



The Place Violence in Hybrid Identity Construction: A Reading of Salman Rushdie

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ABSTRACT

Violence is an important formative force in the construction and performance of identity. This paper discusses how Rushdie employs violence as a trope for the construction and performance of identity in the liminal space which is located at the overlap of cultures. It interrogates how characters in the texts become subjects of violence arising from their special position at points of cultural contact and overlaps. The paper argues that, owing to the nature of their placement, subjects are sometimes compelled to transgress on certain aspects of one culture in order to fit within another

culture. The transgressions usually alienate the characters from one culture and drive them to another one which may also reject them because they are perceived as contaminations. The character as such is forced to develop a third sense which is a product of violence and which straddles the two contributing cultures and which are read as contaminations by either culture. The area at the overlap of cultures is fraught with contestations hence the attendant violence.

Key words: Identity, Violence, culture

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Introduction

In constructing and performing identity in alien spaces, there is a possibility of transgressing on boundaries which have been put in place by different cultures as a way of marking out distinctions in self being. The response in such a situation, from those who feel distressed, may contribute to a conflict which may spiral into violence which takes on different shapes. The most obvious expression of violent responses to transgression have been shown through xenophobia, which, like in the case of South Africa, has been very violent and has led to loss of lives and property. The riots that were experienced in Britain especially in Bristol area could be attributed to the failure by the aliens, in the perception of the natives, to operate within the virtual boundaries of identity which are imagined to be in place. The same situation may also explain the situation which obtains in America especially in regard to the treatment of the black community (Huddart, 2007). It is instructive to note that the West Indian community in England, seem to have evaded the violence which is usually meted out to the foreigners in England because of their ability to operate in the marginal space and constantly playing within the hybrid space. This does not however mean that the said community does not experience violence. The violence which they experience is more psychological and the impact of this form of assault on their self being is captured in the writings of West Indian writers living in England such as V.S Naipaul and Carryl Phillips who have managed to adopt a means of indifference and skepticism to the doublehood of their existence.

Transgressions and Reactions at Cultural overlaps

Transgressions of identity boundaries sometimes may not necessarily result in violent reaction from the aggrieved party. Hassner (2011) notes that, 'transgressive acts might be interpreted as accidental or insignificant when perpetrated by members of the in-group, but the same will be interpreted as intentional, salient and hostile when perpetrated by outsiders especially if those outsiders are perceived as threatening' (p. 30). The performance of identity of an alien identity in such a charged environment can be perceived as hostile by the dominant culture and which can lead to a violent response. Hassner (2011) explains that, the more powerful, proximate, hostile and unfamiliar the outsiders appear, the more threatening their actions are likely to appear. In such a context, the resident is more likely to respond with violence to the perceived transgressions. The alien is unconsciously interpreted as a threat to the well-being and purity of the host culture. The fact that, the interactions may take place in what the residents consider as their territory, then, it is more likely that they may feel entitled to any form of reaction which may include violence directed at the intruder and which according to them is justified. This may explain for instance the actions of the arresting officers who came to arrest Chamcha from Rosa Diamond's

house in *The Satanic Verses (1989)*. They treated him as an animal and denied him all rights as a human. They saw him as an animal. Their construction of Chamcha had an impact on him. After he had told them that he was a citizen, one of the officers made fun of his assertion. Chamcha began to believe that he was half human and half animal. He began, in his imagination, to sprout horns and to develop hooves. The happenings confirm the idea that migrants at some point, succumb to the construction of identity as presented by the hosting culture. They are at the mercy of the hosts and their location at the margins of culture makes them prone to disadvantaged treatment and violence since in the eyes of the hosts, they do not belong.

It is for the same reason that in an environment where a society feels that its culture and identity is under threat from the aliens, violence may be employed as a way of recovering what they consider to be the foundation of their being and the protection of their territory. The same can be said about a people who feel that there is a danger of their culture and identity being eroded or contaminated by the intermingling of cultures which arise as a result of contact with foreign cultures. In the Muslim world, the way out, especially for women is the practice of *purdah*, which employed the isolation of women from the men and more specifically the covering of some body parts in the presence of male strangers. Any perceived breach of the said practice justified the use of violence. In instances of widespread breach, 'conflict can be employed in order to cause a surge of patriotic instincts' (Hassner, 2011, p. 26). In the context of the nation, this is the case but the same can be employed to rally people to defend their cultural identity. The reactions can take on various forms which may include violence targeted at the perceived source of the defilement. Rushdie as a writer has felt the impact of the rallying together of the Muslim believers to right what they perceive as a wrong committed against their faith by the writer. In the opinion of the Muslim leaders, the only remedy was to subject Rushdie to violence by killing him. As a writer living in what may be considered alien territory, Rushdie is keenly aware of the unstable situation that he lives in. He also seems to accept violence as a normal experience of the process of becoming a new being in alien spaces.

