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Mohammed Palimpsests: Nascent Islam in the Late Twentieth Century Novel

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Abstract

This study has as its subject Mohammed the Prophet, the fascinating rise of a humble man whose life and teachings have formed the grand narrative for Muslims the world over. It is entitled "Mohammed Palimpsests: Nascent Islam in the Late Twentieth Century Novel" and is based on a corpus comprised of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Assia Djebar's *Loin de Médine* (1991), and Driss Chraïbi's *L'Homme du Livre* (1995). What they all share includes the genre novel, the brief time span in which the novels were published, the extent to which they rewrite the biography of Mohammed, and the at least nominal Muslim identity of their authors. Despite these similarities, institutional divisions have led to these seminal texts being discussed separately. Yet convinced that this is very much a dialogue that was waiting to happen, I bring these three novels into comparative focus in the desire for a more complete and varied understanding of the issues they bring to light.

Chapter one looks at the complex intertextual relations that each novel maintains with a number of Islamic source texts, most notable of which is the Quran. It argues that intertextuality is not simply re-sourcing, but also creation and demonstrates the wealth of intertextual strategies used by these authors in their re-writings of Mohammed's life. Chapter two is concerned with history. It examines the relation between fiction and history, historiography and notions of historical consciousness. In so doing, it considers various concepts of time (progress, stasis, return to the source) and historical knowledge. Theorists discussed include de Certeau, Kracauer, Laroui, and White. Chapter three examines gender. While all three authors clearly feminize the history of early Islam, making their accounts inclusive, they are equally concerned with masculinity. I therefore address the success of each of these efforts, from the purported "noble failure" (Spivak) of Rushdie, to Djebar's notion of interrogative faith and multiple critique, and feminine spiritualism, which is given expression in Djebar and Chraïbi's work. In this most interdisciplinary chapter, anthropological and psychoanalytical perspectives are used.

I argue that Islam is very central to *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*. These novels not only narrate early Islam, they ultimately are engaged in opening it up to new interpretations, particularly for French and English-speaking Muslims who share their authors' diasporic situation.

Keywords: Islam and the Novel, Intertextuality, Historiography, Gender, Salman Rushdie, Assia Djebar, Driss Chraïbi

Résumé

Le sujet de cette étude est Mohammed et sa montée fulgurante depuis ses humbles origines jusqu'à ce qu'il devienne Prophète de l'Islam, celui dont la vie et les dires forment le grand récit des Musulmans. Cette thèse s'intitule "Les Palimpsestes de Mohammed: l'Islam naissant dans le roman de la fin du XXᵉ siècle" et a pour corpus *The Satanic Verses* [*Les versets sataniques*] (1988) de Salman Rushdie, *Loin de Médine* (1991) d'Assia Djebar et *L'Homme du Livre* (1995) de Driss Chraïbi. Ils partagent tous le genre romanesque, le cadre temporel relativement restreint, la question de la récriture —au moins partielle— de la biographie de Mohammed, ainsi que l'appartenance religieuse des auteurs. Malgré ces similitudes, une certaine division institutionnelle les a jusqu'ici cloisonnés dans différents départements universitaires. Je suis persuadé qu'une étude comparative de ces trois romans marquants servira de maïeutique à un dialogue qui n'attendait qu'à voir le jour. Je crois également que seule une analyse comparative permettra une appréciation plus ambitieuse et nuancée des questionnements qu'ils soulèvent.

Le premier chapitre examine les complexes relations intertextuelles que chaque roman entretien avec les textes souches de l'Islam, dont le plus important est le Coran. Il propose l'intertextualité non seulement comme manière de ressourcer des écrits, mais aussi comme *poiésis*. Le deuxième chapitre traite de l'histoire, en se penchant sur le rapport entre la fiction et l'histoire, sur l'historiographie, de même que sur certaines notions de la conscience historique. Il considère diverses notions du temps (le progrès, la stasis, le retour à la source) et le savoir historique. Parmi les théoriciens dont les écrits sont discutés, on compte de Certeau, Kracauer, Laroui et White. Le troisième chapitre s'articule autour du genre sexuel. Alors que chacun des trois auteurs féminise en quelque sorte l'histoire de l'Islam des premiers temps dans le but de rendre leurs récits plus inclusifs, ils s'intéressent tout autant à la masculinité qu'au rapport entre les des deux genres. Je traite de notions comme l'échec noble (Spivak) attribué à Rushdie, ainsi que la critique multiple ou la foi interrogative chez Djebar et le

spiritualisme féminin chez Chraïbi. Dans ce chapitre particulièrement interdisciplinaire, des approches anthropologiques et psychanalytiques viennent nourrir la réflexion.

J'avance que l'Islam constitue une notion clé pour la compréhension de ces romans. Non seulement narrent-ils les débuts de l'Islam, mais ils ouvrent l'Islam à de nouvelles interprétations, particulièrement pour les musulmans qui partagent la situation en diaspora des auteurs.

Mots clés : Islam et le roman, Intertextualité, Historiographie, Genre, Salman Rushdie, Assia Djebar, Driss Chraïbi

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INTRODUCTION

La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadan rasul Allah, "There is no deity save God, [and] Muhammad is the messenger of God," is the Islamic profession of faith. From this statement alone it is clear that he is a central and defining figure of the religion. But who was he?

The story of Mohammed, the seventh century CE Prophet of Islam, features a meteoric rise comparable to that of any twentieth century cultural icon. From impoverished orphan living on the margin of his society, indeed of his clan, to successful trader, founder of a religion and political leader, his rise has fascinated millions and been put forth as an example for countless Muslims over the centuries. The resulting narratives are therefore hagiographic in the strictest sense of the word. Indeed it is as an exemplar and theologian that Mohammed's life has principally been communicated. Other ways of retelling his story exist, however, because, as Islamic scholar Maxime Rodinson has argued, traditional Islamic historiography does not correspond to modern-day methods or perspectives. While we know a good deal, the transcription of his life was not begun until over a century after his death. As with any narrative, it can be manipulated, either embellished or abused, for doctrinal or ideological reasons. He nonetheless remains the central figure of Islam, and his sayings constitute the second source of its theological base, its jurisprudence, in a very broad sense the very core of the culture. As Annemarie Schimmel makes clear, Mohammed is at the core of Islamic piety, as revealed by his numerous epithets: *Uswa hasana* "a beautiful model" (Sura 33:21, Schimmel 1985:26); "perfect in nature and moral qualities, *khalan wa khulqan*" (45); "the paradigm of behaviour" (43) "careful and loving imitation of the Prophet's example" (31).

By all accounts, the biography of Mohammed qualifies as a grand narrative, because it is essential to Muslims' understanding of themselves as Muslims. One way of entering into dialogue either about or with Islam, therefore, is to engage discussion about the life of the Prophet. The premise underlining this study is perhaps best expressed by the

philosopher Sadik Jalal Al-ᶜAzm or the psychoanalyst Fethi Benslama, both of whom question both the paradigms instituted by Islam, and the forms of social organization and interaction that it legitimises. Faith demands belief, not all of which can be rationalized. The expression "article of faith," referring to such elements as the Koran as the word of God or Jesus as the Son of God, makes clear how religion is in part based on what cannot be explained by rational means. Yet without discounting faith, I wish to look at both Mohammed's life and early Islam as a basis for rethinking contemporary life from a Muslim perspective.

The question of how contemporary Muslims would rewrite this history therefore arises. In what significant ways would a late twentieth century biography of Mohammed differ from those that preceded it? In particular, how does it distinguish itself from accepted accounts of his life?

It came to my notice that re-examinations of Mohammed's life, although possible from a number of disciplinary approaches, were however to be found in three fictional texts by writers who are at least nominal Muslims, Salman Rushdie, Assia Djebar, and Driss Chraïbi. While Rushdie and Djebar are students of history, in common with Chraïbi, they both have undertaken their investigations in the form of the novel. What does the novel add to a discussion of Mohammed's life? Does it allow for some things to be said that otherwise would be suppressed?

The proposed corpus consists in three narratives: Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Assia Djebar's *Loin de Médine* (1991), and Driss Chraïbi's *L'Homme du Livre* (1995) are novels engaged with Mohammed's life and legacy. In addition to the generic and temporal convergence criteria, thematic concerns also support a sustained comparison of the works by these authors. While other such palimpsests, mostly in Arabic, have been published in the course of the twentieth century, the relatively tight timeframe of publication of the three texts suggests that an epochal change was in the offing. In addition to that, my own linguistic competence limits the extent to which other texts, published in Arabic and of which only a very few have been translated, can be investigated.

Among the alternative Mohammed Palimpsests in existence are Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Muhammad*, Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi's Muhammad *the Messenger of Freedom*, and Najib Mahfuz's *Children of the Alley*, all of which predate my own text corpus considerably.[1] The one most often cited is of course Najib Mahfuz's *Children of the Alley*. In the article "Modern Arabic Literature and the Qur'an: Inimitability, creativity… incompatability", Shawkat M. Toorawa provides a brief survey of how modern Arabic literature uses Koranic heritage and textual sources. He begins by noting that published studies give scant attention to Koranic relations, with Mustafa Bayyumi's 1999 publication, *The Holy Qur'an in the Oeuvre of Najib Mahfuz* providing a notable exception. But as Toorawa notes:

> […] for all its usefulness, Bayyumi's study completely passes over Mahfuz's 1959 novel, *Awlad Haratina* (*Children of the Alley*). One cannot escape the impression that the otherwise meticulous Bayyumi is hedging his bets; that, like other critics, he is (justifiably) fearful of the reaction of the religious establishment and possibly also of the general public—*Children of the Alley* is (still) banned in Egypt (240).

So while other examples of Mohammed Palimpsests exist, they are either not accessible to me or are not contemporaneous with the chosen corpus and would be of questionable utility. There is however another reason for a corpus composed of novels from the late twentieth century: after the 1979 establishment of an Islamic theocracy in Iran, Islam forecefully re-entered the world's consciousness. This event would inspire other movements of political Islam, and as a result, the world increasingly had to engage with Islam. Part of my premise is that these novels not only reflect on these new discourses, but propose alternatives thereto.

The title of this study, "Mohammed Palimpsests: Nascent Islam in the Late Twentieth Century Novel," may at first seem unabashedly poetic,

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[1] It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the dates of publication in some cases. In the case of al-Hakim's *Muhammad*, the translation appears to have become available in 1968.

but is nonetheless appropriate. The palimpsest as a trope of intertextuality may have gained widespread currency, but it still does call for some explanation. According to the *Oxford Dictionary,* the Greek *palimpsestos* "scraped again" originally referred to "parchment whence writing had been erased" [...] from *sistos*, to rub smooth". The primary current definition is however:

> 2. A parchment or other writing-material written upon twice, the
> original writing having been erased or rubbed out to make place
> for the second; a manuscript in which a later writing is written
> over an effaced earlier writing.

As the defining figure of intertextuality, palimpsest is not so much concerned with scraping, erasure or effacement, but rather generally highlights the notion of writing over. That is not to say that the first layer disappears, though, because as the key concept of dialogism suggests, the dynamic interplay of the two texts is the core of its reading and analytical practise. Clearly there is some semantic relation between the two texts, or they would not be superimposed. The rewritten part however is what is primarily visible or discernible to the reader, and therefore determines the relation with the earlier text that is only perceptible as trace elements.

Is the Mohammed in the title synecdoche or metonymy, and can one speak of the birth of a religion? If we consider the bipartite profession of Islamic faith—"There is no God but God and Mohammed is his Prophet" — quoted at the outset, it is hard to miss the pivotal position it accords to Mohammed, who is thereby revealed as the defining person of the religion. This synecdoche holds true to the extent that all three novels studied in some way rewrite his biography. Yet beyond this narrow definition, Mohammed can metonymically be taken to mean his era. The epochal hegira, based on Mohammed's flight from persecution in Mecca to Medina in CE 622, which gave rise to the Islamic calendar, is one such example. Indeed it is as much the timeframe as the illustrious Mohammedan example, what Schimmel repeatedly refers to as the *imitatio Muhammadi*, which interest me. His habits helped shape the manner of worship, the

outlook, and way of life of his coreligionists. As such the interest he generates transcends religion, encompassing culture in the broadest sense as well as anthropology. As for the subtitle, "Nascent Islam," and the appropriateness of birth as a metaphor for a form of human organization, I would argue that while it is not always clear when a religion comes into being, in the case of Islam the temporality is hardly shrouded in mystery. Another possible objection to the modifier "nascent" might be that it is excessively biological; to which I would answer that Islam is very much alive. What could be more appropriate for giving expression to the dynamism and vitality that is the world's major religion, practised in a plurality of forms and cultures, and in the process of constant renewal? While that is clearly what Islam has become, incipient Islam was indeed fragile and amorphous, much like the newborn. Its contours seemed undefined, and as we shall see, its idea of itself was at times indistinct; a matter exploited most in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, but also in evidence in *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre* as well.

The first novel in the corpus, *The Satanic Verses* is not only a Mohammed Palimpsest. While a significant portion, two of its nine parts, occur in the dream world of seventh-century Arabia corresponding to the birth and spread of Islam, the other seven, representing the narrative present, occur in the late twentieth century. They are however at the heart of the novel, the source of its title, as well as of its controversy. One of the difficulties of this novel, and a disorienting aspect of it as well, is the multiplicity of registers present. Not only is the so-called "authorial voice" not consistent, but the characters' dialogues and thoughts are represented in a variety of ways ranging from the jive or civil rights discourses of the solicitor Hanif Johnson, to the intermedial (literature presented as a screen narrative) relation of Mecca as seen by the film actor Gibreel Farishta, to the mock legend of Ayesha. This phenomenon, which Mikhail Bakhtin referred to as polyphony, while present in every novel, seems extreme in the case of Salman Rushdie's fiction, and of *The Satanic Verses* in particular. What I propose is a textual analysis of *The Satanic Verses* that

explains the frequent use of burlesque and satire in critical literature. Beyond that, I want to bring it into a comparative focus that allows the relative merits and demerits of its presentation of Islam's birth to be appreciated.

In the midst of the free speech and blasphemy discourse that surrounded its publication, it was lost on many readers that *The Satanic Verses* is also a novel. While the controversy of the *fatwa* proclaimed by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini led some to read this *succès à scandale*, the narrative was often more than they had bargained for. *The Satanic Verses*, for any one who may have forgotten about the existence of the novel,[2] is a difficult place to begin anew. A favourite charge of its many detractors has been that it is "unreadable".[3] They have perhaps found it so because they were either reading Rushdie's work, or postmodernist fiction, for the first time. It is not, however, the most obvious place to start reading Rushdie, who, if the institutions of canonization[4] are to be believed, is among the contemporary authors most worth reading. It has been said that for anyone who had read *Shame* or *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* was not particularly surprising, but since such a preparation cannot be expected of everyone, in this study I propose to offer another means of access to the work. *The Satanic Verses* is famous as an "unread bestseller", and as Ruthven remarked at the height of the controversy, "the book was breaking all records for the hardback sales of a difficult literary novel" (3). In the belief that it is aesthetically rewarding as well as intellectually stimulating, I wish to help make it more accessible.

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[2] This is an allusion to the supposed death of the novel, to which Salman Rushdie responded in a *Mail & Guardian Review of Books* article, "The novel's not dead…it's just buried", September 1996.

[3] Jacqueline Bardolph also makes the point that "given the novel itself and the unforeseen circumstances of its publication, [...] it came to the attention of people who in the normal course of things would never have been its readers" (209).

[4] With the exception of *Grimus*, all of Salman Rushdie's early novels have been awarded prizes: *Shame*: Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger; *Midnights' Children*: the Booker Prize, the James Tait Black Prize, and the Booker of Bookers (the best novel to have won the Booker in 25 years); *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*: winner of the Writer's Guild Award; *The Moor's Last Sigh*: European Aristeion Prize for Literature and *The Satanic Verses*: the Whitbread Prize for Best Novel.

Clearly, in large part owing to the controversy it unleashed, *The Satanic Verses* is the text that has spawned the most commentary. Its academic reception has been both partisan and polarized, witness Malise Ruthven's *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam*, and Shabbir Akhtar's *Be careful with Muhammad: The Salman Rushdie Affair*. While each has its merits, it is clear that Ruthven's is at pains to present some aspects of the British Muslim community as alien other, highlighting their "wild and scraggy" looks and faulty English, describing them as "irredeemably provincial" (1). In a panorama that celebrates London's cosmopolitanism, the only perceived foreign element is the crowd of Muslim protesters. This detracts from Ruthven's review of the events leading up to the fatwa pronounced by the Ayatollah Khomeini on 14 February 1989 and their aftermath.[5] Among the most interesting critical studies of Rushdie's oeuvre, and of *The Satanic Verses* in particular, are published in *Reading Rushdie*: *Perspectives on the fiction of Salman Rushdie*, edited by D.M. Fletcher, and *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie*, edited by M. Keith Booker. Monographs with invaluable insights include *Salman Rushdie: A postmodern reading of his major works* by Sabrina Hassumani and *Origin and Originality in Rushdie's Fiction* by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère. Surprisingly, stimulating perspectives have been offered by psychoanalysis, and Fethi Benslama's *Une fiction troublante*, as well as *La psychanalyse à l'épreuve de l'Islam* have proven among the most fascinating readings of Rushdie's work.

Perhaps Djebar's most challenging novel, *Loin de Médine* sets out to retell the era of the first caliphs from women's perspectives. The difficulty it presents to the reader is owing to two factors: it features a fragmented structure, and a large cast of characters, including both members of the Prophet's household and those who rebelled against him and were resistant to Islam(icization). The structure is based on the histories written by early Arab historians, and the fictional element, on the imaginative completion

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[5] For this reason I do not agree with Erickson, who lists Ruthven among those "who seek to present a balanced view by understanding both sides" (130).

of their silences on female protagonists. As we shall see, all too often, the women are written out of the picture. Djebar's text attempts to give them their due, highlighting the gaps left by Ibn Hicham, Ibn Saad and Tabari, all of whom are historians of canonical status. The resulting novel is remarkably metatextual, with the narrator (or narratrix) appearing as much as a commentator of previous texts as a storyteller. At the same time, this is a novel suffused with Islamic faith and spirituality, as is demonstrated by its distinguishing trait, questioning faith or "la foi interrogative" (cf. 63), remarked by a number of researchers. The prophet's humanity, be it as a leader or as a family man, shines through. He is shown to be a principled opponent, a uxorious husband, and a generous father. In short, *Loin de Médine* strives for a balanced portrait of Mohammed and of his legacy.

Although Djebar is now among the most esteemed writers on the world stage, as the 2000 *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels* and 2005 election to the *Académie Française* attest, this novel has received relatively little critical attention. Kenneth Harrow's *The Marabout and the Muse, Faces of Islam in African Literature*, which contains a number of studies of *Loin de Médine*, provides a welcome starting point. Indeed, in *The Marabout and the Muse*, her fictional work, and especially *Loin de Médine*, elicited the most critical response, prompting the editor Kenneth Harrow to observe that Assia Djebar "enjoys the status of the dominant voice, and it is her novel, *Loin de Médine* […] that most evokes the challenge of Islam for the Maghreb in these troubled times" (xxii). Other scholars, among them Carine Bourget, Donald R. Wehrs, and Clarisse Zimra have however contributed a number of articles on this novel. Notable monographs on Djebar's oeuvre include Mireille Calle-Gruber's *Assia Djebar ou la résistance de l'écriture: Regards d'un écrivain d'Algérie* and Jeanne-Marie Clerc's *Assia Djeber: écrire, transgresser, resister*, with the former including a lengthy chapter on *Loin de Médine* and the subsequent operatic adaptation, *Figle di Ismaele nel vento e nella tempesta*. Calle-Gruber expresses exasperation with the tendency to treat

Djebar's writing only thematically, as if it were journalism. Her own study draws the reader's attention to a number of rhetorical devices used in Djebar's works, but perhaps insisting on aesthetics at the expense of sociohistorical pertinence. The same cannot be said of Muriel Walker's poetically titled, "Amours palimpsestueuses: voyage au bout de l'écriture djébarienne," a dissertation whose use of intertextuality for the study of Djebar's oeuvre has made it an invaluable resource for my own work.

Driss Chraïbi's *L'Homme du Livre*, the latest as well as shortest of the novels in this corpus, recounts Mohammed's biography up until the point of the revelation of the Koran. Without exaggeration, *L'Homme du Livre* can be said to have largely escaped both general interest and scholarly inquiry in the ten years since its publication. In the general press, a review of the novel appeared in the 19 May issue of *Le Monde* in 1995, the year it was published. It is a brief article of only 589 words, but it does refer to its intertextual quality: "Émaillé de phrases du Coran, le livre, sous-titré roman, fait la part belle à l'émotion, au souffle lyrique, à l'imagination". More disturbingly, however, there is an exoticist undercurrent in the rest of Florence Noiville's review: "Chraïbi y chante un Orient mythique, avec ses fêtes hautes en couleur, ses récits de bravoure guerrière, son sens de la terre et de la tribu. On y trouvera, en filigrane, de superbes peintures de déserts ou de chevaux" (5). At the same time, there is a concern for the reception that such a novel may occasion: "Pas un mot, cependant, qui soit susceptible de froisser les 'barbus islamistes'. 'Le livre a été lu soigneusement par les oulémas, les gardiens de la loi, raconte Chraïbi. D'ailleurs, je n'ai rien d'un martyr chiite'" (5). The other notice taken of the novel in the general press also occurs in *Le Monde* on 31 March of the same year. In an enumeration of literary prizes, Chraïbi is mentioned as the laureate of the *Grand Atlas Maroc* Prize for this novel.

Among the few mentions of the text in secondary literature appears in *Scrivere=Incontrare. Migrazione, multiculturità, scrittura,* a volume in which a number of cosmopolitan authors are presented and discussed. Yet even in this text, the novel is dispatched in very few lines by the scholarly

text written by Maria Chiara Gnocchi, which, to be fair, is only an overview of Chraïbi's oeuvre. It does offer a detail of narratological interest, however: "*L'Homme du Livre*, is a difficult text that was only published in 1995, in which the author [Chraïbi] follows the actions and the thoughts of Mohammed in the space of twenty-four hours—the twenty-four hours preceding Koranic revelation" (101). [6] The narrative present may consist in the twenty-four hours preceding revelation, but a number of prolepses and analepses complicate its structure. Part of the difficulty of *L'Homme du Livre* is therefore narratological. One notable example of a forward move is the mention of 1993 in Azerbaijan (22), while the hermit monk Bahira (also known as Al-Khadir and Khidr) recounts his meetings with Moses and Jesus as analepses.[7] A further challenge presented by this text is doubtless its intertextuality. Gnocchi has not said so, but it stands to reason that this "difficulty" is an issue of communicability (Pfister's category of communicativity discussed in chapter one), or of whether or not the reader has the clues necessary for deciphering Chraïbi's text. For this reason, intertextuality will be at the heart of this examination.

Driss Chraïbi is not always a candid interlocutor, often making jokes at the expense of his interviewers. Perhaps the best-known example of Chraïbi's humor is an interview in which the interviewer wanted to insist that being an Arab, but writing in French, represented a dichotomy. Chraïbi simply replied that a man likes nothing better than to have two tongues in his mouth, especially if the other one belongs to a woman. This incident is recounted in *Scrivere=Incontrare*, where Chraïbi further deprecates his erstwhile interviewer's intelligence ("He understood nothing at all—had no sense of humour—and asked me the same question again. So I understood that he was a real dolt").[8] But since among the few texts

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[6] *L'Homme du Livre*, un testo impegnativo che uscirà solo nel 1995, in cui l'autore segue le azioni e i pensieri di Maometto nello spazio di ventiquattr'ore—le ventiquattro'ore che precedono la rivelazione cranica. (All translations from Italian and German are my own).

[7] See also Bourget 137-38.

[8] Lui non ha capito niente—non aveva il senso dell'umorismo—e mi harifatto la stessa domanda. Allora ho capito che era proprio scemo (111).

concerning the novel is his contribution to the same volume, it may be of some use:

> I then undertook something entirely different. I could no longer stand those who spoke of Islam and of our culture without knowing anything about it.   I could no longer stomach our governments that did nothing to protect their societies and add to the sum total of humanity.   The Algerian cutthroats, who knifed women and children, who raped them, in the name of Islam, revolted me.   Then, although working in radio, and writing other books, I wrote a book that took me ten years to write. I am talking about *L'Homme du Livre*, which is about a man, Mohammed, and of his life in the twenty-four hours leading up to the revelation of the Koran. After the advent of the revelation my narration ends (116).[9]

Among the more interesting brief studies of Chraïbi's work is written by John. C. Hawley, contributor to *The Marabout and the Muse: New Approaches to Islam in African Literature*. His book chapter does not mention *L'Homme du Livre*, yet could be said to anticipate it. This long quotation of Chraïbi's is in keeping with John C. Hawley's account, that "While it may be reasonably argued that Driss Chraïbi's many novels focus almost obsessively on characters whose identity as Muslims is foregrounded, the sociological, or even theological, distinctions [of forms of Islam] are not central to the novelist's concerns"(62). While Hawley's article offers an overview of Chraïbi's career and oeuvre, from his violent beginnings as the author of *Le passé simple*, "the most controversial work

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[9] Poi ho intrapreso qualcos'altro. Non ne potevo più della gente che parlava dell'Islam e della nostra cultura senza saperne assolutamente niente. Non ne potevo più dei nostri governanti che non facevano nulla per fare progredire la loro società ed aggiungere una pietra all'edificio umano. Mi rivoltavano soprattutto quegli sgozzatori algerini che tagliano la gola ai bambini, alle donne, e le violentano, nel nome dell'Islam. Allora, sempre lavorando in radio, e scrivendo altri libri, ho portato avanti un'opera scritta per la quale mi ci sono voluti dieci anni. Si tratta di *L'Homme du Livre*, che parla di un uomo, Mohammed, e della sua vita nelle ventiquattr'ore che precedono la rivelazione coranica. Una volta che la rivelazione è avvenuta la mia narrazione si ferma.

of the 'Generation of '52'",[10] to his maturity, it more importantly tries to come to terms with his understanding of Islam. Hawley notes that Arab scholars have claimed that, "Driss Chraïbi, like the majority of Maghrebians formed in the French school, does not possess a sufficient knowledge of Arabo-Islamic culture nor, perhaps, of the Arabic language, either" (Kadra-Hadjadji 218-219). As Hawley explains,

> These critics discern three degrees of unorthodoxy [in] Chraïbi's representation of Islam: least offensive are some passages that are inexact expressions of the Qur'an; other passages seem to be naïve and childish recollections of the Islam Chraïbi experienced through youthful eyes, and never grew to understand more comprehensively as an adult; and most offensive are those passages that have absolutely no parallel in the Law (67-68).

Critics note many censures of Islam in Chraïbi's work, and at the same time, remark "his apparent belief in the 'invincibility of the Islam of one's heart' as well" (Hawley 68). Hawley describes the author's take as a "somewhat protestant version of Islam, one that [...] could be characterized as a scripturally centered latitudinarism with a humanistic, and even 'incarnational', emphasis" (68). He also compares it to liberation theology

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[10] Marx-Scouras, 1992, 131. Bensmaïn regards Chraïbi as a, (if not *the*) "founding father" of Maghrebian fiction (Bensmaïn, 1986: 15). As for the Generation of 1952, Joan Monego's introduction to her study *Maghrebian Literature in French* shows that it represented the coming of age of literature in this area:
By 1950 North African writers had passed through their initial phase of development, the difficult period of acculturation which was marked by inadequate command of the tools of their craft and a superficial point of view, and they began to embark on a new course. The most important of North Africa's novelists emerged during this period, producing well-written, thought-provoking works of fiction: Mouloud Feraoun, *Le Fils du pauvre* (*Son of the poor man*, 1950) and *La Terre et le Sang* (*Earth and blood*, 1953); Mouloud Mammeri, *La Colline oubliée* (*The forgotten hill*, 1952); Mohammed Dib, *La Grande Maison* (*The big house*, 1952); from Tunisia, Albert Memmi, *La Statue du sel* (*Pillar of Salt*, 1953); from Morocco, Driss Chraïbi, *Le Passé simple* (*The simple past*, 1954) [...]
    The first generation of accomplished Maghrebian writers, dubbed the "generation of 1952", opened the initial chapter in the history of Maghrebian literature, for which the years 1910-50 served only as a preface. Its rapid evolution was closely allied with the North African countries' efforts to achieve political independence and to make the transition to statehood (Monego 20-21).

in contemporary Christianity.[11]   As for liberation theology, it is a movement begun in Latin America within both the protestant and Catholic Church to "take their social mission seriously", involving such aspects as work among the poor (education, supporting land reform) as well as theorization.[12] Within the broader historical context of the Islamization of North Africa, one should also consider the Berber element mixed in with more orthodox elements, or as Hawley puts it,

> It is little wonder that the "Islam" to which the Berber Driss Chraïbi finds himself returning in his later works is found somewhat suspect by critics like Hoauria Kadra-Hadjadji: it does, in fact, seem to blend a semipantheistic pre-Arabic Berber spirituality with more traditional Islamic theology. Such a blend seems to have a history in Morocco (Monego 10, Hawley 69-70).

Against the current of Islamic scholars' criticism of Chraïbi's writing on Islam, Hawley's contextualization recuperates the author. While the Berber current goes some way to explaining his unorthodoxy, he does not attempt to fit Chraïbi into any mold. Rather it is the highly individual nature of his Islam that shines forth. In the following text, I shall try to see whether the claims made by Hawley hold also for *L'Homme du Livre*. While this novel is absent from the article, it should consist in a completion of the cycle, of the re-racination (alienation and subsequent return) posited by Hawley.

Chraïbi remarks on the relative lack of response to his novel

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[11] It would be of help to explain these terms at this point. According to the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, a latitudinarian is a "liberal, especially in religious views". Latitudinarian, used figuratively (just as reform with a small c does not necessarily mean Reformation, with reference to the religion of Martin Luther) all the same refers to a movement in Anglicanism. Among the characteristics of Latitudinarianism was the advocacy of an alliance between religion and science. The movement also developed a simpler sermon style influential in English prose, as the summary of Martin I.J. Griffin Jr.'s *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* reports. Liberation theology can be interpreted variously, however, and Shabbir Akhtar's *The Final Imperative. An Islamic Theology of Liberation* bears little resemblance to what Hawley outlines.

[12] The website that condenses Leonardo and Clodovis Boff's book, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, offers a well-structured overview of the movement with numerous references to leaders and important authors.

L'Homme du Livre in the continuation of his comments quoted above (*Scrivere=Incontrare*):

> I did not expect to speak about religion (perhaps I am a Muslim, I have no idea...) and I did not want to get drawn into a sterile debate about social and political identity. As for me, I am concerned with literary creation. What has happened since? The book was extraordinarily well received in Morocco, Spain, Germany, and I believe in Italy as well, but not in France. In France, you see, a system operates in which France occupies the place of first-born of the Church, and this in turn reduces Islam to a commonplace... but in that regard I have nothing to add (117).[13]

It is hard to miss the frustrated tone in Chraïbi's response. He states his reluctance to be drawn into a discussion of a political nature, yet he seems to criticize French reception in a way that is political as well as polemical. This outburst is also important for shedding light on the postcolonial situation he inhabits, and in particular on the reception in France, the former colonial power. As Bourget explains,

> Chraïbi fit une entrée fracassante dans la littérature maghrébine avec la publication du *Passé simple* (1954), qui dénigre l'Islam et la société marocaine, valorise l'Occident, et fit de lui le précurseur de la littérature maghrébine moderne [...] Accusé de faire le jeu des colonialistes, Chraïbi reniera son roman, brandi par la presse étrangère comme preuve justificative du Protectorat (Bourget 127).

This history gives some indication of the oft-troublesome nature of reception. It specifically demonstrates that his first novel's success was

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[13] Non spettava a me parlare di religione (forse sono musulmano, non ne ho idea...) e non volevo lasciarmi invischiare in un dibatito sterile d'origine identitario, sociale e politico : per quanto mi riguarda, io mi occupo di creazione letteraria. Che cosa à stato accolto straordinariamente bene in Marocco, in Spagna, in Germania—credo anche in Italia—ma non particolarmente in Francia. Perché in Francia vige uno schema, quello che vede questa nazione occupare il ruolo di figlio primogenito della Chiesa, uno schema che riduce l'Islam a un luogo commune... ma in propostio io non ho nulla da aggiungere.

politically expedient in its country of publication, France. Within the context of academic reception, Bourget also notes that the Berber trilogy is "toujours lue comme une démystification de l'histoire officielle, qui promeut la culture arabo-musulmane au détriment des populations berbères" (132). The Berber has largely been constructed within the context of French colonialism, however. Bourget cites research by Kaye and Zoubir's *The Ambiguous Compromise. Language, Literature, and National Identity in Algeria and Morocco*, which shows that the Berber policy of colonial France was put into place in order to weaken Islam. Consequently the Berber was constructed as pagan, democratic and anti-Arab, and it was part of a policy of divide and conquer:

> La culture arabe réunissait des valeurs codées qui pouvaient rivaliser avec celles des Européens parce qu'elles étaient exprimées par écrits dans le Coran. Les Berbères pouvaient êtres détachés de leur adoption de modèles arabo-islamiques, ils pouvaient êtres lus et écrits dans des versions anthropologisantes de différence historique qui les estompaient en caricatures de victimes opprimées par le gouvernement arabe. Ceci était possible car pour les Français les Berbères eux-mêmes étaient muets parce qu'ils n'avaient pas d'écriture et donc pas d'autorité. (Kaye and Zoubir 13, in Bourget 130)

All things considered, the Maghrebian author is in a difficult position. On the one hand, Chraïbi's novels about non-Arabic or Islamic themes such as *Mort au Canada* are ignored by the press, and on the other, they are taken for specialists of Arab and Muslim relations in European countries.

Among the publications covering somewhat similar ground to this study are John Erickson's *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative* (1998), which examines the work of Maghrebian authors Djebar, ben Jelloun, Khatibi and Salman Rushdie, and Carine Bourget's *Coran et Tradition islamique dans la littérature maghrébine* (2002), which shares the same Maghrebian focus and discusses the works of Djebar, Mernissi, ben Jelloun, and Chraïbi. In the first case, the post-colonial framework means taking into

account the struggle against foreign domination. Indeed, its stated purpose is the encounter between Islam and the West, and the chapter on *The Satanic Verses* bears the title "The view from underneath," an allusion to the author's non-fiction *The Jaguar Smile*. As Hamid Dabashi has argued in his online commentary, "In facing and opposing the unfathomable barbarity of European colonialism, Muslims have left not a single stone unturned in their own religious doctrines and dogmas." But while that is a narrative available in cases such as *L'amour, la fantasia*, studied at length by Erickson, the same cannot always be said of the novels in my corpus, which are, after all, set in seventh century Arabia. Even in the case of *The Satanic Verses*, where the narrative also takes place in the twentieth century, it does not, alas, constitute a Mohammed palimpsest. For the other two novels in this study, however, Bourget's study has proved an invaluable resource, particularly for the study of intertextuality. As we have seen, Bourget is well aware of the postcolonial context of the authors she studies, and, while the word does not appear in her title, it is nonetheless a key element of her work as well.

Bearing in mind the following caution,

Postcolonial criticism as it is currently practiced sometimes tends to subsume texts to an overarching agenda or theoretical framework, which, though illuminating, can also overlook their subtlety and irreconcilable tensions. However, a more probing or nuanced, though theoretically informed, reading of the text may reveal a more self-knowing and complicated position, accounting for its more intractable twists and turns (Hai 20),

I am reluctant to discuss these novels primarily as representatives of postcolonial narratives. In my experience, postcolonial critique often concentrates on identity, position and positioning to the detriment of what is a complex and often-contradictory semiotic practice, the literary text. With novelists of renown such as Rushdie, Djebar and Chraïbi, that has

already been done,[14] and I would prefer to concentrate on textual analyses and the theoretical considerations they bring forth.

While a number of studies may discuss both Chraïbi and Djebar together, apart from Erickson's book, it is still rare to find Rushdie related to either of them. The association of Chraïbi and Djebar is inspired by their common Maghrebian heritage and language of expression. Institutional divisions and specialization have caused them to exist in parallel worlds, in departments of French and English literature, which rarely come into contact with each other. Yet I would argue that comparative literature offers a unique perspective for the study of these works, because it links thematically related texts without undue regard for their linguistic provenance. At the same time, as a discipline that defines itself as a crossroads of discourses and branches of learning in the humanities and social sciences, it lends itself to discussions not only of how texts relate to one another, but of how they relate to the wider world. I am primarily motivated by a desire to let the texts speak for themselves. Just as the choice of corpus was prompted by the similarities of narrative form and content, I strive to discuss the works primarily as literary texts while opening the discussion to other branches of knowledge. We are after all dealing with fictional narratives engaging with religion, history, society and culture in the broadest sense.

Is it possible to read *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre* without noticing the many instances of either commentary and italicised or otherwise offset text, highlighting the relation to a previous text or body of work? To my mind, this formal and conscious rewriting is at the heart of their literary form. For this reason, intertextuality, the notion of one text being present in another, has informed the first chapter of this study. Intertextuality has been theorized a good deal, and there is inevitably some element of arbitrariness in the

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[14] Indeed, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the so-called Holy Trinity of postcolonial theorists, have all used Rushdie for their considerations of identity and positioning. Spivak has also written on Djebar's work.

selection of theoretical texts. I have endeavoured to include those that cast the widest net, and which allow for a nuanced reading of my palimpsestuous corpus.

By the same token, I doubt that it is possible for attentive readers to overlook the historical component in these three novels. Mohammed was a historical figure, and there is a relation to the history that is brought to bear in each work. This is particularly the case in *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine*, but still true, although to a lesser extent, in *L'Homme du Livre*. The second chapter is therefore devoted to history. It deals with notions such as rewriting history, historical truth and fiction, and the relation of the past to the present.

The third and final chapter discusses gender, which is a matter raised in both the previous chapters. It is a vast notion, and one that has been approached from a number of perspectives in the novels studied. For this reason, this is also the most interdisciplinary chapter, encompassing fields as varied as psychoanalysis and anthropology, but always taking the novels as the starting point of theoretical considerations. Setting aside my self-imposed generic constraints of the novel, this chapter also looks at *Figlie di Ismaele nel vento e nella tempesta*, the adaptation of *Loin de Médine* for the operatic stage. I have done so because it represents a further development of some gender issues raised in the novel.

My conclusion reviews the points of convergence noted in the foregoing analyses, and attempts to establish whether these three novels, are indeed heralds of Islamic modernity.

CHAPTER ONE: INTERTEXTUALITY

Following the time-honored tradition of rhetoric and literary studies, I will proceed from formal to thematic concerns. That being the case, intertextuality will be the first of the three chapters, because it is the most concerned with literary forms and structures, and will form the basis of later discussions of both historiography and gender. As for the discussion of intertextuality within the three texts, I propose to do so in ascending order of intertextuality— as we shall see, some works are more intertextual than others —based on criteria developed by Manfred Pfister. Before doing so, however, I wish to clarify what is meant by intertextuality. As the name suggests, it means the presence of one text in another.

This coexistence of two texts may happen in multiple forms, and the concept of intertextuality has been notable for its terminological profusion. For instance, it has been shown that Driss Chraïbi practices what could be called *intra*textuality, often repeating the same sentences from one novel to another (Bourget 146, cf. Fouet).[15] In other words, he quotes or plagiarizes himself. Far from being sloppy repetitiveness, this intentional practice helps to establish thematic as well as formal unity in his diverse oeuvre. As for Djebar, her prologue ("*Avant-propos*") to *Loin de Médine* lays bare her intent as well as her method, re-writing. For Rushdie, the palimpsest is a figure recurring in some form in most of his fictional work, most notably in *Shame*, *Haroon and the Sea of Stories*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and the novel under consideration, *The Satanic Verses*. Yet what *L'Homme du Livre*, *Loin de Médine* and *The Satanic Verses* share are numerous references to Islamic intertextuality implicated in the retelling or rewriting of the birthing hour of the religion.

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[15] It could also be called self-plagiarism, if, as so often the case in his oeuvre, the recurrence is not acknowledged.

METHODOLOGY

I shall have ample opportunity for general remarks about intertextuality after discussing the particulars of each text, but for now would like to establish a few principles. This methodology or framework taken from structuralist literary studies has provided the terminology for this chapter. If structuralism itself is a methodology most inspired by descriptive linguistics, then intertextuality should be seen as the coming together of semantics and syntax. Gérard Genette's study *Palimpsestes*, in which textual practices of various kinds are discussed and explained, has been particularly important in this regard. It has, in fact, provided much of the necessary methodology and terminology to enable my discussion of intertextuality.

But as to what I understand by intertextuality, that may be somewhat removed from the original intention of Julia Kristeva, whom we thank for the neologism. In *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, she writes that "tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte. À la place de la notion d'intersubjectivité s'installe celle d'intertextualité" (85). This comment opened the way for a spate of studies in which the influence of one text on another was examined.

