

## IDENTITY PERFORMANCE, ORALITY AND FICTIONALITY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE ENCHANTRESS OF FLORENCE*

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### ABSTRACT

Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* is a novel that uses performance elements and strategies in the presentation of man's struggles across time in personal, social, historical, mythical and fictional contexts all of which the novelist assert are contributory and intrinsic parts of human existence. The novelist deploys the performance of identity and oral forms as strategic elements in deepening fictionality. With these resources, he also shows the human condition and survival strategies that human elements, the weak and powerful, the aspiring and the successful employ to meet the complex challenges of existence in a world shaped by competition and disfigured by negative colorations of rivalry. In order to centralize his material in fiction, Rushdie hinges his peculiar narrative style on depicting the palpably unreal and unlikely as events. Suppositions, make-belief, figments and artifices of the imagination, made-up characters, assumed identities, unreal events constitute fictional elements that the novelist deploys to sustain fictionality in a novel with a veneer of historicity.

**Keywords:** identity performance, creative strategy, fictionality, Orient, West

### INTRODUCTION

Richard Schechner describes performance as "twice behaved behavior" by which he means that performance has a leg in two worlds; as presentation and as existence. This is because performance is contextual and it is usually pitched on an initial reality, the existence of which makes its representation an exhibition of pre-conceived reality and not the first instance of its occurrence.

Though the performance of identity presupposes a pre-existent identity, it transcends this initial existence as it implies a presupposition that the performer is capable of appearing and existing as an other, differentiated from the presented being. Identity performance as a post-modern creative strategy utilizes in social contexts, convergences of essence and redefinition of boundaries and outlooks. In this situation, being becomes the essence whereas existence is itself performed. In both contexts, there is drama, presentation and re-presentation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In a postmodern sense, performance in a particular state of being supplants the idea of holding on to a particular identity as the core of being. This is because it legitimizes the performance of existence as a means of sustaining identity, as Anthony Giddens (1997) would have us believe:

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual 'supplies' about herself. A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self. (54)

The authoring of narratives and the sustenance of these narratives through diverse acts by the subject is critical to the reality of his identity. The sustenance of these constructs determine, maintain and stabilize identity. Giddens recognizes that existence cannot be hundred percent fictive but it can be fictive in part. To be rooted in social reality, the identity performer must appropriate events in contemporary social life for his performance.

Performance would not even be wholly fictive because performance sustains the existence of the persona as an objective being-in-existence. This creative sensibility presupposes a personality as the basis of the performance. The resultant identity, particularly in a postmodern context is constituted with the background personality, the performed personality, combinations of the two and collocations of diverse identity cores in different respects to collate diverse identity outlooks as situations may demand or as creativity may serve the performer. Postmodernity is essentially the continuity of discontinuity and the discontinuity of continuity (Lyotard, 1984; Jameson, 1991; Schacht, 1996).

Henri Bergson (1910) provides the basis for the combination of elements on the existential plane with his concept of duration. He presents pure duration as “...*nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number: it would be pure heterogeneity. (104)*” It is a quality based on refinement in which an internal flow sustains and links a process and the link connects the states to one another; they are states of identical occurrence with each being an advancement upon the last in a way that is barely discernible because we appear to be confronting an indistinguishable whole.

Duration can be employed to interrogate and at the same time essentialise creative processes in fiction such as we have in *The Enchantress of Florence*, in which the prose style is dependent upon a succession of ideas, events and elements even stages and in which there is a seamless flow from one item to another in a way that homologizes narratives. However, the peculiarity of each person's style is the particular creative strategy deployed to attain this homology.

We must pay attention to the nexus between the performative strategy of the oral bard and the concept of duration as the oral bard whose presentation is basically dependent on the oral narration he performs brings scenes, situations and characters alive thus, necessitating the adoption of the creative strategy of utilizing dramatic details and gargantuan proportions in presenting situations and particularly characters in order to compensate for the absence of the visual effect of the acting of roles which we have in dramatization and is missing in the performance of the oral bard (Okpewho, 1979; Foley, 1999; Ong, 2009). We thereby have a situation in which in cultures shifting from a basic oral culture to scribal culture there is a transference of presentational style and the use of characters with vivid traits and gargantuan features as survivals from the performed art of the bard in the narrated prose of the novelist. This prominent feature of orality is to be found to be the social reality and creative context in the Nigerian and African; the Indian and Asian situations,