The violence that individuals experience in the alien lands is usually informed by the identity structures which have been put in place by the dominant cultures. Those operating in the liminal spaces between cultures are more prone to suffer from the impact from of the dominant culture asserting its dominance. The reaction and the resultant acts of violence can be attributed to the structural basis of identity. It has been explained that identity is usually based in a set of structures which give it a shape and which are given impetus by forces of history. Chambers (1994) has noted that, 'history is made in structures and modeled by violence' (p.17). In his opinion, issues such as identity are to be found within structures which are products of history and which are engendered by violence.

The most common example can be found in the practice of colonialism. The colonialists felt justified to employ violence against the colonized because, in their estimation, it was the only feasible way of transforming those groups into new beings by erasing their self being and supplanting it with a new one. The impact of their actions was both physically and psychologically violent on the colonized people because it went for the basis of what gave them an identity.

Similarly, religion can provide a basis for an identity and in some instances can serve as a basis for violence. Sen (2012) notes that, 'exploitation of a religious identity is such a big part of the cultivation of organized conflict'. It thus implies that religion can provide a basis and a justification for violence being meted out to the perceived transgressors. It also justifies the punishment meted out to those who attempt to contaminate religion because religion survives on the basis of maintaining its own purity in order to sustain its distinct identity. Many wars have been fought in the line of defending a religious identity and, the members of each religion justify their actions based on the demands of their religious dogma. The war between the states of Israel and Palestine is not so much about land as about religion. The two groups have a lot in common and the only distinguishing factor is their religions which have provided a basis for a long drawn out war. The partition of India into Pakistan, Bangladesh and India was based on religion. The partitions were fueled by desire to uphold the purity of one religion within a space which enabled purity to be easily enforced. However, the idea of purity is a myth since those who were to found the new land had already been exposed to hybridity. So that instead of purity eliminating violence, it formed the foundation for the generation of violence. This notion is clear in *Shame* where the conflict shifted from ethnicities and religious differences to those between religious fundamentalists and liberals.

Religion and violence is given a central position in regard to the formation and performance of identity. The writer appears to imply that violence is the basis of most identities, and even in instances where violence and conflict is not involved in the actual construction of identity, it still determines the direction in which the particular identity takes.

The significance of the role of violence in creating a new being can be observed in the opening page of *Midnight's Children*, at the very moment Aadam Aziz is struck by the tuft of grass. It is at that point that he abandons religion for a new identity without the necessity of supplicating to a supreme being. He thus becomes a new being arising from experience of violence,

Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies...at that moment, as he brushed diamonds contemptuously from his

lashes, he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man.(Rushdie, 1981, p.4)

The resolution to become a new being is motivated by the pain which comes about as a result of the violence meted upon him by the earth. It is for the same reason that he begins to develop new perspectives of the world because he is a new being. It is instructive to note that violence results in bloodshed. As such, to become a new being blood has to be shed. The Quran captures the significance of blood in the making of man in the sense that, '*lord thy creator, who created man from clots of blood*' (italics original)(Rushdie, 1981, p. 4). The implication is that for a person to develop an identity, there must be blood and by extension some form of violence must be performed either physically as in the case of Aadam Aziz or psychologically. The view therefore creates a situation which centralizes violence as an essential component in the creation of an individual and by extension the identity that the person performs. Similarly, the mutation of the country meant that the different territories expressed distinct identities. It is for the same reason that violence was used to impose that which was considered as an ideal identity. Anybody who was perceived to be interfering with that form of identity was forced to retract. To ensure that there was compliance, the coercive power of the military was employed. The result is a change not only in the physical environment but also in the psychological make-up of the people which brutalizes their wellbeing. The people are nostalgic about the past when there was order where they could understand and explain their world. The past and its history provided a structure on which identity could be superimposed. The longing for a past which made sense to them is captured by the author when he says,

