

ISSN:0976-8165

THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English



Vol. 7, Issue-I February 2016

7 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

www.the-criterion.com

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Exploration of Identity in *The Satanic Verses*: How Binary Oppositions and Performativity Create Ontological Discourses

Miranda Taylor

Undergraduate English Major
Southern Nazarene University.

“Blasphemy and heresy, far from being the greatest evils, are the methods by which human thought has made its most vital advances” (Shaburidin 30). This statement was made by Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses* (1988), speaking in defense of his novel, which has survived and thrived through conflict and controversy since its publication. Commonly known as the Rushdie Affair, *The Satanic Verses* made news headlines across the world when Islamic leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ordered a fatwa¹ in 1998 against Rushdie. The fatwa commanded Muslims to kill Rushdie over the novel’s blasphemous statements concerning the Islamic religion.

The Satanic Verses uses magical realism embedded within the structure of the novel’s frame narrative, intertwining subplots portrayed as dreams. The frame narrative consists of two actors from India, who are cross-culturally centered in modern England. The two protagonists, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, both come from similar backgrounds of Muslim Indian families. Chamcha is a voice over artist and current resident of England, who has broken with his Indian heritage and identity. Farishta’s character is roughly based on the Bollywood superstars N.T. Rama Rao and Amitabh Bachchan, except Farishta’s acting specialty lies in portraying Hindu deities. The novel begins with both protagonists held captive on a hijacked plane traveling from India to England. While flying over the English Channel the plane explodes, but Chamcha and Farishta undergo a transformation whilst falling and are magically saved. During their metamorphoses, Chamcha evolves into the likeness of the devil, while Farishta changes into the likeness of the archangel Gibreel. After the crash and metamorphoses both, characters attempt to restore their former lives. Farishta searches for Allie Cone, the mountain climbing woman he has fallen in love with, but their relationship becomes uneven and unbearable due to Farishta’s developing mental illness (most refer to it as schizophrenia). While Farishta seeks out his long lost love, Chamcha battles coping with his transformation into a goat-like demonic creature. He blames his transformation and misfortunes on Farishta for abandoning him after their fall. Chamcha then focuses all his energy, not on finding love, but taking revenge on Farishta for what he has done. Taking advantage of Farishta’s crippling mental illness, Chamcha uses Farishta’s possessive form of jealousy against him and destroys his relationship with Allie. Both characters return to their homeland of India, and after Farishta is aware of what Chamcha has done, he holds him at gunpoint. In the end Farishta saves Chamcha’s life by taking his own. The

¹ See Lebdai for an in depth study on the fatwa issued in 1998 against Salman Rushdie.

novel ends with Chamcha staring out the window with a new sense of identity, recovered through forgiveness from Farishta, his father, and himself.

Ingrained within the frame narrative are dream vision narratives experienced by Farishta. There are multiple dream sequences that occur throughout the novel - the first consisting of the life of Muhammad, the second sequence narrates the story of an Indian peasant girl by the name of Ayesha, who says she is experiencing visions from the archangel Gibreel, and the third dream sequence is about a religious leader by the name of Imam. The first dream vision is where the bulk of controversy concerning this novel is located. In this section Muhammad experiences a prophetic revelation in which the old polytheistic deities are favored by Allah, but then he later denies his prophecy stating that the vision was not of a divine essence, but was inspired by Shaitan. Muhammad's two adversaries in this section are Hind, a wicked pagan priestess, and Baal, a satirical and cynical poet. When Muhammad returns to the city as its leader, Baal seeks shelter in a black-market brothel. In this brothel the prostitutes take on the identities of Muhammad's wives and claim Baal to be their husband. During this time, one of Muhammad's scribes admits to altering the texts as Muhammad dictated the prophecies, and with Muhammad being completely oblivious of this when the scribe read it back to him, the scribe begins to doubt the authenticity of the revelations. The second dream vision contains the Indian peasant girl named Ayesha. She claims that she receives revelations from the archangel Gibreel and convinces her village to accompany her on a pilgrimage to Mecca in spite of the fact that they will have to cross the Arabian Sea, which Ayesha claims they will be able to do simply walking across it. When the pilgrims approach the sea all the believers walk into the water and vanish. The testimonies about the pilgrims' entrance into the water vary between miracle and murder. Some say they crossed the sea miraculously underwater, while others say they saw the floating bloated dead bodies wash to shore. The third dream vision introduces "Imam," an extremist religious leader, with great allusion to Ayatollah Khomeini during his time as an exile. The interesting part about this dream sequence is that, although the narrative is set in the late-20th-century, it also links back to the first dream vision through recurring themes found in the character of Muhammad.

