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SUBJECT AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN *THE SATANIC VERSES*

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ABSTRACT

This essay is an analysis of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* focusing one of its character, Salahudin Chamchawala, and the three conditions that underline the process of identification, which he goes through, in the construction of his subjectivity and identity, between colonized/colonizer or dominated/dominator, as theorized by Frantz Fanon in *Les Damnés de la Terre* and summarized by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*.

KEY WORDS: Postcolonial literature, cultural hybridity, identity and subjectivity.

*I is an other.*

*Arthur Rimbaud*<sup>1</sup>

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest  
Now is the time that face should form another;

*William Shakespeare*<sup>2</sup>

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In an open letter to the Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, widely published in various newspapers in 1988, Salman Rushdie stresses that his novel *The Satanic Verses* “isn't actually about Islam, but about migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London and Bombay.”<sup>3</sup> Two years later, in an essay entitled “In Good Faith,” Rushdie returned to the same idea, in a more elaborate way:

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If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all Humanity.

Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are those of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves.<sup>4</sup>

Nobody would disagree with the idea that the novel is a metaphor "for all Humanity," the question which remains to be discussed now is how it is also an example of "uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis... that is the migrant condition."

Salman Rushdie provides his readers with a clue to one of the possible readings of *The Satanic Verses* when he quotes Frantz Fanon, in chapter 2, part five of the novel, "A City Visible but Unseen." At this moment in the development of the narrative, Rushdie emphasises the confrontation between "native and settler, that old dispute," as one of the characters, Gibreel Farishta, thinks. Through Gibreel Farishta's mind, the reader is also confronted with Fanon's idea that "the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor"; "in this way the individual," Farishta goes on quoting Fanon, "– the Fanonian *native* – 'accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows

down before the settler and his lot, and by a kind of interior rehabilitation acquires a stony calm.”<sup>5</sup> Through his character, Rushdie is trying to describe the process of identification between settler and native, in other words, between coloniser and colonised. Since his novel deals with problems of migration, as the novelist himself has constantly insisted, it is worth recalling that *The Satanic Verses* tells the double story of two migrants, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, both from India, both trying to recreate their lives in England. The key question for both is “Who am I?” repeated several times in the development of the book. Both Chamcha and Farishta are actors, in the theatre and in the movies respectively, where both of them wear masks, symbolic ones for Chamcha, for he uses the many voices he is able to imitate, and real ones for Farishta, for he is famous because of playing the roles of religious deities, in India traditionally represented through masks.<sup>6</sup> Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta are the protagonist and the antagonist in the novel, and the way they question/interrogate their identities and, at the same time, try to find a place of their own in their worlds is the central problem focused here. And since Frantz Fanon is cited in the very text of the novel, my point of departure is going to be Fanon’s ideas on the problem, always taking Saladin Chamcha as the central example.

Homi Bhabha, in chapter two of *The Location of Culture*, summarises Frantz Fanon’s statements concerning “that familiar alignment of colonial subjects – Black/White, Self/Other,” since Fanon talks “from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of a resolved contradiction between culture and class; deep from within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality.”<sup>7</sup> Still according to Bhabha, “three conditions that underline an understanding of the *process of identification*” emerge in the analytic of desire proposed by Frantz Fanon.

First: to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look and locus. ... It is always in a relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of

possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles.

Second: the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting. ... It is precisely in that ambivalent use of 'different' – to be different from those that are different makes you the same – that the Unconscious speaks of the form of otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. It is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness. ... it is in relation to this impossible object that the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes emerges.

Finally, the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. The demand of identification – that is, to be *for* an Other – entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness. Identification ... is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes. (*LC*, p. 44-45)

Homi Bhabha complements with “for Fanon, like [Jacques] Lacan, the primary moments of such a repetition of the self lie in the desire of the look and the limits of language” (*LC*, p. 45). If we follow the development of Saladin Chamcha’s story in *The Satanic Verses*, perhaps we can also identify the three above-mentioned Fanonian conditions in relation the process of identification is concerned, that is to say, we can find out how Saladin Chamcha interrogates his own identity as well as the way Salman Rushdie has created and presented this character’s identity in the novel.

