



SALMAN RUSHDIE'S DUAL CITIZENSHIP, HIS WRITINGS AND HIS CON(TEXTS)

OMOTAYO, Adeola Lewis

Department of English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria.
Email: omotayolewis@yahoo.com Mobile: +23408055001746

Abstract

*The thematic pre-occupations of most creative writers are determined by their locale and world of experience (s). Moreover, the genre through which they deploy to communicate their creative outputs are crucial as they form the bases of their convictions and experiences while inhabiting within certain geo-political spaces. This applies to the British-Indian author, Salman Rushdie whose writings reflect his British nationality juxtaposed with his Indian ancestry as evidenced in his two novels selected in this essay: *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983). This essay adopts the technique of Magical Realism, to interrogate the manner in which Rushdie contextually reflects his dual ancestry in these two novels. It argues that Rushdie deliberately deploys this technique in these novels to subvert the notion of history, truth and fact to enable him present the deprivations and environmental degradations prevalent in the Indian geographical and cultural spaces which constitute his major thematic concerns.*

Key Words: Magical realism, Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, third world.

Salman Rushdie's Biography, Worldview and Literary Activism

Though born of Indian parents, Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie, poet, critic and novelist, has lived most of his life in Britain where he lives in disguise, in the aftermath of the pronouncement of *Fatwa* against him by the Iranian spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. There are unsubstantiated reports that Rushdie currently lives *in cognito* in the United States of America after the *Fatwa* was pronounced on him and also because of the knife attack on him by the 24-year-old Hadi Matar. Rushdie was brought to England by his parents at the age of 13 to study. A friend describes him thus:

His life is layered between worlds as his fiction-between the committed socialist, the major artist, and the British gentleman; the third world aristocrat, the immigrant hustler, and the Muslim male-as polyphonic as his style. His devotion to writing is an absolutist's faith, he is the Ayatollah of free expression. He has rejected well-meaning suggestions—a warning sticker on his book (*The Satanic Verses*), voluntary withdrawal of the paperback, distribution of his royalties to free speech causes—that would compromise his autonomy or the book's integrity. Call it pig-headedness, or greediness—many do—but why should he agree to terms no other writer in the world would accept for an instant. (Blaise and Mukherjee, 1990: 31)



The confusion associated with Rushdie's writings is traceable to his background. His description by a friend as an "immigrant hustler" shows that despite his status as a world-rated writer, he, to the Eurocentric mind, is still a second class citizen in the mould of Buchi Emecheta's character in her novel by that title, who must hustle for his daily bread. Due to his third world consciousness, Rushdie presents as a writer who places more premium on commercial gains than on making a case for the oppressed. In 1981, he wrote *Midnight's Children*. This novel won him great acclaim, such that many critics agreed that it served to create a centre space for Indian writings in the literary world. Josua E. Rege (1997) notes:

Midnight's Children's commercial success certainly helped to pave the way for future Indian writers, as publishers in India became more attentive to the domestic market for fiction in English, and publishers in Britain and the United States became more receptive to new writers from India. (343)

The publication of *Midnight's Children* (henceforth (*M C*)), changed the negative perspective of the Western world about writings of Indians or Indians in the diaspora. This attention encouraged the emergence of other Indian writers in English who were motivated by Rushdie's use of the language of the former colonial masters of the first postcolonial nation. Prior to this time, the anti-colonial fervour that gripped the independent nation had encouraged the use of local languages in the artistic productions as a way of spiting their former political overlords and affirming their own identity as a people. Despite his emigrant status, the venom reflected in Rushdie's writings for environmental degradation in third world countries such as his native India portrays his new taste.

The plot of *M C* is deliberately interwoven with world events to create a sense of factuality with reference to such historical events as World War II. Since the World war is a historical fact, the reader is made to believe that the events in the narration are factual. This technique of Magical Realism is deliberately deployed to subvert the notion of history, truth and fact. The deprivations and environmental degradations prevalent in the Indian geographical and cultural space are some of Rushdie's thematic concerns as can be seen from this excerpt:

