The Satanic Verses: An Intercultural Experiment by Salman Rushdie

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The paradox created by the wide distribution of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988)[1] and the small number of people who have actually read it leads to many complex questions in various departments of intellectual research. The major problem for the Western reader lies in Rushdie's use of the Islamic tradition in *The Satanic Verses*. Many implications of this tradition are inaccessible for the majority of European scholars in the field of international English literature,[2] and thus the text of this novel cannot become "experienceable" or "readable" for them in terms of modern reception theories.[3] Approaching the problem on a scholarly level, we have to see that the Islamic tradition on the whole can be understood as a textual system or even more radically as a text. This not only because Muslims understand themselves as *"ahl al-Kitâb,"* (followers of the Holy Book), and thus on a comparable cultural level with Christianity and Judaism, but also in terms of cultural semiotics: Islam as a cultural system and a cultural structure can therefore be interpreted, in a poststructurally radical generalization, as a text. So we may draw from some of the research in the field of literary intertextuality.

My aim, in this study, is to apply the forms and fields of reference of literary intertextuality to the case of the novel *The Satanic Verses* and its use of the Western and Islamic traditions, in order to gain more insight into the structure, themes, and methods behind this work.[4]

What can probably be seen as the most basic and consistent theme running through *The Satanic Verses*, the critical probing and questioning of absolutes, particularly the absolute claim to truth and holiness of the *Qur'ân*, takes us straight back to the intellectual roots of intertextual research: to Mikhail Bakhtin's intratextual *"dialogichnost'"* or "Dialogicity."[5] In terms of this subversive tension, *The Satanic Verses* can be understood as a modern dialogical novel.[6] This perspective of explosive ideological criticism and critique leads us to Julia Kristeva, who first

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[1] All references are to the first edition: Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988).

[2] See Bhikhu Parekh, "Between Holy Text and Moral Void," *New Statesman and Society* 24 March 1989: 29-33.

[3] See Hans Robert Jauss, "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft," *Rezeptionsästhetik: Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Rainer Warning (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1975) 126-62, 131.

[4] I should add, at this point, that in embarking upon my scholarly inquiry, I pay my due respects to all those members of the Muslim communities of the world who feel offended or deeply hurt in their religious feelings because of the Rushdie affair.

[5] See Julia Kristeva, "Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman," *Critique* 23 (1967): 438-65, and slightly revised in Julia Kristeva, *Sémeiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969) 143-73.

[6] For the modern dialogical novel, see Manfred Pfister, "Konzepte der Intertextualität," in *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, eds. Ulrich Broich & Manfred Pfister (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985) 1-30, 3.

introduced the term *"intertextualité"* in the nineteen-sixties.[7] In contrast to Kristeva, however, I do not agree with her cancellation of the autonomous and intentional subject of the author, certainly not in the case of *The Satanic Verses*, for with such a cancellation the individuality of the work itself would also disappear. In my use of the term "intertextuality," therefore, I differ from the poststructural and deconstructionist origins of the term.

Since my aim is the concrete analysis of the text of *The Satanic Verses*, I have to be even more specific regarding my use of the term "intertextuality." I do not mean the general quality of all texts in the sense of Kristeva's radical concept implying that the space into which a text inscribes itself is always a space which is already inscribed,[8] but I mean a specific quality of a particular text. I see intertextuality as a specific criterion of the literariness and poetry of *The Satanic Verses* in the sense expressed by Laurent Jenny.[9] This, in its essence, also corresponds to the conditions set up by Harold Bloom.[10] My idea of intertextuality, then, is not a mere universal principle of literary reception, but, in the sense given to it by Wolfgang Preisendanz, an alternative possibility, a procedure in the construction of meaning in literary works.[11] One could limit the concept of intertextuality even further at this point. However, let me merely add two acknowledgments: First, my interpretation of *The Satanic Verses* as an "experiment" concedes to Roland Barthes that I mean to take as a starting point his idea of the reader as the clearing point of the intertextual transaction. Secondly, my line of argumentation is indebted to the model of mediation proposed by Manfred Pfister.[12] This model lists six qualitative and two quantitative criteria for the scaling of intertextual references. I will now apply these criteria to *The Satanic Verses*.

