

**“To be born again, first you have to die”. Καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πᾶν
πρόσφατον ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον¹ or the hyped Salman Rushdie’s Satanic
Verses**

**“Para volver a nacer, primero es necesario morir”. Καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν
πᾶν πρόσφατον ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον o los sobrepublicitados Versos
Satánicos de Salman Rushdie**

Álvaro Manzano Redondo
Universidad Camilo José Cela
alvaro.manzano@sek.es

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*Soles occidere et redire possunt
nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux
nox est perpetua una dormienda.*

Catulus

Resumen

Nuestro objetivo en este artículo es ofrecer un análisis innovador de la vigorosa estructura que ha ilustrado *Los versos satánicos* de Rushdie (1988) con el fin de hacer un enfoque diferente y, además, desacreditar falsos mitos que giran en torno a la novela universal de Rushdie. Más específicamente, me centraré en las influencias clásicas en *Los Versos satánicos* y haré un análisis comparativo de similitudes, conexiones y usos de la técnica literaria con otras obras maestras que me llevarán al mundo griego / latino: *El asno de oro* de Apuleyo (158/9 dC), o García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (1967), y *La metamorfosis* de Kafka (1915) para demostrar que *Verses* es un compendio de erudición portentosa pero a la vez carente de originalidad en términos de construcción literaria. Aunque en el libro de Rushdie su prosa está sustentada en pasajes prestigiosos de un impecable estilo delicioso, la construcción técnica se presenta en forma de trípode: referencias y metamorfosis clásicas/modernas, Ringkomposition y realismo mágico, no ofreciendo nada nuevo en cuestión de originalidad literaria.

¹ Ecclesiastes (1:9), nothing new under the sun (the canonical translation).

Palabras clave: Metamorfosis, Ringkomposition, realismo mágico, religión, clásicos.

Abstract

In this paper, I aim to offer an innovative analysis of the vigorous structure which has illustrated Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) in order to make a different approach and, in addition, to debunk false myths that revolve around Rushdie's "universal novel." More specifically, I will focus on the *Verses* and make a comparative analysis of similarities, connections and literary technique usages with other masterpieces which will take me as back as to the Greek/Latin world: with Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (158/9 AD), García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) to demonstrate that *Verses* is a compendium of portentously erudition but devoid of originality. Even though in Rushdie's book the narration is written thanks to a number of prestigious passages of impeccable style, the staple knowledge, the scaffolding construction is processed as a tripod: Classic/modern references and metamorphoses, *Ringkomposition* and magic realism not offering anything new in terms of creativity.

Keywords: Metamorphosis, Ringkomposition, magic realism, religion, classics.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Why human literature history has buried thousands of pages and has simply extoled a few is one of the most discussed topics since human critic literacy appeared. Ganapathy-Doré (2009: 10) writes: "but the discourse of the postcolonial readers situates Shakespeare at the starting point and Rushdie at the other end of the spectrum of great writers who have laid claims to universality."

If we examine the word "universality" more cautiously, we can see that the etymological origin of the term is the old French word *univers*, which in turn derives from the Latin word *universum*. The Latin word was used by Cicero and later Latin authors in a similar sense of the modern use of the English word¹. "The Universe can be defined as everything that exists, everything that has existed, and everything that will exist"², so, if I attend to this definition, the universality of Shakespeare and Rushdie is a fallacy, a hyperbolic

¹ Cf. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 1971, p. 3518.

² Paul Copan; William Lane Craig (2004). *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*. Baker Academic. p. 220.

exaggeration and a hypostasis. In terms of literature, as Jesús G. Maestro explains,³ I understand that these two authors are more a "product of English Cultural Colonialism" rather than a question of "universal authors."

Salman Rushdie (1947), Indian-British author has engendered, universally, *urbi et orbi*⁴, together with the *Fatwa* of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his provocative out verbal public pose, the most controversial and hyped fiction written novel ever; on occasion of the celebration of its 30th anniversary, his accurate tongue and the *Fatwa* ill-advisedly also awards the book the authority to confront East and West once more in terms of religion *insigniae*⁵, understanding *insigniae* as the values over which a religion is built and new adepts find an explanation to the existence of the divine in it.

Orientalism, one of the greatest studies about the discussion of how Western culture constructs alien images of others in its discourses, written by Edward Said (1978), is present in Rushdie's novel, contributing to the idea that identities are never unified and are increasingly fragmented and fractured. There is no post-multiculturalism because this is a nutopian idea. The heterotopia space of postmodernism becomes essential to post colonialism, while colonialism presents East and West as evil and good, satanic and angelic, post colonialism makes their integration possible (Said: 1978).

The first time the reader approaches *The Satanic Verses* a trembling shake invades his soul. It is like being invaded by those delicious worlds written in *Beowulf*, *Don Quixote*, *The Name of the Rose*, *The Aleph*, just to mention some examples. Classical references and metamorphoses, *Ringkomposition* or "Tale inside the Tale" (easy saying) and magic realism-Milesian tale, are the three main narrative "scaffolds" which sustain Salman Rushdie's grandiose fiction. To my mind, the implications, the consequences and the results of this creative structure are quite palpable as it is analyzed below, but apart from his erudition and his command of a great narrative technique, Rushdie navigates in unfertile *aquae frigidae*⁶: *Nihil novum sub solem*, a key verse of our study (Ecc. 1:9) and attributed to King Salomon, and in Greek, firstly written, as almost everything which is untouchable: Καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πᾶν πρόσφατον ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον⁷.