First of all, the character’s real name is not the one already mentioned, but Salahuddin Chamchawala, which would not sound well in England, and was shortened by a theatrical agent “for commercial reasons” (p. 45). The shortening of the name is an important part of the character’s transformation in what he thinks to be the ideal model of Englishness, for he had since his early childhood rejected India and Indianess in favour of the dominant coloniser England:

The mutation of Salahuddin Chamchawala into Saladin Chamcha began ... in old Bombay, long before he got close enough to hear the lions of Trafalgar roar. When the England cricket team played in India at the Bradbourne Stadium, he prayed for an England victory, for the game's creators to defeat the local upstarts, *for the proper order of things to be maintained.* (p. 37-38, italics mine)

This desire for the “proper order of things” will lead him to want to go to England for his education and future life, for England represents “a demand that reaches outward to an external object,” the look and locus of the otherness (*LC*, p. 44). Saladin Chamcha will feel and understand himself only through an English perspective. His origins are felt as a burden and oppress him. Many years after going to London and remaining there for a very long time, he would still regret being an Indian: “Damn you, India, Saladin Chamcha cursed silently... To hell with you, I escaped your clutches long ago, you won't get your hooks into me again, you cannot drag me back” (p. 35).

Saladin Chamcha's dream of going to London is opposed by both his parents. While his father eventually agrees to give him “an English education,” his mother is reluctant to have him transformed into an Englishman. Refusing to cry on his departure for London, she gives him, “instead, the benefit of her advise. ‘Don't go dirty like those English.’ She warned him. ‘They wipe their bee tee ems with paper only. Also, they get into each other's dirty bathwater.’” Saladin's answer to her lays bare the different points of view they have on the subject: “It is inconceivable, Ammi, what you say. England is a great civilisation, what you are talking, bunk” (p. 39). This difference is also the difference between two of the three Fanonian conditions in the process of identification referred to earlier, as summarised by Homi Bhabha. Nasreen Chamchawala, a colonised Indian, is not like her son because she is a step ahead of him in the same process, being critical of the English. Saladin is still in the step or process of identifying himself with the coloniser, in order to be equal to the English, to occupy or to share with

the English the same place, for “it is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated” (*LC*, p. 44). Saladin’s mother, on the other side, being critical of the coloniser, establishes her difference in relation to them, not wanting to be equal to them or desiring their place.

It will take some time for Saladin Chamcha to become aware of his own difference, although from his first days in England he tries to do his best to be accepted, even spends “ninety minutes” eating a kipper for breakfast, and “he was not permitted to rise from the table until it was done,” for no one of his fellow-pupils helped him, teaching him how to eat the fish.

... if he had been able to cry he would have done so. Then the thought occurred to him that he had been taught an important lesson. England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it. He discovered that he was a bloody-minded person. ‘I’ll show them all,’ he swore. ‘You see if I don’t.’ The eaten kipper was his first victory, the first step in his conquest of England. (p. 44)

Although not easy for him, Saladin Chamcha does succeed in establishing himself in England in a somewhat reasonable way. He becomes an actor of some success, mainly because of his ability to use his voice, capable of imitating many different accents,<sup>8</sup> gets married to an English woman, and seems to live a happy life, despite the fact that he is unable to have children “there was something the matter with some of his own chromosomes, two sticks too long, or too short, he couldn’t remember”(p. 51). This apparent normality will not take long to be endangered. The problem, Saladin Chamcha recognises, is that he is not what he appears to be.

A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator’s role, according to one way of seeing things; he’s unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his

willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him socio-politically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invents about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. (p. 49)

Saladin Chamcha is what he is while trying to conceal his own secret self in order to *be like* or *become* English. He ends up by revealing the forgery. Zeeny, “the first Indian woman he had ever made love to,” tells him after their first lovemaking: “You know what you are. I’ll tell you. A *deserter* is what, more English than, your Angrez accent wrapped around you like a flag, and don’t think it’s so perfect, *it slips*, baba, *like a false moustache*” (p. 53; italics mine). At this point in the novel, Saladin Chamcha returns to Bombay after many years

with the Prospero Players, to interpret the role of the Indian doctor in *The Millionairess* by George Bernard Shaw. On the stage, he tailored his voice to the requirements of the part, but those long-suppressed locutions, those discarded vowels and consonants, began to leak out of his mouth out of the theatre as well. His voice was betraying him; and he discovered his component parts to be capable of other treasons, too. (p. 49)

