

METAPHORS OF IDENTITY AND ALTERITY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE GROUND BENEATH HER FEET*

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ARTICLE INFO

Keyword

Figurative language,
conceptual metaphor,
metonymy, identity,
alterity

ABSTRACT

This article deals with some aspects of the English literature's postcolonial background, looking at Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* from a cognitive linguistic perspective. At the same time, the paper aims at valorising the metaphors regarding “identity” and “alterity” within Rushdie's literary discourse from his sixth novel. Although there has been a lot of research in this field there is still much to be discovered. Moreover, to date, there is no such analysis from a Cognitive linguistics point of view. Many researchers have been writing about Rushdie over the years, from different perspectives, but it seems there are no studies interested in discovering the writer's options for figurative language in general, and especially the writer's linguistic choices concerning “identity” and “alterity”.

Introduction

Today's world is a complex one: the postmodern age - marked by cultural diversity and relativism, multiplicity and individualism, fragmentation and plurality, subjective experience and flexible realities - invites scholars to reflect on a new ideology and brings into focus the concept of “alterity”. Defined as “otherness”, the notion is a recent vocabulary acquisition which may be analysed from different perspectives and disciplinary confluences, since it has philosophical, psychological, social and literary inferences. The occurrence of the concept within such diverse contexts (from the ones referring to globalisation, cultural identity, to linguistic and literary ones) generally leads to the ambiguity of the discourse and its effect is the notional pair “identity/alterity” being often placed in the semantic area of hostile difference (“identity versus alterity”). Such a vision is not only unilateral, but it also causes an alterity crisis, usually understood as an aspect in the general context of cultural crisis, besides the one of language and identity. Thus, the possibility of non-conflicting alterity - which designates a coexistence of the contraries, a kind of interchangeable simultaneity, meaning identity and alterity at the same time - is excluded from the beginning.

Consequently, the creation of a propaedeutic alterity becomes essential in order to avoid confusions and semantic ambiguities. This process involves following a special route, from defining the concept of “identity” towards explaining the binomial “identity/alterity”, including the relations between the two. Supposedly a straightforward term, “identity” is marked by multiple meanings related to philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, social sciences or discourse analysis. The notion has extended within multiple fields due to its association with the subjectivity domain, as “personal identity”. In its narrow sense, “personal identity” aims at feeling identical, the fact that the individual perceives himself/herself as the same in time. In its broad sense, the term refers to a system of feelings and representations through which the subject becomes unique. This means that someone's identity is therefore what makes him/her similar to himself/herself and hence different from others. Two questions still remain: “How does alterity influence identity?” and “Which are the relationships between identity and alterity?” “Identity” is therefore based on the idea of permanence and unity, which excludes difference and change, hence alterity. Unfortunately, this type of identity analysis, which encompasses a narrow vision of the

phenomenon, is specific to Occidental thinking. Throughout history, the “alterity” reception has registered some meaningful moments. For instance, during antiquity, classical philosophy interpreted alterity only as “difference” and hence did nothing but restrain the concept, limiting its manifestation area. The proper accreditation of the notion “alterity” took place only in the 21st century, which means that the terminological pair “identity/alterity” has gone through a process of semantic extension. Nowadays, more and more specialists are talking about a “fundamental alterity”, which has a social coordinate, and about an “internal alterity”, with obvious psychological implications, or even about an “alterity of language”. Duality represents, therefore, the existential dimension of the human being as subject and manifests itself in the dialogical relationship “Me -You”, perceived as an ontological event. In other words, the human being perceives himself/herself as subject not in the interiority of the Self, not in that of “You”, but in the relation of intersubjectivity which he/she keeps with “Other”, and through “Other” with himself/herself. Through his/her “You”, understood both as inner and as outer, “Me” is able to achieve his/her own duality and can become conscious of his/her personal alterity, in order to perceive himself/herself as being the Same and simultaneously “Other”. This kind of duality is defined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work about internal dialogism (Bakhtin 1981).

Bakhtin demonstrates the structural bipolarity of the human being not only on the basis of interaction and communication between two people, but also on the basis of “internal speech” as an imaginary speech, conscious or unconscious, between “Me” and “You” or “Other”. Dialogizing both with a real “Other” and with an imaginary “Other”, who is not outside him/her, but inside him/her, the Self is always divided, but this splitting is not irreversible or alienating. On the contrary, it is unifying, favouring the permanent re-identification of the Self as the “Same”. The analysis of the relationship between identity and alterity - understood as difference in the case of fundamental alterity, or as a unity of contraries, the “Alter-Ego” being coexistent to the “Ego”, in the case of “interior alterity” - leads to a common denominator: alterity represents a dimension of human existence, projecting itself both outside and inside. The meeting with the exterior “Other”, conflictual in essence, ensures a double “labour”: identity is attributed by the “Other” (identity for the “Other”), and at the same time, it is claimed by the Self (identity for the Self). The meeting with alterity in the space of interhuman communication bridges the gap between the Self (“Me”) and the “Other”, establishing alterity into a native, inborn dimension of an “Ego” towards “Another Ego” (“Alter Ego”).