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80ogZzp_ihc

<http://www.academiaeditorial.com/web/coleccion/critica-de-la-razon-literaria/>

⁴ Cf. Ovide, *Fastes*, II, (683, 684): "*Gentibus est aliis tellus data limine certo; Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem*".

⁵ *Fasces*.

⁶ Tests to identify witches used by the Holy Inquisition: *judicium aquae frigidae*, which it was to put women into cold water to see if the Devil reacted.

⁷ "Nothing new under the sun".

Throughout this essay, I will connect quotations, passages from the book to contextualize the analysis. In this way, the reader will be able to see that when the book is deprived of its ornaments, there is nothing more than a mere scholarly succession of references, so the plot is very simple and an imitation of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*.

2. CLASSICAL AND MODERN REFERENCES AND METAMORPHOSES

Salman Rushdie is, without doubt, one of the greatest 21st century intellectuals such as Umberto Eco. His books are full of references to the ancient world, and he has a perfect command of the Greek, Roman, Islamic, Indian and Christian traditions. *Verses* is a clear example of this. Below I will examine a number of references to reinforce what I have called the "*aquae frigidae* theory" in Rushdie's *Verses* when it comes to looking at Rushdie's creativity.⁸

Firts, I will look at Greek and Roman references. Then, I will examine Biblical and Quranic allusions, and modern literary references; and finally, I will study metamorphosis-related allusions. Through this methodology, I will attempt to prove that Rushdie is one of the greatest intellectuals nowadays who, however, does not offer anything new in *Verses* other than "flashing entertainment."

2.1. Greek and Roman references

"To be born... first you have to die" Rushdie (1998: 3) alludes to the Phoenix Myth.⁹ The 5th century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus gives a somewhat skeptical account of the Phoenix:

"[The Egyptians] have also another sacred bird called the phoenix... In order to bring him, they say, he first forms a ball of myrrh as big as he finds that he can carry; then he hollows out the ball, and puts his parent inside, after which he covers over the opening with fresh myrrh, and the ball is then of exactly the same weight as at first; so he brings it to Egypt, plastered over as I have said, and deposits it in the temple of the Sun. Such is the story they tell of the doings of this bird."¹⁰

The Death/Birth dichotomy: "*No, not death: birth*" Rushdie (1998: 87) plays a magnificent role in *Verses*. Both main characters fall from the plain, "the two of them were floating down to the Channel like scraps of paper in a breeze" (9), after the terrorist attack, die (metaphorically) on their way down to the sea and are born again transformed into new alive essences. This fact is one of the key pillars of the plot construction.

⁸ Creare: In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram. (Colunga et Turrado, 1999)

⁹ In Greek mythology, a phoenix (Ancient Greek: φοῖνιξ *phoînix*) is a long-lived bird that cyclically regenerates or is otherwise born again.

¹⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book II Trans. G. Rawlinson (1858)

Reincarnation, for frenzied Gibreel, was a term beneath whose shield many notions gathered a-babeling: phoenix-from-ashes, the resurrection of Christ... *To be born again, first you have to die...* The old must die, you get my message, or the new cannot be whatnot (84).

This allusion to all the religion explanation existence in the characters of Gibreel and Saladin is Rushdie's way to introduce the reader into the book's main theme.

The narrator is acknowledging the connection between Gibreel and Saladin's fall from the exploding Bostan and Satan's fall from Heaven in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Milton's epic poem begins with Satan in Hell, after "Him the Almighty Power / Hurl'd headlong flaming from the' ethereal sky / with hideous ruin and combustion down / to bottomless perdition..." Satan's appearance is changed by his fall, although not drastically at first, "he above the rest / in shape and gesture proudly eminent / Stood like a tow's; his form had yet not lost / All her original brightness." Satan is indeed a higher power, and the greatest of the fallen archangels; in his rebellion he fell the farthest. By claiming "In the matter of tumbles, I yield pride of place to no personage," the narrator of Rushdie's novel is slyly admitting that he is the Devil himself (84).

The allusion to Icarus in the words "close to the sun" is clear. Ancient Greek: *Ίκαρος*, Etruscan: Vikare in Greek mythology, Icarus, who is the son of the master craftsman Daedalus, the creator of the Labyrinth. Icarus and his father attempt to escape from Crete by using wax wings made by his father. Icarus' father initially warns him about complacency and then about hubris *ὑβρις* means "arrogance" or "pride." Daedalus tells his son not to fly too low nor too high because the sea's dampness would not clog his wings and the sun's heat would melt them. Icarus ignores his father's instructions; when the wax in his wings melts, he plummets and falls into the sea where he drowns Pinsent (1982).