In looking at this work then I shall utilize the theories of identity performance, post-modernity, duration and orality which I have skirted above to indicate a trajectory of relevance to the novel. These theories I have found are foundational to the creative style with which this novel has been constructed and will serve to illuminate its fictional style.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL**

### **PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY AS CONFLATION OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES**

Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) is a novel based on identity, it is the story of the identity of the European who arrives at the court of Emperor Akbar of India seeking a future but arriving as an ambassador of the Queen of England who upon the disputation of his claim about representing the queen, substitutes it with the claim of being an oriental and even the emperor's uncle. The plot of the novel unwinds to cover his and the childhood and growth of his two friends. This unfurls even to cover the identity of the Queen that could have been his mother, Qara Koz, her erasure from history and the possibility of re-inserting her into the history of the Mughal court.

From his entry into the capital city of Sikri, he displays the mien of a man performing an identity

while also seeking identity “...if he had a fault, it was that of ostentation, of seeking to be not only himself but a performance of himself as well, and, the driver thought, around here everybody is a little bit that way too, so maybe the man is not so foreign to us afterall. (6)”

This novel traces the story of three friends Niccolo il Machia, Agostino Vespucci and Antonino Argalia repeatedly bringing to the attention of the reader that “In the beginning,” ... “there were three friends, Niccolo ‘il Machia,’ Agostino Vespucci, and Antonino Argalia. Their boyhood world was a magic wood.(157)” The novel traces the adventures of these three whose lives took different paths and thus becomes a story of travel, adventure, identity performance, social analysis, social parallels and the counterposing of Western and Oriental cultural experiences and realities in a bid to show that none lacks finesse and the Orient is not inferior to the West.

Rushdie’s *The Enchantress of Florence* presents an extension of the frontiers of the fictional through the use of a number of creative strategies. Principal among this is identity instability and variety. We find the main character transiting between different identities and personalities. He presents himself as one person in one instance and as another in another instance hence, he appears to be playing with identity and presenting the face that is needful for each instance and situation of interaction. The instability of identity takes us back to performance of identity because in the face of the presentation of different identities for the same person, the character is seen to exert efforts in appearing as an other and exerting efforts to live up to i.e. perform identity by sustaining narratives that keep the identity going. For being “a teller of tales, he had been driven out of his door by stories of wonder, and by one in particular, a story which could make his fortune or else cost him his life. (10)”

In order to sustain identity instability, Rushdie collocates postmodern assumptions with Western and Oriental pre-modern realities in interrogating emerging scenarios in cultural interaction and the cultural assumptions and under-pinning of major social developments, conflicts and interactions. In this novel, he pictures major cultural issues that tend to differentiate the societies while also showing that violence, identity fraud, power struggle, blood-letting are universal issues. Clearly

the 'West' (which of course is not a stable geographical or cultural location but a geopolitical myth) comes to constitute 'the universal point of reference in relation to which others recognize themselves as particularities' (p. 477), and this imaginary point is in turn the condition of possibility for a number of strategies of power: the strategies of primitivization that have regulated the relations of the imperial centre to its others; the strategy of contrasting development with backwardness... (Frow, 2)

Rushdie disables this strategy of the conceptual privileging of the West and even attempts to privilege Asian civilization above the Western in an ambitious but magical realist tale told from the middle, nodal flashpoints and with diverse median enlargements widening the plot laterally but with token vertical progress except for wide swings across time. In these swings across time, we have the tale combining the mental frame with the social frame and the fictional, non-existent frame of existence as contexts of narration.

The main character begins his identity performance as Ucello di Firenze and with this identity, a colourful story teller and a fantastic performer, he warms his way into the heart of the captain and crew of the pirate ship, *Scathach*, on which he had been discovered as a stowaway:

he had been found under bunk in the ship's forecastle seven days after the vessel rounded cape Agulhas at the foot of the African continent, wearing mustard-coloured doublet and hose... cradling a small carpetbag, and sleeping soundly, with many loud snores, making no effort to hide. (13)

This is the introduction we have to him in the novel and the instability of his identity makes it obvious that even this identity is not to be believed. The pursuit of the identity of this character becomes the novel's creative strategy and becomes the basis of the novelist's ambitious enterprise. Identity instability becomes the basis to sustain doubts about Ucello di Firenze's real identity, showing that he is actually wearing the identity of Ucello di Firenze as a mask of convenience to disguise who he really is and to play a role or fit into a situation, a context, status and environment.