Finally, alterity offers the possibility to imagine everything, to materialize dreams through a fictive “Other”, who is still “Ego”. It is important to see the manifestation area of alterity as a space of multiple significances, of dialogue, and not of confrontation. Apparently antagonistic, the concepts of “identity” and “alterity” suppose reciprocity, being the two poles between which human consciousness forms. The concept of identity, category written down into the subjectivity of the Self, is indissolubly bound to alterity, considered both as difference or opposition and as interior alterity. The couple identity – alterity, materialized in the form “Me – the Others”, is meaningful for understanding cultural diversity. The construction of personal identity, specific for every linguistic and literary space, is achieved through the impact of the alterity perception. The ways towards alterity suppose both the awareness of identity and of identity into alterity.

Research Methodology

Literature study is a research method that is carried out by collecting and analyzing information from written sources or literature that is relevant to the research topic being discussed. Literature study is carried out to gain a better understanding of the topic being studied and to obtain the information needed to compile a scientific paper, such as a paper, thesis, or dissertation. In a literature review, researchers can use various types of library sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, official documents, and other sources that are relevant to the topic being researched. After the library sources have been collected, the researcher analyzes and interprets the information that has been obtained. Literature study is often used in descriptive, qualitative, or theoretical research. This method is also often used as an initial stage in a study to get an overview of the topic being researched before conducting more in-depth research. One of the advantages of the literature study method is its efficiency in gathering information without the need for a large amount of money. However, literature study also has weaknesses, namely the information obtained may be limited and it is difficult to know the truth. Therefore, it is important for researchers to choose quality literature sources that are relevant to the topic being studied.

Results and Discussion

The notion of “alterity” is defined as a concept used in both philosophy and anthropology with the basic meaning “otherness”. In philosophy, the concept means the entity in contrast to which an identity is constructed and it was developed by Emmanuel Levinas in the 20th century, his work being based on the ethics of the “Other”. In anthropology, it has been used by scholars to refer to the construction of “cultural others”. Since the thinking of the French philosopher Rene Descartes, individual consciousness has been considered the privileged starting point

for consciousness, and the “Other” has begun to appear as a reduced “Other”, as an epistemological question in this type of post – Enlightenment philosophy. This means that within the concept of human being (in which everything emerges from the notion “I think, therefore I am”), the chief concern regarding the “Other” is the ability to answer questions such as “How can I know the other?”, “How can other minds be known?”. The term “alterity” shifts the focus of analysis away from these philosophic concerns regarding otherness – the “epistemic Other” (the Other that is only important to the extent to which it can be known) – to the more concrete “moral Other” (the Other who is actually located in a political, cultural, linguistic or religious context). This is a key feature of the changes within the concept of subjectivity, because, whether seen in the context of ideology, psycho-analysis or discourse, the “construction” of the subject itself can be seen as inseparable from the construction of its “Others”. In postcolonial theory, the term has often been used interchangeably with “otherness” and “difference”. However, the distinction that was initially held between “otherness” and “alterity” – that between “otherness” as a philosophic problem and “otherness” as a feature of a material and discursive location – is peculiarly applicable to postcolonial discourse. The self-identity of the colonizing subject, indeed the identity of imperial culture, is inextricable from the alterity of colonized Others, an alterity determined by a process of othering. The possibility for potential dialogue between racial and cultural Others has also remained an important aspect of the use of the word, which distinguishes it from its synonyms (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2001: 11-12). The experience of colonization and the challenges of a postcolonial world have produced an explosion of new writing in English. This diverse and powerful body of literature has established a specific practice of postcolonial writing in cultures as various as India, Australia, the West Indies and Canada, and has challenged both the traditional canon and dominant ideas of literature and culture. More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. It is easy to see how important this has been in the political and economic spheres, but its general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples is often less evident. Literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions are expressed and it is in their writing, and through other arts such as painting, sculpture, music, and dance that the day-to-day realities experienced by colonized peoples have been most powerfully encoded and so profoundly influential.

A characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion, and a study of the subversive strategies employed by postcolonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition. Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie’s phrase, the “Empire writes back” to the imperial “centre”, not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place (*Idem*, p. 32). It is interesting to see “how literature, now and in the past, serves and has served to keep alive the memory of the experiences of pre-colonial ages, and of periods of colonisation and decolonization, and this for all concerned, and on all levels, from the most personal to the most communal” (D’haen, Krus ed. 2000: 5).

The Ground Beneath Her Feet – a story about love and music

It is problematic how to define the term British when speaking about literature, or rather how to decide which writers have been or want to be labelled with a national tag that in some sense determines the way in which their work is read. Salman Rushdie, for example, was born in India, moved to Pakistan at a young age, then moved to Britain, and now lives in New York. It is somewhat problematic, therefore, to call him straightforwardly British. He has, however, most often been categorized in those terms and even though the plots of some novels are mainly set in India or Pakistan, it does not seem unreasonable to include him in a book about recent British fiction (Bentley, 2008: 2-3). In his novels, Salman Rushdie draws on the Western canon, the Eastern perspectives and popular culture, foregrounding the unreality of the real and thus emphasizing the awareness of the altered image projected by the self in the refracting mirror of the Other. Among the aspects explored that the reader may find fascinating are the following: the frequent incursions into the self of the narrative, the therapeutic re-writing of the conflict between centre and margin, cultural hybridization, repression and cathartic cultural transfer, Occidentals in the Orient or the colonization of the colonizer. Rushdie exploits and combines Indian vernacular usage with English. It is the presence of a second language, together with elements of race and political struggle that define his oppositional model of postcolonialism.