We headed north, past Breach Candy Hospital and Mahalaxmi temple, north along Hornby Vellard past Vallabhbbhai Patel Stadium and Haji Ali's island tomb, north off what had once been (before the dream of the first William Methworld became a reality) the island of Bombay. We were heading towards the anonymous mass of tenements and fishing-villages and textile plants and film-studios that the city became in these northern zones (not far from here! Not at all far from where I sit within view of the local trains!)... an area which was, in those days, utterly unknown to me; I rapidly became disorientated and was then obliged to admit to myself that I was lost. At last, down an unprepossessing side-street full of drainpipe-sleepers and bicycle-repair shops and tattered men and boys, we



stopped. Clusters of children assailed my mother as she descended; she, who could never shoo away a fly, handed out small coins, thus enlarging the crowd enormously. Eventually, she struggled away from them and headed down the street; there was a boy pleading, “Gib the car poliss, Begum? Number one A-class poliss Begum? I watch your car until you come, Begum/ I very fine watchman, ask anyone! (246)

Migration introduces a ‘disorientation that makes the plot and thematic occupation less believable because a dis-orientated tale bearer is less believable. This is a reflection of the crisis of place suffered by British citizens like Rushdie whose placentas are quite distant from their former twins. The position of the British citizen in the diaspora, the language he deploys to address his readers and the techniques employed to convey his message, have always been issues of contention. The being, and yet not being, is a major thematic occupation of Rushdie. With the departure of the colonial masters after the non-violent resistance to British rule in India, ineptitude and corruption in governance led to filth and insecurity in the country as captured by Rushdie. Due to the prevalent lack of jobs and the consequent poverty in the polity, theft and armed robbery are commonplace. This is reflected in the offer of “poliss(ing)” the wealthy madam’s car for a few coins in the ghetto. The army of jobless youths create jobs by exploiting the incompetence of government. The ineptitude of the state police is reflected in the narration where individuals have to pay some poor youths to carry out government’s responsibilities.

From the time of the anti-colonial struggle to the struggle against their successor, the neo-colonialist writers from former colonies have deployed various literary methods to fight against oppression. Before the emergence of Rushdie on India’s literary space, Indian writers wrote mostly in the local languages in response to the nationalistic fervour of the time. Professor Vrinda Nabar of Bombay University, claims that, in the sixties, “there was a strong feeling against English, and writers were criticised for using it” (Rege, 1997: 345). Rushdie’s background must, however, have contributed to his unabashed use of the English language and, with its attendant success, he has influenced many other Indian writers to embrace the English language as a medium of expressing their literary creativity. The confusion in the author’s use of his new language is however obvious in the sometimes interjection of his native Indian words into his English language narration. As if in agreement with Sander’s assertion that the English man can no longer claim exclusive access to the language, Rushdie deploys the language on his own terms. He refuses to be the ‘Other’ but instead becomes the ‘Centre’ in his deliberate use of coinages. The title of one of the chapters in *M C* is: Revelations: Om hare Khustro hare khustrovand om (306). The writer drops the title with a straight face as if the meaning is accessible to the global community. The tendency to use words unknown to the English language user is a deliberate subversion of the authority of the centre.



The Magical Realist Mode

Magical realism is a literary mode that is found in the literary works of authors across continents. It is believed to have its root in Africa especially, with her preponderance for traditional story-telling as confirmed in an interview by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. On the African continent, there are authors like: Amos Tutuola who wrote *The Palmwine Drinkard* and D. O. Fajunwa who wrote the *Ogboju Ode* series in Yoruba. One of Fajunwa's novels, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* written in 1938, was translated into English by Wole Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* in 1968. The Nigerian writer, Ben Okri and the South African author, Zakes Mda who respectively wrote *The Famished Road* and *The Whale Caller* belong to the later generation of African literary artists who write in this literary mode.

Realism was the mode of writing employed by most pioneer novelists. Since most of their initial stories were more historical than fictional, the realistic mode was considered more appropriate. This formed the tradition of the first generation of educated Africans. From the time of the first African novel, *Mudi* (1930), writers such as Chinua Achebe who were considered social realists told their stories in the social realist mode. They reflected on the society in a realistic way. Naturalists and Absurdist, like Ayi Kwei Armah, the Ghanaian author of *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*. More recent African writers like Ben Okri and Zakes Mda have embraced the Magical Realist mode. Forced to occupy a socio-political space that is radically different from their forebears, this group of writers have embraced this literary method which has differentiated them from Achebe and Soyinka of the preceding generation.

