

# A TALE OF AMBIVALENCE: SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "TWO YEARS, EIGHT MONTHS AND TWENTY-EIGHT NIGHTS"

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*Abstract:* Salman Rushdie's memoirs, essays and novels contribute to the appreciation of the contradictions in his outlook on life. His experiences in his family enable Rushdie to make efforts for objective and tolerant judgement of British lifestyle and culture. However, his isolation from the society in Britain despite his struggle for adaptation to British cultural values cause contradictions in his cultural identity. While Rushdie expresses his allegiance to India and its culture in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), he reflects his alienation from his homeland in this novel as well. Similarly, in his *Imaginary Homelands* (1981-1991) whereas Rushdie questions the injustice and inequality caused by imperialism in *The New Empire within Britain* (1982), he justifies the colonialist discourse in *Kipling* (1990). He elaborates on the contradictions in his outlook on life in terms of his cultural ambivalence in his fictions such as *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983). However, in his latest novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), Rushdie reflects his cultural identity conflict in terms of rationalism-mysticism dichotomy. With the use of allegory as well as the lack of linearity in time and space, Rushdie justifies his cultural ambivalence in relation to the dynamism of contemporary world. Thus, Rushdie's latest novel invites reading for its representation of the oppositions in his approach to life.

*Keywords:* Salman Rushdie, Cultural Identity, Rationalism, Mysticism, Cultural Ambivalence.

## INTRODUCTION

People live together in groups that have specific values and ideals on which they base their lives. These values reflect the peculiar characteristics of a society. A community's traits are formulated mainly in relation to the term "culture". Roger M. Keesing and Andrew J. Strathern define this term as "knowledge distributed among individuals in communities" (Keesing and Strathern 1998: 20). As understood from this description, cultural values are passed on from generation to generation and embody the traits specific to the societies. Putting emphasis on this aspect of "culture", John Jay argues that "the notion of culture is like a window through which one may view human groups" (Jay 1998: 40). Thus, considering the existence of different nations on the globe, it is possible to observe a diversity of cultures throughout the world.

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Similar to “culture”, identity is also a concept that has characteristics peculiar to individuals, groups, societies and nations. In this sense, it is not wrong to suggest that identity is a multifaceted term. It is defined as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). While identity reflects an individual’s distinguishing traits, it also represents a society’s peculiar characteristics. Whereas a person’s name and surname, his/her gender indicate individual traits, the social stratum to which a person is attached is a signification of a distinctive characteristic in socio-economic area. In cultural sense, identity reflects a sense of belonging to a specific set of values peculiar to a country. Hence, similar to the term “culture”, it is possible to observe a diversity of identities throughout the world. Although this could be considered as a source of wealth in cultural sense, “people [...] seem to look on their own culture as most suitable or best and on that of others as less civilised. This becomes the source of ethnocentrism, the tendency of people to judge other cultures by the values and assumptions of their own culture” (Hiebert 1983: 38).

However, beginning to show its impacts throughout the world, the process of globalisation has contributed to the proliferation of inter-cultural relations. Particularly, “towards the end of the twentieth century, more than ever before, people share cultural influences on a global scale. Moreover, people are active rather than passive in the reproduction of social institutions on global scale. Aspects of global culture do not materialise of their own accord, they are reproduced around the world by people who thus in a sense form a global society” (Spybey 1996: 5). The processes of transformation in the world do not happen regardless of nations and cultures with different lifestyles. At this point, John Tomlinson defines globalisation as “the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterise modern social life” (Tomlinson 1999: 2). In *Postnational Flows, Identity and Culture*, Mike Featherstone explains the characteristics of globalisation in the following words: “One of the vogue words of contemporary accounts of globalisation is the term ‘flow’. [...]. The concept of flow points to movement, mobility, to the speed, volume and intensity of interchanges in a globalising world” (Featherstone 2001: 501). As understood from Featherstone’s arguments, globalisation accounts for the dynamism and unprecedented flux in the contemporary world. In *A Global Society?* Anthony McGrew

focuses on the fields in which the changes are observed in the world as a result of globalisation:

Globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and inter-connections that transcend the nation-states (and by implications societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. Nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, communications, crime, culture, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries. Transnational networks, social movements and relationships are extensive in virtually all areas of human activity [...]. Moreover, the existence of global systems of trade, finance and production binds together in very complicated ways the prosperity and fate of households, communities, and nations across the globe (McGrew 1992: 65-66).

McGrew's statements depict a world where different lifestyles, cultures and social strata interact with each other. The acquisition of knowledge in a short time makes it possible for people and societies to learn about the cultures and lifestyles with which they are not familiar. The international flow of capital in commercial and economic areas is an embodiment of the transnational characteristics of economic relations. Similarly, the proliferation of a fashion trend in different parts of the world suggests that clothing preferences, as one of the signifiers of lifestyles, can pass beyond the national and cultural borders. In short, globalisation contributes to the removal of social and cultural frontiers. In Peter Beyer's words, "we [...] live in a globalising social reality, one in which previously effective barriers to communication no longer exist" (Beyer 1994: 1).