Besides all these, Rushdie uses magiccorealism with a precise goal: his magiccorealism “gives texture to a culturally and racially complex and comprehensive fourthspace; rather than invent storyworlds and narrators that reproduce a binary opposition between a firstspace – coded as European, rational, civilized, and real – and a thirdspace – coded as racial Other, prerational, magical – Rushdie uses magiccorealism as the form to invent fourthspace narratives that critically revise such divisions” (D’haen, Kruse ed. 2000: 90-91). Generally speaking, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a novel about love and music. It recreates the myth of Orpheus, re-inventing at the same time the history of rock ‘n’ roll. Rushdie narrates the story of Vina Apsara, a famous rock star, and of Ormus

Cama, a gifted songwriter and musician, who captivate and even change the world through their music and romance. Celebrating the power of both love and music, the novel proves to be a re-imagining of ancient Greek and Indian myths, a critique of the cult of celebrity, and an existential meditation on “not-belonging”. The story of the tempestuous love between Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara is told by the other man who loves Vina, Umeed “Rai” Merchant, a friend from their childhood and occasionally Vina’s lover. The book begins on February 14, 1989 (the date the fatwa was issued against Rushdie) in Mexico, with a tragic moment: an earthquake splits the ground beneath Vina’s feet and she dies. After that, Rai Merchant’s first-person narrative jumps back to 1950s Bombay, where the lives of the novel’s three protagonists intertwine. Even if *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, written in 1999, opens with a nostalgic description of the 1950s Bombay pluralism central to *Midnight’s Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, and *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, it is in the end an American novel, doing for America what *Midnight’s Children* does for India. Rushdie himself describes it as “my first American novel” (Kadzis 1999: 28 cited in Trousdale 2010: 141). Like his Indian novels, however, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* makes the pluralist city stand in for the nation, suggesting that pluralism is essential to American identity and treating New York-style multiculturalism as the next iteration in Rushdie’s ongoing examination of rooted cosmopolitanisms (*Idem*, p.141). *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* finds in overabundance, discontinuity, and disorientation the basis of a community of displaced people and provides Rushdie’s most thorough account of how novels can transform readers’ personal and political affiliations.

In contrast to the subjectively constructed interpretive “worlds” from it, the novel itself is set in a literal other world, a planet on which historical events vary from those on our own. To further complicate matters, the novel’s world collides with and destroys a second alternate world: the one inhabited by Maria, a world hopper who appears to Ormus and Rai. These objectively “real” alternate worlds are systematically contrasted with the subjectively alternate worlds of childhood or art and also with the “worlds” of differing cultures and continents. The novel differentiates between types of other worlds, suggesting a multitiered system of alterity that recognizes the existence of some alternate realities while treating others as fantastic or paranoid.

Non-belonging - expressed through the new art of rock ‘n’ roll - becomes the dominant form of identity in the novel, shared worldwide by the people who throng to stadiums to hear Ormus and Vina’s band, VTO, and later to mourn Vina’s death. The peculiarity in Rushdie’s account of outsidership is his suggestion that everyone – not only the exile or the migrant – is at some point an outsider. While Rai treats non-belonging as a permanent exile, the novel transforms it into an alternative form of community affiliation, to which everyone has access. Outsidership is directly related to fictionality and alterity.

Analysing metaphor and metonymy in Salman Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

In order to demonstrate if Rushdie is indeed a mirror reflecting otherness, the next section will take into account some examples of figurative language from *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

At the beginning of the novel, the author describes the female character Vina Apsara as *the very archetype of the wild rock goddess halfway down the road to desolation and ruin*. The conceptual metaphor occurring in the paragraph is VINA IS A GODDESS and the basic metaphor is THE SINGER IS A SUPERNATURAL ENTITY:

She had decided to become a redhead for this tour because at the age of forty-four she was making a new start, a solo career without Him, for the first time in years she was on the road without Ormus, so it wasn’t really surprising that she was disoriented and off balance most of the time. And lonely. It has to be admitted. Public life or private life, makes no difference, that’s the truth: when she wasn’t with him, it didn’t matter who she was with, she was always alone. Disorientation: loss of the East. And of Ormus Cama, her sun. (p.10).

There is a classical conceptual metaphor here: THE BELOVED ONE IS THE OTHER LOVER’S SUN. The love between the two main characters becomes cosmic, losing the lover being equal with losing the East and the whole orientation. In other words, the basic metaphor is THE LOVER IS THE SUN. Another conceptual metaphor may be DISORIENTATION IS LONELINESS, as Vina’s loss of orientation is due to the loss of her lover and means loneliness and lack of physical contact. All these are structural metaphors.

