difficult to frame and to define on any strict terms. This is, therefore, a move that will not be attempted here. However, as this dissertation proposes a comparative reading of texts from across the former colonial divide, and as Rushdie himself has been acknowledged as an important voice inside the universe of so-called post-colonial literatures, it will be necessary to (try to) comprehend somewhat the "post-colonial" and certain attending issues or terms

associated to it (terms such as colonialism, hybridity, mimicry) as they pertain to his literary output.

Again, what is proposed in this chapter is not an attempt at framing or an in-depth discussion of all post-colonial theory. The idea here is merely to point to certain underlying concerns in some post-colonial critical thinking that resonate with Rushdie's work in order to better understand Rushdie's place in or relations to it. Indeed it would be difficult to carry out any reading of his novels, no matter what the focus or concern, without at least acknowledging this kind of critical affinity or overlap.

Although post-colonialism (a general term we will take here to refer to that universe of both critical/theoretical and literary works engaging, in varying ways, with the configurations of empire and the experience of (de)colonization) includes complex economic, political and social factors, the discussion here will focus more on its cultural and literary aspects. It is not that these aspects can be compartmentalized and strictly separated; rather, acknowledging that post-colonialism is such a broad field of debate that any attempt at encompassing all its aspects would anyhow be doomed to failure, this chapter focuses on those aspects that most come to bear on a study of the literary texts chosen here.

Post-colonial theory and literature then engage with the dynamics established inside a colonialist world order and with its legacies following decolonization. When it comes to the process of forming a new community in a new land, in other words colonization, we could say with Vijay Mishra that it entails, to a lesser or greater extent, the un-forming or re-forming of the communities already populating a determined territory (8). In the case of the European empires, which spread Western cultural, political, social and economic formations across the globe, colonization involved a wide range of practices from trade and negotiation to plunder and even enslavement. Post-colonial critical thinking tries to make sense of these practices, along with the body of writing surrounding them (from public and private records, government papers and

trade documents to works of fiction), a task further complicated by the awareness that they did not occur in the same way, to the same extent and with the same consequences across the heterogeneous European colonies. It is this aspect of imperialism and of colonialism, that is, a body of practices that is both constitutive of and staged in (literary) texts, that we will try to take stock of here in the work of "post-colonial" critics like Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, in order to better understand its workings in Rushdie's novels.

The term colonialism, as it appears repeatedly in this chapter and indeed in a wide range of post-colonial critical theory, thus refers particularly to the establishment of European interests across the globe. It could be argued that what distinguishes these colonialisms at their peak (arguably during the nineteenth century) from earlier processes of establishment of communities in foreign territories is that while the latter were pre-capitalist, modern colonialism was established alongside capitalism in Western Europe.

> Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries. (Mishra 9)

This flow of human and natural resources accounts for the kind of interdependence Said refers to in the imagining of individual, collective and later national identities on both sides of the colonial divide. It is on this constitutive interdependence that some post-colonial critical theory will focus (Said himself, but also particularly Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha through his notions of hybridity and mimicry) and which fiction such as Rushdie's consistently plays up via migrant characters (as in *The Satanic Verses),* or via the crumbling of a Eurocentric historical narrative mode in *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Rushdie's novels thus attest

to the argument made by some “post-colonial” theorists: that the cultural, social and political interconnectedness established under the aegis of the exploitative capitalist (even if nascent) economic formations that structured and drove European colonialisms is not only an indelible mark of the shared experience of colonization, it is relevant also for understanding the world order ushered in after its official demise.

Looking at such legacies in the wake of decolonization Gayatri Spivak argues that these forms of interconnectedness, and more particularly the vocabulary used to describe them today, have shifted somewhat. Following colonialism, Spivak argues, we no longer describe the world in terms of colonial outpost and metropolitan center but in terms of the global North and South, developed and developing countries. Although the vocabulary may have shifted, the formal end of colonialism opens, for Spivak, the era of globalization as the financialization of the world (*Critique* 3), the apex of a colonialist legacy of inequality and exploitation.

For Spivak, the cultural interdependence ushered in by colonialisms becomes, after their official dissolution, a pervasive world order, only now it is translated under the rubric of globalization and its vocabulary. Looking back to Rushdie’s fiction, although he has been both acclaimed and critiqued as a staunch defender of a global interconnectedness and of cultural “impurity”, the novels discussed here also share an awareness of the underlying unequal divisions of cultural and economic wealth this impurity has produced. The rapacious businessman Abraham Zogoiby turns into in *The Moor’s Last Sigh,* the enticing consumerist decadence paraded triumphantly on the streets of New York in *Fury, are* Rushdie’s way of portraying the brand of globalism emanating from the West in all its corrosive potential.

Rushdie’s novels, much like the work of “post-colonial” theorists like Said, Bhabha and Spivak, thus focus not only on colonialism itself but on what decolonization has meant for newly independent nations. What the novels seem to imply in their shifting, ambivalent narratives, and what critics like Spivak, Bhabha and Said would

endorse, is that colonialism, although broadly defined in terms of territorial dispute, is difficult to pin down and generalize because spread over heterogeneous social, cultural and historical factors. This signals that colonialism and its legacies are best understood in terms of their links to localized historical processes (Mishra 10), rather than categorized and set down in all-encompassing critical definitions that obscure the very relations of domination post-colonial theory (and literature) in general tries to uncover.

Thus the term “post-colonial” frequently used to characterize much contemporary critical debate (as well as a whole range of literary texts) surrounding varying or plural histories of colonization, although useful, should not, as Spivak reminds us, be so generalized as to uproot it from specific sites or experiences. Post-colonialism, in other words, should not be generalizing or prescriptive. And this is a view Rushdie’s fiction subscribes to. Although his novels consistently attempt to portray how colonialism is/was experienced on both sides of the divide it created, as well as the kind of impure cultural legacy resulting from it, this portrayal is always negotiated, ambivalent and shifting, never attempting to provide the last word.

Rushdie’s fiction thus highlights what critics like Homi Bhabha imply, that empire and colonialism are riddled with contradictions and contingencies, a condition afflicting both colonizer and colonized. For Rushdie, it seems these contradictions are not merely a byproduct of colonialism; rather colonialism, in its exploitative drive, seems to be poised on or constituted by them. This paradox is highlighted, for example, in the figure of Saladin Chamcha, who reveals on the one hand how, for a colonial, being Anglicized actually excludes one from “Englishness”, but on the other hand just how far “Englishness” itself is a performance act that relies precisely on what it excludes for its validation, even in the beating heart of the former metropolis. It is through this uncovering of contradictions rather than a critical act of pin-pointing, Rushdie suggests, that the experience of colonialism, felt as both territorial and also

cultural, political and economic dispute, and its inheritance are better understood, negotiated and even, to an extent, contested.

Rushdie's writing thus suggests, in line with the more nuanced critical approaches favored by Bhabha and Spivak, and also Said himself, that colonialism, although broadly defined along territorial borders, encompasses such a varied set of practices that it is itself a fragmentary experience that is impossible to totalize. Taking this perspective on colonialism, much post-colonial critical theory and literature then constitute themselves as sites if not of contestation, at least of negotiation of this shifting experience of colonial domination. For, as Said has argued, the imperial encounter has always produced some active form of resistance (*Culture* 12). Post-colonialism, in both its literary and its critical/theoretical manifestations, to a degree, could then be seen a site of oppositionality to the varying subordinating practices and discourses of dependence that sustained the imperial and colonial projects.

However, although it would be possible to see an oppositional stance underlying post-colonial critical theory and literature, it is important to stress that this is not an opposition constituted along the lines of a simple binarism. Post-colonial theory (or at least the branch of it that will be the focus of this chapter) and "post-colonial" literature such as Rushdie's employ strategies far more complex than an attempt at replacing colonialism with something else. The kind of oppositionality they embody relies more on an undermining and a re-working of the subjecting discourses of colonialism, rather than on a mere rejection of its tenements or a positing of some kind of nativist resistance. This is a caution tempered by the acknowledgment that colonialism, although arguably a marking experience, does not inscribe itself on a clean slate, it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in post-colonial societies. The question then becomes what came before colonial rule? What other cultural practices, what other bodies of texts (written or oral) interact with imperial cultures and,

in turn, helped also to shape them, precisely via the lines imagined by the colonizer as marking out their constitutive differences?

Faced with such a complex scenario, instead of posing definitions that will most likely prove problematic and limited, perhaps a better way of approaching post-colonial critical theory and literature might be to look at the contexts in which they arise, what they wish to challenge or put forth and what economic, social, historical and particularly cultural formations they respond to. For Vijay Mishra, these overlapping contexts would be, first, the history of decolonization itself; the second, the revolution within Western intellectual traditions in thinking about issues such as language and how it articulates experience, how ideologies work, how human subjectivities are formed, and what we might mean by culture (22-23). It is in this overlapping of domains that the work of critics like Said, Bhabha and Spivak, a body of thinking that resonates particularly with Rushdie's fictional work and its informing concerns, could be situated. So, to better understand Rushdie's "post-colonial" narratives, it will be necessary to understand just how these critics view post-colonialism and to trace their use of those terms that consistently come up in post-colonial criticism, terms particularly applied to Rushdie's work in the wide range of its scholarly assessment.

For Homi Bhabha, post-colonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation within the contemporary world order (*Location* 171). This criticism would emerge from the testimony of so-called Third World countries and the discourses of the "minorities" within the global divisions of East and West, North and South. For Bhabha, what underscores post-colonial critical theory and post-colonial literatures then is that "they intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples" (*Location* 171). Ultimately, post-colonialism would challenge and revise not colonialism and imperialism *in themselves,* a move that would lead to their conceptualizing in

monolithic terms, but rather those pedagogies that set up the relation of metropolitan center/colonial margin, First World and Third World in a binary structure of opposition and ultimately of exclusion. For Bhabha, post-colonialism resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation, forcing the recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries and overlaps that exist on the cusp of these opposed spheres (*Location* 173).

In questioning the categorizations and strict separations devised inside colonialist practices, what Bhabha calls the post-colonial perspective forces us to rethink all the limitations attending a consensual and collusive "liberal" sense of cultural community. For the critic, in the wake of post-colonialism, not only is the issue of assimilating minorities to Eurocentric holistic and organic notions of cultural value seriously questioned, but the very language of cultural community needs to be rethought (*Location* 175). Driven by a subaltern history, rather than by the need to point out the failures of logocentrism, Bhabha attempts, via terms like hybridity and mimicry, to represent a defeat of the "West" in its authorizations of the idea of colonization, colonized societies and of colonial culture. Bhabha's work thus breaks down the notions of culture and community that grounded imperialist and colonialist self-perceptions. It is this kind of questioning of the constructions of colonial margins that can be read in *The Satanic Verses* and its renditions of the former metropolitan center being slowly but surely cleansed of its strict sense of "Englishness" by the arrival of such large numbers of "marginal" immigrants.

Although Bhabha's concern with the discourses that ground colonialism and its practices is shared by such a "post-colonial" writer like Rushdie, the critique that could and has been made to his work is that colonialism and the world order it helps to shape, although relying on cultural (re)formations for consolidation, are ultimately also consolidated by violence. This is an aspect of colonialism Bhabha does not address at length but which Rushdie's work, in the violence that breaks out on the streets of

London, the assassinations in New York and the *coup* on Lilliput Blefescu in *Fury* to the bombings in *The Moor's Last Sigh,* consistently also denounces.

Despite what has been perceived as an underlying theoretical shortcoming, what is important in Bhabha's work for a "post-colonial" novelist like Rushdie is that Bhabha's critical act of erasing the binary oppositions set up inside a colonialist cultural order leads him to a reflection on and an empowerment of subjectivity outside of the Western metaphysics of the logos that grounded the colonialist self-understanding and its attending constructions of its "margins". Instead of a subject expressive of a singular self-image that rests on comforting notions of belongingness, Bhabha ushers in the in-between or liminal as defining the times and spaces in which the subjects of cultural (and colonial) difference may be represented (*Location* 179). For Bhabha (and we could say for Rushdie also) it is in these in-between spaces that post-colonial critical theory and literature, in order to be effective, should operate.

If we look at the novels discussed here, Rushdie's depiction of ambivalent, in-between characters in transit in liminal spaces subscribes to Bhabha's politics of erasure, constituting a poetics of in-betweenness. Taking this stance, Rushdie's narratives can then place the experience of colonialism not as a mere backdrop or context "against which human dramas are enacted, but [as] a central aspect of what these texts have to say about identity, relationships and culture" (Mishra 65) in the contemporary world. Rushdie, along with Bhabha, is able to take up not an oppositional stance to empire and colonialism, but a much more effective critical crumbling of its structuring certainties. In taking up this stance, his work signals what Bhabha has further argued, that literary texts are not only a space for describing colonialism; deeply invested in/by its workings, they are privileged sites for its discussion, comprehension and negotiation, instead of mere descriptions of its effects.

The branch of post-colonial critical theory represented by Bhabha, which foregrounds cultural formations in its understanding and its critique of empire and

colonialism, although influenced by contemporary critical trends like post-structuralism, is also heavily informed by Edward Said's arguably seminal work on orientalism. For Said,

> Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts [...] it is above all, a discourse that [...] is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with power political (as with colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual, power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values, power moral). (*Orientalism* 12)

Orientalism, in Said's work, becomes a generic term to describe Western approaches to the Orient in the centuries spanning their contact. It would constitute the larger part of Western political-intellectual culture, grounding Western definitions of us/them that would later be translated under empire into terms such as metropolitan center/colonial margin. Orientalism systematically places the Orient as a topic of learning and discovery through a collection of dreams, images and a specific vocabulary. For Said, this allowed Europe to advance securely upon the Orient, preparing the way "for what armies and bureaucracies would later do on the ground" (*Orientalism* 73).

Orientalism, rather than an overt policy for justifying the claiming of foreign territory, is rather a process of re-fashioning of those territories under terms recognizable and admissible to the European eye and mind. As such, it simultaneously helps to define and divide the colonialist self from the colonized "other", a binarism that lays the groundwork for the justification and vindication of imperial dominion. To see orientalism, as proposed by Said, as a mere rationalization of colonial rule would then

be to ignore that colonial rule is, in fact and *in advance*, prepared, justified and "naturalized" by its scattered, collective images and dreams, its excluding descriptions and vocabulary and its monolithic constructions of identity. It is precisely on the critical uncovering of these binary divisions ushered in by Said's work on orientalism, as well as the awareness his work raises of the engagement of cultural formations with colonial expansion, that critics like Bhabha and writers like Rushdie will choose to focus.

Said's discussion of orientalism then foregrounds just how entangled cultural products like literature are in the colonial structuring of power. For the critic, the European imagination was so extensively nourished by orientalist descriptions that

> Between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century such major authors as Ariosto, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes […] drew on the Orient's riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines, imagery, ideas and figures populating it. In addition, a great deal of what was considered learned orientalist scholarship in Europe pressed ideological myths into service, even as knowledge seemed genuinely to be advancing (Said, *Orientalism* 63).

Orientalism then creates a cultural archive on the Orient, a body of thinking and a set of descriptive tropes that are confirmed at the moment they are drawn upon by writers, scholars, politicians and later colonial bureaucrats. By the nineteenth century, this body of knowledge was firmly instituted inside colonial expansionist practices, and each helps to legitimate and authorize the other.

*Orientalism,* focusing primarily on Western strategies for encompassing the Orient, ultimately really has more to say about "metropolitan" culture and discourses than about the "margins" these discourses construe. This is acknowledged in the book by Said himself. Following up on the arguments made in *Orientalism*, Said goes on to explore at length in *Culture and Imperialism* just how far narrative is crucial to colonial domination. For if the main point in colonialism is over land, "when it came to who

owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative" (Said, *Culture* 13). Narrative, for Said, would then be the site where intellectual and aesthetic investments in overseas dominion were made, investments which always represented a Western consciousness as the principal authority, the "active point of energy that made sense not just of colonizing activities but of exotic geographies and peoples" (*Culture* 24).

Said's work on the textual representations of the colonial encounter in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* thus foregrounds the heavy investment of literature in the consolidation of colonialism's founding (and excluding) notions of identity, subjectivity, community and culture, notions that Bhabha's critical work and Rushdie's in-between fiction later attempt to undermine. Said's work further lays bare that, even while they sought to know, frame, contain and re-fashion the Orient, European imperialisms were also constituting, via this body of knowledge on the oriental "other", the national self-representations that, concomitantly, also helped to sustain them.

Looking back to Rushdie's novels, in their *destinerrant* interceptions of a canonical text like *Paradise Lost* to problematize the establishment of excluding instances like the colonial center/margin divide, we can see Rushdie harking back to this process of archiving/describing/containing the orient in narrative. What Rushdie's brand of in-between "post-colonial" fiction enacts is then an attempt at a re-claiming of the *loci* of knowledge and narrative described by Said, opening up the categorizations of identity, both individual, local and national, produced under colonialism and perpetuated by processes of decolonization, to the kind of liminal, un-prescriptive, critical revisions put forth by theorists like Bhabha.

The idea behind these colonialist representations of marginal outposts that Rushdie's novels counter, according to Said, is that, in them it is "we" westerners who

created the native because “we” taught him/her how to speak and how to think (Said, *Culture* 20). In the Western cultural archive, the imperial power is always the reference and the colonial exists only as he/she is seen and described in it. Said’s focus on narrative as a site of a power struggle, in line with Rushdie and, to an extent, also Bhabha, then seeks to question this ready assumption by opening up the overlapping experience of westerners and orientals. Their work stresses

> The interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories […]. For the first time, the history of imperialism and its culture can now be studied as neither monolithic nor reductively compartmentalized, separate, distinct. (Said *Culture* 22-23)

What this means is that the binary oppositions that sustained the imperial projects and their national self-representations are no longer viable. In their place, new alignments must be made across borders, types, nations and essences. These alignments in turn may help shake and disturb the fundamentally static notion of identity at the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism (Said, *Culture* 28). And it is to these kinds of alignments, rather than a simple contestation, that Rushdie’s fiction is committed in its attempt at reclaiming the *loci* of (colonized) knowledge on identity, geographies and histories Said describes.

Thus, it is in the struggle over narrative, the struggle over who has the power to represent whom and how, that much “post-colonial” literature is engaged. Rushdie’s work, in particular, in its consistent weaving together of formerly colonized and Western identities as neither separate, monolithic or uncomplicated, foregrounds this struggle. The underlying premise in his novels is not that India and its population, for example, cannot be or are not worth representing outside of their (neo)colonial encounters with the West, but rather that a particular idea and writing of India itself, and also of a

metropolitan nation (which, in novels like *The Ground* and *Fury*, shifts from Britain to the USA as the new global superpower), are both constituted in/by this encounter. For Rushdie, as for Said and also Bhabha, rethinking empire and colonialism and challenging their lingering cultural forms today have become a rethinking of their structuring assumptions, assumptions like the binarism underscoring the constructions of identity and nationality produced inside a colonialist cultural framework.

Rushdie's work, foregrounding the type of cross-cultural/cross-border alignments Said defends, attempts to rise to the challenge Said sees as facing all post-colonial critical theory and literary practice: "are there ways we can re-conceive the imperial experience in other than compartmentalized terms, so as to transform our understanding of both the past and the present and our attitude towards the future?" (Said, *Culture* 18). Rushdie, as both public figure and writer, embodies Said's assertion that

> Many of the most interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the empire. (Said, *Culture* 35)

In their *destinerrant* interceptions of *Paradise Lost* Rushdie's novels perform an act of re-signifying of the epic that calls into scene this practice described by Said of taking up and re-inscribing a history drawn up along the lines of a colonial sense of cultural indebtedness and historic belatedness. These novels are then able to respond responsibly not only to Milton's text but, more broadly, to the kind of colonial historiographies, assumptions and practices Said describes. Rushdie thus does not propose a simple break with the shared memory of a colonial past, in fact he seems to acknowledge this to be impossible; rather his work posits, among other things, new

ways of re-reading this past and of coming to terms with it. Rushdie then joins the ranks of those writers who “can truly read the great colonial masterpieces, which not only misrepresented them but assumed they were unable to read and respond directly to what had been written about them” (Said, *Culture* 35).

Said’s work, stressing points that are consistently touched on by writers like Rushdie, has likewise impacted post-colonial critical theory and writing in Latin America. Walter Mignolo, following Said, also treats post-colonialism as signaling not a simple break with the past, but as a set of cultural, political, social and literary practices that necessarily dialogues with colonialist discourse, a set of practices that both grows out of and goes beyond it. For both critics, the term “post-colonial” then does not mean that colonialism is over and done with, but rather that it reorganizes its foundations, requiring different responses.

Mignolo’s work on post-colonial literature, highlighting its dialogic nature in relation to a former “metropolitan” canon, touches tangentially Said’s. Mignolo proposes the term border thinking as a means of re-thinking colonial difference. Defining post-colonialism along this axis of border-thinking would, for him, signal a movement beyond the fixed and stable mapping of the power relations between colonizer/colonized and center/margin. For Mignolo, a post-colonial stance negotiated on the overlaps of borders set inside colonialism would allow for more nuanced critical/literary practices, leaving room for movement, mobility and fluidity rather than the categorizations colonial discourse sets in place (Mignolo, *Local*, 95).

Mignolo’s thinking thus echoes fundamental concerns in the kind of post-colonial theoretical trail opened by Said and taken up by other critics like Bhabha: the need to re-think how texts from across the former colonial divide may be read alongside each other and, consequently, to re-define the bias that has, in the past, organized them inside a vertical, historicist paradigm. Mignolo’s border thinking would then respond to the need, already identified by Said, to re-define the authorized

histories and the conceptual foundations used to divide the world between Christian/pagan, civilized/barbarian, modern/pre-modern, developed/developing, all of which would constitute global projects for mapping colonial difference inside an imperialistic discursive framework (Mignolo, *Local*, 96).

Thus, for the critic, post-colonial theory and literatures do not constitute a new paradigm but a part of a larger one. Post-colonialism then can be seen to be grounded on a form of thinking both emerging from and going beyond the geopolitics of knowledge, colonial legacies, racial conflicts, gender divisions and sexual prescriptions produced inside imperialism. Mignolo's proposition of border thinking is then "a longing to overcome subalterneity and a building block of subaltern ways of thinking" (*Local* 95).

For Mignolo, as for Said, post-colonial theory and literature then share a common concern with critiquing those "natural" categorizations of the world produced inside imperialism as a means of transforming its legacies of dependence. In the case of a writer like Rushdie, whose themes revolve around conflicting spaces, histories that do not add up or cohere and in-between constructions of identity, all weaved together in a literary style that self-consciously references texts from a wide array of different sources across the colonial divide, this critical stance is a central concern. [10]

Rushdie's brand of "post-colonial" literature, poised along the (im)possible line of inhabiting those structures and spaces it seeks to problematize, committed to a rethinking of (post)colonial histories along the lines described by Said and also by Mignolo, is ultimately reflective of theirs and Rushdie's own condition, that of persons coming from former colonial countries who are, nevertheless, able to communicate with each other and also with "metropolitan" culture. Gayatri Spivak aligns this (im)possible

[10] Although we have here quoted Said and Mignolo alongside each other, this should not be seen as an attempt at homogenizing their critical work or as an implied affirmation that they are arguing the same point. They are cited in this chapter, along with other critics, due to the concerns their work shares with Rushdie's fiction. Although we will not develop in depth the singular features of their critical and theoretical work, it is nevertheless important to point out that we are aware of important fundamental differences and divergences.

positioning of Rushdie's with derridean deconstruction. And although the aim here is not to stretch it over Rushdie's novels, or to read in Said's work a decontructionist stance, aligning post-colonialism to post-structuralism enables Spivak to propose a strategy for reading colonial and post-colonial texts that, echoing Said, foregrounds a constant awareness of the positions from which one speaks/writes. Rushdie's novels, it could be argued, consistently and self-consciously treating their characterizations and the places/times they depict in such a way as both to abolish hierarchies, avoid simplistic binarisms or prescriptive solutions, echo the kind of awareness Spivak's work brings to the fore.

Spivak's strategies for reading imperial and post-colonial texts, highlighting as she does the need for a constant critical self-vigilance, call forth a figure the critic calls the native informant. The term is borrowed from ethnography, a discipline in which the native informant, although denied any autobiography as it is traditionally understood in Western paradigms, is still the object of extensive scholarly work, a blank that is, nevertheless, generative of a cultural identity that only a Western eye or discipline could inscribe and fully understand (*Critique* 6).

Spivak is obviously not concerned with ethnography itself, but with how this figure that first appeared there can help her to see, first and foremost, how the aboriginal native is both necessary to and foreclosed by the kind of Western cultural self-fashionings described also by Said and Mignolo and which took for granted the European as the human norm. In Spivak's take, however, the native informant becomes an im-possible place from which to (re)read those source texts of European ethico-political-cultural self-representation (texts like, say, *Paradise Lost*), as well as their disconcerting complicity with some contemporary self-styled post-colonial discourses (*Critique* 49). The native informant would then make appear a shadowy

counterscene[11], one that ultimately displaces not only colonial subjectivity but also, at the same time, the reversal of the master/native opposition by showing the complicity between a discourse of native hegemony and the axiomatics of imperialism.

The reading strategies put forth in Spivak's work then are necessarily "mistaken", since the perspective they engage with is an impossible one, a perspective for which there can be no strict scholarly model. "It is, strictly speaking, "mistaken", for it attempts to transform into a reading position the site of the native informant in anthropology, a site that can only be read, by definition, for the production of definitive [Westernized] descriptions" (Spivak, *Critique* 49). This critical position cannot, therefore, be prescribed or inhabited, only staged in order to critique the kind of discourse that gave it being in the first place. And as it problematizes these discourses, the position of the native informant questions also the idea of a unified "'Third World', lost, or, more dubiously, found lodged exclusively in the ethnic minorities in the First" (Spivak, *Critique* 49).