The next reference is an unblemished example of how in *Verses* every movement of the characters is an allusion to a previous masterpiece to create expectation. Another example is: "To get his mind off... he studied, becoming an omnivorous autodidact, devouring the metamorphic myths of Greece and Rome, the avatars of Jupiter, the boy who became a flower, the spider-woman, Circe everything... Rushdie, (1998: 23-24)." Here there are allusions to Narcissus, Arachnid, Jupiter transformed into golden rain, and a bull to have a sexual threat with Europe, or The Witch Circe *Κίρκη*, is a goddess of magic or sometimes a nymph, witch, enchantress or sorceress in Greek mythology. By most accounts, she was

the daughter of the sun titan Helios, and Persse, one of the three thousand Oceanid nymphs.¹¹

Circe converts Odysseus's warriors into animals until he makes love to her: "On winter nights he, who had never slept beneath more than a sheet, lay beneath mountains of wool and felt like a figure in an ancient myth condemned by the gods to have a boulder pressing down upon his chest... (43). Others major Greek figures present in Rushdie's work are Sisyphus¹² and Atlas... They are condemned by the Gods to carry a huge weight on them. The name of Sisyphus¹³, etymologically, Sophos (σοφός, "wise"), and sisys (σίσις, "a goat's skin"), points out not only to his intelligence but also to a rain-charm in which goats' skins were used. Finally, Atlas¹⁴ is a Titan condemned to hold up the sky forever after the Titanomachy. Both mythological characters are used by Rushdie to shape Saladin, his protagonist. Saladin¹⁵ *Verses* character's name is based on the name of the first sultan of Egypt, connected with Egypt time and Bible.

Through these allusions, and many others not addressed here for reasons of space, I firmly believe that Rushdie is a scholarly, but not original writer. Every time the plot advances there are several references. Rushdie embellishes his plot, characters and style with hundreds of allusions due to his intellectuality with the intention to flash the reader and create the necessary expectation to prevent the reader from putting down the book.

2.2. Bible-Quran allusions in Verses

Verses is plagued of Biblical Quran and Hinduism's – not mentioned in this work – allusions because I believe *Verses* is a religious book, an intention of holy written. Following – imitating Marquez, rather – I believe Rushdie tried to create a new Holly Book where there is more openness to Islam including also Hinduism, and Christianity, as Marquez created *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a Colombian Bible¹⁶ plagued of Biblical allusions.

Although Rushdie's approach to religion is ironic, he does not intend to offend Muslims.

¹¹ Bell, Robert, E. (1993). *Women of Classical Mythology: A Biographical Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹² Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). Sisyphus". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 25 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 161.

¹³ Sisyphus was the founder and first king of Ephyra (supposedly the original name of Corinth).

¹⁴ Graves, Robert (1992). *The Greek Myths*. Penguin Books. p. 27.

¹⁵ Humphreys, R. Stephen (1977). *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260*. State University of New York Press.

¹⁶ <https://prezi.com/e9vjiqxp9wv/100-years-of-solitude/> : Bible apparent in 100 Years of Solitude from hidden allusions and symbolisms such as Noah's Flood, the temptation of Knowledge, and the innocent Garden of Eden which are all utilized to chronicle the life and history of Human Legacy much like the Holy Bible.

"For over two years I have been trying to explain that *The Satanic Verses* was never intended as an insult; that the story of Gibreel is a parable of how a man can be destroyed by the loss of faith...¹⁷"

Khawaja (2005: 1) writes a reflection about humor in Islam where it is probably one of the most debated themes about literature and Muslim religion:

Is There no room for humor and wit in Islam?... For indeed the questions themselves sparkle with wit and irony, the gift often (wrongly) attributed to the Enlightenment to which the modern world, in its marriage of science and humanism, and *ironically* its postmodernist sequel are so heavily indebted, and from which the Muslim world is seen to have been singularly exempt.

Some of the references we could find about religion in *Verses* are used to see how Rushdie constructs over very well-known sources:

They say in Jahilia that this valley is the navel of the earth... Adam came here and saw a miracle: four emerald pillars bearing aloft a giant glowing ruby, and beneath this canopy a huge white stone, also glowing with its own light, like a vision of his soul... by the time of Mahound, three hundred and sixty stone gods clustered around God's own stone Rushdie, (1998: 98-99).

Monotheism and polytheism are also one of the key themes in *Verses*. Rushdie creates all Gibreel dreams around references drawn upon the *Bible* and *The Quran*.

Adam, for example, is the first human on earth *Vulgate* (Genesis: 1.26) "*Et ait: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostrum et similitudinem nostrum...*" The entire Jahilia Tale is constructed on the basis on the previous history of *Quram*. The main concern is whether the three goddesses should be accepted through submission to the new religion established by Mahound, dictated by Gibreel after having encounters with Allah in the sacred mountain.

Another crucial point to understand *Verses* is to comprehend that Rushdie wants to look down on Islam to the acceptance of those verses and facilitate women Goddesses' adoration. "Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza and Manat, the third, the other?' And Mahound, with silenced eyes, recites: 'They are the exalted birds, and their intercessions is desired indeed' ... 'Allahu Akbar'" (114). *Verses* refers to precisely the verses that accepted the goddesses as daughters of Allah, so they also could be venerated by new followers, but never told by Allah but by Satan dressed up as Gibreel *The Quran*, (2012; 534)¹⁸.

¹⁷Salman Rushdie, *The Times*, 28/12/90, qtd. in La'Porte, 91.

¹⁸ *The Quran*, (2012). Al-Muntada Al-Islami. UK. Birmingham. Abul-Qasim Publishing House.

...the three best-beloved goddesses in Jahilia. They bow before all three: Uzza of the radiant visage, goddess of beauty and love; dark, obscure Manat, her face averted, her purposes mysterious, sifting sand between her fingers –she’s in charge of destiny- she’s Fate; and lastly the highest of the three, the mother-goddess, whom the Greeks called Lato. Ilat, they call her here, or more frequently, Al-Lat. *The goddess* Rushdie (1998: 99-100).