Magical realism is not entirely new to Africa. The interconnectivity between the physical (realistic) and the spiritual (magical) is a daily reality for the African such that he does not fathom the possibility of their divisibility. There has been a yearning for a return to our precolonial era as captured in this excerpt by Ben Okri:

And so we have to heal our Africa within. We have to re-discover the true Africa, the Africa of laughter, of joy, of originality, of improvisation, the Africa of legend, of story-telling, of playfulness, the Africa of brilliant colours, the Africa of generosity, of hospitality and kindness to strangers, the Africa of immense compassion, the Africa of wisdom, of proverb, of divination, of paradox, the Africa of ingenuity and surprise, the Africa of a four-dimensional attitude to the Africa of magic, of faith, of patience, of endurance, of profound knowledge of nature's ways and the secret cycles of destiny (Okri: 2016 5)

Most African social space is suffused with the interconnectedness of the spiritual and the physical. For the African, there is really no demarcation between the mythic/magical and the physical/realistic such that the repetitive nature of man's destiny is perceived as a cycle.



According to Ajibola Adewole, in Africa, through informal education, traditional religious practice, rituals and taboos which emphasise the worship of the gods, like *Oloku*, *Nya*, *Api*, *Amadioha* and the like, are passed from one generation to the other (2003). He further notes that “the belief in ritual, ritual rites which was a process of cleansing the community, appeasing the gods and other spirits who were constant in communion with man was a normal feature of day-to-day living” (34). To the African man, magic, mystery, the metaphysical and traditional medicine come in to ensure his survival in his immediate environment. Within this context, Africans evolved their own forms of entertainment enmeshed in dance, drama and various forms of narrations. These beliefs, customs, values and aspirations constituted the reality known to the African mind before the invasion of the continent by strangers from Europe.

With the coming of the White settlers who initially came to trade, Western education and Christianity were introduced to Africa. However, with the acquisition of Western education, writers like Tutuola and Fagunwa superimposed the African worldview on this alien culture. Consequently, the works of this duo are suffused with the mythic, the magical and spirits commingling with man. Magical realists trace their foundation to the works of these two African writers: Tutuola and Fagunwa and writers from different parts of the world have adopted it as a mode of literary expression. Among such writers is Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Zakes Mda and a host of other writers.

The Dual Contexts of the *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*

First published in 1983, *Shame* covers a period in Pakistan's history where tensions between the West and Pakistan were very high although the author ironically notes: "My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan" (Rushdie, 29). The postcolonial milieu which was Pakistan when Rushdie wrote *Shame* is representative of any other Third World, or as they are derisively referred to, 'developing countries' of the world. Ayo Kehinde (2002) avers that:

Salman Rushdie, the radical postcolonial/postmodern novelist, stands at the apex of the “literary canon of disillusionment”, precisely because, in his idiosyncratic representations of ontological pangs, our apprehension of the dark times we live in assumes a new intensity, a searing illumination. (160)

The representations captured in *Shame* obviously come home with Kehinde who is himself a product of the Third World experience, his country, Nigeria, also being postcolonial. The “intensity” noted by Kehinde is not just in the use of symbols but also in the images drawn in the mind of readers by the author. Rushdie juxtaposes several pieces of local town gossips to create the magical realistic setting in *Shame*. There are many accounts, very disparate accounts, which admittedly have contributed to the novelist's peculiar



characterisation and weave of the plot. His narrator develops large portions of the plot in passages introduced by unsure statements like “Tongues began to wag” (Rushdie, *Shame*: 45).

Shame portrays a period in Pakistan’s history where tensions between the West and Pakistan were heightened but the author ironically notes: “My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan” (Rushdie, 29). This attempt to globalise the narration is understandable considering the author’s duality. The novel is set in the fictitious city of Q. Rushdie interweaves fact with fiction, magic with blending both in a manner that is reminiscent of the *Arabian Nights*. Roshin George notes that in *Shame*, Rushdie exposes “the absurdities and cultural vacuity in Pakistan in the 20th century” using “a fairy tale analogy where political allegory is very clear.” The reality of the narration is fuzzy as the writer pretends to distance the space in his narration from the geographical space known as Pakistan. The two spaces are however same in reality. The fictional space which Rushdie creates provides an alternate reality reflecting the postmodern slant of the narration. The fictional space is identified as Q. Revealing that “I have not given the country a name. And Q is not really Quetta at all” (29). By prevaricating on the identity of the space in which the narration unfolds, Rushdie globalises the postcolonial conditions reflected in the novel. This technique brings the reader to the realisation that this is merely a fictional work but does not distract from the potentiality of it being real. Quetta is a district in North West Pakistan. The word Quetta is urdu and means ‘fortress’.