Intertextuality has been a fad, long since passed, and it has also been presented as a *sine qua non* of literariness, as Wolfgang Preisendanz argues in "Zum Beitrag von R. Lachmann 'Dialogizität und poetische Sprache'"

> Was mich indessen irritiert an der skizzierten Universalisierung der beiden Begriffe, ist der Preis, um den sie gewonnen werden, nämlich die Schwierigkeit wenn nicht Unmöglichkeit, Dialogizität bzw. Intertextualität als spezifische Möglichkeiten literarischer Sinnkonstruktion in semantischer bzw. pragmatischer Beziehung auszuzeichnen und sie also nicht zum Definiens literarischer Kommunikation überhaupt zu machen (und damit im

> Grunde zu Trivialitäten: triviale Befunde, so kann man lesen,
>
> sind solche, zu denen sich kein Gegenteil denken läßt). [16] (26)

The quotation from Kristeva above shows that her categorical affirmation ("**tout** texte") is in part responsible for both the rise and the fall of the fad, which in hindsight should perhaps have been foreseeable. Since some novels are more or less polyphonic--in some cases there is hardly a discernible difference between authorial voice and the principal character--there is no reason why intertextuality should be considered a (pre-) condition of literature that is valid for all texts and for all time. In a *reductio ad absurdum* that follows the line of argumentation in the Kristeva quotation above, a particularly *inter*textual text is for that reason alone more literary. Perhaps just such a line of reasoning occasioned the binary opposition posited by both Renate Lachmann and Stephanie Sieburth,[17] in which there is the realistic work of fiction on the one hand, and an intertextual interplay of texts on the other. That this dualism is not a matter of course, and these aspects of fictional production need not be mutually exclusive, should become clear in this discussion of *The Satanic Verses, Loin de Médine,* and *L'Homme du Livre.*

Another weakness that becomes apparent in Kristeva's application of the term intertextuality above is the rather loose use of the term "citation", or quotation, which has had a distinct meaning in a discourse that is specifically literary long before her proclamation of intertextuality. Citation is one practice of intertextuality. Among the other main ones are plagiarism, allusion, and pastiche. The advantage of Genette's methodology for intertextuality is therefore that he offers a

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[16] "What bothers me about the proposed universalizing of both terms is the price at which it is made: the difficulty, if not impossibility, of making dialogism or intertextuality the defining character of potential construction of meaning, rather than making them the defining moment of literariness (and thereby trivializing them: trivial findings are those which do not allow for the possibility of opposition)." This excerpt is echoed in Broich and Pfister, 15. "Das überrascht auch nicht, denn ein Konzept, das so universal ist, ist notwendigerweise von geringem heuristischem Potential für die Analyse und Interpretation". In this case of intertextuality in the secondary literature, the hypotext is not documented, however.

[17] cf. Ursula Link-Heer, „Pastiche und Realismus bei Clarín" in *Peripherie und Dialogizität: Untersuchungen zum realistich-naturalistichen Roman in Spanien.* 157-81.

taxonomy of textual practices, that with judiciously chosen examples of process and effects make the relations intelligible. Instead of a work of theory, as in Kristeva's *Semiotiké*, Genette's *Palimpsestes* represents much more of a practical grid of intertextuality.

The consideration of intertextuality within the context of narration, for example with the social as well as the literary component in the metamorphosis of the protagonist in *The Satanic Verses*, means that the methodology in certain cases nears what is known as interdiscursivity, or discourse analysis in a literary application of the Foucauldian term. It is open to debate whether any methodology is unaffected by any others. Despite the relative disinterest in intertextuality as a purely theoretical reflection since about the early 1990s, I intend to use it as a tool for reading and interpreting *L'Homme du Livre*, *Loin de Médine*, and The *Satanic Verses*. Interdiscursivity, which has largely superseded intertextuality as a trend, has drawbacks of its own. The most apparent danger is of banality. If, as Wolfgang Preisendanz argues, everything is intertextual/dialogical, where is the interest in discussing works in terms of their intertextuality/dialogism? If literature, as Ursula Link-Heer and Jürgen Link argue, constitutes no specific discourse of its own, but rather is a meeting point of several discourses,[18] then is the danger of a banal, since ubiquitous, phenomenon not greater still?

But even the claim that literature represents no specific discourse, made by Link and Link-Heer in "Diskurs/Diskurs und Literaturanalyse" is open to question. How else would one classify a discussion of imagery or the use of rhetorical figures in *Paradise Lost*? Another concern is that the practitioners of interdiscursivity have marketed their analytical tool as the successor to intertextuality and have presented its superior epistemological framework as the reason for its succession. In some cases, as in Ursula Link-Heer's discussion of "Pastiche und Realismus bei Clarin", a chapter of *Peripherie und Dialogizität. Untersuchungen zum realistisch-naturalistischen Roman*

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[18] A point made also by Ursula Link-Heer in the image "Gewimmel unterschiedlicher Diskursparzellen" (Swarm of diverse discours parcels), 165.

in Spanien, the interdiscursive analysis means that the episteme used to categorize *La Regenta* as either a realist or a naturalist novel have been more closely examined. In essence her study represents a more thorough rewriting of literary history.[19] Its claim to represent a higher level of literary science cannot be accepted out of hand. Her judicious application of discourse analysis certainly makes the case for the methodology, but discourse analysis *avant la lettre* is Dorothy Van Ghent's consideration of the economic/financial discourse in *Moll Flanders*.[20] It is however debatable whether that, as opposed to say, the question of Moll as a reliable narrator, is the most relevant, noteworthy or fascinating aspect of the novel. In short, interdiscursivity is not necessarily new, and is no guarantee of getting the most out of a text.

It must further be said that I am not beholden to any school of thought. My study of intertextuality here is conditioned purely by the text. For the practitioners of interdiscursive analysis, the discourse itself is the subject. I would argue that literary discourse is sufficiently specific to lay claims to its own ways of reading. For that reason, I consider discourse analysis a methodology too concerned with thematic aspects for discussing the literary text in the first instance. This is not to say that these three novels do not engage important thematic concerns, but rather that they will be discussed more fully in later chapters.

Without all too much concern for what is currently fashionable in literary research, and without wanting to insist upon what constitutes literariness to the exclusion of all else, I propose to conduct a close reading, comparative and interpretative analyses of the texts that constitute *L'Homme du Livre*, *Loin de Médine* and *The Satanic Verses*. Just as some claim intertextuality as literariness, par excellence, others have been just as unfair in over-simplifying the concept and the trend. In *Voleurs de mots: Essai sur le plagiat, la psychanalyse et la pensee*, Michel Schneider claims that

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[19] For a literary history of *The Satanic Verses* it is still too soon, but this study too will give occasion to discuss categorization cf. Feroz Jussawalla, "Rushdie's *Dastan-e-Dilruba*: *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam".

[20] In *The English Novel: form and function*, 1961.

> Peu à peu, le plagiat est redevenu, réhabilité sous le nom
> savant d'intertextualité, quelque chose qui n'est plus une
> fatalité mais un procédé d'écriture parmi d'autres, parfois
> revendiqué comme le seul. Quant à l'infamie elle-même,
> l'opprobre s'en est quelque peu dilué. (Porra 35)

Whereas Michel Schneider is right in noting that plagiarism too is a form of intertextuality, he is wrong to extend the opprobrium of this one practice to a host of others. The artistry of recycling is part of the work at hand. In the examples to follow, we shall see that the practices of intertextuality are many and that far from opprobrium, fascination is a much more appropriate attitude.

Part of what I am putting forth in this chapter is a reading that allows the Islamic components of the novels of my corpus to come to light. I wish to establish that each is significantly Islamic, albeit in a different way. In order to do this, intertextuality is used as a means of detecting the points of contact with earlier Islamic texts.

In "Modern Arabic Literature and the Qur'an: Inimitability, creativity... incompatability", Shawkat M. Toorawa provides a brief survey of how modern Arabic literature uses Koranic heritage and textual sources. He explains that:

> The Qur'an is [...] understood to be literal not allegorical; is
> regarded as inimitable [...] By virtue of being regarded as
> inimitable, a concept known as I'jaz, this aspect of it,
> inimitability, has been the subject of numerous treatises,
> classical, medieval, and modern, and has led some authors to
> try their hand at "imitating" or "surpassing" it. Significantly,
> the mere accusation of such an attempt levelled at someone
> was, and is, damning, so to speak, and was, and is, thus
> wielded to great effect by a writer's detractors (241).

For all his use of the vocabulary of influence and sources, Toorawa mentions the tripartite manner of Koranic usage: thematic, structural, and textual, each of which is illustrated by an example. It does not have the theoretical and terminological clarity of intertextual studies such as Pfister and Broich's, or even of Genette's, for that matter: most notably,

it is not clear in what way the structural is distinct from the textual. *Awlad Haratina* (*Children of the Alley*), given as an example of structural use of the Koran, is apparently allegorical. Yet textual strategies of Koranic use, including quotation and allusions, as in the case of Amal Dunqul's poetry, are subject to literary-religious criticism, as Toorawa shows. In commentary that recalls some criticism of Driss Chraïbi's Koranic citations, Dunqul's poetry is taken to task by Ikhlas Fakhri Imara for its "marked incompatibility" between what the Qur'an sets out, i.e. the Truth, and what the poet sets out (cf. 247).

Toorawa ends his survey by noting that the avenues available to writers wishing "to tap into the phenomenally rich universe of the Qur'anic text" are "few indeed", but invokes the Koran's multiplicity of meaning, including its obvious (zahir) and meta- (batin), concluding "these same arguments can be adduced to allow for creative recourse to the text, to allow for a creative reading and (re)writing" (249).

What then is intertextuality, and how is it different from source and influence research? A brief comparison of three readings of Rushdie's major novels is revealing in this respect.

In "The Importance of Being Earnest", Sadik Jalal Al-cAzm remarks, "As I read and re-read the Hijab episode in Rushdie's novel, four major associations kept pressing on my mind" (268). The connection between the works occurs only through the reader's association. Although interesting, this is little more than reasoning by analogy, as the word "association" makes clear, but is ultimately arbitrary. In fact, many of the associations are clear signals to the textual antecedents left by Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*, but this either goes unnoticed, or is not sufficiently appreciated by Al-cAzm. In the same volume, Patricia Merivale's "Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Intertextual Strategies" similarly discusses associations, "allusions and echoes of *The Tin Drum* in *Midnight's Children*" (94), as well as filiation, since Midnight's Children "owes more to *The Tin Drum*"(84), but nowhere does she cite the theorists of intertextuality. In order to engage in meaningful intertextual scholarship, she would have had to quantify the relative importance of *The Tin Drum* compared to *One*

Hundred Years of Solitude as intertexts of *Midnight's Children*. More importantly, she would have had to say that a number of multiple clues referring to a specific work or corpus constitute a signifying practice that enables the reader to make sense of the whole. As such, intertextuality could be said to exist only in the article's title. In section one, "The 420 Confidence Trick" of his article "Being God's Postman is no Fun, Yaar", on the other hand, Srinivas Aravamudan argues for more than chance association. For one, he establishes that the song sung by the protagonists at the beginning of the novel is a translation of the 1955 Hindi musical *Shri Charsawbees* (Mr 420), which is subsequently referred to twice in the novel ("Shree 420"421, *Shree Charsawbees* 454). Aravumudan remarks

> The number '420,' an inside joke between Rushdie and his readership on the Indian subcontinent, is more crucial to understanding this book than several other frequently untranslated, and untranslatable, colloquialisms, allusions, and sprinkling of choice Hindi epithets. (190-91)

This number, which refers to small-scale fraud and confidence tricks in the Indian Code of Criminal Proceedings, is repeated in *The Satanic Verses*. For example, the bombed Air India flight from which Chamcha and Farishta fall in the opening pages of the novel is AI-420. What makes Aravamudan's an intertextual reading, despite the absence of intertextual terminology, is that it combines syntactic and semantic elements to make its case. It argues that the repeated references are no error, but rather constitutive of the meaning of the novel. Having said that, Aravamudan nowhere mentions intertextuality or intermediality to explain his methodology, yet his undertaking is intertextual in all but name. Similarly, among the most informative analyses of the novel that I have come across, Beert C. Verstraete's "Classical References and Themes in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*", without ever using the term "intertextuality", both places Rushdie's fiction in a context that makes it more intelligible and reflects upon its artistic and semantic novelty with regard to its Latin precursors. Such is also the nature of the current undertaking.

My argument is that intertextuality is a sophisticated semiotic activity. Far more than simply a process of filtering influences and sources, it is a method of conscious signalling of textual messages of semantic importance. Who can read *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, or *L'Homme du Livre* without noticing the many quotations set off from the adjoining text by indentation, quotation marks, italics, and in some cases, even documented by quotation of sura and verse? The attentive reader, for his part, is expected to notice clues, especially repeated ones, and make sense of their relation to the surrounding text.

THREE TOUCHSTONES

In the context of her *A Poetics of Postmodernism,* Linda Hutcheon has remarked that

> even though we may no longer be able to talk comfortably of
> authors (and sources and influences), we still need a critical
> language in which to discuss those ironic allusions, those re-
> contextualized quotations, those double-edged parodies both
> of genre and of specific works that proliferate in most
> modernist and postmodernist texts. This, of course, is where
> the concept of intertextuality has proved so useful. (126)

Perhaps our greatest debt to Genette is the diffusion of the notion of palimpsest, which I have integrated in the title of this study. It is a metaphor for a textual practice of rewriting over an existing text borrowed from graphic arts. In the original sense, it was a painting that was painted over, yet whose first layer is still perceptible through the subsequent one. The subtitle of his work, *La littérature au second degré*, further emphasizes the relational aspect resulting from intertextuality. I understand the second not as a succeeding element, but rather an additional one that permits communication between levels.[21]

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[21] Not everyone has been in agreement with the figure of the palimpsest, however, and von Koppenfels, in his article on literary translation, remarks that "Der Folgetext ware so besehen nicht, wie in Gérard Genettes metaphorischem Titel seines jüngsten Buches zum Thema, ein 'Palimpsest' als Überlagerung zweier écritures, also ein

As I have noted, Gérard Genette's *Palimpsestes* represents a taxonomy of textual practices. Among the examples of rewriting that he discusses at length are plagiarism, quotation, parody, burlesque, and satire. His exposition consists in discussing the form, the intent, and the functioning of the hypertext with regards to its textual antecedent. In "tableau général des pratiques intertextuelles" the criteria used are relation (*transformation*, *imitation*), and régime (*ludique*, *satirique*, *sérieux*). It is within this framework that I shall proceed. Another term from Genette, "la condition de lecture-perceptibilité" (31), also referred to as "le contrat intertextuel", will be used in this study, because it clearly includes the active participation of the reader in the intertextual undertaking.

This intertextual contract, or issue of intertextual marking, implicit or explicit relations to textual antecedents, is more thoroughly developed, however, by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister in *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien.* In particular "Skalierung der Intertextualität" (25-29), with its six criteria of *Referentialität, Kommunikativität, Autoreflexivität, Strukturalität, Selektivität* and *Dialogizität* will prove of great assistance in the analyses below.

Genette, Broich and Pfister's analyses of intertextual relations are in essence the same. For me the noticeable difference is in their vocabulary and in schemas. I find Genette's terminology more consistent and less confusing. *Prätext*, for example, Broich and Pfister's counterpart to hypotext, as a synonym for excuse, has an unfortunate association in English. *Nebentext*, as opposed to Genette's "paratexte", is also problematic, if only because it is not consistent with the Greek terminology that I use elsewhere here. Most importantly, however, the prefixes hypo- and hyper- convey the image of lower and upper

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Wortgebilde, unter dem das geschulte Auge den überdeckten Subtext entziffert, sondern das Ergebnis verbaler Interaktion mit einer kritisch aufgenommenen und aktiv andverwandelten Fremdvorlage (139-40). (The subsequent [hyper-] text would therefore not be a 'palimpsest', as in the metaphorical title of Gérard Genettes most recent book on the topic, as two superimposed textual elements under which the trained eye can decipher the subtext, but rather the result of critically received and actively incorporated foreign example).

(respectively) consistent with the trope of the palimpsest and the concept of textual layering used in this study.

The most recent general study of intertextuality that serves as a guide is the compendium written by Sophie Rabau. It is a text that brings together a number of theorists' insights into the methodology, but supported by a lengthy introduction written by Rabau that strikes a balance between many differing views on the matter. Particularly helpful is her insistence on intertextuality as a poetic in its own right:

> L'intertextualité n'est pas un autre nom pour l'étude des sources ou des influences, elle ne se réduit pas au simple constat que les textes entrent en relations avec un ou plusieurs autres textes. Elle envisage à repenser notre mode de compréhension des textes littéraires, à envisager la littérature comme un espace ou un réseau, une bibliothèque si l'on veut, où chaque texte transforme les autres qui le modifient en retour. (15)

In the belief that the hypertext determines the intertextual relation, as much as possible, I will limit my recourse to hypotexts. The Koran[22] or Tabari's *Chronicles* make for interesting reading in their own right, and without recourse to intertextual methodology would give rise to a lengthy and unwieldy gloss to all three novels. Indeed the temptation to do so has been great. Yet by proceeding from the hypertexts *L'Homme du Livre*, *Loin de Médine* and *The Satanic Verses*, what I propose to discuss are the dialogic relations that the latter texts create in relation to their predecessors.

DEGREES OF INTERTEXTUALITY

While it is easy enough to establish intertextuality quantitatively, what allows one to speak of qualitative intertextuality? How can one, for example, affirm that one text is more or less intertextual than any other? In "Skalierung der Intertextualität" ("Degrees of Intertextuality")

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[22] While I am aware that Quran would be a more accurate transcription of the Arabic word, in the following, my use of certain words of Arabic origin will conform to those used in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and my other primary texts, if only to avoid confusing pairings. I will only use alternate spellings when quoting.

Manfred Pfister has established six criteria, which he cautions are not proposed in a spirit of naïve positivism intended to measure intertextuality. He rather recommends heuristic constructions that allow for a differentiation of intertextual relations. As mentioned, these concepts are referentiality, communicativity, self-reflexivity, structurativity, selectivity, and dialogism.

When using these categories, one is simply designating a work or an instance of intertextual practice as either more or less intertextual, although there are no clear demarcations, but instead spectrums, with antinomical values. We can therefore see why Pfister cautions his reader: it is not a measure as such, except of a tendency. If I were only studying one text and a straightforward relation to its hypotext, it may not have been of much use to apply this grid, but comparison constitutes the core of the present study, and Pfister's category is a means to that end.

1. Referentiality

Quotation alone has little referentiality. The quotation that reveals itself to be such by making reference to its hypotext intensifies the intertextual relation. In so doing, the hypertext becomes a metatext (of its hypotext). A high degree of referentiality means that the hypertext is increasingly metatextual because it comments on the text that precedes, puts it into perspective, and interprets it.

2. Communicativity

This criterion establishes the communicative pertinence of intertextual relations. It is a question of the author and the recipient's intentionality. To what extent is the intertextuality marked? Low communicativity is a game of chance, consisting in arbitrary connections found by the reader, while maximum communicative intensity is attained when the author is conscious and marks her text in a way that the recipient finds unequivocal. The most communicative hypotexts are therefore those belonging to the canon, or contemporary texts that are talked about. Esoteric texts and those known to a small public, on the other hand, are of lesser communicative pertinence. (A high degree of communicativity does not necessarily correspond to a

high degree of the other categories. Plagiarism, for example, has week communicativity and referentiality, even though structurally demonstrates strong intertextual relation).

3. Selfreflexivity

The degree of intertextuality of the first two criteria can be further intensified if the author reflects upon the intertextual condition of her text. In addition to mentioning the intertextual links, she makes them a topic of discussion. This is often the case in modern and postmodern literature. Selfreflexivity can be qualified along the poles of explicit and implicit. The main question to ask for this criterion is: in what manner is the discussion of intertextuality thematized?

4. Structurativity

This fourth criterion deals with the syntactic integration of the hypotext in the hypertext. Occasional quotations make for a weak intertextual link, whereas in the case that a text takes the structure of another, it attains the maximal intertextuality according to this criterion.

5. Selectivity

Why is a certain element of a hypotext present in the hypertext? Why is it emphasized? According to this criterion, a quotation is more highly intertextual, whereas an allusion is less so.

6. Dialogism[23]

According to this final qualitative criterion, intertextual intensity is increased if the relation is oppositional. The greater the semantic and ideological conflict between the two texts, the more intense the intertextual relation. An antithetical hypertext is therefore more intertextual, whereas a faithful hypertext, be it an imitation or a translation, is less intertextual. For Pfister, an ironically distant hypertext is however more dialogical than one that seeks open confrontation.

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[23] For some theorists, dialogism is itself a vast notion, of which intertextuality is but one aspect. Indeed, a theoretical study of dialogism, which contains a number of reflections on intertextuality, including the one cited above from Preisendanz, is *Dialogiziät*, edited by Renate Lachmann.

TRANSLATION

Scholars of intertextuality and translation are in agreement that translation constitutes the primary intertextual relation (Genette 293, Broich 135). That is because quantitatively it accounts for more textual rewritings than any other kind. Yet both Genette and the contributors of *Intertextualität* (Broich, Pfister et al) consider this purely linguistic change but one form among many possible transformations (transposition and *Versetzung*, respectively). It is considered on the same order of importance as intermedial transfer, prosification, versification, and so forth.

For one of the hypotexts used by the three authors the problem of translation is problematic, however. Translations of the Koran, whether in part or in whole, are not considered valid. Yet if we are to consider that Driss Chraïbi, Assia Djebar and Salman Rushdie have nonetheless proceeded to cite the Koran in part, it is fair to assume that they are doing so outside the context of Islamic orthodoxy. Each has in some way acknowledged the difficulty of doing so. Chraïbi's epigraph, in which he insists on the fictional nature of his text, is one response. Djebar, in an interview with Clarisse Zimra, acknowledges the sensitive issue of naming the Prophet without his epithets in Arabic text:

> [...] as soon as you deal with religious figures, Arabic demands a specific series of sacred phrases and formulas. As a matter of fact, I do use them. I put them in the mouths of specific figures, and that is why, in the original French version, such speeches are printed in italics. The rest of the time, the rest of the text is controlled by a narrator—whom we may call "the author," if you wish— who is neutral: neither for nor against Islam. Its tale is in a neutral mode that, at this point in time, Arabic could not maintain. Non-Arabic people must realize that, wherever or whoever one is, even if one is a communist writer writing a communist piece, as soon as one writes or pronounces the name of the Prophet, one must immediately follow it with the requisite formula, "may the

blessing of God be with him." Were one to omit the formula,

it would immediately signify hostility to Islam. (Zimra 129)

Writing in French therefore represented a liberation of sorts from the linguistic conventions of Arabic. As for Rushdie, he seems to have the least problematic posture in relation to the translation. Perhaps this is so because he, unlike Chraïbi and Djebar, is a non-speaker of Arabic. While he would have learned prayers in the language, it is fair to assume that as with most South Asian Muslims, indeed for all non-Arabic speaking Muslims, translation has been a tool of understanding Islam. He therefore simply acknowledges that he has used an English translation of the Koran in *The Satanic Verses*. In the acknowledgements at the end of the novel, Rushdie states "The quotations from the Quran in this book are composites of the English versions of N.J. Dawood in the Penguin edition and of Maulana Muhammad Ali (Lahore, 1973), with a few touches of my own".

To write these novels that in some way quote the Koran, these novelists have either had to insist on the fictionality of their works, or to flout the theological discourse in their cultures. In the case of Rushdie, there can be no doubt that theological hegemony is being challenged, what Erickson has referred to as a leveling of discourses.

In the following discussion of the *L'Homme du Livre*, *Loin de Médine* and *The Satanic Verses*, I will deal with the translated nature of the texts only to the extent that this linguistic duality is present and made a topic of discussion in the hypertexts. Otherwise, I will contend with the linguistic theorists that anything that can be said in one language can be said in another.[24]

Finally, as a non-Arabist, I have relied on the existence of translated texts for this study. While knowledge of Arabic would undoubtedly have added greater semantic depth to this undertaking, I must forego it for the present time.

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[24] As discussed by Peter Chr. Florentsen in *Translation as recontextualisation*, especially Part IV, "The Translational frame", in which the theories of Nida, Toury, Hermans, Reiss and Vermeer are compared.

HYPOTEXTS

The major hypotexts used in these three novels are the Holy Koran, and al Tabari's *History*. It cannot be stressed enough that in the Islamic faith the importance given to the holy book as the literal word of God is more extreme than in the other monotheistic religions. While the Christian Bible has a tradition of alternate versions and translations from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, Judaism has a long tradition of paratexts and commentary. The literalism evinced in the Islamic approach is thereby countered in the other two faiths by these other textual practices. Indeed it is a dilemma in which Islamic theologians must find themselves: whereas the text itself is a guarantor of fixity, central to the faith as a legitimizing agent, its own sources are paradoxically not historically reliable.[25] They must insist upon its infallibility however, and convince others still thereof. The Koran as word of God is therefore, as Forsyth and Hennard argue, indeed comparable to the Christian belief of Jesus as son of God or the Judean precept of God's covenant with Abraham (cf.143). It is at once the central precept and an article of faith. Since it cannot be proven, it must simply be believed. Islam, as Forsyth and Hennard argue, is preoccupied by the inviolability of the word. Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel likewise explains: "The Central position of the Koran in the Islamic *Heilsgeschichte* stands, phenomenologically, parallel to the position of Christ in Christianity: Christ is the Divine Word Incarnate, the Koran is (to use Harri Wolfson's apt term) the Divine Word Inlibrate" (Schimmel 1985:24). While the purity of the word is a necessity, a guarantee of its canonical status, any doubt cast as to its authenticity causes great anxiety (cf. Forsyth and Hennard 147).

What Forsyth and Hennard refer to as the "fétichisme du texte caractéristique de la transition entre culture orale et culture écrite" (143-44), indicates that there are sociological and communicative aspects to the question of orality and literacy in the early Islamic era.[26]

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[25] Forsyth and Hennard write of "l'importance primordiale et constante accordée á l'authenticité du texte sacré, et d'autre part l'impossibilité matérielle de réaliser cet idéal de pureté" (149).
[26] Akhtar notes that in the Koran even unintelligible letters have been maintained (22).

They recount the history of canonization of the Koranic text. In contrast to the profusion of Bibles in Christianity, the Muslim community has insisted on the diffusion of a single text in order to safeguard against divergence and the concomitant variations in interpretation. Whereas Judean and Christian hermeneutics have flourished, Islam rather has brought forth grammatical commentaries and guides to recitation (149 ff.). Indeed the word Koran means recitation, and the oral nature of transmission has been preserved to this day. It is as an oral performance that it is most effective and still most often used, and for this reason one can see why such care has been taken to ensure that the performance itself is canonized.

While seven ways of reading the holy text are foreseen, and seven variations thereof are accepted, that does not change its untouchable nature. Within the Koran itself there are many instances of the unchangeable nature of the book. They all insist that they are the unaltered revelation. Yet despite this variation, within Islam attempts, such as Muhammed Khalafallah's proposal in 1949 to divide the Koran in distinct parts according to genre—legend, poetry, folk's tale—have met with outrage (Forsyth and Hennard 143-44). Rushdie has clearly embarked on a similar project. Is *The Satanic Verses*' Baal, the local poet and lampooner, not a counterpart to Mahound? After all, the Koranic quotation appearing in the novel (*The Star*) is recited in much the same circumstances as Baal's own work. Does Mahound's epithet *Kahin* (seer) not suggest that he is perceived as a soothsayer, and not as a holy man?

The full title of the second major hypotext is *The History of Prophets and Kings,*[27] written by the scholar Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari. Its English translators remark that it is "by common consent the most important universal history produced in the world of Islam" (ix). It covers the period from creation, "with special emphasis on biblical peoples and prophets, the legendary and factual history of ancient Iran, and, in great detail, the rise of Islam, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and the history of the Islamic world down to the

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[27] Also refered to as the chronicles (la chronique) in *Loin de Médine*.

year 915"(ix). Tabari's methodology often consists in quoting his sources verbatim and tracing the chains of transmission (*isnad*) to an original source. As Franz Rosenthal explains in "The Life and Works of al-Tabari", "Tabari derived the materials for his major publications almost exclusively from written works, despite the pretense of oral transmission which obscures the picture to some degree by preventing more specific reference" (53). His probity in scholarship is undisputed, however (54), and as Rosenthal further explains, the most remarkable aspect of Tabari's approach is his constant and courageous expression of 'independent judgement' (*itjihad*)" (55). Finally, Tabari's own views were characterized by moderation and compromise (56). In Tabari, therefore, we have a historian whose vast work remains part of the canon to the present day.

In the following discussion of intertextuality in the three novels of the corpus, a certain diversity of method will be in evidence. This is in part owing to the varied nature of the intertextual relations examined. In the case of *L'Homme du Livre* , the occurrences can largely be said to consist in snippets: they are relatively brief elements whose (syntactic) integration into the rest of the narrative, as we will see, varies from clearly marked, to unmarked. As for *Loin de Médine*, the same thematic concerns recur repeatedly throughout the body of the text. I have therefore preferred to use a few select examples that make the point, rather than multiplying instances of similar phenomena. A further difficulty in discussing Djebar's text is the lack of formal unity. It cannot be said to have a single protagonist, nor narrative strand. What rather holds it together is the thematic unity: a vision of nascent Islam from the perspective and voices of women. *The Satanic Verses*, unlike the other novels, offers a sustained example of intertextuality of such complexity that it cannot but be discussed holistically.

Another reason for the differences in application is that differing hypotexts are used. These three novels can be said to use the full range of sources about Mohammed's life, among them the Koran, the hadith, Islamic history and popular belief. This study therefore does not constitute a study of Koranic intertextuality alone. Its title "Mohammed

Palimpsests" rather expresses an interest in the biography and the time of Mohammed, the defining moment in the history of Islam.

L'HOMME DU LIVRE

Two recent publications have as their subjects at least two of the authors discussed in this study. The first, John Erickson's *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative* (1998) examines the work of Maghrebian authors Djebar, ben Jelloun, and Khatibi along with Salman Rushdie. The second, Carine Bourget's *Coran et Tradition islamique dans la littérature maghrébine* (2002) shares the same Maghrebian focus and discusses the works of Djebar, Mernissi, ben Jelloun, and Chraïbi.

Erickson discusses intertextuality in his conclusion:

The notion of intertextuality has much to do with the phenomenon of *métissage*—the bastardized or culturally/artistically/racially mixed or diluted. It bespeaks the interpenetration of cultures, the use made of other ideas and cultural positionings. It inveighs against any notion of a literary or cultural imperialism that rules by exclusivity. Such activity as we have seen in the works of the writers studied is nomadic, in the sense given to that term by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. (Erickson 165)

Although Erickson mentions intertextuality in passing, his study is more concerned with discursive practices in the broader sense, including that theorized by post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida. I may have occasion to return to his work, but for now would like to demarcate it from my own. I am not certain that his choice of texts is the most appropriate to his study. In the case of Assia Djebar, for example, although all her fictional output is arguably Islamic,[28] it strikes me that *Loin de Médine*, which discusses early Islam at length, is more so than *L'amour, la fantasia*, on which Erickson largely bases his arguments. As for the inclusion of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, it seems slightly out of place in an otherwise Maghrebian context. What sets this

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[28] As Bourget explains, Islam is an important heuristic tool for the work of such authors.

study apart is the similar subject matter of the novels studied: they are all Mohammed palimpsests. Although similarly limited to and interested in a corpus by postcolonial authors, I have the additional convergence criteria of time (1988-'95), genre (the novel) and intertextuality. His notion of Islam, not limited to a corpus that retells Mohammed's biography, is consequently more vast.

Carine Bourget's study, which is entirely devoted to a Maghrebian corpus, has the advantage of intertextuality as a methodology. As she states,

> l'Islam dans les textes choisis (publiés dans les quinze dernières années) n'est pas un simple fond culturel; c'est un élément clef pour leur interprétation. L'étude que nous entreprendrons de l'intertextualité islamique se fera en deux temps: l'identification des éléments islamiques sera suivie d'une analyse de leur rôle crucial dans l'interprétation du texte. (Bourget 27)

Bourget begins by theorizing intertextuality. She does this with reference to theorists such as Jauß, Iser, and Pfister. An important quotation taken from Julia Kristeva's *Révolution du langage poétique*, indicates the breadth of her notion of intertextuality:

> Tout le corpus précédant le texte agit donc comme une *présupposition généralisée ayant valeur juridique*: il est une loi qui s'exerce par le fait même de sa formulation, puisque ce qu'elle commande c'est l'intervention textuelle elle-même.
> … C'est dire que tout texte est d'emblée sous la juridiction des autres discours qui lui imposent un univers: il s'agira de le transformer. Par rapport au texte comme pratique signifiante, tout énoncé est un acte de présupposition qui agit comme une incitation à la transformation. (Kristeva 338-339, cited in Bourget 7)

This notion, as Bourget remarks, is related to Genette's neologism transtextuality. Following Kristeva's lead, Bourget claims that there are two sources for texts with juridical value for the authors of her corpus: Western and Arab-Islamic.

One limitation of Bourget's study is perhaps that, despite its beginning with a theorization of intertextuality, it is uneven in its application thereof or dialogue therewith. Her discussion of intertextuality as such appears to be limited to her introduction, although notions of intertextuality appear in her discussion of Chraïbi's texts, and, to a lesser extent, of Djebar's. Yet among its strengths, the inclusion of reception and horizon of expectation into the broad notion of intertextuality allows for a discussion of the market(ing) of postcolonial literature (cf. 20), a point to which I shall return.

For the purposes of her study, a Francophone Muslim writer is defined as born into a Muslim family and educated in French. As Bourget further notes, in the case of these authors, the switch to the French school system often interrupted a rudimentary knowledge of Islam, gained at traditional schools while young. From that time on, most French-speaking Muslims in this situation would learn about Islam through a Western filter.[29]

In many respects, Bourget can be said to pick up where Hawley leaves off. Just as Hawley discusses Chraïbi's re-racination within the context of his oeuvre, Bourget concentrates on a trilogy comprised of *La Mère du printemps* (*L'Oum-er-Bia*, 1982), *Naissance à l'aube* (1986) and *L'Homme du Livre*, which, as she explains, recount the advent of Islam in different regions at three specific times in history: in Arabia (the revelation made to Mohammed), in North Africa (Oqba ibn Nafi's conquest in 681) and in Spain (under Tariq bnou Ziyyad in 712). What is particularly helpful about this study is the links that are drawn between different works of Chraïbi's corpus. With regards to different characters' use of Koranic quotations, Bourget notes that "Malgré les différences dans les rapports que chaque personnage entretient avec l'Islam, un trait d'union est tracé entre eux par le choix des versets coraniques qu'ils citent, et les libertés qu'ils prennent en les interprétant" (Bourget 147). In a similar vein, she highlights a sentence borrowed from the *L'Inspecteur Ali* (142) that reappears in *L'Homme*

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[29] The biographies of Djebar, Samba Diallo and Driss Chraïbi, all of whom became autodidacts of Islamic culture, are examples of this phenomenon.

du Livre (68), "Si tu ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé avant ta naissance, tu resteras toujours un enfant" (Bourget 137). This is the point at which the latter novel truly begins to form in Chraïbi's mind.

Perhaps more substantially, Bourget's intertextual methodology consists in a thematic taxonomy of intertextual references common to the novels. She then goes on to discuss the certain intertextual relations (transformation, allusion) in some depth. I will summarize them the better to theorize them, before discussing my own findings. The main difference between Bourget's methodology and my own is that she uses a broader definition of intertextuality. While I share many of her insights, I find it more helpful to discuss them in separate chapters concerned with either the formal or the thematic interests they bring up.

KORANIC HYPOTEXT

The first instance of Koranic intertextuality occurs on page 16 of *L'Homme du Livre*. As Mohammed begins to experience revelation, the letters "Y.S." (*Ya Sin* in Arabic) are repeated (16, 20, 21, 22), and only on page 22 is it followed by *Wal Kitabi al-hakim!* While Bourget refers to this as the first Koranic allusion (152), I would argue that it could also be seen as a quotation, because *Ya Sin* is the name of Sura 36 as well as its incipit. Perhaps more importantly, however, it is said to be considered as the heart of the Koran, according to its French translator Berque, "en ce sens qu[e la sourate] en résume les thèmes majeures" (Bourget 152). For George Lang as well, they are letters replete with meaning: "*Ya-Sin* gives rise to insane, 'man' or 'human,' but is here[30] understood to mean 'the Leader of man, the noblest of mankind, Muhammad the Prophet of God'" (18). Its referentiality is high, because in each case, the letters are written in italics and in boldface type. In other words, the paratextual clues accompanying these occurrences clearly demark them from the surrounding text and thereby reinforce their referentiality. Because it is taken from the

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[30] Lang's quotation is found in *La Mère du Printemps*. The etymological arguments are attributed to Abdullahi Yusufu Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*.

Koran, a canonical text of Islam, its communicativity is high as well. It is, in other words, understood, but above all recognized as such by its target readership. By the same token, we would do well to consider the criteria of structurativity and selectivity together. While a slight quotation such as this one should be interpreted as a low intensity of intertextuality, its choice is revealing. It is the heart of the Koran, and as such may be said to function metonymically. Finally, according to dialogism, this is a reference of weak intertextuality, because it is not at all opposed to its hypertext.

Yet when the novel is viewed as a whole, the criterion of structurativity is somewhat higher. As Bourget convincingly argues:

> *L'Homme du Livre* est divisé en deux parties, respectivement intitulé « La première aube » et « La deuxième aube ». Le début d'un nouveau jour, ou un nouveau cycle naturel [...] signale l'avènement de l'Islam. Ces retours en arrière font écho à un verset du Coran, qui stipule que l'histoire des nations sert de leçon, et qui annonce le déclin de toute civilisation [...]. (VII, 34)

The novel therefore owes its internal structure to its Koranic hypotext, an indication of a high degree ofintertextuality.

Another Koranic hypotext appears in the same section of the novel. Mohammed hears himself say: "Quand il sera demandé à une âme pour quel crime elle a été tuée" (24), and another Koranic quotation.[31] This first one, however, is perhaps the most significant. In Sura 81, "The Cessation", there is question of "when the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain". It recalls the pre-Islamic practice of putting infant girls to death, but that ended with Islam. Why was this quotation, of all available Koranic quotations, chosen? It is revealing of Islam as a progressive religion that heralded in a new age of gender relations as well as new respect for all human life.

In concentrating on the part of Mohammed's life before revelation, the text presents a dreamer, an ingénu, someone who is

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[31] Bourget, in her discussion of the resurrection motif, associates it with XVII, 49-51 and LXXV, 3 of the Koran.

unsure of himself. Far from striving for prophecy, for example, he is tormented by it: "Mohammed s'arrêta. Avec lui s'arrêtèrent instantanément voix et visions qui n'avaient cessé de le harceler depuis qu'il était entré en méditation dans la caverne" (25). This corresponds to the division of the Koran according to which the Sura from Mecca are said to be more peaceful, whereas those from Medina, at which point Islam has become hegemonic, are considered more bellicose. This too, is an aspect of selectivity, in which the slice of life shown has thematic consequences for the novel as a whole.

The above examples do not allow for a pronouncement on one criterion. In considering the criterion of auto-reflexivity, one can only say that it is explicit, owing to the effect of the previous criteria communicativity and referentiality. It is with reference to a non-Koranic hypotext that we are able to see how *L'Homme du Livre* demonstrates intertexuality as poiésis.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT HYPOTEXT

As Bourget has observed (156), the only writer mentioned in *L'Homme du Livre* is Ibn Arabi, the (1166-1240) Islamic scholar and mystic. Not only is Ibn Arabi himself mentioned, but also his most comprehensive work,[32] *The Gems of Knowledge*, is cited. In one of Mohammed's visions stretching into the future, Ibn Arabi is presented as a simple man eating a simple meal, his only meal of the day, yet he is somehow not hungry. He hungers rather for being, as well as for the knowledge behind science and art. Chraïbi's narrator first describes him in his monastic simplicity consisting in his diet and clothing, then introduces him as Mouhyiddin Ibn Arabi. He is presented at a crucial moment in his life, because he has just completed his *Gems of Knowledge*. The inkwell is dry, and the narrator insists on the fact that he will not reread his text, but rather leave it to posterity. Clearly, his situation can be equated with Mohammed's, from whose vision he

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[32] Chittick claims that it "résume la pensée d'Ibn Arabi et est, parmi ses cinq cents livres, celui qui est le plus souvent étudié" (*Imaginal* 1, cited in Bourget 157) and Gloton refers to it as a "véritable somme condensée de ses positions doctrinales fondamentales" (17).

appears: "Il en frissonne encore [...] Il ne demande ni récompense ni réconfort. Car qui peut regarder au-delà de son propre regard ? » (85). Like Mohammed, his responsibility seems to end with the delivery of the message. Ibn Arabi is at the same time a symbol of Moorish Andalousia's cultural brilliance: "Autour d'Ibn Arabi, sitôt la porte franchie, l'Andalousie brille de milles éclats" (86).