Spivak's work with the native informant (and also with derridean deconstruction) then takes up not only founding imperial texts, but also texts that have come to inform post-colonial critical thinking across the globe. It is a reading that does not merely seek to replace empire's cultural forms but to make post-colonialism, in all its textual and intellectual manifestations, more aware of its own discursive positionings.

> This openly declared interest makes my reading the kind of "mistake" without which no practice can enable itself. It is my hope that to notice such a structural complicity of dominant texts from two different cultural inscriptions can be a gesture against some of the too-easy West-and-the-rest polarizations, sometimes rampant in colonial and postcolonial discourse studies. To my mind, such a polarization is too much a

[11] For a discussion of the counterscenes Spivak describes formed by reading *Paradise Lost* and post-colonial theory, see Sá's *Paraíso Perdido em Contracena*.

> legitimation-by-reversal of the colonial attitude itself (Spivak, *Critique* 39).

It is these polarizations that Spivak unveils that Rushdie's texts try to avoid. His *destinerrant* interceptions of a "central" English text like *Paradise Lost* to write not narratives of native vindication but in-between stories, shaped by ambivalent narrators, stories that balance precariously the shared (albeit unequal) colonial experience without coming to rest on any one perspective, signal a commitment to the same critical awareness Spivak defends, allied to a rejection of discourses of cultural hegemony on both sides of the former colonial divide. In this way, Rushdie's fictional work enacts a critical positioning akin to that performed by Spivak in her "mistaken" reading strategies.

The native informant ultimately allows Spivak to say that even with official decolonization the division between a metropolitan "center" and its "margins" does not cease to make itself felt, but has been re-written into the vocabulary of First vs. Third World, separated in their command of resources but still connected by technological globalization. The idea of globalization has led, in turn, either to appeals to the kind of nativist hegemony Spivak (and also Rushdie) rejects or too often to the a-critical celebration, even in academic circles, of the hybrid, a celebration which, for Spivak, inadvertently legitimizes the rationale behind the colonial ideal of the pure (Critique 65). Spivak's denouncing of terms like globalization and hybridity serves as a warning against an uncritical, too easy celebration of those terms that appear in some post-colonial critical theory, and which has also been applied to Rushdie's novels. In many instances, Spivak argues, this contemporary jargon does not really amount to granting equal representation to the global South, testifying more to an internal transformation occurring in the North in response to global trends (*Critique* 170).

Coming back to Rushdie's novels, although they do bring into play "marginal" voices, either in their depictions of the struggles attending independence in post-

colonial nations or in the immigrant communities flooding the erstwhile metropolis, these voices are self-consciously woven into narratives whose constant recourse to ambivalence consistently poses the phrase “and yet…” to avoid implicating themselves either in the uncritical celebration of hybridity (which only reinforces the colonialist center/margin binarism by opposition) or the unethical stance of allowing Rushdie himself to speak for these so-called “margins”.

Spivak’s prescription of a constant critical self-vigilance so as not to endorse the structures of dependence critics like Said have raised as the hallmark of (neo)imperialisms could be read also alongside Homi Bhabha’s critique of European colonialisms and their legacies. This is not to say that Spivak and Bhabha are arguing the same point, but rather in Bhabha’s particular take on hybridity and mimicry we can see staged the same concern with a critical self-awareness and an attempt at undermining critical gestures that may, inadvertently, confirm the very thing they wish to challenge. Bhabha’s take particularly on hybridity and forms of mimicry produced in/by the colonial encounter might thus be better ways of looking at the so-called “hybrid” fiction of a writer like Salman Rushdie.

For Bhabha existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, a living on the borderlines that is translated into the shifty prefix ‘post’ used to describe it: post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-feminism (*Location* 1). The beyond signaled in these terms would be neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past.

> Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (Bhabha, *Location* 2)

The prefix ‘post’ would then produce a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, a restless movement in which what is important is not marking out (colonial)

difference itself, but its interstices, overlappings and displacements. For Bhabha, it is in these overlaps of domains of difference that the contemporary collective experiences of community, nationness and cultural value should be negotiated.

Bhabha is quick to clarify that if this jargon of our times (post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-feminism) is to have any meaning at all, it should not be understood in terms of sequentiality or polarity/opposition. Rather, in gesturing to a restless and revisionary beyond, terms like post-colonialism "transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment" (*Location* 4). This would lead to an awareness not of the limits of ethnocentric ideas but to an awareness that these very ideas, in themselves, represent or are also informed by the boundaries of a range of other, dissonant/dissident voices – that of women, the colonized, minorities, etc. Once we realize this, the boundaries set in place in colonizing discourses, rather than merely marking a separation, mark "the place from which something begins its presencing in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out." The border then becomes not the limit or un-breachable line, but "the bridge [that] gathers as a passage that crosses" (Bhabha, *Location* 5).

Bhabha defines contemporary global culture, with its attendant history of colonization, in terms of this middle passage, characterized by displacements and disjunctions in which experience cannot be totalized. It is this disjunctive aspect of cultural formations, indicative not of a *presence* but of a presencing of those constitutive other(s) of Eurocentric identity that Bhabha understands as hybridity. In the same line as Spivak, Bhabha then does not argue for hybridity in terms of a dialectical negotiation, but as an unwitting constitutive aspect of those discourses the colonial encounter generated, discourses that, emanating from an array of European metropolitan centers, defined community, culture, identity and eventually nationness in terms of domains of difference that effectively did *not* overlap.

The borderline approach to culture, in Bhabha's perspective, relies then on a looking at colonial legacies in a post-colonial world neither as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it is rather a gaze that renews colonialism, refiguring its cultural forms as 'in-between' spaces (Bhabha, *Location* 7). This transformative gaze would negotiate the dissonant voices of "marginalized" subjectivities and communities, but without attempting to produce its own teleological or transcendent History. Rather, the gaze described by Bhabha leads to theoretical and artistic performances which, opening up hybridity as a site of struggle within the very discourses of colonialism, destroys their negative polarities. In these critical and artistic performances, and here we could include such characters as Saladin Chamcha and Malik Solanka, Rushdie's mimic men, Saleem Sinai, Moor and Rai, those fallen, in-between narrators, as well as Rushdie's shifting depictions of India, Britain and the USA as leaking into and informing each other, "the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One nor the Other but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" (Bhabha, *Location* 28).

Bhabha's take on cultural difference reveals an underlying ambivalence inside cultural authority itself. In other words, the authorization of domination in the name of a hegemonic cultural supremacy would itself be produced only at the moment of contact with its "other", and not before. It is, therefore, neither self-constitutive nor self-standing. Ultimately, for Bhabha (and, it would seem, for Rushdie) it is the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.

In bringing to the fore this 'middle passage' or hybridity of the colonial discourses of cultural differentiation, Bhabha inaugurates a process of displacement and disjunction of its established categorizations that Rushdie will echo. In the case of novels like *The Satanic Verses*, *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath her Feet*, particularly, this process of displacement of colonialism's founding certainties means that "the Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar

migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity" (Bhabha, *Location* 6). At the same time as they lay bare the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations in the aftermath of decolonization, along with their exploitative multi-national division of labor, Rushdie's novels play up this re-signifying of both metropolitan and colonial national histories. In Rushdie's novels, the depictions of metropolitan centers and colonial outposts leak into each other, undermining nationalist and nativist histories. Rushdie's is then a perspective on the legacies of colonialism that offers no totalizing comforts but deploys a take on cultural hybridity akin to Bhabha's "to 'translate, and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity" (Bhabha, *Location* 6).

Bhabha's characterization of post-coloniality as the experience of living in the 'beyond', a condition that enables him to see cultural formations on both sides of the colonial divide as poised along the stairwell or middle passage of a conflictual, constitutive hybridity, also leads him to see post-colonial literature like Rushdie's as revisionary, as a gesture of re-describing cultural contemporaneity. This hybridity, as we see staged in Rushdie's brand of in-between, *destinerrant* fiction, is not some dialectical resolution of the divisions produced inside colonialism; rather, it is a taking up of a critical position that allows him to revise this experience, undermine imperial national self-representations as well as nativist challenges to colonization and the national projects that emerged from them in former colonies as a result of decolonization.

Bhabha's take on hybridity as a means of re-signifying the discourses of domination of European colonialisms and their legacies leads him to argue that post-Enlightenment colonialism speaks, in spite of itself, in a tongue that is not necessarily downright false, but forked, and its authority is exercised through farce (*Location* 85). One of these farcical modes of exerting colonialist authority would be mimicry. For Bhabha, colonial mimicry stages the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'other', that is,

a colonized subject constituted inside a process of differentiation that makes him/her almost the same as the colonial ‘master’, but not quite. Colonial mimicry, undercut by this fundamental indeterminacy (almost the same, but not quite), becomes

> The sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers. (*Location* 86)

The effects of mimicry, in this way, while on the surface conceived as an instrument of regulation and separation, may ultimately disturb colonial discourse in spite of itself, even as it stages the desire for a fashioning of a colonial subject recognizable to the European eye. In normalizing its colonial subjects via mimicry, the post-Enlightenment ideals of civility that justified colonial expansion actually alienate their discourse of liberty, inadvertently opening it up to other readings.

The mimic man, for Bhabha, is then the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which (to Saladin Chamcha’s chagrin) to be Anglicized is emphatically to be marked as *not* English. Mimicry, as Rushdie ironically points out in the fortunes of his protagonist in *The Satanic Verses*, overlaps with mockery. But for Bhabha, it would be from this area of overlap that the mimic man threatens and displaces the European civilizing mission. Mimicry, that form of (necessarily) partial imitation, discloses the ambivalence of a discourse that relies on a proliferation of slippages or strategic failures for its success. Bhabha’s (and Rushdie’s) mimic men thus become the

> Appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness. But they are also, as I have shown, the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which

> alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects. A desire that, through the repetition of partial presence, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. (Bhabha, *Location* 87-8)

The mimic man, articulating these instances of authorized versions of difference and menace, shatters what Bhabha calls the unity of the European man's being. This is painfully brought home to Saladin in his aping of British customs upon arriving in England, an aping that reveals to Rushdie's reader the English schoolchildren as an instance of aping of 'Englishness' themselves. The same disturbing power of mimicry is once more suggested in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, as the reverend Oliver D'Aeth looks upon the imitations of English homes and gardens in Fort Cochin as unsettling, flawed images of the "real" Englishness back home, flawed images that nevertheless must be reclaimed lest they put uncomfortably into question just how dependable this Englishness is.

Hybridity, and especially mimicry, taken as the signs of the productivity of colonial power and the strategic reversal of its processes of domination through a disavowal of the 'pure' and original status of colonial authority, ultimately displace all the sites in which this authority is exercised. Hybridity, as defined by Bhabha, "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (*Location* 112). The colonial hybrid thus becomes an ambivalent subjectivity, a site at once disciplinary and disseminatory, a kind of negative transparency (*Location* 112).

In Rushdie's novels, protagonists like the Anglicized Saladin Chamcha and Malik Solanka, the Cambridge intellectual, those mimic men of Western high culture,

unleash (in Saladin's case, unwittingly) this disseminatory power of mimicry on the centers of (neo)colonial power. However, it is in *The Ground Beneath her Feet* that the issue of hybridity is perhaps most insistently highlighted. And it is in this novel that Rushdie poses his greatest critique of an uncritical throwing about of the word in terms of a dialectic or as a means of redemption from the colonialist divisions of the world in the fortunes of Vina, Ormus and Rai.

The proliferating differences of colonial mimicry Bhabha proposes ultimately also evade the imperial eye of surveillance. Those discriminated against may be constituted as recognizable objects, but their presence also forces the recognition of the articulacy of colonial authority. Once this authority is displaced by the very object it sought to fashion, once it also is revealed as an effect of hybridization, the discursive conditions of domination are turned into the ground of intervention (*Location* 112). For Bhabha, and we could say also for Rushdie, hybridity is then not a simple issue of genealogy or of cultural relativism, in other words, of an overlapping of two different cultures. Hybridity would be rather "a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse" (Bhabhba, *Location* 114).

Coming back to the argument concerning literature that opened this chapter, hybridity estranges presence and forces a re-assessment of the national identities consolidated within European imperialisms. For Bhabha, this ultimately means that cultural differences can no longer be seen as objects of epistemological/moral contemplation (*Location* 114). Hybridity, such as proposed by Bhabha and engaged with by Rushdie in his *destinerrant* interceptions of *Paradise Lost*, "intervenes in the exercise of colonial authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its [own] presence" once it is divested of an essence.

> Such a reading of the hybridity of colonial authority profoundly unsettles the demand that figures at the centre of the originary myth of colonialist

> power. It is the demand that the space it occupies be unbounded, its reality coincident with the emergence of an imperialist narrative and history, its discourse non-dialogic, its enunciation unitary, unmarked by the trace of difference. It is a demand that is recognizable in a range of justificatory Western 'civil' discourses where the presence of the 'colony' often alienates its own language of liberty. (Bhabha, *Location* 115)

Bhabha's take on hybridity and mimicry, by displacing colonialist discourses of authority to reveal their constitutive "impurity", become tools for changing a coercive world order. Bhabha thus "inaugurates" a hybridized history outside of a historicist teleology. And this re-figuring of History we see played out not only in Saleem and Moor's autobiographical narratives, crossed by a national mythologizing that fails to live up to its promises, but also in the alternate universe on collision route with ours and which poses an alternative history to the one Rushdie's reader would recognize as "factual" or "true" in *The Ground,* to the re-writing of the metropolitan capital itself not by the British but by the dissident "others" internal to its national history in *The Satanic Verses*.

It is important to highlight once more that, although in this chapter we have been discussing in a very general sweep the work of critics like Said, Spivak and Bhabha as valid theoretical standpoints from which to approach Rushdie's fiction, the goal is not to use their work as tools for interpreting the novels, much less to affirm that Rushdie as a writer is reading and "mouthing" their arguments. Rather, as strong representatives of a branch of what has been identified as "post-colonial" critical theory, their work touches upon issues and concerns that are either recurrent in his fiction or which have been associated to it (particularly in the usage of terms like hybridity and mimicry) by Rushdie scholarship at large.

Although this chapter has been arguing that this brand of critical theory is aligned to Rushdie's fiction, it has nevertheless met with a share of critique. Vijay

Mishra, for example, has pointed out that this branch of post-colonial critical thinking, and post-colonial critics like Bhabha and Spivak in particular, have been accused of neglecting the material conditions of colonial exploitation by focusing on its discourses and representations, a neglect Mishra qualifies in terms of an exhorbitance of discourse (Mishra 84). This type of post-colonial critical theory would then create a paradoxical situation. While on the one hand it is possible to see the power of texts (and conversely to read power as text), "colonialism-as-text can be shrunk to a sphere away from the economic and the historical, thus repeating the conservative humanist isolation of the literary text from the contexts in which it was produced and circulated" (MIshra 84). This caution is valid, although it should not be taken too far. It is true that critics like Spivak and Bhabha do focus on cultural representations within a (neo)colonial world order, a critical gesture which might result in their work being read as overlooking contexts of domination through violence. However, another way to situate their work would be to see the realm of textuality and cultural representations as one of the possible sites for transforming a history of colonialism by providing better critical tools for understanding it. This understanding would underscore an informed critical stance, rather than a mere challenging of (neo)colonialist paradigms based on arguments that might, in the end, only serve to confirm them by reverse.

It could further be argued that, in the case of Rushdie's novels, while this context of violence is never ignored, scholarly assessment of his fiction seems to focus on those terms addressed in precisely such culture-oriented theory: hybridity, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, globalism, identity. It would seem then that in any analysis of his work such terms cannot be bypassed. And while the tone of some Rushdie criticism is rather celebratory of such terms, we would argue that Said, Bhabha and Spivak's more nuanced approach to the same issues are more in line with Rushdie's, hence the decision to present an overall discussion of them here.

Rushdie's novels thus intersect not only texts like *Paradise Lost* but also critical theory in its approaches to the terms this chapter has highlighted so far; and Rushdie's use of them has constituted hinging points of both criticism and praise. But whatever the critical views on or definitions of Rushdie's brand of "hybrid", "post-colonial" fiction, what is arguably a concern underscoring all his literary output is the operation of notions like in-betweenness, hybridity and mimicry to negotiate the contemporary individual, communal, local and (trans)national spheres of experience molded by a history of colonialism and often traumatic processes of decolonization. This negotiation has been characterized by Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago as the experience of inhabiting the unstable and post-modern global village constituted in transit among the economic circuits of the globalized world (Santiago, *Cosmopolitismo* 49-50) resulting from colonialism, a condition that defines, *par excellence,* contemporaneity.

Santiago's use of the term 'global village' to characterize the social, economic, cultural, technological and political configurations across the world following decolonization, although arguably not original, speaks also to an idea put forth by Bhabha of a global post-coloniality characterized by disjunctive temporalities (for example, that of the disposed peasantry in newly independent and impoverished nation-states) cutting across post-modernity. The new world order that emerges from the colonial encounter, far from redeeming its inequalities, seems rather, for Santiago, complicit with its reorganization into what Spivak has called the global North/South (instead of metropolis and colony) divide and its unequal distribution of wealth and resources.

This reorganization has, in turn, been productive of a plethora of descriptive or analytical critical terms in the terrain of culture, terms such as multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, also linked to the production of such a novelist as Rushdie. And once more, while it is not the aim here to enter into an in-depth discussion of all the shifting configurations emerging from colonialism and decolonization and the critical responses

to them, certain terms that consistently appear in this context and that in turn have been linked to the idea of the global village brought forth by critics like Santiago in intellectual circles, are also relevant for reading Rushdie's novels and their responses to the contexts they engage with and describe.

For Santiago, a discussion of multiculturalism, a term he takes to refer to how the disjunctive cultural interactions indicated by Bhabha are negotiated in the globalized world, must be done from its "peripheries" or the "Third Word". It is not that the phenomenon does not impact in any way the "First World"; but in the so-called "peripherical" nations its effects are more readily pronounced. In these peripheries then, the increasing democratizing of facilities like public transport would signal to rural workers an easy migration to ever expanding urban centers craving cheap labor. This impoverished work force (formerly an impoverished peasantry) forms a stark contrast to "the grandiloquent spectacle of post-modernity, which called them from their land for labor and houses them in the deplorable neighborhoods of urban centers" (Santiago, *Cosmopolitismo* 51). A new form of social inequality would thus be formed to feed the economic growth of the financial centers of transnational capital, an inequality that cannot be understood or framed within the legal system of each separate nation-state, much less in terms of official inter-government relations.

The official demise of colonialism would then mark the "birth" of a plethora of independent nation-states marked by this process and which emerge, in a sense, only to take their place in a system of pervasive inequalities structured inside colonialist practices. Attempting to take stock of this scenario and its consequences, Santiago argues, the term multiculturalism has been put forth in, at least, two competing ways. The rather outdated form of multiculturalism would unwittingly take for its reference the notion of Western civilization as borne across to European colonial outposts, its structures would thus be founded on strategies of acculturation. Although this brand of multiculturalism preaches peace between the different ethnic or social groups brought

together by the allure of urban centers and the spread of technology and consumerism, its theory and practice would still remain the domain of men of European origin. Multiculturalism of this kind, in the end, would discipline all of those diverse groups within the 'national melting pots' inside a Europeanized cultural framework (Santiago, *Cosmopolitismo* 54), subsuming the cultural differences posed by the contra-modern identities flooding urban centers within alienating theoretical models and practices.

To counter this brand of multiculturalism, Santiago posits a multicultural perspective that attempts not simply to acknowledge these masses of underpaid workers, but one that leads to an understanding of these diverse groups as bearers of identities external to the official national community (*Cosmopolitismo* 58). This "other" multiculturalism would rely on the de-nationalization of politics as a strategic political move towards ensuring legitimate citizenry to these marginalized groups, while at the same time preserving them from being engulfed by a rampant capitalism and its cultural and intellectual formations, a capitalism that consolidates itself by re-working the economic structures resulting from official decolonization.

Santiago's approach to contemporary cultural formations and to the intellectual responses to them aligns an understanding of the cultural to the technological/economic. The discrepancies produced within a globalized world order, connected, as Said has pointed out, by Western colonialist expansion, becomes in his analysis more garish in the contexts of migrations to urban centers in both the global North and South to help meet consumer demands and ultimately increment the wealth of the "First World". The brand of multiculturalism Santiago proposes to deal with these discrepancies would lead to a re-configuring of what he calls the peripherical national cultures, a re-configuring that allows for its poor and disenfranchised working classes to manifest what he calls a cosmopolitan attitude, before unseen among historically marginalized groups (*Cosmopolitismo* 60), without subsuming them within cultural, economic and political strictures emanating from the so-called First World.

A multiculturalist perspective, for Santiago, is then not a mere assessment of varying and shifting processes of acculturation produced within a globalized economic system of unequal distribution of wealth and citizenship. It rather promotes a re-configuring of the "margins" and of the forms of participation in the 'global village' open to them. As such, it must, necessarily, come from them. Santiago's approach to multiculturalism thus seeks to highlight and undermine those cultural interactions produced within a (neo)colonialist economic framework, interactions he sees as productive of a unilateral process of acculturation.

Coming back to Rushdie's fiction, and to the novels that particularly concern us here, they all, to a lesser or greater extent, tackle or depict the contemporary world order described by Santiago. But how do we relate such competing takes as Santiago describes on a term so frequently linked to Rushdie's work in general? It is true that, on the one hand, Rushdie does not seem interested in elaborating or contesting the workings of the global financial order in all the complexity discussed by Santiago. Indeed, one of the criticisms made to his work it that is has very little to say from the perspective of subaltern groups. And it does seem that Rushdie, from his own social and educational background, would have little to identify with among them. On the other hand, however, Rushdie's denouncement of national projects as arenas of exclusion in novels like *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* shares some affinity with the gestures of thought proposed by Santiago. It is true that Rushdie is not concerned, in general, with addressing specifically the situation of working classes in urban centers Santiago focuses on. But his depiction of immigrant communities in London who use their identities on the margins of the nationally defined community to carve out a place for themselves as bearers of "other" identities, his depiction of the religious 'backwardness' in India that is incomprehensible to the national elite, but which nevertheless threatens their constructions of Indian nationness in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, to the fury that bubbles on the fringes of the wealth paraded in *Fury*'s New

York, all suggest a view on the cultural interactions inaugurated by colonialism and perpetuated by globalized capital far more nuanced and complex than the celebration of cultural exoticism and impurity so often attributed to him

Santiago's assessment of the competing forms or perspectives on multiculturalism resulting from colonization touches on another term, also consistently applied to Rushdie's fiction, cosmopolitanism. Looking at yet another term whose definition is by no means consensual, we could ask with Jacques Derrida where have we received the image of cosmopolitanism from and what is happening to it (*On Cosmopolitanism* 3)? Although Derrida links cosmopolitanism to the idea of the citizen of the world, a condition in which Rushdie himself would undoubtedly fit, when it comes to the novels themselves and their narrators/protagonists, this image of the citizen of the world, comfortable everywhere and belonging nowhere, becomes complicated.

Following Derrida somewhat, Pranav Jani argues that "cosmopolitanism" in the work of a writer like Rushdie emerges as a category of cultural identity encompassing the way certain elites and intellectuals experience the world. This experience of an urban bourgeoisie would allow figures like Rushdie to engage with and inhabit Europeanized cultures with comfort and competence (20). Cosmopolitanism, in this sense, would be linked to an educated, middle-class perspective or experience of the world that in turn gives rise to a certain literary practice, but a perspective that should, nevertheless, *not* overdetermine the understanding of this practice.

This understanding of cosmopolitanism in terms of a middle class bourgeois practice that cuts across national state borders designed within capitalist modernity posits a veritable will to a cosmopolitan identity. Still, although this seems to be the place from which Rushdie writes/speaks, his engagement with post-colonialism allows him to write novels in which the figure of the cosmopolitan as citizen-of-the-world is portrayed rather as the "victim of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging" (Pollock *et al*. 6) Such

‘minoritarian cosmopolitans’ as Saladin Chamcha and the immigrants that flood the London scene in *The Satanic Verses,* the self-exiled narrator Rai of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and the fallen narrator-protagonist of *The Moor’s Last Sigh* could be seen to embody, in their downfall, a kind of failed cosmopolitanism. They could be seen as representatives of a “cosmopolitics” that bears witness to the shortcomings of decolonization rather than its transnational beneficiaries.

Thus, rather than translating the issues and contexts they depict simply in terms of how their narrators/protagonists see them, occupying as they do the same middle-class, in-between position Rushdie himself does, the novels seem to be asking “who is the subject of citizenship? Is citizenship a necessary common frame to be shared universally? Is the cosmopolitan necessarily about the production of the sort of individual interest, will, and belief that most ideologies of citizenship appear to require?” (Pollock *et al*. 8) Rushdie’s novels then could be seen to illustrate the point made by Pollock, that the role of the cosmopolitan writer is to raise the questions of what it means to live in our times, what defines our times and what times are ours. In Rushdie’s work this is translated into a literary style that foregrounds questioning and ambivalence over unequivocal responses. His brand of literary cosmopolitanism could then be seen as “entirely open, and not pregiven or foreclosed by the definition of any particular society or discourse” (Pollock *et al.* 1).