(1) Referentiality: The criterion of referentiality examines the degree of reference, i.e., it investigates to what degree a text merely quotes certain pre-texts or refers to them. Thus, I want to ask how intensively the novel *The Satanic Verses* thematizes important pre-texts by laying open their essence and thus assuming the character of a meta-text.

On the level of the quotation, we can find a rich variety of material in this novel. Rushdie quotes from many pre-texts in the Islamic and the Western tradition. Among the latter, the most outstanding ones are the quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoseon libri* (1 B.C.-A.D. 10) and Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (55-43 B.C.) because these are used to constitute the central theme of the novel. Also, they indicate how deeply this novel is rooted in the Western tradition, which is a good thing to remember in the investigation of the role of the Islamic tradition.

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[7] Julia Kristeva, *Sémeiotiké* 146.

[8] Cf. Pfister 11. Cf. also Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) 78; Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 101; and Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1973) 59.

[9] Laurent Jenny, "La stratégie de la forme," *Poétique* 27 (1976): 257-81, particularly 257.

[10] Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 2-3.

[11] Wolfgang Preisendanz, in "Zum Beitrag von R. Lachmann 'Dialogizität und poetische Sprache,'" in *Dialogizität*, ed. R. Lachmann (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1982) 25-28, 26-27.

[12] Pfister 25-30.

Saladin Chamcha, the Indian actor with the 1,001 voices (60), an Anglophile imitator of European customs and one of two survivors after the aircraft explosion at the beginning of the novel, turns into a real devil with horns, goat's hooves, tail, thick fur and sulfurous breath. Furious, humiliated, and desperate, he finds shelter in a small room of the rather shabby Shaandaar Café in Rushdie's fictitious London borough of Brickhall. The landlord of the Shaandaar Café, Muhammad Sufyan, an ex-schoolmaster from Bangladesh, tries to offer consolation to Chamcha by means of his scholarly learnedness: "Sufyan . . . tried to bring what good cheer he could. 'Question of mutability of the essence of the self,' he began, awkwardly, 'has long been subject of profound debate. For example, great Lucretius tells us, in *De Rerum Natura*, this following thing: . . . However,' up went the ex-schoolmaster's finger, 'poet Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, takes diametrically opposed view. . . . For me it is always Ovid over Lucretius,' he stated. 'Your soul, my good poor dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form'" (276-77). Here we have the central question of migration, mutation, change, and alienation, a theme that runs through the entire novel, for this book, in one of its narrative threads, treats the problems of identity and cultural conflict among the immigrants from the Indian subcontinent in Britain, and it constantly explores the various changes in these migrants' innermost beings in consequence of their migration. This example may illustrate how Rushdie treats quotations from the Western tradition. Characteristically for his style, there is a slightly humorous note, growing out of the contrast between the esoteric diction of the classic Latin quotations and the slapstick situation among Oriental exiles in London, but also out of the schoolmasterly didactic note in Muhammad Sufyan's mediation.

Similarly, Rushdie employs quotations from the Islamic tradition. However, these appear in a different light because of the cultural shift from the text of the holy book into the context of Rushdie's magic realism with its brilliant contrasts, its crude provocations, and its unlimited and undaunted sense of humor.[13] The intertextual references to the *Qur'ân*, the holy book of Islam, can be found throughout *The Satanic Verses*, first in a low degree of referentiality on a level of allusion, then as fragmentary quotations, and, finally, as thematized reference.