Warnes' "Migrancy and Metamorphosis in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*"

In the critical analysis of *The Satanic Verses* I will make reference to and debate against Warnes' book *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence*. Warnes begins his analysis of *The Satanic Verses* by claiming, "there is no novel more irreverent," making an indirect reference to the fatwa issued against Rushdie by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who called Rushdie's novel heresy against the Quran and the Muslim religion. While Warnes contends that Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has a significant mode of faith-based magical realism, he pins Rushdie on the opposite end of the

spectrum saying that he presents epistemologies set up by faith-based magical realism as problematic.

Although Warnes begins this chapter by calling Rushdie's novel the most irreverent novel in existence, the most irreverent sections of *The Satanic Verses* are not technically categorized as having magical realist characteristics. The most irreverent parts of Rushdie's novel are not magical realism but occur in Gibreel's dreams, and more specifically, in the first dream vision about the prophet Mahound. In that sense Rushdie uses dreams as a defensive and protective mechanism much like the medieval women mystics². So, if the most irreverent sections of Rushdie's novel are not considered magical realism, and Warnes even says this himself, stating, "the parts of the text most offensive to Muslims are not themselves magical realist" (Warnes 102), then it begs the question, what is left in this novel to call irreverent? This question is even further convicted when Warnes connects Rushdie with Garcia Marquez on the scale of faith instead of irreverence. He says, "Rushdie's butterflies can be read as an objective correlative of the states of faith induced in and by Ayesha, suggesting perhaps that it is the "provincial," faith-based strands of Garcia Marquez's magical realism that impress Rushdie more than his irreverent ones" (Warnes 103). Yet again it seems the "most irreverent novel" creates and exemplifies a seemingly reverent state through the mode of magical realism.

Warnes believes Rushdie's use of magical realism to be unsatisfactory because he merely exploits language by the overuse of hyperbole, "the splitting, fusing and blurring of the literal and the metaphorical, and an emphasis on the constitutive and performative over the merely descriptive capacities of language, are all central to Rushdie's modes of narration and strategies of representation" (Warnes 101). I disagree firmly with this statement, and base my argument in direct opposition focusing on Warnes' aversion to performative language. Performativity is not only found in speech acts and literature, but in everyday communication and conversation. These modes of communication are performative in the sense that they complete the definition of identity. This mode of language inverts the idea that secondary actions such as gestures and speech provide the only source for identity, and instead gage the construction of identities through the causation of performative actions, gestures, and behaviors.

The best example of performative language being used by direct causation of the novel's most explicit use of magical realism occurs after Saladin has already undergone his transformation and is being housed at the Shaandaar Café by Muhammad Sufyan and his family. During his stay at the Café, Sufyan goes to speak with Saladin about his new physical form, and according to Greek philosophers, what his transformation may mean about the essence of his "self." Warnes expends a lot of energy writing about this section, where Sufyan references both Ovid and Lucretius's position on the "mutability of the essence of the self." Essentially Lucretius' position is this: changing makes a being free, bringing about death to the old self and

² For more information on women mystics, see Jeay, Madeleine, and Katherine Garay.

creating something new, whereas Ovid's position is that the essence of the self is a molding of what already exists and stays the same on the inside. Although Sufyan presents himself as an optimist despite his religious conviction and chooses Ovid's position, Saladin is not comforted by either. Concerning his own essence of self, Saladin comes to the conclusion that either an evil, irreversible, demonic mutation has occurred in his innermost self, or what already existed in his innermost self has finally come to the surface to be witnessed by all. In this section Warnes' post-structuralist leanings become more visible as he notices the "slippage of language" that occurs during Sufyan's attempted translation and speech to Saladin when he states, "He [Rushdie] cites the original Latin, and allows Sufyan to struggle through possible translations, thus providing a subliminal commentary on the way in which words, sentences and meanings are carried across and altered from language to language, culture to culture, even across millennia" (Warnes 111). Warnes asserts that this "slippage of language" in the translation from Sufyan to Saladin causes, with the accompaniment of Saladin's despair, Saladin to view Lucretius' position as fatalism, which leads to him denying the "possibility of any stable sense of purpose, meaning and identity" (Warnes 112). I believe that it was not despair that caused Saladin to simply take the Lucretian position, but it was a manifestation of cultural upbringing in a very fatalistic society that caused him to view the position so heavily, therefore, positioning a more structuralistic point of view.

