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DISPERSAL OF THE HEROIC CONSTRUCT IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH*

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Abstract

Creating heroism in characters, especially in the postmodern novel, provokes enthusiastic reading. Enabled by the creed of ambivalence, the postcolonial writer tries to undermine the "centre" so as to counter its hegemonic feelings by embarking on revising the conventional ideals of heroism. Revising hero-attribution, therefore, made the object of this essay – exploring the degree of postcolonial maneuvering around heroism and varied faces of the hero portrayal in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* – very compelling. This objective, pursuant to halting the ascendancy of a domineering character, is made theoretically impelling with the aesthetics of deconstruction, and the emphasis on dialectics of asymmetry and symmetry in character analysis, especially concerning morality and prominence. The finding is that, despite the fact that there is some sense of certainty about who the hero is, the author projects a dispersal of hero-features, as empowered by a system of paradoxes. This dispersal of heroic credentials to some extent creates difficulty identifying the character with the greatest influence on the plot, many of the characters, the strength of the hero-apparent notwithstanding, contributing very prominently to the twists and turns in the novel.

Keywords: heroism, dispersal, hermeneutics, dialogic, binarist.

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Introduction

Guided by the postmodernist ideology, Salman Rushdie's character-constructing framework reveals some distance from the conventionality that attends announcing the most cardinal of the characters or the personalities with the most heroic force. Rushdie deploys the interpretative force of hermeneutics, coupled with Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic paradigms to controvert the conventionalism or the traditional idea about heroism. Rushdie is, albeit, not unmindful of the gripping appearances of major characters in the story. Importantly, the regenerative concerns of the postcolonial ideology inspires creative flexibility in hero-creation. Though "an adversarial and antagonistic encounter" (Sanga 79), the colonial ordeal, to Rushdie, paradoxically explicates heroism as an identity in the conception of "historiography as a struggle for representation" (Banerjee 9), which manifests in "representations of the cultural difference epitomized by the chutney" (9). Rushdie uses the "chutneyfication" trope to dignify heroic duplicity in a novel, which shows that his

> fiction consistently embraces contradiction, privileging the plural over the singular, the polyphonic over the monologic. One of the clearest ways in which it does so is through the construction of dual oppositions […] only to deconstruct those oppositions by demonstrating that the apparent polar opposites are in fact interchangeable and mutually interdependent. (Booker 238)

From the contention about Salman Rushdie's fictive ideology in the statement just quoted, this essay is essentially about how heroism in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* is subjected to inter-character relevance, in the process controverting the idea of an all-powerful heroic figure in the plot of the novel; this inter-character relevance is expatiated upon through highlighting how some characters, though of miniature heroic prospects, become heroes by accident or coincidence, as their heroism is unintentionally facilitated, for they lack the will and intent to be heroes, and how powerful and influential characters vitiate the importance or 'potentate' force of the hero-apparent, which is done by juxtaposing the hero-apparent, Aurora, with some characters who, consciously (because of their arrogance and significance in the "subversion and abrogation" of the Aurora image) are convinced of their heroic values, and with a solitary individual, who unconsciously pursues heroic potency.

In this vitiation of the heroic substance, the relevance of the deconstructionist, postmodern and postcolonial theories is revealing. Deconstruction in this criticism is applicably noteworthy in that Salman Rushdie in *The Moor's Last Sigh* reviews and reconstructs the conventional belief, supposition and knowledge about heroism, by making the most notable of the characters less heroic than naturally envisioned, making her to be at the receiving end of malevolent opposition from some characters who are belligerently in pursuit of the hero-status, and whose actions say a lot about the ideological fluidity of the author concerning heroism. The postmodern construct in this criticism takes into account the desire of the author to establish many faces of the heroic template in order to deconstruct the colonial idea of one infallible power centre in its relationship with the colonised. In another sense, the reference to postmodernism in this essay is to underpin the attempt by Salman Rushdie to generate many truths about heroism contrary to the colonial view which seeks to build a common truth about it pursuant to glorifying its (colonial power's) own zeal and

longing for the status of almightiness in race relations. Adverting to postcolonialism in this article tends towards underlining the principles of "subversion, appropriation and abrogation" (Ogunsanwo 41) in defining the heroic ideal. Rushdie appropriates the colonial ideal of heroism by creating a character of immense mental power in Aurora but goes on to subvert and abrogate her eminence by making her morally frail, thereby exposing her and her ideological world to scathing counter-arguments from some characters, who are also relatively prominent and authoritative respecting the sequence and form of events, pursuant to varying heroism in *The Moor's Last Sigh*,