Rushdie most clearly and most pointedly lays open the essence of a pre-text, and thus creates intertextuality of the highest degree of intensity in terms of referentiality, when he treats the revelation of the so-called Satanic Verses. These are the verses which the Prophet Muhammad allegedly spoke after verse 20 in sura 53 but revoked on the following day as Satan's words, thus creating a legend which is not included in the "*Hadîth*" (the Prophet's statements and declarations) tradition.[14] This leads us to the controversial narrative thread which constitutes Chapters 2 and 6 of the novel.

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[13] For aspects of magic realism as postcolonial discourse, see Jean-Pierre Durix, "Magic Realism in *Midnight's Children*," *Commonwealth* 8.1 (Autumn 1985): 57-63; also Stephen Slemon, "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse," *Canadian Literature* 116 (Spring 1988): 9-24.

[14] Cf. Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, trans. Anne Carter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 106, 113; also Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990) 37-38.

The second survivor of the aircraft explosion at the beginning of the novel is called Gibreel Farishta, and he is also an Indian movie star. Through his fall from the sky over the south coast of England he turns into a proper angel. As seemingly indicated by his name—Gibreel is the Arabic form of the name Gabriel—he assumes the personality of the archangel and even grows a halo. Like his colleague and rival Chamcha, Gibreel also suffers under his mutation, but in his case this leads to a decay of the mind (92). In hallucinations and wild dreams, he falls into his own version of early Islamic history, Chapter 2 dealing with the time before the "Hijrah," Chapter 6 with the time between the Prophet's return from Yathrib-Madina and his death. The central issue of these chapters is the question of immutability and the stability of absolutes in the world. If such an issue is to be treated through the medium of fiction, the controversial legend of the Satanic Verses seems particularly rewarding because it represents a conflict between fact and fantasy, between "truth" and "falsehood," and it recalls the obvious differences between the historical figure of Muhammad and the idolized and idealized image of the Prophet.

The intertextual references to sura 53 gradually increase and culminate in the scene in which the Prophet, who bears the provocatively abusive medieval name of Mahound in the novel, appears before the Grandee of Mecca, which is called Jahilia in the novel, a name which represents the Islamic label for the pre-Islamic time of ignorance. This entire scene can be seen as the climax of the novel. It leads to the recitation of the Satanic Verses: "Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other? . . . They are the exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed" (entire scene: 113-15).

On the one hand, this scene includes a word-by-word quotation from sura 53 of the *Qur'ân*, from the title ("The Star") and the "Basmala," the fixed formula at the beginning of almost each sura),[15] including verses 1 to 20, up to the so-called Satanic Verses; on the other hand, the text is translated into English[16] and placed in a fictitious context of its original genesis and thus laid bare in its essence: the scene shows the Prophet in the act of public recitation. The word *Qur'ân* can also be translated as "recitation," which refers to the nature of the revelation. According to the accepted tradition, the Prophet, who could not write, recited the verses—revealed to him by God through the archangel—to his companions and disciples, who learned them by heart and later wrote them down. The phrase "and the scribes began to write" (114) refers to this particular quality of the pre-text. Already the greetings uttered by the Grandee point to Muhammad's position and implicitly to the prevailing original opinion about his recitations, "the seer, the kahin" (113); these epithets confer on the Prophet the position of a soothsayer and interpreter of dreams. Thus the pre-text is not only laid open in its originally difficult position of a misunderstood interpretation of ghosts and fantasies, but the ep-

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[15] This introductory formula, the so-called "Basmala," also serves to mark the beginning of a new sura in early manuscripts of the holy text: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful!" It is only absent in sura 9. As we are to understand from sura 27, verse 30, as well as from other sources, the Prophet himself knew this formula, and it is therefore not unlikely that he already dictated it to his scribes at the head of each sura when he recited the holy text. See Helmut Gätje, *Koran und Koranexegese* (Zürich: Artemis, 1971) 43.