In the beginning section of this paper, I made reference to how Warnes obtained his scale of faith to irreverence. One of the major contributors to his faith-based section of the scale is Alejo Carpentier, who portrayed a faith stemming from the supernatural culture of Latin America, and also a faith in the ability of language to represent presumptive realities. Warnes argues that Rushdie's use of magical realism rejects both of these aspects of faith. He continues saying, "for him, culture does not have an ontological reality prior to its inscription in language, nor is language the vehicle by which culture can problematically be carried. His anti-naturalism, including but not limited to his magical realism, is the basis for an attack on both of these assumptions. The goal is not the inscriptions of new ontological realities, but the destabilization of those already present in order to posit a different basis for the assertion of new cultural identities" (Warnes 119). In this statement, Warnes assumes Rushdie to be a militant literary leader attacking the faith-based forms of magical realism. He neglects to observe that, whether or not Rushdie intended to destabilize or inscribe a new "ontological reality" does not negate the fact that through written language Rushdie has constructed a fictional ontology that appears very real to the characters developing within the novel, therefore, creating a structural foundation and reality on which the rest of the novel flows.

While Warnes relies heavily on the deconstructive mode of post-structuralism in his analysis of both *The Satanic Verses* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, I contend that deconstructing any piece of work within the realm of magical realism does the work an extreme disservice, leaving the magical and fantastic elements shattered and torn into broken pieces, void

of their intentional meaning. Therefore, instead of merely focusing on the minute scale that Warnes presents, I will take a more structuralist approach, arguing that concepts in the realm of magical realism can be better understood and appreciated in the context of the larger structures they are a part of. Another advantage of using structuralism is that it also questions the way reality is structured and categorized, and prompts a breakage of habitual modes of perception or categorization. Utilizing this approach allows this process to reach a more reliable view of things. In using this critical method, language is chaotic in the sense that it doesn't describe reality, it creates it.

Binary Oppositions in the Search for Identity

I contend that *The Satanic Verses* exonerates magical realism through the toggling of binary oppositions, therefore refuting the concept of irreverence because a reverent or realistic state is never fully established. The concept of irreverence and reverence is shifting and varying depending mostly upon cultural ideologies, and although Warnes does give a small amount of credit restitution to the role of culture within not only Postcolonial novels, but in magical realist novels as well, he does not provide enough detail for each cultural background to create a reasonable definition of either stance of reverence or irreverence. While Warnes argues that magical realist novels convey their meanings and expressions through a fluctuating, but relevantly linear scale incorporating and spanning across the concepts of faith through to the opposite definition of irreverence, he manages to skim over or completely exclude critical concepts, like many of the factors that make up the representations of both numerator and denominator in the equations of binary oppositions. These such binary oppositions, I will argue, are the best suited signifiers on which magical realism can find restitution and meaning, instead of being unfairly judged based on minor themes, rather than overall impact. In this way, the constant shift of typical binary oppositions - epistemology over ontology, good over evil, faith over doubt, and male over female - are the ways in which Rushdie creates a reality and a way for characters to explore identity through the foundation of language.