While globalisation contributes to the understanding and recognition among societies and cultures with different lifestyles, it may also bring negative consequences in relation to social and cultural interaction. In *The Question of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall explains these negative consequences in the following words: "Cultural homogenisation is the anguished cry of those who are convinced that globalisation threatens to undermine national identities and the 'unity' of national cultures. [...]. In the latest form of globalisation, it is still the images, artefacts and identities of Western modernity, produced by the cultural industries of 'Western' societies (including Japan) which dominate the global networks" (Hall

1992a: 304-305). The situation which Hall discusses indicates that globalisation brings cultural monopoly rather than cultural pluralism on the global scale in the second half of the twentieth century. Accordingly, Tony Spybey relates cultural monopoly to Western hegemony: “The process of globalisation is often taken to be an imposed process – the rise of the West and the imposition of its institutions around the world” (Spybey 1996: 34). In *Undoing Culture: Globalisation, Postmodernism and Identity*, Mike Featherstone explains the cause of the Occident’s dissemination of its culture throughout the world as follows: “The West understands itself as the guardian of universal values on behalf of a world formed in its own image” (Featherstone 1995: 89). Thus, even if globalisation apparently contributes to the removal of borders among different cultures, it in fact points to the imposition of Western lifestyle in the world. Hernando Gómez Buendía states that the Western lifestyle shows its impact on the societies in three areas: “globalisation of markets, globalisation of culture and globalisation of security” (Buendía 1995: 4). Particularly, in socio-economic terms, capitalism enables the Western products to be exported to different parts of the world and hence acquisition of great profits becomes possible. In line with this argument, James Clifford states that “commodities and markets release forces that tear down borders and unsettle empires; they also consolidate dominant polities” (Clifford 1997: 331). The consumption of products on the global scale leads to an increase in more demand for them. In Akbar S. Ahmad and Hastings Donnan’s words, under the circumstances of the globalising world, the capitalist worldview “promotes a culture based on youth, change and consumerism” (Donnan 1994: 12). It is not wrong to argue that this culture, which can be qualified as consumerist, is based on the export and rapid consumption of the Western products throughout the world. For Paul Kennedy, “along with money, goods, people and information, cultural experiences of all kinds – abstract knowledge, aesthetic preferences in everything from cuisine and music to designer goods and TV soaps, marriage customs, religious beliefs and so on – exhibit a growing capacity to break loose from their original moorings in particular societies” (Kennedy 2001: 11).

Thus, despite globalisation’s contribution to the removal of boundaries among the countries in different parts of the world and its effects on global scale, it may somehow lead to the imposition of Western values on the societies and nations with distinctive lifestyles. As a result of this imposition, it is

still possible to observe the continuation of the prejudices among nations with different lifestyles and worldviews. The West-East dichotomy can be considered as an explanation for the continuing biases in cultural area in spite of the process of globalisation. In *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, Stuart Hall defines the term “West” in the following words: “Clearly, ‘the West’ is as much an idea as a fact of geography. [...] By ‘western’, we mean the type of society [...] that is developed, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secular, and modern. [...]. Nowadays, any society, wherever it exists on a geographical map, which shares these characteristics, can be said to belong to ‘the West’” (Hall 1992b: 276-277). Industrialisation, urbanisation as well as capitalist and secular approach can be judged as the characteristics of Western lifestyle. Considering them as the stereotypes of “the West”, the Occident discriminates the Eastern societies since the West views the Orient as devoid of these traits. This judgment accounts for East-West binary opposition. Edward Said identifies this dichotomy with the term “orientalism”. In his book, *Orientalism*, Said explains its characteristics in the following words: “Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints and limitations of thought than it is simply a positive doctrine. [T]he essence of orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority” (Said 2003: 42). Orientalist viewpoint reflects the Western societies’ approach to Eastern peoples in accordance with their identities. Aijaz Ahmad explains the term “orientalism” with a set of binary oppositions. For Ahmad, such binary oppositions as “Asia’s loss, Europe’s victory; Asia’s muteness, Europe’s mastery of discourse; Asia’s inability to represent itself, Europe’s will to represent it in accordance with its own authority” (Ahmad 1992: 180) establish a basis for orientalist discourse. Europe’s power of representation, method of administration, its ability to determine thought and discourse can be said to have caused the West to consider herself as the “master” of the East. This approach inevitably leads Western people to judge the Orient from a biased perspective.

It is possible to mention different aspects of the prejudices in inter-cultural relations. Ania Loomba elaborates on the West’s approach to the Orient in terms of personal characteristics. For Loomba, from the perspective of the Occidental culture, the Eastern people are characterised as showing signs of “laziness, aggression, violence, greed, [...], primitivism, [...] irrationality” (Loomba 2005: 93). The Western societies,

with their planned, rational and systematic way of life, inevitably judge the cultures with different lifestyles not impartially. The Occidental culture foregrounds its own values as an alternative to such traits as laziness, primitiveness and greediness, the characteristics mainly attributed to the Eastern nations.

In addition to personality, the Oriental mystical approach to life also explains the Western prejudice against the Eastern culture. In Edward Said's words in *Orientalism*, unlike the Occident, generally considered as a rational culture, the Oriental societies are viewed as having the characteristics of "pantheism, [...] spirituality, [...] primitivity" (Said 2003: 150). As understood from Said's statements, it is a popular belief that the events, situations and people that are encountered in daily life can be handled in a rational manner. This approach accounts for the Western critical approach to the Oriental lifestyle and culture.

The Western civilisation's arguably discriminatory outlook on the Eastern peoples and way of life can theoretically be explained with the term the "Other". Similar to women's segregation by the male-dominated system and the lower class people's exposition to inequalities by the wealthy strata in social milieu, the East is viewed as the "Other" by the West in cultural area. Aijaz Ahmad explains the reason for the use of this term in cultural area in the following words: "It is by defining the 'Orient' as the dangerous, inferiorized civilizational Other that Europe has defined itself. [...]. The West has needed to constitute the Orient as its Other in order to constitute itself and its subject position" (Ahmad 1992: 178-182).

While Aijaz Ahmad expresses the general traits of the "Other" in these words, Frantz Fanon deals with the impact of biased approaches upon the people who are exposed to discrimination in cultural sense. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon reflects the psychological situation of the colonised black people as follows:

The black man has no dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. [...]. Every colonised people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter, as he renounces his blackness, his jungle (Fanon 1967: 8-9).

While Fanon argues that the black person tends to reject his blackness in his encounter with a white man, he also elaborates on how the Western people judge the black. For Fanon,

in Europe, that is to say, in every civilised and civilising country, the Negro is the symbol of sin. The archetype of the lowest value is represented by the Negro. [...]. The black [man] is the slave of [Western] cultural imposition. After having been the slave of a white man, he enslaves himself. The Negro is in every sense of the word a victim of white civilisation (Fanon 1967: 146-148).