[16] For the English translations from the *Qur'ân* used in the novel, see Salman Rushdie's appendix (549): "The quotations from the Quran in this book are composites of the English versions of N.J. Dawood in the Penguin edition and of Maulana Muhammad Ali (Lahore, 1973), with a few touches of my own."

ithet of the "kahin" indirectly also points to the form of the pre-text, for the seers inspired by ghosts (*kuhhân*) to convey their interpretations in the form of the *saj'* ("rhyming prose"),[17] which Muhammad also chose for his recitations. Since poets also used to be connected with ghosts, the Prophet dissociates himself from the *kuhhân* by asserting: "I cannot claim to be one of them" (114). And there are many more references to the nature of the pre-text. The second half of verse 19 runs: ". . . and I saw some of the greatest signs of the Lord." The word "sign" refers to the Arabic word *Âyah*, which can also mean "miracle." It is not only the term used to denote the individual verses of the *Qur'ân*, but it also refers to the miraculous nature ascribed to the divine revelations. These revelations seemed to be miracles to the Prophet himself. According to the accepted tradition, when the Meccans asked him to perform miracles like the earlier prophets, he referred them to the verses of the *Qur'ân*, the *âyât*, themselves miracles. The idea was that no human being but only a divine revelation could produce such verses. So the scene described by Rushdie is the recitation of some of these miraculous "signs" before the Meccans. The presence of the Grandee refers to a possible political-tactical explanation or justification for the public recitation of the Satanic Verses: to the attempt of the Prophet to improve his own rather weak position by a public acknowledgment of the claim of the three Meccan goddesses. The reaction of the Grandee confirms the success of the Prophet's clever move.

There could be added many other instances of high textual reference to the *Qur'ân* throughout this novel,[18] but the examples treated so far ought to have sufficiently demonstrated the highest degree of referentiality of the intertextuality under consideration.

(2) Communicativity: In a case like this, where we are dealing with intercultural phenomena, the criterion of communicativity becomes particularly problematical, for this criterion examines the scaling of intertextual references according to their communicative relevance, that is, the degree of consciousness of the intertextual reference on the side of the author and on the side of the recipient, which is basically a question of how intentional and how clearly marked such references are.[19] This means that at both ends, the author's as well as the reader's, a certain degree of familiarity with the relevant pre-texts and the mutual consciousness of this familiarity play a vital part.

It is always difficult to trace an author's intentions after the event, and in the case of Salman Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* this is particularly complicated, because real intentions can be intermingled with justifications. From the numerous

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[17] Helmut Gätje, *Koran und Koranexegese*, 13: "Next to the gods there were the djinns or ghosts (*jinn*), regarded as half wordly half celestial beings who could establish direct contact with individual human beings. The soothsayers and seers (*kuhhân*, singular *kâhin*), who could interpret dreams, make prophecies and perform all sorts of supernatural things, were said to be inspired by such ghosts. These seers clothed their statements in rhyming prose (*saj'*)and they revealed themselves as mouthpieces of their djinns or ghosts in terms of address and contents of statements"; my translation.

[18] To give a few more examples of clearly recognizable textual references to Qur'anic passages in *The Satanic Verses*, see: Sura 2:34 (336), Sura 7:26 (323), Sura 18:50 (353), plus innumerable allusions to the *Fâtiha* and the *Shahâdah*.

[19] Pfister 27.

documents in this case,[20] one can conclude that Rushdie had intended the very opposite of what happened afterwards. About four months after the publication of the book, one commentator states: "Rushdie says that one of his aims in writing the novel was to try to fight prejudice and fanaticism by establishing a dialogue with Muslims. He has manifestly failed."[21] And about another six months later, after the Rushdie affair has already disappeared from the headlines, Malise Ruthven comments on Rushdie's intentions: "Nevertheless, when taken together Rushdie's statements, including the apology he made after the Ayatollah Khomeini issued his *fatwa* condemning him to death, created an impression of ambiguity about his intentions in writing the novel."[22] Examining the mutual consciousness of the intertextual references at both the author's and the reader's ends, we may remember that it was already raised in an interview with Rushdie prior to the publication of the book: "Isn't there a risk that your readers won't know about Islam?" to which Rushdie answers that, "the novel still ought to work at the level of pure story."[23] However, the first reviews in Indian newspapers already showed that the readers did not share the same ideas about the author's intentions, as the title of one review in *The Times of India* expresses: "You did this with satanic forethought, Mr Rushdie."[24]