Complementary heroism in Rushdie's writing often denudes the hero-apparent of the all-engaging and all-powerful reach, reflecting "Stevenson's classic tale of the duality of human nature [in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*], a strong literary paradigm of dualisms" (238), which is indicative of "the conflicting selves jostling and joggling" (qtd. in Booker 241). The postmodern literary arena is now awash with dualist configurations in hero building in order to do away with inflexible literary structures, thereby countenancing "Nietzsche's transvaluation of values […,] the dialogics of Bakhtin [… and] the deconstructive project of Jacques Derrida" (250). Although the norms of postmodern malleability or flexibility dignifies the ambivalent conception of heroism, Rushdie still inclines towards the truism that, "one term in a pair is privileged over the other, so that what is "good" becomes defined by its difference from what is "bad"" (250). Invariably, the dismantling of hardline architecture of hero-making does not take Rushdie away from installing characters with the most overbearing expression and demeanor in a particular work, his ideological prerogative at a particular point in time being of the essence.

Hermeneutics of the Heroic Genius in *The Moor's Last Sigh*

Building a heroic figure in a narrative is dependent on the ideological pursuit of the writer. To that extent, the creation of heroism becomes a matter of creative virtue, writers being at liberty to construct characterization patterns to suit their doctrinal concerns. Such is the state of heroism in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. However, before an overview of the heroic platform in the narrative is done, it is vital one takes a critical look at the definition of the word 'hero', for this will be a guide to understanding Salman Rushdie's hero construction in the novel. The hero or heroine is the

> main character in a narrative or dramatic work. The more neutral term protagonist is often preferable, to avoid confusion with the usual sense of heroism as admirable courage or nobility, since in many works (other than epic poems, where such admirable qualities are required in the hero), the leading character may not be morally or otherwise superior. When our expectations of heroic qualities are strikingly disappointed, the central character may be known as an anti-hero or anti-heroine. (Baldick 163)

The particulars of this definition make the hero identity in *The Moor's Last Sigh* a question of perspectives. Salman Rushdie, like Chris Baldick, seems to be clear-headed about the criteria that make a character acceptable in heroic terms, especially respecting moral strength. As explained in the definition, the main character may lack the moral fibre with which to be clothed in heroic apparel. Besides that definitional outlook, the issue of prominence may also be controversial as the actions and inactions

of more than one character may bestride the length and breadth of the plot to the extent that from the exposition, through the climax, to the denouement, more than one character may be of substance. In addition, some characters may be heroic in some particulars, with especial regard to superhuman attributes, but constitute an anti-heroic force in some other respects. Some characters are also so noticeable to the point that they become antagonists to the hero-establishment. All these hero-constructing issues and contentions reveal the appreciable leaning toward arguing for the multifaceted picture of the conception of heroism in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, despite the acclaimed superhuman disposition of Aurora, the character with the most likely heroic appearance.

Some characters in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, going by the definitions above, are presentable as hero-personalities because their actions greatly contribute to the ideological standpoint of the author, which is to disperse the heroic compliments in order to glorify postmodernist syncretic all-involving philosophy to the detriment of the bourgeois European heroic singularity. It has to be said though that in the mix of the heroic many-sidedness, most of the characters come up as more of pretenders than contenders to the ideal heroic identity.