All these previous references are key to understand why Rushdie achieved *The Fatwa* from Ayatollah Khomeini, extensible to the Muslim World. In addition, the fourth part of the book is divided between two dreams of Gibreel, the first one is a standalone – isolated and told as a unit – dream where the Imam recruits Gibreel to help him regain control of his homeland Desh (Iran). The big fight of Gebreel with Al-Lat (Ayesha) and Gibreel will permit the Imam to have the power back.

“Dow she tumbles, Al-Lat queen of the night; crashes upside-down to earth, crushing her head to bits; and lies, a headless black angel, with her wings ripped off, by a little wicked gate in the palace gardens, all in a crumpled heap. –And Gibreel looking away from her in horror, sees the Iman grow monstrous, lying in the palace forecourt with his mouth yawning open at the gates; as the people march through the gates he swallows them whole (215)

After looking at a number of Quranic references, where the intention of Rushdie, I intuit, is to plant the doubt about whether Goddesses should have been included in the Quran as demanded religion idols, we would like to *conferetur* the Biblical allusions in *Verses*. I intent not only to catalog the quotations, but also to show how Rushdie embellishes his work in terms of construction writing technique. He departs from a basic line plot and adds as much as necessary to flash the reader with a *capitation benevolentia* purpose.

Moises, Mûsâ ibn ‘Imran – known as Moses in the Hebrew Bible – considered a prophet, messenger, and leader in Islam, is the most frequently mentioned individual in *The Quran*¹⁹ states that Moses was sent by God to the Pharaoh of Egypt and the Israelites for guidance and warning. As we read in *Verses*: “Ayesa (Moises) had begun to walk towards the water, and Mishal was being dragged along by her two helpers... Within minutes the entire village was in the water, splashing about the horizon, never looking back... In moments, every one of the Ayesha Pilgrims had sunk out of sight” (502-503). In my opinion, that this conclusion of Gibreel’s dreams is a replica of *The Vulgate (Exodus 14.21)*

¹⁹ Quran, sura 19 (Maryam), ayat 51-53.

"Cumque extendisset Moyses manum super mare, abstulit illud Dominus flante vento vehementi et urente tota nocte, et vertit in siccum: divisa est aquam."

2.3. References to modern and contemporary literature

Verses is full of modern references the author has used to construct his plot. By modern references, I mean those references that have not been included in classical references so – i.e. Greek, Latin and Holy Literature. To my awareness, some of the allusions are out of place and could have been omitted, unless the intention of the author is, as I firmly believe, to be closer to every reader, understanding reader as an decipher entity, but also a target. Authors such as Cervantes o Lewis Carroll path the road for Rushdie's allusions with Salman's intention to illustrate his vision. Firstly, I will catalog the references to show that Rushdie somehow abuses them to embellish his work with a flashing reader intention and *captatio* as explained above. All the quotes come from Rushdie (1989):

"...went to Wonderland: while pushing their way out of the white came a succession of cloud forms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, god into bulls, women into spiders, men into wolves" (6).

Worderland refers to the famous Lewis Carrol novel (1865) written by the English author Charles Lutwidge Dodgson under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. It tells the story of a girl named Alice who falls down a rabbit hole and ends up in a fantasy world populated by peculiar anthropomorphic creatures.

At once a latticework of blood oozed up through the cracked surface of the stranger's body, and when Chamcha tried to pick off the broken shards the other began to scream, because chunks of his flesh were coming away with the glass (34).

In this passage, Rushdie is alluding to Cervantes's crystal character in *El licenciado vidriera* "The Lawyer of Glass" (1613), which is one of the several conceal references Rushdie has in *Verses*, not openly mention the author, neither he doesn't remember nor he doesn't want to. *Verses* has been influences by Cervantes' works²⁰

"After all, 'les acteurs ne sont pas de gens', as the great ham Frederick has explained in *Les enfants du Paradis* (1945). Masks beneath masks until suddenly the bare bloodless skull" (34). Marcel Carné described his greatest work, *Les enfants du paradis*, as a "tribute to the theatre," and the story breathes with the very life and soul of French theatrical tradition²¹.

²⁰ J. A. Garrido J. A. *The Cervanrean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain*. (2009)

²¹ <http://www.filmreference.com/Films-Dr-Ex/Les-Enfants-du-Paradis.html>

Rushdie uses this technique constantly in *Verses*. I would say that Salman Rushdie, deeply influenced by the cinema, uses a lot of actors and movies to flourish the book.

On the shelf of Changez Chamchawala's teak-lined study... translation of the *Arabian Nights*... there stood a magic lamp, a brightly polished copper-and-brass avatar of Aladdin's very own genie-container: a lamp begging to be rubbed... 'One day', he assured the boy, 'you'll have it for yourself' (36).

The magic lamp²² is one of the symbols in *Verses*. The reason why Saladin comes back to India when his father is sick is because he wants the lamp as he was promised. By rubbing the magic lamp, a person's desires can come true. Saladin wants a new opportunity to live. Rushdie uses this type of allusions to include magic realism in his plot constructions: "Gibreel took the lid off the wonderful lamp of Changez Chamchawala and let it fall clattering to the floor... Gibreel rubbed his hand along the side of the magic lamp: once, twice, thrice... A fearsome jinnée of monstrous stature appeared" (546).