Aziz Al-Azmeh has shown how selectively the readers, especially the Islamic critics, made use of their potential degree of intertextual consciousness.[25] This means that, from the perspective of the authorial intention, the conditions for a high degree of communicativity were fulfilled, but the intended communicative relevance could not be realized because it was prevented by certain inhibiting factors at the recipient's end. Apart from certain political and social reasons, most of the inhibiting factors could probably be found in the Islamic concept of tolerance. As Amir Taheri writes, "The very idea of using the prophet Muhammad as a character in a novel is painful to many Muslims. . . . An Arab proverb says: 'Kill me, but do not mock my faith.'"[26] Or, as that early reviewer from India expresses: "Civilisation is nothing but voluntary acceptance of restraints."[27]

If we are looking for reasons within the text for the failure of the communicative relevance of the intertextual references in *The Satanic Verses*, we must investigate the clarity of their marking in the same text. However, before launching into this central question, let me quickly apply the other criteria of intertextual scaling from Pfister's model of mediation to the text under consideration.

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[20] For discussions around the worldwide "Rushdie affair" in documents from newspaper articles, radio commentaries, and interviews, see Lisa Appignanesi & Sara Maitland, eds., *The Rushdie File*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1989). For more background information on the affair see Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair*.

[21] Amir Taheri, "Khomeini's Scapegoat," *The Times* (13 February 1989), quoted from *The Rushdie File* 94.

[22] Ruthven 15.

[23] "Sean French talks to Salman Rushdie," *The Observer* (25 September 1988), quoted from *The Rushdie File* 9.

[24] Syed Shahabuddin, "You did this with satanic forethought, Mr Rushdie," *The Times of India* (13 October 1988), from *The Rushdie File* 45.

[25] Aziz Al-Azmeh in *New Statesman & Society* (20 January 1989), from *The Rushdie File* 71.

[26] Taheri 93.

[27] Shahabuddin 47.

(3) Autoreflexivity: Under this criterion, we examine the degree in which an author reflects on the intertextual nature of his text in this same text, that is, how intensively he makes it part of his theme and subject by discussing its advantages and drawbacks, its conditions and achievements.[28] This criterion reveals a whole range of examples in *The Satanic Verses*; indeed, it can be said that the entire novel has as one of its central themes the phenomenon of intertextuality, since it deals primarily with cultural displacement, transformation, and the relative dependence of the individual on certain fixed constellations within semiotic systems.

These complex themes are introduced quite early in the novel in an ironic manner. From the very outset, the intercultural displacement of the two main characters between India and Britain is stressed, and their professional associations with the world of the theater and the film, with television and the advertising industry represent variations of the central theme of continuous oscillation between different realities.

After his miraculous landing on British soil, Saladin Chamcha tries to reach his wife Pamela on the telephone in the middle of the night. He is calling her London number from a house in Pevensey Bay (136-37). This passage very clearly shows the different levels at which Rushdie treats the theme of intertextual and intercultural shift. Already the two contrasting adjectives "unidentifiable, familiar" (136) announce the dichotomy inherent in such a shift. Chamcha's ensuing memory of a theater production represents a shift at several levels: from reality to the stage, from the English original to the Indian version, from the author to the production, from the production to the audience, and, here, from experience to memory. As the example of the forgotten author illustrates, earlier stages or pre-texts tend to retreat into a more or less hazy background in the course of the shift. Significantly enough, the term "text" is being used in this context. After Chamcha's mental return to his present condition, the shift remains a central theme, signaled by his sojourn in an "unknown bedroom" and his "unfamiliar red-and-white striped pyjamas" (137): first at the level of an identity crisis ("Damn all Indians"), then at the level of banal attributes to his present environment ("frilly-edged pillowcases from Harrods in Buenos Aires"), and, finally, at the level of semantics in the context of sociolinguistic value judgments, introduced by the lexical term "bastard." Ironically, this scene is immediately followed by another scene of a cultural shift of a different kind: Chamcha's arrest as an allegedly illegal immigrant.