The problems with which Saladin is confronted makes him oppose India and England, and due to a fantastic and marvellous circumstance, he will be forced to recognise one of them as unbearable. But it is worth paying attention, before we move ahead in our attempt to understand how Saladin Chamcha performs the three conditions established by Fanon for the process of identification, to what we have found out about the character so far: first of all, he denies his Indian origin and does his best to become English, to conceal his migrant condition; second, he tries to forget parents, relatives, his own language; finally, he is confronted with the strange and somewhat contradictory circumstance of being back in India as a famous English actor to play the role of what he really is, an Indian. The strangeness he feels about the sounds of his own language intensifies his unbalanced position. Back in India and forced to come face to face

with his father and acquaintances, the reality of his country and people, Saladin Chamcha is put in an in-between position. If what he has built as a mask for himself “slips ... like a false moustache,” he is not anymore sure of what he is. When Zeenat Vakil tells him that his voice had made him famous but had hidden his face, he feels that “maybe *I’m a ghost already*. But at least a ghost with an airline ticket, success, money, wife. *A shade*, but living in the tangible, material world. With *assets*. Yes, sir” (p. 62; italics mine). Saladin Chamcha does not realise the contradiction between seeing himself as a ghost or a shade but “with *assets*, yes, sir”. Unable to cope with his reality, he creates an ever more comfortable imaginary which will collapse in a very short time.

Saladin’s flight back to London (this is what follows next in the course of the novel) proves to be a turning point in his situation, for his plane explodes in the air over England, because of terrorist actions, and he falls from a very high sky, only to discover that, miraculously safe down on earth, he is not a normal human being, nor has he a normal human body anymore, but has become a goat or a kind of goatlike being.<sup>9</sup> The novel, as a matter of fact, begins *in medias res*, for its first chapter describes the plane crash, everything we know about Saladin Chamcha coming as if in a flashback, until all of his past life in India as well as in England is reconstructed. What follows after Saladin’s transformation into a goat reinforces his in-between, unresolved situation. Accepted by other migrants in England, he becomes a freak, is arrested, and suffers unbearable physical and emotional pain. When arrested and taken to migration officers, Saladin tries to establish his identity, what he believes it could be:

‘My name is Salahuddin Chamchawala, professional name Saladin Chamcha,’ the demi-goat gibbered. ‘I am a member of Actor’s Equity, the automobile association and the Garrick Club. My car registration number is suchandsuch. Ask the Computer. Please.’

The officers, despite his asking, do not pay attention to him, do not look at him as a normal being, much less an Englishman:



'Who're you trying to kid,' inquired one of the Liverpool fans, but he, too, sounded uncertain. 'Look at yourself. You're a fucking Packy billy. Sally-who? – What kind of name is that for an Englishman?' (p. 168)

The problem for Saladin Chamcha is that “the very place of” his “identification” becomes “a space of splitting ... a doubling, dissembling image of being” (*LC*, p. 44). He is not a man, a human being, but a demi-goat and, certainly, not an Englishman, considering the sort of name with which he introduces himself – “Sally-who?” asks the policeman, sending Saladin to an even deeper limbo, since Sally is a feminine name. He cannot complain about the police for ill treatment in the officers’s hands. One of them suggests “Mr Citizen Saladin, that you dinna trouble with a complaint. You’ll forgive me for speaking plain, but with your wee horns and your great hoofs you wouldna look the most reliable of witnesses” (p. 172).

Separated from his wife, sheltered out of pity at the Shaandaar Café by the Sufyans, Saladin Chamcha has his troubles summarised by Jumpy Joshi:

“...what has happened here? A: Wrongful arrest, intimidation, violence. Two: Illegal detention, unknown medical experimentation in hospital ... because what you believe depends on what you’ve seen, – not only what is visible, but what you are prepared to look in the face, – and anyhow, something had to explain horns and hoofs; in those policed medical wards, anything could happen – ‘And thirdly,’ Jumpy continued, ‘psychological breakdown, loss of sense of self, inability to cope. We’ve seen it all before. (p. 261)

The key expression in Jumpy’s words is “loss of sense of self,” for it reveals Saladin’s in-between circumstance. As Jumpy says, “not what is visible, but what you are prepared to look” at. Muhammad Sufyan, the head of the family and owner of the Café, tells Saladin that the best place for him to stay is there, with them, and adds: “Where else would

you go to heal your disfigurements and recover your normal health? Where else but here, with us, among your own people, your own kind?" (p. 261). Saladin accepts his offer to stay, but alone in the attic room, he says to himself: "I'm not your kind. ... You're not my people. I've spent half my life trying to get away from you" (p. 262). It is not necessary for him to add that now he is half-human, half-animal, his staying with them makes him realise he is like them again. It is difficult for Saladin to accept his new situation, and that he has no other way out but to conform himself to this situation and expect it to change, reverse and disappear in the same unexpected and fantastic way it had appeared. Realising the impossibility of any escape, Saladin accepts, in a kind of mystic reaction that "*I am that I am*" (p. 268; author's italics). Saladin Chamcha thinks about what he is in the place where he desires not to be, a place where he is what he does not want to be even reminded of what he is. In other words, "he thinks where he is not, therefore he is where he does not think," as Lacan puts it,<sup>10</sup> for he cannot be there, where he is a toy of his own thinking. The ambiguity of his situation is related to the fact that he can only think what he is where he does not think about thinking (LACAN, 1998).