The plot flashes back and forth in timelines in such a vicious manner that intense concentration is needed to keep up with the fast sequence of events. The novel highlights the oppression and the sense of inequality under which women in Pakistan labour. Typical of the magical realist setting, the women cannot be pigeon-holed. They either seem to be larger than life or fade into the background so that they do not create the impression of being typical Pakistani women like the undecipherable three sisters who give birth to only one child that happens to be the novel’s protagonist. Young Sufiya Zenobia, who embodies shame, is different from birth. First expected as the son to replace the stillborn son, her birth is not accepted by her father who insists that she is a boy. An illness whilst a child gives her the mental age of a seven-year-old throughout her life but at the same time empowers her with magical powers of brute force and strength. Her oxymoronic characterisation draws the reader’s attention. While the women are considered inferior occasioning their subjugation, babies who are incapable of rational mature decisions by the traditions of the land, in reality, dictate what happens. Both the imagined and the supernatural intermix such that readers are anxious to read to the end. The reader does not know how the story is going to unfold that is the Rushdiean style. The inability of the child to outgrow the infantile stage is reflective of the “developing country” status of Pakistan



M C and *Shame* are thematic reflections of the dual existence resulting in the confusion that embodies a migrant. The life and writings of Rushdie encapsulate the confusion of the British citizen whose roots are outside the European geographical sphere. The search for identity and the frustrations of the dual existence of Indians and Pakistanis constitute some of the dominant themes in these two texts.

In the literary history of postcolonial countries, the place of the old in the new, and how much of the borrowed can be infused in the local in producing the new have always been issues. As it is on the African continent, so it is on the Asian continent. The displacement of the anti-colonial fervour, which encouraged the production of Indian literary texts in local languages before the emergence of Rushdie's writings in English, is something some critics have against him. The anti-colonial sentiment which made local language writings popular, contradicts the use of anything foreign, especially one with its roots link with former colonial masters against whom Indians passively fought and gained their independence in 1947. For the Indian anti-colonialist, the English Language represents the oppressor, the "Other" as Edward Said labels them and, is therefore, a medium which cannot speak for him or tell his story. Writing on the utility of the English Language in former colonies, Metcafe and Astle (1980) note:

The supremacy of English as a world language is a relic of the age when Great Britain was an important world power. The inhabitants of the huge chunks of territory, which in old atlases, were coloured red enjoyed the benefits of learning English from explorers, travellers, missionaries and settlers. (7)

Rushdie's medium of expression seems to be an acceptance of the Western idea of the "Other", which considers the English Language more civilised, and as being the language of the arts which, as far as the Europeans are concerned, is not accessible to the Orientals and the blacks (civilisation). The reality for Rushdie however, having arrived the shores of England as a teenager, the tendency is that the English language is retained as the most efficient form of communication if he must convincingly funnel his thematic preoccupations. Language is a critical tool for the magical realist writer as the language of the former colonial master is reinvented by these writers to serve a local purpose. The narrative mode of magical realism which Rushdie employs is not peculiar to developing countries although critics like Liam Connel, Brenda Cooper and Timothy Brennan query the adoption of the magical realist mode, arguing that they reinforce the perspective of the Western world about the periphery—the "Other". According to Maggie Ann Bowers:

It follows that if magical realism is constructed from the conflicting discourses of the magical and the realist, and if this mode is then associated with the postcolonial situation in which the colonialists are forever in conflict, then one or other of the



two may appear to be associated with the 'magical' and the other with the 'realist.
(Bowers 2005:122)

This position of the magical realist puts the West at an advantage, while the Third World is left at a disadvantage. This is because this kind of model replicates colonialist thinking in its affirmation of the "primitive" and pre-modern attributes of the colonised, whereas the colonialists are presented as a people with a rational, modern and progressive culture. For the colonialists, the binary opposition of the magical and the realist makes realism more desirable for its pragmatism and scientific objectivity than the magical which is negatively associated with the childish and irrational. Bowers and Connel (1989:123) contend that this "reinforces the colonialist view that the colonised are like irrational children, who need the guidance and superior knowledge of the colonial power in order to progress into modernity". This fact is made worse by magical realist writers from the Third World who deliberately set their stories in rural, non-Western cultures and settings which seem to resist urbanisation and modernisation.