Yet surely Ibn Arabi is included in the narrative not only as an extended metaphor of Mohammed's experience, particularly if the *Gems of Knowledge* is mentioned repeatedly. The next passage introduces a sexagenarian patriarch named Daniel, his eyes

> "pleins de bonté et d'honneur, il relit *Les Gemmes de la Connaissance*". Et comme à chaque fois, les phrases de ce livre lui emportent la vue et la raison: des mots tremblants, superbes, puisés à la source du langage. A qui transmettre ces joyaux de la parole? Pour s'en pénétrer, il lui faut une concentration totale, ce même recueillement absolu dans lequel l'auteur avait enfanté son œuvre. (86)

While seated with his family, Daniel wonders whether he is called to one of the imaginary presences Ibn Arabi wrote about, which appears to be an allusive reference to his mysticism. The chapter ends with a reminder that Daniel, like Ibn Arabi before him, is Mohammed's vision. Clearly, the *Gems of Knowledge* serve as a referent, more—a signifier-- for a philosophy or belief system, or an approach thereto, or it would not be the subject of such repeated mention at this point in the novel.[33]

Bourget claims that orientalist scholarship has interpreted Ibn Arabi as a form of pantheism, a position refuted by the Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel. She further explains that his thought, despite its infinite complexity, remains influential. It would appear that what is retained from his teaching, is on the one hand, God's love being various in its forms. A poem by Ibn Arabi appears to encourage religious tolerance (poem cited by Schimmel *As Through* 38-39, by Bourget 158). After all, *The Gems of Knowledge* ends with an invitation to recognize

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[33] In another of Chraïbi's novels, *La Mère du printemps*, one of the characters refers to Ibn Arabi. Oqba "ne voulait rien conquérir dans ce monde qui n'était que l'apparence face à la Réalité" (122, cited in Bourget 157).

God in all forms of worship.

According to Genette's criteria of *régime* (serious/satirical/humorous) and the binary distinction of imitation/transformation, Chraïbi's *L'Homme du Livre* is serious and transformative. Its portrait of Mohammed is in many respects faithful to the one known to Muslims. As for the transformations that have been made, they consist in slight changes in the wording of Koranic text. As Bourget argues, "Chraïbi semble citer le Coran de mémoire, ce qui expliquerait les citations approximatives, qui, bien qu'inexactes, ne changent pas fondamentalement de sens (comme la substitution de « kitabi » [livre] à « Qur'ân » dans une citation du début de la sourate « Yâsîn »)" (154). There are degrees of transformation, as with anything, and Chraïbi's would, in my opinion, be purely formal. As Hawley has shown, Driss Chraïbi's liberties with Koranic quotation is deliberate, and not due to ignorance, part of an intertextual strategy that emphasizes primacy of the message and simplicity. Hawley speaks of "a return to the simplicity at the heart of Mohammed's message" (Hawley 70). Indeed, there is a passage in the novel which reflects on the inefficacy of words for expressing any message: « à l'instant même où il atteignait aux vraies relations du monde, il se rendit compte qu'il ne disposait que des mots qu'on lui avait appris depuis l'enfance, des mots arabes, vieux, limités dans l'espace et dans le temps—alors que ce qu'il pressentait était au-delà des mots » (*L'Homme du Livre* 20). In a passage that prefigures Bourget's qualification, "syncretic", and that neatly sums up the formal and thematic aspects of Chraïbi's use of Koranic hypotexts, Hawley further says "His recent writings express a religious sense that is not systematic, and far from dogmatic, but based in compassion, fraternity, and significantly, a rootedness in the earth as the lasting source of all life" (Hawley 70).

LOIN DE MÉDINE

I propose to begin with a word on the complex structure of *Loin de Médine*. The author received her academic training in history, and it is mostly as recorded history that *Loin de Médine* is presented. In fact,

the fictional portion, the *rawiya* and "voices" written in italics, is very much in the minority. It seems as though the author exhausts the full range of structural and paratextual mechanisms, including Prologue, genealogy, footnotes, and three kinds of narrative, all told 41 segments of various genres. The first paratextual clue is the word "novel" on the frontispiece, and yet, as we have noted, the fictional aspect in strictly quantitative terms, pales in comparison to that of the historical elements. The unity of the text appears to be more thematic than formal, because although the setting in broad historical terms (geographical as well as temporal/generational) is unified, the actors are not. Even within the timeframe that encompasses The Prophet Mohammed and his grandchildren, and the division into parts corresponding to caliphates, it is hard to speak of a general progression. While reconstructing connections between characters with the aid of the genealogy and patronymics remains a possibility, taken together, the novel's segments represent a rhizomatic pattern. Rather, it is the gendered revision of history that provides a constant.

In an observation that recalls Driss Chraïbi's frustration with French response to *L'Homme du Livre*, Assia remarks that although *Loin de Médine* "qui m'a valu des prix littéraires à l'étranger a rencontré en France un autre type d'incompréhension: il y a une sorte d'intégrisme des intellectuels laïcs en France" (Armel 102). Yet the relative neglect is not limited to France or the French-speaking public, as Barbara Frischmuth observes:

> Das dritte große Thema von Assia Djebar ist der Islam. Ihre Annäherung an ihn ist unspektakulär, bis auf den großen Roman *Fern von Medina* meist nur in einzelnen, eingeschobenen Sätzen kommentiert, und selbst diese scheinen sich beim ersten Hinsehen bloß als Erinnerung an den Kinderglauben zu präsentieren.[34] (*Friedenspreis* 26-27)

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[34] Islam is the third major topic of Assia Djebar's [work]. Her approach towards it is unspectacular, with the exception of the novel *Far from Medina*, mostly commented upon only in passing, and even then seemingly representative of the faith in which she was brought up.

I therefore propose to begin to address the shortfall in the following.

There is already a book-length study of intertextuality in Djebar's work in existence. Muriel Walker's dissertation, "Amours palimpestueuses: voyage au bout de l'écriture djebarienne", is a discussion of the author's oeuvre that includes a meticulous analysis of *Loin de Médine*. She proceeds by comparing the novel to its hypotexts, in particular to the translation of the historian Ibn Tabari, the principal source text used in the novel. At the same time Walker's reading defines the complex diegetic relations according to structuralist narratology. Yet while sharing many of her interpretations of the text, I will adopt another methodology. I will limit my recourse to the hypotexts, if only because I believe that the hypertext determines the intertextual relation. Carine Bourget also has a chapter-length study of this novel entitled "Les femmes en Islam: politique et éthique chez Fatima Mernissi et Assia Djebar,"[35] but with less rigour in her consideration of the intertextual relations between the novel and its textual antecedents than she had applied to Chraïbi's fiction.

In order to give some idea of the complexity and diversity of Djebar's intertextual practice in this novel, I will discuss three brief passages in terms of the criteria enumerated above. This section is not intended as an exhaustive survey of Djebar's intertextual strategies within *Loin de Médine*, which would vastly expand the scope of this study. I rather wish to discuss the scope of techniques, and to provide just enough evidence to support the claim that the novel is both more intertextual than Chraïbi's *L'Homme du Livre*, while less so than Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

The preface of Djebar's *Loin de Médine* outlines the project that is constituted by the novel itself, which is a representation of the era of the Prophet Mohammed from women's perspective. In the "avant-propos", the author states that

> J'ai appelé "roman" cet ensemble de récits, de scènes, de
> visions parfois, qu'a nourri en moi la lecture de quelques

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[35] Bourget 31-89.

> historiens des deux ou trios premiers siècles de l'Islam (Ibn Hicham, Ibn Saad, Tabari). [...]
>
> Musulmanes ou non musulmanes elles trouent, par brefs instants, mais dans des circonstances ineffaçables, le texte des chroniqueurs qui écrivent un siècle et demi deux siècles après les faits. Transmetteurs certes scrupuleux mais naturellement portés, par habitude déjà à occulter toute présence féminine...
>
> Dès lors la fiction, comblant les béances de la mémoire collective, s'est révélée nécessaire pour la mise en espace que j'ai tenté là, pour rétablir la durée de ces jours que j'ai désiré habiter ...(Djebar 5)

There is no escaping the metatextual nature of this quotation. For this reason, and for the emphasis placed on verbs of narration throughout the text, it has often been noted that the real topic of *Loin de Médine* is not so much the lives themselves, as the transmission of those lives. Harrow has commented

> The dialogic presence of the female narrative voices enters into the male spaces of the i*snad*. Buried, suppressed female voices are here returned to the textual center—joining Djebar's project with that of her feminist sisters. This results [...] in a foregrounding of language, the discourse of transmission, as the real subject matter of Djebar's novel. (Harrow xxii)

It is both revealing of and explicit in reference to its textual antecedents. At the same time, it "comments on" them, clearly placing them within a framework of gender relations as well as of historical accuracy. This preface also demonstrates a high degree of self-reflexivity: it is explicit and revealing of its textual antecedents. According to another criterion, communicativity, defined as the marking of the intentionality, the intertextual relation is yet again very strong: The reader cannot but notice the goal here: it is the rewriting of the history by three eminent historiographers. Also pertinent to the criterion of communicativity is the fact that a wider Muslim audience would know these historians. A

number of commentators have remarked that Djebar's text is replete with "the discourse of transmission".[36] There are indeed numerous references to what the chronicler Al Tabari relates for each of the historical incidents rewritten in the novel. As for its dialogism, despite the good faith and diplomacy shown by the author ("certes scrupuleux" "naturellement"), there can be no mistaking that she is writing against elements of their historiography.

As for the other criteria listed by Pfister, structurativity, selectivity and dialogism, taken together they demonstrate the extent to which the intertextual relations in this novel are complex. Of the 41 parts that constitute the novel, those that are purely fictional are a small minority. Only the voices, short episodes in italics, are truly fictional. The rest is based on the history related by the Arab historiographers cited in the preface and whose texts, taken together, represent Djebar's hypotext. We may therefore affirm that according to the criterion of structurativity, the degree of intertextuality is once again very high. Walker notes that the narrative anachrony of Djebar's texts reflects the hadiths' structure: "L'intervertissement du prologue et de l'épilogue qui ne se suivent pas chronologiquement, reprend le thème de transmission ininterrompue du Hadith" (65). Djebar herself has commented on this high structurativity, albeit without the terminology of intertextuality:

> J'ai [...] développé des narrations à partir de[s textes de Tabari] sur la période de la mort du Prophète et du début du califat d'Abou Bekr, mais j'ai pris systématiquement le point de vue des femmes, les célèbres et les moins connues. Je suis restée tout près du texte arabe, à la racine même parfois des mots. Je cherchais la vérité—c'est-à-dire aussi la vie, le mouvement et les passions des êtres—en creusant deux falaises à la fois : celle du texte arabe et, en reflet, ou dévié, mon texte français. (Armel 102)

This quotation is of course revealing of more than Djebar's modus operandi. It also indicates her understanding of intertextuality as a dialogue between two texts. The subtext of a dynamism inherent in the

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[36] Harrow xxii, cf. Lee, Geesy.

dual-action process, concentrating on both Tabari's hypotext and her own hypertext, which corresponds to the concept of intertextuality as a poetics, as a creative dynamic within literary production.

To discuss selectivity and dialogism, however, I would like to put forward yet another textual example. "La reine yéménite" is the very first chapter of *Loin de Médine*. It relates the story of a woman who, after noticing the apostasy of her husband, helps a number of Muslim men to kill him:

> Ce sera elle l'instrument de Dieu : par elle Aswad périra, comme l'a prévu Mohammed. Les circonstances de cette chute annoncée font lever, du passé, la vive silhouette de cette reine yéménite (20) [...]

> Non, il n'y a pas de Judith arabe ! Ce serait supposer chez cette Yéménite une pureté définitive, une pulsion de fatalité, un éclat de tragédie. À l'instant où se joue la survie d'un peuple, Judith, tranchant elle-même la tête de Holopherne, ouvre l'avenir.

> Ce ne sera pas encore le moment, dans l'imaginaire arabe, pour faire lever de tels êtres, ou pour en inventer !

> Pas encore, du moins, en ces récits des temps anciens. (27)

As the narratrix remarks,

> [...] dans la relation du complot, l'accent est mis sur l'intempérance de Aswad. Il "tombe" ivre dans le somme. La chronique préfère insister sur l'ivresse de l'homme, sur son péché d'avoir été maudit par le Prophète en personne. Comme si les voies qu'emprunte la comploteuse si assurée n'étaient que provisoires. (22)

Similarly, the narrator observes: "La fiction serait d'imaginer cette femme rouée [...] Si Mohammed avait également maudit la reine, la Tradition aurait scrupuleusement rapporté la condamnation, n'en doutons pas" (20).

I have reproduced this much text in order to discuss selectivity and dialogism, but should note in passing that the self-reflexive (metatextual) and referential elements are also very much in evidence.

As for selectivity, however, the question concerned with the "why" of the reproduction of a text in a hypertext, the preface cited above is revealing of its relevance.   Once again, it is gender that is at issue. In rewriting the history of Islam since its very beginning at the end of the twentieth century, the gulf to be breached, to use the terms of Djebar herself, is the considerable contribution of women to history in this period. As for dialogism, the criteria according to which an oppositional text is more intertextual than one that is only a translation or an imitation, we notice a very high degree of intertextuality here.

Bourget remarks in a footnote that there is a part of *Loin de Médine* (184-87) that is a rewriting of a scene from Driss Chraïbi's *Le passé simple*.

> *Loin de Médine* reprend un épisode du *Passé simple* d'un point de vue totalement différent. Dans [*L*]*e Passé simple*, après la mort de son plus jeune enfant, la mère est méprisée par son fils Idriss lorsqu'il l'aperçoit parée pour séduire le père afin de remplacer l'enfant décédé. Dans *Loin de Médine*, l'action similaire de Oum Salem lui vaut l'admiration de Oum Harem, narratrice de cet épisode. (Bourget 46, note 14)

The reason for this being relegated to a footnote is doubtless its *un*marked nature. It would have been somewhat anachronistic and illogical, in a novel set in seventh century Arabia, to have referred in some more explicit way to a twentieth century text.   This does not however exclude the presence of hypotexts from sources outside the traditional Islamic sources used in *Loin de Médine*. Indeed, as Bourget fittingly notes, such is the case of the two epigraphs, which I will cite partially here. The first case, a quotation from Ferdousi's *Le Livre des Rois*, begins "…Tout ce que je dirai, tous l'ont déjà conté". The second, from the historian Michelet, states "Et il y eut alors un étrange dialogue entre lui et moi, entre moi, son ressusciteur, et le vieux temps remis

debout".[37] Because I wish to return to discuss these epigraphs at greater length in the subsequent chapter on historiography, suffice it to remark on the manifest intertextual and hence self-reflexive character they lend to the novel.

Both Bourget (76, 85) and Walker make reference to the Battle of the Camel, the event leading to the schism within Islam, in *Loin de Médine*. In both cases, they note that the reference made is an allusion, a relatively implicit reference to a hypotext. In fact, as Walker argues, the event is sufficiently familiar to Muslims to not require more than a hint for communicative purposes.   It may be helpful at this point to include a lengthy quotation from Walker:

> La *fitna* est un sujet délicat au sein de la culture islamique car cela marque une déchirure profonde qui divise encore aujourd'hui les Croyants mais Djebar choisit de ne pas en reprendre l'histoire. En apparence, du moins. La guerre civile, la « grande *fitna* » eut lieu entre Ali et Aïcha et fut responsable de la division de L'Islam en deux factions : les Sunnites et les Chiites (scissionnistes, inconditionnels d'Ali). Scission irréparablement grave au sein d'une foi encore neuve et déjà fragile. Djebar mentionne la grande « fitna » en prologue de son texte, et vers la fin du roman, mais elle ne reprend pas la narration de l'événement, pourtant très détaillé chez Tabari. Elle ne reprend pas cette narration, mais elle en reprend une autre. Je n'avais pas vu la similitude lors de ma première lecture parce que je n'avais pas lu l'hypotexte de Tabari ; or il y a, dans le texte djebarien, un chapitre intitulé « Selma la rebelle » qui présente effectivement des ressemblances avec le combat d'Aïcha. (Walker 98)

Walker goes on to demonstrate convincingly the parallels between Tabari's relation and Djebar's. Indeed, much is made of the similar age of Selma and Aïcha (Ayesha), their friendship, and the narration is

[37] Cf. Bourget 68. Ferdousi recounts the history of Persia up to the time of Islamic conquest, and Michelet, as Bourget explains is a romantic historian influenced by Hegel.

framed by references to Ayesha. In recounting the battle in which Selma is involved, Djebar uses Tabari's hypotext. In fact, as Walker shows, hers is a calque, and therefore reveals a high degree of syntactical similarity (notably by including the same details from the battle) with the source text. Yet as with the rest of *Loin de Médine*, this brief chapter also is sated with the vocabulary of transmission ("détail du chroniqueur"(39), "Tabari s'est contenté de relater" 38). Yet in rewriting Tabari's text, even retaining its sequence of events, Djebar adds to it, modifying quotations, parentheses, and exclamation marks (Walker 101). Perhaps most importantly, however, she changes the possible attribution of responsibility. As Walker explains, « [Djebar] annexe ainsi un non-dit déconcertant dans le texte du historien: la responsabilité de la victime, sa valeur guerrière qui fait d'elle le vainqueur du corps à corps avec l'homme d'armes » (101). Put another way, for all its structural similarities, Djebar's hypertext is dialogically opposed to the interpretation of its precursor.

This narrative has also caught the eye of Jeanne Marie Clerc, who notes that the narrator explains that "*Selma* signifie 'sauvée'. C'est ce salut-là—chute brusque dans l'effervescence guerrière, lent affaissement du corps jusque-là dressé—que la reine des Beni Ghatafan a choisi" (39, cf. Clerc 117). The play on words (saved and salvation) highlights the irony of her fate. She was saved from slavery and became a Muslim, but chose to die free and fighting. Consider that the above line ends on the verb to choose. Although Clerc's argument was not couched in terms of dialogism, it is revealing of oppositionality to tradition as represented by Tabari's hypotext. Yet despite being written against the grain of Tabari's text, *Loin de Médine* is nonetheless inscribed in the same line of thought as Mohammed's original message. As Clerc explains, "l'auteur tente de cerner l'origine de cette claustration, matérielle et morale, à laquelle des descendants du Prophète ont peu à peu condamné les femmes, trahissant, de ce fait, les germes de subversion dont était porteuse la parole de Mohamed" (Clerc 117-18).

There is also an important Koranic intertext in *Loin de Médine*. In the chapter "Elle qui dit non à Médine", surat 4-3 is quoted:

« Épousez, comme il vous plaira,

Deux, trois ou quatre femmes.

Mais si vous craignez de n'être pas equitable,

Prenez une seule femme ». (Djebar 73)

It is clearly set off from the surrounding text, not only by quotation marks, but by italics as well. This example of a Koranic intertext is however more appropriately developed in chapter three, discussing gender, and relating to the wider issue of polygamy.

To sum up, there is a high degree of sustained and above all self-reflexive intertextuality in Djebar's *Loin de Médine*. If, of all the criteria now under consideration, one were to be singled out, clearly it is dialogism, and who can doubt the questioning and oppositional nature of the entire undertaking that is *Loin de Médine*. Although she does not refer to it in terms of dialogism, Bourget remarks that

Assia Djebar écrit en réponse à des discours défavorables pour la femme, elle adopte le procédé de réécriture des sources mêmes de ceux à qui elle s'oppose. Cette œuvre entrelace fiction et histoire et place les personnages féminins au premier plan. Cependant, le roman soulève plus de questions qu'il n'apporte de réponses. Djebar sort de l'oubli des événements ayant eu lieu au début de l'ère islamique dans le but de contester ce qui est devenu au cours du temps la version officielle de l'Islam. C'est donc un contrepoint aux événements qui ont été privilégiés et qui seuls, au fil du temps, ont fini par informer les croyances musulmanes et les représentations de la première société musulmane [...] (Bourget 75-76).

We must also ask how *Loin de Médine* fits into Genette's schema. Does it transform, or merely imitate? Is it serious, humorous, or satirical? While one could argue that such terms do not allow for sufficient flexibility, I maintain that the entire project is serious in its authorial intent as well as transformative. What becomes most evident in the reading of the novel is the extent to which there are holes in the histories used as hypotexts by Djebar. To the extent that her

intertextuality is metatextual and self-reflexive, it is as a reflection on the gendered historiography of certain male historians.

THE SATANIC VERSES

An intertextual study of this novel is premised by the challenge of reading Rushdie, and of reading *The Satanic Verses* in particular. It has, after all, been referred to as an "unread bestseller". A number of published works have hinted at the importance of reading Rushdie in an intertextual light. Jussawalla's provoking article "Post-Joycean Sub-Joycean", without in any way employing what could be described as intertextual methodology, suggests the importance of Joyce to understanding Rushdie.[38] Another commentator, Hassumani, discusses Rushdie in a book-length study entitled *Salman Rushdie: A Postmodern Reading of His Major Works*, yet without reference to intertextuality, which is one of literary postmodernism's primary conventions. When in her discussion of *The Satanic Verses*, she mentions the "constant interplay between the real and the fictitious serves to undermine the logic of coherence and unity in this novel and a single meaning is refused at the intertextual level" (90), intertextuality seems to be used rather as a synonym for coherence and unity, and not to designate the methodology under consideration here.

Intertextuality has also been remarked upon in Rushdie's other novels. In "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism and Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie" M. Keith Booker convincingly demonstrates that *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is "the intertextual model" of *Shame*, and *Tristram Shandy* is the intertextual antecedent of *Midnight's Children*. His analysis of names (cf. 239) is particularly revealing of Rushdie's structuring of his narrative. In *L'intertextualité*, Sophie Rabau includes an excerpt from *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* related to the idea, also developed in the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, among others, of the world as a library:

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[38] Although it is mostly concerned with the thematic aspects of *Shame*, Aijaz Ahmad's aforementioned article alludes to the importance of "high modernism" in Rushdie's oeuvre.

> Different parts of the Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And because the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns.[39] (Rabau 187 ff., Rushdie72)

What is of interest is the notion of narrative potentiality expressed in this description, as well as that of protean narration. "Versions of themselves" suggests that something of the essence of such stories is nonetheless retained in their new, as yet untold forms. In short, this excerpt outlines intertextuality or retelling as poiesis.

Another Rushdie novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, discusses the palimpsest in the plastic arts at length. The work of the painter Aurora Zogoiby consists primarily of palimpsests, of painting over canvasses that already contain an image. The palimpsest is also a metaphor of the many cultures, which, by overlapping, have formed India, the principal setting of *The Moor's Last Sigh*. When the protagonist, Moraes Zogoiby is told, "Go find your precious Palimpstine" (371), what is meant is that he, an Indian, should search for his roots in Moorish Spain that are central to his heritage and identity.

In *The Satanic Verses* too, there is considerable reference to cultural palimpsests. Locally, "Bombay was a culture of re-makes" (64) and India as a whole represents "an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest?"(52). While there is an argument to be made for *The Satanic Verses* as a novel about London,[40] it cannot be denied that it is

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[39] Rabau quotes the French translation by J.-M. Dubuis and Christian Bourgois (80-85).

[40] An argument made by Rushdie himself in his interview with Alaistair Niven.

most of all about Indians in London. Bombay, although secondary, is also a major setting, and perhaps more connected to all narrative strands —i.e. Part IV "Ayesha" and Part VIII "The Parting of the Arabian Sea"— than the central showplace. Another context in which re-writing appears is in the protagonist Chamcha's recollection of a play by Somerset Maughm, "the story" of which, "in the Indian version [...] had been rather different" (140-41). The motif of cultural recycling, migration, and hybridity is presented in still another extended metaphor:

> a mansion-block built in the Dutch style in a part of London which he will subsequently identify as Kensington, to which the dream flies him at high speed past Barkers department store and the small grey house with double bay windows where Thackeray[41] wrote *Vanity Fair* and the square with the convent where the little girls in uniform are always going in, but never come out, and the house where Talleyrand lived in his old age when after a thousand and one chameleon changes of allegiance and principle he took on the outward form of the French ambassador to London. (211)

For these reasons it seems legitimate to extend such a metaphor to the novel as a whole. It is Indian insofar as it is composed of re-makes. The re-makes of *The Satanic Verses*, I would argue, are as central a metaphor of Indian multiplicity and renewal as are pickles in *Midnight's Children*, as the question "How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made?" (8). The textual re-makes will be the subject of this investigation.

While many works published about *The Satanic Verses* have explained what the fuss is about, either in journalism[42] or in literary scholarship,[43] a focused intertextual approach has yet to be put forth.

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[41] Thackeray is of course, along with Kipling, among the most notable Anglo-Indians of the 19th century.

[42] In particular, Raphaël Aubert's *L'Affaire Rushdie*, a book-length study, and the substantial article published by Pierre Pachet, "*Les Versets sataniques*: Salman Rushdie et l'héritage des religions", *Esprit* 158 (janvier 1990): 5-22.

[43] Perhaps the best example being Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère's book-length study *Origin and Originality in Rushdie's Fiction*.

THE HISTORICAL EVENT AT THE HEART OF THE CONTROVERSY

Rushdie presents a version of the religion's beginnings that is at variance with that of orthodox Islamic tradition. In doing so, he brings some of the weaknesses of Islam's doctrinal framework to light, as well as practical considerations brought to bear on an undertaking that is, in fact, only partly spiritual. The point of contention at the heart of the novel, as well as the source of its title, is an episode about a certain sura of the Koran, in which the Prophet accommodates pre-Islamic polytheism, only to repudiate the verses afterwards. Even Akhtar, author of *Be careful with Muhammad!*, acknowledges that this incident was vouchsafed by canonical Islamic historians Ibn Sa'ad and at Tabari (19). Mohammed recalls the sura in question, saying that it stemmed from the devil. Even to the present day this episode has sparked controversy among Islamic scholars: while some accept the inclusion of the satanic verses in the Koran, still others consider them apocryphal.[44]

Rudi Paret, among the most notable European Islamic scholars,[45] discusses this incident at some length in the chapter "Einflüsterung des Teufels" (Whispering of the Devil), in which he shows that the repudiation of the so-called "satanic verses" is discussed in the original Koranic (hypo)text.

> Jedenfalls sollte das, was in Sure 22, 52 über die früheren Gesandten und Propheten ausgesagt wird, dem Propheten Mohammed selber zur Entlastung dienen. Ein persönlicher, wenn auch vielleicht sachlich begründeter Wunsch von ihm hatte in einer Offenbarung Gestalt angenommen. Nachträglich stellte Mohammed fest, daß er zu weit gegangen war und sich getäuscht hatte. Die eigentliche Schuld ließ sich auf den Teufel schieben. [...] Selten wird sich in der Äußerung eines Religionstifters so viel Selbstsicherheit mit

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[44] Neil Forsyth & Martine Hennard, "Ce diable de Rushdie" (144).

[45] Paret is translator of the most widely available German edition of the Koran. cf. Navid Kermani. "Gott ist schön: Arabischen Fundamentalisten und westlichen Orientalisten gleichermaßen verborgen: Die ästhetische Bedeutung des Korans". Bilder und Zeiten. *Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung*, Samstag 8 Juni 1996.

einer so weitgehenden Selbstkritik vereinigt finden, wie das in dem hier analysierten Korantext zum Ausdruck kommt. Der Wortlaut vermittelt uns einen tiefen Eindruck in Mohammed's Sendungsbewußtsein. Sein Versuch, die eigene Unzulänglichkeit mit Hilfe des Teufels zu rechtfertigen, mag einen primitiven Eindruck machen. Aber sein Schuldbekenntnis, das so deutlich zwischen den Zeilen zu lesen ist, wird auf jeden sachlich eingestellten Kritiker entwaffnend wirken, weil es auf eine Lauterkeit der Gesinnung schließen läßt.[46] (Mohammed und der Koran 65-68)

The novelty of Rushdie's representation of events,[47] contrary to the lenity and "good faith" evinced by Paret's interpretation above, is the doubt cast on the Prophet, whereby the circumstances of the revelation and repudiation make them seem less like reasons than excuses or expediency. Or, as Forsyth and Hennard contend,

les implications subversives et hérétiques de cet épisode apparaissent tout de suite évidentes. En elle-même, la démarche 'révisionniste' de Mohammed et l'erreur initiale quelle présuppose posent déja une première et capitale difficulté: le texte du Coran tire son caractère sacré et, partant, son autorité incontestable — et, à quelques exceptions près, incontestée —, de l'inspiration divine sous laquelle il a été dicté. Le Prophète, comme Homère avant lui, se serait-il donc endormi une première fois? (145)

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[46] In any case, what is written in Sura 22,52 about previous prophets exculpates the Prophet Mohammed. A personal, although objectively reasonable wish of his came to pass in a (subsequent) revelation. Thereafter Mohammed realized that he had gone too far, and had erred. The true fault was however attributed to the devil. [...] Seldom in an utterance of the founder of a religion does self-confidence (unify syn.) with self-criticism, as is expressed in this part of the Koran. The words convey Mohammed's profound sense of mission. His attempt to account for his own shortcoming with the devil, may seem primitive. Yet his admission of wrongdoing, which is so clearly read between the lines, is disarming for every objective critic, because it is revealing of Mohammed's sincerity.

[47] Italo Calvino is said to have included a somewhat similar episode in his *If on a Winter's Night ...* Booker, "Two Myths" (198).

Since Mohammed's actions alone can give the answer to this question, we must examine how Rushdie's narrator portrays him, or rather, allows him to be portrayed, in *The Satanic Verses***.**

THE NARRATIVE FRAME

The Islamic tradition represents a primary hypotext of *The Satanic Verses*. The action in Jahilia consists in the dreams[48] of Gibreel Farishta,[49] the stage name of Ismail Najmuddin, protagonist and actor made famous for his work in "theologicals", a popular Indian cinematic genre. His dreams about Jahilia stem in part from his mother, who had told him many stories about the Prophet "and if inaccuracies had crept into her versions he wasn't interested in knowing what they were" (22). As a result of his fatigue, of his familiarity with an unauthorised version of events, as well as of his profession, "his somnolent fancy began to compare his own condition with that of the Prophet at a time when, having been orphaned and short of funds, he made a great success of his job as the business manager of the wealthy widow Khadija, and ended up marrying her as well" (22). Rather than analyse the character of Gibreel Farishta at this point, I wish to clarify the context of Rushdie's rewriting of events within the logic of the narrative. It must therefore

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[48] Raphaël Aubert comments on the centrality of this character:

Gibreel [...] a certainement été beaucoup dans le rejet du livre de Salman Rushdie par les lecteurs musulmans, car là encore, l'auteur bouleverse, pour ne pas dire plus, quelques idées réçues. Personnage charnière, c'est lui en outré qui fait le lien entre les multiples personages des Versets, à travers lui aussi qui se nouent comme en grebes les fils en apparence distendues de l'intrigue. (56)

Gibreel Farishta has a total of three dream sequences, in which Jahilia, the exiled Imam, and Ayesha the prophetess are featured. I shall refer to Jacqueline Bardolph's analysis of the role of Gibreel's dreams in the novel. Gibreel:

is afraid to go to sleep because in his dream he is Gabriel and as such participates in three long stories which are the major subplots of the novel, the best-known one being connected with the dictation of Satanic verses to Mahound. The three parables explore the same question: is inspiration good or evil--to be trusted, dismissed, or examined in the sceptical light of reason? Are the protagonists of the three stories--Ayesha the prophetess, Mahound, Desh the Imam--receiving a divine message or projecting their own dreams and desires in the reading of the dreams? And what if Gabriel himself is delivering messages after he has lost faith? (212)

[49] The history behind the stage name is explained to Saladin on the flight: "My one and only Mamo, because who else was it who started the whole angel business, her personal angel, she called me, *farishta*, because apparently I was too damn sweet, believe it or not, I was good as goddamn gold." (18).

be said that Farishta is a particularly profane character,[50] notorious for his promiscuity[51] and decadence, and one who eventually succumbs to mental illness: The world of Jahilia is a product of his mind.   I wholly subscribe to Al-ᶜAzm's insight, that "to accentuate the problematic 'Islamicness' of Gibreel Farishta', Rushdie has him feasting on pork sausages, cured York hams and rashers of bacon before the Mahound scenario starts unraveling in his fantasy" (267).

Although Farishta may seem a more stable identity than his antagonist Saladin Chamcha, he too is somewhat confused (cf. 112). His cultural identity may be clear, (he knows to which collective bodies he belongs--India, (secularised) Islam, Bombay, Bollywood) but as an individual he confounds the devil, the Prophet Mohammed, and Archangel Gibreel (Gabriel),[52] with himself as explained in the text by his mother's frequent references to him as "Shaitan" or "imp" (93). He is similar to Mohammed the Prophet in age (Mahound turns 44 at the beginning of Part II, 97), as well as in their shared orphaned condition. The resulting narration bears the hallmark of this confused identity, and the text does not resolve the identity. The narration at times is Gibreel in the first person, and at others, reflects his mental confusion:

> *Mahound comes to me for revelation, asking me to choose between monotheist and henotheist alternatives, and I'm just some idiot actor having a bhaenchud nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help.* [53] (111)

The Koran is is not, however, the only level of intertextuality evident in these sections of the novel. In Al-ᶜAzm's reading of this passage, there are four parallels to previous works of literature and cinema (268-269). Assuming that these associations were also Rushdie's at the time of

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[50] Feroza Jussawalla, in "Post-Joycean/Sub-Joycean", notes that Gibreel is "a morally ambivalent character" (229).

[51] "He had so many sexual partners that it was not uncommon for him to forget their names before they left his room. Not only did he become a philanderer of the worst type, but he also learned the arts of dissimulation, because a man who plays gods must be above reproach....skillfully did he conceal his life of scandal and debauch" (25).

[52] As the name literally means "Gabriel Angel", the confusion is perhaps understandable cf. Aravamudan (199).

[53] Italics in the original.

composition, then one could speak of a layering of intertextual levels that gives new meaning to the paradigm of palimpsest.[54]

Critical commentary has been published indicating the extent to which much of *The Satanic Verses* resembles a screenplay.[55] For our purposes it is sufficient to note that the focalisation is Gibreel's. One would expect that Gibreel would act out many roles, but he does that and is apparently behind the camera as well as on the cutting floor:

> as the dream shifts, he, Gibreel, is no longer a mere spectator but the central player, the star with his old weakness for taking too many roles: yes, yes, he's not just playing the archangel but also him the businessman, the Messenger, Mahound, coming up the mountain when he comes. Nifty cutting is required to pull off this double role, the two of them can never be seen in the same shot, each must speak to empty air, to the imagined incarnation of the other, and trust to technology to create the missing vision, with scissors and Scotch tape or, more exotically, with the help of a travelling mat. Not to be confused ha ha with any magic carpet. (110-111)

Gibreel's point of view is once again emphasized some twelve pages later:

> Gibreel, when he's tired, wants to murder his mother for giving him such a damn fool nickname, angel, what a word, he begs what? whom? to be spared the dream-city of crumbling sandcastles and lions with three-tiered teeth, no more heart-washing of prophets or instructions to recite or promises of paradise, let there be an end to revelations, finito, khattam-shud. (124)

The narrative frame of Jahilia, the dreams of a vulgar schizophrenic, may well be a clever strategy of an author in need of attenuating the

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[54] Works profane and sacred, among them Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, the novels of James Joyce, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, are but a few of the most notable hypotexts of *The Satanic Verses*. It is a novel that is promiscuously intertextual.

[55] cf. Nicholas D. Rombes, Jr. "The Satanic Verses as a Cinematic Narrative", *Literature Film Quarterly*, 1993, 11:1, 47-53.

critique of Islam. The unconscious is revealed as well as the vision of an unwell man. The actual Rushdie Affair has shown that this strategy has not avoided insult to some Muslims, but it does represent levels of distance from any consistent authorial narrative voice.

THE INTERTEXTUAL CONTRACT

In this study not only of the intertextual relation of *The Satanic Verses* to the Koran, but of the alternative early history of Islam proposed by the novel, it must be borne in mind that if it is to be read, among other things, as a postmodernist work, then it will necessarily be "a contradictory cultural enterprise, one that is heavily implicated in that which it seeks to contest. It uses and abuses the very structures it takes to task" (Hutcheon 106). These structures for the most part consist in historical and geographical details shared with the handed down history of early Islam. A reason for the particularly intensive intertextual marking of the Koranic hypotext found in *The Satanic Verses* is suggested by Pfister and Broich in their case studies of intertextual practices:

> Im einzelnen Text wird ein intertextueller jedoch oft auf verschiedenen Ebenen und durch verschieden Verfahren gleichzeitig markiert. Dies ist besonders dann der Fall, wenn der Autor sicherstellen will, daß der Leser einen intertextuellen Bezug auf jeden Fall erkennt.[56] (Broich and Pfister 44)

The assumption here is that intensive marking underlines the critical and parodistic intention of the author.[57] Because the clues to Rushdie's Koranic intertext are indeed multiple and diverse, they must be discussed before we can move on to discuss either other structures or their relations.

Rather than use the term pre-text proffered by Broich and Pfister, I wish to continue using the vocabulary of "the intertextual

[56]In a single text intertextuality often operates on different levels and is marked by multiple techniques. This is especially the case when the author wants to make sure that the reader recognizes the intertextual relation.

[57] Broich and Pfiister argue this on the basis of Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, in which intertextual references to Richardson's *Pamela* abound (44).

contract" proposed by Genette. Rushdie employs several hints on a number of levels. As Genette notes, the title of a re-writing is often implicitly allusive: "l'hypertextualité se déclare le plus souvent au moyen d'un indice paratextuel qui a valeur contractuelle"(17). *The Satanic Verses*, for instance, puts one in mind on the one hand of a theological discourse from the monotheistic religions, on the other hand of both Bible and Koran--sura (plural surat), the unit of the Koran, is often translated as verse--are hypotexts written in verse. Such a clue is however implicit and debatable. The acknowledgement of quotations, like the title, constitutes a paratextual indication of intertextuality, with the notable difference that it is explicit and cannot be swept aside as mere conjecture. As we have seen, the sources of *The Satanic Verses*' English-language Koranic quotations are acknowledged.

On another level, Rushdie has created a world that abounds with parallels to seventh century Arabia. These parallels make it quite clear that Jahilia is an allegorical construct to be read as complement to the Islamic orthodoxy that represents the hypotext of Rushdie's novel. Without developing a complete taxonomy of parallels, it may be of help to enumerate some of the most obvious and striking examples. The clues consist in names of people, place names, linguistic clues,[58] and quotation. Long before the word Islam ever appears, clues are strewn as to the hypotext in question.

Among the most notable clues are the proper nouns in use, either for the Prophet, the religion, or other aspects of worship. At one point we read that "These verses[59] are banished from the true recitation, al-qur'an" (127). In this instance the Koran is called by name, and yet in a rather indirect way. For one, it is not capitalized, as one would expect of a proper noun. The spelling in question represents one of the many possibilities of transcription in English, and yet is much more redolent of Arabic: the orthographic connections of article to noun, as well as the use of Q to reflect the original phonology, are particularly Arabic

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[58] Srinivas Aravamudan includes an interesting study of some of the intertextual clues, among them Jahilia, the name Mahound, Mount Cone as parallel to Mount Hira (196).
[59] The so-called satanic verses.

touches. The use of 'the true recitation', a canonical epithet of the Koran, also serves to make the reference clear.

Another clue is the frequent usage of "Submission" as the name of the new religion. At first it is referred to as *Submission*[60] (127), italicized, as if to indicate foreign-ness, or to emphasize its meaning. Indeed, according to *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* the word Islam comes from "*aslama* to submit, to surrender, specifically to God". As we shall see, however, the version of events presented in *The Satanic Verses* rather suggests that the faithful submit to the will of Mahound.

The leader of the new religion is at times referred to as the Messenger, a clever epithet that both recalls the epithet of Mohammed and the Greek etymology of the word prophet, "spokesman, interpreter, esp. of the word of God". The prophet of the new religion, Mahound, a member of the Shark[61] tribe, resembles Mohammed Qureshi, whereby an anagrammatical transformation of the original (hypo)text is visible. The surname in particular unmistakably contains the same consonant sounds. Mahound's name not only recalls Mohammed's, but has a semantic baggage all its own:

> His name: a dream-name, changed by the vision. Pronounced correctly, it means he-for-whom-thanks-should-be-given....Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; has adopted, instead, the demon-tag the farangis hung around his neck. To turn insults into strengths, whigs, tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym Mahound. (95)

The stated intent is reclamation, but the possibility of subversion exists as well. Mahound is the medieval term of abuse used by Christians,

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[60] As we shall see in the discussion of gender chapter three, Part 2 of *Loin de Médine*, "Soumises, insoumises," also plays on this etymology.

[61] Italicized in Rushdie's text (97).

most notably by Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queen*,[62] although Schimmel also remarks the Scottish *Mahound* for "devil" (1992: 2).

The toponyms of *The Satanic Verse*s constitute yet another example of intertextual marking. It is clear that the setting recalls Arabia: Jahilia is a city of sand made wealthy by traders passing by in camel trains.   Moreover, Jahilia is an Arabic word.   In Islamic theological discourse, Jahilia is often translated as "the gentility" but is derived from Arabic root *Jahel*, which means unknowing/ignorance. Far more than that, it is synonymous with debauchery and all manner of wrongdoing, possibly an equivalent to Babylon for Christians.[63] This symbolic function of wrongdoing is perhaps exemplified in *Loin de Médine*, in which Fatima decries injustice as "la loi de *dhajilia*" (81). Whereas in theological discourse it represents a temporal and conceptual term, in *The Satanic Verses* Jahilia is spatial, a toponym. The city Jahilia corresponds to Mecca, as the presence of the Kaaba, the black rock around which Muslim pilgrims circulate, makes clear.

Similarly, Yathrib refers to the former name of Medina, the second most holy city of Islam. In *The Satanic Verses* it is written, "An offer is received, from the citizens of the oasis-settlement of Yathrib to the north: Yathrib will shelter those-who-submit, if they wish to leave Jahilia" (127).   The hyphenated "those-who-submit" is the anglicized form of Muslim, which, as Schimmel explains, means "those who practice Islam".   As for Yathrib, she explains that it "soon became known as *Madinat an-nabi*, the City of the Prophet, in short, Medina" (1985: 13).