Epistemology and ontology are two terms commonly stationed at opposite ends of the spectrum, the first promoting the study of being, existence, or reality, and the other promoting the study of the nature of knowledge (OED). In "reality" or the perceived world in which humans exist, the preference of epistemological thought centered on the pursuit of one specific scientific truth dominates the mode of ontological thought centered on what is true within the confines of perspective. *The Satanic Verses* consistently flips this binary opposition through the discourse of literature and plurality. In Sten Pultz Moslund's "Literature as Discourse: An Analysis of the Discursive Strategies in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," he asserts that Rushdie's novel is a "trespassing kind of literature" that does not hold to any rules inscribed as illicit or prohibited by previously existing discourses. He continues further to say that, "it exploits a position of discursive un-attachment to step in and out of established regimes of truth

and disturb the boundaries between such absolutes as the holy and the profane, truth and falsity, reality and fantasy, and so on” (Moslund 292). In this article Moslund states that although Rushdie believes he gives no privilege to any discursive notion within the novel, he actually privileges language above all others unknowingly. The plurality and heteroglossia of varying narrative voices found within the context of *The Satanic Verses*, as well as the intertextuality with reference to Daniel Defoe, Herman Melville, Hans Christian Andersen, and Lewis Carol, allow Rushdie to create, or to enable language as the “primary producer of reality.” An example of where this created reality, or new ontological discourse, holds precedence over a scientific epistemological view occurs when the two main characters fall from “twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without the benefit of parachutes or wings” out of a hijacked airplane (Rushdie 3). During this fall the two characters undergo a metamorphosis, or mutation much like the fall that Alice took “along the hole that went to Wonderland” (Rushdie 7). While each character sings and voices different perspectives in the way they view life, setting the stage for future heteroglossia and plurality, Rushdie’s central narrative voice acknowledges that this occurrence should seem unbelievable and unrealistic. Yet, the narrative voices continues in saying, “Let’s face it: it was impossible for them to have heard one another, much less conversed and also competed thus in song. Accelerating towards the planet, atmosphere roaring around them, how could they? But let’s face this, too: they did” (Rushdie 6). Thus, in one instance, Rushdie created a new ontological discourse outside the realm of epistemology in which the rest of the novel bases its characters’ existence, identities, and perceived reality.

The next binary opposition that Rushdie rotates is the concept (with metaphorical connection to characters) of good versus evil. Duality, the essential ideology of binary opposition, occurs in human nature as co-eternal opposites struggling (in a Darwinian manner) to surpass the other. Examples of this duality include morality, ontological, theological, philosophical, and scientific all partake in the shaping of a person’s identity and worldview. One such duality, or binary opposition, is the moral stance between benevolent and malevolent. In Anna Aragno’s “The Devil Within: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Evil” she believes the most powerful duality of “human experience” to be “good and evil” (Aragno 102). She uses a psychoanalytic approach to this duality, whereas I will use a literary approach.

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick: on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And as with age, his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring.
Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: Prospero, Act IV; scene I (26)

It seems by this quote that Shakespeare holds the opinion of Ovid when concerning the essence of the self, and yet while these two binary oppositions always seem to be pinned against each

other, Rushdie seems to merge them together, flipping one as being barely dominant over the other for only a brief period of time.

The first example occurs in the chapter entitled “The Angel Gibreel,” and, although Gibreel transforms into an angelic creature, has the name of the archangel, and plays deities as an acting career, it becomes evident in this chapter that maybe the “angel” is not so good, just as the “devil” is not so bad. The evidence of Gibreel’s inner malevolence seeps through when given the first physical description of his character.

Gibreel’s exhalations, those ochre clouds of sulphur and brimstone, had always given him - when taken together with his pronounced widow’s peak and crowblack hair - an air more saturnine than haloed, in spite of his archangelic name... the devilish odour that was beginning to attach itself to that forso-long sweet-smelling name. You could say that he had stepped out of the screen into the world, and in life, unlike the cinema, people know it if you stink. (Rushdie 13)

This physical description sets the stage for confusion in relation to the character of Gibreel. Is he angelic? Is he demonic? Or is he insane?

Then his counterpart Saladin transforms into the likeness of the devil, but prior to the fall and metamorphosis Saladin is described physically as having “possessed a face of quite exceptional innocence, a face that did not seem ever to have encountered disillusion or evil, with skin as soft and smooth as a princess’s palm” (Rushdie 139). From this description arises the same questions associated with Gibreel. After Rosa Diamond finds the newly transformed beings the text says, “one man’s breath was sweetened, while another’s, by an equal and opposite mystery, was soured” (Rushdie 137). In this instance it seems that although Gibreel may have been the “evil” one before the fall, he has transformed into the “good” one after the fall. These stereotypes hold true until Gibreel snaps from Saladin’s malicious attempts at breaking up his new found life with Allie Cone. Gibreel then goes on to murder not only his former boss, innocents at the Shaandaar Cafe, but also his former love, Allie.

