RESEARCH ARTICLE

Magic realism and science fiction: Salman Rushdie's inter-generic writing

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Abstract: Salman Rushdie's fiction is well-known for its abundant mixes of magic realist and science fiction textual elements. By resorting to three writing strategies, namely "meta-writing," "split-writing" and writing about identity-related issues, Rushdie generates a type of "inter-generic writing" that serves to voice authorial appeals for hybridity, impurity and plurality. Meta-writing is an authorial construction of the neo-historicist verisimilitude justifying the legitimacy and self-sufficiency of literary writing. Split-writing reveals "the alterity of selves," thus advocating tolerance and pluralism. Writing about identity-related issues is no less than a politicized identity construction, in the quest for multiple postcolonial subjectivities in the "Third Space."

Keywords: magic realism, science fiction, intergenericity, "Inter-generic" writing, dialogism

1 Introduction

Shortly after its publication in 1988, *The Satanic Verses* caused worldwide turmoil and was banned in the Islamic world because of its alleged blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad and the *Koran*. Rushdie (1989) was forced to go "underground" after Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, announced a *fatwa* against him via Tehran radio, accusing him of blasphemy against Islam. As a highly acclaimed Asian-British immigrant writer alongside V. S. Naipaul and Kazuo Ishiguro, Rushdie has long maintained a dubious cultural identity and an ambiguous writing stance. As early as 1975, Rushdie wrote his first semi-science fiction novel *Grimus*. Rushdie's debut is so temptingly imbued with science fiction elements that some scholars tend to label him as a science fiction writer (Yael Maurer literally calls Rushdie "a writer of science fiction" in the preface of his book (2014, p. 1)). In *The Satanic Verses*, a character dubs for a popular science TV show. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) is a story about the magical journey to the moon in a robotic bird. The author pays homage to the golden age of science fiction through Solanka's view in *Fury* (2001), proclaiming that "Golden-age science fiction and science fantasy were [...] the best popular vehicle ever devised for the novel of ideas and of metaphysics" (Rushdie 2001, p. 158). In the memoir, Rushdie recollected his youthful obsession with science fiction in the 1960s (Rushdie recalled that he read science fiction every Wednesday during his school years in central England (2012, p. 42)). "Rushdie sees science fiction not as an end in itself [...] but as a springboard for the exploration of philosophical and political concepts" (Teverson 2007, p. 111). Harold Bloom points out that "Rushdie's desire to draw on the genre of science fiction may account in part for some of the ingenuousness of the narrative" (Bloom 2003, p. 32).

As two different genres of fantasy, magic realism and science fiction are intertwined in many aspects. Bowers takes Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* as an example in *Magic(al) Realism: The New Critical Idiom* to show close connections among magic realism, fantasy, fable and science fiction (Bowers 2004, p. 27-28). Such connections are elaborated in Darko Suvin's definition of science fiction (Suvin defines science fiction as "a literary genre or verbal construct whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the *presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment*" (Roberts 2006, p. 7-8, emphasis in the original)). Magic realism and science fiction are frequently paired off. With their abundant differences and similarities, they provide desirable points of entry for exploring the fusion of literary genres. We draw on Rushdie's novels to explore shared thematic and formal features of magic realism and science fiction. The concept of "intergenericity" is thus proposed to identify the confluence of magic realism and science fiction in Rushdie's writing. The word "intergenericity" proper is invented in relation to two poststructuralist notions of "intertextuality" and "intersubjectivity,"

hinging on both the textual and conceptual features of Rushdie's works. From the perspective of intergenericity, the dialogism of "inter-generic" writing in Rushdie's post-*fatwa* works comes to light. Dialogism, as ingeniously formulated by Bakhtin, is effectuated here by means of constructing generic mixes reminiscent of hybridity, plurality, self-alterity and multiple identities.