Finally, one clue that somewhat diverges from the historical examples offered above is Mount Cone. In the monotheistic religions

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[62] Annemarie Schimmel further explains that "In Europe, where Muhammad has at times been understood as an idol-worshipper or transformed into Mahound, the Spirit of Darkness, his historical biography was studied from the eighteenth century onward, and although he was generally depicted as a kind of Antichrist or a Christian heretic and arch-schismatic, he also appeared to some philosophers of the of the Englightenment period as representative of a rational religion, one devoid of speculations about Trinity and Redemption and, even more importantly, a religion without a powerful clergy (1985:5).

[63] Malise Ruthven quotes a letter written by the Islamic Defence Council to Penguin that details the novels offenses. Among them, "The Islamic Holy City of Makkah is a city of 'Jahilia' – of ignorance and darkness." (106).

mountains have been a privileged space for the reception of the word of God. The historical precedent in Islam is Mount Hira, but the reference in the text has other motivations. It recalls Alleluia Cone, the mountain-climbing woman with whom the dreaming Gibreel Farishta is in love. This clue therefore represents a break with history, and a reminder that the whole setting is in Farishta's head.

Linguistic clues also serve to situate the text in Arabia. The text contains a sprinkling of Arabic mixed into English, that Sadik Al-ᶜAzm refers to as "heteroglossia and copious interlingual play on words".[64] Shabbir Akhtar, on the other hand, observes: "the story of Mahound is told in a modern idiom—a mixture of journalese and irreverent Bombay diction. The whole ethos of Jahilia is distinctly Indian (as opposed to Arabian) with countless idioms, including swear-words, whose insinuations are lost upon Western readers" (15). At times the non-English elements are explained, as in "a beheshti, a despised water-carrier" (97), but at others, such as "Kahin" (106) it is not, and yet kahin (soothsayer) is a term of some historical importance. In *The Satanic Verses* kahin is an insult to the Prophet Mahound used by Abu Simbel, his social superior and his adversary in the political and religious arena. While in another instance "seer" is placed as apposition and synonym after the Arabic word in the text (116), it does not go far in clarifying its import.[65] Islamic scholar Rudi Paret explains in *Mohammed und der Koran*:

> Zu den Menschen, die auf Grund einer Sonderbegabung glaubten, mit der Welt der Götter und Geister in näherer Verbindung zu stehen und von da her höhere Einsichten zu erhalten, gehörten auch die Wahrsager. Die Quellen, denen wir die Kenntnis der altarabischen Wahrsagerei verdanken, sind allerdings alle als sekundär zu bezeichnen. Sie stammten aus einer Zeit, in der das Wahrsagen als eine heidnische Kunst längst in Verruf und zum Teil auch in Vergessenheit geraten war. Bei den Aussprüchen, die von

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[64] Sadik Al-ᶜAzm (*Reading Rushdie*: 263).
[65] Cf. Fück 174, where the importance of the reproach of soothsaying is also discussed.

den falschen Propheten und Wahrsagern aus der Epoche unmittelbar nach Mohammed's Tod überliefert sind, muß man mit nachträglichen Fälschungen rechnen. (*Mohammed und der Koran*: 24)[66]

Moreover,

Eigenartig ist die Form, in die der Kahin seine Wahrspüche einzukleiden pflegte. Er verwendete dafür den sogenannten Sag, Reimprosa, d.h. kurze, rhythmisch, nicht wie in der Dichtung metrisch gebaute Sätze und Satzteile, die durchgehend oder auch wechselnd aufeinander reimten, also genauso, wie das vor allem bei den ältesten Stücken des Korans der Fall ist (25).[67]

In Rushdie's novel, as in the history written by Islamic theologians, there is some question of the Prophet being doubted by non-Muslims, and of them accusing him of soothsaying. But as this of all terms is not further explicated in *The Satanic Verses*, this is perhaps a somewhat esoteric element carried over from the tradition from which Rushdie draws. The difficulty is Broich and Pfister's criterion of communicativity (*Kommunikativität)*. The relevance of such a term is hidden for culturally illiterate readers. Familiarity with Islam and with the life of the Prophet Mohammed in particular, is both assumed and demanded of the reader. The same could be said of any number of the examples given above, but the point to be made here is that the coexistence of English and Arabic further cement the intertextual foundations developed through other means. Whereas clues such as *kahin*, in one case used with an English equivalent, "seer"(116), are most readily apparent to the Islamic scholar or the culturally literate Muslim,

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[66] Soothsayers were among those who believed to be close to the gods and spirits because of special gifts and therefore have deeper insights. The sources from which information on early Arabic soothsayers has been obtained are however of secondary importance. They are from an epoch in which soothsaying had long fallen into disrepute and had largely been a forgotten practice. Statements about false prophets and seers from the era immediately after Mohammed's death should be considered as fabrications.

[67] The form in which the soothsayer formulated his pronouncements was remarkable. He would use Sag, rhyming prose, short, rhythmic sentences and phrases, unlike the metrical ones in poetry, which rhymed throughout or in cross-rhyme. The soothsayer's style was exactly what we find in the oldest parts of the Koran.

it would appear that the other clauses of the intertextual contract discussed above were sufficient to readers who understand the text as a commentary on Islam.

KORANIC HYPOTEXT

The Koranic quotation used by Rushdie is *The Star* (sura 53), which includes, then repudiates the satanic verses. The relation of the intertextual borrowing is explicit. Use of italics to mark the title of the sura indicates that it is a quotation. The Koranic text is only noticeable however in that it is Mohammed's recitation. Stylistically it does not fit into Rushdie's own text, and only the inverted commas reflect this difference. Formally the Koranic quotation is therefore quite similar to the lines quoted from the Boney M hit recording, or to be more fair to Rushdie's text, to the spontaneous biblical quotation that Pamela Chamcha utters in response: "If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tong cleave to the roof of my mouth; yeah, if I prefer not Jerusalem to my mirth" (182). Similarly:

> *The Star*
> 'In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful!
> 'By the Pleiades when they are set, Your companion is not in error; neither is he deviating.
> 'Nor does he speak from his own desires. It is a revelation that has been revealed: one mighty in power has taught him.
> 'He stood on the high horizon: the lord of strength. Then he came close, closer than the length of two bows, and revealed to his servant that which is revealed.
> 'The servant's heart was true when seeing what he saw. Do you, then, dare to question what was seen?
> 'I saw him also at the lote-tree of the uttermost end, near which lies the Garden of Repose. When that tree was covered by its covering, my eye was not averted, neither did my gaze wander, and I saw some of the greatest signs of the lord.' [...]

> 'Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third,
> the other?' [...]
> 'They are the exalted birds, and their intercession is desired
> indeed.' (116-17)

While the Koranic text is formally on a level with the quotation from popular music, the intent of this quotation is cast in a different mold. In stark contrast to the stated burlesque of "counterfeit emotion" and "disco-beat imitation of pain" (182), the handling of the Koranic hypertext demonstrates gravitas. There is, for example, no doubt as to its lyricism being true to the Arabic hypotext.

The many instances of verification of the prophecy in this excerpt as unfailing and true are unmistakable. Pachet notes that "peu de textes révélés comportent autant que le Coran la mention des accusations de fraude et de supercherie qui furent portées contre le prophète" (Pachet 7). As to why these justifications are necessary, we must turn our attention to the hotly disputed historical event that is its content. But unlike the Koran, from which this text is constructed, there is a clear procedural element to Rushdie's narrativisation. There is the insertion of the verses, followed by their repudiation several pages later. In the Holy Koran, however, where no mention is made of the so-called satanic verses, only the definitive text, denying the deity and exalted status of the three goddesses, is to be found. The repudiation, in which Mahound is quoted as saying, "Shall he have daughters and you sons? [...] This would be a fine division!" (127), which corresponds to "Are you to have sons, and He the daughters? This is indeed a fair distinction!" (53: 20). If I cross-reference N. J. Dawood's translation, it is in order to provide greater clarity. While it is the acknowledged source of Rushdie's Koranic text, in this particular case he has attenuated the misogynist message. Whereas in *The Satanic Verses* the unequal value of sons and daughters is hinted at, in the Dawood translation it is made explicit.

The quotation above is not the unexpurgated text, because among the text omitted, a reference to Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat, are the following passage: "They are but names which you and your fathers

have invented: God has vested no authority in them. The unbelievers follow vain conjectures and the whims of their own souls, although the guidance of their Lord has long since come to them" (53: 22) and "Those that disbelieve in the hearafter call the angels by the names of females. Yet of this they have no knowledge: they follow mere conjecture, and conjecture is no substitute for truth" (53:28). While it is clearly a condensed version of the text, with the added apocryphal text "their intercession is desired indeed", which is absent from the Koran, it is economical in its use of available Koranic material.

It is altogether likely that too much be made of the critical--in the sense of negative--aspects of the Koranic intertextuality and Islamic interculturality in *The Satanic Verses*, since any recycling of the Koranic hypotext represents an increase of its diffusion. A revaluation, if not an enhancement, in and of itself, by placing the story in a new context, wins it a new audience. For many readers, *The Satanic Verses* represents the first contact with or serious consideration of Islam. It raises questions that they can then pursue, should they so desire, either in literature, in theology, or in history.

Whereas some commentators think that *The Satanic Verses* represents an attack on Islam, I find such an interpretation premature. Islam is clearly at issue, and yet attack implies polemics of an unproductive sort. Like Forsyth and Hennard, I agree, however, that a good deal of satire and irony are in evidence. In *Mahound* and *Return to Jahilia* this seems to be the satirizing of the personal. This situation rather leads me to conclude that the novel offers a reflection on "how newness comes into the world" (cf. 8) with reference to the advent of Islam. With Genette's statement that "l'hypertexte [...] a souvent valeur de commentaire" (Genette 17) as my starting point, I think it must be seen in light of religion as a (man-made) process, a point that is made early on in the first of two sections dealing with Jahilia: "From the beginning men used God to justify the unjustifiable"(97). Because the human element must be factored into the process, Mahound was made the focus of the novel, as our reflection of him in the eyes of his (albeit biased) contemporaries has shown.

It would appear that in the course of the discussion of the Koran, the framework of intertextuality has been abandoned for what has come to be known as interculturality. Whereas intertextuality is a specifically literary discourse and methodology, interculturality presupposes that everything is text: orality, history, in short everything that constitutes culture, including that under discussion here, the deviations from the collective memory of Muslim orthodoxy. My having done so has quite practical reasons. For one, as my discussion at the outset clearly states, I am not assuming any familiarity with Islam of my audience, and any exclusively textual discussion of the Koran in *The Satanic Verses* would have run the risk of utter meaninglessness. The other concern has been expressed better by Neil Forsyth and Martine Hennard: "La croyance populaire et la parole du texte sacré coïncident rarement de façon exacte dans toute religion, et cette remarque vaut surtout pour les trois grandes religions du livre que sont le judaïsme, le christianisme, et l'Islam" (139).

One should also note that numerous references to satire recur in Aravamudan's article: "the satirical weapon of metonymy " (197); "the self-deconstruction of the authorial person in satire"(197); "satire undermines the host's immunity even as it colonizes parts of the host to look like itself; could there be a polytheistic blasphemy lurking under every monotheism?" (198); "Satire, highly dependent on temporality and ambiguity "(199).

Aubert, for his part, comments on the "liberté de ton" (46) of the novel, and remarks that Rushdie is "habile à provocation" (8), whereas the profanity of language is a matter that Akhtar repeatedly comes back to. Akhtar further remarks "Rushdie relishes scandalous suggestion and pejorative language" (12). Yet while Aubert claims that in Rushdie's texts, no character is ever either wholly positive or negative (41), Akhtar rather contends "Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is seen by Muslims as a calculated attempt to vilify and slander the Prophet of Islam. Not only has Rushdie said what he pleased about God, he has also taken liberties with Muhammad" (1). The ambiguity and

ambivalence could be taken as a hallmark of great fiction, which makes the most of such tensions.   Yet Hai notes that:

> [Rushdie's] own language and ideology become indistinguishable from that which they seek to castigate, furtively relishing and replicating—instead of distancing from [...] ironic subversion always runs the risk of reinforcing precisely what it seeks to subvert, since "the man who attempts to say one thing while clearly meaning another ends up saying the first thing too, in spite of himself." (Miller 219, Hai 31)

This was observed in reference to patriarchy, but it is a question worth asking here as well.   Has Rushdie's irony failed as a communicative act? Considering that the portrait of Mahound that emerges is deeply flawed, how does his name work as reclamation, as the narrator claims it does?

CONCLUSIONS

To return to intertextuality, an approach that I think must precede any other analysis of these texts, we can see that the cited text of *Loin de Médine*, considerably more so than that of *L'Homme du Livre*, is more radically intertextual according to many of the criteria of qualitative intertextuality established by Pfister.   In determining this judgment, *Loin de Médine*'s self-reflexivity and dialogism appear the most salient criteria. And, should quantity have a quality all its own, the longer passages such as that discussed by Walker, in which the novel uses generous servings of the hypotext before developing them esthetically and strategically, it is yet another reason to say that Djebar's novel is more intertextual than Chraïbi's. As for *The Satanic Verses*, it is the density of intertextual practices, combined with the more readily incendiary dialogism that accounts for its position in this list of most intertextual of the Mohammed Palimpsests under consideration. What has been highlighted, particularly in the case of Djebar and Rushdie, is a common concern for gender, whereas Djebar and Chraïbi's texts

highlight the reformist elements within Islamic tradition. For this reason, the subsequent chapters will deal with history and gender, respectively.

To return to general considerations of intertextuality, it is entirely possible to study these texts without making any bones about this aspect. In my opinion that would be to neglect a crucial component of their structure and meaning. As stated at the outset, this methodology developed within structuralism, which considers the text an autotelic artefact. As Rabau notes, intertextuality

> [...] permet de justifier l'idée que le texte littéraire ne se réfère pas au monde. C'est là encore une idée générale du structuralisme des années soixante qui trouve son origine dans l'idée formulée par Jakobson que le message poétique renvoie à lui-même, ce qui permet de définir un autotélisme de l'oeuvre d'art que soutienne aussi bien la notion d'effet de réel chez Barthes (le réel est en fait un effet du texte) que l'intérêt pour la mise en abîme: le texte réfère à son propre fonctionnement ou à sa propre thématique. (26)

This position of radical closure is attributable to Riffaterre. Rabau, on the other hand, concludes that it would be "naïf de croire que l'intertextualité exclut toute idée d'auteur et que se référer aux textes empêche de se référer au monde. L'intertextualité pose, plus qu'elle n'élimine, la question de l'auteur et du monde" (27).

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY

The previous chapter on intertextuality discussed the primarily formal aspects of *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*. In so doing, it became clear that history is at issue. To the extent that they are oppositional texts, it is because they take issue with some facet of Islamic history. What *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine* seem opposed to are some aspects of Islamic history, whose claims and silences they set out to question, while *L'Homme du Livre*, which at times approaches Islamic hagiography, is more concerned with the instrumentalization of Islam. Even so, Chraïbi's oeuvre abounds with reflections on history, as Mustapha and Fouet have shown, and *L'Homme du Livre* continues in this vein, albeit more subtly. This chapter, then, has history as its focus. My aim here is to show that in addition to reflecting upon the topic, these novels are also consciously reflective of an important historical junction of Islam and for Muslims. These then are novels of socio-historical importance, a characteristic that this chapter intends to highlight. I therefore propose to examine what they reveal about history as well as about the preoccupations of Muslims in the late twentieth century.

It would appear that any re-writing of the story of Mohammed, and more generally, the (his)story of nascent Islam, consists in presenting new perspectives of both. By all accounts, the biography of Mohammed qualifies as a grand narrative,[68] because it is essential to Muslims' understanding of themselves as Muslims. In the words of Akbar Ahmed, author of *Islam and Postmodernism*, Mohammed, like other Semitic prophets such as Moses and Jesus, "represented and propagated a moral order" and Mohammed in particular is considered by Muslims to be "*insan-i-kamil*, the perfect person" (58). One way of entering into dialogue either about or with Islam, therefore, is to engage discussion about the life of the Prophet. The question arises as to how contemporary Muslims would rewrite this historical narrative. In what

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[68] An expression coined by Jean-François Lyotard to express totalizing narratives, the foundational stories that make sense of everything.

significant ways would a late twentieth century biography of Mohammed differ from those that preceded it? In particular, how does it distinguish itself from orthodox accounts of his life? Furthermore, what does the novel add to a discussion of Mohammed's life? Does it allow for some things to be said that would otherwise be suppressed?

It stands to reason that contemporary accounts reflect recent developments in social discourse and that these perspectives are to be found in recent re-writings of Islamic history. It is a realistic expectation that movements such as modernism and post-postmodernism, with their conceptions of what constitutes reality, have left their mark, as have ideas about the necessity of increasingly inclusive accounts of the past in the social sciences, with formerly marginalized groups more and more the subject of research and reflection. Seen in this light, there is still much to be told about the epoch in which Mohammed lived. For the late twentieth century reader or cultural observer, accustomed to history as social history, and historical portraits as increasingly complete and multi-faceted representations reflective of all new branches of knowledge, a good deal remains to be said about Mohammed. In the words of Sadik Jalal Al-ᶜAzm, who offers a perceptive reading of *The Satanic Verses*, one of the texts studied here:

> I struggled with questions such as: Was Muhammad a prophet or a statesman and or politician? Was he a world-historic figure or an instrument of Divine Will and Plan? [...] After some exposure to Freud I did ask myself questions about the psychoanalytical significance of his earlier marriage to a woman fit to be his mother, and about his later infatuation with girls fit to be his daughters. (288)

If such profound questioning is widespread among contemporary Muslims, then all the more reason for us to review Mohammed's life. In his brief reflection entitled "La littérature: miroir de l'histoire?," Guy Scarpetta convincingly argues that function of the modern novel is to uncover the unsaid of official history, the zones of human experience ignored by historians, to destabilize certainties, orthodoxies, and

established visions of the world, and to explore the reverse or the negative of the image that societies offer of themselves.[69] My belief is that new versions of Mohammed's life and his epoch do indeed reflect twentieth century thought, moreover, that by doing so, they offer new ways of thinking about Islam that are ultimately regenerative. These novels are clearly written from a questioning perspective, and the questions they raise about troublesome silences will increase the sum total of knowledge, or at least of what can be known, about Islam's coming into being. The assumption is that more knowledge, as well a better theorization of knowledge, will inevitably lead to enhanced discussions about Islam, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For these reasons, this study investigates recent novels that engage in discussions about this era.

While I am not beholden to any school of thought or methodology, I have been persuaded by the argument made by Cleanth Brooks and other New Critics, that great art is self-reflexive.[70] For instance, part of what accounts for the lasting appeal of a film such as *The Truman Show* is its theorization of fiction on the one hand, and of television and film spectatorship on the other. By the same token, narrative fiction that makes profound insight into creative language, or that gives the reader new understanding of fictionality, is considered of a higher standard. That is the hallmark of its artistry, the difference between mere fiction and literature. Because these novels do not just tread the fine line between fiction and history, but make it a topic of discussion, I argue that they are particularly worthy of attention. Apart from saying something about Islam's history, they offer insights into the inter-relation of recorded events, make-believe, and narration that extend beyond their own subject. The following will not feature exhaustive textual analyses of any of the novels, but rather a discussion

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[69] Scarpetta cites Hermann Broch's *La Mort de Virgile*, as well as Carlos Fuentes and Milan Kundera.

[70] Of course with the Russian formalist Roman Jakob's neologism *literaturnost*, or literariness, defined variously by subsequent theorists, we have yet another term that strives to grasp the essentially literary quality of a text. With this odd foray into New Criticism, I have chosen clarity and simplicity.

of their theorization of history. The reading I propose is therefore a symptomatic one.

A number of concerns are gathered under the broad heading of history. There is firstly the poetic element to history, its representation. That is to say the trope given to an aspect central to all these novels, because at their heart lies an historical character, Mohammed. What figures or images do Salman Rushdie, Assia Djebar, and Driss Chraïbi use to represent history? Another formal concern of history is historiography: how can history be written? How should it be written? A further concern is historicity, the factual as well as the fictional component of the novels. This aspect is arguably made a topic of discussion by the inclusion of the paratextual clue "novel" in each case, which presupposes a distinction made with other kinds of writing. Historicism, the historical context of the birthing hour of Islam, as well as the concomitant limitations of certain beliefs, tenets, or even approaches to history and to religion, are further concerns of this chapter. Finally, it will be of interest to discuss the philosophy of history. What philosophies of history are inscribed *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*? History is admittedly a large and possibly unwieldy topic. Perhaps it is best to begin with a reflection on form. One aspect of history of interest to both *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine* is representing history metaphorically, as we shall see in the following section.

HISTORY AS PALIMPSEST

To use the terminology of formalist literary scholarship, the history is the story, the matter on which the artistic enterprise, the discourse, has been built. Yet that is not to say that thematic concerns and formal expression are at variance. On the contrary, in this case they work hand in glove. My title *Mohammed Palimpsests* is therefore not limited to the intertextual aspects of these novels covered in the preceding chapter.

As we have seen, the palimpsest as a figure of intertextuality has gained widespread currency. Why should it then be extended to include

history? History, after all, is usually considered a science, whereas fiction and painting are acknowledged to lie in the domain of creative endeavours. I will argue that it is crucial to understanding these novels to the extent that they rewrite the Islamic grand narrative, which, apart from being religious, stakes its claim as recorded history, as fact. In this section, I will show that *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine* reveal themselves to be imbued with a historical consciousness that is best represented as palimpsestuous. History is not only thought about and reflected upon in the novels studied here: it is also represented.

Firstly, I have argued elsewhere[71] that Rushdie's novels are to be read as an oeuvre. As with many authors, a number of recurring themes and stylistic traits are in evidence. Among these is the palimpsest, which the theorist-practitioner Rushdie, to borrow an expression from Linda Hutcheon, places at some point in all of his major novels. In *Shame* there is a lengthy discussion of palimpsest and history. I suggest that this theoretical excursus within the novel is equally appropriate for understanding Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and, beyond that, that the extended metaphor of history as palimpsest may help to understand *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre*.

The following excerpt from Rushdie's *Shame* is an authorial intrusion that reflects on similarities between immigration of individuals and secession of states.[72] It is notable for its use of the figure of the palimpsest as an extended metaphor of historiography.

> It is well known that the term 'Pakistan', an acronym, was originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals. P for the Punjabis, A for the Afghans, K for the Kashmiris, S for Sind and the 'tan', they say, for Baluchistan.

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[71] In my *Magisterarbeit*, "Intertextuality in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*", I argued that intertextuality would not provide an exhaustive analysis, but could be seen as window on a notoriously stylistically heterogeneous text.

[72] Before using a long quotation, I would like to refer *en passant*, to the theoretical and methodological considerations of doing so. As Walker has argued, it is possible to use a text against itself by cutting it into very small portions. With reference to Brian Fitch's article « Le métatexte du commentaire critique », *Texte* 15\16 (Toronto, Les Éditions Trinitexte, 1995). She also qutoes Rousset's *Forme et signification*, most notably the phrase « L'instrument critique ne doit pas préexister à l'analyse » (xii, cited in Walker 30). Like Walker, I believe that quotations with ample context serve as the best guarantors for my reader that I am engaging in an honest practice of criticism and scholarship.

(No mention of the East Wing, you notice; Bangladesh never got its name in the title, and so, eventually, it took the hint and seceded from the secessionists. Imagine what such a double secession does to people!)—So it was a word born in exile which then went East, was borne-across or trans-lated, and imposed itself on history; a returning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest of the past. A palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done.

  Who commandeered the job of rewriting history? —The immigrants, the mohajirs. In what language? —Urdu and English, both imported tongues, although one travelled less distance than the other. It is possible to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been-imposed. It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigments used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just insufficiently imagined, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriffbaring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then, a miracle that went wrong.

       As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history: what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change. (*Shame* 85-86)

Rushdie's text invites the reader to view history both as fiction and as palimpsest. It bears noting that official languages form the core of the palimpsest, whether it be English spoken by expatriate Pakistanis, as in the first paragraph above, or the repeated mention of languages (English and Urdu, "Urdu versus Punjabi") in the second.[73] Whereas Punjabi is the language of Pakistan's most populous province, Persian-influenced Urdu, considered a language of culture, and therefore of the literate elite, was preferred. As for English, it is of course even less indigenous to Pakistan, and its legacy, unmistakably colonial. The temporal element (Pakistani Standard Time)[74] of palimpsest is also stressed, which makes it particularly appropriate to history as well as to historiography. The extension of the metaphor into clothing is an example of *Shame*'s narrator himself translating (bearing across) the former Hindu garment into local Pakistani Muslim custom and vernacular.[75] Also noteworthy in this excerpt is the connotation of disrepair, the "peeling" palimpsest. Concealment also forms a leitmotiv within this extended metaphor of palimpsest, conveyed by the words "obscure" twice, and "cover up". These semantically related terms, together with the notion of imposition, indicate the social and political interference involved in writing history. In other words, this history of Pakistan did not just come about. It was made to happen, by those who had an interest in its propagation. The question, "Who commandeered?" indicates that historical writing is misused by state power, a notion that may also hold true for *The Satanic Verses*.

One must also note that this extended metaphor reveals identity to be constructed, another hallmark of Rushdie's fictional as well as

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[73] This could of course be said of any state's official language, and France offers a telling notable example. Making one language official by decree or legislation necessarily robs others of legitimacy and effectively hastens their demise.

[74] Pakistan's clocks are set half an hour ahead of India's.

[75] This is consistent with other parts of the narrative in *Shame*. As Ambreen Hai observes, in the:

foundational narrative of Bilquis, the mother and primal source of Shame, and by implication, perhaps, another origin for the novel. The archetypal migrand to the new postcolonial nation Pakistan, Bilquis is the girl whose past in India literally disappears in flames and whose beautiful naked body is rescued and reclothed by her future husband, the future president of Pakistan (as if the two were coterminous), just as her story is retold by her new family, re-covering her, in every sense, from the nakedness of her past. (22)

theoretical writings. In this case, *Shame*'s narrator likens the Pakistani historiographers-mythmakers' choice of cultural artefacts to the painter choosing colours.[76] Yet the impermanent hues chosen reveal the task to be ultimately Sisyphean, if only because culture is dynamic and ever changing. Sabrina Hussumani has also refers to the passage from *Shame* quoted above in *Salman Rushdie: A Postmodern Reading of his Major Works,* remarking, "a palimpsest hides what's beneath. In order to construct Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history and the past was rewritten by mohajirs in two imported languages: English and Urdu [...] " (28). Rushdie's passage arguably represents a misuse of the trope of the palimpsest, however, because it works by allowing the simultaneous perception of two layers.   Elsewhere in his works, the upper layer is the deciding element that enables decoding, but here, it is the surface that is discarded as superficial, shallow, phony. Instead of perception, though, it emphasizes concealment and dissimulation. The reader is led to believe that the true nature of Pakistan is the one beneath the new ostentatiously Islamic surface. The passage above is also remarkable in that it raises "the problem of history": it is an issue of selecting among diverse objects available to the historian-historiographer, a matter to which I shall return. Suffice it to say for the present that the historian-historiographer is always a maker of palimpsests. But since "problem" is polysemous, it can also buttress the "peeling" "fragmented" "fail[ed]" qualities of the palimpsest to which the narrator refers. The problem of history could therefore be taken as a synonym of challenge. It stands to reason that the challenge with any historical account is to capture the truth, to leave a fair and accurate record of events to posterity.

My argument is that within Rushdie's oeuvre, *The Satanic Verses* succeeds *Shame*, and recorded history, as palimpsest,[77] is an instance of

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[76] M. Keith Booker remarks the self-conscious fictionality of the narrative [that] is directly linked to the artificiality of our constructions of history (244).

[77] While Rushdie's conception and representation of history as palimpsest may owe something to Siegfried Kracauer's extended metaphor, my analysis of it does not. For the sake of completeness, however, I will quote it here:

Sometimes life itself produces such palimpsests. I am thinking of the exile who as an adult person has been forced to leave his country or has left it of his own free will. As

the author's moving from theorization to practice, from reflecting upon to showing how. If we bear in mind how much history is questioned in the earlier novel, we will be better able to appreciate the later novel's handling of early Islamic history. For one thing, "Mahound", the section that is an allegory of early Islam, until the time of the Prophet's departure for Yathrib (Medina). It begins with references both to the fall of Satan, and to Hagar's abandonment by Abraham, however, and as such is a layering as much as blending of cosmogony and more commonplace actions involving humans. The back-story of Mahound the Messenger, the principal figure of both "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia", consists of the retold stories common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In these narratives we find the same kind of questioning demonstrated in the quotation from *Shame* above:

> What is the opposite of faith?
>
> Not disbelief: Too final, certain, closed. Itself a kind of disbelief.
>
> Doubt.
>
> The human condition, but what of the angelic? Halfway between Allahgod and homosap, did they ever doubt? They did: challenging God's will one day they hid muttering beneath the Throne, daring to ask forbidden things: antiquestions. Is it right that. Could it not be argued. Freedom, the old antiquest. (*The Satanic Verses* 94)

In the above passage, the narrator, the dreaming Gibreel Farishta, calls divine will into question. At this point in the narrative, there is some confusion as to whether Satan is prompting him to ask such defiant questions, because the passage ends with the narrator confused about his own identity and agency.

Yet another example of an historical palimpsest occurs shortly thereafter. The narrator recounts the foundation of Jahilia, the

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he settles elsewhere, all those loyalties, expectations, and aspirations that comprise so large a part of his being are automatically cut off from their roots. His life history is disrupted, his « natural » self relegated to the background of his mind. To be sure, his inevitable efforts to meet the challenges of an alien environment will affect his outlook, his whole mental make-up. But since the self he was continues to smolder beneath the person he is about to become, his identity is bound to be in a state of flux [...] (83).

allegorical Mecca, whose location corresponds to the fountain that saved the exiled Hagar and her infant son from certain death. In so doing, it compresses the narrative to a few brief lines, adding to them a flippant but searching inquiry:

> In ancient time the patriarch Ibrahim came into this valley with Hagar and Ismail, their son. Here, in this waterless wilderness, he abandoned her. She asked him, can this be God's will? He replied, it is. And left, the bastard. From the beginning men used God to justify the unjustifiable. He moves in mysterious ways: men say. Small wonder, then, that women have turned to me. (97)

What we have, then, is a narration that urges scepticism in the face of any official account of events, and, perhaps more importantly, any official interpretation thereof. *The Satanic Verses*, no less than *Shame*, presents officially sanctioned history as teleological and subject to the abuse of power.

Yet *The Satanic Verses* is also notable for its recuperation of polytheistic pre-Islamic history. In the passage most redolent of *Shame*, the narrative describes a transformation of Jahilia from polytheism to monotheism, and specifically to the religion "Submission," in which the building blocks are a metaphor for attitudes toward religion:

> The city of Jahilia is built entirely of sand, its structures formed of the desert whence it rises. It is a sight to wonder at: walled, four-gated, the whole of it a miracle worked by its citizens, who have learned the trick of transforming the fine white dune-sand of those forsaken parts, --the very stuff of inconstancy,--the quintessence of unsettlement, shifting, treachery, lack-of-form, --and have turned it, by alchemy, into the fabric of their newly invented permanence. These people are a mere three or four generations removed from their nomadic past, when they were as rootless as the dunes,

> or rather rooted in the knowledge that the journeying itself
> was home.[78] (96)

While not all the descriptors above are positive, who can argue that this passage ends by conferring prestige upon nomadism? Perhaps most importantly, however, is the amnesiac quality displayed by the present-day Jahilians, who have shed their nomadic selves for social and geographic fixity. Is it only their permanence that is newly invented, however? I think there are far-reaching implications here, such as Leila Ahmed's comment that

> Islamic civilization developed a construct that labeled the
> pre-Islamic period the Age of Ignorance and used that
> construct so effectively in its rewriting of history that the
> peoples of the Middle East lost all knowledge of the past
> civilizations of the region" (36-37).

I would argue that, like *Shame*'s amnesiac Pakistanis eager to suppress their Indian selves, the Jahilian population of the narrative present is the result of wilful autopoiesis. The text suggests, however, that past and suppressed self is as much a part of the present as the one that is willed. In *The Satanic Verses*, the resilience of polytheistic rite is most evident in the kaaba, the site of pilgrimage maintained by the new religion, Submission. Just like the black stone in Mecca that inspired the allegory, the kaaba was first used in polytheistic rituals, and the practice was incorporated into the new religious practice.

Rushdie is not alone in conceiving of history and historiography as palimpsestuous, however. The first of *Loin de Médine's* four sections, "La liberté et le défi", recounts the stories of Muslims as well as of non-Muslims. Among them is Selma, "*la rebelle*", who renounces Islam and fights against an army of Muslims. Another is Sajdah, from the city of Mossul, a false prophetess who challenges Mohammed. If we once again refer to the preface quoted in the previous chapter, the point of

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[78] This image is buttressed by a passage in "Return to Jahilia":
The city of Jahilia was no longer built of sand. That is to say, the passage of the years, the sorcery of the desert winds, the petrifying moon, the forgetfulness of the people and the inevitability of progress had hardened the town, so that it has lost its old, shifting, provisional quality of a mirage in which men could live, and become a prosaic place, quotidian, and (like its poets) poor (372).

including non-Muslims as well as Muslims, was that both, in this section, resisted the temporal power of Medina (Djebar 5). What is unmistakable in Djebar's narration is the empathy for both women. Selma renounces Islam after a Muslim kills her brother Hakama for alleged apostasy. The narrator tries to understand what she felt:

> Elle revient à son paganisme premier, sans doute est-ce pour se dire: je deviens à mon tour Hakama!
>
> Comme si toutes les femmes arabes alors, saisies d'une ferveur sororale, ne pouvaient que s'identifier au frère. Chaque Bédouine se dresse libre, ressuscitant le héros mort au combat! (36)

As for Sajdah, who had been raised a Christian in Mesapotamia, she set out to unite forces with another false prophet, Mosaïlima, but fell in love with him instead, which led to the downfall of both.[79] What is perhaps most important to note here, though, is firstly, that this meeting was chronicled by Tabari, the famed historiographer on whose writings *Loin de Médine* is largely based. Secondly, the novel's principal source Tabari recounts that the three daily prayers—as opposed to the more common five-- said by the descendants of the Beni Temim, is a legacy of the union of Sajdah and Mosaïlima. As in the case of *The Satanic Verses*, some element of another religion has been coopted into Islam.

To be fair, *L'Homme du Livre* also mentions the three pre-eminent feminine deities of Mecca. Mohammed contemplates them, observing "ces idoles et tant d'autres qui s'alignaient face à ses yeux dans le Temple, il les connaissait depuis son enfance" (41). He also wonders how much truth the artists who had made them infused into them, however.

In Assia Djebar's *Loin de Médine* historical palimpsest is also conceived and represented textually. The novel begins with two striking epigraphs, placed between the preface (*avant-propos*) and the "prologue", which I will reproduce in full:

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79 In this case, the narrator's empathy is revealed in her questioning of Tabari's version of events, which insists that it was the woman who fell to desire. Mosaïlima is described as appealing, but we know nothing of Sajdah's looks.

« …Tout ce que je dirai, tous l'ont déjà conté ; tous ont déjà parcouru le jardin du savoir.

« Quand même je ne pourrai atteindre une place élevée dans l'arbre chargé de fruits, parce que mes forces n'y suffisent pas, toutefois celui même qui se tient sous un palmier puissant sera garanti du mal par son ombre. Peut-être pourrai-je trouver une place sur une branche inférieure de ce cyprès qui jette son ombre au loin … »

Ferdousi, *Le Livre des Rois* (Djebar 7) ;

and from Michelet, " Et il y eut alors un étrange dialogue entre lui et moi, entre moi, son ressusciteur, et le vieux temps remis debout" (Djebar 7). These epigraphs would seem to place the novel under the dual aegis of two forms of knowledge, respectively *noesis* (cognition) and *poiésis* (creation). Both writers refer to the use of existing material as the basis for their works. While there is no explicit mention made of the palimpsest, there can be no doubt that both Ferdousi and Michelet insist on the iterative element of their undertaking.

At first glance, this double epigraph appears to situate Djebar's work within two distinct cultural or civilzational frames of reference, because on the one hand there is Ferdousi (Firdawsi), a tenth century Persian historian and poet, on the other, 19th century French historian Jules Michelet.   Perhaps more importantly, however, the authors' renown or notoriety situates Djebar's own work.

Firdawsi's[80] *Book of Kings* (*Shahnameh*) is the Persian national epic, recounting the people's history from mythic times until the Arab conquest. Let us briefly consider the comment of one of his translators, Alexander Rogers:

Not wishing to increase the size of this work, the translator refrains from commenting at any length on its merits or demerits as a history […] Its many defects in this respect are

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[80] The *Encyclopedia of Islam* further notes that his name was in fact Abu-l-Qasim Mansur, but the Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah claimed his compositions turned the court into an assembly of paradise (*firdaws*), hence the epithet Firdawsi. During the 35-year composition of the work, he is said to have grown disappointed with his pay, satirizing the Sultan, and fleeing into exile. He later returned and was reconciled with the Sultan.

palpable, especially in the matter of its chronology, and the slight notice taken of the wars of Persia with the Greeks. He [the translator] has looked on it merely in the light of a great epic, which, considering the vast period (about 3620 years) it is supposed to embrace, and the wonderful purity and delicacy of its style is hardly equalled, and certainly not surpassed, by any other ever written in the world. (Rogers xi-xii)

Reuben Levy, author of another translation entitled *The Epic of the Kings*, explains that:

Ferdowsi did not invent the legends he put into verse form; in other words, he was not a fiction-writer drawing on his imagination for the central characters or the actual plots of his stories. They were established parts of the national tradition. But he elaborated what he found already in existence and he himself composed the innumerable speeches he put into the mouths of his heroes, as well as the many long letters written at the dictation of the kings and other principal characters. (xvi)

In both Roger and Levy's commentary, we note a resistance to accepting Firdawsi's work as history. In the first case, the poetic element is emphasized. In the second case the title *The Epic of the Kings*, calls attention to its poetic rather than factual component as well. Indeed it over-determines the work, assigning it a specific category, epic, within the larger category of literature. Patricia Geesey observes that Djebar's "choice of citation indicates that she is seeking to ground her own text in a tradition of epic and legendary narration" (42). I would argue that it rather draws attention to the poetic potential of historiography, although not necessarily only in Djebar's own text.

In the case of Michelet, what we have is among the foremost and most prolific historians of his time. He is known for his literary style, considered at times as exalted as that of Victor Hugo, as much as for his erudition and for his anti-clericalism. He was a Huguenot, and among his writings that earned him enmity was his collaborative effort *Des*

Jésuites (1843). The clergy ensured that he lost his professorship at the Collège de France. What is more, he refused to utter an oath of allegiance to the Second Empire, and thus lost the possibility of working as an archivist. If Djebar quotes him in her epigraph, she calls to mind a controversial figure not only in French historiography, but also in French history. Yet another reason for using his quotation here is doubtless the style. The implication of Michelet's words is that history can be made very lively, and his stylistic contribution to history writing is among his legacies. The same holds true for Firdawsi, whose career was similarly chequered, and whose epithet pays homage to his poetic qualities. Taken together, these epigraphs seem to call to mind the literary component, the creative aspect or poiésis, of historical writing, and, for those familiar with the biographies of Firdawsi and Michelet, the perils of historiography.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In a reading of Djebar's oeuvre that owes much to anthropologist and cultural theorist Michel de Certeau's conception of writing history, Clerc notes that Djebar's work is not in the vein of traditional historiography defined as an attempt of totalization of the historical agent constructing a powerful synthesis and a complete understanding of what is History.

> Il y a longtemps, déjà, que l'Histoire a cessé de se prétendre entreprise de « compréhension sans faille ». L'apport original d'Assia Djebar est d'avoir montré que l'historien construit, rationnellement sans doute, à l'aide d'archives et de documents confrontés d'une façon qui se veut objective, mais aussi imaginairement, grâce à des souvenirs personnels et sa recréation intuitive. Dans cette reconstruction, c'est tout l'humain qui se révèle [...] à travers cette sédimentation d'événements retenus par l'expérience individuelle, qui transmet des faits historiques une autre vision que celle consignée par les traités et les chroniques. L'Histoire devient

> ainsi un effort de mémoire pour repérer, dans le passé, les silences, les déchirures, les « noeuds de toutes sortes » [...].
> (Clerc 106-07)

Especially noteworthy in the above passage is the importance of subjectivity to historiography. One could also say that Djebar does not have a positivistic view of historical writing. Beyond the facts, there is selection, human agency. As we shall see, this is a conception that is shared by Rushdie.

The excerpt from *Shame* above is also quoted in part (the final sentence) by Inderpal Grewal, who notes "[Rushdie's] history is not positivistic in having the basis of an objective observation of facts. Rushdie suggests the fictional process of historiography, indicating that it is based upon interpretation and choice of events and is itself an interpretation" (Grewal 123). While Grewal goes on to discuss this excerpt in the context of Hayden White's theorization of history, I think that it bears more discussion than appears in her article for a more ample appreciation of his contribution to a theorization of history.

Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse* is first and foremost an investigation into the nature of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. A subsequent publication, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation,* among other achievements, demonstrates the "value of narrativity in the representation of reality."[81] As Grewal correctly remarks, White realizes the problem of language within this problem. His study is therefore, among other things, a demonstration of the "linguistic turn" that occurred in late twentieth century humanities and history of ideas. Indeed it is as "turn" that he understands the word trope (White 1978:2). It would be all too easy to place him within the confines of deconstruction or postmodernism, however, because his inquiry is vast, encompassing an impressive number of theorists of the modern age.

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[81] An allusion to the first chapter of the study. For Maurice Lagueux, whose 1998 article, "Narrativisme et philologie speculative de l'histoire," was without the benefit of White later publications, it was already clear that Hayden White was a narrativist. Lagueux's article is a comparative analysis of a number of theorists of historiography, among them Paul Ricoeur, Arthur Danto, Walter B. Gallie, and Louis Mink.

As Grewal duly remarks, Rushdie does not write history as positivistic. White also discusses the extent to which historiography is, or can be, fact-based. When there is a dearth of information, conjecture and speculation are warranted. Yet even when faced with copious sources, the process of writing history is complicated by the need to select, to choose and to suppress. That much is clear from Grewal's paraphrase. White goes beyond that, though, saying that emplotment and narration are as much a part of historiography as is evaluating sources. The historian is also concerned with telling a good story. For all these reasons, White forcefully argues that history is the child of literary culture:

> A historical narrative is thus necessarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts, at once a representation that is an interpretation and an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative. (51)

Hayden White's argument about the inevitably literary component of all historiography, including the necessity of such speculative activity as interpretation and inference, leads me to conflate the two modes of investigation. White refers to both the fullness and the paucity of the historical record, which calls upon the literary imagination of the historian (cf. 51). With reference to Mohammed, the seventh century prophet of Islam, it is rather the scantiness of reliable sources that is problematic. Linda Hutcheon's contention that "[w]e know the past through textualized remains "(119), does not apply here, because, as the Islamic scholar Maxime Rodinson explains in his preface:

> Les plus anciens textes que nous possédons sur la vie du prophète remontent à cent vingt-cinq ans après sa mort environ, un peu moins que le temps qui nous sépare de la mort de Napoléon. Assurément, ils citent des sources (orales pour la plupart) plus anciennes, ils prétendent remonter à des témoins oculaires des événements. Mais I. Goldziher et

> J. Schacht en particulier ont montré le peu de confiance
> qu'on devrait avoir envers ces "traditions".[82] (13)

While textual remains are part of the picture, they do not give the whole picture. For the sake of completeness, Rodinson therefore accepts legends and hagiography that help his reader to apprehend the historical Mohammed.

There is no denying that the repercussions of conflating the historical and fictional representations of the Prophet's biography that provides Muslims the world over with a totalising order are great. What Rushdie is engaged in, by his own admission, is a de-sacralizing effort. With references to Michel Foucault as well as to Jean-François Lyotard, he explains his fictional work within the context of both discourse analysis and the postmodern condition. Rushdie argues that

> [...] whereas religion seeks to privilege one language above all
> others, the novel has always been about the way in which
> different languages, values, and narratives quarrel, and about
> the shifting relations between them, which are relations of
> power. The novel does not seek to establish a privileged
> language, but it insists upon the freedom to portray and
> analyse the struggle between the different contestants for
> such privileges. (*Imaginary Homelands* 420)

This quotation once again raises the spectre of Desh the Imam, the character of *The Satanic Verses* who clearly wants to arrest historical progress.

While White's theorization of history owes much to formalism in literature,[83] it also owes a great deal to the ideas of Michel Foucault, whose thought has had far-reaching consequences for all the social sciences and humanities. Foucault, in a number of writings including *L'ordre du discours*, his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France and a condensed version of issues examined elsewhere, discusses the extent to which any object of investigation is constructed. Foucault's thought has

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[82] Goldziher is however among the Orientalists mentioned by Said in his groundbreaking study *Orientalism* (Said 209, cf. Laroui 83). Rodinson himself is also often cited.

[83] In *The Content of the Form*, where narrative is opposed to discourse, White cites Jakobson, Benveniste, Genette, Todorov and Barthes (2).

also been significant for another theorist of history, Michel de Certeau, author of *L'écriture de l'histoire*, as we can see in the following comment

> [...] j'entends par *histoire* cette pratique (une « discipline »), son résultat (le discours), ou leur rapport sous la forme d'une « production ».   Certes, dans l'usage courant, le terme d'histoire connote tour à tour la science et son objet— l'explication qui se dit, et la réalité de *ce qui s'est passé* ou se passe.   D'autres domaines ne présentent pas la même ambiguïté; le français ne confond pas en un même mot la physique et la nature.[84] (28-29)

Indeed the word history is polysemous, a matter that has consequences for the practice of historical scholarship.   Like White, de Certeau emphasizes the creative input of the historian.   He remarks that the historian, in selecting the facts to be presented, participates in the prioritization of knowledge.   With reference to Roland Barthes' "le discours de l'histoire" he argues that the writer of history does not so much gather facts as signifiers (cf. Barthes,[85] de Certeau 54).   In a similar vein, de Certeau also claims "[...] désigner ça comme un « fait » n'est qu'une manière de nommer l'incompris; c'est un *Meinen* et non un *Verstehen*.[86]   Mais c'est aussi maintenir comme nécessaire ce qui est encore l'impensé » (54).   In other words, designating something as a fact is more a question of opining rather than of understanding.

If, as *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine* suggest, historical knowledge is problematic, then it is due to human agency, involving

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[84] Although de Certeau does not mention it, this distinction was also clear to Hegel, as Carter explains: "History is also used in at least two distinct ways in Hegel's writings, first as the 'history of the world,' and second, as the intellectual discipline that exists to interpret the world" (Carter 186).

[85] There is no page number cited in de Certeau's work.

[86] "To opine, instead of to understand". This comment is made with reference to history as an academic discipline, yet could be extended to any social science or discipline in the humanities.   It calls to mind Robin Fox's observation that "Anthropologists are never happier than when coining natty Latinisms for things.   It is a kind of magical belief in the power of names: if you discover its name then you have it in your power.   This Rumplestiltskin philosophy (name it and nail it means that anthropologists can always substitute word-coinage for thought [...]" (Fox 50).   One need not necessarily look so far afield for examples of terminological profusion, though.   The previous chapter on intertextuality also introduced a number of new terms, but in the belief of their heuristic usefulness.

selecting, obscuring and writing history such as theorized by de Certeau and Hayden White. At this point it is important to recall that *Loin de Médine's* principal intertextual relation is the ongoing discussion with and challenge to three established Islamic historiographers, chief among them Tabari, whose chronicles are shown to be anything but objective. If we recall "La Reine Yéménite", which presents a story similar to the Book of Judith in the Bible, the narrator's commentary was that it was not yet time for an Arab Judith.   It was not so much a dearth of facts that explains Tabari's version of events. Rather it was a failure of his literary imagination.   He wrote from a perspective conditioned by patriarchy, and did not put himself in the place of the queen who killed her husband for apostasy. Once again, the narratrix of *Loin de Médine* distances herself from the chronicler's vision, offering the reader an alternative.   For this reason, the many verbs of transmission in evidence in *Loin de Médine* have often been remarked upon in the available scholarship on this novel (cf. Geesey).   If we consider Scarpetta's metaphors of the novel as the mirror of history, and in particular the novel as the photographic negative[87] that allows a vision of the reverse side, then that is precisely what *Loin de Médine* does.

Hayden White has been referred to as a narrativist, which, considering the subtitle of *The Content of the Form* is hardly suprising. Within the context of developments in twentieth century literary theory, this term connotes both formalism and structuralism. The formalists, inspired by descriptive linguistics, differentiated between *story* (content) and *discourse* (artistry), of which Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* is perhaps the best-known example. The structuralists then continued this methodology, with a number of theorists developing a syntax of narrative. In the case of structuralist narratology, the distinction made is between *histoire* and *récit*, which corresponds to the story and discourse above.

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[87] This is also the main simile of historical writing used by Siegfried Kracauer in *History, The Last Things Before the Last*. Chapter Eight, "The Anteroom", begins "One may define the area of historical reality, like that of photographic reality, as an anteroom area. Both realities are of a kind which does not lend itself to being dealt with in a definite way" (191).

Within traditional Islamic historiography, however, attention is also paid to a system of classification, which also includes narrative. The eight categories that Laroui proposes are oral testimony, written testament, monument or figurative document, artifact, numbered document, biological heritage, collective conscience, and pre-concept. The point of his argument is that for each type of material support, there is a particular kind of historical continuity at the level of human activity. He concludes that

> Un récit historique qui se fonde sur un type de document obéit forcément à une temporalité spécifique. Ceci nous amène naturellement à nous interroger sur le cadre où s'intègrent toutes les informations sur un sujet donné malgré la diversité des sources, et c'est parce qu'on prête à l'historiographie islamique d'emblée l'unité d'une monographie que l'on néglige toutes les questions que nous venons de soulever. (33)

Laroui's point is that the document, although considered a neutral support that remains unchanged through time, is not without an implicit philosophy that affects the mind of the historian. It gives him notions on time, matter, causality, life, and the conscience that allow the reader to distinguish the historian from the philosopher, the poet, and the scientist. He further says "Partant de l'examen de l'histoire comme mode de pensée, nous découvrons que chaque conception de l'histoire est en grande partie déterminée par le type de document qu'elle met à contribution" (34).

Before proceeding to further textual analysis, it helps to situate Rushdie within an aesthetic current, that of postmodernism. Discussions of Rushdie's style inevitably mention "postmodernism", a notion whose concepts have often been used to explain his text, at least partially. In the years since its publication, Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* has established itself as a standard reference with respect to postmodernism understood as a literary and artistic aesthetic. Rushdie's novels *Shame* and *Midnight's Children* clearly espouse this aesthetic, and are repeatedly mentioned in the course of her study.

Akbar Ahmed, author of *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*, caustically remarks "Rushdie, in particular, for the west a postmodernist icon, a new literary messiah, even a Hallaj for its Islamic experts" (166-67).[88]

It is therefore necessary to have some inkling of what postmodernism is.[89] If I mention an aesthetic current when discussing history, it is not intended as a digression. Rather I would contend that the post-modernist aesthetic is characterized by a particular attitude towards the past. Even a theorist of postmodernism such as Hutcheon regards it as "a contradictory phenomenon" (3). My use of the term may not be conclusive, but is meant to contextualize the novel within an aesthetic. Recourse to this flexible and contradictory notion is motivated by my interest in the problematic of the past being significant to the present. The premise of my larger study is that revisiting (and revising) Mohammed's biography is relevant to, and indeed, engages late twentieth century reality. Postmodernism has been used to refer to an age, the current *Zeitgeist* (since the early 1970s), but Hutcheon warns "it cannot simply be used as a synonym for the contemporary" (4). Rather, postmodern art is defined by its conception of subjectivity and knowledge. In this art, "(we do not) find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty. This is not a transcending of history, but a problematized inscribing of subjectivity into history" (118). Historiographic metafiction is a convention of postmodernist art that helps us to understand Rushdie's narration. According to Hutcheon,

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[88] Among whom he ironically cites Ruthven and Ian McEwan. Hallaj (d. 922) was a Sufi martyr: "His name is a keyword in modern—usually progressive—poetry in the Muslim world, for he sacrificed his life for his ideals and was killed by the establishment" (Schimmel 1992:108).

[89] Social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, author of *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, is rather more dismissive of the whole movement than Hutcheon is, saying "Postmodernism is a contemporary movement. Over and above this, it is not altogether clear what the devil it is. In fact, clarity is not conspicuous amongst its attributes. It not only generally fails to practise it, but also on occasion actually repudiates it" (22-23). He furthers writes that "My real concern is with relativism : the postmodernist movement, which is an ephemeral cultural fashion, is of interest as a living and contemporary specimen of relativism, which as such is of some importance and will remain with us for a long time" (24). While he is most concerned with postmodernism as a methodology in the social sciences, his critique of a science of "deep doubts" (25) hold true as well for the humanities.

> Postmodern art is not so much ambiguous as it is doubled
> and contradictory– awareness of official history as only the
> most dominant version,[90] one of many possible stories –
> Problematization of versions of history is problematizing
> almost everything the historical novel once took for granted,
> historiographic metafiction destabilizes received notions of
> both history and fiction. (120)

Clearly, Rushdie's representation of early Islamic history is consistent with the conventions of historiographic metafiction. It "suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (110). This Rushdie does by including the viewpoints of secondary characters, including the foes of the Prophet, by representing their fears and their opposition, to him as well as to nascent Islam. The resulting vision of Islam's early history is contingent, reflecting the concern for "the multiplicity of truth(s) relative to the specificity of place and culture" (Hutcheon 108). Moreover, "historiographic metafiction [...] instills totalizing order, only to contest it, by its radical provisionality, intertextuality, and often, fragmentation" (Hutcheon 116). An example of this fragmentary nature of historiographic project is the death of Mahound in *The Satanic Verses*. In opposition to the widespread notion of Mohammed rising to heaven in Jerusalem, it is suggested that a spell cast by Hind kills him. As a man, the Prophet is shown to be vulnerable, and not invincible, as tradition would have us believe.

Hutcheon's discussion of historiography is not simply concerned with a type of historical writing, however, but is based on the premise of (all) historiography "as structured, coherent, and teleological as any narrative fiction" (111). It is also preoccupied with epistemology: "How do we know the past? What do (what can) we know of it now?" (115). Sanctioned accounts of the life of the Prophet indeed tend to show that Mohammed was destined from his earliest hour and that this led to the role he later played. These show that his life was all of a piece, coherent,

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[90] Rushdie's *Shame* is used to illustrate this point.

and as can be expected of the founder of a world religion, it was an exemplary biography.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Islam considers the Koranic text a guarantor of fixity. The arguments brought forth by Forsyth and Hennard show the extent to which the prospect of unreliable transmission causes anxiety. In the words of Laroui, "l'historiographie traditionniste a toujours été defensive même quand elle paraissait occuper seul le terrain" (118). Laroui further explains that within Islam, the historian has increasingly come to resemble the theologian and that historiography has increasingly been subordinated to the logic of hadith. He also states that "Le traditionniste croit que l'événement miraculeux, dûment attesté, convertit automatiquement l'improbable en fait réel: ce qui soulignera avec force Tabari dans sa préface à son ouvrage principal *Histoire des Prophètes et des Rois*" (65).

What Rushdie of course does is to subvert the hagiographic account of divine inspiration and unfailing transcription.[91] In the version of events presented in *The Satanic Verses*, the illiterate Prophet, when faced with a mutinous scribe, is in no position to guarantee the fixity of the text. Islam seeks to ensure the purity of the word of God by insisting on a single version of events, as discussed in the previous chapter, in which this was framed in a sociological and communicative context. The translated Koran, for instance, is considered as a paraphrase. For religious purposes, moreover, only the classical Arabic of Mohammed is used, regardless of the ability of the faithful to understand. But if anything proves the "fetishization" of the text remarked by Forsyth and Hennard, it is surely, as Akhtar recounts, that

> The early community felt, with reverence and awe, that these
> revelations vouchsafed to Muhammad were inimitably
> miraculous—the literal and infallible word of Allah, to be
> carefully preserved and transmitted to future generations.

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[91] Forsyth and Hennard, speak of a "(mise en relief) du problème de la transmission du texte et celui des versions successives du message divin. Le roman de Rushdie s'avère entre autres un lieu de réflexion sur ces quelques questions textuelles" (150). Jacqueline Bardolphe has also noted „Particularly in societies, past or present, with a strong oral culture, the act of utterance has always had something sacred about it, and is potentially fraught with danger-to which can be added linguistic uncertainty" (210).

> The canon of the Koran was already established at the time of Muhammad's death and, unlike the Bible, it has not undergone even the smallest change. Indeed even unintelligible letters, prefixed to certain chapters, are scrupulously reproduced as part of the revealed text up to this day (22).

For Malise Ruthven, who studied the response to *The Satanic Verses* as a primarily South Asian phenomenon, the legacy of Arabic as the language of prayer is important for identity. He explains it in terms of different approaches to defining Islamic identity between speakers of Arabic and other Muslims:

> Muslims in the Arab world wear Islam more lightly than their co-religionists in South Asia. The Arab identity is vested in the superiority of language and the historical memory of rulership. Even though the Arab hegemony over Islam lasted only a few centuries, the religion has never entirely broken away from its linguistic matrix. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, the tongue of the Arabs. In traditional Islamic theology, moreover, the Qur'an is the Uncreated Word of God −an intrinsic part, as it were, of the Divine Essence. In effect this means, not just that God speaks Arabic, but that the classical Arabic of the Qur'an is a part of the Divine Logos. (8)

Against this linguistic and historical link to the past giving Arabic speakers a more confident collective identity, there is the very different experience of South Asian Muslims, whose context of minorities against an overwhelmingly Hindu background Ruthven compares to Jewish identity: both face the threat of losing one's identity in the "cultural mainstream" (9). He claims that both minority groups collective identity is articulated through conflict and persecution, both of which aid in reinforcing a sense of distinctiveness.

One may also note a propos that the questioning of the purity of the word, of Koranic transcription, comes about when Salman, the Persian scribe, plays a trick on Mahound. His status as a non-native

speaker of Arabic quibbling about approximate terms such as "*all-hearing, all-knowing*" and "*all-knowing, all-wise*"[92] (379-80) is also a manner of evoking the translatability of the Koran and the concomitant question of Arabic hegemony. To return to issues of historiography raised by Hutcheon, historiographical metafiction clearly functions ironically, by undercutting and subverting official or accepted narratives and by adopting other perspectives. In Jahilia, Salman the Persian by virtue of his non-Arabic origins, is the marginal figure par excellence.

White refers to a quaternary pattern of emplotting history (70). In this system that owes much to the formalism of Northrop Frye, and to the historian R.G. Collingwood, satire as a mode of emplotment corresponds to the contextualist mode of explanation and the liberal mode of ideological implication. As we have seen, Rushdie's narrative subverts hagiographic accounts of what happened in seventh century Arabia. His narrative further suggests that expediency explains many of the precepts that would become norms and laws. It may therefore be safely assumed that the trope in which he operates is irony. As White explains,

> Irony sanctions the ambiguous, and possibly even the ambivalent, statement. It is a kind of metaphor, but one that surreptitiously signals a denial of the assertion, or at least sets a crucial qualification on it [...] What is involved here is a kind of attitude towards knowledge itself which is implicitly critical of all forms of metaphorical identification, reduction, or integration of phenomena. In short, irony is the linguistic strategy underlying and sanctioning scepticism as an explanatory tactic, satire as a mode of emplotment, and either agnosticism or cynicism as a moral posture. (73-74)

The previous chapter, concerned more with the formal aspects of these novels, indicated that only *The Satanic Verses* is consistently ironic. This is as true of its tone as it is of its historical perspective. Yet *Loin de Médine* is no less concerned with historical knowledge. In the case of the latter novel, however, "la foi interrogative," or questioning faith, has

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[92] In italics in the original.

more often been used to qualify its approach. *L'Homme du Livre*, on the other hand, with its tendency to hagiography, is rather more affirming than questioning. I do not think it useful to force either *Loin de Médine* or *L'Homme du Livre* into White's grid, because they do not seem to correspond to any of the other patterns. I also doubt whether anything as protean and multiple as historiography can be apprehended by something as limiting as a quaternary pattern.

While *Loin de Médine* clearly shares some concerns about historical knowledge with *The Satanic Verses*, it would be wrong to consider Djebar a writer of postmodernist fiction. There are a number of other conventions of the aesthetic, chief among them a mixing of high and low and culture, and the principle of transgression, that do not characterize her fiction. At best, one could say that *Loin de Médine* has "preoccupation with text, and with a vocabulary of narrativity, empl[o]tment, ultracommentary" (Fardon 569-71, Gellner 25), as demonstrated in the previous chapter on intertextuality. As such it espouses a post-modernist approach to historical investigation. Geesey has remarked

> In *Loin de Médine*, Djebar's project of re-reading highly regarded historical chronicles of the first centuries of Islam and then performing an interpretive act that elaborates on the glimpses of women's presence and women's words demonstrates a conscious manipulation of the discourses of both historiography and fictional narration. Given this technique, Djebar's text may be categorized as what Linda Hutcheon describes as "historiographic metafiction." (41)

Geesey is however equally cautious of otherwise categorizing the fiction as postmodernist.

Historiography is not solely concerned with stylistic matters, though, and if the novelistic imagination is concerned with filling gaps, that is partly owing to the problems of factual evidence encountered in historical research. Maxime Rodinson, like Rudi Paret one of the most notable Islamic scholars of the twentieth century, claims however that the sources of Mohammed's life are incredibly unreliable, comparable to

writing about Napoleon in the 1960s with only word of mouth sources to go on (13). Rodinson's biography *Mahomet* also represents an unorthodox, non-hagiographic portrayal of Mohammed. As with Rushdie's novel, we could say that it is written against the Islamic tradition. But whereas in hagiographic history the pretence of documentation is avouched, this at once Marxist, psychoanalytical and theological study problematizes that which cannot be known for certain.

> Avertissement de la seconde édition.
>
> Mohammed était un génie religieux, un grand politique et un homme comme vous et moi. Ce n`était pas là trois plans séparés, juxtaposés, mais des aspects d'une personnalité totale, aspects qui ne peuvent se distinguer que par l'analyse. Tout acte, toute pensée mettaient en jeux toutes ces faces d'un même homme. Ceux qui s'intéressent avant tout à l'homme religieux et à son message ont tout intérêt à comprendre les motivations et répercussions non religieuses de l'activité de cet homme. Ceux qui en voient surtout la trace historique doivent méditer sur la part de l'idéologie dans ce phénomène humain et même sur cette idéologie en elle-même. (*Mahomet* 18-19)

These difficulties lead Rodinson to conclude that since very little is known with certainty, a history of Mohammed that does not include information from specious sources would be a history devoid of interest to the reader. Rodinson therefore includes many anecdotes whose motivation and effectiveness as hagiographic portrayal are acknowledged even as they are being employed. In other words he decides that his history is insofar historical –a methodological and scholarly discipline– in that it problematizes its own non-authentifiable sources. In other respects, however, it is a somewhat *romanesque*, or novelistic, biography. As an example of this delicate balance, Rodinson recalls two anecdotes in which the young Mohammed, while traveling abroad with his adopted father, is recognized by strangers as someone foreseen for greatness. On another occasion, members of another monotheistic religion predict his later gift of prophecy. While Rodinson

clearly finds this testimony specious, it is included as an example of the legitimizing concerns of hagiography. The recognition thus accrued to Mohammed indicates, however extravagantly, that Islamic hagiography is not purely self-referential (Rodinson 70-71). It also bears noting that the incident itself is witnessed, and it is to these alleged eyewitness accounts that the legend can be traced.

I have made a point of separating the various facets of Mahound that are represented in the text. Within *The Satanic Verses*, however, as Forsyth and Hennard[93] have commented, I believe that for all practical purposes the categories are broken down. If one were only to consider the ethnic and religious composition of Mahound's polygynous household, such synthesis of various facets of his personality and his politics becomes quite clear. Political gain is one consideration, as some of twelve wives are the daughters of powerful families, as is personality, as other women's charms respond to various sensuous and emotional longings and offer insight into the psyche of their shared husband. Polygamy itself is also of interest, because it institutionalizes and legitimizes patriarchy.[94]

Despite the diverse disciplines and discourses from which they start out, in essence the categories of both Rushdie and Rodinson are the same: they are both interested in the psychological, the social, the economical, and to the doctrinal aspects of early Islamic history. This brief comparison of their perspectives and methodologies supports Hutcheon's claim that in historiographic metafiction "the novelist and the historian are shown to write in tandem with others--and with each other" (190). Where Rushdie and Rodinson's portrayals really differ, however, is in tone.

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[93] Neil Forsyth and Martine Hennard explain that : " L'essentiel de la controverse a porté sur le défi du roman à des formes souvent combinées d'autorité-politique, religieuse, institutionnelle, patriarcale. [...] L'épisode des versets sataniques pose ainsi clairement le problème de la collusion entre autorité politique et religieuse"(157). Elsewhere they make the point that "En effet, Rushdie ironise sur la figure du prophète dans *Les Versets sataniques*, insistant sur son humanité, son opportunisme, son tempérament commerçant et sa sensualité" (151).

[94] This is not to say that Islam is any more or less polygamous than other cultures, however. It was widely practiced outside of Islam and clearly predates Islam, as we shall see in the following chapter on gender.

HISTORICITY

While *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre* all mention or display the generic category novel, only in the last named do we find a more ample justification. In the words of Chraïbi

Avertissement

Ceci n'est pas un livre d'histoire, mais un **roman**, une oeuvre de pure fiction, même s'il met en scène un personnage considérable: le Prophète Mahommed.

D.C.

I must insist on the fact that this paratextual clarification be attributed to Chraïbi, as indicated by his initials "D.C.", and not a "narrator". The word **novel** (*roman*) is written in bold letters in the original. All things considered, this "warning" (*avertissement*)—and one would not be amiss to ask why a less ominous word such as "notice" (*avis au lecteur*)[95] was not used—posits a radical ontological distinction between fiction on the one hand, and history on the other. We shall see that this is not a position that can be accepted at face value. Another question one could ask of the text is why it does not complete the opposition with equal terms. A more logical completion to "a work of pure fiction" would be "a factual account". Instead this pronouncement assumes that history is as free from fiction as fiction is from fact. Another possible ending would have been, "although it represents a historical figure" in the sense of one whose existence is factual and documented. The warning does none of these things, yet it raises the spectre of all of them. Indeed, the modifier "pure" fiction used to characterize the novel is rather provocative. It implies that there is in fact a continuum of factual and fictional running between the two recognized poles of history and fiction. It strikes me as odd that Chraïbi goes to such lengths in his warning, because as we have seen, his novel is far less

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95 In her consideration of the meaning of « avertissement », Fouet notes that « l'idée d'avertissement se déploie très vite dans le champ lexical de la mise en garde avec menace plus ou moins implicite » (101) and « au sens premier d'appel à la vigilance, le mot « avertissement » fait suivre diverses significations dont celle de punition administrative » (102).

oppositional than the other two, and is, as I have said, at times even hagiographical.

It may seem that too much is being made of a slight remark, but Jeanne Fouet, in *Driss Chraïbi en marges*, has developed this remark further still. As the title of her study suggests, she is most concerned with the paratextual clues strewn throughout the author's oeuvre. *Naissance à l'aube* has a similar epigraph,

> Avertissement
>
> Ceci n'est pas un livre d'histoire, mais un roman. S'il prend source dans l'Histoire, il y entre surtout l'imagination galopante de l'auteur, qui me ressemble comme un frère. En conséquence, toute ressemblance de quelque nature que ce soit avec des événements historiques ne serait que pure coïncidence, une heureuse rencontre. Il reste que ce qui n'a changé ni vieilli depuis le fond des ages, c'est la terre. Et j'ai toujours eu la folie de la lumière et de l'eau. Si ces deux éléments viennent à manquer, l'histoire des hommes tarit.
>
> (Fouet 99)

Fouet notes that the link between novel and history is not denied, but explained by a metaphor according to which literary creation is born of (« *prend source dans* ») history. Fouet considers this a veritable philosophy of history that emphasizes the unlimited possibilities open to the novel for giving life to history. She further remarks that the author lays claim to his subjectivity, a way of warning the reader about taking his novel for History. Perhaps most remarkably, Fouet notes that the author creates an ironic distance by doubling, because the author of the Warning is not the same as that of the novel, even though they resemble each other like two brothers (100). The "D.C." who signs the epigraph of *L'Homme du Livre*, on the other hand, is undeniably Driss Chraïbi.

What Chraïbi appears to be grappling with, or trying to get around, is the problem referred to in Rushdie's text above from *Shame*, the so-called "problem of history". The problem is not resolved by the generic fiat of applying another label, however. Unlike Chraïbi, both Rushdie

and Djebar have written texts that recognize the problematic nature of any historical account. It is hardly a coincidence, since both were students of history.

Compared to this tortuous explanation, Djebar is much more forthright in her interview with Sophie Bonnet:

> J'ai alors pris la décision d'écrire *Loin de Médine*. Avec *L'Amour, la fantasia*, j'avais acquis un savoir-faire entre l'Histoire et le roman. Je me suis donc dit qu'il fallait que j'utilise cet acquis pour raconter les premiers temps de l'Islam du point de vue des femmes ; j'ai senti que les intégristes allaient revenir en force et monopoliser la mémoire islamique. (Bonnet 59-60, cited in Clerc 116)

Djebar's concern is clearly the abuse of Islamic history for contemporary ends. Even without such an unequivocal statement, however, quotations from the preface and novel in the previous chapter and above were revealing of this tension between the historical and the contemporary. Most interestingly, however, Djebar refers to History and the novel as different forms of knowledge and situates her work at an intermediate position between the two. This constitutes a stark contrast to Chraïbi's radical disavowal.

As for how *The Satanic Verses* invokes historicity, I have argued that *The Satanic Verses* calls the truthfulness of the Islamic historical tradition into question in a number of ways. The existence of such controversial verses within the Koran does however have more far-reaching implications:

> L'existence [des versets abrogeants] est une preuve de plus sur l'historicité dont le Coran est porteur. Si Dieu ne tenait pas compte du temps, il n'abrogerait pas certains versets antérieurs à d'autres. Il n'y aurait pas de précédent ni de suivant. C'est un mystère insondable. Par contre, il est clair que les *ulémas* ont ajouté un verset sous prétexte qu'il aurait été *oublié* lors de la recension du Coran : celui de la lapidation des femmes adultères. (*Arabies* 1990, Aubert 53-56)

Aubert goes on to comment on this practice of abuse of hadith, but in doing so, he not only considers the factual as opposed to fictional component, but historical methodology as well:

> Cette question—de l'historicité du Coran et de son approche rationnelle et critique—conserve toute son actualité en terre d'islam, où, comme le rappelle Claude Molla [...] il est toujours interdit aux théologiens musulmans de recourir aux méthodes modernes d'exégèse tant au sujet de l'Écriture qu'à propos des traditions relatives aux actes et aux paroles du Prophètes (*hadith*). (Aubert 54)

While it is clear what is meant by rational and critical approach, "modern methods of exegeses" is less so. Perhaps more importantly, it must be explained what relation hadith, here obviously a science of religion, has to historiography. This question is addressed most fully in Abdallah Laroui's *Islam et Histoire*, a work that is largely devoted to this complex relation. It is worth noting, however, that Laroui dedicates an entire chapter to "histoire et orientalisme".

The Satanic Verses is not the only one of the three novels to raise the troubling specter aspect of historicity. In *Loin de Médine*, there is the comment that "un hadith n'est jamais tout à fait sûr" (Djebar 63, cited by Bourget 74). This quotation comes at the close of "La fille aimée", which, among other things, recounts the death of Mohammed's daughter Fatima.

> S'écarter un instant de Tabari pour rapporter un *hadith*. Cette scène, c'est Bokhari le scrupuleux qui en a vérifié la source... Elle figure parmi les moins contestables de la *sira* du Prophète.
>
> Quelques semaines, peut-être quelques jours avant sa mort, le Prophète reçoit la visite de Fatima.[96] (62)

The passage above introduces a moving scene in which Fatima visits her ailing father, and is aggrieved to see that he is dying. It is witnessed by

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[96] In the novel's first usage of the words Hadith and Sira, the author italicizes both words and gives the following explanations in footnotes: « Hadith : « dit » sur la vie du Prophète. Sira : l'histoire de la vie du Prophète ». Further references to hadith bear no typographic emphasis.

Ayesha (Aïcha), the Prophet's young wife and purported favorite. In this incident, Mohammed tells Fatima that among those close to him, she would be the first to follow him in death. Although among the least contestable of reported sayings, the narrator calls the certainty of this hadith into question. For one thing, the reference to Bokhari the scrupulous ends with ellipsis points, thereby casting doubt on his meticulousness. Yet what conveys uncertainty even more, especially when taken as history, is the approximate date. The relation of this hadith in *Loin de Médine* ends with "Un hadith n'est jamais tout à fait sûr. Mais il trace, dans l'espace de notre foi interrogative, la courbe parfaite d'un météore entrevu dans le noir" (63). This metaphor, apart from recalling the oft-cited questioning faith that is Djebar's hallmark, conceives of historical knowledge as more darkness than light. With the help of faith, it is possible to make trajectories in the dimness, yet ultimately, it is the black, the unknown, which predominates.

Laroui discusses the problem of truth in a similar, albeit more theoretical vein:

> le problème de la vérité et de la certitude peut être légitimement soulevé. C'est pour garantir l'une et l'autre qu'est instituée la Tradition à travers un corps social chargé de la maintenir vivante (*ihyâ'al-sunna*). En dehors de ce domaine, celui du sens transmis d'âge en âge, tout ce qu'on peut affirmer au sujet du passé, de ce qui n'est pas objet d'expérience directe et immédiate (*hâdir*) est problématique, non qu'il ne puisse jamais être vrai, mais simplement parce que la certitude à son endroit n'est ni garantie ni exigée. L'histoire factuelle, profane, qui est l'histoire moins le sens, n'est pas tant niée que dévalorisée. (80)

Where Djebar and Laroui's appear to converge is in discussing the difficulty of being certain of historical knowledge. Laroui, however, in addition to this reflexion, raises the hierarchization of religious as opposed to worldly history, which clearly happens at the expense of the latter. But perhaps most importantly, this latter comment raises the

issue of the relation between history and time, one aspect of which is historicism.

HISTORICISM

Aubert speaks of "le refus de l'histoire, comme éloignement, distance avec l'origine" (66-67) as well as of "Ce regain spectaculaire de la religion coranique témoigne peut-être avant tout d'un refus, celui du monde moderne" (99). Michelet, who is cited by Djebar in one of the epigraphs to *Loin de Médine* above, describes history writing as resuscitation of the past. This colorful metaphor suggests that the past is dead, and raises the issue of the relation any history has to time. This relation is also a topic of de Certeau's *L'écriture de l'histoire*, according to which historiography always serves the needs of the present (cf. "Productions du lieu"). The implications thereof include the political and epistemological currents at the time of a history's writing.[97] It is a matter that is also discussed in an even-handed and convincing manner by Siegfried Kracauer in "Present Interest" (*History, the Last Things Before the Last*). Kracauer remarks that "the typical period is not so much a unified entity with a spirit of its own as precarious conglomerate of tendencies, aspirations, and activities which more often than not manifest themselves independently of one another" (66) and as "fragile compound of frequently inconsistent endeavours in flux" (67). This being so, "the influence of the contemporary world on any man is of a complexity which defies all but the crudest analysis" (Finley 74, Kracauer 68). If it were not for the textual clues in the novels and the

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[97] This thought is echoed in Clerc's reading of another Djebar novel *L'Amour, la fantasia* remarking:

ainsi le passé sert-il à justifier le présent dans ce qu'il a de plus inexcusables tant est grande l'ignorance de l'Histoire vraie, occultée par cette soumission à une tradition, qui se réduit à des rituels figés, et prive les hommes de la dynamiques qui fait évoluer le temps. Le culte de la tradition replie sur un passé disparu au lieu de conférer l'élan nécessaire à sa perpétuation. Le narrateur dénonce « l'historique faiblesse » d'un peuple qui vit « dans une confusion des temps » et que le feu de la guerre contribuera peut-être à réveiller en brûla « ce que, dit-il, nous croyions jusque-là un passé mort alors qu'il subsistait en nous et en nous pères. Ce réveil du passé par le présent deviendra le thème du film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* et apparaîtra comme caractéristique d'une conception moderne de l'Histoire en tant qu' « acte libérateur restituant au présent toutes ses virtualités. (Clerc 93)

authors' pronouncement on the interrelation of history and present interest, I would hesitate to broach this topic.[98] Suffice it for the moment to say that this temporal element, in addition to the other constructions alluded to earlier, limits the extent to which a history can be objective.

Before discussing this problematic further, let us first see how else modernity is at all an issue raised by the texts. In *The Satanic Verses*, a brief yet telling dream sequence features Desh the Imam, an exiled Muslim cleric whose condition brings to mind that of the Ayatollah Khomeini before the 1978 Islamic Revolution in Iran, although he is far from being the only cleric in that position at that time.[99] It would be helpful to quote at length a passage in which the Imam considers the current state of his homeland:

> There is an enemy beyond Ayesha, and it is History herself. History is the blood-wine that must no longer be drunk. History the intoxicant, the creation and possession of the Devil, of the great Shaitan, the greatest of the lies, -- progress, science, rights—against which the Imam has set his face. History is a deviation from the Path, knowledge is a delusion, because the sum of knowledge was complete on the day Al-Lah finished his revelation to Mahound. (Rushdie 217)

On one level, there is a clear reference to Iran in the late 1970s, in which the spouse of the Shah, in this allegorical construct the Empress Ayesha, may have been thought to have too prominent a role. On another, there is a reference to the early history of Islam, and the leadership struggles that ensued after the death of Mohammed. As Fatima Mernissi has shown, the widespread apprehension of temporal, or rather political, female power in Islamic societies harkens back to a hadith referring to the leadership role of Ayesha, the Prophet's youngest wife and presumed favourite, after Mohammed's death.[100] Gender relations are therefore an undeniable aspect of the problem of history. At the same

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[98] Kracauer raises the possibility of chronological extraterritoriality with respect to Vico.

[99] There are however repeated references to SAVAK, the Iranian secret service at the time of the Shah (213, 214).

[100] I am referring to *Le harem politique*, which is discussed in the following chapter.

time, history and knowledge are emphasized, and to a considerable extent, what is discussed in *The Satanic Verses* is a version of history, and knowledge of past events. As we shall see, this is a theme raised by another novel in the text corpus.

While the above passage is rife with contemporary geopolitical allusions, the speech ends on a note of more conceptual clarity: "Death to the tyranny of [...] calendars, of America, of time! We seek the eternity, the timelessness, of God" (Rushdie 217).[101] This dream does not form part of the action recounted in the novel, and yet its thematic relation to the Islamic topics raised elsewhere is unmistakable. Moreover, the use of the name Mahound with reference to the Prophet Mohammed in the allegorical construct Jahilia is formally consistent with the longer dream sequences "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia".

Because *The Satanic Verses* is as much a deconstruction as a reinscription of Mohammed's biography, at this point a discussion the historical figure in terms of his originality is called for, if only to allow the other side of this satirical portrayal to come to the fore. While Rushdie's novelty operates a levelling of discourses (cf. Erickson) and a questioning of faith as well as of personality, it does not indicate why this singular individual continues to inspire so many faithful. It is all the more necessary to consider Mohammed's legacy in terms of originality because *The Satanic Verses* raises the spectre of the Koran as a palimpsest of the Bible.

This association does not occur in the two sections "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia", that are concerned with seventh century Arabian history, though. Rather, the Koran quotation in question occurs in Part V, "A City Visible but Unseen,"[102] whose setting is contemporary cosmopolitan London as experienced by a delirious Gibreel Farishta, in a stream of consciousness. To substantiate the claim of mental derangement, suffice it to say that he sees himself as a

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[101] Benedict Anderson notes that "the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue to the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). Anderson's study of course disproves this idea.

[102] The attribute "unseen" is doubtless a reference to the immigrants who are only grudgingly acknowledged in the social fabric.

being capable of flight. His perception is of "hovering high above London"(363), and his thoughts run from his surroundings, to the nature of good and evil, to quoting Frantz Fanon,[103] and reflecting upon the Bible and the "Quran". Gibreel quotes: "He was of the djinn, so he transgressed" -- Quran 18:50, there it was as plain as the day--How much more straightforward this version how much more practical, down to earth, comprehensible!" It is hard to overlook Gibreel's concern about pragmatic considerations such as intelligibility. These concerns, as we shall see, are also present in his dreamworld Jahilia. Further thoughts from Gibreel are:

> How right [...] to banish those Satanico-Biblical doubts of his,
> -- those concerning God's unwillingness to permit dissent
> among his lieutenants, -- for as Iblis/Shaitan was no angel, so
> there had been no angelic dissents for the Divinity to repress;
> -- and those concerning forbidden fruit, and God's supposed
> denial of moral choice to his creations, -- for nowhere in the
> entire Recitation was that Tree called (as the Bible had it) the
> root of the knowledge of good and evil. It was simply a
> different Tree! Shaitan, tempting the Edenic couple, called it
> only 'the Tree of Immortality' -- and as he was a liar, so the
> truth (discovered by inversion) was that the banned fruit
> (apples were now specified) hung upon the Death-Tree, no
> less, the slayer of men's souls. (364-65)

This passage too is an allusive intertextual reference not only to the Koran, but also to the Bible. Here called the Recitation, in contrast to the precise quotation by name, sura and verse number, occurring half a page earlier, perhaps to attenuate the explosively polemical ramifications of representing the Muslim holy book as an apocryphal Bible. More substantively, the words version and inversion, subversively hint at the workings of the human hand in the allegedly revealed divine word.

Johann Fück's article on the originality of the Muslim prophet, although it predates Hayden White's theorization of historiography,

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[103] Apparently Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth*.

could be said to embody the methodological issues raised therein. His method is in part philology, in part historiography and in part speculation. Perhaps most importantly, he recognizes the limits of scholarly inquiry for explaining the phenomenon that is Mohammed. It also neutralizes the earlier quotation by Maxime Rodinson, who cites two Orientalists (Schachtel and Goldziher), both of whom cast doubt on the veracity of the Koranic text and hadith because of a dearth of written evidence. His insistence on the existence of a pre-Islamic Arabic literature despite the lack of traces other than its stylistic legacy in the Koran is the most evident example of this approach.