Citizens of Third World or developing countries are always desperate to emigrate from their home countries because of the choking poverty and political oppression prevalent in these countries. The separation of Pakistan from India, and later Bangladesh from Pakistan introduce conflicts that serve to further polarise the people as seen in *M C* and *Shame*. Unfortunately, these unfavourable conditions, which lead to their leaving, result in other scourges such as racial discrimination, joblessness and sometimes death in the foreign countries. In recent times, the wave of xenophobia which has ravaged most Western nations is directed at postcolonial citizens in foreign countries. The Europeans who ravaged the postcolonial countries are themselves facing economic challenges making them to vent their frustrations on citizens of Third World countries. The lure of a better life is thus resulting into frustration for many who have been tempted or forced to leave by the harsh political and/or economic conditions in many Third World countries. This cyclic phenomenon occasioned by corruption and bad governance in postcolonial countries is reflected in *Shame*:

The last time I visited Pakistan, I was told this joke. God came down to Pakistan to see how things were going. He asked General Ayub Khan why the place was in such a mess. Ayub replied: 'It's these no-good corrupt civilians, sir. Just get rid of them and leave the rest to me.' So, God eliminated the politicians. After a while, He returned; things were even worse than before. This time He asked Yahya Kahn for an explanation. Yahya blamed Ayub, his sons and their hangers-on for the troubles. 'Do the needful,' Yahya begged, 'and clean the place up good and proper.' So God's thunderbolts wiped out Ayub. On his third visit, He found a catastrophe, so He agreed with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that democracy must return. He turned Yahya into a cockroach and swept him under a carpet; but, a few years later, he noticed the situation was still pretty awful. He went to General Zia and offered



him supreme power: on one condition. ‘Anything, God,’ the General replied, ‘You name it.’ So God said, ‘Answer me one question and I’ll flatten Bhutto for you like a chapati.’ Zia said; Fire away.’ So God whispered in his ear: ‘Look, I do all these things for this country, but what I don’t understand is: why don’t people seem to love me anymore?’(112)

The countless changes in leadership as a result of conflicts occasioned by poor governance, question of identity, control of natural resources, divisive ethnic politics, religious intolerance and the insurgence of armed group are common features of postcolonial countries. The frequency in change of leadership each time “God” visits and the deteriorating conditions of living during each visit despite his interference reflects the inability of the divine to intervene in a positive manner despite the belief in his capacity to help. There is a permanent presence of the supernatural in the midst of the irreverent. This derisive comment on the divine reflects the postmodernist bend of the writer and his lack of faith in religion. The pronoun ‘He’ is capitalised as common with religious adherents but by the third visit, the pronoun is written with a lower case ‘h’. This shows a gradual depreciation of religious faith in the author, a fact which he also acknowledges in his essays and critical writings: *Imaginary Homeland*

Shame revolves around the fortunes of three families in a fairy-tale country called Pakistan. The narration throws mental pictures of a city filled with recriminations, blood and despair. It is a satire on political life in Pakistan, the coups and thuggery, the senseless violence of the mob and the fearfulness of middle classes. The title, *Shame*, conveys the outlaw-like nature of the entire situation, the confusion and anarchy that are prevalent in a postcolonial society such as Pakistan. The entire novel is divided into books and in Book 3, the scene shifts to the story of Bilquīs Kemal and the bomb that drove her into the arms of her husband at the time of partition.

‘What things won’t you do there, Raz!’ she cried. ‘What greatness, no? What fame!’ Raza’s ears went red under the eyes of his companions in the bumping, rickety Dakota; but he looked pleased all the same. And Bilquīs’s prophecy came true, after all. She, whose life had blown up, emptying her of history and leaving in its place only that dark dream of majesty, the illusion so powerful that it demanded to enter the sphere of what-was-real—she, rootless Bilquīs, who now longed for stability, for no-more-explosions, had discerned in Raza a boulder-like quality on which she would build her life. He was a man rooted solidly in an inflexible sense of himself, and that made him seem invincible, ‘A giant absolutely,’ she flattered him, whispering in his ear so as not to set off the giggles of the other officers in the cabin, ‘shining, like the actors on the screen (144).