Rushdie’s novels then would seem to embody what Walter Mignolo has called a critical cosmopolitanism. This critical cosmopolitanism would emerge as the need to discover “other options beyond both benevolent recognition and humanitarian pleas for inclusion” (Cosmopolitanism 160). In this sense, Rushdie’s work appears to be more sophisticated than such celebratory readings of uncomplicated inclusion critics like Timothy Brennan have championed. The challenge facing this critical cosmopolitanism would be to negotiate human rights and global citizenship “without losing the historical

dimension in which each is reconceived today in the colonial horizon of modernity" (Mignolo, Cosmopolitanism 161).

Viewing contemporary cultural, social, political and economic configurations through colonial difference, critical cosmopolitanism cannot be articulated from one point of view, within a single (even if benevolent) logic or discourse, be that discourse from the political right or left (Mignolo, Cosmopolitanism 179). This critical cosmopolitanism, Mignolo argues, would dissolve cultural relativism to reveal "the coloniality of power and the colonial difference produced, reproduced, and maintained by global designs" (179). Critical cosmopolitanism would, ultimately, constitute a new democratic project for negotiating the pervasive coloniality of power in a world controlled by globalized capital.

Cosmopolitanism, rather than a word carrying a specific content or point of reference (as Jani and Brennan seem to suggest), would then become another connector (alongside hybridity and mimicry) in the struggle to overcome the coloniality of power from the perspective of colonial difference. By connectors, Mignolo clarifies, he does not mean empty signifiers that, while they promote a benevolent "inclusion" of the 'other' into citizenship of post-modern nation-states, preserves these terms (citizenship, the other, etc) as the property of European Enlightenment (Cosmopolitanism 180). Mignolo argues rather for a

> Horizon of critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism [that] presupposes border thinking or border epistemology grounded on the critique of all possible fundamentalism (Western and non-Western, national and religious, neoliberal and neo-socialist) and on the faith in accumulation at any cost that sustains capitalist organizations of the economy. (Cosmopolitanism 181)

For Mignolo, while cosmopolitanism was initially projected from particular local histories (that of the urban, middle class westernized intelligentsia), today it is more aligned with

a critical, dialogic but never totalizing, border thinking. Diversality would then be "the relentless practice of critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism rather than a blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single [urban, middle-class, educated] point of view" (Mignolo, Cosmpolitanism 182).

It is this notion of cosmopolitanism Rushdie's novels embody. Stemming from a middle-class intelligentsia, citizen-of-the-world experience, a position some of Rushdie's protagonists would share, his novels then embark on a critique of a pervasive coloniality of culture, power, wealth and exclusion via their take on hybridity, mimicry, in-betweenness and post-colonial thinking. The end result are narratives that are, in line with Mignolo, un-prescriptive and un-totalizing. For although they are narratives that stem from a particular point of view (Rushdie's) and depict characters more akin to the position he himself occupies, this perspective is never all-encompassing or final, rather it becomes the point from which Rushdie's literary practice construes itself in a multitude of intertextual, *destinerrant* directions, critical towards the experiences of colonization and the world order that emerges from decolonization, but that never try to sum up this experience from his/their own perspective.

In this chapter we have attempted to discuss, in a very broad sense, what is meant by "post-colonial" critical theory and some of its main concerns. As the term "post-colonial" has been associated to Rushdie's fiction, we have tried to understand at which points his fiction intersects this brand of critical thinking, not with the aim of applying the latter to explain it, but as a means of better situating his writing in contemporary debates on culture and literature. Taken together, notions such as hybridity, multiculturalism, mimicry and cosmopolitanism underlie Rushdie's writing, and it is with them in mind that we propose, via derridean *destinerrance*, to understand Rushdie's work and its significance today not only within the international literary marketplace and academic circles, but more specifically in its interceptions of a

canonical text like *Paradise Lost*. This is what we will embark on, keeping as a background the discussion outlined above, in the following chapter.

# 4. Salman Rushdie's "Fallen" Narratives: A *Destinerrant* Dialogue with *Paradise Lost*

> *For diaspora Britishness is not a pre-given, it is at once a statement of exclusion and a sign to be negotiated. (Loomba 229)*

In the preface of his book *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, Timothy Brennan lists Salman Rushdie among those authors Western audiences choose as interpreters and "authentic" voices of the Third World, writers whose literary project Brennan characterizes as a "familiar strangeness". For the critic, the key word to such fiction is in-betweenness, and Rushdie, whose own personal history ties him equally to India, Pakistan and England, is a good representative.

In Rushdie's novels, narrators and characters persistently beset by a crisis of faith, plunged in doubt and bound up with images of a fall into spaces at once paradisiacal and infernal are not only recurring themes but also structuring devices. In the particular novels discussed here, Eastern and Western myths of a fall and of the conflict between divine and satanic forces are engaged and become a site in which issues such as the construction of identity (individual, local, national) in the aftermath of (de)colonization can be addressed. *The Satanic Verses*, in particular, takes up the imagery of the fall of its protagonists to characterize the paradoxes and ambiguities that characterize contemporary cultural, social and political formations, in which high technology, intense movement of peoples across the globe, represented in its migrant characters, and the appeal of urban centers like London and Bombay co-exist with traditional religious certainties and reactionary appeals to nativist forms of nationalism or regionalism.

Rushdie's engagement of the imagery of the fall, of edenic and infernal spaces and of a transgression of authoritative (Godly) discourses, although it does refer back to religious texts, most consistently refers to religiously charged literary texts. Among

this plethora of references, in Rushdie's renditions of the edenic/infernal spaces in which his in-between, fallen characters transit, we can also spot the *destinerrance* of Milton's Eden and his Satan. It is with Milton's rather ambivalent descriptions of Eden and his powerful rhetoric of transgression[12], portrayed through the character of Satan, in *Paradise Lost* that Rushdie's work is continuously, even if indirectly, dialoguing with. However, in a very derridean move, this wandering of Milton's text, carrying with it a certain "inheritance", produces difference, deviation and error. For while the puritan poet is driven by an underlying desire to write a text in which a very positive doctrinal message is an inescapable aspect of poetic form, Rushdie re-inscribes this Miltonic imagery into narratives that seek to write the complexities of post-coloniality within ambivalent, shifting narrative frameworks.

Although the aim here is not to map or focus on references, implicit or explicit, to *Paradise Lost* in Rushdie's novels, a move that would activate precisely the notion of source survey this dissertation seeks to question via its take on textual *destinerrance*, it may be useful to list briefly some points of contact between the texts before proceeding to a reading of the novels themselves. *The Satanic Verses,* as *Paradise Lost*, begins *in medias res* with a fall linked to a transformation, a fall that allows Rushdie to play up Milton's literary rendition of multiple falls instigating one another. The inner Hell Satan carries within him as a consequence of his fall in the epic is then mirrored back to him everywhere he goes, a theme translated in the novel in Gibreel and Chamcha's experiences on the streets of London. Opening with a fall the novel then recovers Milton's use of a satanic narrative perspective, which in turn allows Rushdie to engage Milton's rhetoric of free will and freedom mouthed by Satan. This rhetoric is imbued by Satan with pathos, as Milton's text challenges its reader to distinguish between satanic

[12] This rhetoric of transgression voiced by Satan is a fundamental aspect of Milton's literary rendition of the fall and of how *Paradise Lost*, as a text, functions. In Rushdie's work this rhetoric reverberates in the way Rushdie's fallen narrators/protagonists are (self) fashioned and come across to the reader, thus playing up the structuring of the novels around the fall from grace with which they open.

arguments and the points the text is really endorsing. This dynamic Rushdie plays up in his shifting, ambivalent narrator. Finally, Rushdie makes clear he is dialoguing specifically with Miltonic imagery by having the protagonists of *The Verses* quote passages from *Paradise Lost*, specifically Satan's temptation of Eve and his first sighting of Adam and Eve in Eden.

*Fury,* like *The Satanic Verses,* starts off with another protagonist who is already falling from grace, instigating the further multiple falls of Solanka as the novel progresses. Here it is not London but New York that becomes a hellish scene akin to what Satan finds in the opening Books of *Paradise Lost.* And as Satan, Solanka's fallen condition is linked to an internal transformation that leads to his hellish innerscape being reflected first in New York, then on Lilliput-Blefescu. The novel, much like *Paradise Lost*, ends on a note of an implied redemption. Solanka, bouncing desperately up and down, looking for a place on which to rest his feet, is reminiscent of Adam and Eve looking out where to find their place of rest in a post-lapsarian world at the end of the epic.

The same fall that structures both epic and these two novels appears again in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Moor Zogoiby, the novel's narrator, starts off telling the reader that his story is that of a fall from grace, making him a sort of modern Lucifer plunging into Pandemonium. As in the other novels, Rushdie once more recovers the structuring device of an opening fall shaping the narrative. And here once more the same idea of multiple falls is played out in his family fortunes, falls announced and instigated by the failures and the death of Francisco da Gama. This linking of falling and the family affairs is further linked to the national mythos, written in terms of the unstable Edens traceable to Milton's ambivalent depiction of the pre-lasparian paradise.

Lastly, in *The Ground Beneath Her* Feet, another fallen narrator/protagonist continues the line of fallen narratives traceable to Milton's epic. Rai detains knowledge that is irredeemable, like Satan and post-lapsarian man. He aligns himself with a

Miltonic satanic perspective, that of the self-outcast, and in the novel, as in the epic, this move is initially imbued with pathos and coated in a rhetoric of freedom. In this novel Rushdie once more quotes from Milton: Ormus singing the approaching chaos and the "Miltonic pain of unconsummated love untwisting all the chains that tie/the hidden soul of harmony" (*Ground* 390). It will be through the narrator Rai, and the other protagonists, Vina and Ormus, that Rushdie will engage with the myth of Orpheus and its structuring linking of the theme of redemption to poetic creation we persistently find in Milton's work. Instead of re-writing the myth Rushdie, like Milton, will engage it to reflect on the idea of redemption and its (possible) links to art.

Looking at these points of contact/dispersal between Rushdie's novels and Milton's epic, it is possible to see Rushdie harking back to and dialoguing (also) with a specifically Miltonic rendition of Satan (how the character comes across to the reader via his own perspective and the dynamic this in turn sets up in the epic), with the character's take on his own rebellion and with the unsettling depictions of the paradisiacal garden we find in *Paradise Lost*. It is on these elusive references, and more precisely on their slips and deviations in the novels, that this chapter will focus.

But before embarking on a reading of the novels, it is important to make a note on the selection made here of Rushdie's work. *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh, Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are novels that could be said to be representative of Rushdie's literary career as a whole. These novels span the cycle began with the early texts that brought Rushdie notoriety and critical acclaim (*Shame* and *Midnight's Children*) and that *The Satanic Verses* closes, the disillusionment with post-colonial nationalisms portrayed in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, to the concern with depicting the turn-of-the-century globalized consumer culture and its dire consequences in *Fury* and *The Ground*. As the aim here is to present a critical overview of Rushdie's fiction, these four novels, representative of his writing in general, were consequently chosen. Needless to say that, although these four novels lend

themselves to the kind of reading with a view to a broadening of the scope of Rushdie criticism proposed here, in some of them (such as *The Satanic Verses*) the dialogues with *Paradise Lost* are more readily established, while in others (like *The Ground*) the discussion will focus more on analogous (and also more elusive) uses of myth to underscore their (Milton's and Rushdie's) views on the place and function of literary creation.

*The Satanic Verses: destinerrance* and post-colonial identity

Rushdie's tendency towards unstable narratives combined with the use of divine and satanic imagery is introduced already in the epigraph[13] of *The Satanic Verses*, the novel that won him international critical acclaim and helped establish him in Western circles as an authoritative voice on his country of origin. From this epigraph, the novel introduces the theme of a lack of fixed spaces, even if one is not physically mobile, in the figure of Satan who, transgressor *par excellence,* finds himself without a place on which to rest his feet. In the novel, this is what characters like Saladin and Gibreel, Jumpy and the other immigrants that live in the Shaandaar B & B, but also Zeeny Vakil and Pamela Chamcha, experience on being cast out (as Satan is) of formerly secure places of identification.

For Brennan, *The Satanic Verses* is a novel whose questions are essentially religious, and which takes its imagery primarily from Islam in a much more positive sense than any of Rushdie's previous work. Rushdie would be concerned with a religion of doubt and with making it flourish. In this way, "the novel floods into, overlaps with and creates anew the 'satanic verses' of tradition, although only in a world in which the supreme is both devil and God at once" (Brennan 152).

Brennan's reading of the novel's quite overt references to Islam is interesting enough, and the chapters dedicated to portraying the revelations made to its prophet do take up a substantial part of the narrative. However, *The Satanic Verses* is also scattered over with references not simply to scripture but (and we would argue primarily) to literary renditions of sacred texts. Among these is John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In Milton's epic, Satan (rather convincingly) attempts to undermine God's authority, but in a text that ultimately challenges its reader to arrive, through struggle

[13] Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste or air, yet this is certainly part of his punishment, that he is … without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon.

and effort, at some measure of understanding of Divine truths[14]. What *The Satanic Verses* does is to offer its reader the epic's images of a fall and the attending satanic narrative perspective it opens up, but only to launch itself into a discussion of the power of the fictions of identity colonialism creates on both sides of the colonial divide, and ultimately undermines their fixed, authoritative, "godly" status. Broadening the scope of his references, Rushdie's politics of doubt and his questioning of good and evil as absolutes thus enable him to write not only the immigrant communities that have come to England from colonial outposts, but a biting, ironic and humorous critique of the colonial experience itself and the ambiguities and discontinuities produced on both sides of the colonial divide.

As *Paradise Lost, The Satanic Verses* begins with a fall, a motif that spans both texts and which is explored by both in the multiple attending falls of its protagonists. Milton describes Satan's casting down into Hell, along with his followers in the opening lines of Book I:

> Him the Almighty Power
> Hurld headlong flaming from th'Ethereal Skie
> To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
> Who durst defie the'Omnipotent to Arms.
> Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night
> To mortal men, he with his horid crew
> Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
> Confounded though immortal. (*Paradise Lost*, I, 44-53)

Opening with Satan's physical fall the epic then shifts back and forth in its narration of the events that precede it and the events that follow it, a structure that plays up the

[14] This line of reading of the epic has been put forth in Stanley Fish's *Surprised by Sin*. Although Fish's theory rests on a rather close reading of *Paradise Lost*, nevertheless this doctrinal bend in the text is inextricable from its poetic form.

idea of multiple falls instigating each other that the epic will explore. The reader of *Paradise Lost* becomes aware of how the fall of man is occasioned by Satan's, but also that this physical fall is in fact precipitated by another, a fall that takes place still in Heaven.

These multiple falls Milton explores are linked to a transformation, something Rushdie will also take up in the comic fall of Chamcha and Gibreel. In *Paradise Lost*, the fall of Satan into Hell that opens Book I precipitates apparently only a decrease of his and the other fallen angels' former lustre. Looking around him Satan says

> … yet not for those,
>
> Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
>
> Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
>
> Though chang'd in outward lustre, and that fixt mind
>
> And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,
>
> That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,
>
> And to the fierce contention brought along
>
> Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd
>
> That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
>
> His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
>
> In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
>
> And shook his throne. (*Paradise Lost*, I, 94-105)

Satan does not seem to see himself at all diminished by his fall and his rhetoric rather plays up the notion that he still poses a challenge to God's authority. What Milton's text from this point on will strive to show is that Satan's fall (and also man's) really occurs at the moment he turns from God, and this fall (and the constant choice to remain fallen that Satan makes) precipitates the other.

The most important transformation attending his fall and that Satan fails to recognize, in Milton, is then an internal one. As post-lapsarian Adam and Eve, Satan

has lost the image of God within himself, a revelation he stumbles on when he affirms that “The mind is its own place, and it itself/Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (*Paradise Lost*, I, 254-55) but whose implications ironically he fails to see. But whereas man finds a measure of redemption in the closing books of *Paradise Lost*, Satan seems to be mocked by the text for his persistent lack of self-awareness. Opening with Satan’s physical casting down into Hell, the poem thus explores multiple falls and how, after them, the character unwittingly carries hell inside of him wherever he goes.

In *The Satanic Verses* we have a parallel opening fall that, much like *Paradise Lost*, triggers a series of transformations or mutations. As in Milton’s epic, the reader of *The Satanic Verses* is plunged *in medias res* into a text whose characters are already plummeting down to their respective hells, the actual Hell of *Paradise Lost* and the inferno London becomes for the mutated Chamcha and Gibreel. Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, falling with arms intertwined from an airplane over the city of London, see their bodies transformed, Saladin into a demon, Farishta into an angel. As against all odds they survive their fall, the novel embarks upon a reflection on birth (or re-birth) and its consequences. Rushdie’s narrator wonders

> How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made? How does it survive, extreme and dangerous as it is? What compromises, what deals, what betrayals of its secret nature must it make to stave off the wrecking crew, the exterminating angel, the guillotine? Is birth always a fall? (*Verses* 8)

The linking of the themes of birth, death and a fall spans Rushdie’s work. In *Grimus*, his first published novel, the main character is not only born from a death but must literally fall and be drowned in order to be born into the other dimension of Calf Island. Similarly, in *Paradise Lost* a fall brings not only death into the world but also re-birth

with the promise of redemption by Messiah. Most importantly, in the epic the fall means that for post-lapsarian man the knowledge of good is bound up with the knowledge of evil and compliance with God's will now means inhabiting a "paradise within", as the Edenic garden is irretrievably lost. For Rushdie, however, the fall and metamorphosis of the protagonists entail a narrative in which it is not knowledge of the world but the polarities on which such knowledge is produced, polarities such as good and evil, imperial center and colonial margin, that necessarily and irreversibly overlap.

The *destinerrance* of Milton's rendition of multiple falls results, in Rushdie's narrative, in a foregrounding and re-fashioning of the fall that opens both novel and epic and its consequences into a discussion of the paradoxes inherent to a world order in which the former colonial center takes on the colors of the mass labor flooding into it from its erstwhile colonies. The newness Rushdie is addressing resulting from this fall is not simply the fantastic angelic/demonic beings Saladin and Gibreel find themselves metamorphosed into. *The Satanic Verses* is a novel concerned with the aftermath of decolonization, and it is the fusions, translations and betrayals, of history, of grand narratives of nationality, of micro narratives of identity, that the novel stretches and explores.

In an article on *The Satanic Verses* Antje Rauwerda picks up on the workings of *Paradise Lost* in Rushdie's novel. Rauwerda argues that Rushdie's implicit references to the epic responds to Milton's characterization of Satan as always having the potential for the angelic and a propensity for evil, a dynamic Rushdie recovers in the angelic/devilish duo Chamcha and Gibreel. Echoing this dynamic operating in Milton's Satan in his linked protagonists, Rauwerda argues, Rushdie suggests that good and evil coexist and that any person can be both angel and devil at once. These implicit allusions to Milton's characterization of the fallen angel would allow Rushdie to "establish the closeness of angelic and devilish qualities and the solubility of the seemingly impermeable boundary between good and evil" (Rauwerda 94), a

suggestion the novel then broadens into a discussion of the fallacy of believing in boundaries (racial, cultural) in the first place. In Rushdie, Rauwerda argues, the evil "other" is internal, and thus faith in Manichean binaries, such as that drawn between good and evil (as well as those mapped across the colonial divide), is called into question (Rauwerda 94).

Rauwerda's highlighting of the dynamic at work in Milton's Satan and its *destinerrant* translation in Rushdie's novel into a discussion of the in-between or, as Bhabha would have it, liminal nature of (neo)colonial cultural formations is valid. However, the critic also focuses on Rushdie's scattered, explicit quotations of *Paradise Lost*, and here the article presents some problems. Rauwerda argues that Satan's words, in the mouth of Gibreel, insist not on the intransigence of his (Satan's) evil and his punishment but on evil's amorphous pervasiveness (94). However, in *Paradise Lost* God's punishment of Satan is not intransigent, this would be rather a function of Satan's fallen logic than an argument the epic makes. Another problem with Rauwerda's mapping of specific quotes from *Paradise Lost* in the novel is that it is a critical move that relies, once more, on source survey to posit an intertextual dialogue couched on the principle of similarity. Another way of reading the epic and the novel would be to see how they take the opening motif of the fall, linking it to an opening of a fallen, "satanic" perspective. In *The Satanic Verses*, this Miltonic narrative device is deviated, as Rushdie embarks on a discussion of the paradoxes and contingencies attending contemporaneity.

Saladin and Gibreel, although the only survivors, are by no means the only victims of the incident involving flight AI-420 Bostan jumbo jet. As Rushdie's narrator tells us

> There had been more than a few immigrants aboard… a sufficiency of children upon whose legitimacy the British Government had cast its ever reasonable doubts - mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally

> fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home.* (*Verses* 4)

Although only Saladin and Gibreel experience actual physical mutation, in the novel mutation is, nevertheless, a shared part of the experience and the memory of colonialism. This experience empties individual, local or national sites of identification of any stability. Saladin and Gibreel's physical transformation brings home these shared mutations to the former colonial power, tying its identity also to the ongoing process of production of newness resulting from (post)colonial encounters.

*The Satanic Verses,* taking the cue from Milton's opening fall, construes itself as a portrayal of the complex cultural, social, political and economic scenario resulting from the official end of the European empires (for Rushdie, as for Said and Mignolo, colonialism and empire are not simply over and done with). The novel is critical of different attitudes towards this new world order in all its characterizations, but especially in the figures of Gibreel and Saladin. The latter has sought all his life to become a "translated man", to immerse himself in British culture and so become, as far as possible, English, an identity the narrator scornfully dubs a "half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices" (9). Farishta, on the other hand, drops out of the sky singing an optimistic tune about being a citizen of the world

> Mr. Saladin Chamcha, appalled by the noises emanating from Gibreel Farishta's mouth, fought back with verses of his own. What Farishta heard wafting across the improbable night sky was an old song, too, lyrics by Mr. James Thomson, seventeen-hundred to seventeen-forty-eight. '… at Heaven's command,' Chamcha caroled through lips turned jingoistically redwhiteblue by the cold, 'aroooose from out the aaaazure

> main.' Farishta, horrified, sang louder and louder of Japanese shoes, Russian hats, inviolately subcontinental hearts, but could not still Saladin's wild recital: 'And a guardian angel sung the strain.' (*Verses* 6)

Gibreel and Saladin, the conjoined opposites, see their identifications and worldviews shatter with their fall as each character is confronted with the (his) other. Saladin has sought to be transformed by a different culture, Gibreel to transform it; both stances are finally rejected in the novel. The problem with Saladin's perspective is that he has bought into a dream, something he cannot, ironically, see even when it is mirrored back to him in Gibreel's inability to distinguish dreams from reality. Farishta's multiculturalism, on the other hand, is also unsatisfactory. Multiculturalism of this brand, resting on comforting notions or polarities such as the subcontinental heart he sings of, Rushdie suggests, is itself at heart fake.

Saladin fails to see that the Englishness he worships in lieu of God in fact exists only in his mind, so that "for a man like Saladin Chamcha the debasing of Englishness by the English was a thing too painful to contemplate" (75). Rushdie depicts his attempts at taming England as a putting on of masks that

> These fellows would recognize, paleface masks, clown masks, until he fooled them into thinking he was okay, he was people like us. He fooled them the way a sensitive human being can persuade gorillas to accept him into their family, to fondle and caress and stuff bananas in his mouth. (*Verses* 43)

What Rushdie asks, rather brutishly is, who is the gorilla here? Who is fooled by his own imagining of Englishness, Saladin or the English themselves? The novel plays on the ironies of self-delusion resulting from this encounter, but does not attempt to answer the questions it puts before its reader.

Paradoxically, however, after his fall Saladin is finally able to empty the term "Englishness" of the contents of disinterested goodness he attributes to it, and to reconcile himself with his past. The narrator asks how to identify goodness. For Saladin Chamcha it is initially bound up with Englishness. As a child he dreams of this mythical land of poise and moderation, as opposed to the exhausting superabundance he sees as India.

> Of the things of the mind, he had most loved the protean, inexhaustible culture of the English-speaking peoples… Empire was no more, but still he knew 'all that was good and living within him' to have been 'made', shaped and quickened by his encounter with this islet of sensibility, surrounded by the cool sense of the sea. (*Verses* 398)

After his fall the world he had courted for its assiduity, fastidiousness, moderation, restraint, self-reliance, probity, family life, and into which he strives to be accepted, persistently rejects him, and Saladin eventually finds his adoration of it emptied. Saladin Chamcha realizes he has been living in a state of phony peace. He is fallen only to be born, much like Milton's Adam, "into the knowledge of death; and the inescapability of change, of things-never-the-same, of no-way-back" (*Verses* 260) and the change, as in Milton's epic, becomes irreversible.

For Brennan, the fall and resulting metamorphosis of Rushdie's protagonists evoke the mutation of the immigrant on arrival in indifferent England from educated professional into an individual fit only to occupy low, poorly paid jobs. What we would have, for Brennan, in the images of Chamcha and Gibreel, is more than an attempt to capture the immigrant's confused identity, but a grotesque imaging of racist fantasies (Brennan 156). In this way, Chamcha initially sees himself as the acculturated Indian Englishman, but is nevertheless turned into the demonic image of the immigrant created by the white man and is a victim of all the racial slurs and stereotypes white society associates to colonial peoples: he is unclean, he is a paky, and he is overly

sexual. The immigrant community, on the other hand, takes him in as its own. In *The Satanic Verses*, according to Brennan, this means that "opposition to British hegemony within the black community takes on the form of accepting the devil's role assigned to them by Britain, not passively but as a form of resistance" (Brennan 156).