Whereas Fanon discusses the “Other” in relation to white-black binary opposition, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak identifies this term as “Subaltern” and defines it as “groups that feel subordinated in any way” (Spivak 1996: 290). This subordination is observed in different aspects of social life. In patriarchy, while man has the “Subject” position, the female population gets exposed to discrimination. Similarly, the wealthy social strata, due to their accumulation of capital and acquisition of economic power, view themselves as the “masters” of the lower social classes. These prejudiced approaches in relation to gender and social status inevitably bring about disunities, which are also experienced in inter-cultural relations. In Spivak’s words in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, “the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy and ideology of the West” (Spivak 1983: 24). Hence, as a result of their reinforcement of the perception of “Western superiority”, the Occident judges the East as the “Other”, as an object. Considering Spivak’s discourses, it does not seem possible for the segregated women, social classes and cultures to lead their lives and express their opinions in liberty.

While the term “Other”, as examined by Aijaz Ahmad, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak from different perspectives, reinforces the “Western superiority” perception, it also causes the Oriental societies to gradually alienate from their native identities. Their segregation by the Western societies despite their efforts to adjust to the Occidental lifestyle arguably leads to an in-betweenness among the Eastern people in terms of their cultural identities. In the introduction to *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha focuses on the emergence of in-betweenness, stating that “the ‘locality’ of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as ‘other’ in relation to what is outside or beyond it. [...] What emerges as a [consequence] is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through

which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated” (Bhabha 1990: 4). Local cultures are neither unified nor unitary because of the globalisation process. As a result of globalisation, along with people and their outlook on life, societies and cultures somehow inevitably get exposed to transformation. Thus, in line with this argument, in Bhabha’s words in *The Location of Culture*, “cultural globality is figured in the *in-between* spaces of double frames: its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred ‘subject’ signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the ‘present’. [...]. It is only through the structure of splitting and displacement [...] that the architecture of new historical subject emerges at the limits of representation itself” (Bhabha 2004: 309-310). Globalisation’s removal of boundaries among nations and cultures not only bring positive results like the recognition of the so-far unknown cultures, but it also leads to the Western cultural hegemony throughout the world. The perception of “Occidental supremacy” despite the Eastern people’s expectation for integration with the Western host culture leads to the establishment of split identities among individuals with the Oriental lifestyle.

At this point, ambivalence in terms of a sense of belonging to a cultural identity can be best related to the term “migration”. In Graham Huggan’s words, migration is “an intricate nexus of social, political, economic and historical forces” (Huggan 2008: 35). In relation to the process of transformation in individual, social and cultural areas, Nikos Papastergiadis explains the characteristics of “immigrants” in the following words: “Today the term ‘migrant’ has a looming presence. It has an ambivalent association. For some it suggests a positive image of cosmopolitanism and adventure. To others it issues a defensive reaction against the so-called ‘dirty’ foreigners and ‘bogus’ asylum-seekers” (Papastergiadis 2000: 51). Recognition and understanding of as well as integration with different lifestyles reflect the expectations of the Eastern immigrants to the West. However, such descriptions as “dirty foreigners” and “bogus asylum-seekers” represent the continuation of the Western discriminatory outlook on the Oriental societies. Despite their expectations for integration with the Occident, people’s exposition to segregation due to their status as immigrants lead them not to feel a sense of belonging to either their original identity or Western culture completely. Global-local dichotomy restricts and may inhibit the estab-



ishment of a worldview in individual, social and cultural terms.

While Papastergiadis theoretically deals with the immigrants' identities, Elleke Boehmer specifically elaborates on their circumstances, particularly in the United Kingdom, as follows:

The late twentieth century witnessed demographic shifts on an unprecedented scale, impelled by many different forces: anti-imperialist conflict, the claims of rival nationalisms, economic hardship, famine, state repression, the search for new opportunities. Uprooted masses of people streamed across and away from Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burma – and more recently Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Iraq. According to the United Nations, some 100 million people in the world today qualify as immigrants – that is, live as minorities, in states of unbelonging. [...]. For different reasons, ranging from professional choice to political exile, writers from a medley of once-colonised nations have participated in the [...] condition of energised migrancy. These include the St. Lucian Derek Walcott, a commuter between Boston and the West Indies; the Bombay-born Salman Rushdie [...] (Boehmer 2005: 226).

In the light of the theoretical analysis of the cultural disunities between the East and the West, this paper aims specifically to focus on Salman Rushdie's ambivalence in relation to his discrimination in the British society despite his efforts for integration with the lifestyle in England. In this context, the paper aims to elaborate on Rushdie's latest novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) and explain his ambivalence as a consequence of dynamism in the globalising contemporary world.

#### INEVITABLY AMBIVALENT: "TWO YEARS, EIGHT MONTHS AND TWENTY-EIGHT NIGHTS"

Since his early years in life, Rushdie has established interaction with individuals from different cultures. This can be considered as an explanation for his tolerance about cultural diversity. In his words in *In God We Trust* (1985),

I was brought up in an Indian Muslim household, but while both my parents were believers neither was insistent or doctrinaire. [...]. I had a Christian ayah (nanny), for whom at Christmas we would put up a tree and sing carols about baby Jesus without feeling

in the least ill-at-ease. My friends were Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis (Rushdie 1985: 376-377)

Culture is not a static phenomenon. It somehow inevitably changes as the societies experience transformation. This change does not only occur among different nations, but among people in the same country as well. Rushdie's early experiences in life in India can be considered as an epitome of this idea. His growth by a Christian ayah and his family's lack of insistence on him in relation to Islamic norms contribute to Rushdie's appreciation of different cultures impartially. Particularly, the impact of the ayah, rather than his parents on Rushdie leads him to get more acquainted with the Western traditions. Moreover, Rushdie's friends from the Hindu, Sikh and Parsi identities make it possible for him to recognise different beliefs and cultures and judge them objectively. His acquaintance with different lifestyles and beliefs indicate the transformation in Rushdie's cultural identity as a by-product of dynamism in the globalising world.