Between the illusion of her past life and Bilquīs’ reality, is a reflection of the society in which her character had been formed. Her optimism at her new life with a new love, a



successful military officer is the image of blood, force and repression which the military represents in the novel. Although Rushdie says that this book is a fairy-tale, he spends time and effort describing the migrant experience in Pakistan. As if shame or shamelessness were synonymous with immigration, Rushdie might as well have been telling the story of his experience as an immigrant in Britain. The conflation is not totally unexpected: already Bilquis has been banished for the shame of not conceiving, linked to her new status in the house of her husband's family. Elsewhere, Rani Harappa is waiting for her husband, Iskandar:

Later, she sits in shalwar and kurta of Italian crêpe-de-chine on the coolest porch, embroidering a shawl, watching a little dust cloud on the horizon. No, how can it be Isky, he is in town with his bosom pal Shakil; I knew trouble, knew it the moment I saw him, the fat pigmeat tub. Probably just one of those little whirlwinds that skip across the scrub. (123)

After Omar's brother Babar is killed as a separatist, Omar tries to contact Iskander, who brushes him off. Omar is made physically ill by this snub but proceeds to fall in love with Sufiya Zinobia Hyder. With dexterity, Rushdie constructs in a perfect alchemy of words images, representative of human happiness and distress to reflect the magical and yet realistic conditions that occur in Pakistan. Examples of magical realist novels with such rural settings are: Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*, Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, and several other such novels from the developing world. Rather than set his story in the urban side of Bogota in his native Colombia, Marquez chooses the rural context in a fictive town of Macondo. This is like looking at the world through the prism of the Western world (Bowers, 2005 and Connel, 1989).

Seen from another angle, this can, however, be said to constitute the subversive power of the literary mode. Despite using the English language and an anti-Western literary model of the novel form, Rushdie, Mda and other magical realist writers engage a "third eye," which seems not to be available to the Western world, to interpret the world around them. The postcolonial writer has the advantage of binary cultures as represented by the local and the foreign, the pre-colonial and the colonial heritage from which he can draw his themes, symbols and images. The fact of her/his history becomes an advantage rather than a disadvantage as s/he is at liberty to draw from experiences from his dual citizenship. This, however, introduces the dilemma of the diasporic writers like: Rushdie, Mda, Ngugi and lots more.

Some questions relating to their specific utilitarian mode of expression are: can this 'Third Eye' be acquired while growing up abroad or is it the exclusive preserve of writers from former colonies? Is it innate? Brenda Cooper notes, this "third way" of seeing things in



relation to the writings of Ben Okri and Amos Tutuola. Quoting Cooper, Bowers notes the complexity of the cosmopolitan writer's relationship to the non-Western pre-(or non-) scientific aspects of the magical realist. Cooper claims that the non-specific magical point of view must be dealt with in a respectful way by the writer, despite the writers' sophistication and modern education (Bowers, 2005: 124). But can Western education aid the acquisition of this Third Way of seeing or is it available only to the migrant writer?

The fact that Rushdie is so far removed from living with the realities of India and Pakistan, which he seeks to portray in *M C* and *Shame* is questionable. The larger part of Rushdie's life had been spent outside the Asian continent, save for occasional visits to India, as in the aftermath of the success of the publication of *M C*. This case is, however, different from the case of the South African magical realist writer, Mda who though widely travelled, spent a large part of his growing up years at Lesotho while his father was in that country on self-exile as a result of his (father's) anti-apartheid activities.

The *fatwa* experience is one which has served to reinforce the position of critics such as Brennan and Cooper on the suitability of the diasporic writers, like Marquez and Rushdie, for the assignments they have taken on themselves. The proclamation of the *fatwa* on Rushdie was applauded by the Asian, Arabian, African Muslim worlds while the West felt appalled by the call. The fact that his kinsmen are the ones calling for his head as a result of the views expressed in his literary output is noteworthy. This may just be a reflection of whose mouthpiece Rushdie has succeeded in turning out to be. This confirms the thesis of this research that a writer, inadvertently echoes his geographical space and its ideologies unconsciously.

The distance between *homelessness* which plagues the Third World writers in diaspora makes the reliability of their writings as a true reflection of the aspirations and desires of "their people" questionable. Human beings tend to idealise and idolise what they can only dream of but which is inaccessible to them due to one restriction or another. Marquez admits that he really does not believe in the myths he incorporates in his writings, saying they were passed down to him by his grandmother. Rushdie also denies the concept of something as "simplistic as a united 'Third World' outlook" (Cooper, 1998:18).