The paper probes into the dialogic intergenericity of Rushdie's post-*fatwa* works from the perspectives of meta-writing, split-writing and identity-related writing, examining how Rushdie's inter-generic writing of magic realism and science fiction can be interpreted as subtle political appeals and inconspicuous cultural choices. Rushdie's inter-generic writing indicates three appeals. Meta-writing is an authorial construction of the neo-historicist "verisimilitude" justifying the legitimacy and self-sufficiency of literary writing. The concept of "verisimilitude" is adopted here with an emphasis on the quality of "seemingly true or real" to distinguish from the phenomenological reality. Split-writing reveals "the alterity of selves," thus advocating tolerance for pluralism. Writing about identity-related issues is no less than a politicized identity construction, in the quest for postcolonial subjectivity in the "Third Space." The status quo of inter-generic writing calls into focus the blurry nature of generic boundaries in general and the intricate correlation between magic realism and science fiction in particular. Inter-generic writing is by no means a mechanically combined style but rather a new hybrid genre geared towards dialogism, which is omnipresent in Rushdie's oeuvre, enabling another meaningful perspective from which to probe into his individual poetics.

2   Meta-writing and "verisimilitude"

"Meta-writing" is a term derived from the literary idiom "metafiction," a type of writing in which the process of writing is discussed or described in a manner both challenging and reaffirming the verisimilitude of the text. As a means of creative writing, meta-writing weaves a textual network connecting a variety of texts, characters and realities. When commenting on the story or the writing per se, texts allude to or directly refer to wordings, devices, images, characters or plots from other novels, which is fundamentally intertextual. Julia Kristeva defines it as "a mosaic of quotations" and "the absorption and transformation of another [text]" (Kristeva 1986, p. 37). Brennan labels Rushdie's works as meta-fiction, namely "novels about Third-World novels" from a neocolonial perspective (Brennan 1989, p. 85). In a similar vein, Rushdie's novels can also be labeled as meta-writing blending rational verisimilitude with empirical verisimilitude. The title The Moor's Last Sigh alludes to Shakespeare's tragedy Othello: The Moor of Venice. Shakespeare's Othello and Rushdie's Moraes share the Moorish identity. Although Rushdie has not cited Othello's sigh from Shakespeare's work, the two texts are still covertly related. At the beginning of the novel, Rushdie depicts an image of "sighing" in Moraes' voice: "A last sigh for a lost world, a tear for its passing" (Rushdie 1995, p. 13). The "sigh" has multiple implications. "Sighing" is both a recurrent image throughout the text and a structural thread underlying the textual surface. Historically, the sigh also refers to "the sigh" made by the last Moorish Sultan Boabdil when he abandoned his city and fled. In 1492, King Boabdil was forced to surrender his sovereignty over Spain, "returning" the kingdom of Granada to King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile. Standing on the hillside overlooking the Palace of the Alhambra, thinking of the Moorish splendor, Boabdil uttered a heavy and helpless sigh. The Moor's "last sigh" is reminiscent of literary works and historical facts at once. It is a novel about novels and a story about stories. The remorseful sigh is no less than a voiceover conveying Rushdie's sympathy for the tragedy of Moraes the Moor. By means of meta-writing, the earlier-written literary and extra-literary elements add up to the verisimilitude, namely the "seemingly true or real" quality of the text in case.

Meta-writing is prevalent in science fiction. Brian Malzberg's *Beyond Apollo* (1972) is a story narrated by its main character who is also the implied author. In *The Iron Dream* (1972), Norman Spinrad adds a criticism of the story in the afterword. Under the pseudonym of Homer Whipple, he critiques, among many other things, the author's blatant preference for phallic symbolism and lack of prose style (Spinrad 1972, p. 288-289). *The Einstein Intersection* (1967) by Samuel Delany displays the interplay between two narrative voices. Pervasive meta-writing in science fiction makes it conceivable to devise an inter-generic writing strategy blending magic realism and science fiction. Meta-writing serves as a rhetoric device to evince a sense of neo-historicist verisimilitude, bespeaking the notion of multiple truths or "verisimilitude pluralism" in defiance of any hermeneutic quest for the correct interpretation of "true story." While science fiction speaks to the rational truth, magic realism celebrates the empirical truth. The blending of two under the formal camouflage of inter-genetic writing reveals authorial inclinations to the dialogic interrelation between the rational and the empirical.