Aurora, by her prominence in every aspect of the plot and superhuman accomplishments, can be said to evince the most significant heroic qualities. She is indeed the main character. However, her moral declivities or attitudinal lows, to some reasonable extent, as depicted in one of the concepts of heroism identified in the definition above, mark her out as anti-heroic. Other characters like Abraham her husband, Vasco Miranda and Raman Fielding (Mainduck) though operating at the highest rung of the ladder of anti-heroism or villainy, are not insignificant figures in the author's spreading of the gospel of the reduced personality syndrome towards diffusing thoughts about the heroic 'integrity'. As would be seen later in this essay, these three characters, if that definition of heroism that deplores vices is to stand, demonstrate heroism by their actions, particularly against validating the attitude of almightiness of the main character, Aurora. In fact, without their actions, the hero-apparent would have become irreducible, and this would not favor the doctrinal agenda of the writer in attacking realistic transparency or Western homogeneity in hero establishment.

Unintentionally-facilitated Heroic Values in Postmodern Fiction

The postmodern novel, particularly in its antagonistic offensive against Western homogeneity, is at ease redefining literary canons and precepts. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the unintentionally-facilitated hero creation has a gripping hold on the plot. Therefore, unwittingly, a character like the narrator, Moraes, becomes a candidate, if peripheral or superficial, for heroic acclaim, both in his prominence and dramatic involvement with the denouement, in spite of the fact that he has no manifest intent to be a heroic agent. *The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children*, like *The Moor's Last Sigh*, reveal Rushdie's penchant for the creed of evasiveness respecting who dons the mantle of heroism. In *The Satanic Verses*, the author also uses the unintentionally-aided heroic genre to give Chamcha and other lesser characters some degree of conspicuousness, Gibreel being the main heroic voice. Gibreel Farishta's all-powerful heroic substantiality exists within the interrelatedness of primary and secondary

heroic potentialities. Gibreel, though he exudes ideal heroic prowess in the plot, is far from being the primary source of the fantastic instrument that guided him to safety after falling from the air during the *Bostan* horror. Chamcha, his psychical or subconscious half, who fell alongside him, received directly the transcendental being before it got to Gibreel. Salman Rushdie is also confused: "Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed. Which was the miracle worker?" (Rushdie, *Satanic Verses* 10). In his mind, he may be wondering who really the heroic entity was. At that point, Chamcha seems to "have been" before giving up his eminent position to Gibreel due to his (Chamcha's) distaste for antirealism, antirealism being the driving force in their quest to conquer the British Isles.

The heroic interconnectedness becomes more interestingly established when the author once referred to the two as "the two men, Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha" (5), when in real sense it is Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. Rushdie deliberately omitted the conjunction "and" between the names in the quotation, and then merged the opposite first names with the converse surnames to strengthen his idea of hero haziness. In order to substantiate hero parallelism or interchangeability between the two characters, the author would talk about "Chamcha", Saladin's surname, but makes reference to "Gibreel", Farishta's first name, a postcolonial portrait of the indistinctness of the South Asian migrants' identity, for they are "partly of the West […] sometimes stradd[ling] two cultures; at other times fall[ing] between two stools" (Needham 145). This play on likeness and variance fortifies the author's proselytizing of the multiplex personality syndrome.

The uninformed traveler in Ben Okri's *Astonishing the Gods* also epitomizes this possession of heroism without premeditation. The traveler is intrinsically endowed with heroic particulars, contextually speaking, though he is oblivious of the endowment. In the same vein, the "invisibles" are also innately blessed with the same content of invisibility from which sprouts the heroism of the traveler. Unlike the traveler, however, they are cognizant of being a repertoire of the property. Apparently, the "invisibles" have to inculcate in their travelling guest the importance of the heroic invisibility that is naturally resident in him, and makes him aware of it, without which he would have remained empty, a hero in the dark about his heroic force. Possessing the invisibility vitals and at the same time perceptive of its possessorship, it will be arguable to clothe the "invisibiles" in heroic garments.

This polyphonic endearment to the projection of character preeminence through the unintentionally-assisted heroic slant, withal, takes into consideration the activist struggles of Black Tyger and Jeremiah the photographer as they invigorate Azaro's quest initiative, reinforcing the hero-symbiosis perception in Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment*.