In Damien Rogers's words, as an indication of both the increasing inter-cultural relations in the global context as well as his efforts for tolerant judgement of different cultures, "in 1961, Rushdie was sent to continue his education in England, where he attended Rugby School" (Rogers 2006: 36). In *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012), it is possible to find out Rushdie's experiences as well as ideas about his education in England. Although this book is categorised as a memoir, it is as a matter of fact his autobiography. Remarkably though, he reflects his real-life experiences from the third person singular point of view, instead of the first person narrative. Arguably due to his anxieties about the likelihood of the continuation of the fatwa against him, Rushdie names his book as *Joseph Anton*. In this autobiographical account, Rushdie's focus on his experience for tasting pork, despite its prohibition in his family's religion, can be viewed as a representation of his efforts for integration with the Western lifestyle:

By the end of the Latin lesson he was a hard-line atheist, and to prove it, he marched determinedly into the school tuckshop during break and bought himself a ham sandwich. The flesh of the swine passed his lips for the first time that day, and the failure of the Almighty to strike him dead with a thunderbolt proved to him what he had long suspected: that there was nobody up there with thunderbolts to hurl (Rushdie 2012: 32).

Similarly, his words in *In Good Faith* (1984) “I believe in no god [sic], and have done so since I was a young adolescent” (Rushdie 2010: 405) embody Rushdie’s effort for the appreciation of and adaptation to the Occidental lifestyle and culture. His efforts for integration with the Western lifestyle can be related to the cosmopolitan characteristics of the British society. Mary Louise Pratt defines the multicultural trait of the social structure in England with the phrase “contact zones”, which she describes as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination across the globe” (Pratt 2008: 7). Thus, although the British society apparently welcomes variety in cultural area, it somehow inevitably exhibits a discriminatory approach to people with a sense of belonging to different cultural values. Therefore, in James Clifford’s words, “contact zones become conflict zones” (Clifford 1997: 207). Hence, as a signification of the continuing inter-cultural biases in the cosmopolitan British social area, Rushdie inevitably gets exposed to discrimination at school. Accordingly, in Jack Livings’ interview with him, Rushdie concentrates upon the British segregation against him and its reasons in his following words: “I was very lonely and there were few people that I thought of as friends. A lot of that had to do with prejudice” (The Paris Review). Rushdie emphasises the inevitability of clashes in inter-cultural relations and he explains the major reason for the prejudices and disunities among the nations in *Home Front* (1984) as follows: “God cannot be defined without the Devil, Jekyll is meaningless without Hyde. Clearly the Other is to be feared. [...]. Very frequently the Other is foreign; only very, very rarely is it presented as an object of sympathy” (Rushdie 2010: 144). Similar to God-Devil and Jekyll-Hyde, Rushdie makes comparison between the East and the West. As discussed in the theoretical analysis early in this paper, the Orient and the Occident are considered opposite to each other. The West’s power in the determination of discourse enables her not only to represent her own lifestyle but also her Oriental counterpart. The perception about the West’s activeness and the East’s passiveness inhibits conciliation between these two cultures and leads to disunities in cultural area. Hence, based on the comparison in *Home Front*, Rushdie indicates the impossibility of mutual understanding among the nations with different lifestyles and sense of belonging. In relation to the comparison in terms of inter-cultural relations, Rushdie ex-

plains his loneliness and acquisition of only few friends with prejudices among different cultures.

Rushdie deals with inter-cultural biases not only in his writings but his works of literature as well. The cultural prejudices are epitomised in *Midnight's Children* (1981). The protagonist of the work, Saleem Sinai, is born in India, which proclaimed its independence after the British Raj<sup>1</sup>. Because of his Indian identity, he gets exposed to discrimination in the school, which he attends. The following dialogue between Saleem and his geography teacher, Zagallo, can be considered an embodiment of the biases in inter-cultural relations:

Saleem's assailant: handsome, frenetic, with a barbarian's shaggy moustache: I present the leaping, hair-tearing figure of Mr. Emily Zagallo, who taught us geography and gymnastics, and who, that morning, unintentionally precipitated the crisis of my life. Zagallo claimed to be Peruvian, and was fond of catling us jungle-Indians [...]. Zagallo is laughing now. [...]. "You don't see?" he guffaws. "In the face of thees ugly ape you don't see the whole map of *India*?" (Rushdie 2006: 318-321).

The teacher Zagallo judges Saleem as the "Other". From the Peruvian perspective, he segregates Saleem by describing him as "ugly ape". Zagallo's expression indicates that disunities inevitably occur not only between the coloniser and the colonised, but also among the societies with different lifestyles. In this sense, Zagallo's discriminatory approach can be viewed as an example proving the impossibility of conciliation not only between the East and the West but also among societies with distinctive outlook on life and humanity.

Rushdie shows that the cultural biases can be mutual as well in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). Among its major characters, Max Ophuls, depicted as a child of a Jewish family living in Strasbourg, is a person with a biased outlook on the Oriental culture and lifestyle. In the narrator's words, for Ophuls, the singer's name "Zainab Azam, meant nothing to him" (Rushdie 2006: 25). However, from Zainab Azam's point of view, "he [Ophuls] was the Rudyard Kipling<sup>2</sup> of ambassadors" (Rushdie 2006: 25). With a discriminatory approach, the ambassador does not find the singer's name meaningful. In other words, Max Ophuls judges Azam as the "Other", since she belongs to a culture different from the Western culture, to which he is attached. Zainab Azam also exhibits a parallel point of view, because similar to the ambassador, she judges him not objectively, but in terms of her sense of belonging to

Indian culture and hence she establishes similarity between him and Rudyard Kipling. In this sense, both characters view each other with regard to their identities. Hence, this example can be commented as the signification of the mutuality of the biases in inter-cultural relations.