"...like in the movies, when Charlton Heston stretched out his staff, so that we could, across the ocean-floor, it never happened, couldn't have, but if not then how, or did we in some way underwater..." (132). This allusion to Charlton Heston connects with one of the aforementioned Biblical references. Rushdie is talking about the great and famous movie *The Ten Commandments*²³, it is a 1956 American Biblical epic film produced, directed, and narrated by Cecil B. DeMille. He also mentions Orson Welles (338), François Truffaut²⁴, the French film maker, screenwriter, producer, actor, and film critic, as well as one of the founders of the French New Wave is mentioned to refer to his work *L'argent de poche*. In (518) Rushdie alludes to Malcolm X's oratory. He used him before in one of Gibreel's dreams when he is talking about "the bearded and turbaned Iman (205)", when he says "the American convert²⁵, formerly a successful singer, now known as Bilal X (207). Malcolm X was one of the most important figures of the Black Civil Rights Movement. There is another reference to a political figure "Ms. Torture" (338), Margaret Thatcher²⁶, a very unpopular figure due to her social reforms. Rushdie pokes fun at her by converting her into a caricature. He also mentions *Love Story* and *The Magnificent Seven*²⁷ (89), *Potemkin*, *Kane*, *Otto e Mezzo*, *The Seven Samurai*, *Alphaville*, and *El Ángel Exterminador*, as

²² Mahdi, Muhsin (1994). *The Thousand and One Nights*, Part 3. Brill. pp. 51-71.

²³ "The Ten Commandments." Turner Classic Movies. Atlanta: Turner Broadcasting System (Time Warner). Retrieved November 13, 2016.

²⁴ François Truffaut: film author 1932-1984 - Robert Ingram, Paul Duncan. Google Books. Retrieved 6 February 2012.

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sYTqmPD3jI>

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoIZdEBf9Wk>

²⁷ <https://www.filmaffinity.com/es/film306209.html>

"All this Western art-house crap" (439) and *Blade Runner* (340). He also mentions Schwarzenegger (340) and known bandits such as Dick Turpin, Ned Kelly, Poland Devi and Billy the Kid (334).

Throughout *Verses*, Rushdie mentions several great theories which have contributed to construct science: Lamarck Theories, Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859), "The evolutionary heresy of Mr. Charles Darwin" (75), Annie Besant's Theosophy (39), James Joyce's Avant-guard novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939)²⁸..., whose experimental style turns it into one of the most difficult works of fiction in the English language²⁹.

As explained above, as part of the erudition technique he uses, he constantly flourishes the text with many references in order to embellish a very simple plot, which tries to emulate that of *The Golden Ass*, which is: humans after suffering an impacting experience became other entities (Ass, Angel, Demon), and they perambulate through in between worlds until they find a reason to become normal again but as Phoenix completely renovated.

2.4. Metamorphosis references

One of the ideas I will attempt to prove is the major role that the concept of "metamorphosis" plays in Rushdie's *Verses*. Not only because he anticipates the idea years before in one of his works (Rushdie, 1991), but because the transformation, the migration is the postcolonial theory to interpret the book on the basis of the crisis identity which this theory sustains.

Rushdie (1998) alludes several times to *The Golden Ass*: "Lucius Apuleius of Madaura, Moroccan priest, AD 120-180 approx., colonial of an earlier Empire... in his career he had been transformed, by witchcraft into... an ass" (243). A few pages later, Rushdie also writes: "Lucretius... *De rerum natura... quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante...* Lucretius holds, 'by doing so brings immediate death to its old self'... Ovidio in the *Metamorphoses* takes diametrical opposed view... Our spirits! Our immortal essences! -'Are still the same forever, but adopt in their migrations ever-varying forms'... 'For me it is always Ovid over Lucretius' (276-277). The two main characters in

²⁸ What Art is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand, p 245, Louis Torres, Michelle Marder Kamhi, Open Court Publishing, (2000).

²⁹ Other references to modern literature include "George Bernard Shaw (70)", (1856-1950), and his *The Millionaire*, is the play Saladin represents when he comes back to Bombay after he left India. "Thackery (263)", says Rushdie, writes *Vanity Fair* that is an English novel which follows the lives of Becky Sharp and Emmy Sedley amid their friends and families during and after the Napoleonic Wars during his instance in London. "Hamlet... Ghare-Baire... Tagore (292)", "Percy Westerman, G. A. Henty and Dornford Yates (293)", "Lucius Apuleius... *The Golden Ass* (310)", "Othello (316)", "Lucretius... *De rerum natura... Ovid... Metamorphosis* (351)", "Herbert... Milosz... Baranczak (378)", "Isaias... Blake (403)", "Camus (522)", "Frankenstein (440)", "Niccolò Machiavelli... *Il Principe... Discorsi* (504)", "Fausto (522)", "Crusoe (528), Tamerlane... Marlowe (652).

The Satanic Verses, Saladin and Gibreel, undergo an altering form from the beginning of the book to predetermine two classical concepts over which so many books have built their plots, Good and Evil³⁰, as is the case with Goethe's *Faust* (1832), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601) among others. Rushdie establishes the dichotomy to sphere metamorphosis appearance and, in this way, to draw the reader's attention by moving the protagonist and the antagonist from Heaven to Hell.