But I believe there was only me. And the last time she called for help, I couldn’t give it, and she died. She ended in the middle of the story of her life, she was an unfinished song abandoned at the bridge, deprived of the right to follow her life’s verses to their final, fulfilling rhyme. (p.10).

THE SINGER IS THE SONG, or better said, THE DYING SINGER IS AN UNFINISHED SONG is the conceptual metonymy-based metaphor here, as long as the song stands for the singer, who is *abandoned at the bridge, deprived of the right to follow her life’s verses to their final, fulfilling rhyme*.

The last paragraph from the second chapter *Melodies and silences* contains a sad conclusion: *Vina Apsara, the beautiful, the dead. Her very name, too good for this world. Vina, the Indian lyre. Apsara, from apsaras, a swanlike water nymph. (In Western terms, a naiad, not a dryad.) Look out, Vina. Nymph, watch your step. Beware the ground beneath your feet.* (p.39).

VINA IS AN INDIAN LYRE, the beauty of her voice being compared with an Indian musical instrument. Therefore, the basic metaphor here is THE SINGER IS A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. The metonymy also included here shows that the voice stands for the whole person, so it is a PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy. Therefore, the combination between the two results in a metonymy-based metaphor. Altogether, further commenting on her name, Rai compares her with *a swanlike water nymph*, giving life to a beautiful lyrical image conveyed by a simile.

The earthquake is foreseen by Vina, who plays with words talking to Rai, the narrator : *“Don’t you earthquake me,” she said to me in her tough-broad, disaster-vet voice as we arrived at the plantation [...]. “Don’t try and Richter me, Rai, honey. I been scaled before.”* (p.13).

The metonymy here implies the using of the noun *earthquake* as a verb, which creates a powerful effect. Even the proper noun *Richter* is used as a verb – *Don’t try and Richter me*, which creates an interesting pun and also a CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy.

Describing Don Angel Cruz’s feelings, the host of the banquet in Mexico for Vina Apsara, Rai says that the *fear of an earthquake began to seep damply from the corners of his eyes*. The conceptual metaphor is FEAR IS WEEPING. Well chosen words help understanding the visual image created by the metaphor-metonymy combination: tears stand for the fear of a new earthquake. This is a completely novel metaphor, created by the author.

The earth began to shake just as she finished, applauding her performance. The great still life of the banquet, the plates of meats and bowls of fruits and bottles of the best Cruz tequila, and even the banquet table itself, now commenced to jump and dance in Disney fashion, inanimate objects animated by the little sorcerer’s apprentice, that overweening mouse; or as if moved by the sheer power of her song to join in the closing chaconne. (p.14)

THE EARTH IS AUDIENCE: the earth, which began to shake after Vina Apsara had just finished her song, becomes animate in order to applaud her performance. It is a personifying metaphor and altogether a completely novel one.

THE INANIMATE OBJECTS OF THE BANQUET TABLE ARE PEOPLE, who began to jump and dance as if they wanted to accompany Vina, also constituting a personifying metaphor. Therefore, OBJECTS ARE PEOPLE is the basic entity metaphor here.

CRACKS ARE MONSTERS because they *scurried like lizards along the walls of its buildings, prying apart the walls of Don Angel’s hacienda with their long creepy fingers, until it simply fell away like an illusion, a movie façade*. This is an entity metaphor as well.

Here was the eternal silence of faces and bodies and animals and even nature itself, caught—yes—by my camera, but caught also in the grip of the fear of the unforeseeable and the anguish of loss, in the clutches of this hated metamorphosis, the appalling silence of a way of life at the moment of its annihilation, its transformation into a golden past that could never wholly be rebuilt, because once you have been in an earthquake you know, even if you survive without a scratch, that like a stroke in the heart, it remains in the earth’s breast, horribly potential, always promising to return, to hit you again, with an even more devastating force. (p.14)

FEAR IS A WILD, DANGEROUS ANIMAL because it has caught *faces and bodies and animals and even nature itself* and it is synonym with the *grip of the fear of the unforeseeable and the anguish of loss, the clutches of this hated metamorphosis*.

EARTHQUAKE IS A BAD PERSON *always promising to return, to hit you again, with an even more devastating force*. This is another entity metaphor.

Another conceptual domain in the novel is writing: *I have chosen to tell our story, hers and mine and Ormus Cama’s, all of it, every last detail, and then maybe she can find a sort of peace here, on the page, in this underworld of ink and lies, that respite which was denied her by life. So I stand at the gate of the inferno of language, there’s a barking dog and a ferryman waiting and a coin under my tongue for the fare.* (p.19)

It seems that the writer hardly decided to write, maybe because WRITING IS ORDEAL and the writer stands *at the gate of the inferno of language*, just like a hero from the Greek mythology, waiting for the *ferryman* to take him across the river. At the same time, maybe WRITING IS REBIRTH, as long as the writer has to go into the realm of death in order to fulfil his dream – to write, to tell a story. It may also be an autobiographic glimpse here, related to the threat of fatwa and the challenge to write in spite of it. The two metaphors are novel, unexpected.