In order to deepen the fictional frame of in this novel, this character transits to Mogor dell' Amore as soon he lands in the capital of the Empire of India, Sikri. He approaches the emperor's court with a supposed letter of credence from the Queen of England as an ambassador and begins to live under that identity.

His performance of this identity is however questioned with disputations when the crew of the ship, *Scathach*, whose captain he had poisoned catch up with him in the Mughal court. This makes him begin to flip through different identities compelling one of his accusers to unmask him: "This *Mogor dell'Amore* is no name at all," he said, damningly. "It means a *Mughal born out of wedlock*. ...By assuming it he implies that he wishes to be thought of as an illegitimate prince" (91). This revelation causes Abu Fazl to successfully cast doubt on his identity as Ucello di Firenze and when he is asked to supply his real name, he comes up with Vespucci, Nicolo, hyphenating the names of two of the three friends who form the background personalities on which the events in the novel rest, i.e. taking Vespucci from one and

Niccolo from another, thus generating another non-existent identity to stand in the place of his own. This then makes the emperor's position here relevant as he says "a man who lies about his name will lie about much besides, (93)"

He has to deal with skepticism and suspicion in the court of the Emperor of India: "The Queen mother Hamida Bano thought him an agent of the infidel west, sent to confuse and weaken their holy kingdom. In the opinion of both Birbal and Abul Fazl he was almost certainly a scoundrel, probably on the run from some dreadful deed back home (200)." These characters were not too far wrong in their suspicions because the letter of credence he claimed to have brought from the Queen of England ended up being read twice, first by him in a fictional frame with embellishments and denunciation of Rome and pleas for closer ties between India and England. However, when in another instance the letter was re-read years later by a different interpreter much of the original text had disappeared. The surviving document was found to contain no references to his own infallibility or the Pope's; nor did it ask for an alliance against common foes. (73)"

But even while the suspicion persisted in the heat of his arrival in Sikri and his navigation of different narratives, there is some tolerance for his constructs "What we know is that he has crossed the world to leave one story behind and to tell another, that the story he has brought us is his only baggage...he wants to step into the tale he is telling and begin a new life inside it." (201) So there is a tolerance for him not only because he smartly sidesteps each revelation of his chicanery but because the tradition of making up narratives to prop social life is tolerated as performance, entertainment and art, part of the way of life of a cultural establishment and he is tolerated partly as a social reality and partly as fictional element.

Mogor dell'Amore understands that in human memory and rendition of events and even in the reality of everyday events there are gaps of knowledge and existence into which an individual can slip with the right pedigree, and pedigree sometimes is nothing more than stories and stories and memories are dependent on narratives which are recollected from memory which sometimes fail; and more importantly stories are believed on the basis of the way they are told and this character knows how to tell stories and make presentations. His is then an attempt to sustain identity through "keeping its sustaining narrative going".

Apart from the main character who is constituted with the strategy of identity instability leading to a plurality of identities, the novelist composes another character with complementary identities and traits; assembling him by collating similar characters almost as if he has multiple identities in the

equivalences found for him in different countries. This character is Giovanni Milano:

All of Florence knew the story of the city's own Giovanni Milano, who had been born Sir John Hauksbank in Scotland a hundred years before. In France, he was "Jean Aubaine," in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland he was "Hans Hoch" and in Italy it was Giovanni Milano – "Milano" because a Milan was a hawk – leader of the White Company, erstwhile general of Florence, and victor, on Florence's behalf, of the battle of Polpetto against the hated Venetians, Paolo Uccello had worked on his funerary fresco and it was the Duomo still (136 – 137)

Here, an authorial consciousness seems to be at the base of these constructs and this is that characters usually appear as re-appearance or re-incarnation of others and this novelist treats these characters as if there is duration of essence from one historical personality in one country to another in another. Also, the different historical periods in which these characters appeared to have lived does not appear to matter as the essence of the character that carries through into another is connected with the temperament of an oral bard seeking to have his audience relate to what is familiar to her in her environment.<sup>1</sup> Each of these characters enter the novel with their baggage of events and associations and pluralize the fictional strands in the novel and multiplies the nodal flashpoints of the narration.