The removal of diasporic writers "from the actual suffering of the subaltern postcolonial people that they seek to represent means that the treatment of the aftermath of colonialism in their writing is flippant" (Brennan, 1989:125). This is compounded by their inclusion of magical happenings in their narrative. Brennan argues that writers like Rushdie and Marquez reinforce Western colonialist attitudes even when they attempt to counter them. This may be because they are themselves 'citizens of the world' who have been influenced by Western ideology and ideas of globalisation. This attitude makes their writings



condescend to the same set of people whose story they have set out to tell as captured below.

Both Garcia Marquez and Rushdie...temper and subvert the routine appeals by writers of anti-colonial commitment to native discourse by showing not only the inevitability but the benefits of what has been left behind. The discourse, instead of telling a story reviling Europeans for their dishonourable past, stylistically alludes to that past and appropriates it for their own use (Bowers, 2005:125).

As opposed to writers in the diaspora, there are the likes of Soyinka, Ngugi and Armah who lived and wrote on the continent before some of them, like Ngugi and Achebe, relocated abroad. This set of writers, whom Brennan refers to as the “decolonisers”, rely heavily, on “their interpretations, modifications and reconstructions of indigenous beliefs and myths in order to contribute towards the creation of national cultures” (Losambe: 215). Brennan’s anger is understandable when juxtaposed with the more sympathetic comments of the Indian critic Kum Kum Sangari, who describes Rushdie as representative of “a postcolonial middle-class ethos and its contradictions” (Sangari: 177).

These decolonisers labour under the same crisis as the diasporic writers who are cosmopolitan. While the cosmopolitans “explore diverse and hybrid cultural experiences, influences and determination”, the decolonisers seek to excavate this African past and salvage it from where the cosmopolitans “explore diverse and hybrid Western colonial contamination”. They attempt to “decolonise their cultures” (Cooper, 214),

Although the focus of decolonisers in terms of the post colony may seem asymmetrical, they, like their cosmopolitan counterparts, are also very well-travelled and sophisticated members of the global literati and, within the group, have enormous differences on both political and aesthetic issues. Their writings are, therefore, also characterised, to a large extent, by the kind of hybridity reflected in the works of their cosmopolitan counterparts. An examples is Achebe’ socialist novel *Things Fall Apart*, which is obviously contradictory to Oualoguem’s naturalist novel, *Bound to Violence* and different from Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* with its Marxist leanings.

The Decolonising Perspective

The emotivity of postcolonial writers in diaspora on issues such as home and homelessness is still contentious as reflected in the varied positions in their writings. Although both Rushdie and Mda write within the magical realist mode, their deployment of the technique varies widely. This is a reflection of their different postures to the postcolonial question. While making a comparative analysis of *The Tin Drum* (1959) by Gunter Grass and



Rushdie's *M C*, Patricia Merivale draws attention to Rushdie's "translation" of the earlier text from a non-Third World or former colony writer:

With the help of Rushdie's recent critical collection, *Imaginary Homeland*, we can now piece together the views that underlie his magical realism, expressive as it is not only of a specifically "Third World consciousness" but also of the more "international" and "migrant" status that he claims to share with, among others, Gunter Grass. Such a writer is free, he says, "to choose his parents...(from) a polyglot family tree" (20–21): in this way, I suggest, Salem's inter-textual relationship to Oskar is a genealogical allegory of Rushdie's 'choosing' of Grass and for the "migrant" writer, magic realism is the appropriate mode, for it provides the "stereoscopic vision" with which he can "see things plainly," enough to "invest the earth beneath his feet" (19, 25, 149). Thus Rushdie finds the marvelous in what, like *Macondo*, is magic precisely because it is real (302), "imbuing the...World (and the world of the text, with...radiancy and meaning (257) by means of his translation of Grass. (Zamora and Faris, 2005: 342).

Merivale draws attention to what should ideally be a minus for Rushdie in categorising him as a postcolonial writer but asserts that it is a plus. His migrant status puts him on a competent pedestal to be able to interpret the two worlds, the colonial and the postcolonial, the imperialist and the colonised, the real and the magical. He actually belongs to the world, although this paper argues that belonging to the world imbues his writings with a kind of nebulosity, to which most postcolonial writers would not like to admit. His fluid pedestal has, to a large extent, influenced his thematic preoccupation making his ownership by any segment of the world suspect. It will be profitable to scholarship to find out whose mouthpiece Rushdie has turned out to be in reality.