In *Shame* (1983), Rushdie explains the reason for the prejudices in inter-cultural interactions in relation to Darwin's theory of evolution: "History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise, and old, saurian truths go to the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarettes. Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks [...]" (Rushdie 1995: 124). Just like the species in the nature, the societies experience a cultural evolution. Arguably as a result of their evolutionary process, the Western societies consider themselves as the masters of their Oriental counterparts, since they judge the Eastern communities as deprived of the traits of the Occident, which make it feel a sense of superiority. As understood from Rushdie's words, the realities of the Western ideals shape the cultural values of the Oriental societies as well as their approach to life. Hence, although Rushdie tries to understand and become integrated with the British cultural values, the perception of cultural "superiority" causes biases.

As a result of the prejudices among cultures, an issue that is reflected both in his writings and works of literature, despite his efforts for integration with the Western lifestyle, Rushdie inevitably experiences contradictions in his outlook on life. These contradictions can be exemplified in various situations. The following words in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) epitomise the conflict in his approach to his native land: "India, my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable, my mother, my father and my first great truth. It may be that I am not worthy of you, for I have been imperfect, I confess. [...]. India, [...], source of my savagery, breaker of my heart" (Rushdie 2000: 249). Rushdie's depiction of India as "my mother", "my father", "my first great truth" represents his allegiance to his native country. On the other hand, he considers India as "the source of my savagery" and thus he indicates his alienation from the Indian culture.

A second contradiction is concerned with Rushdie's approach to religion. As a columnist, his following words in his essay "Now I Can Say, I Am a Muslim" indicate that Rushdie has not been completely alienated from his native identity in

terms of religion: “Religion for me has always meant Islam. [...]. What I know of Islam is that tolerance, compassion and love are at its very heart” (*New York Times* 28 December 1990). Islam is one of the components of Rushdie’s native identity. His description of this religion with the words “tolerance”, “compassion” and “love” is an indication of his continuing link with his Indian origins. Conversely, his following ideas about religion in his essay “*Imagine There is No Heaven*”: *A Letter to the Six Billionth World Citizen* (1997) epitomise his critical outlook on beliefs:

As human knowledge has grown, it has also become plain that every religious story ever told about how we got here is quite simply wrong. This, finally, is what all religions have in common. They didn’t get it right. There was no celestial churning, no maker’s dance, no vomiting of galaxies [...]. Wrong, wrong, wrong (Rushdie 2003: 155).

Rushdie has a questioning approach to religious beliefs. He criticises the mystical stories that are considered sacred in different religions and puts emphasis on the rationalist point of view in judging these stories. This can be viewed as an indication of Rushdie’s efforts to internalise the rationalist characteristics of the British society. His view of Islam as a faith based on tolerance, love and mercy as well as his depiction of all religions as mystical suggest the paradox in his outlook on the issue of faith.

Rushdie’s conflicting arguments in terms of the imperialist discourse also provide hints about his outlook on life. The following words in his essay *The New Empire within Britain* (1982) indicate his critical approach to imperialism<sup>3</sup>:

British thought, British society, has never been cleansed of the filth of imperialism. It’s still there, breeding lice and vermin, waiting for unscrupulous people to exploit it for their own ends. One of the key concepts of imperialism was that military superiority implied cultural superiority, and this enabled the British to condescend to and repress cultures far older than their own; and it still does. (Rushdie 2010: 131-132)

Imperialism separates individuals in relation to their identities and lifestyles. This inhibits mutual understanding and unity among different cultures. Rushdie, albeit aware of their inevitability, criticises the clashes in inter-cultural interactions. However, as an embodiment of the contradictions in his out-

look on life, Rushdie also suggests that there is valid reason for Britain's segregation of the Indians in his essay *Kipling* (1990): "Kipling states most emphatically his belief that India can never stand alone, without British leadership, [...]. There will always be plenty in Kipling that I will find difficult to forgive; but there is also enough truth in these stories to make them impossible to ignore" (Rushdie 2010: 80).

While Rushdie reflects his contradictory ideas in terms of his cultural ambivalence in his fiction and non-fiction, he deals with his identity conflict in relation to the dichotomy between mysticism and rationalism in his *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*. Based on this binary opposition, Rushdie does not follow a linear time sequence. He combines the contemporary world with Ibn Rushd and Ghazali's time. These two philosophers also function as allegorical characters in the work to justify the ambivalence in Rushdie's identity as an inevitable consequence of dynamism in the globalising world.

In the novel, Ghazali is introduced as the representative of mysticism. The narrator depicts his mystical trait as follows:

Ghazali had written a book called *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, [...]. Philosophy, he jeered, was incapable of proving the existence of God, or even of proving the impossibility of there being two gods. Philosophy believed in the inevitability of causes and effects, which was a diminution of the power of God, who could easily intervene to alter the effects and make causes ineffectual if he so chose. (Rushdie 2015: 8)

Ghazali's dogmatic approach reflects the unquestioning point of view for life and individuals. As a binary opposition to Ghazali's mystical outlook, Rushdie employs Ibn Rushd as the representative of rationalism in the novel: "[R]eason', 'logic' and 'science' [...] were the three pillars of his thought" (Rushdie 2015: 7).

Rushdie reflects rationalism not only in terms of Ibn Rushd's traits, but also in his dialogue with his jinn named Dunia in the novel:

"What happens", Ibn Rushd asked Dunia when the night wrapped them in silence and they could speak of forbidden things, "when a lighted stick is brought into contact with a ball of cotton?"

"The cotton catches fire, of course", she answered.

"And why does it catch fire?"

"Because that's the way of it", she said, "the fire licks the cotton and the cotton becomes part of the fire, that's how things are".

“The law of nature”, he said, “causes have their effects”, and her head nodded beneath his caressing hand.

“He disagreed”, Ibn Rushd said, and she knew he meant the enemy, Ghazali, the one who had defeated him. He said that the cotton caught fire because God made it do so, because in God’s universe the only law is what God wills (Rushdie 2015: 8).