In those days there was no army camp at the lakeside, no endless snakes of camouflaged trucks and jeeps clogged the narrow mountain roads, no soldiers hid behind the crests of the mountains past Baramulla and Gulmarg. In those days travelers were not shot as spies if they took photographs of bridges...(Rushdie,1981,p. 5)

The implication is that, with the acquisition of a new identity by the people of the valley, there was need to protect it and to enforce it, at times, through violence. Taking of photographs was considered as a cause for one to be subjected to violence. The bridge can be read symbolically as attempts to bridge the divide which exists between the discursive identities. As such anyone who tried to link the identities was subject to violence. The presence of soldiers suggests violence and their willingness to employ it to enforce what is considered as the ideal identity.

Identity and its performance therefore is a contested territory. Each group feels that they need to protect their identity using whatever means is available to them. Sometimes, the contestation employs violence in order to assert supremacy and to mark out the boundaries of what can be considered acceptable limits of interference. This notion can be explained by recasting the happenings in the limited space of Aadam Aziz's family. The wife Naseem felt that the kitchen was her inalienable territory and any attempt at encroachment was made with resistance which at times bordered on violence. For instance, at a point when she was expecting her last child Esmerald, 'her husband offered to relieve her of the chores of supervising the cook. She did not reply; but the next day, when Aziz approached the kitchen; she emerged from it with a metal pot in her hands and barred the doorway' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 48). The actions of Naseem highlight the lengths that people can go to in order to protect that which they consider to be rightly theirs; including identity. The kitchen represented, in her mind, a territory which could not be allowed to be transgressed and which violence could be used to defend it if need arose.

On the individual front, absence from an area can cause one to feel oppressed by the environment on his return. When Aadan Aziz comes back to the valley after his training in Germany, he realizes that his world view and by extension his identity had been altered by his experience of another world. The narrator observes that Aadam Aziz, 'now, returning, he saw through travelled eyes, instead of the beauty of the tiny valley circled by giant teeth, he noticed the narrowness, the proximity of the horizon and felt sad, to be at home and feel so utterly enclosed' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 5). The violence of altered perspective is felt by Aadam Aziz and this subjects him to psychological pain. The altered vision which compels him to abandon religion also creates a Psychological void in his self being and which the narrator calls a hole which fuels the hate that is latent in him and which at times results in unexplained spurts of violence. For Aadam Aziz, the changes that have come into the valley have performed some violence not only physically on the people, but it has also interfered with the inner structure of the inhabitants, because in his opinion, the 'army tanks have messed everything up' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 6)

The violence within him is accentuated by the fact that, owing to his exposure to other cultural values, he found himself suspended between the two worlds which results in a violence in his mental landscape and which was given impetus and form by the tussock of grass which severed his link to religion and its identity which demanded regular confirmation through prayer. The decision and the pain arising from the tussock of grass, pushed him to the middle, uncertain ground of identity. An area he did not fully understand and manage which ensured that he remained permanently suspended resulting in uncertainty in his life. The result was a 'permanent alteration: a hole' in his life (Rushdie, 1981, p. 7).

The importance of violence in the creation of an identity can be captured in the perforated sheet. The sheet which Ghani the landowner used to show Aadam Aziz fragments of his daughter's physical make up, further contributes in creating a new person in him. The sheet which formed part of the marriage agreement also served to cement the new identity that the couple acquired after their marriage. It was on the same sheet that the symbolism of violence of the creation of a new identity was permanently captured and stored. To seal their marriage, the couple had to consummate it. A sheet was placed beneath the bride on their wedding bed and in the morning there were three drops of blood on the sheet. With the consummation of the marriage, Naseem detached her identity from the father and acquired another from her attachment to the husband. The three drops of blood highlights the fact that violence is an integral part of the making of a new identity. The importance of the sheet with the three drops of blood to the couple was captured in the reaction of Aadam Aziz and Naseem when young Saleem Sinai accidentally discovers it and uses it as a costume. The father violently takes it away warning him never to touch it. The reaction of Aadam and Naseem shows the importance that the sheet was attached to in regard to the identity acquired through their marriage. Similarly, when Tai the ancient boatman and childhood friend of Aadam Aziz decides to take on a new identity, he employs a subtle form of violence to assert his new identity. The smell that came about as a result of his failure to bathe can be read as an attempt to subject all those who came into contact with him to recognize his new identity and to affirm it.