Another example for the novel's dialectic treatment of the theme of intertexuality can be found in its treatment of history. This appears most clearly in the episode of the old Imam in his Kensington apartment. This Imam, who has a great deal in common with the Ayatollah Khomeini in the eyes of the reader, is depicted as being in control of the movements of history. Rushdie hastens to add: "No: not history. His is a stranger dream" (209). The Imam not only conjures up history but something stranger: he wants to instigate a revolution "that is a revolt not only against a tyrant, but against history" (210). So the Imam shows himself as an enemy of history; he wants to "unmake the veil of history." This wish of the Imam, to annihilate history and thus the passage of time, on the one hand reflects the inter-

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[28] Pfister 27. My own attempts at a definition of the various criteria of intertextuality represent a rough adaptation of Pfister's scholarly German elaborations and definitions.

textual problems inherent in all versions of historical record; on the other hand, this inversion of the concept of historical record based on Enlightenment philosophy places the over-dogmatic belief in the absolute immutability of the holy text in a sphere of ironical relativity. All this places the basic problem of all textual transmission at the center of the reader's concern.

The criterion of autoreflexivity also leads us to the important episode in the novel in which Salman Farsi, the Prophet's scribe, challenges the unfailing memory of his master and thus the absolute claim in the textual transmission of the *Qur'ân*, by deliberately making certain changes in his written version of the recited verses. He reads his altered verses to his master, but the Prophet only nods in agreement (368). This episode, as well as the fact based on historical evidence that the Prophet, on his glorious return to Mecca on the 30th of January 630, condemned to death as traitors mainly intellectuals and writers (392), has many implications on the central issue raised by the present inquiry: the conflict between a rigid, dogmatically valid pre-text, and a playful meta-text created by a fanciful, imaginative mind.

(4) Structurality: This criterion for the scaling of intertextuality can be treated very briefly here. Since the pre-texts under consideration are integrated syntagmatically in the text of *The Satanic Verses* only to a very limited extent, and only within clearly isolated cases—for example in cases of parodies on the historical figure of the Prophet, or in sections consisting of translation or imitation— and hardly one pre-text can be found to have become a structural foil of this novel, we can say that, in terms of structurality, the novel shows a relatively low scale of intertextual intensity. However, Malise Ruthven writes: "The structure is as complex, and as confusing to many readers, as that of the Qur'an itself: indeed, *The Satanic Verses*, like its predecessor *Shame*, seems in ways to mirror the Muslim scripture. Like *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is a kind of 'anti-Qur'an' which challenges the original by substituting for the latter's absolutist certainties a theology of doubt."[29] This position of the novel as an "anti-*Qur'ân*" seems to be based merely on its ideas, or in the words of Timothy Brennan, on its "religion of doubt": "In this fertile indecision, this apotheosis of self-questioning, the counter-*Quran* of the novel finds its theology."[30]

(5) Selectivity: This criterion explores how pointed a certain intertextual reference is, and how exclusively or inclusively the pre-text is being referred to, that is, at what level of abstraction the pre-text constitutes itself in the reader's mind.[31] Within this perspective, a selective and exact reference is granted a higher intertextual intensity than a general allusion.

If we want to draw up a complete list of general allusions and pointedly selective references to recognizable pre-texts in *The Satanic Verses* we can write another book. There are so many, of all different shades of selectivity. There are general allusions like the use of the term "Submission" in its English context with simultaneous allusion to the meaning of the word "Islam" (e.g., 289); there are allu-

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[29] Ruthven 17.

[30] Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* (London: Macmillan, 1989) 152.