Although citing Fück is fraught with danger, if only because it has a hint of Orientalism, the rewards of his insights appear to outweigh the risk. His historicism brings refreshing insights into Mohammed's biography and cultural environment, particularly the consideration of legends as well as theology contributing to the stylistically heterogeneous document that is the Koran. Within the framework of orthodox Islamic scholarship, any mention of "legend" would be inconceivable. In his article "Die Originalität des arabischen Propheten", Fück discusses the tendency in Orientalist scholarship to emphasize Mohammed's borrowing from the two other established monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity.[104] Fück notes that while the Koran acknowledges its contact with both these religions, source scholarship breaks the Islamic holy book into a mosaic of individual pieces with no cohesion whatsoever. Another result of this method is the erasure of the Prophet's personality, which, given his importance as exemplar as well as theologian, appears to be an indispensable factor of the religion's success and legacy.

> Niemals warden die Mittel der rationalen Wissenschaft ausreichen, das Geheimnis der Persönlichkeit dieses Mannes ganz zu entschleiern, und niemals warden wir nachprüfend feststellen können, welche Erlebnisse seine Seele bewegten,

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[104] Fück cites two contemporary examples, C.C. Torrey's *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (1933) and W. Ahrens's *Muhammad als Religionsstifter, Abhandlung der Kunde des Morgenlandes* although it becomes clear from his study that they were but the latest representatives of the trend.

bis er sich in qualvollem Kampfe zu der Gewissheit durchdrang, von Gott zum Warner u. Gesandten ausersehen zu sein. Ist diese Einsicht gewonnen, so verliert die Frage nach etwaigen Vorbildern, Einflüssen und Anregungen jene schlechthin eintscheidende Bedeutung, die sie für eine mechanistiche Geschichtsauffasung besass. Wohl aber ist es wichtig u. wissenswert, wie der Prophet das ihm gegebene Material verwandt und verarbeitet, seinen Zwecken dienstbar gemacht, geändert und ausgelesen hat. Dass er dies stärker als irgendein anderer der Heroen der Religion getan hat, besagt nichts gegen seine Originalität. Gehört es doch zum Wesen aller Großen im Reiche des Geistes, dass sie den Ihen überlieferten Stoff dankbar benützen, aber mit neuem Leben erfüllen.[105] (171-72)

It is also interesting to note at this point that this judgement of originality corresponds to contemporary theorization of intertextuality as *poiésis* (cf. Rabau) in which the creative process is not limited to ex nihilo textual production, but results from selective reading and rearrangement of material of varying vintage.

Fück regards the Day of Last Judgement as the central concept of earliest Islamic thought. From the observation that the Koranic designation for the pre-existing religion is *Hanif*, Fück concludes that Mohammed was well aware of the overlap between his new religion and that of the former monotheistic Arabic religion, Hanifism. In other words, it is Arabian monotheism, and not Christianity or Judaism, which contributed the most to nascent Islam. The earliest sermons

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[105] Rational scholarship will never suffice to unveil this man's mysteries, nor will we ever be able to prove what experiences moved him to the point where, after tortuous struggle, became certain of having been chosen as God's warner and envoy. Once we have admitted this, the question about influences, examples, and inspiration loses its decisive role that it possesses for a mechanistic conception of history. Yet it is important to know how the Prophet used and elaborated the material, made it work for his purposes, and interpreted it. That he did this to a greater extent than his other heroes of Religion, takes nothing away from his originality. Greatness is after all gratefully using what is already present, but over and above that, filling it with new life.

especially were remarkable for their "*arabisches Kolorit*" (174). [106]

In determining the importance of various source texts, philological analysis was of great importance. The linguistic origin of concepts, for example, can be an indication of their provenance. Yet the etymology of most non-Arabic terms in the Koran is Aramaic, which was at the time the lingua franca of the learned of various religions. As such, the existence of Aramaic termini is no conclusive proof that these concepts were not Arabic in origin. Fück also advances alternative explanations for what may be read as Biblical allusion (cf. Sura 87 and 53: 37-54) or other acknowledgement of Judeo-Christian textual and cultural antecedents. While Christian legends do find their way into Mohammad's sermons, they by no means predominate. Rather it is the pre-Islamic Arabic legend, whose stylistic characteristics (cf. 178) allow them to be identified, although, as Fück allows, a pre-Islamic literature "sich [...] nicht nachweisen [lässt]"(178).[107] Moreover, within the system of Islamic revelation, biblical legends play only a subordinate role as illustrations. Perhaps most importantly, Fück argues, Mohammed's naïve hope of being recognized as a Prophet by Jews and Christians is the greatest proof of his lack of knowledge of these religions.

In explaining Mohammed's originality, Fück also accounts for the distinction between Meccan and Medinan prophecy. He notes that in the early Meccan period of Islam, the Prophet headed a small, cohesive community in the sense of *Gemeinde*, or face-to-face contact. The close contact of its members with the Prophet obviated legislation. In Medina, to which the community fled during the hegira,[108] on the other hand, the rapid increase in its numbers, its poverty, and the collapse of the tribal system of government used in Medina created a need for social order. This last named factor also meant that, unlike the Meccan aristocracy, which was firmly in place, there was nothing in place in Medina to oppose him.

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[106] Local (Arabian) color or— more metaphorically— an Arabian flavor. Fück mentions Sura 111, 106 and 105 as examples.
[107] Cannot be proven.
[108] This event, occurring in AD 622 marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

The historical perspective of Mohammed's originality opens up Chraïbi's novel to a reading other than hagiographical. Yet the venerable Christian monk, who some thirty years previously had prophesied Mohammed's greatness when he was but a child, sees the adult Mohammed and remarks, "tu es resté humble, à ce que je vois. Humble et angélique, un enfant de quarante ans" (27). On the one hand contact with other religions is emphasized in the text, but that in no way detracts from the originality of the prophecy itself. Indeed, mention of the other religions, and particularly of those with shared traditions (legends, referents) within *L'Homme du Livre* is determined by its Islamic reception, not by the hypotext (source text). Jesus son of Mary is thus "Issa fils de Meryem" (32). "Jésus fils de Marie" is however used by the Christian monk Bahira himself. The narrator also refers to a Christian at another point in the text, as a Nazarene (25). We may therefore conclude that such usage inscribes this novel into a primarily Islamic context, although other communities are given voice through dialogue. Another view would be that the codes, although differing, represent variants of one another, are mutually intelligible, and may coexist peacefully.

Chraïbi's novel is presented as a narration until the point of revelation. The rising action culminates in the command "Lis" (100). Prior to that, Mohammed had been plagued by a series of oneiric visions in which he was able to see both forwards and backwards in time. In this part of the text, in which Mohammed dreams and is visited by visions, there is both first and third person narration in the text. The somnolent Mohammed recounts his oneiric time travel, in which he sees Jesus and Mary, Moses, and Ibn Arabi:

> Quelqu'un me projette vers l'avenir. Quelqu'un que je ne connais pas, que je ne vois pas. Il me guide comme si j'étais aveugle. Il ne parle pas—pas encore: ce n'est pas l'heure. Mais il m'interroge de par sa seule présence. [...] Des amis d'autres peuples, d'autres pays que le mien me rendent visite

là où je suis maintenant, à la croisée du chemin de l'espace et

de celui du temps.[109] (82)

The narration in the paragraph immediately below is however in the third person, and further contextualizes the dream: "Mohammed se remit sur le dos [...] Des fragments de ces rêves inachevés se transmirent à d'autres hommes, en des temps à venir, en des ramifications souterraines et innombrables, sur toute la terre" (83). What is interesting here is the notion of transcendence. Rather than tie Mohammed to a time and a place, this narration takes him out of time, frees him from spatial and temporal constraints. Yet at the same time, the narration is concerned with historical accuracy: "C'était la vingt-septième nuit du mois de Ramadan, vers le milieu d'août de l'an de l'ère chrétienne 610" (92). How then are we to read the paratextual clues that accompany the novel? Firstly, there is the warning that precedes the narrative, cited above. Rather than take Chraïbi at his word, I think it more profitable to consider this within the framework of the novelistic imagination completing as well as complementing other forms of knowledge as suggested by Hutcheon, Scarpetta and Djebar.

Mohammed is transcendent in still another way, however. What appears as a leitmotiv in Fück's article on Mohammed's originality discussed above is the word personality. Indeed, much is made of his personality in *L'Homme du Livre*. The words that recur in the text are "humble" (27, 29),[110] and self-doubt is another concept expressed in various ways: "tant il doutait de sa raison" (23), "le vent du doute et de la déraison" (63), "Suis-je fou? Suis-je possédé des démons? M'a-t-on jeté un mauvais sort?" (68). Part of what makes Mohammed endearing is his reticence, his resistance to prophecy. His agony before accepting the burden is the most lasting impression of *L'Homme du Livre*. His simplicity is described as child-like, and his modesty emphasized. For

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[109] At another point in the text, the notion of time, space and transcendence is evoked: « il se rendit compte qu'il ne disposait que des mots qu'on lui avais appris depuis l'enfance, des mots arabes, vieux, limités dans l'espace et dans le temps – alors que ce qu'il pressentait était au delà des mots (20).

[110] In a comment that recalls Rudi Paret's observations, Schimmel explains, "The Western reader, raised in a centuries-old tradition of aversion to Muhammad, will probably be surprised to learn that in all reports the quality that is particularly emphasized in the Prophet is his humility and kindness" (1985: 46).

Jean-Michel Hirt, psychoanalyst and specialist of Islam, the three principal personalities of the monotheistic religions Moses, Jesus and Mohammed are confronted with the desire to see God and to make him seen by others, in essence to convince others of the truth of their missions. This desire is doomed to failure, however, because

> Ni la vision de Dieu, ni la raison divine ne sauraient entièrement aux normes de la vision et de la humaine, ce que l'islam a théorisé en distinguant dans le Coran des versets *muhkham*, dont le sens est disponible à l'intelligence et des versets *mutashâ-bih*, dont seul Dieu connaît le sens. (31)

To return to how Mohammed must feel in the situation of prophecy, Hirt notes that there is "[r]ien de rassurant dans une telle expérience" (33). What comes across in the narration of *L'Homme du Livre* is the profound empathy toward Mohammed, whose doubts and agony the reader shares.

THE ORIGIN

The above quotations from *L'Homme du Livre* suggest transcendence on the one hand, and temporal rootedness (the precise dating of events, the concern with present needs) on the other. There is also the brief epilogue placed after the narrative: « L'Islam redeviendra l'étranger qu'il a commencé par être. » --Prophète Mohammed ». Far from being a particularity of Chraïbi's novel, it is a problem that lies at the heart of Islam, and one that the other novels also engage with. Fethi Benslama explains

> Rappelons, en effet, que la prédication du fondateur de l'islam s'affirme dès le début comme un retour à la religion première d'Abraham, que le judaïsme et le christianisme aurait transformée en trahissant sa lettre. Aussi en appelle-t-il à une réconciliation monothéiste universelle autour de l'acte de renoncement du père et au sacrifice du fils. À cela vient s'ajouter le fait que Muhammad s'annonce comme le sceau des prophètes, le terme dernier d'une chaîne qui

commence avec Adam. Le retour à l'origine se double donc d'une clôture de l'histoire monothéiste. L'islam se propose comme la fin qui reprend le commencement, comme un recommencement qui infinitise l'origine (Benslama *Psychanalyse* 55).

With historicism, we therefore have an element of *L'Homme du Livre* that occurs in *The Satanic Verses* as well as *Loin de Médine*. In each of these novels, there is the issue of historical consciousness and at some point there is the notion of return, or of straying from the original path, which is raised. As we have seen, in *The Satanic Verses* it is Desh the Imam, the exiled Muslim cleric, who wants to halt history. The Imam's thoughts on the current state of his homeland revolve around the notion of history, which he refers to as an intoxicant, and "the creation and possession of the devil" and "a deviation from the Path" (217).

As for *Loin de Médine*, it could be said that straying from Mohammed's path in Muslim interpretation is the novel's entire premise, but to recall the "avant-propos" that begins the book,

Musulmanes ou non musulmanes [...] elles trouent, par brefs instants, mais dans des circonstances ineffaçables, le texte des chroniqueurs qui écrivent un siècle et demi deux siècles après les faits. Transmetteurs certes scrupuleux mais naturellement portés, par habitude déjà à occulter toute présence féminine...

Dès lors la fiction, comblant les béances de la mémoire collective, s'est révélée nécessaire pour la mise en espace que j'ai tenté là, pour rétablir la durée de ces jours que j'ai désiré habiter ... (Djebar 5)

Just above that quotation, the narrator speaks of "un lieu de pouvoir temporel qui s'écarte irréversiblement de sa lumière originelle" (5). The former quotation calls the historicity into question, whereas the latter is rather a starting point that serves as a defining moment. In the novel, the same temporal relation is also invoked:

Quatorze siècles se sont écoulés: il semble qu'aucun père depuis, du moins dans la communauté de l'Islam, plus aucun

père ne se dressa, ne développa une défense aussi ardente
pour la quiétude de sa fille! (68-69)

While the psychoanalyst Benslama and historian Laroui both insist
that the preoccupation with origins is peculiar to Islam, de Certeau's
reflection on historical writing reveals another important aspect of
history's relation to time. He argues that "La première contrainte du
discours consiste à prescrire pour commencement ce qui, en réalité, est
un point d'arrivée, et même un point de fuite dans la recherché" (102).
In essence, what determines the history is the narrative present of the
historiographer. In a remark that calls to mind Genette's *Figures III,*[111]
de Certeau claims that "toute historiographie pose un temps des choses
comme le contre-point et la condition d'un temps discursif (le discours
« avance » plus ou moins vite, il s'attarde ou se précipite" (104). He
goes on to enumerate other decisive factors that influence the resulting
history:

> En fait, l'écriture historienne— ou historiographie – reste
> contrôlée par les pratiques dont elle résulte; bien plus, elle
> est elle-même une pratique sociale qui fixe à son lecteur une
> place bien déterminée en redistribuant l'espace des
> références symboliques et en imposant ainsi une « leçon »;
> elle est didactique et magistérielle. (102)

If we recall the epigraph in which Michelet is quoted as resuscitating
dead history, then the question it calls to mind is what precise
conditions would make this resuscitation necessary.

In his effort to define what is particular to an Islamic conception of
history, Laroui considers what western scholars of Islam and Islamic
societies have said about it. In "Histoire et orientalisme", he
convincingly argues that much of what is deemed Islamic
historiography, if it had been written by a Christian, would never have
been called Christian historiography. While acknowledging the
perceived limitations of Islamic history, Laroui makes a case for there
always having been alternate views of history within Islam. Having
said that, we would do well to recall the process during which theology

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[111] This constitutes one of the defining texts of structuralist narratology.

has taken the upper hand described in the sub-section on historicity above. As Laroui argued, this development has resulted in meaning supplanting fact, and a subsequent devaluation of fact.

Laroui further claims that with regard to history, historicism takes the form of an ideology of action. Like Ludwig von Mises, he refers to it as praxiology, hence its connection to reformism. In this context any idea of the absolute, of an ultimate finality or closure must be banished; in such conditions, one can only conceive of stages, of provisional conclusions, limited ends, that reform, taking history as a guide and analogy as method, allows one to attain (Laroui 126). Laroui explains that

> von Mises applique l'historicisme à la société, domaine de la rationalité pratique et donc de la vérité conditionnelle, alors que Karl Popper a en vue [...] l'historicisme appliqué à la religion, à la science, à l'art. Mais appliquer l'historicisme au domaine de l'absolu, c'est se perdre dans des contradictions sans fin, à moins de finir par se noyer soi-même dans l'absolu, procéder à ce que j'appelle un retournement (*qalba*). (127)

Laroui warns against using the hadith as the source of society, which he sees as a process of reductions. Another important distinction that Laroui insists on is that between faith (iman) and rite (islam), between what is felt in the depths of one's soul, by definition individual, and what is shared—[such as the] recitation of the hadith, for oneself and for others. Another reduction would be the identification of the hadith (ethics) to the *fiqh* (public morals). He concludes that interpreting the Koran with hadith alone, using it to supplant the *fiqh* in its diversity, is to negate history after having used it, closing what until then had been open and from which one had benefited. Among the wider repercussions of these processes of simplification and reduction, Laroui says that using hadith alone to interpret the Koran means a rejection of the personal experience of each individual, the subsequent suppression of Sufism, not only in its popular and intellectual derivatives, but in its very principle, and thus, with one fell swoop, the result of history as

development, localization, and specification of the Law is erased (cf. 129).

Laroui helps us to understand that historicism, far from being an issue between Islamic discourse and a presumed Other, already occurs within Islamic scholarship and theology. Furthermore, the contradictions he remarks in this discussion are of the same order of Kracauer's reading of Collingwood and Croce in "Present Interest". They are universal concerns at the heart of any attempted historical perspective.

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

I want to investigate the premise put forward by Al-cAzm, who, in his insightful reading of *The Satanic Verses* remarks that what is really at issue in this novel is modernity. A number of possible definitions exist for a term such as modernity, and chief among the pitfalls awaiting those who attempt to define the concept is the charge of eurocentrism. Al-cAzm argues strongly against this charge, and feminist scholar Haideh Moghissi also indicates that the relativism of postmodernism and cultural pluralism have benefited Islamic fundamentalists, and all those who militate against the democratization of Islamic societies. What concept of modernity is applicable to this study? To what extent is a secular European experience comparable to that of societies elsewhere?

Jürgen Habermas, an acknowledged authority in discourses of modernity, traces this definition of modernity as secularisation back to Weber, and ultimately to Hegel.[112] In the first case, modernity is a process resulting in the development of autonomous spheres of value as opposed to a dominant theological discourse. Social anthropologist Ernest Gellner (75ff., 80) would add that modernity is the rise of rational inquiry. Spivak on the other hand remarks:

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[112] The final chapter of Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* is entitled "The Modern Time" and begins "The period of Spirit conscious that it is free, inasmuch as it wills the True, the Eternal—that which is in and for itself Universal" (412). Kracauer on the other hand disparagingly notes, "Whenever philosophers speculate on 'the idea of history,' Hegel's 'world spirit' pops up from behind the bushes" (64).

> Given that the story of Christianity to secularism is the only
> story around, we tend to feel quite justified when we claim, in
> praise or dispraise of reason, that reason is European. The
> peculiarity of historical narratives [...] is that it is made up of
> contingencies which can also be read as Laws of Motion. I
> would like to suggest that it is the reading of one of those
> contingencies—the   fit   between   monopoly   capitalist
> imperialism and monotheist Christianity-into-secularism—as
> a Law of Motion that makes us presuppose that Reason itself
> is European. ("Reading *The Satanic Verses*" 240)

Gellner would probably add the rejoinder that although rational inquiry developed in European societies, it constitutes "an independent reality [...] able to reach beyond the bounds of any one cultural cocoon, and attain forms of knowledge valid for all" (75). To return to Habermas, he further says, however, that Hegel was the first philosopher to develop a clear concept of modernity. As a consequence of epochal events such as the Reformation, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution (Habermas 17), a new consciousness of the historical process came into being. Indeed, History as a collective singular was a novum in the 18th century, as were dynamic concepts such as progress, emancipation, development, crisis, and Zeitgeist (7).   With reference to Schelling's *Philosophy of the Ages of the World*, Habermas further explains that "the secular concept of modernity expresses the conception that the future has already begun: it is the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future" (5).

Modernity describes however not only a state of mind and corresponding state of social development. It lends itself to discourses, as Ashis Nandy has demonstrated with reference to South Asian examples.[113]   Yet for Fethi Benslama, there is a difference between modernism and modernization, with the former being the style, the discursive, and the latter the material and substantive. Let us recall Gellner's argument that rationalism, the way of thinking and

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[113] A number of Nandy's publications make this point, but *Science, hegemony and violence : a requiem for modernity,* which he edited, would give an idea of his work.

approaching problems that defines modernity, may have originated in one society, but is universally adaptable. Fethi Benslama takes up the argument with the observation that a certain form of discourse, which he calls the national-theo-scientific, has taken hold in some Islamic societies. The Algerian FIS (*Front du salut islamique*) is however considered archetypical. An example of the religious melding into the national is the Koranic designation *shaheed* (martyr) adopted in Algeria for those who died in the war of national liberation (cf. *Psychanalyse* 71), yet this is not the only discursive shift. What Benslama further notes is that "le scientisme qui infiltre le discours religieux est un fait massif, comme si la religion était devenue insuffisante à garantir, pour les croyants, l'ordre de vérité de jadis" (*Psychanalsye* 70); and that

> L'idéologie islamiste n'est pas un phénomène intelligible dans les limites de ce qu'on appelle habituellement la religion; il s'agit d'une mixtion composée à la fois de théologie, de scientisme et de populisme. Seul l'élément de référence à la loi théologique (*chari'a*) est proprement islamique. (72)

Yet different systems of knowledge are not always invoked for political purposes, as we can see in the excerpt with Desh the Imam above, what is resolutely refuted are spheres of knowing apart from the theological. Rather, faith is held to be coterminous with knowledge. While the narrative of Mohammed's life has been of use to Muslims for establishing an earlier epochal change (in the seventh century AD), the hegemonic theological discourse has, for a number of fields, signified arrested development. Instead of looking forward for possible answers in autonomous spheres of knowledge, one form of the so-called Islamist[114] discourse such as it is exemplified in Desh the Imam insists

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[114] Benslama explains «Jusqu'à ces dernières années, le mot « islamisme » en désignait dans la langue française, et cela depuis le XVIIe siècle, la religion islamique en tant que telle, à l'instar du judaïsme et du christianisme. Depuis que l'usage s'est répandu d'appeler ainsi l'activisme et l'extrémisme, *il n'y a plus de terme neutre pour nommer la religion de l'islam stricto sensu.* Reste le mot « islam », qui a l'inconvénient d'être un fourre-tout désignant à la fois l'ensemble des peuples qui professent cette confession, la civilisation et la religion. C'est comme si l'on ne pouvait plus faire de distinction la langue entre judaïsme et judéité, entre christianisme et chrétienté (*Psychanalyse* 75). Perhaps "islamité"? The italics are Benslama's.

on a backward glance, a stance indicative of a lack of historical consciousness. According to Benedict Anderson, theorist of collective identity and author of *Imagined Communities*, there once existed "a concept of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical" (36). He goes on to say that

> The slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties, first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, 'discoveries' (social and scientific) and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a hard wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. (36)

Desh's response is to institute a theocracy and to halt the march of time. This is of course only one possible response to the challenges of the late twentieth century. As I have argued, the allusions to the Shah of Iran's secret service make Desh most probably an allegory of the Ayatollah Khomeini. What is certain is that attempts to found political orders were not limited to Iran, as Assia Djebar has gone on record as writing *Loin de Médine* in response to Algeria's growing "Islamist" party. Despite evident differences in vision, some cultural, others theological or historical, between an Iranian Shiite movement and an Algerian Sunni one, they share a common ancestry. Both invoke a glorious Islamic past beginning with the rule of Mohammed the Prophet and serving as a timeless model for society.

Given the comments quoted by Benslama above, it is not at all surprising that he would, with reference to *Hamlet*, claim that for contemporary Islam, "the time is out of joint." He says that in "le mouvement islamiste et sa croyance dans la perfection de l'origine, il n'y a pas de futur utopique, il n'y a pas d'horizon d'où surgirait une quelconque venue puisque le meilleur est advenu, l'apothéose a déjà eu lieu" (52). Sociologist Gassan Ascha, author of *Du statut inférieur de la femme en Islam*, also rejects the Golden Age myth.

Thinking about history, as we have seen, necessarily involves thinking about time. What concept of temporality can hold true, if on the one hand the present includes the past, as a number of theorists[115] have observed, and, on the other, modernity opens itself up to the future. Throughout this chapter I have been equally concerned with form and content. If either formalism or structuralism can be applied to the form that history or fiction takes, perhaps it would not be amiss to compare historical consciousness to the grammatical category of aspect. Aspect describes temporal relations of verbs with respect to inception, duration and completion. If we take into account the likelihood of present interest influencing historical narratives, then *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre* correspond to the present perfect, the past tense with most relevance to the present. Put another way, they invite us to read history not simply as events of long ago, but incidents since whose occurrence we continue to reflect on, and whose repercussions we continue to feel. There is a passage of *L'Homme du Livre* that evokes this forcefully: Mohammed, on the verge of reciting for the first time, thinks to himself

> [...] il savait à présent [...] qu'il serait responsable de la vie des autres, qu'il serait leur intermédiaire ; comme il savait de science certaine qu'un avenir se construisait presque toujours sur des ruines, des guerres et des larmes, et qu'il suffirait de si peu de chose en vérité pour qu'une faiblesse humaine, à commencer par la sienne propre, se transformât un jour en force triomphante. (101)

Just as the present encompasses the past, so too does the past reverberate still in the present. Chraïbi's novel is written in a forward-looking past, and, as its closing epigraph "*L'Islam rediviendra l'étranger qu'il a commence par être,*"[116] makes clear, inscribed in the notion of the constant renewal of Islam.

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[115] In addition to those quoted above, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has stated "Nul moderne, de fait, ne se constitue sans inventer un rapport à l'ancien" (90, Benslama 1994: 84).
[116] Attributed to the Prophet Mohammed. The italics are Chraïbi's.

CONCLUSIONS

Let us recall the premises with which this chapter began, one of them being that each novel in some way makes the past relevant to the present. This is not only done in the narration, but has been supplemented by authorial commentary. Whether it is the concern with history that is a defining characteristic of the postmodern aesthetic, or history as a form of knowledge situated on a continuum with the novel, or as present interest, it is an aspect shared by *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*. Another premise was that these novels reveal something about the relation between fact and fiction. The references to theorists of history such as Hayden White, Michel de Certeau and Siegfried Kracauer clearly show the extent to which subjectivity informs historical writing.

The question remains of how best to portion the contested terrain between the religious and the secular, particularly when not only knowledge, but also power, are fought over. Like Moghissi and Al-ᶜAzm, Gellner insists that the only way forward is by rational inquiry, which necessarily precludes any privileged or a priori truths. Instead emphasis is placed on procedural principles of knowledge. Al-ᶜAzm's questions about the historical Mohammed are the product of rational inquiry, yet, as we have seen, history conceived as a positivistic discipline cannot answer them all. With the help of the novelistic imagination, however, we can begin to find answers to such questions.

As far as knowledge about history is concerned, the satire *The Satanic Verses* highlights teleological Islamic history. Yet the sceptical narrator in *Loin de Médine'* does much the same, and time and again demonstrates that the recorded history handed down by Tabari and other historians is at best, engaged and subjective, particularly when recounting the deeds pertaining to female protagonists. As for Chraïbi, the relation to history is more complex, not the least because he posits a radical division between fiction on the one hand and history on the other. Yet Chraïbi's *narrato*r invokes Islam as progressive for his time (*L'Homme du Livre* 24, discussed in the previous chapter on intertextuality), which goes some way to disproving the *author*'s

separation of fiction and historical writing in the initial epigraph. It would be all too easy to resolve the matter by establishing a hierarchy between author and narrator, but I think that it is enough for my purposes to point out the contradiction.

Those discussing the early history of Islam, whether from such varied provenance as Fück and Rodinson, remark the limits of factual knowledge represented by evidence. Considering the importance of personality, Mohammed's personality, to this early history, Fück also sees a limit to what can be accomplished by rational scholarship. That is where the literary imagination of the historian, invoked by White and Scarpetta, and illustrated by *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine*, informs an investigation of the past. As Hutcheon has argued, and as my comparison of Rodinson and Rushdie has shown, the historian and novelist do indeed work in tandem.

CHAPTER THREE: GENDER

As we have seen in the previous chapters, gender has often been at the nexus of the intertextuality of *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*. Similarly, to the extent that historiography and historicism have been at issue, they have also highlighted differences of gender. For example, a crucial question to any reflection on Islamic history is how we know what we know. *Loin de Médine* investigates history as a largely male construction that is at times reflective of self-interest and political calculation.[117] It therefore seems only fair to devote a whole chapter to various considerations concerned with gender. My use of this term owes much to Shefali Moitra's explanation of "the sex/gender system", in which she explains

> Sex has not only been variously interpreted as a biological
> category at times sex has also been understood as a product
> of gender. That means that the meaning of sex and sexuality
> has been constituted by the way gender has been constructed.
> It has been argued that there is a close connection between
> our bodily habits and our culture. If culture determines our
> understanding of our body then there can be no prediscursive
> sex. This account leads to a minimalist account of biology.
> (24)

What I take from Moitra is the notion that there is no clear distinction between the supposedly purely biological category sex, and the supposedly performative gender. In the early Islamic and pre-Islamic cultures represented in *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*, the interplay of biology and social roles is often emphasized. This occurs either through highlighting customs, legal constraints or freedoms, and hypotheses, as well representing spiritualism or symbolism with wider implications for gender relations. While I think that each novel in some way feminizes, or attempts to feminize the history of early Islam by being more inclusive, I have opted

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[117] As Bonnie G. Smith demonstrates in *The Gender of History*, western academic history has been also been skewed in gendered terms.

for the more neutral term gender. It is also the more inclusive term, because it addresses the relationship between men and women without focusing on one gender to the exclusion of the other.

In their introduction to *La Virilité en Islam*, Fethi Benslama and Nadia Tazi observe

> C'est en terre d'Islam aujourd'hui, que l'on observe le plus massivement, à la fois *la valence différentielle des sexes*, pour reprendre l'expression de Françoise Héritier,[118] et en même temps son impensé radical : l'adhésion aveugle de la plupart de ces sociétés à un ordre androcentré et la perpétuation d'un droit et d'une culture sexistes. C'est là, également, le long de cette ligne de séparation des hommes et des femmes, que la crise se noue le plus violemment. (5)

They go on to note the preoccupation with women, to the exclusion of what they call "l'affirmation viriliste de l'homme, de ses déterminants sociaux et psychiques, puissamment noués par la structure théo-anthropologique" (6). I will therefore attempt to reflect on this question as a dynamic relationship, possibly of unequals, but not simply from a perspective of victimization. My contention is that, although these novels predate this study, they reflect its concerns in a number of ways. The preceding chapters have given some indication both of the formal complexity and the metafictional elements of these novels. In this chapter, on the other hand, my argumentation will give more attention to content, and less to form.

It is no coincidence that Fatima Mernissi has often been used as a reference point for Djebar's fictional work.[119] The two are of the same generation, products of colonial and international education, and perhaps most importantly, are aware, as educated women in Morocco and Algeria, of being statistically improbable.[120] Their efforts at redress are undertaken in the service of their female compatriots, who are legally, politically, and sociologically disadvantaged. Because much of

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[118] Author of a 1996 publication, *Masculin, Féminin*.

[119] Carine Bourget, Miriam Cooke , Patricia Geesy, and Sonia Lee.

[120] Cf. Fatima Mernissi, *Le monde n'est pas un harem. Paroles de femmes du Maroc*. The introduction is particularly revealing in this sense.

the discrimination has roots in precepts attributed to the Koran and *hadith*, both have undertaken investigations, using a combination of strategies to deconstruct the status quo of androcentric Islam in the late twentieth century.

As Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi explains, some hadith are judged erroneous owing to the political/historical context from which they stem. The task of verification and grammatical commentary is an arduous one, and even Tabari has been considered 'wide of the mark' on some of his judgments, as in the case of conjugal disobedience, the acclaimed Tabari, after much philological and legal study, considered that tying up the woman would be the correct course of action (cf. Mernissi 202).

What both Djebar and Mernissi do is to show that liberal interpretations were available to scholars, who, for reasons more political than religious, have led the community astray. One example of a liberal interpretation being available, but not being used, is the dispossession of Fatima, the favorite daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, which indicates that injustice did in fact exist in this era, moreover, that it had its roots in the maxims of Mohammed. Fatima's dispossession is a scene of importance in both *Loin de Médine* and its subsequent operatic adaptation *Figlie di Ismaele*. Because Mohammed has said that one does not inherit from a Prophet, the executors of his 'testament' do not ensure the transferal of his worldly goods to his only surviving daughter. Owing to this dispossession, which she vigorously opposes, Fatima, for generations or Muslims, will become a byword for martyrdom. I will have occasion to return to this topic and scene below.

Although their works indicate that excessively literal readings or applications of Koranic precepts are incompatible with the modern condition, as equality is incompatible with tutelage, I have some reservations as to the effectiveness of the method employed by Djebar and Mernissi. As Mernissi explains in *Le Harem politique*,[121] in which she investigates the prejudice against female leadership originating in the Koran, using the instruments of Islamic scholars to disprove the

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[121] *The Veil and the Male Elite*. (cf. Geesey 44).

claims of so-called Islamic fundamentalists is an arduous task, arcane and time-consuming. Whereas it may help to clarify theological disputes, it may not, however, go quite far enough. As Gassan Ascha has argued in *Du statut inférieur de la femme en Islam*, there is something fundamentally wrong about using the Prophet as an example. For one thing, the assumption of a 'Golden Age', in which social justice prevailed, is a fallacy. Moreover, the effort to reconcile Islam with modernity by indicating the extent to which the former is applicable to the latter is unscientific. In a forceful comparison to the physical sciences, Ascha likens the efforts of modern day social scientists and social critics to expecting enlightenment on electricity from the Koran.

IDENTITY

While positions such as Gassan Ascha's appear to provide a certain epistemological clarity, it may be at the price of fairness to these authors and others like them, for, if their efforts to articulate social justice for women within the context of Islamic discourse are entirely discounted, the resulting picture of Islam is rather extreme. It seems anachronistic. Do these positions in fact constitute a false dichotomy? That is to say that between a traditionalist Islamist discourse, and radical deconstructionist feminist proposals, there can be no viable middle ground. Is it possible, however, to be at once Islamic and feminist? And, if so, does Assia Djebar's work correspond to such a new reality?

I realize that if I do not to some extent resist this tendency, a good deal of the complexity of Djebar's work may be lost on me. The Norwegian Muslim convert and Islamic scholar Anne-Sofie Roald remarks that

> Many Muslims view worldly and religious concerns as closely
> interwoven, yet researchers could miss the religious
> dimension which is important to take into account in the
> analysis of Muslim societies. This applies particularly to

> researchers who come from those parts of the world where
> the mainstream ideology demands a separation of church
> and state. (Roald 9)

As a result, there is a danger of reducing discussions to "socio-political phenomena" (Roald 9).   I will therefore avail myself of a theorization and reading of Djebar that place her in a context of Arab women struggling to come to terms with the same issues of identity.

The recent study by Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature*, which deals extensively with Djebar's fiction, may help us to theorize these possibilities more adequately. Her socio-historical contextualizing of women's writing in the Arabic world indicates that Islamic discourse has become so prevalent that it is inevitable.

In her investigation of the writings by Muslim women as diverse as Djebar, Nawal El Sadaawi, and Zaynab al-Ghazali, Cooke makes many a fine distinction that may be of use to us in this endeavour. Let us first refer to the practical definition of feminism that she offers.

> Feminism is much more than an ideology driving organized
> political movements. It is, above all, an epistemology. It is
> an attitude, a frame of mind that highlights the role of gender
> in understanding the organization of society. Feminism
> provides analytical tools for assessing how expectations for
> men's and women's behaviour have led to unjust situations,
> particularly but not necessarily only for women. Feminism
> seeks justice wherever it can find it. (Cooke ix-x)

For all the suppleness of this definition, it bears noticing that Cooke's usage of the term is not always in accordance with that of the writers themselves. Some whom Cooke would qualify as such would reject the term, which is often seen as specifically Western. They are rather, within precarious political and historical contexts, at pains to describe themselves as good Muslim women in an ongoing tradition. Cooke explains, "It is important to note that acquiescence with traditional gender roles and behavioral expectations at one moment does not necessarily contradict resistance at another—and sometimes even the

same moment" (Cooke xii). How can that be? The answer lies in a practice known as multiple critique, which allows the Islamic feminist to form different strategic alliances, at times with traditionalist Muslim men, on the topic of Western hegemony, for example, or Third World, or broader gender-based alliances, with the possible inclusion of Western feminists. "Islamic feminism," she argues, "is not an identity but rather one of many possible speaking positions" (Cooke xxvii). She goes on to say

> Writing this book has taught me how problematic is the notion of a single, unified identity, whether ascribed or achieved. Examining Arab women's rhetorical strategies has shown me how we all belong to multiple communities simultaneously. This multiple belonging does not lead to a pathological condition. [...] Those with whom we identify at some point may allow us a platform from which to speak. Sometimes not. (xxviii-xxix)

Cooke's theorization of identity is in keeping with contemporary research in the social sciences. In many respects it echoes Roald's own theorizing of identity.[122] It has often been difficult for Western observers, however, to recognize that Muslim women, while struggling for social justice, nonetheless want to remain Muslims.

Djebar's attempt to inscribe woman into the grand narrative of Islam is telling. If the very real participation of women in historical events is suppressed, and if their accounts have received short shrift, then there is an injustice to be rectified. Her questioning of history reveals an at best androcentric, and, in the worst case, clearly misogynist Islamic historiography. Certainly, both in the Prologue to *Loin de Médine* or preface to *Figlie di Ismaele* we are prepared as

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[122] There is a perhaps a notable difference of style. Roald's contribution is better documented. Her comments indicate that identity might comprise the whole gamut of psychological, spiritual and material influences. At certain times or places particular issues are at stake which crystallize around the question of identity. Current controversies involve questions of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion. The question of identity becomes a question of distinctiveness or oppositionality, i.e. that which makes a person or a group distinctive from other persons or groups or that which makes them oppositional to others. (Rappoport 12, Roald 12).

readers for questioning, if not contestation, of orthodox historiography as we have seen above.

There is no shortage of ways in which to address gender and Islam in these novels. Among them is the use of prominent, iconic or influential female characters that have important roles in the plot corresponding to events in Islamic history. Another possibility is discourse analysis from a female perspective. Motifs and symbolism, as well as spirituality, can also be factors that help to think about gender relations in a new light. They are all to some degree in evidence in *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine*, and *L'Homme du Livre*.

While *The Satanic Verses* invokes women's equality in a number of ways, the most memorable is perhaps a discussion between Baal and Salman in "Return to Jahilia", the post-hegira phase of the allegory that presents Islam, or "Submission" as hegemonic, rule-driven, and perhaps most importantly, considering that it is portrayed by its opponents, vengeful. In a drunken bout with Baal, the poet of Jahilia, Salman the Persian, formerly a companion of Mahound, explains the eventual parting of the ways between himself and the Messenger:

> What finally finished Salman with Mahound; the question of the women; and of the Satanic verses. Listen, I'm no gossip, Salman drunkenly confided, but after his wife's death Mahound was no angel, you understand my meaning. But in Yathrib he almost met his match. Those women up there: they turned his beard half-white in a year. The point about our Prophet, my dear Baal, is that he didn't like his women to answer back, he went for mothers and daughters, think of his first wife and then Ayesha: too old and too young, his two loves. He didn't like to pick on someone his own size. But in Yathrib the women are different, you don't know, here in Jahilia you're used to ordering your females about but up there they won't put up with it. When a man gets married he goes to live with his wife's people! Imagine! Shocking, isn't it? And throughout the marriage the wife keeps her own tent. If she wants to get rid of her husband she turns the tent

round to face in the opposite direction, so that when he
comes to her he finds fabric where the door should be, and
that's that, he's out, divorced, not a thing he can do about it.
Well, our girls were beginning to go for that type of thing,
getting who knows what sort of ideas into their heads, so at
once, bang, out comes the rule book, the angel starts pouring
out rules about what women mustn't do, he starts forcing
them back into the docile attitudes the Prophet prefers,
docile or maternal, walking three steps behind or sitting at
home being wise and waxing their chins. How the women of
Yathrib laughed at the faithful, I swear, but that man is a
magician, nobody could resist his charm; the faithful women
did as he ordered them. They Submitted: he was offering
them Paradise, after all. (378-79)

Salman had previously remarked that the Messenger's recitation
increasingly resembled a book of rules. He had "got to wondering what
manner of God this was that sounded so much like a businessman"
(376). Implicitly he is championing freedom and equality, a situation in
which the women and men would be free to behave as they wished, and
no one sex would have power over the other. This critique, which
mostly occurs in the thoughts and words of Salman, is not just altruism,
however, for it soon becomes clear that the social critic is also a
sensualist.[123] "The sexual aspect of Submission exercised the Persian a
good deal" (399). Salman's sexuality is not of a disinterested nature nor
is it purely social commentary, but rather obsessive and obviously
unhealthy, all the more so because he is obsessed with Mahound's
young wife. The one aspect of sexuality in the new religion that Salman
finds so perturbing is that Mahound allows himself an unlimited
number of sexual partners. For the rest of the population, on the other
hand, a strict code of conduct is imposed. We must also allow that
Salman psychoanalyses the prophet, repeatedly mentioning that his
wives are either maternal or filial, with significant discrepancies

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[123] For another example of this combination, see Wollstonecraft's criticism of
Rousseau in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

between the ages, and the purported dynamic, of the spouses. Yet if we recall chapter one, and the citation quoted in *L'Homme du Livre*, it becomes clear that this rant by a drunken former companion is a decidedly one-sided depiction of gender relations.