Both magic realism and science fiction mimic linkages to the phenomenal world through the working mechanisms of verisimilitude. Science fiction assumes material and physical rationality as its basic premise. As "scientific rigor" is the essential feature of the genre, scientific rationality constitutes the core value of science fiction. Scientific rationality does not necessarily stem from the phenomenal world only, but from the fictional world as well. Future technologies and scenarios depicted in science fiction can often be traced back to a well of prequels. For instance, it is common for future technology weapons to have the appearance of an average blaster pistol and the efficiency and versatility attainable only in fiction, as in *Star Wars*. Objective knowledge and scientific laws are rewritten in the text to generate new knowledge and laws. In science fiction, hard facts and imagination are sometimes interchangeable. While magic realism is also rooted in the phenomenal world, the emphasis is shifted onto the historical and empirical aspect of verisimilitude. Magic realism brings to the foreground memories and oral narration about the empirical world. In imaginative stories, it is possible for readers to deviate from systematically established world orders and to explore hidden alternative realities. Magic realism becomes a powerful tool of resisting and reshaping realities, opening a new vantage point from which the noisy, volatile and wild world can be reconceived. Rushdie's ideologically motivated magical realistic stories highlight the distinction and connection between reality and fiction, and enable literary imagination to disintegrate the colonial reality while reconstructing postcolonial realities. Non-realistic writing enables people to rediscover "the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances" in the disenchanted world because it explains away the invisible concealment that has always existed in reality ([Leal 1995](), p. 122). Non-realistic writing of concealed realities always has its implicit political agenda. It protests against the existing social order, bureaucracy and hegemonic discourses, rectifies the long-established ideological and cultural clichés and empowers the political appeals behind inter-generic writing of plural verisimilitude. Be it science fiction or magic realism, the verisimilitude is constructed as a neo-historicist conglomerate of fragmentary textuality and intertextuality. With the authorial "magic brush," the past, the present and the future, the existing and the imagined are reversed and collaged. On the one hand, the readers know for sure what they are reading is nothing more than fiction. On the other hand, the author narrates his story in a matter-of-fact tone. Meta-writing demonstrates the constructivism of language and the constructedness of verisimilitude. Neo-historicist verisimilitude pluralism as such is the author's justification for the legitimacy of writing. Faced with the threat of a *fatwa*, Rushdie spoke out in his memoir that "a religion whose leaders behaved in this way could probably do with a little criticism" ([Rushdie 2012](), p. 18).