The transformation of Naseem from being a good Kashmiri girl to a modern woman is brought about by subjection of violence not only to her physical being but also her psychological mindset. The refusal to accept a new identity, which was appropriate in the new space where she found herself in, forces her husband to employ some form of violence in order to force her out of her initial identity. When she insists on dressing in the old Kashmiri way in the new space of Amritsar, her husband is forced to compel her to change through violent actions. He decides to get rid of all the markers her old identity in an attempt to force her to accept the new. He decides to set all the clothes which affirmed her Kashmiri identity on fire which unfortunately leads to a fire he could not control, and which exposes his wife to the outsiders which she was protecting herself from in the first place. He completes his violent actions by ordering her to 'forget being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 39). The result was a new person in Naseem and it was the identity that was created on that day, which she performed and entrenched throughout their marriage.

The transformation of India from being a British colony to an independent state involved a big element of violence. The British wished to continue their dominance and control of the way Indians perceived themselves. The Indians on the other hand felt that they needed to get space on which to perform an identity

on which they were in control. The variation in perspectives contributed to the development of violence which resulted in many people getting physically and psychologically hurt. Riots break out and as a result many lose their lives while others are injured. The determination for the people to perform an identity of their choice is usually resisted by the dominant identity. The result is that, sometimes, violence breaks out between those who aspire to generate and perform a new identity and those who want to maintain the status quo. For instance, when riots break out in Amritsar and Dr. Aziz finds himself in the middle of the trouble, he informs his wife that they could not leave the town because in his opinion, there was bound to be more trouble and a doctor would be needed. Trouble came, when one afternoon; he saw a big group of people moving in one direction for a meeting in defiance of martial law regulations that were put in place to sustain the colonial ideology. Meetings had been banned but the Indians call for meetings nevertheless as a way of contesting the domineering colonial ideology. The failure to operate within the colonial laws points to a contestation of space for the performance of an alternative identity by the Indians. Considering the dominance of the British colonial power, it was bound to result in violence. The speakers in the meeting speak passionately about the need for them to have space and power to perform their identity. The British through the military suppress the agitation since it is considered a subversion of the dominant colonial ideology. Brigadier Dyer uses the military to attempt to silence the glamour for change by ordering the killing of many people to scare them into abandoning their demands.

The use of violence is not limited to the construction and performance of identity. At times, it serves as a catalyst for affirmation and management of that identity. Sometimes, it can also act as a means through which people get an impetus to move forward in their demand for an identity which they feel is under suppression. The employment of violence as a means of achieving compliance that at times result in people rebelling which leads to a new circle of violence where the dominated culture reverses the use of violence to reassert their identity and their autonomy. For instance, owing to the violence meted out to the Indians through the employment of the martial law and which was meant to suppress their agitation for a new identity, ensuring compliance with the requirements of the dominant culture, it made the Indian nationalist fervor rise and hardened the people to the extent that they appeared to be immune to the violence. The people were also forced to employ violence to counter the violence that was being directed at them. The relationship between the British and the Indians with the resultant violence has been explained by Zahar (1974) as a way in which violence is structured by asserting that, 'both the antagonistic relationship between the colonized and the colonial master and the interpersonal behavior patterns among the colonized are characterized by violence' (p. 76). The relationships are in most

cases shaped by violence which is usually informed by the desire to protect the individual identity of each group.

The Indians learnt that violence could be a viable means towards the attainment of a space in which they could perform their identity. The realization of the effectiveness of the employment of violence to counter the British violence, made the people to develop an air of optimism, which gave them hope that the future could be bright. The violence and the epidemic of optimism was symbolized by one individual, Mian Abdullah also known as the Hummingbird. The optimism of the people was slowed down through violence and the elimination of the Hummingbird, when, 'six new moons came into the room, six crescent knives held by men dressed in black, with covered faces. Two men held Nadir while the others moved to towards the Hummingbird' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 57). The elimination of the Hummingbird was an attempt to eliminate the symbol of reawakening of a new identity and this was done through the employment of violence. However, the attempt at silencing the Hummingbird came a little late because he had managed to infect the people with his optimism and people had learnt that violence could only be countered through violence. It is for the same reason that, at the instant when the Hummingbird was being killed, his followers were coming to his rescue with the full knowledge that the only way of ensuring their success was through the employment of violence. The writer notes that, Abdullah's hum was violent to the extent that it could shatter glass. The supporters came to his rescue in a violent way, '...they thudded against the door until the wood broke...and then they were every-where, baba! ...some without legs, others lacking hair, but most of them had some teeth at least, and some of these were sharp...afterwards the killers were so badly damaged that nobody could say who they were' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 58). The killing of the Hummingbird was clearly a means through which the dominant identity was trying to protect its turf by elimination of the threat. The action can be explained by borrowing the observation of Marfleet (2006) who in another context notes that,