### **FICTIONALITY AND THE INTERACTION OF FICTIONAL BEINGS AND FIGMENTS**

Fictionality is introduced at different levels in representing characters in this novel. This is because and even if some of the characters are real in the fictional sense, there is a second level or deep fictionality in which apart from the use of fictional characters; we have a situation in which fictional characters are interacting with figments as characters. The figment character is created by the use of a creative strategy of downscaling the level of existence of the character. In which case if we look at the existing personality as a level of characterization, the performed character as another level of characterization and the figment, the non-existent character sustained only with narratives is an out and out deep level of fictionality in characterization. We have here a deeper level of unreality in which case the novelist sustains the non-existent.

The position here is that in *The Enchantress of Florence*, some characters are more fictional than others. In the novel, the Queen Jodha is said to be the most adored by Emperor Akbar but her existence is unreal, being a figment of the imagination of Akbar, her rival Queens and the public, for whom this figment becomes another enchantress in a sense. The character, Queen Jodha is thereby strategically made deficient in order to create a level of existence below the fictional, the imaginary fictional. The Emperor has what can at best be a bizarre relationship in which he has real wives who at least are



known to other fictional characters in the novel and interact; all jointly inhabiting the same plane of fictionality but in the case of Jodha, the relationship in a chamber relationship that is not in any way physical but imaginary,

Even the emperor succumbed to fantasy. Queens floated within his palaces like ghosts. Rajput and Turkish sultanas playing catch-me-if-you-can. One of the royal personages did not really exist. She was an imaginary wife, dreamed up by Akbar in the way that lonely children dream up imaginary friends, and in spite of the presence of many living, if floating, consorts, the emperor was of the opinion that it was the real queens who were the phantoms and no man dared gainsay him. (28)

The whole city was aware that Akbar had a figment of his imagination as his most preferred Queen and accepted that fact. In the heat of feminine competition and working to preserve the identity and position of the Mughal court and her integrity, even the most senior wife and the Queen mother acknowledged this strange fact and sought to seek the figment out to discuss with her and ensure that she tightens her grip on Emperor Akbar to prevent yet another whom they suspected to be a non-physical being, another figment returning from the past, Qara Koz from gaining his affection. This then creates a situation in which they were content speaking into thin air in the name of speaking to the imaginary queen.

They genuinely couldn't see the woman to whom they were speaking, yet they were willing to arrange themselves on her carpets, lounge against her bolsters, drink the wine her servants offered, and tell the sexual secrets of women throughout history to the empty air. (322)

We are not here concerned with ghosts as spirit beings but rather an image, an imaginary form with whom the living struggle. This creates a different level and a novel type of interaction and puts a spin on fictionality using the unreal being to pan out the imagined sequence of events.

### **VISUAL AND VERBAL NARRATIVES AND CHARACTERIZATION**

This novelist also adopts the creative strategy of using the artistic works in which there are representations of characters as the basis of their existence. In a number of instances, we see the author recognizing characters that feature in paintings and wall decorations as existing in real fact. He actually uses this as the only proof that they are historical figures and discusses artists painting people into existence. He thereby stretches the value of these artistic works as anthropological fossils for the cultural history of the people. In trying to assert the existence of Kazanda Begum and Qara Koz the author looks into art works and particularly painting and presents paintings as proof of the existence of



these characters within the Mughal lineage: “Paint her into the world,” he exhorted Dashwanth, “for there is such magic in your brushes that she may even come to life, spring off your pages, and join us for feasting and wine. (118)”. There is then a sense in which there is a conflation of the boundaries of art and social life.

Apart from the use of paintings, we also see extensive dependence on narratives for as the author asserts continually, existence and the authenticity of existence is dependent on its supporting narratives. Mogor dell'Amore is then challenged to present stories that show the place of his forbears in the history of the Mughal kingdom. Mogor dell'Amore then takes diverse liberties with his materials and develops it in different directions. Taking his time and pandering to distractions his manner of rambling over his identity and progeny becomes a creative strategy through which the story is narrated through different twists and turns.

### **THE CREATIVE STRATEGY OF COUNTERPOSING THE ORIENT AND THE WEST**

Counterposing the Orient and the West becomes a creative strategy in this novel. The two cultural realities are compared, contrasted and exhibited to deepen the fictional frame in this novel. A number of events are brought into focus to show that the Asian civilization is advanced while Western civilization cannot be said to be perfect. Rushdie thematises otherness by narrating events that tend to show the difference of identity of two different cultures while at the same time showing that in these different places, the experiences are similar. He recognizes the difference between the two; he dismisses the myth of the finesse and civilization of Western culture by paralleling deeds of both cultures that match one another in violence, blood-thirstiness, immorality and murder among other indiscretions.