Ibn Rushd’s explanation of the natural circumstances with the cause-effect relationship points to his rationalist approach. Similarly, though a supernatural being, his jinn, Dunia has also a rationalist viewpoint. Her expression that cotton catches fire, once in contact with fire, reflects her basis of natural circumstances on the principle of causality.

Parallel to the method he chooses to reflect the basic characteristics of rationalism, Rushdie also elaborates on Ghazali and his jinn Zumurrud the Great’s ideas to indicate the distinguishing traits of mysticism:

“We live in what can be called Becoming-Time. We are born, we become ourselves, and then, when the Destroyer of Days comes to call, we unbecome, and what is left is dust. Talkative dust, in my case, but dust nonetheless. God’s time, however, is eternal: it’s just Being-Time. Past, present and future all exist for him, and so those words *past*, *present*, *future* cease to have meaning. Eternal time has neither beginning nor end. It does not move. Nothing begins. Nothing finishes. God, in his time, has neither a dusty end, nor a fat, bright middle, nor a mewling beginning. He just *is*”.

“Just is”, Zumurrud repeated doubtfully.

“Yes”, Ghazali confirmed.

“So, God is a sort of time traveller”, Zumurrud proposed. “He moves from his kind of time to ours, and by doing so becomes infinitely powerful”.

“If you like”, Ghazali agreed. “Except that he does not *become*. He still just *is*. You have to be careful how you use words” (Rushdie 2015: 232).

Their judgment of man’s birth, death and the period between these two instances from a spiritual perspective can be considered as an indication of Ghazali and Zumurrud’s representation of the Oriental mysticism. Ghazali’s words about “time” are arguably another signification of the mysticism. By reflecting the ideas of both the philosopher and his jinn, Zumurrud, Rushdie reinforces his emphasis on the significance of rationalism. In addition to his favour for rational way of thinking, Rushdie’s critical approach to mysticism can also be related to his efforts for adaptation to and tolerant judgment



of the Western cultural values. The narrator's words "most of Zumurrud's activity was in what might loosely be called the 'East'" (Rushdie 2015: 243) point that Rushdie views rationalist, systematic and planned lifestyle as the major characteristics of the Occidental societies. His favour for rationalism and critical approach to mysticism are thus arguably the signification of Rushdie's aim to judge the Western cultures tolerantly. His alienation from his Indian identity while trying to appreciate the Occidental culture explains his critical outlook on mysticism.

Rushdie's following words explains the major cause of his support for rationalism in relation to his ideas about his father's death in Jason Hollander's interview with him on September 10, 2015:

I watched my father die and he never for an instant called out to any kind of deity. And I'm not interested in that. I'm just not interested in it.

I think what happens as you get older is a kind of clarity arrives about not wasting time. When you're young, the time that spreads ahead of you seems to be vast and accommodating, and there's plenty of time for everything. And by the time you get to this point, you realize there's hardly time to do the things you really have to do. And so don't waste time – that's my message to myself now every day, you know, don't waste the day. Do something (Education News).

As a reflection of his critical view of the Orient, Rushdie believes that spiritual and mystical approach to life and humanity is not progressive. His father's expectation of no deity in his death can be considered as a major factor reinforcing Rushdie's critical outlook on mysticism. As a signification of his critical approach to mysticism, for Rushdie, productivity reinforces rationalist outlook on life and helps individuals to avoid dogmatism. Therefore, in his response to the interviewer, his emphasis on time management explains his criticism for Ghazali's unquestioning attitude in the novel.

As a signification of his tolerant judgement of the Western culture and his expectation for integration with it, Rushdie emphasises the superiority of rationalism to mysticism. But still, he believes that under the circumstances of the contemporary world, rationalist point of view cannot always contribute to coping with the problematic events, people or situations in daily life. In his words in *Kapuściński's Angola* (1987), "what kinds of life should we call 'ordinary', here in the late

twentieth century? What is normal in these ‘abnormal’ days?” (Rushdie 2010: 203). Rushdie depicts rapid change on the global scale as “abnormal” because individuals cannot maintain a steady viewpoint for the circumstances in daily life. The dynamism of contemporary world somehow makes it harder for people to exhibit a rationalist approach to the happenings in life. Rushdie reflects this problematic issue of contemporary life in the novel in the following dialogue between Jimmy Kapoor and his character, Natraj Hero:

Natraj Hero did not exist. He was the fictional alter-ego of a young would-be graphic novelist, Jimmy Kapoor. Natraj’s superpower was dancing. When he “ripped off his outer garment” his two arms turned into four, he had four faces, too, front, back and sides, and a third eye in the middle of his front forehead [...]. Jimmy Kapoor shook with terror. “How did you get hehere?” he stammered. “In into my bebedrooroom?” *You have seen Ghostbusters fillum?* responded Natraj. [...]. Natraj began to flicker and dim. [...]. Then he was gone and Jimmy Kapoor alone wide-eyed in bed watched the black clouds spiral inward until the dark tunnel was gone. [...]. Jimmy Kapoor was the first to discover the wormhole, and after that, as he correctly intuited, everything shifted form (Rushdie 2015: 65-68).

The graphic novel character, Natraj Hero’s dialogue with his creator Jimmy Kapoor as well as his dancing and the changes in his physical characteristics all explain the cases that Rushdie reflects as “strange” in the novel. Moreover, Jimmy’s surprise for Natraj’s flickering and dimming and his awareness of the inevitability of change in the form of the real or fictional existences indicate that rationalist approach cannot always account for the situations that happen in contemporary life. Sanford Bliss’s following thoughts as reflected by the narrator can be considered as an explanation for the effects of dynamism in social area: “A world that did not cohere, in which truth did not exist and was replaced by warring versions trying to dominate or even eradicate their rivals, horrified him. [...] He named his home La Incoerenza, *incoherence* for Italian” (Rushdie 2015: 40). As a signification of the incoherence of the contemporary lifestyle, individuals not only find it difficult to adapt to the change in the world, but they also cannot maintain their sense of belonging to their own culture. Arguably judged as “contradictory”, these situations in the novel epitomise Rushdie’s ambivalence in relation to the continual flux in the globalising world. Therefore, Rushdie handles a set

of paradoxical situations in the work to reinforce his in-between identity.