Saladin Chamcha's acceptance of his condition leads finally to a change. He negates the invitation to be equal to the other migrants, while his desire to be accepted by the English is denied to him. Dislocated and disformed/deformed, he will change his situation only when he *re-learns* to be Indian again, when returning to Bombay because of his father's illness and death. Saladin, step by step, begins to *re-discover* his own life.

When he recovers his human form and is asked what he would do then, Saladin answers: "Me? I think I'll come back to life" (p. 425), and adds:

When you're fallen from the sky, been abandoned by your friend,  
suffered police brutality, metamorphosed into a goat, lost your  
work as well as your wife, learned the power of hatred and regained

human shape, what is there left to do but, as you would no doubt phrase it, demand your rights? (p. 416)

It had to be a long suffering situation, and it would remain so in the near future, for Saladin suffers a heart attack almost immediately, for “*to be born again, first you have to die*” (p. 418; author’s italics). His desire for an English identity seems to have vanished. What takes place is his recognition that the split between that desire and its realisation has already occurred. No more wanting to be accepted in England, separating himself from his kind, Indian migrants in England, and the English as well, Saladin has to find for himself a place where he can be someone. This someone he does not yet know, but is aware that he is going to find out soon:

Eighteen months after his heart attack, Saladin took to the air again in response to the telegraphed news that his father was in the terminal stages of a multiple myeloma, a systematic cancer of the bone marrow that was ‘one hundred per cent fatal’, as Chamcha’s GP unsentimentally put it when he telephoned her to check. (p. 525)

His returning home, to Bombay, proves not to be an easy one. It takes Saladin Chamcha a while to rearrange things. As soon as he gets to Bombay his

head whirled. What strange meanings words were taking on. Only a few days ago that *back home* would have rung false. But now his father was dead and old emotions were sending tentacles out to grasp him. Maybe his tongue was twisting again, sending his accent East along with the rest of him. He hardly dared open his mouth. (p. 528; italics by the author)

After so long a time, twenty years as a matter of fact, Saladin Chamcha falls in love with his father again, after those long angry decades. “It was a serene and beautiful feeling; a renewing, life-giving thing, Saladin wanted to say” (p. 537). He even begins “to find the sound of his full un-Englished name pleasing for the first time in twenty years” (p. 538). Salahuddin

Chamchawala, as he is called from this moment on in the novel, begins his third and last step in the direction of the establishment of his identity, or what it could become. He does not know it yet, but little by little he begins to feel the change.

One day his father asks to be shaved by him, and after the shaving,

when his father fell asleep again, after being forced by Kasturba and Nasreen to drink a small quantity of water, and gazed up at – what? – with his open, dreaming eyes, which could see into three worlds at once, the actual world of his study, the visionary world of dreams, and the approaching after-life as well (or so Salahuddin, in a fanciful moment, found himself imagining); – then the son went to Changez’s old bedroom for a rest.

These three worlds envisioned here are correlative circumstances of the three conditions for the emergence of the process of identification according to Fanon. They can be related as well to the Lacanian Real/Imaginary/Symbolic. Changez Chamchawala will die a “good death” only to the extent that he has fulfilled his existence. His son sees himself reflected in his image because “an image is at once a metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence, and by that same token a metonym, a sign of its absence and loss” (LC, p. 50). Through his father’s dying moment Salahuddin understands, “in celebratory mood,” that death brought out the best in people,” that human beings “are still capable of exaltation ... in spite of everything, we can still transcend.” Changez is so happy with his last visitors that Salahuddin thinks “it’s like a birthday party” (p. 542).

Salahuddin’s father gets worse and is taken to hospital. His death is a key moment for his son:

Then all of a sudden Changez Chamchawala left his face; he was still alive, but had gone somewhere else, had turned inwards to look at whatever there was to see. *He is teaching me how to die*, Salahuddin thought. *He does not avert his eyes, but looks death right in the face.*

[...]

The last thing he had seen in his father's face ... was the dawning of a terror so profound that it chilled Salahuddin to the bone. What had he seen? What was it that waited for him, for all of us, that brought such fear to a brave man's eyes? – Now, when it was over, he returned to Changez's bedside; and saw his father's mouth curved upwards, in a smile.

[...]