Campaigns of terror often begin with attacks upon political and religious leaders and upon professionals such as doctors and teachers with the aim of removing key resources from communities and political collectives. The intention is to weaken local solidarities and to encourage compliance by inducing a sense of defencelessness and powerlessness (p. 245)

The intention of the permanent removal of Mian Abdullah was to ensure that the Indian collective lacked a central rallying point from which to launch attacks on the British and other interested groups who felt that his presence was contributing to the overshadowing of their own identity. One notable group which was excited, albeit clandestinely was the Muslim League which rejoiced at the fall of its

opponent, owing to Mian Abdullah's opposition to partition which was supported by the Muslim League. The partition was intent on splitting the country into two distinct states based on religion. To actualize their wish, the supporters of the partition employed violence in an attempt to coerce the British and those Indians like Mian Abdullah to accept the formation of a country whose basis of identity was religion and religious purity, as opposed to the syncretism of India where Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Hindus lived side by side, although in an uneasy relationship.

Religion can form the basis of violence and a prism through which belonging is determined. Some groups of people privilege religion as the basis of identity over other parameters. When religion overrides all other elements in the determination of identity, it is likely to result in violence. For instance, Lifafa Das was almost lynched for daring to venture into a Muslim neighborhood when he himself was a Hindu. The experience that he had highlights the impact that religion can have in the determination of identity and who can belong. Based on his religious basis, Lifafa Das was perceived as an enemy, 'an outsider' who deserved to be eliminated. He was accused of many things, among which was rapist. The reason for the people's discomfort for him was the fact that as a Hindu, syncretism was part of his world view which was propped up by his religion which accepted the existence of many gods whereas Islam based their worldview on the acceptance of only one God. The contrast in the belief system formed the basis on which he could be subjected to violence. Similarly, his peepshow allowed people to have a glimpse of an alternative world and lifestyle. The action would seem to run counter to the Muslim insistence on only one view and one lifestyle. His action was seen as a means of desecrating their world and destabilizing their religion. Islam appears to be based on unquestioning obedience to teachings of religion. The children repeat what their parent's accusations towards Lifafa Das without really understanding what it means. It is also instructive to note that, it is a child who starts the accusation against him and which is subsequently taken up by parents and passers-by. The accusing child tells Das that she knows that he is a Hindu and her father also knows. In the opinion of the young girl, which is a reflection of the adult view, Muslims and others of different religions need to stay apart in order to safeguard their purity. Lifafa Das seems to transgress on the unwritten rule and is thus faced with the possibility of violence as a means of enforcing the 'rule'.

The power of religion as a basis for identity and violent enforcement of the same is brought into dramatic focus by the living and relational conditions in the Muhalla neighbourhood. Neighbours would be willing to become violent on each other simply on account of their faith. The narrator says reports that,

One group of neighbours was known as 'the fighting cock people', because they comprised one Sindhi and the Bengali householder whose homes were separated by one of the Muhalla's few Hindu residences. The Sindhi and the Bengali had very little in common- they didn't speak the same language or cook the same food; but they were both Muslims, and they both detested the interposed Hindu. They dropped garbage on his house from the rooftops. They hurled multilingual abuse at him from their windows. They flung scraps of meat at his door...while he, in turn, paid urchins to throw stones at their windows, stones with messages wrapped round them... (Rushdie, 1981, p. 94).

The fact that the Sindhi and the Bengali shared little in common but Islamic religion, and the fact that they would go to the extent of causing discomfort for their Hindi neighbor focuses attention on the power of religion to create an identity which at times can employ violence in the attempt to assert itself. Religion thus forms the germ on which violence can be performed with the understanding that it is morally right because religion dictates as such. Many wars including the one leading to the partition of India and Pakistan was based on religious differences and this underscores the significance of religion in encouraging and promoting violence in the service of identity construction. The neighbours, especially the Sindhi and the Bengali, suppressed their ethnic and national identities in order to give prominence to their Islamic identity. The Islamic identity assured them of a basis on which to base their violence on their Hindi neighbour. It also highlight the nature of Islam as a religion which encourages purism and the presence of the Hindi between them was interpreted by the two neighbours as a form of contamination which needed to be cleansed using any means available including the employment of violence. In most instances, the subject of violence is not passive and regularly responds to the violence directed at him in a violent way.