Hugo Casterbridge's self-conflicting case can be considered as one of these paradoxical cases, pointing to the adverse effects of contemporary dynamism on individuals' cultural sense of belonging. Described as a composer, Casterbridge is sensitive to the happenings in the twenty-first century context. However, his ambivalence in terms of his identity can be judged as the representation of Rushdie's outlook on life:

Two hundred and one days after the great storm, the British composer Hugo Casterbridge published an article in the *New York Times* that announced the formation of a new intellectual group whose purpose was to understand the radical shifts in the world conditions and to devise strategies for combating them. This group, widely derided in the days following the article's publication [included] telegenic biologists, mad-professor climatologists, magic-realist novelists, idiot film actors and renegade theologians [...]. The name "Casterbridge" was an invention. The great composer came from an immigrant family of Iberian Jews [...] (Rushdie 2015: 81-84).

Hugo Casterbridge questions the radical changes in contemporary world. As a result of his sensitivity, he tries to find ways to deal with them. Therefore, he establishes partnership with the scientists and artists to find solutions for the issues that he finds problematic. His partnership with the biologists signifies his sensitivity to the effects of the rapid and dynamic lifestyle on the biological diversity on the Earth. His work with the climatologists indicates his concern with the weather conditions aggravating due to humanity's indifference to nature. These examples can be considered as the signs of Casterbridge's sensitivity to scientific knowledge as well as his questioning and rationalist mind. The contradiction in his case, though, is that he does not have an original identity, since the narrator presents his name as an "invention". The inconsistency in the composer's identity can thus be viewed as a by-product of the complexity of contemporary life in cultural area.

Besides Hugo Casterbridge's case, the conflict in Geronimo Manezes' identity is a second example of ambivalence based on the dynamism of contemporary life:

He had been born Raphael Hieronymus Manezes in Bandra, Bombay, the illegitimate son of a firebrand Catholic priest [...]. His holy father [was] Jerry [...]. Father Jerry's son could not be given his

father's surname, of course, the decencies had to be observed, so he received his mother's instead. For Christian names the good pastor named him Raphael after the patron saint of Córdoba, Spain, and Hieronymus after Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, of the city of Stridon [...]. Geronimo Manezes, hearing his original given name after so long, felt a pang of a feeling he recognised as alienation, the sensation of not belonging any more to a part of oneself [...] (Rushdie 2015: 27-33).

In Alison Beard's interview with him on September 2015, Rushdie's argument "understanding the world is a very difficult thing" (Harvard Business Review) is arguably an explanation for the emergence of identity conflict as a by-product of contemporary world. For Rushdie, it is not easy to understand what is going on in the world because the individuals cannot keep up with the speed of change in the twenty-first century. This failure causes indecision about the sets of ideals to believe in individual and social sense. In the interview between with Salman Rushdie entitled "On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation with Edward Said" (1986), Edward Said's following words can be an epitome for the effects of globalisation process on the cultural sense of belonging: "Whether in the Arab world or elsewhere, twentieth-century mass society has destroyed identity in so powerful a way that it is worth a great deal to keep this specificity alive" (Rushdie 2010: 183). As understood from Said's words, beginning from the twentieth century, the concept of globalisation has influenced the societies to such a large extent that cultural monopoly rather than cultural diversity has come to the foreground. This monopoly based on the dynamism of contemporary life somehow inhibits the societies' and individuals' maintenance of their outlook on life as well as cultural identities. The contradiction about Geronimo Manezes's name can thus be viewed as a signification of this indecisiveness. Name represents a person's identity. So, the three names of this character, i.e. Raphael, Hieronymus and Geronimo, reflect his ambivalence as a by-product of the social life in the twenty-first century.

Rushdie not only focuses on the human characters, but also supernatural beings to justify his in-between identity as an inevitable consequence of contemporary lifestyle. The following dialogue between Jimmy Kapoor and Dunia, Ibn Rushd's jinn, can be judged as an epitome of this argument:

I am a person from that world, a jinnia, a princess of the tribe of the bright jinn. I am also your great-great-great-great-great-

great-grandmother, though I may have omitted a *great* or two. Never mind. In the twelfth century, I loved your great-great-et-cetera-grandfather, your illustrious ancestor the philosopher Ibn Rushd, and you, Jinendra Kapoor, who can't trace your family history back further than three generations, are a product of that great love, maybe the greatest love there ever was between the tribes of men and jinn. This means that you, like all the descendants of Ibn Rushd, Muslim, Christian, atheist or Jew, are also partly of the jinn. The jinni part, being far more powerful than the human part, is very strong in you all, and this is what made it possible for you to survive the otherness in *there*; for you are Other, too (Rushdie 2015: 75).

Even though Dunia represents rationalist viewpoint, she believes that the maintenance of personal and cultural identities is impossible. Her consideration of the people with different beliefs and lifestyles as Ibn Rushd's descendants and her depiction of them as coming from the jinns can be considered as a signification of the failure of rationalism in coping with the flux of the contemporary world, hence individuals' and societies' difficulty in maintaining a steady outlook on life and humanity.

While Rushdie relates the cultural ambivalence to the complexity of the globalising twenty-first century world by means of both human characters and supernatural beings in the novel, he focuses on the influence of the dynamic nature of contemporary lifestyle on his ambivalent cultural identity and outlook on life and humankind in *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*:

He was a migrant. He was one of those who had ended up in a place that was not the place where he began. Migration tore up all the traditional roots of the self. The rooted self flourished in a place it knew well, among people who knew well, following customs and traditions with which it and its community were familiar, and speaking its language among others who did the same. Of these four roots, place, community, culture and language, he had lost three. His beloved Bombay was no longer available to him (Rushdie 2012: 53).