And you with your three gods, a carpenter, a father, and a ghost, and the carpenter's mother for a fourth,” the emperor asked Mogor with some irritation, “you from that holy land which hangs its bishops and burns its priests at the stake, while its greatest priest commands armies and behaves as brutally as any common general or prince – which of the wild religions of this heathen land do you find most attractive, or are they all one to you in their vileness....“Sire,” and Mogor dell'Amore, calmly, I am attracted toward the great polytheist pantheons because the stories are better, more numerous, more dramatic, more humorous, more marvelous; and because the gods do not set us good examples, they are interfering, vain, petulant, and badly behaved, which is, I confess, quite appealing. (138)

By pitching renaissance Europe or Italy side by side with Mughal India, Rushdie essentialises otherness and at the same time homologizes human experience as one. He shows that the gory past of Europe is matched by the lore of the gods of India and there is nothing to choose strictly speaking as each culture,

civilization and region has its beauties as well as it has had and still has its ugliness.

By utilizing the counterpoise of the Orient and Western as creative strategy, Rushdie thematises the homogeneity of human nature showing that violence, blood-letting, intrigue, savagery and social disorder are not the exclusive preserve of the Orient but he provides sample characters with positive and negative traits and shows evidence of civilizations in non-Western cultures. He however brings out a number of negative traits in the West to show that negative character traits permeate all human societies and that finesse and cultural advancement, nicety are not exclusive cultural properties of the West and neither are ugliness, murder, social disorder permanent features of the Orient.

His characters traverse both worlds and end up giving the impression that none of the locations is inferior and particularly, that the Orient is not inferior to the West. "The road to the city wall rose quickly up the hillside and as he rose with it he saw the size of the place at which he had arrived. Plainly it was one of the grand cities of the world, larger, it seemed to his eye, than Florence or Venice or Rome, larger, than any town the traveller had ever seen. He had visited London once; it too was a lesser metropolis than this.(8)" The point of comparing cities here is to show that Sikri the capital of the Empire of India is much more glorious than the Western cities he mentioned.

#### **ORALITY, FICTIONALITY, EPISODIC PLOTS AND SPASMODIC SUB-PLOTS**

The fictional material in *The Enchantress of Florence* is also enriched by a curious homology of elements that are patently unreal: suppositions, guesses, projections and suspicions. These elements are used to build the plot as principal elements around which events that are narrated are weaved. Within this framework, micro themes complement characters and events as scaffolds for the framework of the novel. For example, rivalry between the wives of Akbar is thematised at a micro level at which it spins off suppositions. Individuals suppose what reality is though it may not be so. So there is conceptual conflict at this level between what is, what is supposed to be and what is not. The co-existence of concepts within the psychic frames of the individual and the psychic scheme generated for all characters in interaction play into the situation of rivalry between Akbar's women and twist the turn of events complementing an episodic theme with spasmodic sub-units of the episodic plot. There is then a combination of the episodic and spasmodic plot.

What we confront in this novel is not just an episodic plot. The broad frame uses narrativity as a frame, attains a level of episodocity but uses spasmodic sub-plots to attain this. These items are not episodes, they do not have that level of duration in time. Rather, Rushdie invests spasms and bursts of

concepts and builds strains of occurrences on them. Surprisingly, the theoretical creative frame is also presented as a statement here “ideas were like the tides of the sea or the phases of the moon; they came into being; rose and grew in their proper time, and then ebbed, darkened and varnished when the great wheel turned.” There is congruence here between these spasms of events and the postmodern atmosphere of the context and ambience of this novel. The spasms do not continue one another within the framework of this story but they rather are isolated bursts of events that are though isolated but within the isolation of their essence, they in a way do not continue one another but sustain one another with tangential connections.