Hind, wife of Abu Simbel, represents female power in Jahilia. Through her family he has acquired the guardianship of the holy Kaaba in which the three patron goddesses of Jahilia are worshipped. In the struggle against Mahound, she fights for polytheism. A further complication is that Hind's brothers are killed by Mahound, so it is possible that she is struggling for revenge, for her beliefs, for power, or for all three. Hind is not only an adulteress, but a polyandrous adulteress. Among her lovers are Mahound and Baal. I mention Hind in this instance to highlight the possibilities available to some women in Jahilia, whereas the order instituted after Mahound is patriarchal, and if at all polygamous, only in the form of polygyny. Hassumani convincingly argues

> Although the pre-Islamic moment is not romanticized by Rushdie (he recognizes the example of a fully operating dominating patriarchy within it), the idea of multiple gods with a female god at the lead exists in a preferred space which tolerates ambivalence in a way that Mahound's Islam cannot. A pre-Islamic Jahilia celebrates the patriarch Ibrahim's visit to the valley, rather than his wife Hagar's whom he abandoned there along with their son, Ismail, to perish in the heat of the desert, all for the sake of a male deity. It is Hagar who survives, in spite of the injustice done to her, yet the people of Jahilia do not celebrate her memory, rather they celebrate the honor done their valley by the visit of Ibrahim. (71)

Yet for all that, not everyone is convinced that *The Satanic Verses* is truly "feminist" in its intent and execution. Most notably, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has remarked,

> The story of Mahound in *The Satanic Verses* is a story of negotiation in the name of woman. [...] One of the most

interesting features about much of Rushdie's work is his anxiety to write woman into the narrative of history. Here again we have to record an honorable failure. (223)

Spivak establishes this judgment by reviewing the principal characters in the novel as a whole, most of whom are male. Despite the presence of such admirable characters as Zeeny Vakil, who is the protagonist Saladin Chamcha's mentor and partner, the role of women in what could be termed the *économie du récit*, is ancillary. Spivak further explains that the narrative develops "within a gender code that is never opened up, never questioned, in this book where so much is called into question, so much is reinscribed" (223). Yet it is possible that too much has been made of the expression "an honourable failure", because Spivak nonetheless concedes what, for want of a better term, could be called "feminist intention": [...] "it must be acknowledged that in Mahound, we hear the satanic verses inspired by possible *female* gods"[124] (Spivak 224). As for Ambreen Hai, who investigates gender relations in Rushdie's major novels, she believes that in *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie suggests

> [...] grotesquely ominous female figures such as Hind, Allat, and the Empress Ayesha are precisely misogynistically demonized oppositions constructed by the totalising zeal of Mahound, Allah, and the Imam respectively, to which binarisms his paradigm of the prophet Ayesha provides the disturbing alternative, the third term inducing crisis. If Mahound's youngest wife, Ayesha, as protofeminist questions Mahound's polygamy, Salman the scribe suggests subversively that she is engineered into a compromised silence by the strategic arrival of Quranic Verses (Rushdie 386-87, Hai 39).[125]

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[124] Italics are in the original.

[125] A remark made by Hassumani is also balanced, although appreciative of the implications of gender in *The Satanic Verses*: Mahound begins the process of mythmaking by creating Islam. Ayesha carries on this tradition by believing his construct to be reality and later by validating her dreams of Gibreel. The individuals who believe in her "creation" add yet another layer to the fiction of Islam. Thus each of the three Islam dreams (Mahound/The Imam/Ayesha) [is] "false" in that they are

Bearing in mind the previous chapters on intertextuality and history, the novel consistently questions phallocentrism in religion and in historiography.   Let us recall the manner in which the so-called satanic verses were repudiated: "'Shall he have daughters and you sons?' Mahound recites. 'That would be a fine division!'" (127).   This was however a quotation that in Dawood's translation of the Koran was much more contemptuous, more suggestive of having daughters instead of sons being lower in value.   Yet for all that, when Salman the Persian claims "women" and "the satanic verses" as the reason for his parting of the ways with Mahound, he is in essence invoking women twice, because the repudiation of female deities has undeniably misogynist undertones.   If we look elsewhere in the Koran, we see that while *The Satanic Verses* may not have spared the Prophet, it was sparing in its use of Koranic quotation.   A case in point is the sura "Ornaments of Gold" (43: 12-15):

> Yet they [the Meccans] assign to him offspring from among His servants. Surely man is monstrously ungrateful. Would God choose daughters for Himself and sons for you alone?[126]

> Yet when a new-born girl is announced to one of them his countenance darkens and he is filled with gloom. Would they ascribe to God females who adorn themselves with trinkets and are powerless in disputation?

It is hard to explain how women's adornment and purported inability to reason can be accounted for other than to say there is a clear misogynist tone.

Chapter one discussed the koranic quotation ("The Cessation", sura 81) found in *L'Homme du Livre* claiming that Islam, which championed the right to life of infant girls, was revolutionary for its

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constructed by their major players. Each dream ends in death and destruction. By writing these episodes as Gibreel's dreams and then by exposing their "artificial" nature even further, Rushdie represents Islam as a rigid, male-dominated, constructed myth (75).

[126] Dawood explains in a footnote that "The pagan Arabs believed that the angels, and their own goddesses, were daughters of Allah".

time. It also appears in the "Mahound" section of *The Satanic Verses*, but with radically different implications:

> [Khadija, Mahound's first wife] recalls his excitability: the passion with which he'd argue, all night if necessary, that the old nomadic times had been better than this city of gold where people exposed their baby daughters in the wilderness. In the old tribes even the poorest orphan would be cared for. God is in the desert, he'd say, not here in this miscarriage of a place. (121)

What occurs in this narration is that what is widely seen as an Islamic novum is taken out of the sphere of religion. Instead of contrasting Islamic versus pagan value-systems, the opposition is expressed in geographic and cultural terms. It is emptied of its Islamic component, and simply becomes a Meccan oddity. The question arises as to whether the practice was even representative, or how widely it was practiced. For one specialist of gender in Islam, "The practice of infanticide, apparently confined to girls, suggests a belief that females were flawed, expendable" (Ahmed 41; cf. Koran 16:58-61). Concerning the correct interpretation of the abolishment of female infanticide, Ahmed disputes that

> the argument made by some Islamists, that Islam's banning of infanticide established the fact that Islam improved the position of women in all respects, seems both inaccurate and simplistic. In the first place, the situation of women appears to have varied among the different communities of Arabia. (42)

There is therefore a limit to what Chraïbi proclaims as revolutionary and Rushdie's culturalist representation of on the other hand, has its merits to the extent that it acknowledges a diversity of practices.

We have considered the extent to which *The Satanic Verses*, taken as whole, may or may not inscribe woman into the centre of the narrative. I am however principally concerned with the novel as a Mohammed palimpsest, and believe that still more needs to be said about Part VI, "Return to Jahilia". To what extent can it be said to

question or challenge patriarchy? Al-ᶜAzm argues that Rushdie's fiction is generally a "view from underneath" (*The Jaguar Smile* 12, Al-ᶜAzm 260), trying as much as possible to represent the world from the position of the subaltern or the oppressed. It is worth considering whether this subaltern is female, and what other ways there are to consider the Hijab episode in "Return to Jahilia", in which the prostitutes adopt the names and personae of Mahound's wives, the Mothers of the Faithful.

Al-ᶜAzm undertakes a parallel study of *The Satanic Verses* and a number of works, among them James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Jean Genet's *The Balcony* and Fellini's *8 1/2*. It would not do to repeat the multiple parallels between the works, but among the points made by all of the works is that the bordello's real business is the "erotic release of fantasy" (269), not sex itself, and that the house of illusion is complicit with power (273). Indeed, if we consider the first point, once customers of the Hijab begin to imagine themselves as the clients of the prophet's wives, a sharp increase in business occurs. The illusion, on the other hand, similar to the satanic verses that recognized female deities to make it easier for Jahilians to believe in the new religion, represents a transitional phase before Mahound consolidates his power. But Al-ᶜAzm asks, "Is it possibly for modern humanity to attain a condition where the exercise and transfer of power shall require neither 'houses of illusions' nor "houses of costly lies'?" (273).

Al-ᶜAzm's reading brings to light the obsession with Mahound's wives in the local community, and how their seclusion feeds fantasy. We should see how Baal, the poet and satirist of Jahilia, comes upon the idea to mirror the prophet's household at the Hijab: "when Musa the grocer grumbled one day about the twelve wives of the Prophet, *one rule for him, another for us,*[127] Baal understood the form his final confrontation with Submission would have to take" (391). What we have, then, is more than a business plan, but a means of revenge from one of Mahound's foes. In the truest sense of the term, it is also poetic justice. If it were not clear before that Hijab is meant to reflect the

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[127] Italics are in the original.

sacred order ironically, the following banishes all doubt: "The madam's sibylline voice [...] was [...] the profane antithesis of Mahound's sacred utterances" (389). But as for how exactly this irony operates as satire, Al-ᶜAzm explains:

> Baal's revenge is culture-specific and predicated on the assumption that in patriarchal and strongly shame-oriented Muslim societies a man's honour, social standing and status are very intimately dependent on the chastity and sexual purity of his womenfolk. (275)

This is borne out by the two complementary sayings, the wish "may your womenfolk remain protected", and the threat, "may your womenfolk be scandalized" (275). The result of the new doubling of the prophet's wives at the brothel was therefore threefold: to generate scandal, violate their chastity, and to publicly humiliate Mahound (Al-ᶜAzm 275).

Salman the Persian's rant is but one way of viewing transformations in early Submission as it becomes increasingly hegemonic. The other view would be of relative diversity, which can also be interpreted as chaos. As we have noted, if the community was small and cohesive in Mecca, it was larger and less of a *Gemeinde* (parish: face-to-face contact) and more of a *Gesellschaft* (society: a larger, more impersonal group) in Medina. Rules therefore ensured cohesion. As Schimmel makes clear:

> Muhammad was called to find a solution for the communal tensions in this city, and he succeeded in drawing up a kind of constitution that governed not only the different tribes living in Medina, most of whom were considered to be in the category of *ansar*, or "helpers" of the Muslims, but also those who accompanied him in his emigration, the *muhajirun* from Mecca. Though fully implemented only for a brief span of time, the document remained a basis and model for later Muslim communal administration. (1985:13)

In other words, the critique voiced by Salman the Persian is perhaps an undeservedly cynical view. It may not adequately take into account the sociological needs of the new community being formed in Mecca. With

the religion then being new, and many of its adherents converts from a number of older religions, there was certainly a need for everyone to agree on a *modus operandi*.

Not all scholars have been as understanding as Schimmel, however, with Leila Ahmed, author of *Women and Gender in Islam*, giving some account of the anthropological as well as historical context.

> Moreover, although Jahilia marriage practices do not necessarily indicate the greater power of women or the absence of misogyny, they do correlate with women's enjoying greater sexual autonomy than they were allowed under Islam. They also correlate with women's being active participants, even leaders, in a wide range of community activities, including warfare and religion. Their autonomy and participation were curtailed with the establishment of Islam, its institution of patrilineal, patriarchal marriage as solely legitimate, and the social transformation that ensued.
> (42)

It is interesting to note that Ahmed's research cites a practice similar to the uxorilocal marriage and tent arrangement referred to by Salman the Persian above.[128] In addition to that, her description of the process of establishing Islam is one of loss and curtailment. What one must understand is that "In the sixth century C.E. Arabia formed, as it were, an island in the Middle East, the last remaining region in which patrilineal, patriarchal marriage had not yet been instituted as the sole legitimate form of marriage" (41).   The most likely explanation for Islam becoming a religion and cultural practice that instituted patriarchy is that during expansion, it would adopt the practices of the neighbouring cultures, largely Christian, Judaic, or Zoroastrian, in which patriarchy was firmly established.

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[128] *Kitab al-aghani* reports: The women in the Jahilia, or some of them, divorced men, and their [manner of] divorce was that if they lived in a tent they turned it round, so that if the door had faced east it now faced west … and when the man saw this he knew that she had divorced him and did not go to her (Ahmed 44). Similarly, *Loin de Médine* mentions "Les Arabes de l'époque épousaient telle belle femme ayant déjà eu deux ou trois maris après veuvage ou après répudiation mutuelle." (105)

However it is doubtless a rant such as Salman the Persian's, together with the Hijab episode, in which the prostitutes of the brothel adopt the names of the Prophet's wives, that prompted the following commentary of *The Satanic Verses*, among the most sustained and eloquent by a Muslim critic:

> The character assassination of the Arabian Prophet is here carried out with a precision and ferocity that would shock any decent human being, let alone a Muslim. There are serious allegations: Muhammad is an unscrupulous politician—'a smart bastard' in Rushdie's phrase—whose enemies, particularly ideological ones, are the victims of a ruthless anger discrepant with his official professions of mercy; the book he claims to bring from God is really just a confused catalogue of trivial rules about sexual activity and excretion. Muhammad, according to *The Satanic Verses*, was a debauched sensualist with "God's permission to fuck as many women as he pleased" [...] (Akhtar4)

As we have seen in chapter one, in *The Satanic Verses* satire is everywhere in evidence. But rather than repeat the stylistic arguments discussed there, it would do to get to the heart of the problem that Akhtar addresses implicitly: Islam's perceived misogynist bias from a Western perspective.

> Annemarie Schimmel is more forthright in her explanation:
> One aspect of the Prophet's life has always puzzled, bothered, even shocked, non-Muslim students of Islam: his attitude to women. At the end of his life he was married to nine wives. Someone raised in the Christian tradition, with its ascetic ideal of the celibate Jesus and its stress on monogamy, will of course have difficulty acknowledging that a true prophet could have been married, nay, even polygamous. Indeed, one of the most frequently reiterated attacks against Muhammad from the early Middle Ages to this day has been the charge of lasciviousness and sexual vice. The Muslim, on the other hand, feels that the capacity of the Prophet to combine the

worldly and the spiritual spheres is a special proof of his high

rank. (Schimmel 1985:49)

To return to *The Satanic Verses*, we are perhaps best able to make sense of Ahmed's anthropological explanations of kinship and marriage when we notice the many parallels and antitheses in the Hijab incident in the novel.   The Curtain (*Hijab*: curtain or veil) is the brothel in Jahilia where twelve prostitutes adopt the names of the prophet's wives. The relation between the profane and the divine are often repeated in this section: "that anti-mosque, that labyrinth of profanity" (396); "on many days a line of men curled around the innermost courtyard of the brother, rotating around its centrally positioned Fountain of Love much as pilgrims rotated for other reasons around the ancient Black Stone" (394); "at The Curtain, day and night were inverted, the night being for business and the day for rest" (396).   Although Ahmed does not refer to Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la Sexualité*, in which he famously noted that prostitution is the release valve of Catholic marriage, they appear to share observations about repressive institutional forms of sexuality and partnership requiring a built-in system of relief.   This is of course suggested in *The Satanic Verses* by use of skilful repetition as well as an interpretative comment made by the narrator, who describes the prostitutes: "Sequestered from the outside world, they had conceived of a fantasy of 'ordinary life' in which they wanted nothing more than to be the obedient, and – yes — submissive helpmeets of a man who was wise, loving and strong" (396).   The relation between the religion and the form of partnership is unmistakable, since Submission has been used throughout "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia" as the name of the new religion.   The Curtain episode could therefore be said to question patriarchy on a number of levels.   Its ironic inversions reveal its functioning, its exertion of control, mostly through seclusion, setting women apart. The episode's ironic doubling, with the prostitutes and Baal behaving like Mahound, on the other hand, highlights the pervasiveness of this social structure, which is thereby shown to be firmly anchored in the social mindset.

KHADIJA

It is not clear whether Chraïbi's image of Khadija owes anything to Tabari, and for that reason it has not been included in the first chapter on intertextuality. We should however note how alike they are. Tabari reports Khadija saying [to her father],[129]

> On sait que je n'ai pas besoin de la fortune d'un autre. [...] ce qu'il faut, c'est que j'épouse un homme qui soit mon égal. Or Mohammed est mon égal dans la famille des Qoraïshites; il a une bonne réputation parmi les hommes, il est connu pour sa probité et son honnêteté; personne ne le soupçonne d'aucun des vices dont on accuse d'ordinaire les jeunes gens. Plus tu considères cette affaire, plus elle te semblera acceptable. (443)

In Khadija portrayed by Tabari, what we have is a self-confident woman who, while observing the outward forms demanded by her community, has exceptional agency in her own affairs.

In *L'Homme du Livre*, some of the same qualities come to light in a lengthy reminiscence in which Mohammed speaks in the first person. A case in point is his answer to Khadija's question,

> --Que sais-tu encore de moi?
>
> --Ce que l'on raconte ici ou là. On dit que t'es l'un des plus importants commerçants de la cité.
>
> --Je suis la commerçante la plus riche du pays, très exactement. Je n'ai pas demandé à naître riche, mais c'est ainsi. A sa mort, mon père m'a laissé sa fortune. Elle était grande. Je me suis mariée deux fois. Et me voici veuve pour la deuxième fois [...] Et à présent, je dirige mes affaires. Toute seule. A quarante ans [...]. (Chraïbi 54)

This recollection echoes the Tabari quotation that underlines Khadija's self-sufficiency. Where the two accounts differ is that whereas the Tabari portrait is of a self-confident woman, this one is clearly proud.

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[129] Tabari does report, however, that « Quelques traditions rapportent que le père de Khadija était déjà mort, et que c'est son oncle 'Amr, fils d'Asad, qui la maria » (443).

Mohammed further recalls that Khadija was taller than him, but bent down slightly in order to look him in the eye. She entrusts the twenty-five year-old merchant with a caravan, and he gladly accepts, narrating this as "J'ai obéi", which underlines his subordinate status. In a later scene, she sends another woman to suggest that Mohammed propose to her. He responds with alacrity, and after giving her consent, she explains her reasons for doing so:

> Je t'aime. Je t'aime parce que tu te tiens toujours dans le centre, évitant de prendre parti parmi les gens pour ceci ou pour cela. Et je t'aime pour ta droiture, pour la beauté de ton caractère et pour la véracité de tes paroles. Je t'aime surtout pour toi-même. (65)

Once again, as in the passage quoted from Tabari above, we find the elements freedom from vice and honesty. This reflects as much on Khadija, who chooses Mohammed, as on him, though, if we consider his importance as an exemplar.

It is important to note that despite her vaunted independence of fortune and action, the passage makes clear that Khadija owes her position to her father and her marriages. Within a patriarchal structure, women of leadership often owe their standing to natal or marital status (Ahmed 15). Considering that her wealth was gained by birth and from two previous marriages, and that her presence in historiography is largely owing to her third marriage, to Mohammed, her place within Islamic culture and memory is still defined by patriarchal constructs.

Khadija is nonetheless an iconic figure, not simply as the wife of Mohammed, his partner for some twenty years, but as the first Muslim. Hers is therefore not simply reflected glory or virtue. As Tabari reports, "C'est elle qui embrassa la première l'islam" (443). Schimmel further says that she "supported and comforted him throughout the unprecedented spiritual shock brought about by the initial revelations" (1997: 21). While her argument is premised on a golden age of Islam, it is an important one for explaining Khadija's importance:

> [...] over the centuries and under the influence of legalistic and ascetic movements, the woman in Islam has been

> relegated to a position far removed from the one she knew and enjoyed during the times of the Prophet and his successors.
>
> That is why it is impossible to overestimate the role the Prophet's first wife, Khadija, played in defining the woman's place in Islam. [...] Khadija rightfully bears the honorary titles Mother of Believers and The Best of Women, *khair un-nisa* (the latter still a favorite name for women). (1997 :26-27)

Schimmel's study is however primarily concerned with women in spirituality, and there are other, more worldly reasons to reflect on the position of Khadija, as we shall see.

All things being equal, in *The Satanic Verses*, Khadija gets short shrift. Instead we see Mahound as a womaniser, running after Hind, the wife of the local grandee. Yet for all that Khadija does make a brief appearance in the "Mahound" section:

> As for him, Prophet Messenger Businessman: his eyes are open now. He paces the inner courtyard of his house, his wife's house, and will not go into her. She is almost seventy and feels these days more like a mother than a.[130] She, the rich woman, who employed him to manage her caravans long ago. His management skills were the first things she liked about him. And after a time, they were in love. It isn't easy to be a brilliant, successful woman in a city where the gods are female but the females are merely goods. Men had either been afraid of her, or had thought her so strong that she didn't need their consideration. He hadn't been afraid, and had given her the feeling of constancy she needed. While he, the orphan, found in her many women in one: mother sister lover sibyl friend. When he thought himself crazy she was the one who believed in his visions. 'It is the archangel,' she told him, 'not some fog out of your head. It is Gibreel, and you are the Messenger of God (120).

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[130] Ellipsis points appear in the original.

This is an account of Mahound and Khadija's relationship—quantitatively his most important marital relationship if we consider that they were man and wife for some twenty years— condensed into a brief passage, but which tries to express what both partners must feel. It is remarkable how alike the *L'Homme du Livre* and *The Satanic Verses* portraits are, with the same qualities, strength and independence in Khadija, and mutual affection in their partnership, coming to the fore, despite the darker, consistently more cynical tone in the latter novel.

Considering the findings of the general marriage practices in 6th century Arabia, one would also expect Leila Ahmed to consider Khadija an iconic figure. She certainly does, but also convincingly argues that Khadija was above all an important transitional figure whose biography is reflective of the changes ushered in by Islam:

> She occupies a place of importance in the story of Islam because of her importance to Muhammad: her wealth freed him from the need to earn a living and enabled him to lead the life of contemplation that was the prelude to his becoming a prophet, and her support and confidence were crucial to him in his venturing to preach Islam. She was already in her fifties, however, when Muhammad received his first revelation and began to preach, and thus it was Jahilia society and customs, rather than Islamic, that shaped her conduct and defined the possibilities of her life. Her economic dependence; her marriage overture to a man many years younger than herself; and her monogamous marriage all reflect Jahilia rather than Islamic practice. (42)

While this Jahilian imprint is not immediately self-evident, Ahmed's comparison of her biography to Aisha's (Ayesha), the youngest wife, reveals a significant loss of autonomy in one generation. Aisha, by contrast, was secluded as soon as she was betrothed, and was one of a number of co-wives, even sharing her wedding day with Sawdah.

AISHA/AÏCHA/AYESHA

Ayesha (Aïcha), a figure appearing in both *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine*, is an important figure in the history of Islam for a number of reasons.   In addition to her spousal relationship to the Prophet, she is often quoted as the source of hadith.   Moreover, she challenged Ali, participating in the Battle of the Camels, which led to the subsequent split of Islam into Sunni and Shia factions.   Ayesha's importance is therefore multiple.   On the one hand, she is cited as an example or misadventure in female leadership (cf. Mernissi).   On the other hand, she was closely related to the man considered "the perfect person".   Their marital situation is consequently considered exemplary.   One might add that Ayesha was no less a transitional figure whose biography was revealing of the social developments taking place in early Islam. In the reference above to Christian reception of Mohammed, both Schimmel and Akthar refer to lasciviousness.   This is doubtless in part because of his polygamous marriage toward the end of his life, and in particular to Ayesha, considered the favourite.   Her purported status as favourite is however disputed, or at least called into question, by *Loin de Médine*, where we read: "Aïcha, sa plus jeune femme, celle qu'il est convenu de supposer sa préférée" (34).[131]

Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, a Companion of the Prophet and subsequently the first caliph, who was anxious to cement his closeness to Mohammed. She was betrothed at the age of six, from which point she was kept indoors, as is documented by Ibn Sa'ad, who, as we recall, is one of the historiographers cited by Djebar's narrator in her preface to *Loin de Médine*. Yet for Ahmed, it is conceivable that the historians were affected by their Muslim background: "It is [...] possible that reports, coming from the pens of Muslim authors, do not accurately reflect late Jahilia and early Islamic practices but rather conform to a later Islamic understanding of marriage" (52).[132]   In any event, the

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[131] Djebar also questions this supposition in *Figlie di Ismaele* (ix, 2). Leila Ahmed, on the other hand, simply notes "'Aisha became, and remained, Muhammad's undisputed favorite" (51).

[132] This is of course a comment that illustrates Michel de Certeau's thesis according to which history often serves present purposes; une société se donne ainsi un présent

marriage would be consummated some three or four years thereafter, when Aisha was aged nine or ten. Ahmed reports that Aisha's

> Most recent scholarly biographer, Nabia Abbott, stresses Muhammad's tender care and patience with her; he joined her even in her games with dolls. To modern sensibilities, however, such details, like Aisha's recollection of her marriage and her consummation, do not make the relationship more comprehensible. If anything, they underscore its pathos and tragedy. Nevertheless, Abbott is right to assume that the relevant matter is not the sensibilities of other ages but rather the accurate representation of the relationship. (51)

Yet questions about the relationship, and their insights into the personality of the Prophet, persist, even if they are not always voiced. Philosopher Al-ᶜAzm, for one, admits "After some exposure to Freud I did ask myself questions about the psychoanalytical significance of his earlier marriage to a woman fit to be his mother, and about his later infatuation with girls fit to be his daughters" (288). *Loin de Médine* mentions Fatima's age at the death, twenty-eight, ten years older than her mother-in-law Aïcha, who was then eighteen.

What should we retain of this figure? Is she to be remembered as a singular figure in her own right, or for her relationship to Mohammed? In Schimmel's view:

> The example of 'A'isha shows that women in early Islamic
> days participated actively in social life and communal affairs.
> In advanced age, long after the Prophet's death, she herself
> even went out into the battlefield. (Schimmel 51)

Schimmel further cautions: "One has to beware of deriving later developments in Islamic societies, such as purdah or the veiling of women, from Muhammad's own example" (51). Ahmed, on the other hand, notes Ayesha's seclusion was indicative of new social practices in early Islam. This difference is indicative of radically different

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grâce à une écriture historique (119); L'historiographie se sert de la mort pour articuler une loi (du présent) (199).

approaches between the two scholars, with Schimmel principally concerned with matters spiritual, and Ahmed drawing on a number of disciplinary tools and perspectives, to give a balanced perspective of gender relations in both nascent and contemporary Islam. This is a question to which I shall return.

FATIMA

For Djebar, it is clearly Fatima who is a transitional figure in the rise of Islam. The narrator of *Loin de Médine* traces her destiny in such a way that it overlaps with that of her parents, and that of nascent Islam. She is just over ten when her mother dies, five when Mohammed received the Revelation,[133] and in the course of her childhood and adolescence, her family would increase: "elle voit vraiment le séisme et la révolution paternelle dans leur nid" (61). While she recalls being fearful because her father was persecuted, the strength of her mother Khadija, "première convertie" (61) gave her the fortitude to bear the persecution. The second Muslim, Ali, would become her fiancé and husband. Whichever way we look at it, Fatima was at the heart of the young community. Perhaps more importantly, she was in attendance at a time that it underwent significant changes, such that she could be said to reflect more than anyone else female destiny in early Islam.

"La fille aimée" is not short on questions, some of them indirect: "peut-être que Fatima, dès sa nubilité ou en cours d'adolescence, s'est voulue garçon. Inconsciemment. À la fois Fille (pour la tendresse) et Fils (pour la continuité) de son père" (60). This is undeniably a reference to the difference that her gender makes to her destiny, and proof positive, if any more were needed, that gender concerns lie at the heart of *Loin de Médine*. A metafictional interrogation is also placed in this chapter:

> Est-ce par trop librement façonner une « idée » de Fatima ?
> Est-ce par trop l'animer d'une pulsion de masculinité ou
> d'une ferveur filiale si forte que cette fiction se déchire ?

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[133] Capitalized in the text.

> Risque d'invraisemblable, tout au moins d'anachronique, par
>
> l'accent mis sur la frustration supposée. (60)

For all her desire to get to understand the difference that gender made to Fatima's life, the narratrix is nonetheless reticent, fearful of imposing or supposing ideas from another timeframe and another culture. Yet the question, why is it that Fatima appears in the chronicles only as the mother of the martyrs Hassan and Hussain (cf. 62), is left unanswered.

In *Loin de Médine*, as we have seen, conflicting presentations of the same historical event show that history is itself rife with inconsistency, and about multiple versions at variance. It is also a questioning of Islamic jurisprudence and an effort to conceive of social justice for Muslim and non-Muslim alike. A scene of great importance is the dispossession of Fatima. In 2000, five years after the publication of *Loin de Médine*, it was adapted to the musical stage as *Figlie di Ismaele nel vento e nella tempesta*.[134] Its inaugural performance occurred on 5 August 2000 at the Teatro India in Rome, with Djebar as director. In its rewriting for musical theatre,[135] the opera *Figlie di Ismaele*, necessarily a compression of the novel of over three hundred pages, the scene of the dispossession of Fatima is retained. In the novel, whereas this event is recounted early, in the chapter 'Celle qui dit non à Médine', (68-88), the final chapter in the first of four parts, 'La liberté et le défi', in the opera, Fatima's indictment of her coreligionists occurs in the final act, and constitutes a climax. The scenes, throughout act V, in which a dispossessed Fatima rails against those who robbed her of her father's inheritance, supply just such an example.

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[134] The Italian libretto has been published, whereas the French text on which it is based, is not. Maria Nadotti, who translated and edited the text, was also artistic consultant for the performance.

[135] Hereafter I will use the terms opera, musical theatre and play interchangeably. This is partly explained by the Wagnerian concept of opera as musical theatre in which the text is not secondary to the musical composition, but a signifying practice in its own right, especially if the words sung are intelligible to the audience. The music composed by the Andalusian artist Vicente Pradal, whether it predated the libretto or was a collaborative effort, produced concurrently, is of course an integral component of the final product. There is however no recording of the opera available to the general public, and although artistic consultant Maria Nadotti and Assia Djebar have copies; I have not been able to view them. To return to the matter of the appellation, however, I am most concerned with the libretto and its stage directions, and for that reason as well must insist on the synonymy of these terms, which otherwise form distinct genres.

When confronted by a group of men from Medina, Fatima turns away, disdainfully, as noted in the stage directions: "*sempre a voce alta, la testa girata verso Ali, sdegnosamente*-Lasciamo dunque chi ha freta e sa calcolare!"[Still speaking aloud, with her head turned toward [her husband] Ali, disdainfully: "Let us leave those who are in a hurry and who know how to calculate"] (Djebar, 2000, 90). This quotation is a sarcastic[136] reference to the hasty division of the spoils after Mohammed's death. Mohammed's direct heirs, foremost among them Fatima and Ali, were not consulted by local authorities. Several pages later, this accusation is repeated with some force:

> Fatima, *di nuovo con la maschera sul viso. In piedi, ieratica, poi tragica e piena di dignità. Totalmente diversa dall'imagine di supplice di prima. Girata a metà verso il Califfo seduto nell'ombra e verso il pubblico, accusatoria:*[137]
>
> -Avete lasciatio il cadavere del Profeta nelle nostre mani!
>
> Avete sistemato tutto tra di voi!
>
> Non avete atteso il nostro parere!
>
> Noon vi siete curati dei nostri diritti! (105)
>
> [Fatima, once again with the mask on her face. Standing solemnly, then tragic and dignified. Completely different from the image of entreaty presented at the outset. She is turned towards the Caliph, who is seated in the shadow, and at the same time, toward the audience, and adopts an accusatory stance:
>
> -You left the Prophet's corpse in our hands!
>
> You divided everything among yourselves!
>
> You did not await our opinion!
>
> You did not concern yourselves with our rights!]

In this case, however, the person whom she is accusing is the Caliph. Yet she is no less firm, charging him in essence with theft. But apart from the unequivocally strident tone of the text, the italicised stage

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[136] Djebar, in the preface to the opera, speaks of ironically bitter accusations, but considering the disdainful posture adopted by the speaker and the words sung, sarcasm seems a more appropriate designation (x).

[137] The stage directions are always in italics in the libretto.

directions indicate the physical force that the performer must give to the words. Moreover, instead of continuing in the tradition of Fatima as a pathetic figure, they call for a haughty demeanour towards the chief cleric and head of state. He is symbolic of the community, and it is really the group whom she takes to task.

Yet if we turn to the novel, we cannot help but note a consistent separation of roles: "Fatima ne s'oppose pas à l'homme Abou Bekr, dont elle ne peut oublier l'attachement indéfectible qui le liait au Prophète, mais au calife, celui qu'on a désigné calife hors la famille du Prophète" (85). She is torn between affection for him and dismay at his actions. This distinction of course echoes Mohammed's decision to disallow Ali's proposed second marriage, not as a leader of the community or as a theocrat, but as a father.

In *Figlie di Ismaele* once again, several pages later, Fatima takes the leaders of the community of Muslims to task for not coming to her aid. She reminds them of the Prophets words, 'that everyone is continued in his own children' (112) and of the recent history of Islam, in which those who now stand idly by were sedentary, while others, most notably members of her own family, opposed fierce Bedouins in bloody battles. Her meaning is that those who stand before her, those who have allowed her father's successor to prevent her from claiming her worldly heritage, are unworthy of the sacrifices that her family has made. The stage directions again call for strength: "*È a question punto che Fatima, che ha lasciato la piattaforma, compare sul fondo: il viso coperto dalla maschera, li guarda a uno a uno, poi all'improvviso se la toglie. Monta su un sgabello e si accinge ad arringarli*" (110). [It is at this point that Fatima, who has left the platform, reappears in the background, her face covered by a mask. She looks at them one by one, then suddenly removes the mask. She steps unto the stool and prepares to accuse them]. Fatima's removal of her mask indicates honesty, laying aside diplomacy and tact in the service of truth. Her accusations are greeted with murmurs and exclamations (112). Yet throughout *Figlie di Ismaele*, those considered holy by Islam always appear masked

on stage, and in cases such as these, where they are unmasked, they appear in half light, in the shadows (*penombra*).

For all the vehemence of such scenes and words, *Figlie di Ismaele* nonetheless clearly espouses Islamic piety. Fatima is invoked in ways that express her exemplary nature:

—O Lalla Fatima ez-Zahra, la Splendente

Colei che è nata senza macchia

Colei la cui casa è tenda dell'Ospitalità

[…]

— O Madre di Hasan e di Husayn

[—O Mother Fatima, resplendent one

She who was born without fault

She whose tent home was a tent of Hospitality

[…]

—O Mother of Hassan and Hussain]

Here we find some of the epithets enumerated by Schimmel, and which are listed below. In contrast to the complaint uttered in the novel (cf. 62) however, that Fatima has been eulogized as a mother only, we note that her contemporaries praise her for her virtues, and for her actions. This representation is therefore possibly an implicit critique of the historiography that has allowed Fatima as multi-faceted, as seen by her contemporaries, to be lost.

As with the novel, the published text of the play is accompanied by important paratextual commentary. There is a nine-page preface by the author, as well as a postface by Jolanda Guardi, and programme notes of the inaugural performance. In her preface, Djebar invokes spiritual art in a number of contexts, in essence situating *Figlie di Ismaele* in a long tradition of religious art. Among the works and traditions invoked are Bach's *St. John's Passion* (1724) and *Mathew's Passion* (1727), Couperin's *Leçons des ténèbres*(1715), Händel's *Messiah* (1742), but also the *ta'ziyè*, the Shiite passion play in which the martyr Hussein is commemorated (cf. xiii),[138] as well as pictorial art in Islamic cultures such as Turkey, Iran, and northern India. The authorial

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[138] Referred to by the author as quasi-institutional theatre (Djebar 2000 : xiii).

intention is clearly to circumvent the prohibition of representation of those sacred to Islam. This prohibition is however a matter that Djebar contests, because she refers to it as "quel presunto non-teatro che sarebbe inscritto nella natura stessa della cultura islamica"(xii),[139] citing the long tradition of popular theatre in Marrakech. What is perhaps most important to note is the ecumenical spirit of her undertaking. Rather than limit theatre to a narrowly defined practice in Western culture, Djebar widens the scope of possible comparison. She therefore invites the reader/viewer to perceive *Figlie di Ismaele* as religious art on the one hand, and on the other, anthropologizes theatre, including performative and participatory public rites such as the *ta'ziyè* into her broad definition of the theatrical. While it is a conceit that would not be readily accepted by everyone, this bold analogy underlines the pious attitude of this artistic undertaking.

At the same time, however, Djebar comments:

Fatima is truly the Antigone of Islam—the sacrificed one, but especially because she is alone, without whom the political solution to the Founder's successor, to say no, not to the first Caliph, not to all the old Companions, whom she accuses in the mosque itself (ix)[140]

Which places the musical drama in a decidedly more worldly[141] context. If we recall the scenes quoted from the play, it becomes clear that the dual concerns of spirituality (belief) and worldliness (social, legal and political concerns) are reflected throughout, but perhaps find their fullest expression in the scenes concerned with Fatima. The act that precedes Fatima's indictment of the leader of the community is a scene of mass grief, the burial of her father. From this, Djebar goes on to show the exasperation that women, even devout Muslims such as Fatima, daughter of the first Muslim, Khadija, and someone who never

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[139] The presumed lack of theatre inscribed into the very nature of Islamic culture.
[140] Fatima è davvero l'Antigone dell'Islàm—la sacrificata, ma proprio perché è sola, sin dal principio della 'soluzione' politica alla successione del Fondatore, a dire 'no': no al primo Califfo, no a tutti I vecchi Compagni che ella aringa in piena moschea.
[141] In the sense of German musicology, in which *weltliche* (worldly) music is opposed to *geistliche* (spiritual).

knew any other faith, feel about androcentric interpretations of Mohammed's life and words. In the words of Clerc:

> On suit ainsi pas à pas, au long du livre, comment les femmes peu à peu sont bâillonnées par une tradition qui se réclame du Prophète et pourtant le trahit, révélant la grande peur des hommes face à ces femmes fortes qui s'avèrent leurs égales et qui, dans leur fidélité désintéressée à Mohamed, se montrent les témoins gênants de leurs basses querelles de succession. (118)

Similar to this characterization is Schimmel's equation of Fatima with a *mater dolorosa* (1997:30). She further explains that Fatima, suffered from dire poverty:

> One literary genre known as « Fatima's Dowry (*jihaznama-i Fatima*) enumerates all the humble trifles her father was able to give her for her dowry, her generosity toward the poor (even when her own family went hungry), her own sons' want of clothing—and all of this related and embellished in ever-new ways, so that Fatima has come to be a role model for Muslim girls. (1997:34)

While Schimmel does not elaborate further on the conventions of the genre, one wonders whether one chapter that focuses on Fatima in *Loin de Médine*, "Celle qui dit non à Médine," may not be inscribed in this genre, or at the very least, this spirit. The following quotation indicates that the genre of Fatima's dowry may indeed partially inform the novel:

> Fatima rentre chez son père et se plaint de son époux, probablement de la vie trop dure qu'elle mène... Fatima, déçue ou fatiguée (les premières années à Médine, la pauvreté des jours maigres pressait le couple, épuisait la résistance physique de Fatima). (Djebar 70)

This is of course a quotation that could just as well be used to support claims that *Loin de Médine* espouses Islamic spirituality.

POLYGAMY

While *L'Homme du Livre* is significant in representing only the monogamous, egalitarian and uxorious Mohammed, a polygamous Prophet is portrayed in both *Loin de Médine* and *The Satanic Verses*. Indeed, polygamy constitutes a notable thematic concern explored in both *The Satanic Verses* and *Loin de Médine*. It bears repeating the well-known quotation from Sura 4:3 that allows polygamy: "You may marry other women who seem good to you, two, three or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality among them, marry one only". As we have seen in the first chapter, this is among the rare Koranic intertexts in *Loin de Médine* (73). We have already gone over the challenges to patriarchy put forward by Rushdie's novel, and now turn our attention to the way in which *Loin de Médine* questions them.

To begin with, polygamy is presented as a challenge. In "Celle qui dit non à Médine," Fatima, the youngest daughter of Mohammed and Khadija, learns that her husband Ali wants to marry a second wife. It is a prospect that Fatima does not relish, and until the matter is decided, she remains under a cloud of doom. Interestingly, it is her father the Prophet who, upon hearing of Ali's intention, says "no". His no is in response to the family of the young girl, Jouwayria, who had requested his advice in the matter.

The narratrix of *Loin de Médine* is reflective, eliciting a number of questions and possible interpretations:

> A qui Mohammed a-t-il dit « non » ce jour-là, à Médine ?
> Aux hommes de Médine, à tous ceux qui l'écoutent, qui lui demandent conseil, qui prendront exemple (eux et leurs garçonnets souvent témoins si attentifs et qui en parleront bien plus tard) sur sa vie à Lui, sur la moindre de ses paroles, lui, le Messager ? (75)

Ultimately, it is for his daughter that he has refused the marriage, citing his oneness with her, saying that what hurts her hurts him too. Yet Mohammed was faced with a quandary, because he had already pronounced the sura allowing marriage to as many as four women, if they could be treated equally. There were other considerations,

however, not the least of them that Jouwayria, the proposed second bride, was the daughter of a man whose epithet was the "enemy of Islam". He therefore had to say that he did not prohibit what the Holy Book had allowed, but that he could not allow the daughter of the enemy of Islam to be a co-wife with Fatima, nor for Fatima to be hurt. Of the many roles he plays, it is that of father that is decisive, as repeated mention makes clear: "Le père a dit "non", et tous sur-le-champ expliquèrent ce "non" ainsi: "Non, pour ma fille."(68); "Le père en lui, vibrant jusque-là de douceur et d'espoir, se tourne vers le Messager habité, pour oser dire tout haut son désarroi de simple mortel: je crains que Fatima ne se sente troublé dans sa foi!" (75).