To better understand how Rushdie uses metamorphosis is indispensable to remember where the origin of the concept comes from and how it has been used in Rushdie's fiction. The *Metamorphoseon libri*, Ovid's book, is a compilation of 250 myths about alterations orally maintained since the Greek times. The *Heteroioumena* of Nicander of Colophon, 21 stories treated in *Metamorphoses*, was probably the first reference to later Hellenistic writers. Some of the myths like Io, where Zeus transforms himself into a bull to lure Io, in *Book I* comes from the 5th century BC. Ovid, the Latin poet, (43 BC-17 AD) was the first *Kollektivgedicht* as an *epyllion*, an illustration, and a narrative difficult to categorize (García Gual, 1998; Rodríguez Adrados 1995).

"*In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas/corpora*" (Ovid, 2004) are the opening words in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* meaning that, "I intent to speak of forms changed into new entities."³¹ Those transformations may occur in many different ways: from humans to objects, constellations, animals from other animals and fungi to humans, transformations of sex and color. I have conferred *anima* aversion to the transmutations – transformations was the title in English of Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* – of the formal corps to alter animas since early times Kafka's Gregor Samsa transformation into an insect at the outset of the narrative: "Gregor Samsa... changed into a monstrous verminous bug."³² This alludes to the German term *Vermandelt* – "verminous" – from the Latin *vermis* which means "worm" is more a psychological state alluding to a human being degradation as Borges³³ advocated. Rushdie uses the transformation motif as a psychological –i.e. mental – state following Kafka's idea of human corruption and degradation. Magic Realism is just another way to combine real and unreal elements to create a strange atmosphere, just as a form of *captatio benevolentiae* Gual (2004).

Ovid's book has influenced a great variety of authors of all times; Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*; William Shakespeare is influenced by the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe*

³⁰ According to a homiletic teaching in the Talmud, two angels accompany people on their way back home from synagogue on Friday night—a good angel and an evil angel.

³¹ William S. Anderson, ed. (1998). Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

³² <http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/kafka/metamorphosishtml.html>

³³ https://elpais.com/diario/1999/09/28/cultura/938469602_850215.html

(1590) on his *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *Venus and Adonis* (1554) or *Titus Andronicus* (1593). There are also quite a few books using metamorphosis as part of the plot in different centuries and contexts: *Metamorphosis* (1905) by Frank Kafka, *The Odyssey* by Homer, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius, just to mention some examples.

After giving a deeper explanation of the meaning of Metamorphosis, we would like to add just a few brush-strokes about the construction writing technique which Rushdie has used in *Verses* to strengthen our purpose of saying that there is no originality in Rushdie but on the contrary a lot of intellectuality and writing technique.

3. CONSTRUCTION WRITING TECHNIQUE

Rushdie explores two clear techniques between others in *Verses* to maintain the *captatio benevolentia* in the readers. These are Ringkomposition and Magic Realism.

3.1. Ringkomposition

The inner structure of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is a circular composition which contains another circle inside. In other words, the reader faces a *Ringkomposition* structure: the main character circle, which takes place during the whole book, and the circle constructed by the hallucinations of Gibreel's *Satanic Verses*.

Rushdie uses *Ringkomposition* because he intends to create a Biblical book for future generations Douglas (2007). A paradigmatic example of chiasmic structures, which is the classical designation to Ringkomposition, could be *Genesis Flood Narrative* from *The Book of Genesis*³⁴ analyzed by Gordon Wenham (1978) and we believe Rushdie has on mind:

- A: Noah and his sons (Gen 6:10)
- B: All life on earth (6:13:a)
- C: Curse on earth (6:13:b)
- D: Flood announced (6:7)
- E: Ark (6:14-16)
- F: All living creatures (6:17-20)
- G: Food (6:21)
- H: Animals in man's hands (7:2-3)
- I: Entering the Ark (7:13-16)
- J: Waters increase (7:17-20)
- X: God remembers Noah (8:1)
- J: Waters decrease (8:13-14)

³⁴ From the Latin *Vulgate*, in turn borrowed or transliterated from Greek γένεσις, meaning "Origin."

- I': Exiting the Ark (8:15–19)
- H': Animals (9:2,3)
- G': Food (9:3,4)
- F': All living creatures (9:10a)
- E': Ark (9:10b)
- D': No flood in future (9:11)
- C': Blessing on earth (9:12–17)
- B': All life on earth (9:16)
- A: Noah and his sons (9:18,19a)

The Psyche and Cupid Tale, for example, in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, has been analyzed from a feminist perspective as a paradigm of how the gender unity of women is disintegrated through rivalry and envy by replacing the bonds of sisterhood with an ideal of heterosexual love.

As previously mentioned, in *The Golden Ass*, we find the Milesian tales incrustated. There is a tale about Psyche, a beautiful mortal woman, who is isolated from her family when a prophecy says that she will marry a winged monster, a devil. The wind Zephyr takes her from the top of a mountain into a valley and a splendid home where he lives. He falls in love with her even though his mother Venus is deathly jealous of the girl's beauty, and Psyche falls in love with him, too.