Haroun and the Sea of Stories is an "ice-breaking" novel published during the post-*fatwa* period. With the *Kathasaritagara*, a collection of ancient Indian stories, as the major pre-text, Rushdie appropriates a China-box structure for his semi-science fiction story about a robotic bird flying to the magical moon in the form of meta-writing featuring one narrative within another narrative. Haroun's adventure is embedded in a multitude of household stories. The most obvious one is the archetypal sea journey that reminds us of Pinocchio. Science fiction elements are amply added into the narrative frame. As Haroun and Iff began to walk down into the belly of the immense ship, they saw Chupwalas putting on fashionable wrap-around dark glasses to help them see better. Refrigeration machines were invented for keeping the poisons, namely the anti-stories, at low temperatures. Divers wore protective clothing to move around safely in the polluted sea. The ubiquitous science fiction elements are reminiscent of Rushdie's reshaping of rational verisimilitude into the magical reading experience. In the novel, Khattam-Shud "is the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself. He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech," the embodiment of religious tyranny and political violence ([Rushdie 1990](), p. 25). The floating sea of stories symbolizes a fairytale-like kingdom observing freedom of belief, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement. There are multiple conflicts between freedom and imprisonment, voice and silence, fluidity and stagnation, fiction and reality, which constitute the narrative tension. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is highly autobiographical. Rushdie's voice can be read between the lines. After the *fatwa*, Rushdie was deprived of personal freedom. He went into hiding alone and moved irregularly from place to place, away from his family and loved ones. Authorial anguish, hesitation and anxiety mix up with a sense of political, emotional and literary rootlessness. Rushdie was like a caged bird, depressed and sulky. Helpless in the face of real-life imprisonment, he yearned for the bright, lofty blue skies and boundless seas. Under these circumstances, literary creation plays a role in preserving memory and projecting hope. The inter-generic writing of science fiction and magic realism presents the reader with a plural form of verisimilitude, blurring the demarcation between "scientific rationality," "empirical truth" and the "phenomenal world." In the world of magic realism, memories and oral narration are recognized as generally acknowledged truth. Their validity weighs no less than hard facts when rewritten into new stories. Rushdie "was not attempting to falsify history, but to allow a fiction to take off from history" ([Rushdie 1991](),

p. 342). In the shadow of the *fatwa*, his life world likens the magic world that is real, unreal and surreal all at once. The authorial message is explicit both inside and outside the story. By Rushdie's own account,

> History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge (Rushdie 1991, p. 28).

Rushdie's stories can be read as metafiction. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* are telling examples. Magic realism and science fiction writers share a predilection for meta-writing as a writing strategy to exercise textual politics against the unspeakably coercive reality. Rushdie merges rational verisimilitude with empirical verisimilitude so tactfully in his meta-writing that their fictitious nature is in stark contrast to the seeming verisimilitude of established reality. Rushdie's inter-generic writing mixes the rational with the empirical, the fictional with the existential, as well as the real with the unreal.

3   "Split-writing" and self-alterity

Magic realism originates from the gap between two widely different groups of people whose differentiated belief systems generate the split-vision (Hart 2005, p. 3). On the part of diasporic writers like Rushdie, the split of belief system results in the fictive interplay between subjective consciousness and unconsciousness. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* before Haroun drank the wish-water, a string of images flashed across his mind: his father's lost storytelling power, his mother's image popping up, his father's face, and then his mother's again. Haroun could not possibly concentrate. At last, he took the golden cup and drank it up. All at once, several fairytale scenes occurred:

> (**Scene 1**) He found himself standing in a landscape that looked exactly like a giant chessboard. On every black square there was a monster: there were two-tongued snakes and lions with three rows of teeth, and four-headed dogs and five-headed demon kings and so on. He was, so to speak, looking out through the eyes of the young hero of the story (Rushdie 1990, p. 46).
> (**Scene 2**) At the top of the tower was (what else but) a single window, out of which there gazed (who else but) a captive princess [...] Haroun as the hero was required to climb up the outside of the tower by clinging to the cracks between the stones with his bare hands and feet (Rushdie 1990, p. 46).
> (**Scene 3**) As a spider [Haroun] was able to make rapid progress to the top of the tower; but when he reached the window the princess produced a large kitchen knife and began to hack and saw at his limbs [...] and he fell (Rushdie 1990, p. 46).

His father and mother's images and the hero's rescue of the princess (incarnation of the mother) flash back and forth across the conscious and unconscious domains. The hero's vision splits into multiple parallel worlds, urging the reader to step out of the single narrative framework and to experience the interplay between consciousness and unconsciousness. The message of self-alterity is hidden behind the frequent switches of narrative perspectives. This is another way of inter-generic writing that we call "split-writing." Haroun's father, a legendary storyteller, was abandoned by his wife and suddenly lost his ability to tell stories. His mother left her husband and ran away with Sengupta, who hated stories and storytellers, and it was on that day that Haroun's father tragically lost his story-telling ability. When Haroun was trying to save the Sea of Stories, the bizarre scenes of rescuing the princess projected Haroun's mixed feelings about his mother. Haroun's mother metamorphosed into an absurd, compulsive, ungrateful and even dangerous princess. Unconsciously, Haroun the son long relished the perfect image of mother-princess. Consciously, his wishful thinking was nothing but hopeless self-deception and self-comfort. The split mother-image is presented via the son's split-vision.