[31] Pfister 28.

sions to the paratactical style of Oriental narrative prose (e.g., 133) and to elements from *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* (*Thousand and One Nights*) (e.g., 200, 543). The list of pointed references which, as synecdoche or pars pro toto, recall the entire context of the pre-text, range from exact quotations of Qur'anic verses (e.g., 353, or even the example of the Satanic Verses in Arabic: 340) through selective quotations from European pre-texts (e.g., from Goethe's *Faust*, 417, or from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, 525), to a wide variety of real names and titles collected from the Oriental as well as the European context. Apart from a few exceptions, it can be noted that the degree of selectivity in intertextual references gradually increases through the progress of the novel.

(6) Dialogicity: This last qualitative criterion takes us to the major object of Fundamentalist-Islamic criticism. Pfister's definition for cases of particularly high intensity of intertextuality on the basis of dialogicity could serve as a characterization of *The Satanic Verses*: "A textual processing against the grain of the original, a quasi-quotation of a text placing it in ironic relativity and undermining its ideological pre-conditions, a distancing display of the difference between the old context of the alien word and its new contextualization . . ."[32] So it is the resulting irony in such dialogical tension, and the deliberate play with the difference between the old context of the alien term included and its new context in the present text, which has offended the dogmatic adherents of the pre-text. Everything in this novel creates such a semantic and ideological tension of the highest intensity: the central themes—particularly the theme of the position of women and sexuality in Islam—the literary treatment of the philosophical, ethical, moral, and political issues raised, and, most of all, the style and diction chosen for the treatment of such issues.

The model of mediation for the scaling of intertextuality based on Pfister's findings also includes two quantitative criteria: the density and frequency of intertextual references, and the number and scattering range of the pre-texts referred to.[33] Without going into statistics at this point, we may assert that also in terms of these two quantitative criteria, *The Satanic Verses* reaches a high degree of intertextuality.

After this selective analysis of *The Satanic Verses* in terms of the criteria for scaling intertextual references, which has gained us a typological differentiation of such references, I now return to the central question of this study: What are the possible reasons for the obvious failure in the realization of communicative relevance in the case of *The Satanic Verses*? Taking up the line of argumentation in the context of the inhibiting factors of the communicative relevance, my concern is now to demonstrate to what extent Salman Rushdie and his readers, as partners in a communicative process, are not only conscious of the intertextuality of *The Satanic Verses*, but must also take into account their mutual consciousness of this intertextuality.[34] This is of particular importance in view of the climate of tension between Islamic disunity and multicultural reality in Britain in which the novel

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[32] Pfister 29; my translation.

[33] Pfister 30.

[34] Cf. Ulrich Broich, "Formen der Markierung von Intertextualität," in *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien* 31-47, especially 31.

was written, published, and criticized. In order to make the most of the approach under the aspect of intertextuality, I have to treat the forms of intertextual marking and of textual reference, before we can attempt a conclusive intertextual assessment of the novel in view of our central question.

On examining the forms of intertextual marking, the so-called "markers,"[35] as employed by Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses,* we can find that the examples quoted so far are all based on the principle of repetition of elements or structures. However, the novel employs other types of intertextual markers.

Rushdie makes use of the method of placing intertextual markers in secondary or additional texts which refer to the relevant pre-texts. Such additional texts are the title and the motto (a quotation from Daniel Defoe). With these markers, he manages to establish an intellectual bridge between the Orient and Europe. Then there are the nine chapter headings, which serve similar functions as intertextual markers. Another method followed by Rushdie is the inclusion of intertextual signals as markers both in the internal and the external communicative system of his novel. The quotations from Ovid and Lucretius as well as the passage on the recitation of the Satanic Verses are both examples of intertextual marking in the internal communicative system, since the characters themselves refer to the respective pre-texts, in one case in the form of a quotation, in the other case in the form of a self-identification in a dream or even, at a level of an internal communicative system of the second degree, in the appearance of the alleged author of the pre-text. As examples of intertextual marking in the external communicative system, we may point to the choice of names for the central characters and many of the marginal figures in the novel, the careful typographical differentiation achieved by the use of quotation marks, italics, or indentation, the effective employment of languages other than English (particularly Arabic), but also the stylistic contrast between pre-text and (in this case) meta-text. As all this ought to have made sufficiently clear, Rushdie relies on the effectiveness of a wide variety of intertextual markers as well as on the concerted effect of marker clusters. His use of such markers and marker clusters through *The Satanic Verses* is dynamic, that is, most of his references to any particular pre-text are of increasing intensity, and thus of increasing effectiveness.