The Joshua-Esau trans-textual trope in *Midnight's Children*, which proclaims the heroic triumphalism of Saleem Sinai, mediated by the supplanting indiscretion of Mary Pereira, an action that altered the destiny of Shiva, cannot but be an issue for reflection in the exegesis of fluvial heroism of the unintentionally-facilitated hue. This unintentionally-borne heroic shade in *Midnight's Children* to conceive veiled heroism between Saleem and Shiva is also discernible in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, but it is of a more subdued kind in the latter (*The Moor's Last Sigh*) because of the more conspicuous gap in prominence between the two actors (Saleem and Shiva).

The diametrically opposed variant, the intentionally-assisted heroic species, takes the stage in Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment*. Azaro has his heroic hands full in the light of the heroic and anti-heroic moments of Madam Koto, all energized through her otherworldly engagements. "[…] a colossus in our dreams" (Okri 36), Azaro submits, in agreement with her awesome aura over events, her contemptible death-transferring villainy, part of her hero-vitiating viciousness, notwithstanding. The chutney being a link to "postmodernism's penchant for Otherness" (Banerjee 9) may have theoretically burnished her heroism-pursuing zeal. Her hero-pursuit may not be without grounds; as "the new Mother of Images" (Okri 143), she is portrayed in oxymoronic terms, thriving in the munificence of the monstrosity of a feminist order, a salve for Azaro in dire moments, thereby enlarging the author's bizarre creative space. Madam Koto consciously pursues the status of the heroine, and she is assisted by her adventures despite lacking the moral pedigree.

Aurora's manifest Heroic Posturing Arrayed against Abraham's Subtle 'Heroic' Manoeuvres

Abraham's pursuit of the heroic credential is more of criminality than virtuosity but to him, a hero is a hero, no matter in which manner he is presented. Aurora and Abraham, a couple, are symbolic of phallic, feminist and economic signifying ideas towards provoking a conflict of binarist signification. Abraham is appalled and debased by Aurora's authoritarian behavior in their marital life. To counter her seeming heroic power in this regard, Abraham leans on the ideology of destructive invisibility to hide his displeasure, being a covert design to exterminate her. Aurora's family antecedent of riches, the route to Abraham's wealth, besides the genetic feminist force in her, is the signifying pointer to her combative attitude in the wintry marriage. Though he pretends to be hen-pecked, Abraham is silently unhappy at Aurora's tyrannical feminist arrogance. He nurtures a spiteful and baleful vengeance in his muted anger, thereby having recourse to his doctrine of invisibility, a powerful counterforce to Aurora's economic and feminist advantages.

Unlike Aurora's feminist outrageousness, Abraham's doctrinal passion of invisibility is more revolting than laudatory. Abraham Zogoiby represents Fanon's idea of a false European bourgeoisie because

> […] the new postcolonial bourgeoisie class comes to power not through a long process of economic, political and cultural revolution but through a process of mimicry and replacement in which the Indian bourgeoisie have been carefully prepared to step into the shoes of their colonial predecessors. (Idris 155)

Abraham, believably cognizant of the heroism of the Western bourgeois revolt, longs for heroism in the Indian bourgeois locus, but he is incognizant of the reality that "In underdeveloped countries, … no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster" (qtd. in Idris 156). Abraham operates on the outskirts of heroic abode albeit his image is apprehended on the radar of the narrative's hero-appreciation. He singularly orally discerns the route to Vasco Miranda's house for Moraes to storm. His penchant for roguery, be that as it may, underlines his anti-heroic plenitude, the extermination of his wife, Aurora, and daughters, Mynah and Minnie, being ignoble demonstrations of his travesty of hero acclamation. Excelling as "the biggest dada of them all" (*Moor's Last Sigh*, 331), a reference to his overlordship of the criminal world, he bestrides the

universe of villainy with hideous business concerns, "nine-tenths of [which] was submerged below the surface of things" (341). Displaying a higher sense of degeneracy, Abraham outherods Raman Fielding – another megalomaniac and vicious entity – in the contest for supremacy. Completely out of line, Abraham is taken out in a self-triggered cataclysmic siege on Mumbai, heroism the Abraham paradigm.