By using this technique, Rushdie creates similar parallel plots, as Apuleius' to connect with religion and open fantasy assorted to reality. In both books, there is a surface line and a deeper line a plot and a subplot where lectors jump from real world to unreal world, considering the real world also a fantasy lived by metamorphosis creatures. Gibreel has several elaborate visions. These visions introduce the Jahilia subplot, which is a revisionist retelling of the early history of Islam. Mahound, a businessperson who starts a new religion called Submission in the pagan city of Jahilia. Submission is the translation of Islam. The religion is special for being monotheistic in a polytheistic culture. Mahound finds opposition from the authorities especially from Abu Simbel, the city's Grandee. Abu Simbel hires Baal, a poet, to write verses attacking Mahound, Abu Simbel remains restless about the growing sect and allows Mahound and his followers to be persecuted. One day Abu Simbel decides to give protection to Mahound's sects if he acknowledges three of Jahilia's most important goddess apart from Allah. Mahound climbs a mountain to consult with archangel Gibreel who reveals to him the word of God. Gibreel seems to affirm Abu Simbel's request, so Mahound publicly acknowledges the existence of Allah's daughters.

Soon he says that the revelation comes from Satan, not God. Mahound and the rest of the adherents to Submission flee to the more tolerant city of Yathrib.

Similarly, Gibreel's delirium, in *The Satanic Verses*, is conceived of as Ringkomposition clearly differentiated from the main plot at first, but as the book grows far, frequently they interact into the main plot. These hallucinations account for Rushdie's Fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini. Palimpsest is used by Salman Rushdie to get into a particular interpretation of the Coran.

3.2. Magic realism

Once asked about the book he would have loved to write, Rushdie's answer was Garcia Marquez's *Hundred Years of Solitude*³⁵, which confirms my theory that Salman Rushdie is not a fresh writer in *The Satanic Verses* but rather a bricklike, cementing a megalomaniac literature structure using literature bricks already used.

It is relevant to know that for years Rushdie has been classified by identity studies as the successor of García Marquez's magic realism³⁶ (Tsoneva, 2008). Magic realism derives from Latin *fabulae*. *Fabulae*, fables, myths and allegory, defined by Matthe Strecher (1999), as "what happens when a highly detailed, realism setting is invaded by something too strange to believe" (263).

Originally, magic realism was a way to express the realistic American mentality and create an autonomous literary style. Yet, magic realism is not confined to Latin American literature alone, for many Latin American writers have influenced writers around the world, such as Indian writer Salman Rushdie and Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*, (1991).

If we take the above into consideration, we can affirm that the first magic realism could be found in the Milesian Tales. Gual in his work *The origins of the novel* (1995) explains that the *fabula milesiaca* is usually a short story, folktale a fable which features love and adventure surrounded by erotic or titillating nature. The Milesian Tales could be found in examples such as *Satyricon* of Petronius³⁷, "At ego tibi sermone itso Milesio varias fabulas conseram", "but let me join together different stories in that Milesian style" from *The Golden Ass*, the *Gesta Romanorum*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* or *Heptameron* of Marguerite of Navarre. The Milesian Tale comes from the Milisiaka of Aristides of Miletus, translated into Latin by Lucius Cornelius Sisenna under the title of *Milesiae Fabulae*, Milesian Fables. The

³⁵ As he assured in Indian Today (2017). "Embracing Islam Was A Mistake": Salman Rushdie On The Couch With Koel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDGV2RUvzwc>.

³⁶ The term "magical realism" was first introduced by Franz Roh, a German art critic, who considered magical realism an art category. First appeared in 1955.

³⁷ <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/petronius1.html>

only Milesian Tale conserved is *Cupid and Psyche*. Chaucer, *The Miller's Tale* is much into the Aristide's tradition, to mention a more recent influence.

In Apuleius *The Golden Ass* (158/9 AD), magic realism is present from the beginning of the book. For example: "My dear Socrates", I said, "these are certainly very wonderful and terrible stories... when the wound in his throat opened wide and the sponge dropped out into the water, followed by a small trickled of blood (28-30).

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Marquez incorporates many supernatural motifs like levitation and flying carpets. Marquez also creates, in the tradition of the grotesque carnival and supernatural realism, the character of Melquíades, who is an overweight gypsy with supernatural powers. His novel contains powerful images of paradoxical bodily disgust and celebration, ambivalent celebration and laughter, and the reconstruction of human shapes, all of which exemplify characteristics of magic realism.

In *Verses* there are three sequences related to magic realism. One of these sequences contains most of the elements that have been criticized as offensive to Muslims. It is an altered re-writing of the life of Muhammad, called "Mahound" or "the Messenger" in the novel, in Mecca "Jahiliyyah". At its center, we can find the episode of the so-called *satanic verses*, in which the prophet first proclaims a revelation in favor of the old polytheistic deities, but later renounces this as an error induced by the Devil. There are also two opponents of the "Messenger": a demonic heathen priestess, Hind bint Utbah, and an irreverent skeptic and satirical poet, Baal. When the prophet returns to the city in triumph, Baal goes into hiding in an underground brothel, where the prostitutes assume the identities of the prophet's wives. Also, one of the prophet's companions claims that he, who questions the authenticity of the "Messenger," has subtly altered portions of the Quran as they were dictated to him.

The second relevant sequence in order to remark the connection between Rushdie's use of magic realism and blasphemy is the story of Ayesha, an Indian peasant girl who claims to be receiving revelations from the Archangel Gibreel. She entices all her village community to embark on a foot pilgrimage to Mecca, claiming that they will be able to walk across the Arabian Sea. The pilgrimage ends in a catastrophic climax as the believers all walk into the water and disappear, amid disturbingly conflicting testimonies from observers about whether they just drowned or were in fact miraculously able to cross the sea.