As articulated by Lacan, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (Lacan 2005, p. 130). The unconscious Other and the conscious *self* constitute the split-subject. Julia Kristeva advocated a neo-humanist sense of "being an other," that is, "to imagine and make oneself other for oneself" (Kristeva 1991, p. 13). The neo-humanist understanding of self-alterity resonates with split intents, interests, viewpoints and messages as manifest in inter-generic writing. For instance, Toni Morrison's ghosts, Rushdie's double protagonists, the aliens and superpower children in science fiction. Examples about the Other abound in magic realism and science fiction. Split-writing is a formal inter-generic device mirroring the self-alterity within the split-subject. In Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), female protagonist Sufiya Zinobia is an Oriental figure born out of the soul of a Western girl with several ghosts haunting each other inside her body. In *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), the imaginary princess Qara Köz

whom Mughal Emperor Akbar fell in love with is a ghost with magic realistic and science fiction features. She travels through time and space to reach Akbar. This ghostly resonance "is emblematic of the deliberate syntax of oblivion employed by colonialist discourse" (Hart 2005, p. 8). Phantoms implicate and evoke the presence of the absent, and ghost haunting becomes "a means of articulating the secrets of those whose cultural narratives have been erased by colonialism" (Hogle 2014, p. 237).

According to Darko Suvin, "the great majority of [science fiction] texts [...] preclude significant presentations of truly *other* relationships" (Marc 1979). Cornea nevertheless points out:

> Images of Otherness in science fiction can be understood as a metaphor for forms of Otherness within society or between societies and in this way the genre can engage with the fears and anxiety surrounding a given society's Others (Cornea 2007, p. 176).

In the science fiction world, "novum" is the Other, the "point of difference," grounded in the discourse of science or technological rationale, a conceptual embodiment of "alterity" (Roberts 2006, p. 7, p. 17). Novum is the Latin word for a "new thing," a term applied to describe plausible scientific innovations in science fiction narratives. In science fiction stories novum frequently takes the form of metamorphosis in parallel worlds. *Folding Beijing* (2012), the Hugo award-winning novelette by Chinese writer Hao Jingfang, *The Plattner Story* (1896) by H. G. Wells, *The Ghost Pirates* (1909) by William Hodgson, are all based on the vision of parallel worlds. Space traveling between parallel worlds brings about mutation and metamorphosis. Apart from phantoms, writers maneuver gendered metamorphosis to subtly address the topic of self-alterity. In *Death's End* (2010), the third novel of the famous trilogy by the renowned Chinese science fiction writer Liu Cixin, men evolve into futuristic humans with completely feminine appearances. Gender-neutral worlds depicted in Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1970) and Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1996) imagine the collision between and metamorphosis of male and female subjectivity. The co-existence of male/female subjectivity in these science fiction texts is not different from the above mentioned conscious/unconscious interplay. As the word "novum" carries positive connotations such as novelty, newness, innovation and originality in science fiction, Rushdie's inter-generic writing endows metamorphosis and alterity with new connotations.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, another monumental work by Rushdie, came out in 1999. The story is set in India, Britain, the United States and Mexico, telling the love story about singer Vina Apsara, rock musician Ormus Cama and photographer Rai. The novel unfolds the 40-year history of American and European rock music as well as the postcolonial experience of the characters. Female protagonist Nissa-Diana-Vina crafted by Rushdie went through a Cinderella-Snow White-Sleeping Beauty transformation. At first, Nissa was a typical Cinderella whose father left the family and mother married another man. After her mother's bloody slaughter of the children and husband, the only survivor Nissa had to stay with her late mother's distant relatives and was given the new name Diana. She lived a miserable life like a ragged and helpless Cinderella. Later, Rushdie arranged for Diana to meet Rai whose mother Ameer helped turn Cinderella Diana into a Snow White princess and her name was changed again into Vina. At the end of the story, Vina was tragically buried in an earthquake in Mexico. After her death, media publicity triggered the Vina phenomenon and she was elevated as the eternal Sleeping Beauty. Vina is morally grey, culturally ambivalent, and socially controversial. She is Profane Vina, Junkie Vina, Vina the Sex Machine, Barren-Childless-Tragic Vina, a post-modern Snow White defying any stereotype and a Sleeping Beauty unfortunately consumed and devoured by media and the public. Historical, religious and cultural narratives are woven into fantasy in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Eastern and Western myths are reshaped to generate space for postmodern self-construction and reconstruction. As commented by *Publishers Weekly*, conventional time and space are not enough for Rushdie's imagination. He creates two parallel universes to contain the highly allusive journey through the last 40 years of pop Culture (Rushdie 1999, p. 3). Be it phantom, eunuch or fairytale princess, split-vision enables the reader to re-imagine alternative universes. It transports the reader away from the familiar realistic world to witness the distortion and metamorphosis caused by the collision of split world views. Rushdie invites the readers onboard the space-time journeys through parallel worlds and confronts them with metamorphosis. When situated in a position with split-vision, readers are encouraged to negotiate tolerance for alterities and pluralism.