The novelist uses this strategy to show and sustain the concepts, rivalry and competition as normal fare in human affairs. He strengthens this frame by using rumours, plots and counter plots mixed with suspicion as part of the narration in the novel to attain second level fictionality:

Salim was his favorite son, and his most likely assassin. When he was gone these three brothers would fight like dogs in the street over the meaty bone of his power. When he closed his eyes and listened to the galloping hoofs of his children at play he could see Salim leading a rebellion against him, and failing like the puny runt he was. *We will forgive him, of course, we will let him live, our son, so fine a horseman, so shiny, with such a kingly laugh.* The emperor sighed. He did not trust his sons. (57)

This soliloquy shows the feeling of insecurity of Emperor Akbar but it comes full of suppositions and it is a rich stuff from the imagination of this fictional character. It is not an event, rather it is a projection into the future; and it contains assertion of things that have as yet not happened when it is put forward as the thoughts of the Emperor. This is concretised in a way with the emperor putting the brewing power struggle in perspective and trying to show its imagined effects in rich imagery.

The creative strategy here is the use of radical bursts of ideas which we see overlapping and even succeeding one another, invading the terrain of other ideas. This is complemented with the use of characters with very strong traits, positive and negative, which makes it easy for the characters to grab the imagination. There could also be a switch from radical ideas to a strong colourful character and from character to ideas. For example, Akbar started by looking at the gracefulness and the wealth and splendor of his sons, and from there he went on to Salim and from Salim to Murad. From Murad he swings back to all the sons and their excesses. Salim was an opium user and he sodomized women using them sore. Murad was sick and Daniyal he said was good for nothing. With this he links the weaknesses of his children who were now beyond boys but were “little gods” who were “unfortunately born to rule” (56). This takes him back to his sons and his wishes for them and then back to Salim. Salim invades the

scene, invested with a lot of energy. Salim is his favorite son but also his most likely assassin. The idea of a favorite son that would perhaps relive the sour memory of his children's bitter rivalry and ugly outlook is wiped off by the idea of assassination. Not only that but there is then the idea of a rebellion which though sustains the idea of assassination but is not a continuation of that idea in narration but is a refinement of that idea and a sustenance of it through a weak link.<sup>3</sup>

The use of suppositions, guesses and projections introduces deep level fictionality and increases the performative sensibility within this fictional construct. This is because the instance of speculation of supposition, gives free rein to the as yet unreal making it its first instance of occurrence but when the supposed or speculated event happens, it enters a performative frame in the sense of Schechener's coinage of performance as twice behaved behaviour. When the event imagined actually happens, the occurrence reinforces the initial purely fictional narration and becomes a fuller but repeated account of the initial instance of narration. This is because the same event would have been narrated first as speculation and later as event in the sequence of events and contest of ideas in the novel. This is performatively fictional. The idea of Salim leading a rebellion is in the realm of supposition and extensive imagination of the expected and unreal.

## CONCLUSION

Fiction has a life of its own and is to be found in life. Life itself has fictional elements some of which have forced their way into and have been integrated into spheres of human existence. It is then obvious that life as lived is a fusion of the real and unreal where the unreal remains fictionally relevant and impinge existence as part of it and is therefore performatively inserted into life and existence.

Salman Rushdie in *The Enchantress of Florence* concentrates on identity performance, identity instability and the cross referencing of identity from person to person and one location and culture to another. The identity focus is complemented with the use of elements based in orality and the use of figments, non-existent events and characters, these make the novel achieve a level of fictionality that shows true human nature and illustrates the universality of negatives and positives.

Using performance theories and perspective as basis, there is a nexus between Rushdie's initial and primary culture and the cultural antecedent of many Nigerian writers and creative as they draw on cultures with firm roots in orality. While one has regard for the sanctity of the Nigerian moorings of the theme of this conference, investing a postmodern temper in examining this novel by Rushdie is believed to have the potential of enriching discussions at this conference by highlighting Rushdie's creative

strategies in a novel drawn from a background with characteristics that are existent in the Nigerian cultural environment.

### NOTES

1. The novel emphasizes the enchantress of Florence, Simonetta Vespucci (134) but also creates parallels to her, such parallels as the enchantress of Persia, and Jodha who capture the imagination of the people.
2. Another event that parallels this is the bid of Emperor Akbar to have the Queen of England as a lover. This was spurred by the embellishment of the content of the Queen's original letter and the fictional attraction of the Queen to Akbar as fabricated by Mogor Della Moore. A number of developments in the novel are fiction built on the non-existent.
3. There is a rapid succession of ideas here and we transit from idea to character back to idea as we flip over each of Akbar's three sons. Each son is a prominent personality in the portrayal in this part of the novel and they throw up ideas derived from their character traits.

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