On the other side of the narrative, Saladin appears to hold true to his metamorphosis into a devil like creature, until his father (who had essentially disowned him) contracts terminal cancer. Saladin then reconciles with his father and returns back to his homeland of India to care for him. So far in the narrative it is easy to observe the switch from bad to good, and back to bad again with Gibreel, and vice versa with Saladin, until these two characters’ final interaction.

At this point in the novel both characters have returned to India, where Gibreel seeks out Saladin (the now called Salahuddin) purposefully in order to avenge what Gibreel called “the crime of being human” (Rushdie 558). Salahuddin did not know that Gibreel had hidden a gun inside the lamp of Changez Chamchawala and before he knew it “Gibreel put the barrel of the

gun into his own mouth; and pulled the trigger; and was free” (Rushdie 561). Gibreel in this instance can be seen to return to his former status of “good” by taking his own life instead of Saladin’s, thus toggling the binary opposition, and co-eternal duality of “good” and “evil” in a grey mesh of moral discourse much like the mode of magical realism where “it was so it was not in a time long forgot” (Rushdie 558).

Another reciprocating binary opposition Rushdie employs is the theological/spiritual condition of human experience portrayed through the concept of faith and doubt. In most religious cultures, including both Christianity and Islam, doubt is presented as a lack of faith and willingness to trust the higher power supposedly in control of every aspect of life. But, like most things in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie shows that the underprivileged piece placed on the bottom of the binary opposition can be best suited for the discovery of identity via rejection of cultural normality. An example of this rejection of faith taken over by doubt occurs in chapter VIII “The Parting of the Arabian Sea”³. This section of the novel describes the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca of Ayesha’s village community. Although the pilgrims have experienced many disasters on the trip, both Ayesha and Mishal (Mirza Saeed’s wife) insist on finishing the pilgrimage. At the beginning of this journey Mirza Saeed was the only one who expressed doubt and urged his wife to seek medical attention to cure her cancer instead of embarking on, what he calls, a religious extremist suicidal mission. But, as the journey continues and the villagers experience more death and disaster, more and more people begin to express doubt in the divine source of their expedition.

One of the disasters was the death of Khadija followed by Ayesha’s refusal to pause the journey to take her to a “proper Muslim burial ground” (Rushdie 494). After this blatant refusal, her husband, Sarpanch Muhammad Din came to Mirza Saeed and asked if he could join him in riding in the car, “unwilling to wholly abandon the project for which his wife had died, unable to maintain any longer the absolute belief which the enterprise required, Muhammad Din entered the station wagon of skepticism. ‘My first convert,’ Mirza Saeed rejoiced” (Rushdie 495). Later in the pilgrimage, after more death and suffering, former admirer of Ayesha (Osman) asked her, “Tell me why your God is so anxious to destroy the innocent... What’s he afraid of? Is he so unconfident that he needs us to die to prove our love?” (Rushdie 497). After this statement, Ayesha implemented stricter rules which led to more deaths, due to extreme measures of fasting.

But the most horrifying incident, possibly throughout the entire novel, occurs when the Ayesha Haj finds an illegitimate baby and the Imam brings the baby to be prosecuted in front of

³ The events that Rushdie depicts in this chapter are actually based on a real occurrence, consult Ruthven page 44-45 for more information regarding this subject. In 1983 an extremist group of thirty-eight Shi’ites drown in the Hawkes Bay near Karachi, Pakistan. The leader of this group had coerced the thirty-eight that the sea would open for them and allow them to make the pilgrimage to the holy city of Kerbala, Iraq.