4   Identity-related writing and the "Third Space"

Inventing split worlds full of verisimilitude pluralism and revealing self-alterity, Rushdie means not only to deconstruct. Instead, he is constructing a "Third Space" in which to dwell and

construct multiple identities. As Homi Bhabha points out, there is a "time-lag" between global and national cultures, generating a split-space, a cultural "Third Space" (Bhabha 1994, p. 56). In such a Third Space, the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates tension, which provides a space for political and cultural criticism (Bhabha 1994, p. 312). The enunciation in the Third Space constitutes a force of intervening in cultural criticism.

Post-structuralist Roland Barthes metaphorically proclaimed "the death of the author," thus empowering the reader in the process of deconstructing authorial subjectivity and of reestablishing a new hybrid intersubjectivity between authorship and readership. Barthes disarmed the author's monopoly over the genesis of meaning and significance through interpretation. In the real-life domain, Khomeini literally imposed a death sentence on Rushdie, the author, in response to the enormous controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses*. Both the metaphorical and realistic death sentence evokes Rushdie's critical and creative responses. In the memoir he sighed, "[h]ow easy it was to erase a man's past and to construct a new version of him, an overwhelming version, against which it seemed impossible to fight" (Rushdie 2012, p. 17). On the creative front, he fought back by means of inter-generic writing to deconstruct colonial history and to reconstruct postcolonial reality, proclaiming the author's strong presence and powerful intervention. Rushdie declared the priority of the latecomer over the forerunner, with the former breaking the spell of the anxiety of influence and defying Barthes' death sentence by means of misreading and rewriting. He remarks,

> If influence is omnipresent in literature, it is also, one should emphasize, always secondary in any work of quality [...] By using what is old, and adding to it some new thing of our own, we make what is new [...] I tried to answer the question, how does newness enter the world? Influence, the flowing of the old into the new, is one part of the answer (Rushdie 2002, p. 70).