The response can be read as a means through which the dominated form of identity employs violence in order to retain and to protect and to assert its own identity. Religion provides a means through which barriers are created in an attempt to protect religious identity by drawing from the principles that form the basic foundation of that particular religion. In the case of Islam, it appears to espouse the concept of purity and aloofness from other surrounding religions. The principle can be used to explain the alacrity with which Islam seem to employ violence in the process of protecting its own identity of purity. Marfleet (2006:240) has observed that violence may be a 'strategy which aims to produce compliance and control by means of generalized fear' (p. 240).

The Ravana gang is easily identified with violence in the text. However, their violence can be traced to religion. The demand for payment was usually directed at Muslim traders who were seen by the Ravana gang as having a different identity

from them. The violence both physical and psychological being meted out to Muslims was a means of asserting the superiority of the identity of non-Muslims. The owner of Arjuna bicycle factory attempted to circumvent the identity conflicts latent in the society by naming his company after the Hindu god, but the naming failed to disguise the fact that the factory was Muslim owned and met the same fate that befell all those Muslim owned businesses that failed to fulfill the demands of the gang. Religion as such seems to be a powerful and invisible force which drives the construction and performance of identity even in societies which appear to be linguistically and culturally homogeneous.

In other instances, violence can be directed at people who share a religion but are different in other ways. In some cases, the very conditions that people find themselves in can override the power of religion to connect people together. The author gives a lot of prominence to what can be construed as the fellowship of poverty. Poor people seem to ignore religion as a marker of identity and hence a basis for violence, in preference to economic differentiation and status. The poor people of Bombay do not perceive each other through the prism of religion but through the lenses of abundance and lack. It is as a result of this understanding that the optimism brought about by the Hummingbird cut across religion and when he is killed, those who come to his aid, are those from diverse religions. The text seems to suggest that, violence is employed by the rich, who set the poor against one another in order for them to enjoy their wealth without the poor paying attention because they are busy fighting one another. Joseph D'Costa, who is Mary Pereira's boyfriend, understands the concept when he notes that, 'the air comes from the north now, and it's full of dying. This independence is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 139). D'Costa constructs the poor as a category which acquires its identity based on their lack. The rich as such use their disadvantage to make them exercise violence on one another in order to divert the attention from themselves.

Individuals can also sometimes employ violence to draw attention to their self being. For instance, the Brass Monkey, Saleem's younger sister has a habit of burning things and especially shoes. This has the effect of focusing attention on her. The narrator also informs us that she abhorred order and would constantly try to bring disorder in order to centralize herself on the actions taking place, she had, 'bad table manners; she trampled flowerbeds; she acquired the tag problem child...' (Rushdie, 1981, p. 209). Similarly, the individual children of midnight had various abilities which bordered on their exercise of violence. For instance, owing to his physiological make-up, Vishva had knees which could be used as weapons of violence while Saleem's nose has on several occasions in the text, been a source of suffering and pain to others. It is also instructive that what puts him apart from other children and his siblings is the nose which he ostensibly inherited from his grandfather but which is unlikely, because of the fact that he was not his parent's

biological child. The children represented variety of aspects which included violence, corruption, poverty, coercion and chaos. Their identities could therefore be tied to one form of violence of another.

The new country of Pakistan was set up through employment of violence. It was based on the concept of purity of religion as opposed to religious syncretic India. It is for the same reason that violence was constantly employed in an attempt to maintain that purity and to highlight its distinct identity. The war that was fought over Kashmir between the two countries was more about pride in their individual identities rather than for the physical piece of land. Whereas India wanted to protect the discursive nature of its identity, Pakistan was fighting to protect its purity of identity which was based on the religion of Islam and its teachings in regard to purity. In the perceptions of Pakistan, the fight was a means of protecting itself and its territories from contamination which was generally attributed to India's penchant for things hybrid and discursive. This argument is best summarized by Bendix (1992) who observes that, 'nationalism is a pathology, a kind of disease that flares up in moments of crisis, leading those afflicted to disregard the basic human rights of other nationalities and ethnicities' (p. 770).