the people from that town. After the Imam states the baby is born from evil and sin, he turns to Ayesha and asks, “You, Ayesha, kahin. What do you say?” To which she replied, “Everything will be asked of us” (Rushdie 511). Then, “the crowd, needing no clearer invitation, stoned the baby to death” (Rushdie 511). Without any defense, justice, or representation, the baby was murdered simply because it was born illegitimately. Since the baby obviously had no control over the parents that brought it into the world, the villagers (none of whom threw a stone) refused to continue on the journey, seeing how unjustified the death of the infant was. The cloud of butterflies that had hovered over the villagers had disappeared, but returned as soon as the pilgrims were at the water’s edge of the Arabian Sea. Upon seeing this, all but five members of the exhibition rushed into the water. When the waters did not visibly part, and all the pilgrims had disappeared, Saeed, Srinivas, the Sarpanch, Mrs. Qureishi, and Osman (the five who had not entered the water) submerged themselves in an attempt to rescue the pilgrims. The strangeness of the situation witnessed by the five “doubters” was described as, “Human beings in danger of drowning struggle against the water. It is against human nature simply to walk forwards meekly until the sea swallows you up” (Rushdie 517). The “faithful” pilgrims who entered the water did not struggle, and all five (with the exception of Saeed) say they witnessed the miracle of the waters opening for the “faithful”, and joining those who entered the water on faith alone were those who had perished on the journey. The CID men, after hearing all the witnesses but Saeed tell their story of how the waters opened, said, “So many were there, nobody saw these things. Already the drowned bodies are floating to shore, swollen like balloons and stinking like hell” (Rushdie 518). The CID men’s statement gives evidence to what actually occurred when the villagers entered the waters; they all drowned and their bodies (as evidence) washed to shore. This section provides a prime example of how Rushdie reverses the binary oppositions of faith and doubt. Here it is easy to see that doubt saved the lives of the five villagers who did not partake in the haj. It was also doubt that allowed them to perceive the situation without religion clouding their judgments, but it was also this doubt that made all except Saeed believe that the waters parted for the “faithful” pilgrims.

By illustrating this reversal and counter-reversal of doubt and faith Rushdie not only warns against following ideals that demand a “blind-faith” in order to be received, and instead he celebrates the promotion of individual thoughts and ideals in the process of finding and re-creating identity. In using the character of Ayesha and her butterflies, Rushdie depicts a character who has never experienced doubt, and therefore grows corrupt, convinced of her inarguable truth. Then on the other end of the spectrum, in using the character of Saladin, Rushdie depicts a character who embraces doubt, and grows through that struggle to find an identity that does not have to bow down to any specific type of ideology. In this way, Rushdie proposes that every person has both good and evil potential, and through the concept of faith and doubt, will always struggle with the potential that human experience has to offer. One major part of discovering identity has to do with religion, the adoption of one specific denomination or the complete lack thereof differs upon the views of the individual. Rushdie acknowledges the major

impact that religion plays upon the discovery of individual identity, and uses this section to suggest that, although religion is a powerful part of history and human experience, it is one that demands and desires personal struggle.

Patriarchy, and the binary opposition that posits men over women is another element that Rushdie utilizes as a form to express and explore identity. In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie holds true with Islamic culture, as well as Western culture in assuming the boundaries of a patriarchal society, and yet he also rebels against the patriarchal social system at the same time through the interweaving of different characters within the framing narratives. While it is plain to see that the two main characters in the novel are male and both experience the losing and discovering of identity, analyzing the women and how they affect the novel proves to be much more difficult. Rushdie embraces the patriarchal system of society with submissive female characters such as Rekha Merchant (the married woman who has an affair with Gibreel and then later kills herself and her children after Gibreel leaves her for Allie), Hind Sufyan (co-owner of the Shaandar Cafe with her husband and two daughters), and Mrs. Mhatre (The wife of Babasaheb who gives an overabundance of affection to him). With these few submissive women who uphold the traditional modes of patriarchy, Rushdie also has an abundance of strong and independent women such as Allie Cone, Mishal Sufyan (Muhammad and Hind Sufyan's fifteen-year-old daughter, who is having an affair with the lawyer Hanif Johnson), Anahita Sufyan (the other daughter who is loud mouthed and rebellious), Ayesha, Hind, Pamela (Saladin's English wife who ends up having an affair with Jumpy), and Zeeny Vakil (Saladin's Indian lover). In this section I will illustrate how Rushdie utilizes the Sufyan family to exemplify the toggling dominance of male over female with respect to the patriarchal system, how Allie, Pamela, and Zeeny are used to reinforce the men's newly discovered identities, and how Ayesha and Hind provide the complete reversal of dominance in the male/female binary opposition which would now position females in the dominant category.