Although the author inevitably rewrites the already-said or already-written, he is equally or even more capable of producing new forms of cultural-linguistic expression. By blending existing thoughts into distinctive cultural, historical and political contexts, Rushdie creates his so-called *newness* out of literary routine. Before the *fatwa*, Rushdie's literary innovativeness was deemed as a means of resistance to "the death of the author." After the *fatwa*, his inter-generic writing arose in response to the real-life death threats. He "has often employed magical realism toward a celebration of hybridity, undermines notions of any pure, fixed, and hallowed culture" and constructs alternative identities (Sasser 2014, p. 10). By re-imagining geography, race, and history, he attempts to resolve the relationship between movement, nation, race, and place in an (ever) globalized [world] (Boyagoda 2008, p. 22). He often partakes in discussions of postcolonial issues, touching upon topics like cultural identity, homeland, decolonization, diaspora, Orientalism, hybridity, third space, cross-cultural issues and globalization. Mcleod commented,

> His work is characterized by an exhaustingly energetic, culturally kaleidoscopic and formally imaginative literary style, which expresses something of Rushdie's hybridizing experiences as a migrant writer who moves between cultures, continents and languages (Mcleod 2007, p. 225).

By appropriating and hybridizing Eastern and Western literary and cultural traditions, Rushdie practices his textual "mélange" and presents the reader with his masterful hybrid art. He brings impurities into the text, makes it an anti-discourse, subverts the very idea of purity, and attempts to dissolve the boundaries between different cultures, religions, races and countries. While creating a text full of hybridity and intertextuality, he cuts both ways to deconstruct and reconstruct postcolonial subjectivity and authorial identity.

The Enchantress of Florence (2008) is an exemplar of how Rushdie justifies his magic realist identity construction scheme with science fiction imagination. The story of an Indian princess' miraculous journey in the 15th-16th centuries Europe reproduces the great prosperity of the Mughal Empire of India during the period of Akbar the Great (1542-1605). Angélique, the daughter of a merchant of Montpellier, was abducted by pirates and sold as a sex-slave to a house of pleasure. When she was found, she had been turned into "a palace of memories" with her memory erased. The narrator observes,

> When she came here she wouldn't speak at all. A palace with all the doors and windows locked, she was [. . .] she began to make small, incomprehensible movements of the body, like a person walking without moving, as if she was going somewhere in her head [. . .] This young woman has had her own memories removed, or consigned to some high attic of the palace of memory which has been erected in her mind, and she has become the repository of everything her master needed to have remembered (Rushdie 2008, p. 75).

Angélique lost her vigor and acted like a machine. Memory Palace is a maze with countless stories. Each room in the palace contains a different story. Accordingly, Angélique was brainwashed and hypnotized by Argalia with some Greek memory training techniques. The plot of Memory Palace tints the magic realist story with a layer of scientific glamour. The time-traveling plot, a crucial narrative thread in *The Enchantress of Florence*, bears resemblance to science fiction. At the beginning of the story, the enchantress traveled through time and space in the emperor's dream like a ghost. Jodha is an imagined queen generated from the emperor's mind. Songs were written about her and her beauty was celebrated in portraiture and verse. Later on, Jodha was replaced by Akbar's late great-aunt Qara Köz who was a dangerous sorceress dragging the emperor backward in time. As the plot unfolds, the future overlaps with the past. Rushdie borrows the concept of "Mundus Novus" from Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci to justify the magical happenings with a geographic and scientific rationale. He crosses over the magical world and navigates the story into a half-uncharted territory of a seeming science fiction space.

> Across the Ocean Sea in Mundus Novus the ordinary laws of space and time did not apply. As to space, it was capable of expanding violently one day and then shrinking the next, so that the size of the earth seemed either to double or halve. Different explorers brought back radically different accounts of the proportions of the new world, the nature of its inhabitants, and the way in which this new quadrant of the cosmos was prone to behave (Rushdie 2008, p. 155).

The author tries to explain scientifically and reasonably why the enchantress could have lived for 300 years. He resorts to the idea of parallel worlds to justify the erratic anachronism in the text. The storyteller tries hard to make the story authentic and believable, wrapping up the narrative with science fiction plots. Parallel space-time is a unique Third Space, into which the author invites the reader to witness multiple identities of the characters. The author extends an invitation for the reader to explore identity-related possibilities and impossibilities in the Third Space possibilities. As advocated by Bhabha, "by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity" (Bhabha 1994, p. 56).