Brennan's reading, once more, ascribes prescriptiveness to Rushdie's novel that is not necessarily there. Saladin himself rejects this idea of converting the devil image into something positive in which people can recognize themselves. In *The Satanic Verses*, the devil image *is* central to the novel, but not in the terms defended by Brennan. From the wandering cast-out of the epigraph to the satanic narrator, in Rushdie's novel the figure of Satan becomes another narrative device articulating the larger themes the novel addresses, and from which, characteristically in his fiction, they branch out into other associations, rather than a banner or an allegory. As Milton's epic, Rushdie's novel, opening with a fall, then offers the reader an alluring satanic perspective or voice, from which the events in both texts are scrutinized and manipulated.

Thus, through this narrative device we see once more an instance of *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*. In the epic, the character of Satan, on one level, serves the text's justification of God's ways to man as the object of its implied mockery for his failed acts against God, and on the other, as the counterpoint in whose rejection man ultimately attains godliness. Rushdie's narrative, allowing for the same narrative perspective to dictate how events in the novel are portrayed, however, offers no such comforting distinctions. Although his treatment of a satanic voice runs parallel to Milton's, the fundamental deviation here is that the English poet is concerned with divine truths while Rushdie's fiction is bent on the opposite, that is, demystification.

Chamcha likewise rejects the popular umbrella of hybridity and eclecticism Zeeny Vakil, his art critic friend, defends and which critics like Brennan seem to

embrace rather unreservedly. Now much wiser for all his troubles, Chamcha can say about such terms

> The optimism of those ideas! The certainty on which they rested: of will, of choice! But Zeeny mine, life just happens to you: like an accident. No: it happens to you as a result of your condition. Not choice, but – at best – process, and, at worst, shocking, total change. Newness: he had sought a different kind, but this was what he got. (*Verses* 288)

As communal violence and state repression escalate not only in London but in the Bombay Saladin no longer recognizes, Rushdie, the celebrated champion of hybridity and cultural impurity pedaled by the middle-class intelligentsia to which Zeeny belongs, seems to cast doubt on its redemptive power, a doubt echoed later in *Fury*. Hybridity, conceived in terms of a dialectic, a place of rest and resolution, for Rushdie seems to be a problematic notion. The novel's ending, with Saladin's understated and rather uncomfortable embracing of his own 'Indianness', echoes this concern.

The concern, voiced in Chamcha's despair, with a critique of certain discussions of identity that have come to inform post-colonialism thus seems consistent in one part of the novel. The Jahilia chapters, on the other hand, present an interpretative difficulty. Although both parts of the novel must be read as equally important, this second narrative thread introduced by Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses* seems initially at odds with the discussions he has thus far embarked on and leaves the reader with the impression that the novel might not actually hold together as one work of fiction.

For Brennan, in *The Satanic Verses* the appropriations of the fall, together with Gibreel's repetition of the phrase "to be born again first you have to die", apart from the mythical fall of Satan, also bring together Hindu reincarnation and the sense of rebirth converts to Islam and Christianity feel. The Jahilia chapters would be a way of foregrounding this discussion of religious persuasions outside of Christianity, particularly of Islam and its precepts. For Brennan, this section of the novel, in which

Gibreel, after his metamorphosis, dreams he takes on the role of the archangel struggling on the mount with the prophet Mahound, means that ultimately the novel projects itself as a rival Quran with Rushdie as its prophet.

But then the question that follows is: the prophet of what? The Jahilia chapters are difficult to reconcile with those set in London and Bombay; however, it seems safe to say that Rushdie is not critiquing one religion (Islam) by trying to supplant it with another, whatever cosmopolitan guises it may come dressed in. Rather, he seems to be interested in how religious discourse dialogues with the literary, the political and the economic. And here the wandering "inheritance" of Milton the pamphleteering reformist poet echoes once more. But differently from Milton, we could argue that Rushdie is interested in exploring how religious discourse, in touch with the literary, can be seen to produce its other, doubt and transgression. This process of constant slippage of fixed categorizations (good/evil, divine/satanic, true/false) is explored in *The Satanic Verses* (and indeed in all of Rushdie's fiction) as a means of addressing (post)colonial identities, written as unstable and constantly productive of their other(s), in the mishaps of the doubles, demon and angel, Chamcha and Gibreel.

In the Jahilia chapters, a rewriting of Mohammed's first revelations in Mecca, his flight from it to Medina with a handful of converts and his return in triumph at the head of a large army of the faithful, the *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost* that is felt in the novel could be seen to be combined with that of another (inter)text, Maxime Rodinson's biography of the prophet *Mohammed*. Rodinson's biography places Mohammed and his preaching in a historical context and tries to understand Islam not only in its responses to this context but also in its social, cultural, political and economic resonances. Using psychoanalysis and drawing on the narratives of the miracles in the life of the prophet as passed on by his devout followers, Rodinson can discuss not only the motivations of the man Mohammed but also how much, in turn, the views on his life both among his followers and his critics have helped to mold Islam today.

What is particularly relevant to Rushdie's literary project, and which the treatment given to Islam in the Jahilia chapters illustrates, is the balance Rodinson identifies between a central authority, history, narrative and desire. Rodinson's biography of Mohammed succeeds in pointing out this powerful balance, a structuring device that, *destinerrant*-like, will inform Rushdie's depiction of the life of his prophet, Mahound.

For Rodinson, the fact that the precepts of Islam were initially passed on orally meant that inconsistencies surfaced when they came to be written down (43). The consequent idea of its being up to the reader to choose which narrative to believe in from among a body of contradictory versions of the same "historic" facts highlighted by Rodinson serves the novel's rhetoric, which piles text upon text and is mired in contradictions and ambiguities which it does not try to explain away. This treatment of historical discourse as inevitably contaminated by or essentially akin to narrative (therefore also literature) is an important aspect of Rushdie's fiction in general and is especially applied to his depiction of Jahilia, which takes the issue further, examining also the connections between power and narrative. The phrase "God knows best" (43) taken from Rodinson acquires an ironic and somber undertone as Rushdie questions the prophet's motivations and his justifications of unjustifiable acts. In this way, the Jahilia chapters can be reconciled with the novel's other concerns and with Rushdie's literary style in general.

Rodinson's biography raises the question of the extent to which Mohammed was borrowing (consciously or not) from the religious traditions that came before him. For the post-modern generation of writers like Rushdie, whose work flaunts the *destinerrant* "presence" of his own "predecessors", this would be a familiar literary practice. And indeed in *The Satanic Verses* the lines of distinction between discourses are intentionally blurred. Re-casting Mecca as the Jahilia of the prophet Mahound, Rushdie seems to be driving home the point, today rather exhausted, that religion,

history and literature, as discursive formations, are not “innocent” of the kinds of bends and twists post-modern writing flaunts, and certainly not of leaking into each other, as his character Gibreel exemplifies, to his despair, when his dreams leak into his waking hours.

In these dreams Gibreel finds himself worked on by the deep-rooted desires of the man Mahound for transcendence and for touching the divine. The Jahilia chapters have been read as blasphemous and as an attack on Islam in the figure of its prophet. And although this element is there, the chapters are not limited to it. They fit into a larger narrative framework, that is, Gibreel’s dreams and ravings. The character himself is a man twice fallen – fallen from flight Bostan down to London and what he hopes is a re-birth into a new life, but also fallen from faith. It is this prior fall that leads him to eat polluted meat in a half-comical, paradoxical display to the Supreme Being his own (Gibreel’s) lack of faith in Him. In his dreams Gibreel feels himself worked on by the prophet’s will, but this is not merely self-serving. In Rushdie’s text there is an element of fervor in the weeping Mahound when he finally manages to have Gibreel defeat him and so prove his angelic nature, proving simultaneously the nature and truth of God. Instead of a critique of Islam’s precepts, Rushdie presents us rather with a picture of human will and desire that is far more complex. The sentence uttered by John Maslama “how is a good man to know himself?” resonates in these passages, in which the various facets of Mahound/Mahommed come to light, treated with Rushdie’s characteristic recourse to ambiguity and appeal to the reader’s choice of “verses”.

Looking at the satanic verses episode that tricked Mahound and that gives the novel its title, an episode Rodinson discusses at length, Neil ten Kortenaar argues that literary parody and prophetic truth operate in symmetry. The passage of the satanic verses would then serve as both allegory of the writing process itself and would exemplify the power of imagination in bringing into being something truly new, a kind of prophetic force Rushdie would wish to take for himself.

In his reading of the novel, Kortenaar argues that the widespread critical discussions of the its appeal to colonial mimicry and use of post-modernist pastiche do not exhaust it. Rushdie, an idealist rather than a materialist, would be concerned first and foremost with how ideas come into being and with their strategies in the war for hegemony and survival (Kortenaar 353). For the critic, in its inquiries on newness and how it enters the world, Rushdie's novel presents a series of new ideas, all products of the twentieth century, in conflict with each other, ideas like the militant Islam of the Imam, the Sikh nationalism of the terrorist hijackers and the radical aesthetic of popular music and culture, all of which have as a backdrop the pilgrimage led by the prophet Ayesha to Mecca in the backwaters of India.

This struggle between monotheism and paganism, religion and secularism, tradition and modernity, prophecy and satire in Rushdie's novel, for Kortenaar, ultimately means that an idea never enters the world alone but in mortal combat with another. It needs a devil as much as an angel, a blasphemer as much as a prophet (Kortenaar 356). Accordingly, in *The Satanic Verses,* the prophet Mahound divides the world into angelic and demonic forces, Gibreel divides it into dreams and waking reality. The newness Rushdie would be concerned with would then enter the world as rival frames that violently oscillate in tandem. For Kortenaar, what Rushdie's novel illustrates is that, "if entering the world always leaves one vulnerable to parody, I am arguing that that is because parody of the other is precisely the way one enters the world" (357).

Kortenaar's work, with his metaphor of oscillating frames, highlights the fact that ideas, cultural formations, and ultimately also forms of identity in Rushdie's novel are marked by a fundamental splitting motion. Kortenaar can then align *The Satanic Verses*'s shifting narrative framework and its take on in-betweenness not with the perspective characters like Zeeny Vakil put forward, but rather with the more nuanced perspective on hybridity and mimicry defended by Homi Bhbabha. In doing so,

Kortenaar also (and indirectly) points to the complex relation of inheritance and deviation this dissertation has been discussing in relation to Rushdie's novels and *Paradise Lost*. The critic's work and his perception of the prophet/devil dynamic as structuring *The Satanic Verses* thus becomes another indirect way of assessing *destinerrance* and its operation in the novel.

For Kortenaar, Mahound's prophesying and Rushdie's satire involve inventing and wrestling with two opposing doubles. Mahound relies on the angel for his divine revelation, but finds that this requires him to accord the devil just as much power. Rushdie, the secular novelist, invents Baal, a character like himself in spirit, yet this invention relies on a character as much unlike the novelist as possible: the prophet Mahound. Kortenaar's reading of the novel is more consistent with Rushdie's fiction than Brennan's, for example, in that it does not ascribe a central premise to it and then tries to stretch it over the entire body of the text, thus accounting for its paradoxes and ambiguities. Kortenaar understands that, for Rushdie, cultural formations and the discourses he plies together in the novel necessarily produce their others and are in turn informed by them. In this way, identity cannot be separated from parody and performance, good from evil, truth from myth, imperial center from colonial margin. Rushdie then becomes not a prophet but a spokesman for a kind of prophetic, contingent, ambivalent newness.

It is this process of production of others, a generative doubling that allows a secular text such as *The Satanic Verses* to construe itself in dialogue with such a religiously charged text like *Paradise Lost*. In this way, Milton's satanic rhetoric and his exploration of the motif of the fall can be emptied by Rushdie of their drive for didactic or moralizing content and the epic can come across to the twenty-first century via Rushdie's fiction, not in theological indoctrination or, to borrow Kortenaar's term, as a culture of tradition, but in its other, that is, in a "satanic" transgression of authorized discourses and in accommodating ambiguity and doubt. And as Rushdie mediates the

reception of Milton in his (mis)readings and redirecting of these inherited images and discourses, the epic is emptied of its founding, originary status in relation to his work.

Rushdie's re-contextualization of the motif of the fall in *Paradise Lost* thus show the epic as a text, in itself, always already open to this possibility of production of difference and the possibility of misdirection. In *The Satanic Verses*, this process of production of the newness Kortenaar identifies is further intensified as good and evil, center and margin, England and India, are constantly being produced and are mutually constitutive, never present unto themselves except as trace of the other. In *The Satanic Verses* this is not only what the immigrant forcefully presents to the "Englishness" Chamcha so assiduously courts, but what *he* must also come to terms with.

The fall(s) in *The Satanic Verses* signifies, ultimately, a fall from all sense of wholeness of histories, words and identities, both individual and collective. Rushdie expands the image of the fall of Gibreel and Chamcha and their attending mutation to engage the discussion of the ferociously fluid cultural, social and economic boundaries that are a result of (de)colonization. And this discussion is brought home to the former imperial power in the notorious words of Whiskey Sisodia: "The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (*Verses* 343).

The immigrant identities that jostle for expression inside the postwar England portrayed in the novel, in the words of Sisodia, confront it with a history that is not "out there" but its *own.* What Rushdie seems to be arguing is that the immigrant's position is not just a matter of re-appropriating images constructed by the Western gaze as a form of resistance, and which leaves colonized peoples in the role of debtors no matter how much they re-work those images to their advantage. Rushdie plays on imagery to bring to the fore the fact that all histories, discourses, ideas and identities, Eastern and Western, colonizer and colonized, are counter or inter productive. In Rushdie's novel,

Brennan's affirmation that it is only in relation that the constructed "truths" of identity are imagined seems to be the guiding premise.

Sisodia's words should be taken with another episode in *The Satanic Verses*. Sitting in her living room every night, Rosa Diamond awaits the ghosts of History's unfinished business, brought over on the Norman ships that invaded England centuries ago.

> Nine hundred years ago this was all under water, this portioned shore, this private beach, its shingle rising steeply towards the little row of flaky-paint villas with their peeling boathouses crammed full of deckchairs, empty picture frames, ancient tuck boxes stuffed with bundles of letters tied up in ribbons, mothballed silk-and-lace lingerie, the tearstained reading matter of once-young girls, lacrosse sticks, stamp albums, and all the buried treasure-chests of memories and lost time [...] Nine hundred years! Nine centuries past, the Norman fleet had sailed right through this Englishwoman's home. On clear nights when the moon was full, she waited for its shining, revenant ghost. (*Verses* 129)

History is a haunting, Rushdie suggests, whose macro size events co-exist with the prosaic stuff of everyday life. What the Norman ships remind Rosa and the reader of, amidst the latest imperial thrust in England (the war over the Falklands against Argentina referred to in the novel) is that this too, as all places, is a site of conquest, imagined beside/against the imagining of its conquerors.

In Rosa's sightings of William the Conk and her confused rantings about her love affair with the gaucho Martin de la Cruz on the Argentine pampa, to the monsters at the hospital to which Saladin is taken, the novel seems to be asking: to what point are we (un)made by our narratives in the aftermath of colonialism? What happens when they fall apart? Rushdie launches such questions in the troubles of Saladin Chamcha who, after his fall, finds his image of England and of himself shattered.

Against the accusations made by the hospital's patients (all of them immigrants) that they are monstrous because they have been so described by white society, and it alone has power over narrative, is the underlying irony that it is perhaps Saladin, in his dreams of England, who has most helped to construe that authoritative image himself.

A critique that could be made to Rushdie's novel, and is indeed made by Timothy Brennan, is that it cannot conceive of minority cultures as cultures that affirm while they protest.

> Despite the fresh thinking about national form, about a new homelessness that is also worldliness, about a double-edged colonial responsibility, *The Satanic Verses* shows how strangely detached and insensitive the logic of cosmopolitan universality can be. It may be, as he says, that "bigotry is not only a function of power," but it does not seem adequate in the particular immigration/acculturation complex of contemporary Britain that the central issue is one of human evil. The means of distributing that evil are obviously very unequal, and the violence that comes from defending one's identity or livelihood as opposed to one's privileges is not the same. (Brennan165)

The greatest problem facing "post-colonial" writing such as Rushdie's then would still be its incapacity to conceive of the colonial as having a voice that matters. Perhaps this is more a function of Brennan's reading than of Rushdie's fiction itself. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie portrays a world in which the distribution of power is, undeniably, unequal. However, he does not subscribe to marked divisions such as "First vs. Third World", center vs. margin, etc. Rushdie chooses rather to portray the effects of the colonial encounter, in their ambiguities, discontinuities and injustices, as a mutually constitutive experience. It is this detachment from the concerns of those "defending their identities and livelihoods" against those defending privilege, this focus on what issues such as truth, good, evil, history, identity, mean for human communities as

opposed to the evils committed by empire, that Brennan finds so unsatisfactory. This may be so. But given the in-between position of a writer such as Rushdie, it is an effective answer to the problematic of ethical representations of such disparate communities and to the issue of cultural dependence aimed at his work.

Rushdie's use of the fall image or motif dominates *The Satanic Verses* to produce a novel that questions colonial divisions from a post-colonial stance. As we have suggested above, this motif is worked into a satanic perspective on the events in the novel staged by Rushdie's narrator, a perspective that, much like Rushdie's fallen imagery, could also be read in terms of a *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*.

The narrator of *The Satanic Verses* is an ambiguous, shifting entity which, until halfway through the novel, the reader cannot situate as either demonic or divine. In his critical volume on Rushdie's fiction Roger Clark takes a close look at what he feels has puzzled Rushdie criticism to such an extent that it has been largely neglected: the workings of otherworldly elements. For Clark, in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie engages in a narrative experimentation that pushes the role of the Devil to a dangerous extreme (129). In *Paradise Lost*, allowing his Satan to speak for himself and to present a compelling argument, Milton does the same.

> What matter where, if I be still the same,
> And what should I be, all but less then he
> Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
> We shall be free; th'Almighty hath not built
> Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
> Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n. (*Paradise Lost* I, 254-64)

Satan invests his rebellion with pathos, characterizing obedience to God as an all-too-easy acceptance of the servile yoke, a choice he aligns to a false servility and self-

serving humility that serves only to bolster a ruler’s vanity. It is this perspective, interrupted at times by the epic’s narrator, that Milton will allow to guide the first books of *Paradise Lost* and which Rushdie seems to recover in his stretching of the devil’s role. In the novel, however, for Clark, unlike Milton’s epic, the inevitable outcome is the tragic triumph of evil.

Clark draws a parallel between the fall of man, Shakespeare’s *Othello* and Rushdie’s novel, suggested also by the narrator’s wry comparisons of Chamcha to Iago. In a masterfully designed triple parallel, Rushdie would have Chamcha/Satan/Iago drive Gibreel/Adam/Othello to murder Alleluia/Eve/Desdemona. As a counterpoint to the satanic narrator wielding all the strings and driving the characters to their respective ends, Clark sees a confluence of Shakespearean pathos and Sufi mysticism in characters such as Sufyan and Alleluia Cone. In these characters the novel would hint at a deeper ideal of unity and love, even if ultimately unfulfilled (178).

For Clark, concerns with worldly politics and the “Rushdie Affair” have taken precedence over these otherworldly aspects that are, for him, central to understanding the novel. He argues that

> Without a closer look at these otherworldly politics one can easily overlook Rushdie’s most disturbing construction: a narrator who swoops in and out of the text like an evil wind. Like a mad captain this sinister guide steers the massive structure of the novel straight into an icy wall. (Clark 129)

In this reading, Rushdie has an essentially evil Satan irrupt into the narrative to play puppet master, using Chamcha as a pawn in his cosmic war against God, salvation and mysticism and Gabriel, his archangelic rival into whose mock parody the narrator fashions Gibreel. From this satanic perspective, Clark argues, Rushdie conflates the

satanic verses episode involving Mohammed, the jealousy plot of Othello, the mythic fall of Adam and Eve and Sufi mysticism.

Clark's reading of otherworldly elements in the novel is valid, and a satanic narrator is essential to the novel's sliding fabric of worlds. It is this figure we see rewriting its own fall and that of the protagonists, manipulating Chamcha and crushing the mystical aspirations of Sufyan and Alleluia. This demonic voice that constantly interrupts the narrative flow with its own interpretations and comments on the events represented, much like Milton's character, is bent on justifying not God's but Satan's ways to man. And as Milton does in *Paradise Lost*, Rushdie allows this seductive voice to argue its own case in depth

But although critics like Clark have pointed out the lines quoted directly from the epic by Rushdie, they have not picked up on how Milton's rhetoric, allowing as it does for Satan to speak for himself, and make quite a convincing argument while at it up until the last two Books of *Paradise Lost,* has opened to narratives such as *The Satanic Verses* alternative explorations of the fundamentals of good and evil, or at least other literary possibilities of their representation.

This demonic narrator in the novel observes the fall of Saladin and Gibreel, taking responsibility for their mutation and declaring itself an omnipotent entity

> I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and – potence, I'm making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope. Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed. Which was the miracle worker? Of what type – angelic, satanic – was Farishta's song? Who am I? Let's put it this way: who has the best tunes? (*Verses* 10)

Rushdie's satanic narrator defines good and evil as a simple matter of tunes/verses instead of absolute categories, it relying on the reader to decide which sound more convincing. Rushdie's narrator thus shares with Milton's Satan the same *modus*

*operandi,* a resort to manipulation of language (the songs and verses) and a sowing of the true opposite of faith, doubt.

This highlighting of the manipulation of language or narrative is scattered throughout *Paradise Lost* in the superficial, fallen logic mouthed by Satan. It is once more brought to the fore in Book V as the means by which Satan, already fallen, instigates the fall of the other angels by having them doubt God's account of Divine creation. Milton has his Satan rally his followers with verses admonishing God's power over narrative.

> That we were formed then saist thou? And the work
> Of secondary hands, by task transferred
> From Father to his Son? Strange point and new!
> Doctrin which we would know whence learnt. (*Paradise Lost*, V, 853-56)

As none can remember a time when they were not as they are now, how to confirm God's narrative of Himself as self-begot, self-raised entity, a narrative through which He places Himself at the centre of creation? For Satan, this narrative of creation is only prevalent because it is backed up by superior force in arms. In *The Satanic Verses*, in a parallel move, Rushdie's narrator pits good against evil by reducing them also to verses and making them a simple matter of choice, a move that reverberates in the Jahilia chapters and that serves the novel's larger questioning of forms of identity/identification we have been discussing.

For a train of scholarship that sees the satanic rebellion written by Milton (perhaps even in spite of himself) as the driving force of the epic, this argument and the seed of doubt it successfully plants are fundamental. Rushdie's novel, portraying a satanic voice speaking for itself seems to side with these readings of *Paradise Lost*, placing doubt and ambiguity everywhere before the reader. And as in the novel very few (if any) answers are unequivocally provided, this satanic narration seems to be linked to its overall questioning of unequivocal, authoritative (god-like) truth.

Rushdie’s ambiguous narrator, like Milton’s character, involves the reader in its rhetoric, piling quotations upon quotations, verses upon verses, ending with the question: are they sacred or satanic? How to tell? If there is no clear distinction, then are not faith and truth simply an issue of who (en)chants the best verses? Thus, Rushdie’s narrative mode draws heavily on a Satan written not in scripture but in *Paradise Lost*. However, whereas in Milton’s epic the space awarded the character has been explained away by critics such as Stanley Fish as the response the text purposefully elicits from is reader, serving a chastising, moralizing purpose, Rushdie’s sowing of doubt can be seen to feed into the larger project not of didacticism but of questioning of metanarratives and of the fixed notions of identity, subjectivity and nationality they give rise to in an (neo)colonial cultural, social, political and economic framework.

Rushdie’s narrator, like Gibreel when he takes on the persona of the archangel, is bent on revelation. But instead of replacing one revelation for another, *The Satanic Verses* launches its reader into a discussion of truth, that is, God’s domain. The question the text seems to be asking is: How does truth come about? Who or what ratifies it, stamping it with the mark of authenticity? In the novel this reinforces its reflections on the power of narrative in conforming identities, both individual and collective, that will be taken up once more in Malik Solanka’s attempts at creation in *Fury.*

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator’s role, according to one way of seeing things; he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in this struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. (*Verses* 49)

As Satan in *Paradise Lost,* Rushdie’s narrator becomes the advocate of a fiction of self-creation. And like Milton’s Satan, this transgression of the narrative of divine

creation is invested with heroism and pathos. In Milton, Satan convinces his followers that truth is not self-standing but is a function of (God's) power over narrative. For Satan, the issue of truth becomes an issue of language and its mastery, and accordingly he twists language to suit his purpose. *The Satanic Verses* re-works this kind of satanic logic, linking it to the transgression of authorized colonial discourses begun in his exploration of the fall and all its consequences.

Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* with its rewriting of the fall and narrative of a satanic self-vindication thus matches the scope of Milton's epic; but by denying its reader the comfort of prophetic revelations of future redemption, the novel plays itself out as a mock parody of it. Instead of the two characters looking outwards to their choice of a place of rest that ends *Paradise Lost*, Rushdie's novel ends in an understated manner, without much to say about its devilish character or without much further interruption from its satanic narrator.

In these approximations and deviations of *Paradise Lost* in the novel, and indeed in all of Rushdie's fiction, we could say Milton enters Rushdie's text "by the back door". The epic's "influence" is thus felt not as *presence* but in terms of activation of different narrative forms of representing issues of faith, good and evil, empire, (post)colonialism and identity that span Rushdie's work. It is in this way that a fervently religious reformist poet can be "chosen" in the fiction of such a secular author.