*What did he see?* Salahuddin kept thinking. *Why the horror? And, whence that final smile?* (p. 545-546; italics by the author)

Only then Salahuddin Chamchawala realises that “the world, somebody wrote, is the place we prove real by dying in it” (p. 547). For this reason “his old English life, its bizarreries, its evils, now seemed very remote, even irrelevant, like his truncated stage-name” (p. 548-549). Zeeny then tells him that “now you can stop acting at last” (p. 549), and adds:

If you're serious about shaking off your foreignness, Salad baba, then don't fall into some kind of rootless limbo instead. Okay? We're all here. We're right in front of you. You should really try and make an adult acquaintance with this place, this time. Try and embrace this city, as it is, not some childhood memory that makes you both nostalgic and sick. Draw it close. The actually existing place. Make its faults your own. Become its creature; belong. (p. 555)

The full cycle of Salahuddin Chamchawala is now complete: after having identified himself with England and tried his best to be an Englishman, after having done his best to deny his Indian origins and not look like an Indian, he suffered a fall, became half-human and half-animal, recovered his human form, and now, after returning home for his father's death, something is bound to happen, as he feels (p. 555), he “could no longer believe in fairy-tales. Childhood was over, and the view from this window was no more that a old and sentimental echo” (p. 561).

Alain Badiou ends his chapter on the “Theory of the Subject”<sup>11</sup> defining *subject* as someone who “forces a decision, disqualifies the

unequal and saves the singular. ... Because of these three operations ... the event comes to the being, whose insistence it had supplemented.” There is no great differences between Badiou, Frantz Fanon, and Jacques Lacan’s assertions on the question of the subject and identity. They are equivalent, although for different reasons, of course. In all of them three operations or steps or conditions are needed. Salahuddin Chamchawala has completed all of them, for at the end of the novel, the reader understands, with him, that ‘the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophesy – it is always the production of an image ... is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes” (LC, p. 45). This is the reason why he thinks that “in spite of all his wrong-doing, weakness, guilt – *in spite of his humanity* – he was getting another chance” (p. 561; emphasis added).

#### RESUMO

Este ensaio é uma análise do romance *The Satanic Verses*, de Salman Rushdie, focalizando a trajetória de um de seus personagens, Salahudin Chamchawala, pelas três condições do processo de identificação, pelas quais ele passa, na construção de sua subjetividade e identidade, entre colonizado/colonizador ou dominado/dominador, tal como teorizado por Frantz Fanon, em *Les Damnés de la Terre*, e sumariado por Homi Bhabha, em *The Location of Culture*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Literatura pós-colonial, hibridismo cultural, identidade e subjetividade.

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#### NOTAS

1. “Letter to Georges Izambard,” *Complete Work* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1987), p. 100.
2. “Sonnet III,” *Sonetos*, São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1956, p. 26.

3. *The Rushdie File*, Syracuse University Press, 1990, p. 35-36; italics by the author.
4. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, New York: Granta Books-Penguin Books, 1992, p. 394.
5. New York: Owl Books Ed. – Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1997, p. 3363-3364; all quotations are from this edition, and hereafter will be followed by page number only.
6. The expression used in the text of the novel is “theological movies.” See Chapter 2, Part I of the novel: “After six movies playing the elephant-headed god he was permitted to remove the thick, pendulous, grey mask and put on, instead, a long, hairy tail, in order to play Hanuman the monkey king in a sequence of adventure movies...” (p. 25).
7. “Interrogating Identity – Frantz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative.” London: Routledge, 1994, p. 40; subsequent quotations are from this edition, hereafter cited in the text, *LC* followed by page number.
8. “Because he did have that gift, truly he did, he was the Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice ... On the radio he could convince an audience that he was Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the President of the United States. Once, in a radio play for thirty-seven voices, he interpreted every single part under a variety of pseudonyms and nobody ever worked it out” (p. 60-61). Who has so many voices ends up by having none, that is the reason why Saladin will feel his own native language disgusting, doing his best to acquire a pure and most perfect English accent.
9. Another possible reading of *The Satanic Verses* could explore the mocking epic voyage developed in the novel: Saladin leaves a initial stable situation in London, where he is a famous actor, to return to India; in his way to London from Bombay, he falls and survives, but changed into a goat; his “nostos” (homecoming, in Greek), that is, his pilgrimage back home and to what he imagines could be his rediscovery of his real self, would finally restore his peace as well as his human form, and make him transcend. Another way to try to understand the novel is to establish a comparative reading of both “pilgrimages,” Saladin’s and Gibreel’s, something I am not doing here.
10. See “A instância da letra no inconsciente ou a razão desde Freud,” *Escritos*, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1998, p. 521.
11. *L’Être et l’événement*, translation mine from the Brazilian edition, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor/Ed. da UFRJ, 1996, p. 320.



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