Migration is one of the inevitable consequences of the complex and globalising contemporary world. Migration, in this sense, contributes to healthy and constructive intercultural relations, since it arguably removes the barriers between countries with different lifestyles and cultural values. However, while globalisation process enables the physical borders among the nations to be removed, it does not make it possible to end the inter-cultural biases. Considered in this sense, whereas migration process helps Rushdie to understand

and judge the British lifestyle tolerantly, it also inevitably causes displacement in terms of his cultural identity. Hence, Rushdie's qualification of himself as "migrant" indicates that he does not have a sense of belonging to a certain culture. This situation can be seen as a proof reinforcing the continuation of inter-cultural prejudices in the world despite the globalisation process that supposedly removes the borders among the countries.

In the epilogue of *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, the following words can be judged as Rushdie's explanation about the cause of ambivalent identities in the twenty-first century:

In the world of literature there was a noticeable separation of the writers from their subjects. Scientists reported the separation of causes and effects. It became impossible to compile new editions of dictionaries on account of the separation of words and meanings. Economists noted the growing separation of the rich from the poor. The divorce courts experienced a sharp increase in business owing to a spate of marital separations. Old friendships came abruptly to an end. The separation plague spread rapidly across the world (Rushdie 2015: 161).

In Rushdie's words in the epilogue of the novel, as a result of digital technology, "motor cars, electronics [...] bring us joy" (Rushdie 2015: 286). While these devices contribute to facilities in daily life and hence bring joy to humanity, they also lead to alienation, which Rushdie names as "separation" in the quotation. For Rushdie, due to the complexity of the contemporary world, words cannot keep their meanings. So, in a world where words very often change their meanings, the individual and social ideals are not as strictly valued as before. Thus, relations among friends, family members, husband and wives, people from different social strata inevitably lose their significance. In this sense, it is not wrong to argue that Rushdie bases his cultural ambivalence on his inevitable failure in keeping his personal beliefs due to the continuous flux of the globalising world. His favour for Ibn Rushd's rationalist point of view can be considered as a representation of his efforts to adjust to the British lifestyle. However, the failure of rationalist approach in the resolution of the problematic issues in contemporary context reflects Rushdie's lack of success in his efforts for integration with the Occidental values as well as maintenance of his personal outlook on life.

## CONCLUSION

*Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* is a tale of quest for finding a route about the root of a cultural identity in the twenty-first century. Rushdie favours rationalist point of view as a representation of his efforts to get integrated with the British lifestyle. However, in the novel, his deduction based on the failure of rationalism in dealing with all the problematic issues in life can be considered as a signification of the inevitability of his segregation in British social milieu. In this sense, the “strange” situations in the work reflect the ambivalence in both Rushdie’s cultural identity and his outlook on life. Rushdie’s justification of his identity conflict in relation to man’s failure in the adaptation to the dynamism of contemporary world indicates the failure in his quest for a stable route for his roots. This failure Rushdie experiences derives from the host culture’s outlook on him. From the British perspective, Salman Rushdie is “a cosmopolitan migrant writer” (Huggan 2008: 38) who feels a sense of displacement. His reflection of this feeling in his latest novel accounts for both his inevitable inability to maintain his bond with his Indian origins and the continuation of inter-cultural biases in the globalising and dynamic contemporary world. It is thus debatable as to whether man can find a route that contributes to integration among different cultures in the future.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Raj refers to the British sovereignty in India that lasted from 1858 to 1947. During this timeline, the Viceroys, the governors appointed by the Queen to rule India, were responsible for the administrative affairs there. The etymological origin of the term “viceroy” contributes to the appreciation of the rights of the British governors in India. In etymological sense, “viceroy” derives from the French words ‘vice’, meaning ‘deputy’ and ‘roi’, signifying ‘king’” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Thus, the Viceroys ruled India as the representatives of the Queen. Therefore, it is not possible to observe a national sort of government in India during the British Raj.

<sup>2</sup> An India-born British poet, novelist and short story writer, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) focuses on the Eastern way of life from an Orientalist perspective. He reflects the perception of “Europe’s mastery over the East” in his works in different genres. In this quotation, Zainab Azam’s employment of Rudyard Kipling as a metaphor reveals her critical outlook on Max Ophuls’ discriminatory approach to Oriental societies and cultures.

<sup>3</sup> Imperialism is defined as “the policy, practice or advocacy of extending the power and domination of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The view of imperialism as a policy can be considered as a signification that it has an ideological trait. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said defines this concept as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating met-

ropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (Said 1994: 8). Hence, along with its ideological trait, imperialism has also theoretical characteristics. In relation to its theoretical and ideological characteristics, imperialism can be judged as a basis of cultural prejudices continuing despite the globalization process, which contributes to the removal of borders among the nations as well as cultures.

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The narrators of the story of those eventful two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights that changed human life may well be equally nostalgic. For this is history—or maybe, so hazy is the actual truth of what happened in that ancient past (which is, in so many ways, our present), or who were the real heroes of the story, that it could also be folklore—told by a generation that tries to preserve the memory so they may not forget where they came from. The magic realism of the tale, and the humour that almost takes us by surprise in the most unexpected of places and makes us suspect a big private joke, lends a lightness of touch to this portrait of our horrifying times. Share Via. Topics. Salman Rushdie is our preeminent storyteller, but he has outdone even himself in his spellbinding new novel—his most entertaining, most moving and, given the novel’s powerful moral vision, his most deceptively lighthearted! It is absolutely gripping. The characters we meet here, with their dreams of love, their hopes and ambitions for themselves and the world, their battles for survival and for power, will live in our imaginations for years. —Sherryl Connelly, New York Daily News. —Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights is erudite without flaunting it, an amusement park of a pulpy disaster novel that resists flying out of control by being grounded by religion, history, culture and love. —Carolyn Kellogg, Los Angeles Times.