The significance of violence in identity construction and performance is taken to a higher and more symbolic level in *The Satanic Verses* (1989) where individual violence and the violations on the individual provide a foundation on which identity could be performed, constructed and understood. The notion of displacement and its effect on individuals is portrayed as being violent.

From the onset, there is a subtle suggestion by the text that identity and its construction is a violent activity and more prominent at the overlap of cultures. Gibreel Farishta observes that to be born again one must die. In the case of the two emigrants, Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, the old Indian identity had to die in order for them to create a new acceptable identity located at the midway point of the destination culture and their home culture. In other words, for something new to come to being, the old must necessarily give way, which is often against the will of many because many people are creatures of history and habit. Hence any attempt at change would leave them without something to base their self being. The third space as such becomes a site in which violence is never far away.

Moslund (2010) classifies *The Satanic Verses* as one of those texts that fall under migration literature. He describes migration literature by saying that, '[T]he characters of migration literature invariably cope with migration in different ways, from the experience of migration and uncertainty of displaced identities as destructive, agonizing and painful' (Moslund, 2010, p. 3). It would appear that, in his opinion, migration is a source of violence on an individual, particularly on the person's identity and as such, the person is usually in agony. Migrants find themselves subjected to violence arising from their displacement which naturally uproots them from the basis of their known identity. The result is usually

psychological torment arising from the fear of the unknown. Marinescu (2007) asserts that, 'violence not only includes explicit acts of bodily harm, but also subtler forms of, perpetrated by institutions of science, the state, international organizations, global media, transnational flows in finance and people' (p. 101). The migrant as a product of the transnational displacement would usually find himself a subject of violence because of his location at the point of cultural interaction. The violence may not always take physical form but may be experienced at a psychological level. The two immigrants to London find themselves as subjects of violence arising from the position at the overlap of cultures and their hybrid nature.

When the plane explodes over the English Channel, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha find themselves in the strange English soil. The explosion of the plane can be read as a symbolic thrust of the subjects in to a hybrid space which is latent with violence. They have to learn from the onset that violence is a component of the third space. The migrant is assailed by fear of the unknown, so that as they fell, they became aware of, the 'terror of the destiny rushing at them from below, when they hit, were trenched and instantly iced by, the degree-zero boiling of the clouds' (Rushdie, 1989,p. 6). The statement captures the violence of migration on its subjects who are strangers in a new place. The violence is more as a result of the fear of the unknown rather than a product of the change of place.

Marfleet (2006) has noted that, migrants are subjected to violence from the moment they land in the alien country as, 'they are readily criminalized. There are elaborate legal frameworks for controlling entry into territories of states, systems of passports, entry permits, visas, detentions and deportation'(p. 263). This observation is explained in the text when the writer explains the occupants of the exploded plane as including, 'wives who had been grilled by reasonable doing-their-job officials about the length of and the distinguishing moles upon the genitals of their husband's genitalia' (Rushdie, 1989, p. 4). The migrant therefore, is subjected to intrusive invasion of their privacy which may be potentially violent on their self being. In addition, the movement to new spaces transforms the person to the extent that when they attempt to return to their original state of being, they realize that it is destructive to their self being because, 'when you have stepped through the looking-glass, you step back at your own peril. The mirror may cut you to shreds' (Rushdie, 1989, p. 58). Just as getting inserted into the new system of identity involves some element of violence, the same is true of attempts to revert to the old identity. Hybrids are in more peril in attempting to get back into the source identities since they cannot determine which identity to move into owing to the presence of two source cultures. This is true of Saladin, that when he comes back to India, he finds that he could not fit well and when he spoke his native language, people only tolerated him out of politeness.

Zeeny Vakil understands that the only way to exert or to recover an identity on an individual is through violence. It is for the same reason that she feels that the only way to retrieve the real identity of Saladin is by subjecting him to some violence, she says that, 'sometimes , I want to slap you. To sting you back to life' (Rushdie, 1989, p. 61). She is disappointed that he has accepted to be the subject of violations in the alien land in order to survive and to make money, although they still consider him an alien with the wrong colour. The true nature of his lost identity is brought into focus when he goes to meet his father. When he arrives in his old home, he beholds a painting in which violence is the theme and in his new found British mentality declares it barbaric although it forms part of his heritage.