A third dream sequence presents the figure of a fanatic expatriate religious leader, the "Imam", in a late-20th-century setting. This figure is a transparent allusion to the life of Ruhollah Khomeini in his Parisian exile, but it is also linked through several recurrent narrative motifs to the figure of the "Messenger".

So far, we have exposed how the reader can find examples of the tripod construction techniques, Metamorphosis, *Ringkomposition* and magic realism in *Verses*. Salman Rushdie considers Metamorphosis, as the glue to adjust characters to the *Verses* plot. It would have been impossible to construct the *Verses*' edifice taking away metamorphosis and *Ringkomposition* maintaining the façade as solid as it has been built. It is our opinion that without these two remarkable features, *The Satanic Verses* or, more properly, the meaning, the relevance and the repercussion of Rushdie's pages would have been minimized. Because of this, I believe that *The Satanic Verses* are apparently original, however, as explained throughout this essay, originality is not one of the strengths of this novel.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Due to the influence received by the Post colonialism studies, Rushdie seems to have developed the main plot of the *Verses* over the transformation of the characters into oppositions, Good/Evil, Quran/Bible, Men/Women – I understand Saladin becomes more "womanized" at the end of the book – a very deconstructive way of writing and presenting moderns stories.

Definitely, the plot in *The Satanic Verses* is more complicated than that and not so lineal, on account of the frequent *Ringkomposition* structure the author resorts to. In short, the jumbo jet Bostan explodes over the English Channel. Two passengers fall down to the water and miraculously they survive; Gibreel Farishta, is a famous Bollywood actor, and Saladin Chamcha is an obscure voice actor who lives in London. Gibreel and Saladin undergo a curious transformation during their fall; they take on the personalities and physical characteristics of the archangel Gabriel and Satan, in a goat form, respectively. Since that moment, their lives take different paths: while Gabriel enjoys triumph, Saladin suffers rejection. At this point, Lucius and Saladin are the same.

However, I clearly see two ways of interpreting metamorphosis in *The Satanic Verses* anyway. On the one hand, a way of transcending physical chains, a way of liberation, the beginning of a new life, and this one also would concord with the one that is explained in *The Golden Ass*. On the other, we always have an alternative of living life in a different way, as in a virtual world, very commonly done nowadays on the Internet in virtual World conceptions, closer to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Tsoneva (2008).

From my point of view, Gibreel is Salman Rushdie in disguised. We could easily see Augustus-Rushdie transforming Rome from brick to marble. The flying position of Gibreel through the streets of London seeing its habitants as zombies – another interesting case of transmutation – could be interpreted as a Nero-Salman watching Rome on flames from his

palace playing the lira while reciting verses from his own poems. The classical idea of soul migration has been interpreted as a psychological state of personal alienation, moral incoherence and emptiness Tsoneva (2008). Gibreel is empty due to his alienation. Gibreel through his metamorphosis is simply assimilating the colonial identity, he is a colonized, and his way of seeing others is with an "evil eye", using a Homi Bhabha's³⁸ term.

I have analyzed the novel in light of magic realism. There are similarities with Kafka's transformation in a cockroach. Tales, as internal rings, permit the plot to be broken to travel on time and limits. The Tilipur subplot seems like the Liliputians in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's travels* (1726). A traveler goes to a fictional world and after promising to be good, he is liberated. The narration is a satiric critique to the European religious conflicts of the moment.

To my knowledge, Rushdie could never be considered a creator in Stefan Zweig's³⁹ idea. In my opinion, there are two types of writers, the ones that really create something original such as Apuleius, Kafka, Marquez, Joyce or Mishima, just to mention some of them, and those who use what has been already said and transform that into a new version majestically done. This is the case with Rushdie, Murakami, Coetzee and Pamuk, among others. Throughout this paper, I have tried to demonstrate that *The Satanic Verses* is also a hybrid novel. Hybridity is a mechanism of attuning dissonances and finding the common grain of life buried under layers of disparities. The novel could be a search for what is lost and (re)gained. This is a postcolonial assertion. Angels and demons, the eternal dichotomy Good/Evil, Me/the Other, God/Satan, Orient/Occident, *occidere* means to "to die" in Latin, Live/Death. The originality of Rushdie is undisputable but not in terms of the narrative constructive technique and originality. His prose is as beautiful as a smelling flower land, adorned with hundred or classic and modern references, but his architecture writing construction is not new, he uses ring compositions so often that sometimes distract.

To conclude, I would like to add, apart from the previous critic conclusion that *The Satanic Verses* has not been understood yet in terms of religion and I open a door for future investigations to assert that it could have been conceived as a Bible. Maybe in a future this art-piece will be read as the tour de force of amusement it is without radicalism involved. I find *Verses* has been built on beauty and fertile imagination, just for the pleasure, indispensable ingredient for a genuine art piece and desired in rereading it over and over again.

³⁸ Homi K. Bhabha. *The location of culture*. (1949).

³⁹ <https://stefanandlotteinparadise.wordpress.com/article/>

Whatever the case is, what is clear is that *Verses*: Καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πᾶν πρόσφατον ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον: *Nihil novum sub solem. Valete*

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