The Sufyan family owns and operates the Shaandar Cafe, where Saladin takes refuge when he has transformed into a devil-like creature. Hind accepted Saladin only because her husband commanded it to be so. After his command, she thought about the differences in people (especially women) between the "old country" and this "demon city" (London) (Rushdie 258).

Not only was she a shopkeeper's wife and a kitchen slave, but even her own people could not be relied on... and worst of all, the poison of this devil-island had infected her baby girls, who were growing up refusing to speak their mother-tongue, even though they understood every word, they did it just to hurt; and why else had Mishal cut off all her hair and put rainbows into it; and every day it was a fight, quarrel, disobey, - and worst of all, there was not one new thing about her complaints, this is how it was for women like her, so now she was no longer just one, just herself, just Hind wife of teacher Sufyan; she had sunk into the anonymity, the characterless plurality, of being merely one-of-the-

women-like-her. This was history's lesson: nothing for women-like-her to do but suffer, remember, and die. (Rushdie 258-259)

Hind's thoughts expressed here represent not only the generation and ethnicity gap between her and her daughters, but also the role that women now feel they have to uphold. While Hind feels the need to please her husband, and even in the midst of her husband's weakness treat him "like a lord, like a monarch," her daughters dye the color of their hair and sleep around with lawyers before they are of legal age. Then when Hind shows open disgust and disdain for the transformed Saladin, both Mishal and Anahita are excited and think he is "Brilliant... Magic. You know. *Extreme*" (Rushdie 267). The women in the Sufyan family illustrate the opposite extremist cases in gender roles within the novel.

Contrasting to Hind Sufyan's submissive nature in the novel are both Ayesha and Hind, who, according to Vassilena Parashkevova's "I Put Down Roots In The Women I Love': Migrant Stories/Cities And Cartographic Re-Inscription Of Gender And Sexuality In Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," represent the power Rushdie gives to women in *The Satanic Verses*. Ayesha convinces and leads an entire village on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Although she and all of her followers drown, it still reveals the extraordinary amount of power and persuasiveness Rushdie instills within one female character. Then Hind, the wife of Abu Simbel, takes control over Jahilia when Simbel becomes too ill to rule, and in fact appears to be a better ruler than her husband. Through the empowerment of these two characters, Rushdie draws attention to how not only religion, but politics as well construct obstacles for women (Parashkevova 437).

In analyzing the characters of Allie, Pamela, and Zeeny, the role each of these characters play in shaping and supplementing both Gibreel and Saladin's identities become evident. Allie's role in shaping the identity of Gibreel begins after they met in the city's most famous hotel while Gibreel was eating unclean meat trying to prove that god would not smite him saying, "'Don't you get it?... No thunderbolt. That's the point'.... She came back to stand in front of him. 'You're alive... You got your life back. *That's* the point'" (Rushdie 31). After this encounter Gibreel left Rehka and pursued his new found love in Allie. In this novel she represents everything that Gibreel's metamorphosis should have been. She is, according to Steven F. Walker's "Magical Archetypes: Midlife Miracles in *The Satanic Verses*," the *puella*⁴ to Gibreel's *puer*⁵ (Walker 354). This means that while Gibreel is considered an attempted "high flyer" with his previous life as an untouchable super star, but has come back down (through his transformation) into the "real world" only to realize that he does not like what he has become. Allie is considered to be his potential lived out, through her success as a mountain climber and overall unconditional love and pure temperament. She, in this novel, epitomizes everything that Gibreel wishes he can be but cannot, and sadly pays for it with her life. In a similar fashion, Pamela exemplifies

⁴ Consult Walker pages 354-358 for definition and etymology of the word *puella*.

⁵ Consult Walker pages 354-358 for definition and etymology of the word *puer*.

everything Saladin was supposed to become after his transformation, but cannot. She is dissident and adulterous (some qualities that would be expected from a man who just transformed into the devil), and amplifies Saladin's longing for pure Englishness that he can never achieve. Saladin, unlike Gibreel, finds peace in the things he cannot become through the help of Zeeny, who teaches him that a sense of "hybridity" about the totality of human experience offers a fuller identity and life. Without the help, by both example and counterexample, of the women in this novel, the two main characters would possibly still be continuing on their searches for an identity to call their own.