The *destinerrance* that allows for the fashioning of this satanic narrator has produced different critical responses. Roger Clark astutely picks up on the suggestion of a possible demonic possession of Chamcha and Gibreel during their fall, a possession which in the former is felt as a will to live so strong it takes over his body and leads him to grab Gibreel "by the balls" and have him take on the persona of the archangel, commanding him to sing and to fly. However, as he progresses in his reading of the novel, Clark seems to press the association rather too far, tending to see the satanic narration, its duping of the characters and the necessity of detection on the

reader's part of just how fallen its discourse is as the *raison d'etre* of the entire text (181). Clark thus falls into the critical trap of taking an interpretative thread and having it explain the whole novel. And if the whole text is Satan's take on the fall and on the revelations made to prophets like Mahound, one could inquire of Clark's reading: is Rushdie saying there are only demonic forces at work in the universe?

To counteract such evil, destructive forces, Clark sees in Alleluia Cone a chance of redemption. It is not only her name but also her mysticism, her frosty persona and her determination of climbing as close as possible towards Heaven that associates her to the Almighty's icy, aloof domains (Clark 181). But if Allie is to symbolize redemption, Clark idealizes the love between her and Gibreel as celestial, something Rushdie does not. As Alleluia herself admits to Chamcha, their relationship is prosaically based on sex.

For Clark, Alleluia Cone, much as the other characters in the novel, tries to find a measure of redemption in the chaotic world Rushdie builds. However, it seems that, to support his reading, Clark must attribute to her all the possibilities of good that the satanic narration precludes. However, if we look back to the novel, Allie is portrayed more ironically. The seeker of transcendence, she still cannot extricate herself from a purely sexually gratifying relationship, another of the paradoxes Rushdie puts before his reader. And if we bear in mind the fact that she and Gibreel meet just at the moment he loses his faith in God, Alleluia could just as easily be read as another instance of the kind of mock parody Rushdie delights in. Just as he is not the archangel, she is not pure love incarnate; their highly sexually charged relationship could be seen to function as a mockery of his (Gibreel's) failed attempts at climbing figuratively the holy mountain of faith and piety.

*The Satanic Verses* further does not seem to subscribe to the idea that evil can be purged from human beings, as Clark's reading of characters such as Alleluia and Sufyan implies. This is perhaps a function of the novel's rather obscure and

understated ending. Chamcha's return to Bombay could be read as a measure of redemption, of an embracing of his 'Indianness' through his reverting to his full name, in his relationship with Zeeny Vakil and his final reconciliation with his father. However, the text seems oddly reluctant to comment on it. Against the rhetorical superabundance of the previous chapters, the last is strangely muted. Once more Rushdie leaves it to his reader to determine who or what is the victor here. This is perhaps a solution more coherent with Rushdie's overall literary scheme than an argument for the final victory of evil would be, but it is an undecidability that critics like Clark seem ill at ease with.

For Clark, the positive characters like Alleluia and Sufyan are finally marginalized in the narrative. The question he then asks himself is what is the value of a drama that ends with the triumph of evil? The answer, for Clark, is that the scenario is meaningless, just as the evil Shakespeare's Iago stands for is without any positive or redeeming features. Clark's solution is to affirm that

> While the text is meaningless on the level of the satanic narrator's vision – it affirms the value of love and tolerance on a symbolic and mystical level. The suffering caused by the satanic narrator gains meaning when readers recognize his divisive scheming, when they sympathize with the victims of his manipulations, and when they see that the initial explosion of the plane Bostan is echoed in the gunfire that twice stops Alleluia from climbing to God and thus actualizing the deepest meaning of her name. (181)

These lines suggest that, if the reader has read the novel properly (that is, the way Clark is reading it) and is capable of accessing this underlying aspect of it, the narrative can become everything the satanic narrator does not mean it to be. In other words, if the reader is able to see through Satan's verses and sympathize with the true victims, a path to redemption is, at last, found.

This "didactic" turn in Clark's reading of *The Satanic Verses* bears a startling resemblance to Stanley Fish's reading of *Paradise Lost*. Both critics take the position of an underlying and seductive satanic argument in the text which the reader must see through, instead of identifying with. If the didacticism eludes the reader, he/she has not read the text properly. Or worse, has fallen into evil once more.

We could argue, contrary to readings such as Clark's, that instead of trying to make the whole novel cohere around one point, a more productive reading of *The Satanic Verses* would be to see the shifts in the narrator's persona, the physical metamorphosis of Chamcha and the dubious transformation of Gibreel into angel in terms of a probing of fixed, distinct categorizations produced inside colonial discourses. In this way, the novel sets itself up not as an alternative Quran, as Brennan has argued, but as a mock epic in which the characters on both sides of the colonial divide are not thrown out of their secure Edens, as Adam and Eve are, but, more in line with Satan, have any stable versions of paradise wrenched out of them.

*The Moor's Last Sigh* and history's unstable Edens

The idea of a shaking of stable versions of paradise touched on in The *Satanic Verses* appears again in one of Rushdie's later novels, *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The novel tells the story of the erstwhile powerful da Gama/Zogoiby dynasty through the pen of its last surviving member Moraes Zogoiby, also called Moor. The novel is usually read by Rushdie critics alongside *Midnight's Children*, as both texts combine the narrative of a family saga with a fictional rendition of Indian history. Thus, for Nicole Thiara, in both novels Rushdie consistently personifies post-independence India in characters who re-live and re-create national history in a semi-allegorical way (1). But whereas the ambiguous ending of Rushdie's previous novel leaves room for optimism, as a new generation of children better equipped to face the challenges brought about by independence bides its time, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, written over a decade later, presents a far bleaker view of the subcontinent. And as Moor's tale of his family troubles, the independence struggles, the post-independence conflicts over constructions of a national identity and the foothold rapacious globalized capital takes in India unfurls, the novel's outlook on the country becomes increasingly dystopian.

Moor's narrative, as Saleem Sinai's, ties ancestry to history, a connection that leads him to situate his telling of the subcontinent's turbulent past in the da Gama/Zogoiby family homes. But while Saleem's story stages its narrator's wish for meaning and coherence, Moor's narrative, picking up where the previous novel left off, enacts rather a breakdown of all of its renditions of India as fundamentalism and capitalist interest come increasingly to set the political tone in the country.

Through Moor's perspective, Rushdie writes the da Gama/Zogoiby homes as the edenic sites in which both family and national history are staged: Francisco da Gama's ancestral home on Cabral Island, Aurora Zogoiby's Elephanta, Abraham's thirty-first floor Eden of business and corruption, and lastly Vasco Miranda's retreat in

Spain, a gross imitation of Aurora's vision of an eclectic, fundamentally hybrid, yet unified nation. In the novel, Rushdie thus stages nationness in post-colonial India, from the secular, optimistic nehruvianism that set the political tone in the country after independence to the rise of religious fundamentalism and rampant capitalism in the 1990s, not in "factual" or historical autobiography but in Moor's renditions of a paradisiacal space. As his narrative unfurls, the novel stretches and finally collapses these edenic renditions of the national project as they (as well as Moor himself) come to be linked to the motif of the fall and are emptied of all stability, ending finally in the grotesque Little Alhambra representative of Vasco Miranda's insanity.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie, in keeping with his previous novels, thus takes up imagery that is central to a Christian epic tradition. In the novel he seems concerned again with experimenting with how far the edenic imagery and fall motif can be re-signified, writing them over with his own palimpsest India of appropriated discourses. Tying its literary imaginings of India to Moor's family homes, re-cast as unstable Edens, the novel also specifically harks back to and plays up problematic aspects of Milton's imagining of the pre-lapsarian garden in *Paradise Lost*. And although these troubling aspects of the depictions of Eden have been discussed in Milton scholarship, their repercussion on the literature that references his work is still largely ignored.

In *Paradise Lost* the reader curiously first glimpses Eden not through the eyes of Adam and Eve but of Satan. Offering up a satanic perspective on the pre-lapsarian paradisiacal garden, Milton's first portrayal of it is thus already rather unsettling.

> So on he fares, and to the border comes,
>
> Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
>
> Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green,
>
> As with a rural mound the champain head
>
> Of a steep wilderness, whose hairie sides

> With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wilde,
>
> Access deni'd. (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 131-37)

Bordered by this overgrown wilderness, Milton's Eden is a garden in which shrubs and tangling bushes, growing amid lofty trees, block the path of man and animals, where brooks flow "with mazie error". These brooks water flowers "which not nice Art/In beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon/Powrd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine" (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 241-43) and among which vines creep, gently and luxuriant.

This portrayal of Eden, underscored by a disquieting wantonness, is mirrored in Eve at the moment the reader first beholds her. While Adam's hair hangs in manly clusters above broad shoulders, Eve "as a veil down to the slender waste/Her unadorned golden tresses wore/Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets wave'd/As the Vine curles her tendrils" (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 304-07). From the offset, although still unfallen, Milton's depiction of Eve and particularly of Eden are ambivalent and unsteady, shifting between the narrator's affirmations of pre-lapsarian purity and innocence and an underlying tendency to wildness. It is with this particular portrayal of Eden that Rushdie's unstable Edens of national and family history dialogue.

Looking at such passages in *Paradise Lost*, John Rumrich argues that the readers of the epic are consistently faced with a lack of meaning. For the critic, if the reader sympathizes with Satan in the poem it is not due to an underlying didacticism that relies on this identification to function, but because, like the reader, Satan also is confused by the text (22). Against the prescriptive and authoritative persona construed in much contemporary criticism, Rumrich argues rather for Milton as a poet who persistently tackles indeterminacy as a vital dimension of human experience, a poet who has found ways of incorporating and accommodating uncertainty in his most celebrated text.

Picking up on this element of uncertainty that haunts what we could argue should be the most stable of places in Milton's text, Sá argues that the Miltonic pre-

lapsarian Eden already carries within it the potential for excess and uncontainability. In *Paradise Lost*, the reader would find a garden whose exuberant fertility goes hand in hand with an authorized excess. For the critic, it is a concept of nature that allows for the exceeding of limits, a nature inclined to a lack of control which, in the incipient orientalist mindset of seventeenth century England, is linked to both the physical and interpretative territories of the colony (Sá, "O Jardim" 63). In this same line of arguments, Greene goes on to affirm that this orientalist train identified by Sá in Milton's descriptions of Eden is what would lead to the atmosphere he (Greene) identifies of excessive pleasure in paradise, an invitation to indolence and an underlying highly charged sexuality (Greene 86).

Thus, from the beginning, Milton's descriptions of Eden can be read as disquieting, revealing, as Sá has argued, a pre-lapsarian paradise that is neither unique, immutable or stable, but a space which, while it encompasses notions of completeness and freedom without corruption, does not sustain the idea of balance or fixity ("O Jardim" 67). In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie takes up the founding myth of a Christian Arcadia, but it is in Milton's unstable version of Eden that he seems to situate his own depictions of Indian history, along with the problematic constructions of national identity following colonialism and the conflicting states of being both Indian and outsiders his in-between characters experience. Rushdie's treatment of India via Moor's edenic spaces as mired in contradictions and shortcomings, similarly to Milton, pushes the boundaries of the Christian epic genre he "inherits".

Thus, in Moor's Edens we can see a simultaneous play of inheritance and deviation, an indirect working of literary influence that picks up threads in the "predecessor" text of *Paradise Lost* and (re)contextualizes them in ways that resonate with Rushdie's own literary project and with the cultural formations with which his work engages. In this *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's literary depiction of Eden finds a place in Rushdie's fiction, from which it branches out into a discussion of history, of

the constructions of post-colonial nationness amid conflicting communal identifications and globalized reconfigurations of colonial power relations, a discussion that, as the previous section on *The Satanic Verses* illustrates, Rushdie's work consistently explores.

Paralleling Milton's choices in his epic treatment of Eden, Rushdie inflates the range and scope of his own literary effort. The images of Eden construed by the novel's narrator and his desire, akin to Saleem Sinai's, to write what could best be termed as an overarching cosmology of the subcontinent, lends the text an epic thrust that had already appeared in *The Satanic Verses* and in *Midnight's Children.* In Moor's narrative this drive is foreshadowed in the work of his mother, Aurora Zogoiby, from whom he inherits in large part his views on post-colonial national identifications, and her constant efforts at shaping a national consciousness capable of coming to terms with the subcontinent's explosive heterogeneity.

Aurora's very first attempt at painting tackles creation itself, matching visually the scope of Milton's work.

> Every inch of the walls and even the ceiling of the room pullulated with figures, human and animal, real and imaginary, drawn in a sweeping black line that transformed itself constantly, that filled here and there into huge blocks of colour, the red of the earth, the purple and vermilion of the sky, the forty shades of green; a line so muscular and free, so teeming, so violent, that Camoens with a proud father's bursting heart found himself saying, 'But it is the great swarm of being itself.' (*Moor's* 59)

Aurora's first piece thus aligns her with other Rushdie figures such as the narrator of *The Satanic Verses, Fury's* Malik Solanka and even Saleem Sinai, those other creators and manipulators of their own cosmologies. But while in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie's discussion of creation centers on the crumbling of any strict separation between good

and evil, imperial center and colonial outpost, in *Fury* on the pitfalls of the misguided creator and in *Midnight's Children* on the futility of the search for fixed meaning, in Aurora's work creation is necessarily bound up with creation of a post-colonial national identity, something Moor's narration will echo.

At the center of this very first painting is an eclectic collection of influences that Aurora's work, and to an extent also her son's narrative, will take as the guiding premise for the creation of a national mythos.

> She had put history on the walls, King Gondophares inviting St. Thomas the Apostle to India; and from the North, Emperor Asoka with his Pillars of Law […] and from her own South she had chosen the battle of Srirangapatnam and the sword of Tipu Sultan and the magic fortress of Golconda where a man speaking normally in the gatehouse may be heard clearly in the citadel and the coming long ago of the Jews. Modern history was there too, there were jails full of passionate men, Congress and Muslim League, Nehru Gandhi Jinnah Patel Bose Azad, and British soldiers whispering rumours of an approaching war […] In an honoured place was Vasco da Gama himself, setting his foot on Indian soil, sniffing the air, and seeking out whatever was spicy and hot and made money. (*Moor's* 59)

Aurora's canvasses are thus celebratory of a constitutive hybridity that, however plural and multi-faceted can, nevertheless, be brought to coalesce into a unified, distinctively 'Indian' national consciousness. Her work is described in the novel by Vasco Miranda as epic-fabulist because it plays not only with her dreams but with the dream-like wonder of the waking world, words that could well be applied to Rushdie himself as an author.

But although it is this leaking into each other of cosmology and national myth, undercut by family history, that we see resonate in Moor's choice and exploration of a

*destinerrant* edenic imagery in his narrative, for Rushdie this still seems to be a problematic version of hybridity, one that is couched on a resolution into a unified, collusive sense of national identity emanating from a distinctively upper-class, cosmopolitan intelligentsia. As the novel progresses, in a parallel downward spiral to Aurora's dwindling influence on political affairs, Moor's first two Edens slowly fade into irrelevance until nothing is left of them except Vasco Miranda's bizarre mock-epic imitation of Aurora's vision. In light of the failures attending the national project, Rushdie suggests that the only narrative rendition left possible is Miranda's parody of Aurora's sweeping epic style and the remains of Moor's disjointed, scattered writings.

Aurora's first painting, interweaving cosmology and nationness, is also the first site in which both are linked to ancestry. From the outset, her canvasses unite family and nation, the private space of the home and the public stage of the masses, presenting a very particular vision of India that that Moor will, to an extent, eventually inherit.

> Aurora had composed the giant work in such a way that the images of her own family had to fight their way through this hyperabundance of imagery, she was suggesting that the privacy of Cabral Island was an illusion and this mountain, this hive, this endlessly metamorphic line of humanity was the truth… And it was all set in a landscape that made Camoens tremble to see it, for it was Mother India herself, Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion, Mother India who loved and betrayed and ate and destroyed and again loved her children, and with whom the children's passionate conjoining and eternal quarrel stretched beyond the grave. (*Moor's* 60-1)

Aurora's rendition of India, which will leak into Moor's first two unstable Edens, encompasses both creative and destructive forces, birth and death, love and hate. Her painting adopts a mythic romantic mode in which history, family, politics, nationalism

and fantasy jostle together. Her version of Mother-India, as Moor's turns out to be, is a mother of cities and contradictions, "heartless and lovable, brilliant and dark, multiple and lonely, mesmeric and repugnant, pregnant and empty, truthful and deceitful" (*Moor's* 204).

However, as Aurora's brand of national mythologizing is first problematized and later written over by fundamentalism, on the one hand, and the kind of trans-national capitalist exploitation described by Silviano Santiago on the other, Rushdie's narrator seems increasingly to attest to the kind of failed cosmopolitics Pranav Jani has seen underlying his work. Through this perspective, Rushdie's novel puts forth, implicitly, the view critics like Walter Mignolo have defended as the arena of cosmopolitan fiction *par excellence* (an arena in which Rushdie, in the scholarly assessment of his work, has been firmly placed): the critique of benevolent notions of inclusion of minorities or margins in post-colonial nations into an ideal of citizenship that, couched on dialectical notions of hybridity, still preserves the notions of nationness, national identity and belonging consolidated within the framework of European colonizing Enlightenment, a framework which either unleashes nativist fundamentalism or perversely re-works itself into ever new structures of dependence and exploitation.

Mired in this problematic, Aurora's art and her vision of independent India leak into Moor's narrative. Like Saleem Sinai's, his story is also colored by a falling from a personal tale into the harshness of national politics. This is perhaps one of the reasons why his depictions of India have for a basis his paradisiacal family homes. Moor describes the arrival of his great-grandparents at the cradle of the da Gama name and fortune, Cabral Island.

> At the dawn of the century she [Epifania] came on Great-Grandfather Francisco's arm to Cabral Island, the first of my story's four sequestered, serpented, Edenic-infernal, private universes. (My mother's Malabar Hill salon was the second; my father's sky-garden, the third; and Vasco

> Miranda's bizarre redoubt, his 'Little Alhambra' in Benengeli, Spain, was, is, and will in this telling become, my last). (*Moor's* 15)

Far from welcoming associations to fixity and stability, these paradisiacal sites are quickly characterized by Moor as ambivalent, as both holy and serpented, Edenic and infernal, pre-lapsarian and always-already fallen. From the start of the narrative, it seems intimations of a fall surround Rushdie's characters and the spaces they inhabit, intimations that are reflected also on India. What Rushdie seems to be suggesting in his aligning of India to Moor's unstable Edens, contrarily to *Midnight's Children*, is that these intimations are rather confirmed, as its inhabitants consistently fail to live up to the possibilities and the dreams born with independence.

The home on Cabral Island consolidates the central role national affairs take on in the da Gama family concerns. Rushdie writes the ancestral family home as not simply the cradle of the family fortunes but also of the nascent independence movement. Francisco da Gama and his son Camoens, Aurora's father, are prominent figures in the anti-British struggle. Camoens da Gama inherits his father's secular, modernizing brand of nationalism. However, even in these early days of anti-colonial uprising, Rushdie signals a discomfort. For Aurora and for Moor, Camoens's capacity for accommodating the internal disparities of the denouncement of Empire and a fierce love of English literature, "his willingness to permit the coexistence within himself of conflicting impulses" (*Moor's* 32), is the source of his full, gentle, humaneness. But Camoens, as his father before him and Aurora herself, is still unable to reconcile village India, with its religious persuasions, with his progressive national dream in any other way than assimilation. Likewise, he does not seem to give much thought to the place of subaltern groups within this new India, responding with a shrug to the contradiction pointed out between his egalitarian ideals and the reality of his social position, "'everyone should live well, isn't it,' he was fond of saying. 'Cabral Island for all, that is my motto'" (*Moor's* 32).

Francisco's home in Cochin, Moor's first Eden, much like Aurora's Elephanta, is thus associated to a modernizing view of nationness and to the independence movement of the turn of the twentieth century. In the figure of Camoens, however, the novel very early on points to the crippling distance between this naïve upper-class vision of the nation, despite its flaunting of ideals such as hybridity and its superficial embracing of national heterogeneity, and the impoverished, marginalized realities of the majority of its population. The da Gamas's failure to acknowledge these varying aspects of India on any other terms than engulfment by their version of national identity is mirrored in the bloody battle that eventually rages between the family members themselves once Francisco is dead and Camoens imprisoned. As a consequence of these internal disputes, people are murdered, the family fortune dwindles, and Francisco's Eden of nationalist modernism and progress is shaken from within.

In the figures of Francisco and especially of his son Camoens, it could be argued that ultimately "what *The Moor's Last Sigh* offers is an interrogation of the liberal multiculturalist terms with which secular nationalism constructs a unifying narrative for the modern nation" (Gabriel 79). Camoens's, and later Aurora's, brand of secular nationalism are characterized by the novel as, on the one hand, an idealized vision of community, and on the other as intrinsically divorced from the real concerns of the majority of its citizenship. The very fact that Camoens, a "passive positive" constantly criticized for his political inaction, is the book's exemplar of Nehruvian secularism, signals Rushdie's characteristic resort to mockery of its blindspots and shortcomings.

Despite this problematic, a version of Camoens's hybrid India is an enduring ideal in Aurora's and Moor's artistic and literary output. For Aurora, palimpsest India is translated not only in her epic-fabulist initial canvasses, but also in her later depictions of her son Moraes as Boabdil, the last ruler of Arab Spain before its conquest by Catholicism. In these canvasses, Aurora uses a culture she sees as inherently eclectic

as a backdrop to her own views on what Indian politics following independence should be. Moor-as-Boabdil is linked, through his mother's art, to a unity-in-difference imagining of the Indian nation that becomes popular among its upper classes. Aurora's vision of India is

> A vision of weaving, or more accurately interweaving. In a way these were polemical pictures, in a way they were an attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation; she was using Arab Spain to re-imagine India, and this land-sea-scape in which the land could be fluid and the sea stone-dry was her metaphor – idealized? Sentimental? Probably – of the present, and the future, that she hoped would evolve. So, yes, there was a didacticism here, but what with the vivid surrealism of her images and the kingfisher brilliance of her colouring and the dynamic acceleration of her brush, it was easy not to feel preached at, to revel in the carnival without listening to the preacher. (*Moor's* 227)

Aurora's work literally becomes the canvas on which a celebratory vision of her version of a hybrid India is imaged. Moor's use of Milton's unstable edenic imagery will play, palimpsest and *destinerrant*-like, onto his mother's appropriations of Moorish Spain as he takes on the role of attempting to construct a comprehensive picture of the subcontinent. Through Aurora and Moor and their literary/artistic production, Rushdie both puts forth the celebratory secular, hybrid nationalism that resulted from decolonization, but also denounces its shortcomings. However, in a sense, despite its underlying critique, the novel could also read as mourning its loss, as nothing is seen to be left in its place but religious and political division, capitalist exploitation and violence.

Andrew Teverson, commenting on Aurora's use of fifteenth century Moorish Spain in her work, affirms that she plays up what he sees as the conflict at the heart of the novel, the struggle between the superabundant, eclectic India as seen on the streets of Bombay and the idea of Mumbai pedaled in the 1980's and 1990's by the

Shiv Sena (166). For Teverson, a comparable struggle occurred between the culture that flourished in Moorish Spain and the repressive monomania of the re-conquering Catholic monarchs. For the critic, the underlying notion that undercuts Rushdie's entire novel is that

> Rushdie's depiction of the contemporary political scenario, of which the historical narrative is paradigmatic, expresses the fear that tolerance of cultural diversity in India will be increasingly eroded in coming decades. If the Moor Boabdil, long ago, gave his last sigh upon departing from the Alhambra, Rushdie warns, this too might be the fate of the modern Moor in India confronted with the tenacity of the proponents of Hindutva. (Teverson 167)

Teverson's reading of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, although tempered by a valid reflection on the concern with political and religious intolerance that does span Rushdie's work, seems on the other hand implicitly to endorse a view of Rushdie as championing the hybridity he attributes to Aurora and her class, a belief that, for the critic, would (to an extent) shape his reading of the entire novel. What could be argued, however, is that with Aurora's death and the dwindling into irrelevance that befalls Elephanta, what Rushdie seems to be suggesting is rather that the hybridity that for Aurora is compatible with her brand of national politics ultimately falls short. Paradoxically, in Rushdie's view, what this politics gives way to after independence is Hindu fundamentalism.

Aurora is forced to realize that her notions of cultural impurity, according to Moor the closest thing the secular artist had ever found to the notion of the Good, contain a potential also for darkness and distortion. In the novel's final rejection of Aurora's Elephanta, Rushdie suggests that "the positive, productive vision of hybridity cannot sustain itself throughout the entire narrative. Like fundamentalism, hybridity has its own shortcomings" (Ahmad 12).

It is, nevertheless, this vision of an India that can embrace its constitutive difference that informs Aurora's whole creative project and also her Bombay house, Moor's second ambivalent Eden-space, Elephanta. Elephanta, to which the family moves shortly after independence, and to which artists, intellectuals and politicians flock, is for Moor and his sisters a childhood home devoid of any innocence, a "knowing Eden".

> My god, what kind of family were we, diving together down Destruction Falls? I have said that I think of the Elephanta of those days as a Paradise, and so I do – but you may imagine to an outsider it could have looked a great deal more like Hell. (*Moor's* 198)

In Elephanta Abraham and Aurora's relationship becomes strained as both take on lovers. It is also in Elephanta that, as the Emergency regime gets into full swing, the da Gama/Zogoiby's see their position in India shift: "after the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews" (*Moor's* 235). The family's hybrid background, a source of pride to Aurora as it mirrored that of India itself, becomes the basis of their expulsion from monolithic Indian identities, the other side of the hybridity she had formerly championed. With Indira Gandhi's return to power and the consolidation of Hindu political hegemony, Moor's childhood Eden starts falling apart, a downward trend that is confirmed by the death of his eldest sister and later on of his mother.