Vasco's Malicious Pursuit of Heroism Pursuant to exterminating Aurora's Towering Portrait

Vasco Miranda's understanding of the heroic subject is an envy and bitterness-laden undermining and destruction of the Aurora fame, very much at variance with her frontal siege on Uma and Abraham. The Vasco-Aurora phase of the hero-war is his intrusion into the Zogoibys' universe of weirdness. This intrusion avails Vasco an intrusive overview of the Aurora enigma, one he covets, and with competitive animosity, begins a campaign to wreck her, though not without contradictions, as depicted in Vasco's ambivalence-driven pursuit of personality ascendancy. The contradictions appear in the benign influence of Vasco on Aurora's ideological canvas, both being aesthetes of high artistic comportment. With Vasco's guide, Aurora's artistry moves a notch higher, abandoning the mundane mimetic order for Aurora and Vasco are symbolic representatives of high art. Vasco, indeed, ironically improves Aurora's artistry by advising her to abandon mimetic, mundane drawing. These art collaborations metamorphose into a conflict of no mean dimension, Vasco embarking on a no-holds barred assault against the Zogoibys, Aurora in particular, for two reasons: he is humiliatingly ejected from their home; secondly, sad that Aurora is on a higher pedestal in the art world, he begins a supremacy battle to dim her light, she very oblivious of his invidious cause. To this malicious end, the politics of heroism, from Vasco's creation, is enwrapped in signifying elements. Having her in his view, Vasco builds up a signification discourse in amplifying how the politics of heroism is played out in the novel.

Aurora's artistic virtuosity is, unlike Vasco's, founded on an innate love for the unearthly, even right from her teenage years. As a teen, her precocious energy for painting had been blazed; she was grand and sublime in her painting, destroying childish paintings (45) and mythically cultivating the adolescent image on her canvas, enabled by "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" (Roget 405), the source of her surrealistic sojourn into art for self-definition. Unconventional congenitally, she pursues the depth of realism through the supernatural, thereby radiating "an obscure but profound impulse to revolt against the conventions established in [her] own day, in order to rediscover convention on a deeper level" (Frye 132). Through metaphors which define the "ways in which we develop our prejudices and biases" (Sanga 2), she sustains her reality. Transcending the surface, superficial reality, she becomes an enchanting tropological behemoth having learnt "how to whirl-up a whirlwind, how to hurry-up a hurricane […] How to dance up a storm" (*Moor's Last Sigh,* 125). Articulating "a "comic" tendency to integrate the hero with his society, and a "tragic" tendency to isolate him" (Frye 54), Aurora navigates crucial borders of religion, class and social mores (Hassumani 118) in her capricious volatility.

Vasco is unfazed by all these grand antecedents of Aurora, thereby pursuing with passion heroic eminence, part of which is to match her creative beauty. His

malignant distaste for Aurora's artistic glory gets to a head in his failed attempt to forge and reproduce her uncompleted *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the apogee of her famed and lofty but execration-burdened art career. Vasco is very much on tenterhooks and feels insecure that he is not able to unearth the mystery of the excellence of Aurora's creative glory, an agony that haunts him till death. It is an apprehension he nurses till he dies after he kills Aoi, whose dying is conceived of in this captivating mental analogy: "A hole appeared in the canvas, over Aurora's heart; but it was Aoi Ue's breast that had been pierced […] her blood pumped through the wound in my living mother's chest" (*Moor's Last Sigh,* 431). This description is an animist construction of Miranda's psychological contentment in avenging his ejection from *Elephanta* and more notably the envy-filled destruction of an art work he reasons is nonpareil in articulation. She remains legendary to the existence of Abraham and Vasco Miranda, who in the aftermath of her death "became recluses, Abraham in his high tower and Vasco in his […]" (328) but both residing in the lower depths of her artistic conceptualisation.