Conclusion

With identity being the key factor and major critical standpoint of this paper, I believe that Rushdie not only illustrates how Gibreel and Saladin confront the loss of identity, but also how they proceed in discovering a new one. The toggling of binary oppositions such as epistemology over ontology, good over evil, faith over doubt, and male over female are best suited, with the accompaniment of magical realist textualities, to explore the concept of identity in *The Satanic Verses* because they allow Rushdie to emphasize the burden the characters feel while sifting through multiple potentials of human experience.

Language is a tool used to communicate ideas, knowledge and experiences. Tyson argues that "we exist – we think, we see, we feel – within the language into which we were born...language *mediates* our experience of ourselves and the world." In literature language is often used to reconstruct reality in order to explore human behaviors and actions. Literature is used as a space to explore, deconstruct and re-examine established ideologies and belief systems. Herein lies its power. It is through the process of re-examining oneself that one can truly make progress in the world. (Shaburidin 70)

The language used in *The Satanic Verses* communicates ideas and experiences through these binary oppositions, demanding that progress and individual thought be of higher importance in the hopes to ease the burden of what Gibreel calls the "crime of being human" (Rushdie 558).

Works Cited:

Aragno, Anna. "The Devil Within: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Evil." *Issues in Psychoanalytic Psychology* 35.1 (2013): 101-123. Academic Search Premier. Web. 3 Aug. 2015.

Jeay, Madeleine, and Katherleen Garay. "'To Promote God's Praise And Her Neighbour's Salvation': Strategies Of Authorship And Readership Among Mystic Women In The Later Middle Ages." *Women Writing Back/Writing Women Back: Transnational Perspectives from the Late Middle Ages to the Dawn of the Modern Era*. 23-50. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 4 Oct. 2015.

Lebdai, Benaouda. "Salman Rushdie / Joseph Anton: Deconstruction Of The Fatwa Mirror." *Autobiography as a Writing Strategy in Postcolonial Literature*. 4-12. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2015. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 4 Oct. 2015.

Moslund, Sten Pultz. "Literature as Discourse: An Analysis of the Discursive Strategies in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*." *Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies* 61.4 (2006): 291-309. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 15 June 2003. Web. 06 Aug. 2015.

Parashkevova, Vassilena. "'I Put Down Roots in the Women I Love': Migrant Stories/Cities and Cartographic Re-Inscription of Gender and Sexuality in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*." *Textus: English Studies In Italy* 23.2 (2010): 437-452. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

Ruthven, Malise. *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1990.

Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses: A Novel*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008. Print.

Shaburidin, Zubaidah Mohamed. "Exploiting the Instability of Language: Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses'" *Academia.edu*. Academia, 06 Nov. 2009. Web. 05 June 2015.

Walker, Steven F. "'Magical Archetypes: Midlife Miracles in 'The Satanic Verses'.'" *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. By Lois Parkinson. Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995. 1-17. Print.

Warnes, Christopher. *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Zamora, Lois Parkinson., and Wendy B. Faris. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995. Print.

Cherif, Feryal M. "Culture, Rights, And Norms: Women's Rights Reform In Muslim Countries." *Journal Of Politics* 72.4 (2010): 1144-1160. Historical Abstracts with Full Text. Web. 18 June 2015.

Connell, Liam. "Discarding Magic Realism: Modernism, Anthropology, And Critical Practice." *ARIEL: A Review Of International English Literature* 29.2 (1998): 95-110. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 11 Sept. 2015.

Mahler, Sarah J. *Culture as Comfort: Many Things You Know about Culture (but Might Not Realize)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2013. Print.

Medrea, Nicoleta. "The Reconfiguration Of The Identity Discourse In The Writings Of Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul And Kazuo Ishiguro." *Studia Universitatis Petru Maior - Philologia* 11 (2011): 201-207. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 11 Sept. 2015.

Weinberg, Michaela Django. "Paulo And The Birds: Towards A Magical Realist Approach To Ethnography." *Communication Review* 11.4 (2008): 346-369. *Education Research Complete*. Web. 12 July 2015.