Elephanta becomes, on a smaller scale, a model or stand-in for the national consciousness Aurora inherits from her father and that both she and Moor would see flourish in India with the end of British colonial rule. The blindspots of their vision had already been foreshadowed in Camoens's inability to accommodate what both father and daughter come to see as backward, superstitiously religious India. Drawing as it does from Cabral Island, Elephanta can thus only emerge in *The Moor's Last Sigh* as an Eden, much like Milton's, already flawed, uncontainable, ambivalent, always

already-fallen. And it is Vasco Miranda who voices the critique against Aurora's class for being inadvertently out of tune with the political climate in the country.

> Bunch of English-medium misfits, the lot of you. Minority group members. Square-peg freaks. You don't belong here. Country's as alien to you as if you were what's-the-word lunatics. Moon-men. You read the wrong books, get on the wrong side in every argument, think the wrong thoughts. Even your bleddy dreams grow from foreign roots […] Secular-socialist. That's it. Bloody bunk. Panditji sold you that stuff and you all bought one and now you wonder why it doesn't work. Bleddy Congress Party full of bleddy fake Rolex salesmen. You think India'll just roll over, all those bloodthirsty gods'll just roll over and die. (*Moor's* 166)

Elephanta, for all its democratic ideals and modernist eclecticism, as Aurora herself, becomes isolated within itself. The shortcomings suggested in the home in Cochin find their way into Elephanta, and thus Moor's first two Edens share the same fate: gradual fading into irrelevance.

The fall motif, introduced by Moor at the start of his narrative and which is central not only to the telling of his own life but which will also come to dominate his depiction of India, first suggested by the events on Cabral Island is thus confirmed in Elephanta. It is during the Elephanta years that Aurora peaks as an artist only to see her work rejected in favor of Uma Sarasvati's more single-minded sculptures, as well as her authority as interpreter of India diminished. It is also during the Elephanta years that Moor receives from Vasco Miranda the prophetic words with which he introduces himself at the start of the novel.

> 'To be the offspring of our daemonic Aurora,' I was told when young by the Goan painter V (for Vasco) Miranda, 'is to be, truly, a modern Lucifer. You know: son of the blooming morning.' By then my family had

> moved to Bombay, and this was the kind of thing that passed in the Paradise of Aurora Zogoiby's legendary salon, for a compliment; but I remember it as a prophecy, because the day came when I was indeed hurled from that fabulous garden, and plunged towards Pandaemonium. (*Moor's* 5)

Moor's fallen status and Elephanta's own eventual downfall confirm a shift in perspective from *Midnight's Children,* that is, from the chance for regeneration signaled by the previous novel's new A[a]dam. Moor, from would-be creator like his mother, joins the ranks of Rushdie's fallen figures, like Malik Solanka and Saleem Sinai.

Elephanta, the serpented Eden of Moor's childhood, takes on the unstable, unsettling aspects of Milton's pre-lapsarian garden. The Bombay home thus becomes the site from which Moor, Adam-like, is cast off. However, this *destinerrance* of Milton's imagery is marked also by detour. In *Paradise Lost*, although Adam and Eve are fallen, there is still the redemption promised in the coming of the Messiah to look forward to and the comfort afforded by the cultivation of a 'paradise within'. In *The Moor's Last Sigh* both of these instances, as in *The Satanic Verses*, are denied. Moor is cast off and can only fall deeper into violence and underworld criminality. His and previously Saleem Sinai's downward spiral, differently from Milton, point to how individual lives are swirled up in and consumed by dehumanizing forces at play in history, such as the Emergency regime that leaves Saleem mutilated and defeated and the Hindu vs. Muslim fundamentalism that sweeps India and threatens even Bombay's capacity for adaptation and transformation.

From Elephanta Moor is cast off by his mother, an event which triggers the chain of actions that leads him to become a thug in Raman Fielding's fundamentalist Hindu political organization, the Mumbai Axis, and the kind of fallen narrator Rushdie repeatedly employs in his fiction.

> Where you have sent me mother – into the darkness, out of your sight – there I elect to go. The names you have given me – outcast, outlaw, untouchable, disgusting, vile – I clasp to my bosom and make my own. The curse you have laid upon me will be my blessing and the hatred you have splashed across my face I will drink down like a potion of love. Disgraced, I will wear my shame and name it pride – will wear it, great Aurora, like a scarlet letter blazoned on my breast. Now I am plunging downwards from your hill, but I'm no angel, me. My tumble is not Lucifer's but Adam's. I fall into my manhood. I am happy to fall. (*Moor's* 296)

Moor's fall and that of Elephanta are alluded to in Aurora's last canvasses. In them, the Boabdil figure becomes debauched, losing his metaphorical role of unifier of opposites, ceasing to stand for the new nation and becoming a semi-allegorical fallen figure of decay. The irrelevance that comes to dominate Moor's childhood Eden is further accelerated by Aurora's premature death, plummeting from her hilltop home in yet another downward spiral, pushed there by her own husband.

After the loss of his mother and of his childhood Eden, Abraham Zogoiby, Moor's father, takes on an increasingly influential, albeit menacing, role. The father-figure turned by the son into a Supreme Being, against whom this son then rebels, is a recurring trope in Rushdie's fiction. This trope, activated in *The Satanic Verses*, *Midnight's Children* and also *Fury*, once more remits us to an erring of *Paradise Lost* and its satanic rebellion. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, however, Rushdie performs a detour and re-signifies this relationship in terms of the national history he has been portraying. Abraham, at the peak of his power and prestige, both built upon underworld criminal activities, is portrayed in opposition to Aurora and her hybrid version of India. As Aurora dies and India sinks deeper into violence and internal division, Abraham's star rises. His turn to organized crime and his murdering of his wife consistently place him also in

the hall of Rushdie's fallen figures, and the end result is that his capitalist version of Eden literally drops from the sky.

Abraham's expensive thirty-first floor apartment becomes a third Edenic space. Much like the previous Edens construed by Moor (and by Milton), this one is also conceived as unstable and from the first mired in intimations of a fall: "I would go to his high-rise glass Eden at night and he would tell me his serpentine tales. And they were like fairy tales, in a way: goblin-sagas of the present day, tales of the utterly abnormal recounted in a matter-of-fact, banal, duty manager's normalizing tones" (*Moor's* 333). Abraham and his skyscraper garden, it could be argued, signal the final defeat of Aurora and Camoens da Gama's nationalist views to global capital and corruption as the next stage in Indian history.

> 'No more of that namby-pamby South-South co-operation bakvaas. Bring on the big boys! Dollar, DM, Swiss franc, yen – let them come! Now we will beat them at their own game.' In his new frankness with me, however, it was several years before Abraham Zogoiby admitted that beneath this glittering monetarist vision there lurked a hissed layer of activity: the inevitable secret world that has existed, awaiting revelation, beneath everything I have ever known. (*Moor's* 335)

Abraham, Moor's "unrepentant, serpentine father, who had taken over Eden in the absence of Aurora and God" (187), as his influence increases, increasingly takes on satanic aspects that the novel links to financial speculation and economic exploitation of post-colonial countries. Abraham's ending, however, suggests that these forces, once put into sway, become uncontrollable and all-consuming, spiraling into the bombings that finally finish off both Elephanta and Abraham's sky garden and shake Bombay and all of India to their core.

The war that rages between Abraham and Hindu fundamentalist groups for political and economic control over India causes the bombings that kill off most of the

novel's main characters. Eventually even Abraham sees his corrupt version of Eden shattered, falling fantastically from the top of the building it sits on.

> Finally, Abraham's garden rained down like a benediction. Imported soil, English lawn-grass and foreign flowers – crocuses, daffodils, roses, hollyhocks, forget-me-nots – fell towards the Backbay Reclamation; also alien fruits. Whole trees rose gracefully into the heavens before floating down to earth, like giant spores. The feathers of un-Indian birds went on drifting through the air for days. (*Moor's* 375)

The bombings and the fall of Abraham's sky garden annihilate Moor's family, ending also the tie of ancestry to Indian history Aurora and Moor had established. The novel thus wipes the slate clean, but after Abraham's inexhaustible thirst for power, suggestive of capitalism's drenching of India's resources, the novel cannot suggest what this new course might be. This dystopian outlook comes full circle when Moor reaches the final crooked Eden of his narrative, Vasco Miranda's home in Benengeli.

After the bombings Moor is forced to leave India. Unlike Saleem Sinai, he does not father a new generation capable of withstanding the forces of good and evil he sees playing out in history, but is rather worn down by premature ageing, a metaphor perhaps of the wearing down of Rushdie's hopes for India. The events finally lead him to the understanding that

> Just as Boabdil, the last Nasrid sultan, was too weak to defend his great treasure, so we, too, were proved wanting. For the barbarians were not only at our gates but within our skins. We were our own wooden horses, each of us full of our doom. Maybe Abraham Zogoiby lit the fuse, or Scar: these fanatics or those, our crazies or yours; but the explosions burst out of our very own bodies. We were both the bombers and the bombs. The explosions were our own evil – no need to look for foreign

> explanations, though there was and is evil beyond our frontiers as well as within. We have chopped away our own legs, we engineered our own fall. And now can only weep, at the last, for what we were too enfeebled, too corrupt, too little, too contemptible, to defend. (*Moor's* 373)

All the forms of understanding India Moor has tried out in his narrative, his unsteady Edens, are crushed by bombs in a series of events in which it is impossible and fruitless to try to lay blame. Moor's departing reflection on India in light of all its failures rings like a lament for the lost hopes born with independence. The *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*, particularly of its renditions of Eden, inherited and deviated in the novel to write Indian (post)colonial history, by its end are stretched almost to breaking point, ending with the most unstable of them all.

After the traumatic events unleashed by Abraham and Fielding the only place Moor can go to is the town of Benengeli, the site of Vasco's mock parody of Aurora's Mooristan. As all the Edens he had construed fall apart under the weight of their own inadequacies, Moor is left to feel that he is a "nobody from nowhere, like no-one, belonging to nothing. That sounded better. That felt true. All my ties had loosened. I had reached an anti-Jerusalem: not a home, but an away. A place that did not bind, but dissolved" (*Moor's* 388). Benengeli, a small-scale vision of globalized post-modernity, a town of simulacra whose inhabitants are all uprooted immigrants coming to it from different parts of Europe to forget themselves and lead empty, sham lives, is thus a fitting, though anti-climactic, setting for Moor's conclusion of his tale.

This Benengeli is also the adequate setting for Vasco Miranda's Little Alhambra, the last and most unstable of all of Moor's Edens.

> Was this a house built of love or hate? If the stories I'd heard were to be believed, it was a true Palimpstine, in which his present bitter wrath lay curdling over the memory of an old, lost sweetness and romance. For there was something sour here, some envy in the brilliance of the

> emulation; and as the first shock of recognition wore off, and the day rose up, I began to see the flaws in the grand design. Vasco Miranda was the same vulgarian he had always been, and what Aurora had imagined so vividly and finely had been rendered by Vasco in colours that could be seen, as the daylight brightened, to have missed rightness by the small but vital distance that distinguishes the pleasingly apt from the crudely inappropriate […] No, it was not a miracle, after all; my first impressions had been illusory, and the illusion had already faded. (*Moor's* 409)

Vasco's home, rather than a tribute to Aurora's work, becomes for Moor a space of horror and mourning of Aurora's talent. And "even though what Moor eventually finds is in many ways the antithesis of Aurora's vision, this only heightens the grieving for lost possibilities" (Thiara 192) that sets the tone for the novel's final passages.

The Little Alhambra, a garish, grotesque, mock parody of Aurora's work, constitutes a final breakdown not of allegories of history but of the particular mode Rushdie has chosen to model his depiction India, a mode which until now was at best precariously poised and is now made impossible. Aurora's nationalist art, re-inscribed in Moor's ambivalent familial paradises, all end here. For Teverson, the sense of the inescapability of violence we get in the novel's ending with the bombings and Moor's imprisonment in his last edenic/infernal refuge licenses the images of a house in decline, of monstrous physical defects and double personalities Rushdie also explores in *Shame*. For the critic, however, "the sheer polyphony of Rushdie's textuality simultaneously tends to assert also that the plural and profligate sensibility will somehow persist in the structures of the individual imagination and in the perennially resurgent forces of art" (169).

Teverson's remark on the polyphony of Rushdie's fiction as a whole is valid. If we look at his work as a site in which a "presence" of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is

continuously staged via *destinerrance*, the resurgent forces the critic sees as a fundamental aspect of artistic imagination can be seen to be at play in the elusive afterlife afforded the poet in the possibility of re-signification of his work. However, in the particular case of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the last artistic expression available in the novel, Vasco's version of Mooristan, suggests rather an ambivalent positioning between an elegy for lost ideals and a mockery of their shortcomings than a celebratory rendition of the powers of transformation of literature and art.

In Vasco Miranda's version of Mooristan, the narrative of *The Moor's Last Sigh* comes full circle. The dream of a hybrid yet unified India that is at the heart of Aurora's artistic project and her conceptions of the world, a dream which Moor will inherit and translate into his depictions of India in his Edens, has boiled down to the insanity of Little Alhambra. Rushdie, throughout the novel, has appropriated the edenic space written by Milton; exploring not only the parallels but the discontinuities his text makes possible in relation to the "predecessor". Rushdie is then able to stretch the image of the garden into the different versions of India he writes, only to collapse them in this final site. Through the *destinerrance* of Milton's portrayal of Eden, the novel picks up on the drive to write an overarching, comprehensive portrayal of India that had already appeared in Saleem Sinai's narrative. However, as Milton's pre-lapsarian paradise carries within it intimations of excess and instability, Rushdie's Edens of national history are turned, in the end, into garish mockery.

*The Moor's Last Sigh*, as *The Satanic Verses* and Rushdie's other novels, inherits/deviates Miltonic discourse into his particular literary style. The novel explores the parallels, but most importantly the discontinuities, produced in the *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*'s depictions of Eden to situate the history of the subcontinent, which the novel aligns to a family saga. While Milton's Eden can be read as disturbing because it disrupts the notions of stability usually associated to the ideal Christian Arcadia, Rushdie re-signifies this instability in terms of the shortcomings of nationalist projects

and global capital which, for him, betray the dreams and the enthusiasm born with independence. In this way, Rushdie explores Milton's *destinerrant* edenic space for its discontinuities in a novel that addresses the problematic representation of post-colonial national identity.

## Mockery and the *destinerrance* of "satanic" creation in *Fury*

The kind of garish mockery seen in Vasco Miranda's version of Eden at the end of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is echoed in one of Rushdie's more contemporary novels. Published in 2001, *Fury* unfolds into an underlying or implied mockery of its protagonist's shortcomings, his failed creationist flies and his constant lack of self-awareness, all of which has as a backdrop the inferno of the streets of New York City, an inferno representative of the kind of consumer culture emanating from the USA as it consolidates itself as the new global superpower. In this light, Malik Solanka increasingly comes across to Rushdie's reader much like the figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost* in his own rather pathetic and ill-fated rebellion against God.

The novel explores the twined aspects, destruction and creation, of rage in the life of Malik Solanka, Indian immigrant, Cambridge professor and creator of worlds populated by the dolls he makes himself. When his greatest creation, Little Brain, makes it onto primetime television and explodes into international stardom, Solanka finds he must relinquish all control over her into the hands of studio directors, marketing specialists, ghost writers and profit-hungry businessmen. As his creation strays further and further from his original concept to meet the demands of a fetishizing global consumer society, Solanka begins to feel the fury and frustration build up inside him.

Fleeing London for New York, Solanka finds, however, that not only has his own fury followed him, but it is magnified in the noisy, over-populated metropolis of capitalism, wealth, consumption and decadence, Rushdie's biting critique of the (pervasively unequal) re-organization of the world's cultural and economic wealth following decolonization. Thus, it is fury that leads Solanka's life to unravel, but it is also the fury bubbling underneath his illicit sexually charged relationship with Mila that unlocks once more his creative powers. However, spurned by the rage that seems to

dominate not only Solanka himself but all the spaces and characters in the novel, a rage fanned by the new cultural and economic alignments around him, Solanka's attempts at creation, much like the creations of Milton's Satan, turn not only monstrous in his eyes but become the masks behind which monstrous deeds are done.

In its depiction of a pop culture society that feeds on instant icons displayed on the consumer shrines of underwear advertisements and bus signs, *Fury* then draws heavily on an imagery of creation and, as Solanka's life unravels, of a fall. Malik Solanka, Rushdie's contemporary mock Frankenstein, takes on the role of creator only to find that not only have his creatures outgrown him but, as in the case of Shelley's doctor, they have become hideous in his eyes. *Fury* draws on a dispute on the right to and over creation in a society whose consumerism flattens individuals into an anonymous mass devoid of any truly imaginative or creative powers. Looking back to Milton's epic, this same dispute over creation is used by Satan to coax the other fallen angels to his side. And in the novel, akin to the epic, the creationist flies of its protagonist, caught between seduction by capitalist America's comforts and critique of its flattening out of culture and politics into ready-made goods, eventually turn him into the object of its mockery.

Solanka's downfall, like Satan's plummeting down to Hell in Book I of *Paradise Lost,* is magnified in the hellish scenes of decadent wealth, deviant sexual experiences and serial killings that characterize New York, where it is not Satan who is worshipped in lieu of God but consumer society itself. This creation of man and its empty "satanic" rhetoric of plenty are attacked by Rushdie for the profound emptiness it actually proliferates. Thus, in *Fury,* as in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh,* Rushdie's reader finds another fallen protagonist in whom a *destinerrance* of Milton's character in *Paradise Lost* can be read. In the novel, the same underlying mockery of Satan's pathetic rebellion (even though that rebellion comes coated in a powerful rhetoric) that is implied throughout the epic is foregrounded. The narrative device set in

motion by Milton is then both inherited and deviated by Rushdie's prose into a critique of a world order resulting from (neo)imperial encounters. In this new order, although the would-be imperial center has shifted, the unequal distribution of wealth and power and the exploitation of poverty-stricken margins that Gayatri Spivak has pointed out as one of the down sides of decolonization, for Rushdie, represent the contemporary re-organizations of exploitative colonial relations.

Fury grabs hold of Malik Solanka and its possible consequences send him fleeing to New York to a new life. Solanka comes to America, that land of self-made people, to re-write himself.

> This knife was his story now, and he had come to America to write it. No! In despair, to unwrite it. Not to be but to un-be. He had flown to the land of self-creation, the home of Mark Skywalker and the Jedi copywriter in red suspenders, the country whose paradigmatic modern fiction was the story of a man who remade himself – his past, his present, his shirts, even his name – for love; and here, in this place from whose narratives he was all but disconnected, he intended to attempt the first phase of such a restructuring, namely the complete erasure, or "master deletion" of the old program. (*Fury* 79)

For Solanka, much like his dolls, individuals *are* their stories, hence his desperate urge to re-write and thus re-create his own past and, consequently, his identity. This idea of being defined in/by narrative Solanka shares, among other traits, with Milton's Satan, who seeks to escape definition as a creature inside the narrative of Divine creation and to establish a myth of self-generation as vindication for his rebellion.

Satan, rather convincingly, talks of the power of narrative in promoting subjection to God "That we were formed then sais't thou? And the work/Of secondary hands, by task transferd/ […] Doctrin which we would know whence learnt" (*Paradise Lost*, V, 853-55). In this fallen logic, opposition to God's narrative of creation would be

an effective form of resistance and of undermining His power over the rebel angels. It is this characterization of a satanic desire for power over (self)creation, in its *destinerrance*, that comes to inform Solanka's own attempts at creation of his doll worlds as a means of escaping the fury inside himself. For, as the reader of the novel discovers, the back-story Milton's character wishes to write over and that justifies his rebellion is mirrored by Solanka down to its motivation, rage against a father-figure.

The fury that explodes out of Solanka's control in light of the skyrocketing success of his doll Little Brain is in fact linked back to his childhood. His first attempts at creation of his doll world, the novel suggests, had in fact been attempts at writing over his own history of sexual abuse at the hands of a stepfather who raises him as a daughter. As an adult, the novel implies, Solanka needs to build worlds and to be in control of the stories of its characters to counter his lack of control over his own, because he longs to re-write his own life story and cannot. Like Milton's Satan, like Saleem Sinai and *The Satanic Verses*' Gibreel Farishta with his born-again slogans, Malik Solanka enacts a feeble, but also very human wish for self-narration.

But the stage Solanka chooses for this metamorphosis, New York, is a city populated by people carrying dark secrets of their own making. Jack Rhinehart, Solanka's war correspondent African-American friend, rather like Solanka himself, finds himself caught up in and is ultimately seduced by rich white America and struggles to be accepted into it despite his attacks on its bigotry. And although, unlike Solanka, Rinehart's suave mask never slips

> These are the secrets from which the anger comes. In this dark bed the seeds of fury grow […] Solanka was sure he could see, in his friend's blazing eyes, the self-loathing fire of his rage. It took him a long while to concede that Jack's suppressed fury was the mirror of his own. (*Fury* 58)

*Fury*, as *The Satanic Verses* (Gibreel/Chamcha) and *Midnight's Children* (Saleem/Shiva), builds on the relation between contrary and complementary characters

whose interaction furthers the reader's understanding of them individually. Solanka sees through Rhinehart's seduction by power and wealth to his fury, fanned by a profound sense of self-loathing. Ultimately, this internal dynamic is at work also in Solanka himself, mingled with the fury he feels at his own entrapment within mass market, celebrity-obsessed, self-indulgent contemporary pop culture.

The same emotions Solanka feels in his (ultimately failed) attempts at self-writing or re-creating we see also operating, at times, in Milton's Satan. As he contemplates for the first time Adam and Eve's bliss in Eden and his own fallen condition, Satan is beset by doubt, self-admonition and anguish.

> Me miserable! Which way shall I flie
> Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?
> Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
> O then at last relent: is there no place
> Left for Repentence, none for Pardon left?
> None left but by submission; and that word
> Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
> Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
> With other promises and other vaunts
> Then to submit, boasting I could subdue
> Th' Omnipotent. (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 73-86)

Satan acknowledges to himself, if only for a fleeting moment, the futility of his attempts at self-fashioning outside of Divine creation as it has led to nothing but pain and suffering. Contrasted to the powerful rebellious rhetoric with which Book I opens, the character becomes increasingly less convincing, and his rebellion becomes

increasingly pathetic and ineffectual. He soon rallies, however, and sorrow quickly turns once more into anger, directed not against himself but once more against God. In Solanka's attempts at self-narration, we see such *destinerrant* machinations and the same shortcomings. In Rushdie's novel, however, failed (self)creation not only leads to a suggestion of mockery of its protagonist, as in *Paradise Lost*, but also to a reflection on the corrosive cultural, economic and political formations consolidated with decolonization that, for Rushdie, seem to characterize globalized capital.

The issue of wrath against a father raised to the position of Supreme Being we see treated in *Fury,* and which links *destinerrant*-like Solanka to Satan, had already been explored by Rushdie in previous novels. In *The Satanic Verses* the boy Chamcha deifies his father only to reject him as an adult. Chamcha's disappointment in his father turns into a rage that leads to his first metamorphosis into Englishness. In *Fury* Solanka has been abandoned by his father and the father put in his place, to whom Solanka owes his education and his surname, turns out to be a pedophile. A related rage thus serves to spurn Satan's rebellion and to drive, *destinerrant*-like, Chamcha's self-fashioning into Englishman, albeit of the "tinted persuasion", and also Solanka's downfall. However, like Chamcha's first metamorphosis, Solanka's attempts at over-writing of his own story by casting himself in the role of master narrator/creator, even if it be of his fictional doll world, fails and he sees it spiral out of his control. In Solanka's case, rather than a physical mutation, this leads to his transformation from loving husband and father into a would-be murderer.

The abuse that is central to Solanka's history has been linked by Rishona Zimring to themes that undercut all of Rushdie's fiction: the orphaned, victimized, alienated and rebellious son, the abusive, traumatic childhood, rage as a source of creativity and what the critic identifies as an emotional basis for something *Fury* stresses acutely, an urban, cosmopolitan consciousness that is a melancholy, angry response to the loss of innocence (11). For Zimring, bitterness rages not only in

Solanka but in all the immigrant characters in *Fury*, who are displaced from multiple homes and who do not find in nostalgia for a paradisiacal childhood any form of consolation or antidote to the inequalities, violence and broken tongues and psyches that constitute the experience of life at the turn of the millennium. In *Fury,* Zimring argues, "Rushdie seems to be trying very hard to come up with a set of cosmopolitan characters and scenarios in which living the adulteration and the mélange is far from simple or naïve" (10).

Zimring's reading of the novel picks up on issues that link *Fury* thematically to Rushdie's other novels. The ultimate rejection the critic identifies of stable places of identification and retreat and an underlying discomfort with or questioning of notions of cultural impurity and their redeeming powers when it comes to living every-day life is consistently put forth in a large part of Rushdie's writing. However, the linking of a troubled childhood to a type of cosmopolitan agency suggested in Zimring's reading of *Fury* as the novel's driving force is rather a stretch of what has become the cornerstone of Rushdie criticism. This attribution of the rage portrayed in the novel, in both its creative and destructive forms, to childhood abuse could further be seen as a shortcoming of the text itself, a narrative move towards a closure (and a very unsatisfactory one at that) and textual "explanation" that runs contrary to Rushdie's literary commitments elsewhere.

However unsatisfactory Rushdie's tracing of Solanka's rage to sexual abuse may be, the novel nevertheless implies it to be at the heart of its protagonist's transformation, hence also of his downfall, and of his unsuccessful attempts at mastery over creation. Looking back to *Paradise Lost*, Satan's dispute of the authority of an abusive God constitutes a rhetoric powerful enough if not to instigate at least to justify and consolidate multiple falls, his own, that of the other angels, the fall of man and (if we take readings such as Stanley Fish's into account), the persistent fall of the reader every time he/she sees a measure of truth or pathos in it. In the context of turn-of-the-

century capitalist America described in *Fury*, this *destinerrant* rage against an abusive father-figure that triggers Malik's creationist flies and, later on, his mounting rage at their failure, ultimately means that Malik, as Milton's Satan, becomes the object of an underlying, implied mockery in the text.