At the same time, LITERATURE, or better said, FICTION IS ANOTHER WORLD, an *underworld of ink and lies*, a place where Vina *can find a sort of peace here, on the page*. Therefore, FICTION IS A PLACE, maybe even A RESTING PLACE for Vina.

Music is represented in many ways throughout the novel. The title is taken from a song from the novel, composed by Ormus Cama after Vina’s death. The lyrics to the song, with minor changes, were adapted and recorded by the U2 band. Music is also one of the favourite source domains for metaphor or similes.

Paragraphs like this praise music and singers altogether: *Why do we care about singers? Wherein lies the power of songs? Maybe it derives from the sheer strangeness of there being singing in the world. The note, the scale, the chord; melodies, harmonies, arrangements; symphonies, ragas, Chinese operas, jazz, the blues: that such things should exist, that we should have discovered the magical intervals and distances that yield the poor cluster of notes, all within the span of a human hand, from which we can build our cathedrals of sound, is as alchemical a mystery as mathematics, or wine, or love. Maybe the birds taught us. Maybe not. Maybe we are just creatures in search of exaltation. We don't have much of it. Our lives are not what we deserve; they are, let us agree, in many painful ways deficient. Song turns them into something else. Song shows us a world that is worthy of our yearning, it shows us our selves as they might be, if we were worthy of the world.* (p.18)

The conceptual metaphor that occurs here is MUSIC IS HOPE, because *hearing the human voice lifted in song is one of the five mysteries which hold the keys to the unseen* and it is also *one of the occasions when the bolts of the universe fly open and we are given a glimpse of what is hidden; an eff of the ineffable*. It seems that music turns people in better ones and also improves their lives, showing their selves *as they might be*.

Cathedrals of sound is also a beautiful lyrical image, implying a metaphor: MUSIC IS A (RELIGIOUS) BUILDING. An interesting triple simile complete the image *The note is as alchemical a mystery as mathematics, or wine, or love*, not to add the extensive enumeration *the note, the scale, the chord; melodies, harmonies, arrangements; symphonies, ragas, Chinese operas, jazz, the blues* which aims to refer to all kinds of music, meaning that music is universal.

And music, popular music, was the key that unlocked the door for them, the door to magic lands (p.62) shows an interesting metaphor: MUSIC IS THE KEY TO MAGIC REALMS for Vina and Ormus.

Another interesting conceptual metaphor used in the novel is: CHILDHOOD IS A CONTAINER for treasured memories: *From deep within the dusty trunk of childhood I can still dig out the memory of my mother Ameer when young...* Within this example there can be identified a particular pattern, specific to Rushdie's metaphors that use sensory experience to evoke emotions and attitudes: NOUN 1 (concrete) + OF + NOUN 2 (abstract): *the dusty trunk of childhood*. This pattern involves the attribution of physical attributes to abstract or inner entities and it is very close to simile, Rushdie's favourite figure of speech.

In the same novel, the theme of cultural blending and hybridity appears in a simile depicting Bombay: *The west was Bombay from the beginning, impure old Bombay where West and East, North and South had always been scrambled like codes, like eggs.* (p.62).

Selfhood and otherness metaphors

The novel is rich in beautiful metaphors, but it seems the most challenging ones reflect mirrors of otherness, expressing and describing the migrant condition and the concepts of identity and alterity in innumerable ways. Rushdie especially proposes novel metaphors and the manner in which he combines the linguistic choices in order to obtain poetical images is unprecedented.

Rai, one of the three protagonists and also the narrator in the novel, speaks about his own self or identity as dissonance: *At my worst, I have been a cacophony, a mass of human noises that did not add up to the symphony of an integrated self*. In other words, for Ray, THE SELF IS A MASS OF NOISES or THE SELF IS A CACOPHONY. This is a completely novel metahor. Then, he goes on with a personifying metaphor and a simile, saying that *at my best, the world sang out to me, through me, like ringing crystal*. THE WORLD IS A SINGER, another novel metaphor, appears here to complete the image. Altogether, THE INTEGRATED SELF IS A SIMPHONY is another metaphor which has the basic form THE SELF IS MUSIC, a beautifully expressed idea of combining SELHOOD with MUSIC as conceptual domains. All these words: *cacophony, singer, ringing crystal, symphony* are related to the domain of SOUNDS and ultimately, to MUSIC.

Another cognitive source domain, used for the representation of the SELF IS FOOD. Rai describes his relations with Vina and Ormus in the following terms: *...in those days before the tour she at last admitted what I'd wanted my whole life to hear, namely I had become a factor, a problem. I was no longer an occasional dish, a side snack*. The SELF IS FOOD represents a wild and completely unexpected metaphor.