Great warrior Argalia hid a female self within the male. Despite the years of a warring life, Argalia had a woman's taste for finery and his skin was as white as a woman's. The emperor's most trusted spy, Umar the Ayyar, "was a young eunuch so slender and hairless of face and body that he could pass for a woman" (Rushdie 2008, p. 39). He could foresee things that hadn't happened yet. Not only has Rushdie pinpointed the split-subject within his characters, but also devised multiple identifies for them. From Simonetta Cattaneo the beauty to the imaginary Jodha to the spirit of great-aunt Qara Köz, they embody humans, goddesses, ghosts and witches all in one. Multiple identities have been constructed under the framework of inter-generic writing. They can be good and evil, magical and realistic, figurative and factual, all at the same time. Rushdie is writing stories as much as writing about himself. Satan Rushdie, as insultingly labeled by Islamic extremists, attempts to tear apart stereotypic pride and prejudice and to dismantle the walls of ideologies, values, cultures and languages. He was concerned that "my Other [constructed by Islamic extremists and the media] may succeed in obliterating me" and was eager to make his voice heard (Rushdie 1991, p. 340). As Bill Ashcroft observes,

> Salman Rushdie [...] deliberately set[s] out to disrupt European notions of 'history' and the ordering of time [...] [his works] run European history aground in a new and overwhelming space which annihilates time and imperial purpose (Ashcroft 2002, p. 33).

Inter-generic writing constructs a Third Space, which "replaces a temporal linearity with a spatial plurality" (Ashcroft 2002, p. 34). In the constructed space, diverse postcolonial subjective identities have been invented to dispel the malicious stigma attached to Rushdie's name. The "death" of the author denies him the authority of interpretation and the opportunity of enunciation. In the literary Third Space, however, he exposes the false association between meaning and the signifier. As is observed by Bhabha, "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 1994, p. 55). In a literary space as such, cognitive rigidity can be corrected, identity pluralism is made possible, voices of different civilizations are enunciated, and the originality and vitality of the author are in full blossom.

Inter-generic writing of magic realism and science fiction manifests itself as a favorite writing strategy at Rushdie's disposal, as manifest in *Grimus, The Satanic Verses, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, The Moor's Last Sigh, The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *The Enchantress of Florence*. The two seemingly disparate genres overlap and intersect, thus giving rise to a new genre that is fundamentally inter-generic and to a new writing style that is overtly hybrid. Viewed from the perspective of intergenericity, the dialogism in Rushdie's works manifests

itself to the full. Meta-writing initiates communication between the rational and the empirical. Split-writing exposes the hidden alterities within the *self*. In the Third Space of literature, readers are encouraged to imagine the possibilities of multiple identities. All of these presupposes and emphasizes the ability to distinguish the *self* from the Other. However, Martha Nussbaum argues that we are not born with such a distinguishing ability. In dialogue with Donald Winnicott, a British psychoanalyst, she points out that it is through art that one nourishes and expands one's empathy and becomes capable of distinguishing the *self* from the Other, "learning to see another human being not as a thing but as a full person" so as to put oneself in the shoes of another person (Nussbaum 2010, p. 96). Through creative writing, writers undertake the task of "moral imagination," for the novel "is itself a moral achievement, and the well-lived life is a work of literary art" (Nussbaum 1990, p. 148). Under the inter-generic camouflage of magic realism and science fiction, Rushdie maneuvers his ethical and moral imagination through story-telling and voices his cultural critiques against the oppressive powers of fundamentalism, imperialism, militarism, totalitarianism, autocracy and technocracy. Inter-generic writing is not only an authorial expedient against coercive reality but also an artistic experiment with which to generate a much-desired-for hybrid accommodating dialogue rather than monologue, multiplicity rather than singularity, relativism rather than absolutism.

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