In the epic Satan rebels and is mocked not for his rebellion, but for being himself duped by his own fallen logic. In *Paradise Lost* true freedom lies in right reason, which can only lead to submission to God, as Abdiel repeatedly tries to make clear to Satan

> This is servitude,
> To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebelld
> Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
> Thy self not free, but to thyself enthralled;
> Yet leudly dar'st our ministering upbraid. (*Paradise Lost*, VI, 178-182)

In *Fury*, although the father is abusive, it is the failures and blindspots created in Solanka's desperate responses to this abuse, spurning his ever deeper falls into rage and monstrous creation that extend also to him the kind of mockery stemming from a sort of self-delusion Satan attracts.

To counter his history of abuse, Solanka begins to create microcosms using the material of his own life and, by the alchemy of art, making it strange. He creates a collection of dolls called the "Great Minds" dolls, modeled on philosophers such as Machiavelli and Galileo, and the questing knowledge-seeker that is their television interrogator, Little Brain. The latter, his greatest creation, is initially genuinely interested in what Solanka believes to be good-quality, that is high brow, information. She is thus as much a disciple as an *agent provocateur* with a time machine.

Among the great philosophers interviewed by Little Brain is Baruch Spinoza, that philosopher who "cut our strings, who allowed God to retire from the post of divine marionettist and believed that revelation was an event not above human history but

inside it" (*Fury* 17). The admiration Solanka feels for Spinoza as man's liberator, however, is treated rather ironically by the novel. *Fury*, as Milton's text does to its Protean rebellious "hero", implies here the same irony that both Satan and Malik fail to see: the position they so scornfully attribute to the master puppeteer is precisely the one they would claim for themselves. Satan and Solanka (as also Saladin Chamcha), those professed champions of a superior knowledge, in Chamcha and Solanka's case translated as a love of high Western culture, are consistently mocked for their lack of self-knowledge without ever becoming fully aware of the irony. The result of their assuming the creator's role, however, can only be flawed creation; in Satan's case they are the monsters Sin and Death, in Solanka's, after Little Brain's almost instantaneous elevation to icon status that so disgusts him, his dolls become the avatars of the violent power struggles that break out in the Lilliput-Blefescu national revolution.

Little Brain soon outgrows her maker, both metaphorically and literally, standing, life-size, several inches taller than Solanka himself. Her fans argue that, like everything else on sale in twenty-first century America, she was no longer a simulacrum but a phenomenon, "the fairy's wand had touched her and made her real". All of this

> Malik Solanka witnessed from a distance with growing horror. This creature of his own imagining, born of his best self and purest endeavour, was turning before his eyes into the kind of monster of tawdry celebrity he most profoundly abhorred. His original and now obliterated Little Brain had been genuinely smart, able to hold her own with Erasmus or Schopenhauer. She had been beautiful and sharp-tongued, but she had swum in the sea of ideas, living the life of the mind. (*Fury* 98)

Ironically Little Brain, to her creator's despair, shows a complete disregard for all the "high" principles he had brought her into being to extol, that is, his own. Solanka cannot

complain, however, because he owes his very comfortable lifestyle to his creature's royalties. Like Rhinehart, he is not only corrupted but entrapped and can only watch as Little Brain transforms from delinquent child into a rampaging giantess.

Malik Solanka's views on the untainted superiority of principles and of high culture again make him an object of the novel's mockery, the end result being that he is transformed into another Chamcha. Saladin cannot see through the image of Englishness he worships, consequently his naïve form of mimicry can never activate the post-colonial mimicry that sees precisely in the slips generated within colonial discourses of surveillance the potential for resistance to neo-colonial domination. Solanka, on the other hand, and rather surprisingly for a historian of ideas, separates naively and simplistically his brand of high culture from its reified, mass culture "counterfeit". He buys into an illusion of his own making of the greatness of ideas as self-standing and self-serving entities (much like Milton's Satan with his take on true freedom) and, as their champion, this greatness extends also to himself. By the end of the novel, however, the violence that breaks out on Lilliput-Blefescu under the banners of promoting freedom and equality, those supreme ideals that justify all takings of power by force, Little Brain's conquering of this world of pop culture and the affluence this in turns brings him, upset these notions, just as Chamcha's physical metamorphosis upsets his views on proper Englishness.

For Soo Yeon Kim *Fury*'s seemingly unscrupulous mixing of the high and the low brow comprises a "serious" investigation of the dissipation of high culture. In other words, in its mockery of Solanka's world views and their stark contrast to his lifestyle and source of income, the novel ironically displays the process whereby the dissolution of high culture is replaced by an aestheticization of commodities. In *Fury* not only is the field of high culture deeply predicated on consumer capitalism, but there is also an intense process of commodification of politics and of private life. Without glorifying or denouncing high art or culture, or exclusively adopting a "serious" or "tabloid" writing

style, *Fury's* mockery of Solanka then represents the readiness with which intellectuals refashion their tastes for the aestheticization of glamorous, yet unnecessary, commodities.

Such a reading of *Fury* highlights the novel's concern, already touched on in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh,* with reflecting on how decolonization has given way to a globalized consumer society predicated on commodification. In the fortunes of Malik Solanka Rushdie's narrative re-signifies, *destinerrant*-like, Milton's mockery of an empty satanic rebellion against God the Father and his feeble attempts at (self)creation to point to the becoming cultural of the economic and the becoming economic of culture in a vapid global consumer society. However, Rushdie seems to be saying, a simple denouncement of this consumer society and a retreat into its opposite, as Solanka tries to do, is also unsatisfactory and naïve for they are spheres that are intrinsically interwoven, tied in complex relationships.

The mass consumer market Little Brain conquers in her revamped version is epitomized in New York, the beating financial heart of North America. Solanka muses that in India, China, Africa and the southern American continent, those "poorer latitudes", or in Spivak's terms the global South, people would have killed for the street merchandise of Manhattan, its cast-off clothing and furnishings in opulent thrift stores, the designer-label bargains available in downtown discount emporia. New York, for Solanka, adds insult to injury by treating with casualness such apparently inexhaustible bounty. For him, "New York in this time of plenty had become the object and goal of the world's concupiscence and lust, and the "insult" only made the rest of the planet more desirous than ever" (*Fury* 6).

In this scenario the problem Solanka must face, as his friend Rhinehart, is that he too has been seduced into wishing for that promise if not of plenty then of successful self-imagining/self-fashioning that America consistently makes and eternally

withholds. For Solanka, as his life falls apart, America's promises, in the end, generate only lack, disappointment and, ultimately, also fury. He muses

> But perhaps his was not the only identity to be coming apart at the seams. Behind the façade of this age of gold, this time of plenty, the contradictions and impoverishment of the Western human individual, or let's say the human self in America, were deepening and widening. Perhaps that wider disintegration was also to be made visible in this city of fiery, jeweled garments and secret ash, in this time of public hedonism and private fear. (*Fury* 86)

For Solanka, in boom America human expectations are at their highest, hence so also are human disappointments. In a land in which the right to dream is an ideological cornerstone, Malik Solanka, falling further and further into personal hells, can see only a nightmarish landscape in which figures like the revamped Little Brain are worshipped and frustrated hopes slowly disintegrate into uncontainable fury. As he realizes this, "over himself, over New York and America, Solanka hears the Furies shriek. The human and inhuman traffic in the streets screams back its enraged assent" (*Fury* 184).

There is thus, in *Fury*, a sense of impending doom in its treatment of twenty-first century America. Solanka walks the streets of Manhattan venting against its excesses, much as a deranged Gibreel Farishta does the streets of London for its inhabitants' sins. Solanka's downfall in consumer America could then be seen to represent Rushdie's critique of "the simulacrum of paraded hybridity that is a mere cover-up for urban and global injustices of wealth and power" (Zimring 11). In the city-scapes of *Fury* and the downfall of Solanka, the myths that derive from America are deflated.

For Zimring, Solanka's mounting rage throughout the novel is finally subdued. Amidst the urban crowd, it transmutes into something more public and more useful. This transformed fury becomes the "source of Malik's newfound renaissance as a creative artist and of his egalitarian, value-seeking questionings, his refusal to be

seduced by multicultural superficialities" (11). For the critic, Malik's fury becomes in the end a source of agency, and the novel rejects both sentimentalism in the form of idealized childhood experiences that give a sense of belonging to the family home as well as its post-colonial corollary, the nationalist or ethnocentric nostalgia which tends towards the cultural purism Rushdie finds very problematic.

Zimring's reading of Solanka's driving fury stresses a new-found creative outlet, along with what she sees as his egalitarian questioning of corporate America. However, what this assessment fails to take into consideration is that his creation does not redeem him, rather it plunges him further into violence, estranges him from Neela and makes him even more a pawn of corporate America as his new dolls go on to become, like Little Brain, a global phenomenon on the last consumer frontier, the internet. Zimring also fails to see that Solanka's answers to the catalogue of despairing questions uttered by him (for all their value-seeking contents), that it is all the fault of the ruling classes, of the government, of the failure of the principles of high culture, etc., are very unsatisfactory and in themselves empty, futile and naïve. In this light, Malik Solanka becomes not a force of resistance as Zimring would have it but, much like Milton's Satan, a mock agent of justice.

In Solanka's idealist criticism of the world around him, undercut by naïve responses, and the growing perception of the character as the (ineffective) force of resistance we can see, once more, a *destinerrance* of Milton's Satan and of his discourse of transgression. Although Solanka's shortcomings serve a different purpose in the novel than in the epic, that is, critique of the kind of consumer society that results from decolonization, the mockery that follows both characters can be read in parallel. Through this protagonist, Rushdie does not simply display an ambivalent attitude to the kind of urban cosmopolitanism Zimring describes, he also parodies its informing content of a "third space" that could redeem the voracity of globalized capitalism issuing from the demise of empire.

However, in spite of all these criticisms, it is still in the metropolis of raging capitalism and screeching Furies that Solanka manages to find a second creative outlet for his rage. The afternoons spent with Mila Milo, whose own fury at an implied history of sexual abuse leads her to cast men like Solanka in the role of her deceased father, open the floodgates for the creation of planet Galileo-1 and its puppet inhabitants. Fury then becomes, once more, a creative as well as a destructive force. Encouraged by Mila, Solanka thus returns with renewed zeal to his old craft and embarks once more on the creation of another universe. At its center he places Akasz Kronos, the brilliant cynical cyberneticist who abandons civilization to its grim fate when the polar ice caps of Galileo-1 melt and the rising sea levels threaten to flood it. Kronos moves all his operations to the island of Baburia, signing a treaty with the local ruler Mogol. Here he creates a cybernetic life form he names the Puppet Kings.

One of the problems with this new creation is that Solanka, contrary to what he had done with Little Brain, attributes to his creator figure the negative traits Milton's Satan had already affirmed to be the attributes of God: both are self-serving, self-centered and both see in creation a means of ensuring not the general but their own good. It is perhaps, the novel suggests, this nature of the creator (also later shared by his rebellious creatures) that prompts the self-serving revolutionaries of Lilliput-Blefescu to wear the masks modeled on them in their grasping of power.

The fictional space of Baburia, as the novel progresses, functions as a backdrop to the civil war unleashed on the islands of Lilliput-Blefescu. The consequence is that the islands reinvent themselves in Solanka's image, their streets become his biography, peopled by the versions of individuals he had known and written into his creation.

> When he had attempted to retreat from his darker self, the self of his dangerous fury, hoping to overcome his faults by a process of renunciation, of giving up, he had merely fallen into new, more grievous

> error. Seeking his redemption in creation, offering up an imagined world, he had seen its denizens move out into the world and grow monstrous; and the greatest monster of them all wore his own guilty face. (*Fury* 246)

If the figure of Kronos is initially aligned to a *destinerrant* satanic take on Divine creation, the fictional world of Baburia Solanka creates, far from redeeming him, only presents to his waking eyes the nightmarish landscape within himself, another trait he seems to share with Milton's Satan. The phrase uttered by Satan "my self am Hell" then resonates with Solanka as both characters are left not only with a flawed creation (the disintegration of the Puppet Kings into masks behind which murder occurs and the monstrous figures of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost*) but also with the anguish of seeing their hellish inner landscapes reflected back at them.

For critics like Sarah Brouillette, Rushdie's main concern in the Lilliput-Blefescu passage is with the way mass media make cultural products available for highly politicized forms of appropriation that betray the controlling intentions of their authors. In other words, Rushdie would be critical of the way the commercialization of cultural artifacts makes them so readily available for political appropriation (140). For Brouillette, as Solonka is confronted first with a revamped Little Brain and then with the masks of his internet characters carrying very real guns, *Fury* expresses Rushdie's anxiety over the impossibility of authoring the political meaning of one's own works.

In this assessment, Solanka's personal hell and his individual fury, poured into the Puppet Kings and later materialized in the violent upheavals on the islands, would be Rushdie's investigation of the ways in which, on the one hand, cultural products such as Solanka's web-based narrative (and Rushdie's own novels) acquire political weight and, on the other, how in the struggle for control over political mythmaking liberation movements thrive on the narratives of cultural resistance they create and appropriate (Brouillette 149). *Fury,* in Brouillette's analysis, would thus focus on the culture industries in order to emphasize the way revolutionary politics are incorporated

by global pop culture like the Puppet Kings web phenomenon, as well as how revolutionary movements in turn appropriate that global culture in ways its producers may never have imagined (150).

Brouillette thus sees the creation of the Puppet Kings and the Lilliput-Blefescu revolution in terms of the problems surrounding authorship in a world in which information is readily available for easy appropriation and mass consumption. The critique Brouillette identifies of the complicated place and appropriations of cultural products in a world in which everything is flattened out into commodities ready for consumption in the pop marketplace is a fundamental aspect of the novel, and one that we would argue is underscored by the *destinerrance* of aspects of *Paradise Lost*. However, the stress the critic lays on an authorial anxiety on the part of a writer like Rushdie, who has made precisely this de-authoring and appropriating of texts the cornerstone of his own literary style, is rather problematic. Rather than reflecting a deep-rooted anxiety, *Fury* seems more to unite Rushdie's exploitation of textual *destinerrance*, in this case of a "satanic" take on (divine) creation that results, in both the novel and the epic, in flawed, monstrous creatures, and a critique of the cultural underscored by globalized capital Brouillette identifies. In this way, Rushdie can be seen to use a creative approach to the issue of creation itself, while at the same time denouncing the easy, often irresponsible and unethical appropriation and consumption of discourses Brouillette denounces as a mark of contemporary society.

Focusing on the medium Solanka chooses for his second creative endeavor, Yael Maurer argues that the cyberspace Solanka explores with his Puppet Kings, rather than authorial anxiety, represents post-modernity's space for reimagining subjectivities, and is thus endowed with revolutionary potential. Rushdie would then question the status of "real" and "fictive" by devising a unique intersection between three different, yet related, worlds: the cyberspace inhabited by the puppets, the post-colonial arena outside the US, and the post-colonial scene within the US in the stories

of its immigrants (Solanka, Mila, Neela) and other "others". These three worlds mirror each other, affect each other and finally clash.

Rushdie's twin tales of post-colonial revolution and a cyberspace revolt would thus become absurd copies of each other, reflecting the ways in which Solanka is implicated in his own tale. His authorial position, his casting of himself as omniscient, god-like creator, according to Maurer, then become no more than a hollow mask, completing the novel's mockery of his failed "satanic" ambitions. Looking at the deranged Babur wearing the mask of his own guilty face, the mock hero and mock-creator Solanka, much like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, can then declare that wherever he goes he discovers a personal, inner Hell.

Critical reception of *Fury* has been lukewarm and divided. Spanning over this reception, Kim highlights how *Fury* has been read in terms of a refusal on Rushdie's part to commit to utopian renditions of either cosmopolitanism or nationalism. In this type of reading the novel's chronic ambivalence, characteristic of all of Rushdie's fiction, would indicate a strategic complication of these issues as valid critical and practical discourses. In this way, rather than mediating the migrant and the national concerns as earlier novels do, *Fury* would illustrate more how both cosmopolitanism, that arena of the urban middle-class intelligentsia to which both Solanka and Rushdie himself belong, and nationalism are today saturated by a media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed cultural politics.

On the other hand, Kim continues, some critics have read *Fury* as a failed post-colonial novel, or as a novel in which a solipsistic Rushdie justifies his own life choices. In this type of reading, Rushdie would display a carefree cosmopolitanism which, in turn, has led to criticism of the author as a member of an elite profiting from capitalist globalization. In *Fury*, as some critics would have it, Rushdie has integrated with mainstream America.

Closer to this latter interpretative train, Sarah Brouillette approximates the novel to Rushdie's account of his trip to Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution in *The Jaguar Smile,* as well as against his career as a writer whose market value has skyrocketed and whose work has been appropriated by such diverse groups as post-colonial political critics and religious fundamentalists. For Brouillette, Malik, the novel's mock creator (a stand-in for Rushdie himself) questions Rushdie's own status as brand name, as paratext and as icon (Brouillette 151). *Fury*'s more important solipsism would then be its obsession with the status of its author within a global literary marketplace that endlessly celebrates, consecrates and derides him. In the novel, Rushdie would thus re-center his authorship by thematizing its marginalization, critiquing at the same time the commodity function of cultural texts and questioning what sort of autonomy their authors seek.

Looking at this critical fortune, we could argue that *Fury*, to some degree, sustains all of these varying interpretations. Interestingly enough, however, the same issues put across in Brouillette's reading of Rushdie's novel could be raised concerning the work of John Milton in the 400 years of critical and (often opposing) political appropriation, canonic centralization and colonial exportation that have followed the publication of *Paradise Lost*. By "choosing" to inherit and deviate Milton's *destinerrant* rhetoric, Rushdie performs the same accommodating/deviating act others have made of his fiction, mediating in this way Milton's text to the twenty-first century through a creationist demythologizing and *destinerrant*, erring appropriation of its informing narrative strategies and concerns.

The end of the novel returns us to Solanka who, like Satan in the epigraph to *The Satanic Verses,* finds himself literally with no ground beneath his feet. This ending, as is common in Rushdie's fiction, remains poised between redemption and fall as Solanka, in a half-frenzied, half-desperate move, seeks reconciliation with his son. Solanka is drawn to a particular place in London, a garden-scape he names after the

boy, studded with magical trees and infused with artistic creation. A hallowed ground full of the sacred spots that had once been father and son's favorite haunts.

On the one hand, this ending could be seen to offer a vision of a possibly better future in store for Solanka, who longs to reconnect with his "only true son", Asmaan, whose name signifies the only paradise Solanka had ever been able to believe in. On the other hand, however, as is characteristic of Rushdie, this promise is only implied, staged but never unequivocally fulfilled.

Solanka's absurd jumping on the bouncy castle is thus immersed in a Miltonic rhetoric of an edenic space, only now it is translated into the 'paradise within' that closes the epic as a site of redemption

> […] onely add
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
> Add virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
> By name to come call'd Charitie, the soul
> Of all the rest; then wilt thou not be loath
> To leave this Paradise, but shall possess
> A paradise within thee, happier farr. (*Paradise Lost*, XII, 581-87)

For Rushdie, however, contrary to Milton, this redemption remains dubious. Deprived of the promise of successful self re-imagining, seeing the figures of his own creation turn monstrous, mocked for his lack of self awareness, Malik Solanka ultimately embodies, much like Moraes Zogoiby, a witness to the failures of the promises of decolonization and of the heady cosmopolitanism so often attributed to Rushdie himself. Through *destinerrant* approximations of its protagonist to Milton's Satan, Rushdie writes a novel that, even if not as successful as *The Satanic Verses*, for example, still manages, in the fortunes, motivations and downfalls of its mock heroic protagonist, to turn a critical eye on the alignments that have come to characterize

contemporary cultural formations. This critique is taken up by Rushdie once more in the last novel discussed in this dissertation, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

*The Ground Beneath Her Feet:* Poetics of Redemption in Rushdie's Orphic Idyll.

*The Ground Beneath Her Feet* explores the narrative possibilities opened by an intertwining of myth into the lives of its characters. In the novel, the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, re-worked into the love triangle established between its narrator Rai, the pop singer Vina Apsara and her lover, the song writer Ormus Cama, becomes the backdrop against which Rushdie writes the heady decades of the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of the USA as the new global superpower.

Rushdie's use of the Orpheus myth, akin to the exploration of the mythic mode in Aurora Zogoiby's paintings in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, confers not only another intertextual layer on the events described in the novel, but can be seen to constitute an instance of *destinerrance* of Milton's *Paradise Lost.* This underlying movement of the myth from epic poem to novel inflates the scope of Rushdie's text so that, through his protagonists, the author can explore an array of issues from photography and twentieth-century pop culture to American neo-imperialism. Linking all of these issues contemporary to the novel's publication is an underlying questioning of the kind of plurivocal art Rushdie himself as a writer is producing and of the (im)possibility of a breaching of barriers and a healing of wounds that, for Vina and Ormus, constitutes the redeeming power of love and art, represented in the novel via rock-and-roll music.

*The Ground Beneath Her Feet* thus signals Rushdie's concerns, as a writer, with issues that are reiterated in *Fury*. While the latter consistently explores the mounting ironies and shortcomings surrounding the life of its protagonist, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* explodes the kind of dialogic sweep already present in the previous texts to an extent that it becomes difficult to see how the novel will hold together. However, even in this overwhelming exercise in intertextuality, Rushdie's exploring of a fallen narration not merely as theme but as structuring device, coupled with his choice of a myth that consistently appears in Milton's writing and, to a large extent, helps

shape his views on his own poetic efforts, can still be read in terms of the *destinerrance* we have been discussing here.

The myth of the Thracian singer that Rushdie uses as the backdrop for his narrative, and which becomes a lens of sorts through which his narrator comes to understand the events in the protagonists' lives, spans the poetic work of John Milton from his early years. Looking at the different allusions the poet makes to the myth, Sá affirms that, in Milton's perception, Orpheus unites the mythopoieic roles of the archetypal poet and the Renaissance humanist's poetic conflicts, conflicts which Milton the poet will himself inherit (Sá, *Orpheus* 107). For the critic, this may account for the power this particular myth claims over Milton's literary imagination. Milton's take on Orpheus, glimpsed through the allusions to the myth that span his work, seem closely linked to his sense of the place and purpose of literary production, as Sá goes on to clarify

> Milton seems to have directed his poetry and prose to his choice of justifying God's ways to men. From his early writing until the time of publication of the volume that included *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, Milton treated the matter of man's redemption as a struggle between the vision of the literal eye and an inner vision. For the poet, salvation seems to be granted to those who manage to eliminate the literal eye, escape the grim closures of the inner eye, and finally attain the blessed visions of the "true" knowledge of God. Within this poetic choice, Milton thought of Orpheus as the legendary figure who could aid him to outwit death and reinstate art and poetry as the God-given recreative power. For this reason, the many allusions to the Orpheus myth in Milton's early and late writings are to be seen more as juxtapositions of the redemptive motif of the myth than as a development proper. (Sá, *Orpheus* 81)

Milton thus does not choose to simply re-write the myth over but to recover and re-direct, inside a Christian pathos, the redemption motif that can be seen in it. Looking at Rushdie's appropriations of the myth in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, in Vina and Ormus's connection to music we find the same ideal of redemption achievable through a particular artistic form put forward, divested of Milton's Christian rhetoric. In the novel Rushdie, in line with Milton, does not simply propose his own particular development of the myth of Orpheus, but rather re-directs it into the depiction of the rock and roll/pop scene of the 1960s and its attendant issues; in other words, myth becomes a means of portraying the particular cultural and artistic forms that took shape in America during those years and then traveled the globe.

Sá's work provides a useful look at the evocations of Orpheus throughout Milton's poetry. He is quick to point out that, although consistent throughout the poet's career, the evocations of the myth are by no means unchanged; indeed, for Sá, in later texts such as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained,* the myth is rather more problematized than in the earlier texts. In *Paradise Lost*, the poem that concerns us here, the fundamental losses incurred by mankind (loss of innocence, loss of Eden) would entail a transformation of the idea of death and the necessity of finding a new paradise within (*Paradise Lost,* XII, 576-87). Sá argues that, in Milton's poem, finding this internal version of Eden rests on many things, the first of which is choosing the correct attendant muse. Milton's rejection of Calliope (Orpheus's mother in some versions of the myth) in favor of Urania, the "Heav'nly Muse" whose aid he requests in the opening lines of Book I, would show him "trying to reach for a new dimension of spirit and light. The invocation of a heavenly muse seems to work the final transition from classical to Christian terminology" (Sá, *Orhpeus* 101).

In this choice of muse, Milton would signal his hope of being successful where Orpheus, the archetypal poet, had failed before, even if he still cannot quite shake an underlying anxiety over the latter's fate and his own (Sá, *Orpheus* 105). Looking at

*Paradise Lost* and its “companion” epic *Paradise Regained* in their allusions to the myth that so filled Milton’s imagination, for Sá, while the former is marked by the pagan philosophy of inward redemption and of an inward search for what had been lost (in the final prescription of the ‘paradise within’), the latter is finally able to reject the whole body of heathen philosophy and offers its readers the fully regained Christian paradise in the withstanding of satanic temptation by Christ (*Orpheus* 106).