Vasco's heroic pursuit is built against this artistic renown of Aurora. Vasco Miranda contributes to the anti-mimetic build of the novel by espousing "an Epico-mythica-Tragic-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art" (148, 149). Guided by a false sense of structuralist dualism, he disarranges the rules of English, and contends that "if the opposed answer-and-question pairs *there/where*, *then/when*, *that/what*, *thither/whither*, *thence/whence* all existed, then, […] every *this* must also have its *whis*, every these its whese, every *those* its *whoase*" (151, emphasis in the original). Being a painter of recondite and puzzling magnitude like Aurora, he tutors Moor about how a super-hero yearns for normality from the walls. In addition, he provides a prophetic information of the fatal consequences of Aurora's character build.

With the coming together of "a presence and an absence […] A fullness and an emptiness" (158), Vasco's poststructuralist reasoning about the indeterminate ideal is foregrounded; moreover, he tends to idealize the theoretical thought on contradictions and the existentialist struggle. The zenith of his artistic fraternization with Aurora is the mythical explanation of the person who killed her. He tells Moraes: "If she was killed, she said, she wanted the murderer brought to book. So she had concealed his portrait under her work in progress. Get the picture X-rayed, she said to me, and you will see my killer's face" (416). With these theoretical manifestations and revelation, Vasco Miranda could also lay claim to evincing some aspects of heroism.

However, heroic positivity seems to be far from him because of the undesirable task he is made to perform in the tragic flow of events. He feels tormented and diminished by the dishonor and his artistic inability to destroy his "inadequacy, his failure to approach Aurora's heights" (430). Because of this, he becomes a psychopath of dangerous dimensions. Fruitlessly, he attempts to equal Aurora's imaginative beauty in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Pushed by his insane zeal for fame, he tries to make Aurora the central feature of his painting art, which he calls *Last Sultan of Granada, seen Departing from the Alhambra or The Moor's Last Sigh*. He constructs a world of viciousness around himself, which is purposed to unnerve his victim through a blood-curdling music that is intimidatingly filled with "ululations of indeterminate gender, computer-generated whines and bangs" (409, 410). Regarded as "the vilest of dins", the music is "an unearthly, tortured or rather torturing-noise, sadistic, dispassionate,

aloof" (413), all the modifiers depicting Miranda's grisly and hideous universe of world of dread. His death images his gruesome life, being suffocated to death by the mythic "needle" that is embedded in his intestine.

Aurora's Motherly Preeminence Over Moraes' Indifferent Heroic Posture

Moraes, as earlier referred to, has been assisted unintentionally to be a symbol of heroic calling. Of all Aurora's binary others, only, Moraes, her son, does not symbolize an adversarial agent in the structuralist portrayal of their hero-making liaison. He is not, unlike others, a narcissistic symbol of "blissful autonomy" or "self-sufficiency" (Girard 365). Therefore, he is not a threat in any way to Aurora's conscious self-enlargement scheme. However, he is a hero of a sort due to some reasons. First, his hero-inclination is observable in his first person narratorial force, with which he navigates the plot with proprietorial ease. Furthermore, the hyperphysical and extraordinarily frightening conception of his physique invigorates the fantastic realization of the narrative. Of worthiest note in his hero-attribution is his impact in lifting the lid over the person that murdered his mother, the whereabouts of some of Aurora's stolen paintings, and the discovery of Aurora's unfinished masterpiece painting, "The Moor's Last Sigh", "the best part of what remained" (*Moor's Last Sigh,* 415) of her. All these are revealed because Moraes is able to conquer Vasco Miranda's Benengeli fortress to lead the way to the suspense-filled denouement of the da Gama-Zogoiby calamity. Furthermore, of all the characters with pretensions and affectations of heroism, he is the one who maintains the sanctity of morality.

Moor's reluctant drive to heroic ascendancy and Aurora's artistic engagement with his physical malformation for psychological peace, coupled with her unfeeling and fiendish desire to wreak vengeance on him for the sins of Uma, make them adversaries in the hero-claiming pursuit. In this struggle for heroic power, a psychologically unbalanced Aurora expresses her brutish and repressive self over her child.