Works Cited

Adewole, A. Myth and Mystery in Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*. Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Lagos.

Blaise, C and Mukherjee, B. *After the Fatwa: Mother Jones*. April-May, 1990. Ed. San Francisco: Foundation for National Progress. 1990, 28-31 and 61.

Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Cooper B. *Magical Realism in West African Literature*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Chisolm, Adrienne T. 1991. Magic Realism and Self-Conscious Writing. *Waterland and Shame*. '93, English 34. Retrieved on July 1, 2006 from



<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/pakistanlliterature/rushdie/magicreall.html>

Durix, J. Salman Rushdie: Interview *Kunapipi* 4.2.1983, 17-26

Fletcher, M. D. *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Rushdie*. New York: Rodopi, 1984.

George, R. Salman Rushdie's *Shame*: History and Fiction. Salman Rushdie: Critical Essays. Vol.1. Eds: Ray, M. K. And Kundu, R. 2014. Retrieved on January 21, 2012 from books.google.com.ng.

Kehinde, Ayobami. Travelling over the Postmodern Wasteland: A Humanist Reading of Salman Rushdie's *Shame* in *es-revista de filologia inglesa*. Espana: Universidad de Valladolid. 2002

Loomba, Ania. Colonialism/post colonialism. London: Routledge, 1998.

Mack, Roberts. L. *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2990.

Mangwanda, K. Postcolonising the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture. Rowland Smith. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Post-colonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2000.

Mda, Zakes. *Sometimes there is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2011.

Merivale, Patricia. Saleem Fathered by Oskar: *Midnight's Children*, Magic Realism, and *The Tin Drum*. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Eds. Zamora, L P. and Faris, W. B. London: Duke University Press. 2005. 329-345.

Mishra, Vijay. 1989. The texts of mother India. *After Europe*. Eds. Slemon S. and Tiffin H. Syndey: Dangaroo Press. 1989, 119-139.

Mongia, Padmini. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory-a Reader*. London: Arnold 2006.

Osofisan, Femi. 2009. Interview Conducted in His Office at the University of Ibadan, September 6, 2009 by Tayo Lewis.



Osundare, Niyi. *The Writer as Righter*. (Ife monographs on literature and criticism) January 1, 1986

Owoeye, D.K. *Intertextuality and the Novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri*. Unpublished M.A. Project. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife, Nigeria, 2000.

Rege, J.E. Victim into Protagonist? *Midnight's Children* and the Post-Rushdie National Narratives of the Eighties *Studies on the Novel*, vol. 29, No 3. 1997, 342-375.

Rios, Alberto. "Magical Realism: Definitions." 1999. Retrieved April 22, 2008 from www.publicasueduaavios/responsebank/definitions

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. London: Penguin. 1980.

---. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* 1981-1991. London: 1991.

---. *Shame*. London: Vintage. 1995.

Sachs, M. Y. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations – Africa*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. 1976.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism Reconsidered*. *Europe and its Others*. Ed. Baker, F. et al. Colchester: University of Essex. 1985, 14-27.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000.

Slemon, Stephen. Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* Eds. Zamora, L. P. and Faris, W. B. London: Duke University Press. 1995, 407- 426.

Spivak, Gayatri.C. Can the Subaltern Speak? *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Nelson C. and Grossberg L. Chicago: Illinois University Press. 1988. 271-313.

The Mail SALMAN RUSHDIE'S BOOK SALES SOAR AFTER KNIFE ATTACK THAT LEFT HIM FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE IN HOSPITAL. 01:03 BST, 25 August 2022 | UPDATED: 02:01 BST, 25 August 2022. Retrieved Oct 23, 2022 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11143675/Salman-Rushdie-book-sales-soar-knife-attack-left-fighting-life-hospital.html?>



Thiong'o, N. *Literature and Society Writers in Politics: Essays*. London: Heinemann. 1984.

---. *Globalectics*. Colombia: Colombia University Press. 2012.

Vijay, M. *Texts of Mother India after Europe*. Eds. Slemon S. and Tiffin, H. Sydney: Kangaroo Press. 1989. 119-137

Zamora, L. P. and Faris, W. B. Eds. 1995. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. London: Duke University. Press.