Describing Vina's identity, the narrator says VINA IS A PRINCESS/QUEEN: *As Vina Apsara majestically descended (always a princess, she was growing into queen-lieness) a cry went up, just her name, Veeenaaa, the vowels elongated by pure longing, and I recognized, not for the first time, that in spite of all the hyperbolic revelry and public display of her life, in spite of all her star antics, her nakhras, she was never resented, something in her manner disarmed people, and what bubbled out of them instead of bile was a miraculous, unconditional affection, as if she were the whole earth's very own new-born child. Call it love.* (p.12)

Altogether, fascinated by her, Rai says that VINA IS THE FIRST BACCHANTE and also VINA IS A FEMALE DIONYSUS, metaphors derived from the basic metaphor VINA IS A GODDESS: *Dionysiac goddesses: that's closer to my personal experience. What I know about is Vina. Vina, who came to us from abroad, who laid*

waste to all she saw, who conquered and then devastated every heart. Vina as female Dionysus. Vina, the first bacchante. That, I could buy. (p.43)

She was used to giving absolution. Placing her freed hands on his shoulders, she began to speak to him in That Voice, she began to murmur to him as if they were lovers, dismissing the feared earthquake like a naughty child, sending it to stand in the corner, forbidding it to create any trouble for the excellent Don Ángel, and such was the miracle of her vocal powers, of the sound of her voice more than anything it might have been saying, that the distressed fellow actually stopped sweating and, with a hesitant, tentative rebirth of good cheer, raised his cherubic head and smiled. (p.13)

Therefore, VINA IS A PRIESTESS AND A PROPHETESS are two metaphors that complete her image. VINA'S VOICE IS A MIRACLE, even when she is not singing, her voice works wonders. Another metaphor that occurs in this paragraph is THE EARTHQUAKE IS A NAUGHTY CHILD, being dismissed as if it were so by no other but Vina.

Describing Ormus's identity, the narrator says that Gayomart – Ormus Cama's dead twin – is an Alter Ego for Ormus, *one of his shadow selves, the many Others who plagued and came to define his life:*

After the death by spearing of mortal Castor; Polydeuces the son of Zeus spent alternate days below the earth with his dead brother; at a place named Therapne; and in return the dead twin was allowed to spend alternate days with his brother on the surface, with the ground beneath his feet instead of over his head. Gayomart Cama did not return, however; unless it was in the form my mother named, as Ormus's shadow, conceived of as something like that roguish, independent silhouette which once escaped from Peter Pan until sewn back to his feet by Wendy Darling. For it was true that Ormus had shadow selves, the many Others who plagued and came to define his life. It might not be so fanciful (my own nature has a weakness for fancy) to say that his dead twin was, in the shifting shape of Ormus's monochrome, protean shade, still alive. (p.39).

My mother's intuition proved to be correct. Born in his dead twin's shadow, Ormus Cama turned out to be what the ancients called a psychopomp, one concerned with the retrieval of lost souls, the souls of the beloved dead. (p.38).

Ormus always claimed that his dead twin Gayomart was his only style guru — Gayomart, who apparently came to him in dreams (p.60), taught him a new kind of music, rock'n'roll and helped him create some songs which were already sung in the other part of the world – America.

The bewildered Ormus exclaims (when he first hears the songs recorded by Jesse Parker): *"I called him a thief because that's what he is. That's my song. I wrote it years ago. Two years, eight months and twenty-eight days ago, if you want to know."* (p.61)

Two years, eight months and twenty-eight days/nights becomes a leitmotif for Rushdie's literary discourse, because it is also the title for another novel. The number reflects 1001 Nights and stands for the story of Scheherazade. It seems that this number, counting days or nights, refers to the eternal time for love or for preparing to dive into "the sea of stories", to create, to write, to tell a story, in spite of the threat of death.

The genius of Ormus Cama did not emerge in response to, or in imitation of, America; that his early music, the music he heard in his head during the unsinging childhood years, was not of the West, except in the sense that the West was in Bombay from the beginning, impure old Bombay (...) and so Westernness was a legitimate part of Ormus, a Bombay part, inseparable from the rest of him. (p.62)

The West mingles with the East into Ormus Cama's identity, the East and the West are turned upside down by Ormus and his weird connection with his dead twin, Gayomart:

It was an amazing proposition: that the music came to Ormus before it ever visited the Sun Records studio or the Brill Building or the Cavern Club. That he was the one who heard it first. Rock music, the music of the city, of the present, which crossed all frontiers, which belonged equally to everyone—but to my generation most of all, because it was born when we were children, it spent its adolescence in our teenage years, it became adult when we did, growing paunchy and bald right along with us: this was the music that was allegedly first revealed to a Parsi Indian boy named Ormus Cama, who heard all the songs in advance, two years, eight months and twenty-eight days before anyone else. (p.62)

The personifying of music conducts to the metaphor MUSIC IS A PERSON who grew up along with Ormus, Vina and Rai and, although it belonged to everyone, it remained a symbol of their generation.

So according to Ormus and Vina's variant version of history, their alternative reality, we Bombayites can claim that it was in truth our music, born in Bombay like Ormus and me, not "goods from foreign" but made in India, and maybe it was the foreigners who stole it from us. Two years, eight months and twenty-eight days, by the way, adds up (except in a leap year) to one thousand and one nights. Nineteen fifty-six, however, was a leap year. Go figure. This kind of spooky parallel doesn't always exactly work out. (p.62)

Nevertheless, it is repeated time and again the idea of Ormus inventing the music of their generation, meaning rock'n'roll. Two years, eight months and twenty-eight days before, he heard the new songs from Gayomart, from

the realm of the dead. Therefore, it means that rock'n'roll was invented in India, not in the West, it was *made in India*, not "goods from foreign", and maybe it was the foreigners who stole it from us. This way, Rushdie re-invents not only music, but history, creating two parallel dimensions of reality. From the postcolonial perspective, it is a hilarious and maybe ironical point of view. If "...the Empire writes back to the Centre", why not re-invent the entire history?