The psychopathic manifestations of her characterization are Aurora's instrument of lording it over his son, Moor. Enabled by these psychological abnormalities, Aurora makes her art an extenuating agency for the tragedy that Moor's life is, a misbegotten birth, thereby finding cathartic joy in her *Moor* series, which she calls" *A Light to Lighten the Darkness*" (220), epitomizing her "determination to transcend and redeem […] imperfections through art" (220). Aurora embarks on this project as a psychic balm for a seeming punishment. The Moor is exultant that it "was a sign of love […] she painted me into immortality, giving me the gift of being a part of what would persist of her" (221).

The psychotherapeutic instrumentality of her artistic prowess empowers her to draw *Courtship*, a renewed Moraes, whose "hand was transformed into a series of miracles" (224) and *Moor and Tussy*, (224), illustrating the euphemism of the tragedy of Moraes' ageing problem, and *To Die Upon a Kiss* (224), a recreation of murdered Desdemona, now Aurora, and a stabbed Othello, representing Moor. With the prophetic destruction of Vasco Miranda's Alhambra invincibility myth, the Moor, symbol of Aurora's obsession, attracts a more vigorous supernaturalist outlook, Moraes the conqueror. In her prophetic canvas exists a fluvial picture, "the dividing line between two worlds" (226) and its fluid boundary-less features, where water

creatures intermingle with land characters, a "place where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another" (226).

Unfortunately, her masterly drawings about the tragedy of her life creates a fine line between love and hate. She draws strength from her psychopathic emotions to avenge her son's love relationship with Uma. This is how Moraes sees Aurora's artistic degrading of his being for loving Uma:

> And the Moor-figure: alone now, motherless, […] sank into immorality, and was shown as a creature of shadows, degraded in tableaux of debauchery and crime [losing], in these last pictures, his previous metaphorical rôle as a unifier of opposites, a standard- bearer of pluralism, ceasing to stand as a symbol […] of the new nation, and being transformed, instead, into a semi-allegorical figure of decay. (303)

The humiliation he receives in prison, courtesy of his mother's viciousness, makes him for once to doubt her maternal responsibility, asking the rhetorical question: "For what kind of mother would set out on such flimsy provocation, to destroy her child, her only son?" (288). He cuts a pitiful figure in affirming that: "I was becoming nobody, nothing; […] I was scum" (288), convinced of the conspiratorial consent of his mother in his "bitter turmoil" (288).

The same Aurora has earlier fended off an attack against the unborn Moor from Flory, Abraham's mother, when Abraham traded off his unborn Moor over a debt he owed his mother, for which the only payment was his first boy-child. Aurora, on being informed by Flory Zogoiby of this "deal", comes up against Abraham with this affront: "Tell your mother, […] that there will be no children born in this house while I am still alive […] You do your work and I'll do mine […] But the work Flory is waiting for, that she will never see" (115).

To have unleashed such turpitude on a child she has been very much possessive of, even in pre-conception, is indicative of a woman with wavy emotions. Moor's animal depiction of his mother's loathsome hostility to him is a haunting projection of a personality with extreme faces of the two affective dispositions of love and hate, comparing his mother's wickedness to "an age of monsters" (288), wishing she had pulverized him as a baby.

Aurora's pliant consciousness, however, gives birth to a change in her attitude to Moraes. The painting found on her easel after her passing, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, her last work, indicates it much. In it, she restores his (Moor's) humanity. As evidence of the change,

> there was no abstract harlequin, no junkyard collage. It was a portrait of her son, lost in limbo like a wandering shade; a portrait of a soul in Hell. And behind him his mother, no longer in a separate panel, but re-united with the tormented Sultan. (315)

To her son, "it was an apology that came too late, an act of forgiveness from which I could no longer profit. I had lost her, and the picture only intensified the pain of her loss" (315, 316).