Violence can also be used to achieve ends that may point to the importance of identity. The hijackers of the plane were demanding recognition of an independent homeland which would guarantee them a visibility and it was their feeling that violence would best be employed to capture the attention of the world. Zahar (1974) gives basis to this argument and the actions of the hijackers by saying that, 'if undertaken in the interest of the whole, against particular interests of the oppressors, terror can become a necessity and an obligation' (p.77). The hijackers felt that they were obliged to use violence in order to draw attention to their demands against a world that was indifferent to their situation.

Similarly, freedom and acceptance at the overlap of cultures, it would appear, can only be achieved through employment of some degree of violence. One of the characters in the novel Eugene Dumsday acquires his freedom from the hijackers as a result of biting his tongue off. The suggestion given by this event is that, sometimes sacrifices including painful ones have to be made in order to achieve that which is desirable. When the hijackers kill one of the hostages from the plane, and when Man Singh, one of the hijackers panics, the lady hijacker responds that, 'martyrdom is a privilege' (Rushdie 1989. P.79). This clearly points out to the fact that, the hijackers believed that their actions were in furtherance of a larger scheme to affirm an their identity and ensure a place of honour since Tavleen, after killing Jalandri one of the hostages in the plane, and who had abandoned his Sikh identity by removing his turban justifies her actions by saying, 'we shall be like stars; like the sun' (Rushdie, 1989 p. 86).

Violence can also be used to achieve compliance. It is through violence that individual or collective desires are achieved. For instance Abu Simbel the Grandee of the temple of the god Al-lat employs violence to achieve compliance from the poet Baal to disparage Mahound and his followers who were becoming a threat to his dominance and identity by introducing a new way of life thereby threatening his own livelihood and income. He therefore responds to this threat in a violent way. He also orders physical assault on the followers of Mahound more specifically after he disowns the three gods from whom Abu Simbel used to earn his income. The followers of Mahound were subjected to violence from gangs that were

controlled by Abu Simbel. These actions point to the fact that, protection and maintenance of identity at times employs violence in order to sustain itself.

Migration and displacement often provide a basis on which individuals may find themselves on the receiving end of violence. In some instances, the arrival and settlement in an alien territory would create a situation where, the immigrant may inadvertently transgress on certain virtual boundaries that the host society has put in place for the maintenance of its own order. The infringement upon those boundaries may result in violence being meted out to the offending party. Marinescu (2007) observes that, 'violence is a cultural construct, flexible and transformative, a potential in essence that is given shape and content by specific people (victims and perpetrator as well as witnesses) within the context of their particular histories' (p.91). The meaning of violence or what constitutes violence is therefore discursive in the sense that that, depending on the circumstance, it may be read as violent or not. The interpretation and determination of what constitutes violence in the context of immigration always resides with the dominant culture. As such the immigrant would always be at the mercy of the dominant group and their perspectives are never put into consideration. The result of such an arrangement is that, the alien may be subjected to violence which is sanctioned as legal and proper by the dominant culture. Marinescu (ibid) clarifies this assertion by saying that, 'when the so called 'marginal people' come into the historical or ethnographical space defined by the western imagination, their distinct histories quickly vanish and they are unable to invent their local futures'. The migrant as such gives up his right to define himself and ends up acquiring their self-definition based on the parameters provided by the dominant cultural group. The new form of identity is disadvantageous to them because it does not take into consideration their special historical and social backgrounds. This therefore creates a fertile environment on which violence can be performed on them without possibility of resistance. In other words the new cultural and physical space normalizes them to accept the actions upon them as part of the demands of the alien culture.

Conclusion

The violence they receive is seen as part of the new culture. They are compelled to be passive recipients of the violations on, not only their physical bodies but, also on their culture and other values. The violence that is directed at the migrants are usually justified by the receiving culture because, 'migrants are seen as threatening the essential values of the national life' (Marfleet, 2006, p. 263). This therefore provides the dominant culture with the right to subject them to violence because in their opinion, they are trying to rectify a desecration on their identity. Hassner (2011) has cogently put it by asserting that the dominant cultural group, 'might employ violence against desecrators in order to rid itself of contamination

and re-establish its boundaries' (p. 29). In such a situation, violence can be justified and can be considered the logical consequence of desecration.

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