It should be remembered that Ormus, a born singer, had not opened his lips in song since the night he was almost smothered in his bed by his elder brother Cyrus; and a stranger, watching him now, might easily have concluded that all the unsung music of his silenced years had accumulated in him, causing acute discomfort, even agony; and that the pent-up melodies were actually trying to burst out of his body as he walked. Oh, how he swayed and twitched! (p.58)

If MELODIES ARE PEOPLE, and MUSIC IS THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE, then ORMUS IS A MUSICAL SORCERER and also THE CREATOR AND ARCHITECT OF MUSIC: (...) *Ormus Cama was the greatest popular singer of all, the one whose genius exceeded all others, who was never caught by the pursuing pack. (...) He was a musical sorcerer whose melodies could make city streets begin to dance and high buildings sway to their rhythm, a golden troubadour the jouncy poetry of whose lyrics could unlock the very gates of Hell; he incarnated the singer and songwriter as shaman and spokesman, and became the age's unholy unfool. But by his own account he was more than that; for he claimed to be nothing less than the secret originator, the prime innovator, of the music that courses in our blood, that possesses and moves us, wherever we may be, the music that speaks the secret language of all humanity, our common heritage, whatever mother tongue we speak, whatever dances we first learned to dance. From the beginning he claimed that he was literally years ahead of his time. (p.58).*

LYRICS ARE PEOPLE who could unlock the very gates of Hell, sounds and words being able to restore a new world, as long as music is the universal language of mankind. Altogether, MUSIC IS NUTRIENT/FOOD, which nourishes both the body through our blood and veins, and our soul, through beautiful songs and interesting lyrics.

Another conceptual domain in the novel is OUTSIDENESS, a concept explained by Rushdie both through his life and work.

The writer, considering himself an *outsider* of some sort, creates characters who share his opinions about the migrant condition and about being different as well: "*But what about outsideness? What about all that which is beyond the pale, above the fray, beneath notice? What about outcastes, lepers, pariahs, exiles, enemies, spooks, paradoxes? What about those who are remote? [...]* But Sir Darius Xerxes Cama wasn't listening. He was standing at the great window of the library, staring out at the Arabian Sea. "*The only people who see the whole picture,*" he murmured, "*are the ones who step out of the frame.*"

Therefore, THE OUTSIDER IS AN OUTCAST is the basic metaphor here. It is interesting to draw our attention upon the following paragraph: *What about those who are remote?* It seems that the ones who are remote are not just isolated, but totally removed from this world, living into another dimension of reality.

A certain sensibility is required in order to fully appreciate Rushdie's texts and of course, the subliminal messages beyond words: *We find ground on which to make our stand. In India, that place obsessed by place, belonging-to-your-place, knowing-your-place, we are mostly given that territory, and that's that, no arguments, get on with it. But Ormus and Vina and I, we couldn't accept that, we came loose. Among the great struggles of man—good/evil, reason/unreason, etc.—there is also this mighty conflict between the fantasy of Home and the fantasy of Away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey. And if you are Ormus Cama, if you are Vina Apsara, whose songs could cross all frontiers, even the frontiers of people's hearts, then perhaps you believed all ground could be skipped over, all frontiers would crumble before the sorcery of the tune. (...) Where your blood sings in your ears, Don't even think about it. And you think about it, you cross that final frontier, and perhaps, perhaps—we'll see how the tale works out—you have finally gone too far, and are destroyed. (p.39).*

The sorcery of the tune means that MUSIC IS WITCHCRAFT, another novel metaphor creating a beautiful lyrical image. The main characters from the novel, Ormus, Vina and Rai, dared to free themselves from any tie and finally came loose. This is how they solved this mighty conflict between the fantasy of Home and the fantasy of Away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey.

Therefore, CROSSING BARRIERS IS DESTRUCTION because the journey is life itself or...death itself, because if you cross that final frontier, as a daring act, you became an *outsider*, even if you step out of the frame just to see the whole picture. And perhaps, perhaps—we'll see how the tale works out—you have finally gone too far, and are destroyed. Maybe. Maybe we shall never know...

Therefore, in the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the metaphor referring to otherness which occurs very often is THE OUTSIDER IS AN OUTCAST, a fact altogether understood by any migrant.

Look out, Vina. Nymph, watch your step. Beware the ground beneath your feet. This advice occurs in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and strengthens both the role played by the ground and the feet in humans' life, leading

to the idea of the migrant who leaves the ground where he belongs and uses his feet to walk away, often very far away from his homeland.

Therefore, FEET stand for THE PERSON or better said, THE MIGRANT, which is a PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy. The migrant's life implies a lot of moving, travelling, so the idea mixes with the conventional metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The result is a fresh image occurring in the novel *Two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights: uneasy feet* (p.39), which is a creative, novel metaphorically – motivated metonymy.