Fielding's Bullish Pursuit of Heroism in order to Destroy Aurora's Heroic Power

Rahman Fielding's caustic engagement with Aurora, though inconsequential in the heroic purview of the novel, describes to a great extent the power foundations

that announce the contest for supremacy in the Mumbai aspect of the plot. Like Vasco Miranda, Fielding is the source of the conflict. He is ill-at-ease not only with the fearlessness in Aurora's feminine gait but also with her flourishing artistic character. Exploiting the criminal energy of his Bombay dominion, Fielding clings to Aurora's popularity for self-preservation and with the main purpose to express his masculine prowess so as to undermine her, in order to become a hero through being the cause of the heroine's fall. He succeeds to some degree. Mainduck's obsession is to use politics as a Machiavellian instrument to render Aurora irrelevant in the eyes of Bombay populace. This Fielding's action reflects his envying of Aurora's uncontrollable and self-assured pursuit of identity. Moraes is cocksure about Mainduck's presumptuous desire to subvert his mother's thriving personality: "[…] powerful women scare men off, and there were few Bombay males who would have dared to woo her. That explained Mainduck. Coarse, physically strong, ruthless, he was one of the few men in the city for whom Aurora would hold no terrors" (257). Aurora, the most potent feminine force in the plot, even bows to Fielding's political might and confident masculinity.

To prove Fielding's power status in Mumbai, Aurora appeals to human spirits to ward off a planned attack by Mainduck's Mumbai's Axis on Kekoo Mody's gallery during the saga of Aurora's "The kissing of Abbas Alli Baig" (233) painting showdown with Fielding. A bribe from her settles the quarrel. Despite Aurora's manifest control of proceedings in the plot, those two incidents highlight Mainduck's persuasion that the Aurora supremacist figure is not absolute after all. However, these scatological identifiers: "that MA bastard Mainduck" (256) and "this gutter-creature of real potency, this savage, this walking slum" (257), descriptions of Fielding's extreme savage moral, religious and political life, take him off the author's ideological passion. Despite his aggressive intention to disestablish Aurora's fame, Fielding blunders in regarding women as weaklings who must normally bow to the androcentric ego. His just punishment: Aurora is one of the two feminine characters who, in a roundabout manner, take him to his grave. One may call Raman Fielding an antagonist but against the backdrop of the author's ideological penchant to glorify the postmodernist or postcolonial existence of multiple heroic fronts so as to undermine the Western propagation of a solitary heroic power, Fielding's characterization may accommodate some semblance of the hero's nature.

Apparently, the syncretic humanity in the Aurora paradigm makes her a feminine titan. Although she comes low in some of her animosity-borne adventures as recognized in her interpersonal exchanges with some characters, her battles with the phallocentric and feminine opposition, added to the catharsis shown in her embracing of his son, Moraes, (a sign of heroism in purgation), and her "[…] hope to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time" (434) in the light of her trouble-laden existence, make her a supreme emblem of heroic projections.

Conclusion

Questing for political sovereignty and satisfying the exigencies of overhauling Western domination, at least on the ideological front, have had a strong bearing on postcolonial literature, an idea that is very much ventilated in Salman Rushdie's recourse to the de-centering of heroism as a stylistic rhetoric. Since the European

creation of a centripetal international regime is the object of neo-imperialism, Rushdie's emancipatory philosophy leans on subtle deviation from conventional hero-creation in some of his novels to probably apprise the lapsed colonial lords that interdependence, and not the dependency factor, is necessary for the growth of society. In which case, most, if not all, characters in a work are important for its overall success. Even, where the heroic figures seem to have been clearly established, their heroic stature is blighted in the light of oppositional materialization of some almost equally prominent characters. Seen in this light, the accomplishments in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* are attributable to the author's ingenuous penetrative and interpenetrative composition of his characters. This is not understating the fact that one character may be more luminous than others in the plot, despite the conscious longing by others for heroic ascendancy, some of whom are megalomaniacs, just like Aurora, the main character, who engage in self-destruct activities for Machiavellian ends as is apparent in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. For the postcolony, multi-heroic reasoning is a salve for its underling rating, underpinning "the possibility of a spatial reclamation of the past" (Banerjee 13)

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