Examining the textual reference within the intertextuality of *The Satanic Verses,* we can find that we do not need to make the customary distinction between single textual reference and reference to an entire system.[36] The reason is simply that Islam as a whole, as mentioned before, cannot only be viewed as a system generating structures and text(s), but also as a system generated and structured by a text, namely the holy *Qur'ân.* What is important for us here is the fact that Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses,* in dialogically subversive opposition, fully exploits its intertextual potential in view of the Islamic tradition in both fields of reference: in single textual reference as well as in reference to the entire system, by means of variation, allusion, transgression, thematizing, contrasting, and selection.

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[35] Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PLT* 1 (1976): 105-28, 108. Cf. also Ulrich Broich, "Formen der Markierung von Intertextualität," 33-34.

[36] Ulrich Broich, "Bezugsfelder der Intertextualität: 1. Zur Einzeltextreferenz," in *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien* 48-52, especially 52.

So why did the realization of the communicative relevance fail in the case of the intertextual references in *The Satanic Verses*? In the expectation that his readers as his communicative partners would let themselves be led into a common and mutual consciousness of intertextual recognition with the necessary degree of intellectual liberalism and tolerance, Salman Rushdie has obviously judged the communicative situation as well as the sociocultural and political conditions governing the reception of his novel altogether too optimistically. As I have shown, both the Islamic potential of intertextual reference on one hand, and the familiarity with the liberating irrationality of postmodernist magic realism on the other, prove to be of particular relevance for the degree of intertextual recognition in the case of the novel under consideration. The Islamic masses may fulfill the former, Western-educated intellectuals may fulfill the latter requirement. Considering Salman Rushdie's biography, his education and his experience within the multicultural tensions of the modern world, particularly in the context of the reception of his earlier novels *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1986), his erroneous (overoptimistic) judgment appears somewhat improbable if not impossible. One must, therefore, conclude that he was fully aware of the danger of such a failure of communicative relevance, and, in view of this danger, the writing and publication of the novel against all odds can only be understood in terms of a conscious intercultural experiment. Indeed, the novel contains a number of references to the experimental and challenging nature of the text. With such an experiment, Rushdie finds himself not only in the tradition of modern Indian literature in English,[37] but in the entire contemporary stream of postcolonial discourse as well.[38] What remains is a feeling of tragic irony of the postmodernist variant, as implied by Homi Bhabba.[39]

Thus, Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* is a typical postcolonial, postmodernist novel attempting, by means of its intertextuality, the dangerous experiment of challenging such vital contemporary issues as cultural translation with a field of multicultural tension. It is indeed a piece of the highest literary merit which attempts to bridge an old chasm between two major cultural traditions of the world. I have demonstrated the highly demanding intellectual level at which the novel exploits the potential of intertextuality in these traditions, and I have presented evidence based on models of literary intertextuality to account for the spectacular failure in the novel's international reception, particularly in its Islamic reception: a failure which has led to the paradox of an unpopular piece of literature which can be said to be both unknown and well-known at the same time.

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[37] Cf. Feroza F. Jussawalla, *Family Quarrels: Towards a Criticism of Indian Writing in English* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985) 120.

[38] Cf. Slemon passim.

[39] Homi Bhabba in *New Statesman* (3 March 1989), *The Rushdie File*, 137-41, 140.