Altogether, THE GROUND stands for HOMELAND as in *beloved ground*, which actually means the lost home. This idea is very frequent in *Two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights* and has a lot of variants: *his lost home both in space and time, his beloved lost home, his lost soil*. The epithet *lost* shows the *migrant's hollow journey*, the idea that THE MIGRANT'S JOURNEY/LIFE is empty and equals with LOSING THE HOMELAND. This image is recurrent and can be found in the rich meanings on various suggestive phrases: *this mighty conflict between the fantasy of Home and the fantasy of Away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey (The Ground Beneath Her Feet); the dreams of the displaced (Two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights)*.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this article, “identity” and “alterity” are two main concerns in Salman Rushdie's novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, as well as the migrant condition. Most of the times, these aspects are looked upon as novel metaphors in the book. Using wise linguistic choices with which he forms unique artistic images, Rushdie manages to play with words and even worlds in order to create an entire universe for the “outsiders”, for the ones who “do not belong”. The main figures of speech Rushdie uses in his literary work are metaphors, metonymies and similes. These tropes have an important role within the larger framework of Rushdie's literary style. They do not only contribute to the embellishment of the language and his literary style, (which is, of course, rich and various) but they render new meanings and convey novel interpretations, especially when it comes to “identity” and “alterity” notions.

The types of metaphors frequently utilized by Rushdie in the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are: entity or personifying metaphors, container and structural metaphors. Nevertheless, most of Rushdie's metaphors express selfhood and otherness, fact which represents a key feature of the novel. Moreover, most of the figures of speech Rushdie uses in his novel seem to be culturally specific, embedded with elements of his Indo-English cultural universe. Therefore, Salman Rushdie is indeed a mirror reflecting otherness, as long as his figurative language expresses and describes mainly the concepts of “identity” and “alterity” and that of the migrant. More than that, what Rushdie earlier named in an essay “remaking (English) for our own purposes” (Rushdie 1991: 17) is obviously shown where he “hybridizes” English by inserting Hindi terms into his text. Thus, words and expressions “sahib”, “ayah” or ambiguous expressions associated with specific Indian usages, such as “Mumbai ki kachrapati baat-cheet” (p.11), abound in his palimpsestic narrative. The text is also interspersed with pop songs, lyrics comic strips, westerns or nursery rhymes turning the text into a polysemantic narrative.

Rushdie uses magico-realism as the form to invent fourth space narratives that critically revise divisions such the first space and the third space. He prefers diving into magic than proliferating the idea of the binary distinction between these two dimensions of reality. His characters question the colonial power in such a way, that it seems that “...the Empire writes back to the Centre...”, to use Rushdie's own significant words. As Edward Said has explained in his book *Orientalism*, “The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring *images of the Other*. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West)” (1978:15).

The hypothesis which has been the starting point in my research proves itself to be true: a lot of arguments in the novel, based on text analysis as the main method of research, demonstrate that Salman Rushdie is a vivid expression of otherness, just like his characters, a mirror reflecting “not-belonging”, a multitude of identities and several Others. Rushdie's work teems with the overflowing life of India, packed to the brim with larger-than-life characters, tangential storylines, pop-culture references, existential musings, and an effusively polyglot language and style. Rushdie repeatedly addresses identity issues that have bearing on his own life. Writing about the East from London or New York, Rushdie easily admits the ambiguity of his cultural and national affiliations, embracing the dislocation and in-betweenness of his identity as a migrant. Many of his novels centre on characters who, like himself, have made the journey from India to England or America, and the novels explore these characters' efforts to articulate their own experiences (Brown 2011: 6). Salman Rushdie argues for *hybridity* of culture, asserting that in today's postcolonial, postmodern world, no one can or should try to retain a singular identity. In fact, he affirms, living between East and West or embracing the hybrid mixture of India is a positive thing, one which brings about newness in the world. Immigrants do not have to feel compelled to return home or to resist being influenced by their new locations.

Rushdie advocates a hybrid world – a world in which difference and heterogeneity are not only tolerated, but eagerly celebrated as a means of cultural newness. Rushdie says that exile is a dream of glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution: Elba, not St. Helena. It is an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back (Rushdie 1988: 212). Rushdie is an enthusiastic and optimistic advocate of such rootlessness and hybridity, frequently discussing the potential beauty of the migrant condition. In his novels, Salman Rushdie explores the questions which plague the postcolonial and cosmopolitan world - What is the migrant? How can a person survive between cultures? What do those grand ideas of *home*, *culture*, or *nation* even mean? Rushdie's works show that he strongly believes in mixing cultures and identities, rather than limiting identification to a singular place or idea. There are four different areas of cultural identity for which Salman Rushdie advocates hybridity: postcolonial history, national narratives, individual migrant identity and the English language. (Brown 2011: 4). Rushdie's collected work is clearly dedicated to the idea that cultural blending will create a better and more peaceful world in the future. Just like a character from *East, West*, who appears to be a cross-cultural narrator who tells a story, Rushdie longs to make "a bridge between here-and-there, *between my two othernesses, my double unbelonging*" (Rushdie 1994: 141).

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