The redemption to be found in the recovery of Eden, even if only as an internal space, for Sá, is the driving force behind Milton’s poetic efforts, couched on a Christianizing of pagan mythic motifs, as his invocation of Urania attests. Rushdie’s *destinerrant* treatment of the same myth obviously does not involve a recovery of a lost Christian Arcadia, but is linked to a discussion of just how effective plurivocal artistic and cultural forms such as the rebellious rock-and-roll music of Vina and Ormus, and Rushdie’s own literary output, are at crossing barriers and, in a way, redeeming a world order created inside colonialism. Characteristically in Rushdie’s fiction, these transformed sites of redemption in a secular twentieth century are portrayed rather ambiguously by Rai, as all cultural products in the novel are increasingly linked to the bourgeoning of an ever more consumer driven, capitalist global society.

Thus, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the *destinerrance* of the myth of Orpheus can be seen to focus on a discussion of a hope of redemption, as in Milton’s work, only to reveal an ambivalent view of the sites and cultural forms that hold that promise. This is perhaps the reason why the novel is shaped by another of Rushdie’s fallen narrators, the photographer Rai.

In Rai’s narration, as in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie employs again a *destinerrant* fallen narrative voice to shape the events in the novel. And as in his previous work, this recourse to a fallen narrator can be read alongside the space given over by Milton to the satanic perspective on events in *Paradise Lost*. However, characteristically in Rushdie’s fiction, *destinerrance* produces difference at

the same moment it enacts appropriation. Milton's epic treats Satan and his narrative of self-vindication as a mock epic quest that is written over by Adam's and later by Christ's understanding and acting out of the Father's will. Rai's narrative, on the other hand, becomes a way for Rushdie to set in motion a novel precariously poised on the hopes deposited on the kind of eclectic multiculturalism emanating from the USA that is flaunted by Rai himself, by Vina and Ormus in their music, as a way out of the strictures imposed by a pervasive colonial world order and, on the other hand, a deflating of these ideals as they unfurl into the globalized consumer mass culture that, for Rushdie, is the other side of this promise.

From the first chapter of the novel, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice becomes central to Rai's understanding of his relationships with Vina and Ormus, relationships which ultimately shape his perceptions of the world and of the issues the novel tackles. Rai (nickname of Umeed Merchant) identifies himself with Aristaeus, the bee keeper whose love of Eurydice in the "original" myth is ultimately responsible for her death. It is through this love triangle that Rushdie's text sets up an association it will consistently explore, the linking of the unifying and redemptive power of art and music, embodied in Rai's view by Ormus, the novel's Orpheus, of human love (Vina) and the inescapability of the principle of life/death.

Rushdie's narrator tells the reader that while Aristaeus is able to make live bees spring from bovine carcasses, his own talent lies in photographing human carcasses and in documenting the great tragedies of the times, like the bloody war over Vietnam. Umeed, narrator and photographer, becomes the interpreter not only of the narrative events but also of the times he lives in, forcing both upon the eyes of the world.

> And I, Umeed Merchant, photographer, can spontaneously generate new meaning from the putrefying carcase of what is the case. Mine is the hellish gift of conjuring response, feeling, perhaps even comprehension, from uncaring eyes, by placing before them the silent

> faces of the real. I, too, am compromised, no man knows better than I know irredeemably. Nor are there any sacrifices I can perform, or gods I can propitiate. Yet my name means “hope” and “will”, and that counts for something, right? (*Ground* 22)

Through photography Rai has attained to what he sees as knowledge deeper and more hellish than the superficial understanding he sees around him. Like Milton’s Adam who is condemned to knowing good through evil, and Satan who, although he knows both good and evil chooses the latter, Rai has attained to knowledge that is fallen and irredeemable. In this second instance of *destinerrance* of Milton’s epic in the novel, Rai joins the ranks of Rushdie’s other fallen narrators, like Moor Zogoiby and Saleem Sinai.

This use of a fallen narrative voice shaping how events in the novel and its protagonists come across to the reader is thus a recurrent aspect of Rushdie’s fiction. Looking back to *Paradise Lost*, this same desire for mastery over narrative that Milton’s Satan never fully attains but still persistently aspires to is characteristically made over by Rushdie to his own fallen characters. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet,* particularly, this *destinerrance* of a fallen narration, which in Milton is finally written over by Divine authority, is activated to introduce Rushdie’s own reflections in a context far removed from seventeenth-century England.

> For a long while I have believed […] that in every generation there are a few souls, call them lucky or cursed, who are simply born not belonging, who come into the world semi-detached, if you like, without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race […] those who value stability, who fear transience, uncertainty, change, have erected a powerful system of stigmas and taboos against rootlessness, that disruptive, anti-social force, so that we mostly conform, we pretend to be motivated by loyalties and solidarities we do not really feel […] Our libraries, our palaces of entertainment tell the truth. The tramp, the

> assassin, the rebel, the thief, the mutant, the outcast, the delinquent, the devil, the sinner, the traveler, the gangster, the runner, the mask: if we did not recognize in them our least-fulfilled needs, we would not invent them over and over again, in every place, in every language, in every time. (*Ground* 73)

Rai, Rushdie's Indian-born, uprooted, hybrid, upper-class cosmopolitan narrator, along with Vina and Ormus, belongs to the ranks of figures he lists. He thus shares with Milton's Satan not only a privileged access to fallen knowledge but, according to Rai himself, the privileged condition of being an outcast. It is important to clarify that, in both Rai and Satan's case, this is a position that is rather chosen than imposed. While Satan casts himself down when he consistently refuses to accept the pardon offered by God, Rai casts himself, along with Vina and Ormus, from stable sites of identification.

Rai, the solipsistic fallen narrator who construes a text that runs the risk of overwhelming its reader by sheer excess, has drawn some critical attention. Carmen Concilio reads *The Ground* in terms of its narrator, as both the counterpart to the mythological figure of Aristaeus and as the point of convergence of its double discourse on photography and literature. For Concilio, structurally, the first chapter of the novel functions as a proleptic frame, anticipating the tragic end of its female protagonist. This would parallel the structure of Virgil's rendition of the myth, in which Aristaeus's story also frames that of Orpheus and Eurydice (133-34). The difference here would be that Rushdie's evocation of Aristaeus's ghost goes, as is typical of his writing, from the literal to the parodic, to the ironic.

Interestingly enough, Concilio highlights the fact that Rushdie chooses a particular version of the Orpheus myth and frames his re-telling of it with a fall, Rai's last photograph of Vina, Rushdie's Eurydice. In this photograph Vina appears falling to her death, swallowed by a gigantic tear in the ground during an earthquake. For Concilio, uniting in himself the complementary roles of narrator and photographer, Rai

unites also oral and visual art, a mirror image of Rushdie's literary style. It is in this guise that

> Rai is the typical Rushdian orator, expert in rhetorical devices, such as omniscience, intrusiveness, digressions, asides, comments, understatement, but also, prolepsis, analepsis, ellipsis and all sorts of temporal leaps; quite consciously reader-response oriented, linguistically creative, polyphonic and exuberant. That is to say, the usual fascinating, captivating and torrent-like authoritarian, though unreliable, teller of beautiful and truthful lies. (Concilio 135)

Concilio's assessment of Rai could very well be applied to Milton's particular depiction of Satan, another teller of beautiful and seemingly truthful lies. After all Rai, by his own admission, aligns himself, Vina and Ormus, via their take on identity and, most importantly in the novel, the plurivocal artistic forms in which they have chosen to express themselves (rock and roll/pop music, writing and photography) with an image of the devil cast inside one such beautiful lie, Satan as mutant, rebel and (self) outcast.

The consequence is that Rushdie's protagonists, as artists, align themselves and their plurivocal, multi-faceted artistic output with outsidedness, the capacity to step outside the cultural, social and economic framework that stems from their breaking free of stable points of identification. Rushdie, via his fallen narrator, thus appropriates the *destinerrant* version of the devil figure as rebel outcast, a trait Milton's character would find particularly appealing (but as another lie Satan tells himself). What Rushdie does, however, is to fuse this with the discourse of rootlessness as a positive, cross-cultural force disruptive of a world order in which, as *Fury* will attest, colonial power relations are re-structured. Rushdie thus once more activates a *destinerrant* fallen narrative perspective that, in *Paradise Lost*, is posed only to be continually frustrated precisely because it is the fallen satanic perspective. In Rushdie's novel, however, Rai's *destinerrant* fallen narration (initially) consolidates a view, persistently attributed to the

author himself by a large faction of Rushdie critics, of rootlessness as not only positive, but generative of rebellious counter-cultural forces.

Rai aligns himself, and also Vina and Ormus, with a particular version of the devil, pedaled also by Milton's character, as rebel outcast. From this stance, according to Rai, this figure can become a liberator of sorts of mankind's secret nature. This image is weaved into an explosively intertextual literary work that, in turn, raises (but only to later problematize) the power of the plurivocal forms of art they produce in breaching the barriers created in the wake of colonialism and in healing the wounds it perpetrated.

> We find ground on which to make our stand. In India, that place obsessed by place, belonging-to-your-place, knowing-your-place, we are mostly given that territory, and that's that, no arguments, get on with it. But Ormus and Vina and I, we couldn't accept that, we came loose. Among the great struggles of man – good/evil, reason/unreason, etc. – there is also this mighty conflict between the fantasy of Home and the fantasy of Away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey. And if you were Ormus Cama, if you are Vina Apsara, whose songs could cross all frontiers, even the frontiers of people's hearts, then perhaps you believed all ground could be skipped over, all frontiers would crumble before the sorcery of the tune. (*Ground* 55)

For Rai, Vina and Ormus, rock-and-roll music, the one art form that cannot be pinned down because it originates nowhere and everywhere, subsuming democratically and without hierarchy references and influences from every part of the world into itself, becomes the best artistic expression of the notions they have been championing. This would confer on it the privilege of crossing over frontiers of identity and place, uniting in its democratic rhythms people from across the former colonial divide.

However, as Rai's tale progresses, as Vina and Ormus's relationship becomes strained and rock and roll is cynically turned into a commodity by globalized capital, Rai's persuasions become increasingly difficult to sustain. Looking back once more to *Paradise Lost*, Rai's positive associations with the figure of the devil, a *destinerrant* view Milton's Satan himself would share at least in the opening lines of Book I, in which he reaffirms the justice of their claims to the other fallen angels, now means that the kind of attentive critical reading of Satan's assertions required in the epic also becomes necessary here. Rai fuses a fallen narrative mode with a positive take on multiculturalism and rootlessness. But in T*he Ground Beneath Her Feet,* as their musical partnership and the love the protagonists share either break down or fall prey to a tawdry celebrity pop culture, it becomes increasingly clear that Rai's previous associations are more a function of his self-perception than something the novel endorses unreservedly. Rai's fallen persuasions, much like Satan's, are thus not as transparent as both characters believe them to be. In this way, as in *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Fury*, Rushdie's novel employs a fallen narrative to structure events and raise issues that have come to the fore in contemporary culture, but its responses to them, as in most of his fiction, is not one-sidedly clear or unproblematic.

Thus, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet,* Rushdie's use of a *destinerrant* fallen narrative mode, linked to allusions to the myth of Orpheus, shapes a novel whose responses to the questions it raises are shifting and ambivalent. This ambivalence becomes more explicit as Rai realizes that the only really important marks Ormus and Vina's music has succeeded in breaching is that of record sales and concert tickets. Concomitantly, the place that had formerly epitomized the democratic eclecticism Vina and Ormus had championed, America, the biggest exponent of rock-and-roll music worldwide, increasingly takes on the hue of (neo)imperial center. Rai is eventually forced to acknowledge a self-destructive edge to what he, Vina and Ormus have

embraced so unreservedly through music. Their dream America, as the America depicted via New York City in *Fury*, becomes a voracious monster that devours the very people who have bought into it, while they still (sadly) laugh for joy.

In the novel, it is Ormus Cama who first voices the enchantment with dream America and its constitutive hybridity (understood as a democratic embracing of varied influences) that will be shared by Rai and Vina.

> I want to be in America, America where everyone's like me, because everyone comes from somewhere else. All those histories, persecutions, massacres, piracies, slaveries; all those secret ceremonies, hanged witches, weeping wooden virgins and horned unyielding gods, all that yearning, hope, greed, excess, the whole lot adding up to a fabulous noisy historyless self-inventing citizenry of jumbles and confusions; all those variform manglings of English adding up to the liveliest English in the world; and above everything else, all that smuggled in music. (*Ground* 252)

Ormus's vision of dream America is directly linked to the eclectic, fluid, cross-cultural nature of rock and roll and the music he and Vina make together. Their music is at once fleshly and hedonistic, spiritual and divine and, like this dream America pedaled by market capitalism in the latter half of the twentieth century, their music has the capacity to drive people mad with the desire it produces within them. The consequence of all this, and which Rai, doomed to know irredeemably, is forced to acknowledge, is that both leave behind them long trails not only of delight but of destruction too.

Rai, the novel's fallen narrator, conveyor of irredeemable knowledge, is finally privy to the suspicion that the positive, generative forces he has been celebrating as a mark of America and of the artistic form of expression that comes to define it for himself, for Vina and for Ormus, might not live up to all of their promises.

> The America in which I led my well-off, green-carded life, Orpheum-America in which love is the sigh on our humanity, America below Fourteenth Street, loosey-goosey and free as air, gave me more of a sense of belonging than I'd ever felt back home. Also, with the dream America everyone carries round in his head, America the Beautiful, Langston Hughes's country that never existed but needed to exist – with that, like everyone else, I was thoroughly in love. But ask the rest of the world what America meant and with one voice the rest of the world answered back, Might, it means Might. A power so great that it shapes our daily lives even though it barely knows we exist, it couldn't point to us on a map. America is no finger-snapping bopster. It's a fist. (*Ground Beneath* 419-20)

Through his photographer's eye Rai captures the fisted face of America in his images of the Vietnam war and its thousands upon thousands of dead. Ormus, Rai and Vina's dream America, a construct they are all enchanted with, reveals to Rai its own irredeemable side: foreign oppression and violence, destructive self-indulgence, hedonism and consumer decadence. It is hardly surprising that the novel slowly becomes colored by a sense of doom.

This sense of impending doom and destruction is powerfully conveyed by Rushdie in the idea of parallel universes co-existing alongside each other and in perpetual danger of crashing into each other. And although Rai is the interpreter of a narrative increasingly linked to the motion of falling, it is Ormus, the novel's Orpheus, who becomes its prophet and singer. Separated from Vina, Ormus is increasingly plagued by visitations from another world that is on collision course with this, a collision that will prove fatal to either one or the other. Ironically, however, it is this other dimension and its history that the novel's reader would recognize as factual. Faced with a mounting disillusionment, Ormus ultimately finds refuge in madness, prompting Rai to

say “in a way I envied Ormus Cama his madness. That vision of a literally disintegrating world held together, saved and redeemed by the twin powers of music and love, was perhaps not to be so easily derided” (443). This vision, shared among the novel’s protagonists, although not so easily derided, is also barely sustainable.

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie introduces us to a vision of a subversive musical genre that, for him, seems to define Western culture emanating from the USA during his youth only to reveal an ambivalence towards it that will come full circle in his critique of contemporary consumer society in *Fury*. Rushdie’s musical reverie could thus be read as a “re-imagin[ining] of the American myths of idealistic plurality and immigrant success from a postmodern remove” (Boyagoda 34). What Rushdie seems to be suggesting in his fallen narrative is that this idealistic plurality that characterizes the decades he describes is encapsulated, *par excellence*, in the image of dream America, an image which eventually falls short.

For Randy Boyagoda, a nuanced reading of the novel reveals that it is simultaneously about the Americanization of the world and the Americanness of mobile cultural production which, in a global society, is liberated from the confines of a static national past (37). Boyagoda’s “nuanced” reading, however, takes somewhat for granted the deep ambivalence Rushdie is pointing to in his assessment of contemporary cultural production. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the Americanization of the world in an increasingly globalized culture seems to outweigh this celebratory liberation from static national pasts and its attending strategies of equating identity with performance. The substance of dream America in the end turns out to be consumer capitalism, and this disenchantment in the novel is reflected in the fortunes of Vina (she is literally swallowed up by the very rootlessness she had so staunchly championed) and of Ormus (who descends into madness and is finally assassinated).

Focusing on Rushdie's ambivalence towards the 1960s and 1970s of his youth, and which he depicts in the novel, Andrew Teverson sees both *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* as novels that take globalization as a central theme. For Teverson, both novels tend to reflect ambivalently upon the subject, "since they focus upon global mass culture – a phenomenon in which Rushdie is able to discover egalitarian and utopian impulses flourishing alongside the darker machinations of international capital flows" (176). Rushdie's meditation upon the related phenomena of pop music, literature and photo-journalism reveals, according to Teverson, that popular mass culture is an American-led phenomenon, made possible by the massive concentration of wealth, power and technological means in the West. However, for the critic, while on the one hand Rushdie is clearly aware that the mass culture of which rock and roll and pop music are emblematic is driven by, even complicit with, what he calls consumeristic ideology, Rushdie is still unable to turn from it completely, seeing in capitalist economics and mass culture enough cultural complexity to offer a critique of the very same economic processes that have brought them into being (Teverson 176).

For Teverson, the new social and economic order Rushdie sees taking shape in the aftermath of the European empires, led by America and its new global role in the latter half of the twentieth century, has eroded borderlines to become a dynamic transformational force. On the other hand,

> To the extent that it is produced by a long, inequitable history of imperial activity led from the global North, enables the ever-more-effective exploitation of subaltern classes and Third-World nations by those with economic power, and secures the increasing homogenization of culture into brand names and recognizable commodities, his [Rushdie's] work reflects more critically on the subject. (Teverson 178)

Teverson's assessment of Rushdie's ambivalent views on the spaces and cultural formations he addresses thus turns out to be more nuanced, and more in line with

Rushdie's *destinerrant* narrative, than Boyagoda's. For our purposes here, Teverson's highlighting of the ambiguity underscoring the novel in lieu of a one-sided embracing of terms and positionings that, for Ormus and Vina, represent the redeeming promises of pop music (rootlessness, multiculturalism, etc.) goes hand in hand with the fallen narrative structure Rushdie employs, a structure that both foregrounds promises and questions their operation.

However, Teverson's reading of the novel still presents some problems. For the critic, rock and roll and pop music become paradigmatic of Rushdie's writing because they are constituted by "heterotopian spaces in which multitudes of influences blend creatively and clash dynamically" (191). But here we must tread carefully. First of all, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie is depicting a very particular period in rock and roll and pop culture, the scenario of his own youth. Now, many years later, he can look back on those times and on the promises borne with them, problematizing their self-awarded status as democratic sites of creativity. Teverson also perhaps aligns too closely Rushdie's views on globalization and its workings with the theoretical framework he (Teverson) seems to endorse. This perhaps leads him into reading too much of a positive note in Rushdie's text, even if he does stress ambivalence as an important term when it comes to reading the novel. Reading *The Ground* in terms of the *destinerrance* of a fallen narrative perspective, coupled with an exploration of the motifs of the Orpheus myth, may help provide another insight into Rushdie's shifting textual universe.

The breakdown of Rai's *loci* of faith, consolidated with Vina's death, and the falling motion that takes over the novel finally revert its reader back to the constitutive myth Rushdie started off with.

> Four hundred years ago, Francis Bacon believed that Orpheus had to fail in his Underworld quest, that Eurydice could not be saved and that Orpheus himself had to be torn to pieces, because for him, the Orpheus

> myth was the story of the failure not only of art but of civilization itself. Orpheus had to die, because culture must die. The barbarians are at the gates and cannot be resisted. Greece crumbles; Rome burns; brightness falls from the air. (*Ground* 564)

Rai interprets Vina's death alongside Eurydice's descent into the underworld. But the myth also gives him scope for a broader reflection. As the *destinerrant* redemption motif Rushdie has been playing with succumbs with Vina, Rushdie reflects also on the chaos knocking at the gates of the twentieth-century version of imperial Rome.

By the end of novel, Rai/Aristaeus is the only protagonist to survive. And despite the falling motion that dominates the latter part of the text, Rushdie is still able to signal an open ending that saves it from delving too deeply into skepticism and disappointment. Rai still figuratively finds some ground on which to stand and so stem the falling motion that comes to overpower his narrative towards the end.

> In my lifetime, the love of Ormus and Vina is as close as I've come to a knowledge of the mythic, the overweening, the divine. Now that they've gone, the high drama's over. What remains is ordinary human life. I'm looking at Mira and Tara, my islands in the storm, and I feel like arguing with the angry earth's decision to wipe us out, if indeed such a decision has been made. Here's goodness, right? The mayhem continues, I don't deny it, but we're capable also of this. Goodness drinking o.j. and munching muffins. Here's ordinary human love beneath my feet. (*Ground* 575)

Rushdie thus suggests a remaining possibility of redemption from the heady chaos and the tragedies Rai has been privy to, however uncertain, deep or lasting that redemption may be. The cycle of potential collision with the other worlds Rushdie sets up to counter "reality" still exists, after all. By the end of the novel, a new-found source of

redemption is tempered, not as Rai, Vina and Ormus would previously have, by rootlessness, but by love. This tempering, however, much like Malik Solanka's bouncing and Chamcha's reconciliation with his past, remains uncomfortable and dubious, muted and rather unsatisfactory.

Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* explores a *destinerrant* take on the Orpheus myth we may see operating also in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, coupled with a fallen narrative perspective to reflect on the cultural formations that characterized the 1960s and 1970s of his youth. Rushdie chooses rock and roll and pop music as the site in which to develop his reflections on the counter-cultural movements and the rise of American neo-imperialism that set the tone during this period and that consolidated the capitalist consumerism Rushdie will critique in the novel that follows this one, *Fury*. Through these instances of *destinerrance* of Milton's epic, Rushdie at once celebrates and critiques this heady period and its plurivocal cultural products, a reflection that can also be said to touch his own literary output, giving the novel an underlying metafictional layer. In a novel marked, as his previous texts, by falling, Rushdie is still able to suggest a counter-weight, but only one that must necessarily remain precarious, signaled in the survival of his fallen narrator, the figure who weaves the novel's explosive intertextuality, Rai.

# 5. Conclusion

The field of comparative literary studies, although today firmly established within academic circles, has had to undergo a process of revision of its operating paradigms, a process fueled and enriched by critical trends such as post-colonial theory and by the work with language of thinkers such as Jacques Derrida. Although differing in its lines of inquiry, its focus and informing concerns, such an array of critical inquiry has led to a re-thinking of the lines along which texts may be read alongside/against each other. Drawing on this process, this doctoral dissertation attempts also to expand it by suggesting a line of reading, echoing Derrida, of particular texts from across the former colonial divide.

To this end, Jacques Derrida's portmanteau word *destinerrance* is here taken up as a means of providing new points of entry into the fiction of Salman Rushdie via its elusive intertextual relations with John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. Through *destinerrance*, a particular form (or, we could say, a movement) of intertextuality may be read in Rushdie's novels, an intertextuality relying as much on difference and deviation as on approximation, as much on absence as "presence".

Rather than fleshing out or mapping specific references to Milton's epic in the novels, a move that would turn *destinerrant* textual relations once more into source survey, this dissertation has focused on how certain literary structuring devices and imagery present in *Paradise Lost* can make their way into Rushdie's fiction, but in terms of an erring. Taking up *Paradise Lost*'s powerful rhetoric of transgression, a rhetoric that is a function of its literary portrayal of Satan, the attending opening up of an alluring satanic narrative perspective (which, in both Milton and Rushdie calls forth a reading strategy capable of recognizing its slips and shortcomings) and the shifting, ambiguous depictions of Eden we find in the epic*,* this dissertation questions if and how

Rushdie can "choose to be chosen" by Milton, affording the poet an elusive, fragmented kind of afterlife.

Interweaving Miltonic rhetoric and imagery in this way, Rushdie's novels can depict spaces in which differences and continuities in relation to the epic are constantly articulated to fuel the discussion of issues far removed from the context of seventeenth-century England. Informed by the *destinerrance* of *Paradise Lost*, Rushdie's novels can then look at problems such as the negotiation of identity in the aftermath of decolonization in *The Satanic Verses*, the shortcomings attending nationalist histories in post-colonial nations and the problematic of their representation in *The Moor's Last Sigh,* and the paradoxes and conflicts that have resulted from decolonization across the globe in *Fury* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

The approach to a literary influence without a central point signaled here, based not on adhesion or similarity to an original but on processes of re-signification of texts and discourses of power, refines comparative literary analysis, and particularly the notion of influence, making it expansive and creative rather than constrictive and overarching. It also allows writers like Rushdie to dialogue with a literary "tradition" outside of the "successor" position, a view that has led to a critique of Rushdie as merely engulfed by or assimilated to it.

Reading literary influence via *destinerrance,* Rushdie's novels can be read as appropriate "heirs" to *Paradise Lost*, but on the terms Derrida understands inheritance to operate. Instead of a final point of arrival of specific passages from the epic, Rushdie's texts can be read as responsible responses to a literary tradition that Rushdie does not entirely inhabit but which his work nevertheless touches. Milton's authorial signature (hence also his position as point of reference or origin) is dissolved and Rushdie's erring engagements with *Paradise Lost* emerge as counter-signature, in the terms proposed by Derrida, an inventive experience of/in language, an act of reading that is inscribed in the field of the (*destinerrant*) text that is read. Literary

influence, understood via *destinerrance*, becomes this act of counter-signing: not a process of recognition of a Miltonic authoring/authority, but a process of deviation of elusive intertextual relations.

The reading proposed here departs from but also attempts to fuel and expand the kind of critical self-awareness that has increasingly come to the fore in comparative literary studies, helping to refine at the same time discussions of inheritance and influence. Unburdening both Milton and Rushdie from any polarities, this reading opens Rushdie's novels to new spheres of dialogue with the (expanding) universe of texts, images and discourses it touches.

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