Yet there is also reason to believe that by refusing to allow the marriage, Mohammed was making known to the community that, like her mother Khadija, Fatima was to be spared polygamy. Of Mohammed's own first marriage, *Loin de Médin*e recounts: "Le Prophète, qui, après sa longue monogamie de vingt années avec Khadidja, elle-même auparavant deux fois veuve, n'aura eu, sur les quatorze femmes qu'il épousa, que Aïcha comme vierge" (Djebar 105). Ali, it seems, would take Mohammed as an example, because it was only after Fatima's death, that he remarried:

> Après la mort de Fatima, Ali vécut encore trente années. Il fut désigné calife des Croyants seulement cinq années avant sa mort.
>
> Pendant ces trois décennies, il épousa huit femmes; il eut donc presque constamment quatre épouses, jouissant ainsi de son droit de polygamie, dans les limites et les formes permises. A sa mort, il laissait trois veuves. (Djebar 88)

As the parallel elsewhere makes clear, just as Ali is meant to reflect Mohammed, so Fatima reflects Khadija: "Fatima, au cours de sa vie conjugale, fut l'unique épouse de son cousin Ali. Comme sa mère Khadidja fut la seule épouse de Mohammad, vingt-cinq années durant, jusqu'à sa mort" (57). *Loin de Médine* shows that with polygamy, restraint and caution should be exercised. This is perhaps in keeping

with the original meaning of the sura on polygyny, because, as Leila Ahmed explains:

> Verses such as those that admonish men, if polygamous, to treat their wives equally and that go on to declare that husbands would not be able to do so—using a form of the Arabic negative connoting permanent impossibility—are open to being read to mean that men should not be polygamous. In the same way, verses sanctioning divorce go on to condemn it as "abhorrent to God." (63)

In the narration of "Celle qui dit non à Médine", it is important to note the unison between Fatima and the narratrix. It is more than empathy, and, uncharacteristically for this novel, there is a virtual absence of metatextual commentary of the kind highlighted in "La reine yéménite". Instead, what we have is a close-up of Fatima, stoical, holding back the words that come to her, "la fille de l'ennemi de Dieu", yet the knowledge that Ali wishes to remarry "la pénètre lentement, telle une goutte de poison froid" (72). If this chapter is among the most touching in *Loin de Médine*, it is owing to the descriptions of a pained Fatima holding back her emotions, and the supposed interior monologue:

> A quoi bon remarquer, sur un ton de dérision : « la fille de l'ennemi de Dieux » ! Fatima reste dressée, contractée, pour ne pas pleurer, pour ne pas protester, pour ne pas... Pense-t-elle, à cet instant : « Que puis-je ? N'est-ce pas la loi naturelle des hommes ? N'est-ce pas la fatalité ? » « Sa » fatalité à elle, une femme ? Ali ne doit-il pas devenir un jour chef temporel des Musulmans ? N'est-ce pas là la loi islamique : femmes multiples, descendance fructifiée pour chaque « leader » de la communauté ? (73)

The narratrix reveals the struggle to reconcile personal hurt with the belief in the intrinsic justice of Islam. While in this case Mohammed's intercession resolves the conflict and spares Fatima's feelings, it does not resolve the issue for other women. Unlike *The Satanic Verses*, which challenges patriarchy by revealing alternate practices of kinship and

marriage, *Loin de Médine* simply put forth possibilities of interpretation available within the patriarchal system.

It may seem that too much has been made of the prophet's household in the consideration of *Loin de Médine*. I would argue that my analysis has only sought to follow the novel's form. A further character of note, Esma, has not been discussed at length. I would rather quote George Lang's perceptive synthesis of her multiple roles:

> In Djebar's fictionalisation Esma (wife of the first caliph Abu Bakr and thus Aisha's stepmother), intimate friend of Fatima (wife of Ali), is the pivotal figure who resides on a "border invisible then, a border that will open up, deepen, bring progressive dissension, then violence to Medina" (231-32). Esma thus replaces Aisha, the young and faithful wife (albeit a whore in Shi'ite tradition and troublemaker among misogynist currents in general), and Fatima, the loyal daughter (though wife of the somewhat dubious Ali, in Sunni eyes), as exemplary female figure because she Esma, is "the only one to subsume the seething contradictions that will appear, the only one capable of surmounting them. (10)

One could argue Esma's effectiveness is purely a consequence of her relation to defining male characters, which brings us back to the general importance of alliances and dependencies, touched on by Ahmed. As social anthropologist Robin Fox, author of *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective*, explains, kinship legislates alliances and defines descent (cf. 2). Moreover, "the study of kinship as an aspect of social structure began with lawyers and students of comparative jurisprudence" (16). *Loin de Médine* acknowledges the importance of families to social structure by repeatedly mentioning alliances and their consequences for a number of protagonists. The most important outcome is undoubtedly Ali and Fatima's not being considered as the natural heirs to Mohammed's legacy. The novel lists the many roles and multiple alliances of the extensive cast of characters in an annex entitled "Principaux personnages cités", appearing at the end of the volume. Esma bent Omaïs, who appears in three places in the genealogy, is

therefore listed with her successive husbands Djaffar ibn Abou Talib, Abou Bekr, and Ali ibn Abou Talib, and with her sister, Oum Fadl (cf. 309).

It is possible that Djebar wanted to show the extent to which women's actions were dependent on their proximity to or distance from power as defined by kinship. Let us once again look at "La reine yéménite", in which the narratrix remarks that:

> dans la relation du complot, l'accent est mis sur l'intempérance d'Aswad. [...] Comme si une telle Musulmane, sur laquelle Mohammed a fait silence mais qu'il a pris garde de ne pas condamner, comme si une telle amoureuse devenait dangereuse pour tous! Toute étreinte conjugale ne cacherait-elle pas définitivement un plan féminin? (22)

This metatextual musing extrapolates the individual case, making it general practice, and it becomes clear why it might have struck fear into the heart of husbands who were the contemporaries of Tabari, Ibn Hicham and Ibn Saad. By making the Yemenite queen an active participant in the plot to overthrow her husband, the historiographers would have described a conjugal uprising as much as a case of regicide. Perhaps, as the narration suggests, that was too frightening to contemplate. Yet the version of events suggested in this both hypothetical and metatextual retelling, is perhaps more consonant with Islam, because it places belief as the primary motivation for the queen's actions, and suggests that faith alone can vanquish any adversary or condition.

SPIRITUALISM

Spirituality also offers a means for considering gender in Islam. For Driss Chraïbi, this consists in the epigraph "les liens utérins ajoutent à la vie", repeated in both *Naissance à l'aube* and *L'Homme du Livre*. When questioned about this repetition, Chraïbi responded:

> "Je crois fermement que le Prophète a voulu signifier par cette phrase que la femme a un rôle primordial dans la société: elle donne la vie—et donc une éternelle renaissance,

> alors que les hommes (dont je suis) ont tendance à figer la vie ». Cette réponse n'explique pas vraiment ce [*sic* sur] quoi nous interrogeons l'auteur, la réitération du choix de la citation et l'effet de relais qu'elle instaure entre les deux romans que sont *Naissance à l'aube* et *L'Homme du Livre*. Mais Chraïbi, à nouveau interrogé par lettre, s'est dérobé : « les coups de cœurs sont irrationnels. » (Fouet 140)

Yet a more complete explanation is offered by Bourget, who notes

> Il y a un élément qui annonce *L'Homme du Livre* dans *L'Inspecteur Ali*, c'est une traduction inhabituelle de la formule par laquelle presque toutes les sourates du Coran commencent (*bismillah al-rahmân al-rahîm*), qui est généralement rendue en français par « au nom de Dieu le Clément et Miséricordieux », mais qui devient « Au nom de Dieu Matrice et Matriciel » (145).   [...] *Rahim* (qu'une voyelle courte différencie de *rahîm*) veut dire « utérus, matrice » et Berque note à propos du troisième verset de la sourate « L'Ouverture » que La racine r.h.m... évoque une solidarité affective, cf. *rahim* (matrice) *çilat al-rahim* (solidarité consaguine). Cette notion vient équilibrer celle de souveraineté cosmique de Dieu. [142] (154-155).

Bourget further explains that Chraïbi's method of translation is based on Ibn Arabi, whom, as we recall from chapter one, is the only author cited in *L'Homme du Livre*. Yet for some, Ibn Arabi's word association, as in the case of mercy and uterus, amounts to blasphemy.   This formula occurs repeatedly in *L'Homme du Livre* (38, 102), and both times in italics, which is the novel's signpost of Koranic quotation. It thereby attributes Koranic and consequently provenance to its etymologically inspired spirituality.

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[142] Malise Ruthven has also commented on this etymology, saying
The God who reveals himself in the Qur'an, the Muslim scripture, eschews the easy personification of his Judaeo-Christian counterpart, being neither Father nor Son. He contains female elements : the twin epithets that adhere to His name, *al rahman, al rahim* ("the Merciful, the Compassionate") relate etymologically to the Arabic word for "womb." But despite these attributes, the Islamic divinity is seen, primarily, in terms of "an absolute identity consciousness with an immutable, eternal and inalienable identity, who is always, significantly, called He" (5).

Chraïbi is not alone in exploring the feminine aspects of Islamic spirituality and thought, however, because, as Donald R. Wehrs argues in "The 'Sensible,' the Maternal, and the Ethical Beginnings of Feminist Islamic Discourse in Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* and *Loin de Médine*,"

> The feeling (*émoi*) that "forms" an Islamic sensibility, and that stands at the very historical origins of Islam, is a maternal being-for-another co-extensive with a conjugal love whose very generosity, distinguishing the inspired word from the delusive, self-involved word, exposes the error, common in different ways to both North African and European cultures, of reducing love to *fitna*, speech to desire, freedom to will to power. Whereas Anglophone feminism sometimes treats appeals to the body as a retrograde essentialism limiting freedom, the Islamic feminism Djebar articulates takes the immanence of *rahma* in embodied experience as disclosing women's exemplary participation in the transcendent [...] (854)

In this argument we find yet another derivative of the root word womb invoked by Chraïbi. Ultimately, it calls to mind solidarity, what Wehrs repeatedly refers to as "being-for-another", and which he explains is modelled on God's love.

The feminine element of Islamic piety is not limited to the symbolism of the womb, however. Schimmel explains that it is equally evident in the Prophet Mohammed's high regard for mothers: "[...] one should not forget the high veneration shown by the Prophet to mothers. "[...] it is part of the service to God to answer one's mother's call". Tradition also ascribed to him the beautiful saying "Paradise lies beneath the feet of the mothers." (Schimmel 1985:2).

Another key aspect of Islamic spirituality is the specular, as noted by both Annemarie Schimmel and J. M. Hirt. Hirt explains

> À partir d'une parole attribuée au Prophète de l'Islam :
> « Trois choses de ce monde, parmi tout ce qu'il contient de triple, me furent rendues dignes d'amour : les femmes, les

> parfums, et l'oraison », « choses » où Muhammad trouvait
> « la fraîcheur de ses yeux », Ibn 'Arabi développe une
> réflexion autour du miroir, du modèle et du reflet, ainsi de la
> dynamique amoureuse qui les unit (76).

Without going too much into the complexities of the psychoanalytical component and its commentary, I would like to suggest that specular logic very much informs *Loin de Médine* as well. The beginning of "Celle qui dit non à Médine", narrates a disagreement between Fatima and her husband Ali, who is also Mohammed's cousin.

> Mohammed entre chez Fatima et Ali. Ils se disputaient. Ils
> font silence. Ali fait asseoir son beau-père. Celui-ci préfère
> s'allonger sur une natte. Fatima vient s'installer auprès de
> lui, à sa gauche. Il invite Ali à se placer à sa droite.
> Mohammed a posé ses mains réunies sur son ventre, dans
> une attitude de méditation. Il prend alors une main de
> Fatima, puis une main d'Ali et les réunit aux siennes. Ils
> restent les mains liées, dans un silence commun qui ramène
> peu à peu le calme, puis la paix, puis l'abandon à Dieu (c'est-
> à-dire le sens propre « l'Islam »). Ainsi, entre les deux jeunes
> gens, la concorde et l'amour sont rétablis. (69)

The peace re-established is not important for domestic bliss alone, but also illustrates a deeper spiritual union. In this portrait, Mohammed's virtuousness is reflected in the two young people seated at his side, those whom he referred to as "les deux personnes qui sont le plus proches de mon coeur" (69). It begins in disunity, an obviously tense silence, but ends in concord.

Hirt explains that in the science of unveiling developed by al-Ghazâli (1058-1111), the main instrument is the eye, which perceives both semblance and speculation (or mirroring). This concept distinguishes between an external and an internal eye and their respective visions:

> L'oeil externe n'est pas dénué d'imperfections et ce sont
> celles-ci qui lui font supposer que cet oeil correspond au
> monde sensible, tandis qu'il existerait un œil interne plus

parfait auquel correspondrait le monde intelligible. Cet oeil interne, dont le siège traditionnel dans cette physiologie spirituelle est le cœur (*qalb*), est considéré indifféremment comme l'organe de l '*intellect (aql)*, de l'esprit (*rûh*) et de l '*âme humaine (nafs insâni)*. (86)

If we extend or apply this logic to the description of Mohammed, Fatima and Ali, at first three distinct people are present, but at the end, it is the perception of their oneness that prevails. One may also say that specular logic enables the perception of duality in the singular: even in viewing any one person or object, more than itself is perceived. In addition to that, this experience of laying of hands in a concrete way exemplifies the nature of Islam as surrender to God, a state on a higher plane than calm and peace. Mohammed's intercession is clearly shown to be the working of the divine spirit, as is reflected in his looks. A passer-by remarks that previous to the laying of hands, he seemed troubled, whereas afterwards, his face is illuminated (cf. 69).

To what extent can *Loin de Médine* be said to be infused with this Islamic piety? The above story is introduced as one of many possible anecdotes about Mohammed as reconciliatory in the marriage of his daughter Fatima and Ali, and as so often in *Loin de Médine*, verbs of transmission and other reminders of mediation are in evidence: "D'autres anecdotes sont rapportées, de la même façon naïve et sensible" (69), yet unlike the dialogic and oppositional tendency so often noted in chapter one, there is no attempt at critical distance.

There is however yet another example of this specular logic. Fatima reflects on her marriage: "Épousant certes le cousin du père, surtout parce qu'il est le fils adoptif du père: s'épousant presque elle-même à vrai dire, pour s'approcher au plus près de cette hérédité désirée et impossible" (60). Not only is she for all intents and purposes marrying herself, but in the marriage accomplishing a union of the two sides of her father. In this case, though, the issue is not simply spiritual in its implication, but worldly. It raises the issue of succession, which is developed in the section "La fille aimée": "Oui, si Fatima avait été un fils, la scène ultime de la transmission aurait été autre: quelle que fût

l'épouse mandée par le mourant, elle n'aurait pas manqué d'amener "le" fils, sinon son fils" (59).

Schimmel further explains Fatima's importance for Islamic spirituality:

> Fatima was also granted a special position that can be described as nothing less than that of *mater dolorosa*. Although dead for almost fifty years before the demise of her second son, Fatima stands higher than all other people for the Shiites except Muhammad and 'Ali. Her sobriquets, including *Zahra*, The Radiant One; *Batul*, Virgin; *Kaniz*, Maiden; *Ma'suma*, Shielded from Sin, and many others are still very popular names for girls among Shiite communities. Moreover, not only is she the intercessor for all who weep for her son Husain, but, in the realm of mystical speculation, she is also the *umm abiha*, "her father's mother." (1997:30)

In my estimation, *Loin de Médine* is suffused with this spiritual dimension, most evident in the sections "La fille aimée" and "Celle qui dit non à Médine". Yet the spiritual is at times seen to be in tension with other more worldly concerns. This is the tension that comes to light in the above examination of another principal transitional character, Ayesha.

LEGITIMACY AND JURISPRUDENCE

In Salman the Persian's quoted rant in *The Satanic Verses*, it became clear that social norms had been instituted as laws, from a number of diverse practices of marriage and kinship, a sole one, patriarchy, had emerged triumphant. *Loin de Médine* also investigates questions of law and legitimacy, however.

One thematic concern that reveals Djebar's shifting allegiances in this novel is Islamic law. More specifically, *Loin de Médine* invites the reader to consider how this law applies to either a gendered or a cultural Other. The issue of legitimacy or legitimization of certain practices by Muslims in the early Islamic period is a thorny one, yet one that

Djebar's narratrix does not shy away from. A case in point is the first narrative of Part II, "Soumises, insoumises", entitled "Celles qu'on épouse après la bataille" (99-108). This brief chapter is the story of two women, both married by the same man, Khalid ibn el Walid, an illustrious Muslim general, after he has won battles in which their clans were defeated. The problematic is stated clearly at the outset of the narrative

> Ces deux femmes, figurantes fugitives, sont épousées par le même homme, Khalid en personne, et chacune après la défaite de son propre clan. L'une et l'autre passent sans coup férir du camp vaincu dans le lit du vainqueur. Est-ce avec allant, ou dans une lenteur désespérée, que leur pas les conduit à la nuit nuptiale? (99)

The first bride is anonymous. That is to say that she is one of a number of the protagonists whose names were forgotten in the chronicles. She is known as Medjaa's daughter. Her father was the negotiator for the defeated. In this role, he not only managed to bargain a settlement disadvantageous to the victors, but to have the general propose to his daughter. The young girl is ceded to Khalid for one million gold dinars at a time when his own soldiers are starving:

> Les vainqueurs, affamés, passent la nuit à espérer pour le lendemain leur part diminuée du butin. La jeune vierge, auréolée par l'or de la dot versée, n'a-t-elle pas été estimée exagérément par Medjaa si habile à transformer des revers en avantages? (108)

The contiguity of "butin" and "vierge" is no coincidence. As is stated on the previous page, "Dans le camp vainqueur que dans celui du vaincus, les hommes gardent, quoi qu'il arrive, leurs essentielle prérogative: fixer le prix, en or, des filles qu'ils ont élevées et qu'ils donnent en épouses peu après les combats meurtriers" (107). Just as the quotation above (99) emphasizes the emotions of the women, this last comment represents deservedly harsh criticism of those who trade their kin as mercenaries. The woman is not only denied agency when it comes to disposing of her own person, but is reduced to chattel as well.

Oum Temim, the other woman, becomes a widow when her husband, Malik, faced with a question from Khalid, commits a *lapsus linguae* and loses his life:

> [...] tout est Verbe d'abord; si le Verbe défaille, le sang coule: tête coupée du chef, noces sacrilèges pour la femme. Oui, tout est Verbe; la vie, pour un Arabe, y est suspendue et ce risqué-là est certes signe de noblesse, mais pour la femme, en dépend son amour qu'elle perd. Ou qu'elle gagne, comment savoir? (101)

Even within the historical context, the case was controversial, since it consists in one Muslim killing another. The killing of Oum Temim's husband for apostasy was regarded with suspicion among contemporaries, who suspected Khalid with first setting his sights on the wife, and using any ruse to accomplish this end: "La mort de Malik reste gonflée d'ambiguïté. Elle sera la matière d'un procès qui va poursuivre Khalid tout au long de sa carrière" (101). Two issues are raised in this case. The first is the legitimization of might. By insisting on the ambiguities surrounding this case as well as the disregard for the interested female party to the marriage, Djebar's narrative clearly calls this traditional notion of jurisprudence into question. The second issue is that of a discriminatory application of legal principles to non-Muslims or just Muslims regarded as "fallen". If one's status as a Muslim is a matter of conscience, then an event such as this one, in which Malik is slain for failing to demonstrate his faith to a third party, could not possibly occur. "Celles qu'on épouse après la bataille" invites the reader to mourn Malik, perhaps unjustly killed, and raises the possibility of mourning for the widow, not only because of his death, but also because of the new marriage in which she is without agency, and effectively loot. The narration implies common cause across gender, as opposed to religious lines, because by rousing compassion for the slain "apostate," advocates his right to life. This gender-based solidarity would constitute a clear example of the principle of multiple critiques within the novel.

I believe that what the stories of both women in "Celles qu'on épouse après la bataille" illustrate, is that:

> In establishment Islamic thought, women, like minorities, are defined as different from and, in their legal rights, lesser than, Muslim men. Unlike Muslim men, who might join the master-class by converting, women's differentness and inferiority within this system are immutable. (Ahmed7)

"Established" is however the operative word. As Gellner argues, folk Islam is freer in its forms than is scriptural Islam.

In addition to the continuities noted by Wehrs, there is still another aspect of *L'amour, la fantasia* that prefigures *Loin de Médine*. Readers of the former novel will recall the shock and scandal provoked by a twentieth century Algerian man writing to his wife, indicating her name where it could be seen:

> La révolution était manifeste: mon père, de sa propre écriture, et sur une carte qui allait voyager de ville en ville, qui allait passer sous tant et tant de regards masculins, y compris pour finir celui du facteur de notre village, un facteur musulman de surcroît, mon père donc avait osé écrire le nom de sa femme qu'il avait désignée à la manière occidentale : « Madame untel ... » ; or, tout autochtone, pauvre ou riche, n'évoquait femme et enfants que par le biais de cette vague périphrase : « la maison ». (48)

The villagers are scandalized, saying it was possible to have addressed the correspondence to his son instead. Yet the irony is that the only family member able to read the postcard is the eldest daughter, who narrates the story.

Loin de Médine also raises the thorny issue of names. While its subtitle is *Filles d'Ismaël*, it also invokes Hagar (Agar) on the last page. In so doing, it echoes the point raised in *The Satanic Verses* that the life-saving well was associated with Abraham instead of Hagar. The point I wish to emphasize is however that *Loin de Médine* not only inscribes itself in a female lineage, but also questions the taboo of female silence and even of speaking of women in public. A case in point

is the following exchange at the trial of Malik in "Celles qu'on épouse après la bataille":

> Khalid sort, momentanément absous : Il peut même narguer
> Omar toujours aussi impétueux :
> --Approche donc, fils de Oum Schamla !
> « Oum Schamla », était le nom qu'on donnait à la mère de
> Omar. Celle-ci, de son vrai nom, s'appelait Khaïtama, fille de
> Hicham. Le détail significatif est là : puisqu'on lui fait
> reproche d'une nouvelle épouse, lui le vainqueur de tant de
> batailles, Khalid se permet d'insulter, ou de diminuer
> l'adversaire, par simple mention publique du nom de la mère.
> (102).

We therefore find the same concern expressed as in the previous novel. Within the context of the female Islamic lineage Djebar wants to recuperate, this constitutes a key passage. In the same section, and so all the more contrastive, we have the "fille de Medjaa" (105ff.), who, as the narratrix reminds the reader, remains anonymous: "elle semble comme vidée de sa propre identité. Seulement fille d'un père redoutable ou envié" (107).

It cannot be emphasized enough that the narratives of both *Loin de Médine* and *Figlie di Ismaele* recount the progression of marginal and persecuted to hegemonic and law-giving Islam. How is it that a religion of the few became the religion of the many? Islam in part achieved hegemony by armed conquest. But among the adherents and converts, there still remained issues to be resolved. What Djebar's fiction illustrates is the tensions that appear as residents of Mecca and Medina, of Egypt and Ethiopia, live together, forging a new religious and cultural identity.

In "L'étrangère, soeur de l'étrangère", a memorable exchange also occurs between a husband and wife, respectively Arab and Ethiopian, in which her Ethiopian accented-Arabic becomes a point of contention, and further points to the many difficulties faced by a heterogeneous community trying to become a cohesive unit.

> A peine avait-elle terminé sa complainte que Hassan se
> manifesta par une remarque douce-amère :
> --je te croyais islamisée !
> --Est-ce contraire à l'Islam que de parler la langue de ses
> pères et mère ?
> Il opéra un retrait, mais sans paraître s'excuser :
> --Certes pas, protesta-t-il, seulement si tu pouvais atténuer
> l'accent étranger que tu gardes dans l'arabe ! (191)

After this last retort the Sirin falls silent, but thinks to herself that only her heart counts before God. This incident, slight though it may be, both highlights and shrewdly questions the cultural hegemony of Arabic within Islam, recalling instead the spiritual equality of all Muslims.

This brief dispute between Sirin and Hassan parallels the conflict of the independence and high spirits of Medina[143] women contrasted to the relative solemnity of the citizens of Mecca.

> Médine restait pourtant une cite gaie, avec hélas, de mauvais
> lieux où maints Musulmans, le temps d'une soirée,
> redevenaient mécréants. Hélas! Résonnent toutefois à mes
> oreilles l'écho des chansons, la rumeur des fêtes où les
> Médinoises dansaient, se réjouissaient. Il est vrai que
> plusieurs dames Migrantes de La Mecque jugeaient, jugent
> encore ces moeurs contraintes à la pureté musulmane. (124)

Some Muslims thought it contrary to Islamic piety to sing and dance. The heart of the matter is a case of conflicting identities, as communities coalesce. Djamila wonders whether it is possible to be a good Muslim woman from Medina and enjoy music and dancing, thinking that only two years after the death of Mohammed, his followers are bereft of details of his life. She therefore consults Djaber ibn Abdallah, "un de nos traditionnistes les plus réputés" (124). Djaber is able to reassure her, resolving the question of whether it was lawful to have musicians at the wedding of her youngest son. He firstly narrates the hadith whose source is Aïcha, who was asked by Mohammed,

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[143] Which, although with a somewhat different emphasis, corresponds to Salman the Persian's description of Yathrib above (cf. 379).

> Est-ce que tu as pensé à faire accompagner le cortège de la
> jeune épousée par des chants ? Il ajouta, avec un ton
> d'indulgence, et je pense, de tendresse :
>
> --les 'Ançars aiment tant les chants ! (125)

Djebar then assures Djamila that the Prophet himself not only thought about the happiness of others, but when he loved them and knew them to be staunch believers, encouraged their revelry.

In the case of the married couple, where the wife is criticized for her Ethiopian-accented Arabic, the hegemonic position of Arabic culture within Islam is highlighted. The social subtext suggests that she also holds her tongue because she is a woman. In the case of the Medinian woman, however, specifically Meccan cultural practices are considered coterminous with Islamic piety. What we see however is that this Ethiopian woman, like her Medina coreligionists, is in effect subject to conditions of assimilation comparable to the process of colonization.

FURTHER COMPARISON OF *LOIN DE MÉDINE* AND *FIGLIE DI ISMAELE*

There is more to the comparing *Loin de Médine* and *Figlie di Ismaele* than just the pivotal figure Fatima. Quite apart from reflections that discuss the medial specificity of novel versus opera, the latter work constitutes a further reflection of identity within the context of nascent Islam.

Reflection on identity as conflicting, multiple, cumulative and dynamic has been a staple both of Djebar's fiction and her non-fiction. Another such case of unresolved tensions is the complex linguistic reality translated —borne across— in Djebar's French text. She elsewhere draws attention to the complex sociolinguistic and historical reality of her country of origin: As an Algerian she claims four languages, Berber, Arabic, French, and movement.[144] Her foray into film and theatre are doubtless intended to give expression to the fourth

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[144] Assia Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* (26).

linguistic realm. Indeed the stage directions for *Figlie di Ismaele*, quite literally 'Daughters of Ishmael in the Winds and in the Storm", to which I will return shortly, are extensive, and could be considered as choreography, which correspond to the comprehensive paratextual authorial commentary in the novel. On the other hand, with reference to her use of French as language of creation, Djebar insists on her marginal status within the international community of French speakers, and yet it is French that is her vehicle for transgressing the taboo of silence. The practice of signing her published work Paris-Algiers, for instance, calls to mind Homi Bhabha's oft-cited trope of transculture as interstices (Bhabha 224), a concept also developed by Stuart Hall.

The transgression in question regards representation: Djebar explains that for a woman of her culture, the most reprehensible act, the one most censured, is complaining or voicing her grievances (1995: 228). And yet, to a considerable extent, this is what happens in *Loin de Médine*. How does *Figlie di Ismaele* make use of its medial specificity (as musical theatre) to highlight the gendered revision of early Islamic history?

A comparison of *Loin de Médine* and *Filgie di Ismaele* reveals that the former is more representative of oppositional points of view, particularly as regards non-Muslims. They appear at the outset, when its Muslim characters are still a persecuted minority. A number of apostates and rebellious tribes and individuals of both genders people the narrative. In the course of the narrative, however, Islamic hegemony is instituted, and fewer oppositional voices are in evidence. Yet what is increasingly a source of conflict are the intra-group dynamics, of which linguistic and still other cultural issues are involved. Djebar's representation of early Islam is a deconstruction not of Islamic spirituality or divinity, as in Rushdie's novel, but rather of its historiography, jurisprudence, and hegemonic tendencies. In her gendered revision of the grand narrative, she presents Muslim women as devout, yet often at the mercy of Muslim men. She also questions the fairness of certain practices towards non-Muslims (and those declared as such) of both genders. The relativity of culture, which in the

traditionalist Islamic readings has hardened into repressive or oppressive legal precepts, is what she foregrounds.

In the opera, however, quite apart from the critical lyrical text, ample use is also made of rights discourse within Islam by exploiting the physicality of representation on stage. As such, Djebar transforms Fatima from a pathetic martyr figure to a forceful critic of misogynist (mis)application of Mohammed's words. Without anachronism, Fatima is thus transformed into a modern heroine. Such practice inscribes Djebar within the context of Islamic hermeneutics. As Roald remarks:

> In the Islamic debate, the hermeneutic approach seems to work as a conserving factor, creating an understanding of Islam which might be suitable in changing circumstances [...] Islamic ideas continue to flourish within new contexts, and as patriarchal attitudes give way, female perspectives are strengthened within these new contexts. (Roald xv)

Djebar's work constitutes a prime example of the possibilities of Islamic hermeneutics.

In her preface to *Figlie di Ismaele*, Djebar justifies her representation by citing both Islam's own history of pictorial and musical representation, Sufism, and the European tradition of spiritual music. Moreover, the inaugural presentation at Rome's Teatro India in the Jubilee year 2000 is joined to a universalistic appeal: "In questo'anno di Giubileo, esprimo un augurio: che queste rappresentazioni [...] suscitino in molti spettatori 'un desiderio di Islàm' ", [In this Jubilee year, I want to give voice to a hope that these performances [...] give rise to a desire for Islam in the audience]. (Djebar 2000: xiv). In so doing, Djebar opens a discussion of Islam to everyone, welcoming outside participation. This exhortation is in keeping with her search for a Muslim Judith in Islamic historiography. Her work clearly stands in the tradition of "multiple critiques", as defined by Cooke, which forges shifting alliances. While clearly Islamic in inspiration, Djebar's work is inscribed in the historical process and ultimately instrumental in ushering in an Islamic modernity, for which

a more complete revision of the Islamic past, notably in terms of cultural diversity and gendered alterity, is indispensable.

In the words of Calle-Gruber:

L'oeuvre de l'écrivain élabore [...] un féminisme très singulier: elle ne calque pas les féminismes occidentaux, ni leurs revendications ni leurs stratégies; elle n'oppose pas en une dichotomie facile l'émancipation des femmes et l'Islam; elle refuse le refus de la propre culture et affirme l'exigence— bien plus exorbitante—d'une liberté féminine inscrite dans les lois de l'Islam. (151)

We have seen that while Djebar's questioning of gender relations is both profound and multi-faceted, it also embraces the positive aspects of Islamic womanhood. The final pages contain a passage explaining the meaning of the title:

Loin de Médine, toutes ces femmes, soumises à une Loi forgée par les hommes et déformant la parole dictée au Prophète par Gabriel, pourront retrouver la liberté du désert des origines, celui où Agar, l'esclave égyptienne chassée par Sara, femme d'Abraham, jalouse de sa maternité a eu les yeux dessillés par Dieu et a vu les puits qui les sauva, elle et le petit. (300)

This makes clear that her efforts are neither wholly material nor wholly spiritual in scope.

For the most part I have been reluctant to use post-colonialism as an overarching concept for this study. As I have noted, that has already been done, most notably by John Erickson. Yet concerns of domination and unequal power relations have shone through from time to time, such as in reception. On the question of gender, however, the post-colonial perspective is unavoidable. As Leila Ahmed has demonstrated, the same nineteenth century colonizers who were opposed to reforms heralding more gender equality in Britain, invoked women's equality abroad for reasons of empire. Ahmed cites the Egyptian example and Lord Croner (243), but the practice was sufficiently widespread elsewhere and recognizable for Spivak to simply invoke a trope of "white

men saving brown women from brown men".[145] Spivak observes, "The most frightening thing about imperialism, its long-term toxic effect, what secures it, what cements it, is the benevolent self-representation of the imperialist as savior", and that "feminist internationalists must keep up their precarious position within a divided loyalty: being a woman and being in the nation, without allowing the West to save them" ("Acting Bits" 781, 803).

CONCLUSIONS

To return to the considerations outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Clearly, it is *Loin de Médine* that most fully addresses gender relations. While *The Satanic Verses* also questions gender roles, it does so in a limited way, as does *L'Homme du Livre*. On the other hand, *L'Homme du Livre*, as with *Loin de Médine*, is suffused with an Islamic spirituality that draws attention to representing woman positively, as well as to the equality of souls.

What then accounts for the differences between the works written by Annemarie Schimmel and Leilah Ahmed, which have been of such help in articulating the anthropological, sociohistorical, and spiritual elements of gender in this chapter? A quotation of Ahmed's sheds some light. After observing that Islam brought about practical constraints for women, she nonetheless concludes:

> Islam's ethical vision, which is stubbornly egalitarian, including with respect to the sexes, is [...] in tension with, and might even be said to subvert, the hierarchical structure of marriage pragmatically instituted in the first Islamic society. (63)

It is also apropos to consider the person of Annemarie Schimmel, the Islamic scholar of world renown who reportedly sympathized with the fatwa against Salman Rushdie. For some observers, Schimmel's perspective of Islam is a rose-coloured view; the attitude of someone so in awe of the foreign object studied that she suspends critical

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145 Which is the main lesson of her groundbreaking "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

judgement. Indeed her 1995 nomination for the *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels*,[146] unleashed a storm of controversy. The German women's magazine *Emma* spearheaded a campaign including a petition against the nomination, citing her silence on crimes against women in Iran and Pakistan as well as her support for the fatwa against Rushdie.[147] It is indeed a paradox that a peace prize should be awarded to someone who reportedly supports capital punishment for blasphemy. For the sake of my argument, however, it is important to note that Schimmel's scholarship is concerned with spiritual aspects of Islam, and does not seem to have the subtlety or breadth of perspective of Ahmed's. I have consulted a number of her publications in this chapter, including *Islam: an Introduction, And Muhammad is his Messenger*, and *My Soul is a Woman*, all of which draw attention the too oft neglected matter of spirituality as it refers to gender. But is there not more to a reflection about gender in Islam than forms of piety?

Sadik Jalal Al-ᶜAzm's position is in stark contrast to that adopted by Schimmel. He is a thinker who resolutely refutes particularism and communitarism:

> [a giant such as Sartre would never] condescendingly think of other human beings as eternally sealed within their own cultural totalities and/or permanently condemned to live their lives within the confines of their "most authentic" systems of beliefs and values. (287)

This is a comment redolent of Haideh Moghissi's observation that the discourse of cultural plurality has at times favoured stasis. Al-ᶜAzm's lengthy discussion of Rushdie's novel provides a good companion piece to Spivak's "Reading *The Satanic Verses*". The two articles are complementary in the sense that whereas Spivak discusses the politics of reception in India, Al-ᶜAzm discusses the failed response in the West. He writes, "given the all too evident tendency of Western critics and

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[146] The same award that Djebar would receive for her œuvre in 2000.

[147] *Emma* cited the German original of *And Mohammed is his Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (*Und Mohammed ist sein Prophet : Die Verehrung des Propheten in der islamischen Frömmigkeit*). It appears to be absent from the English version, however. Djemaa Maazouzi reports on the scandal in an October 1995 edition of the Algerian daily *Tribune*.

commentators to depoliticize Rushdie's fiction (and predicament), it becomes doubly imperative to emphasize the importance of its militant progressive political dimension" (282).

Part of the progressive social dimension is clearly the way Rushdie's fiction draws attention to gender roles as instituted by Islam. *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre* share the concern for gender equality expressed in *The Satanic Verses*. While customs and practices vary across the Muslim world, these novels were written in the wake of events that suggested a return to more patriarchal notions of gender. The Islamic revolution in Iran, which is represented allegorically in *The Satanic Verses*, is one such event. It brought with it a number of restrictions to women's roles, including professional limitations (to the judiciary), access to education, and freedom of movement. For the sake of brevity, let it simply be said that it reinstituted more patriarchal relations between men and women. Similarly, the Algerian FSI had an equally limited view of women's roles and agency. While her novel *Loin de Médine* is silent on the matter, Djebar herself has often spoken of events in Algeria prompting her to write this novel. It is written against stasis, and for an inclusive Islamic hermeneutics. It further lays claim to a female lineage of Islam, offering the *rawiyat* as a neologism for female transmitter of the word, and highlighting the many silences left by the male historiographers whose histories form the basis of early Islam. The heritage claimed by *Loin de Médine* enables Muslim women to articulate their agency within the framework of their faith and culture.

CONCLUSIONS

To return to general considerations of the novel that prompted this comparative study, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, I will quote Shabbir Akhtar, who writes:

> Can one have a perceptive secular account of revelation that takes it seriously yet denies the recipient's own claim about its supernatural origins and causation? Predictably Rushdie opts for the view that the revelatory act is ultimately one extremely fertile form of the purely human imagination.
>
> If these are Rushdie's aims, there can be no question that he fails to achieve them. Mahound, the recipient of the sacred message, emerges as an insincere impostor who self-induces revelation whenever it suits him. He is a calculating opportunist devoid of conscience, making and breaking rules as he pleases, confusing (or perhaps deliberately identifying) good with evil as the mood takes him. (24)

He answers his own question, stating

> This is hardly a plausible or convincing account of the experience of a seminal prophetic figure. For it raises far more questions than it resolves. Can an insincere man be the founder of a major religious and moral tradition that outlives him? If Muhammad had been seen, by those who began to follow him, as cynical and unscrupulous, would Islam ever have achieved prominence on the stage of world history? Is an insincere Muhammad more convincing than a sincere one? Is an insincere and mistaken Muhammad more convincing than a sincere but mistaken one? (24)

When we recall Rushdie's *Shame*, the allegorical novel of late twentieth century Pakistan, there is the narrator's memorable pronouncement (cf. Chapter 2 above) that Pakistan represents a failure of the imagination; instead of remaining within a united and pluralistic sub-continent, it broke off, forming an Islamic Republic. Could it be that Rushdie's representation of religion, and specifically of Islam, also represents a

failure of the imagination? After all his depiction thereof is consistently negative, and lacks an appreciation of the spiritual dimension. While no one expects a brilliant satirical writer to turn cheerleader overnight, it is all the same disappointing that his consideration of religion is so one-sided.

In the many years since the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, it certainly has become more difficult to impute noble intentions to Salman Rushdie.   While he has been equally critical of other organized religions both there and elsewhere, notably satirizing Hindu fundamentalism and demagoguery in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, some reviewers have observed a consistent anti-Islamic bias.   Ziauddin Sardar, in "Welcome to Planet Blitcon"[148] reviews both the oeuvre and the author's "surprising progression, over the past 20 years, from political left to centre right" (52). Sardar observes consistent elements in the novels *Shame*, and *Midnight's Children*, with *The Satanic Verses* forming the anti-Islamic apogee. The most recent novel, *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), proves to Sardar that Rushdie has learnt little in the ensuing years:

> The protagonist of the novel, Shalimar, turns from a lovable clown and tightrope walker into a fuming terrorist. But what motivates his fury? The sexual betrayal of his wife and the fanatical zeal of an "Iron Mullah" who forces people to build mosques and shroud their women in burqas. In Rushdie's world, a human interpretation of Islam is a total impossibility. (53)

I agree with Sardar and other commentators that *Shalimar the Clown* does not give sufficient explanation for the protagonist's turn toward Islam, nor does it explain why Islamic zeal need take violent forms. Responding to questions following the launch of *Shalimar the Clown* on

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[148] This article, which appeared in *The New Statesman*, appears with the header: "Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie and Ian McEwan dominate British literature—and they're convinced that Islam threatens civilisation as we know it ." Blitcon, the neologism in the title, is a contraction of British, literature, and conservative, modelled on the current term "neocon". In "Islam and Gobanalisation", Hamid Dabashi speaks of "neocon artists", a term that, in addition to evoking neocon of political discourse, also plays on the term "con artist."

30 September 2005 in Montreal, Rushdie once again spoke in glowing terms of his childhood home, Bombay, and of his family. This recollection praised the multicultural city in which the young boy was exposed to a number of faiths and religious practices. He claims that everyone was free to join in all the celebrations. More importantly, though, Rushdie equated open-mindedness with secularity. His family, it appeared, was nominally Muslim, and it was this lighthearted approach to religion, that explained their broad and accepting worldview. The failure of the imagination, though, especially when compared to Djebar and Chraïbi's writings, indicates that for Rushdie, openness is not conceivable within an Islamic context.

On the other hand, it is possible to recuperate the text from authorial intentions. Not only have a number of Muslim intellectuals always written in support of Rushdie, but others, such as Sadik Jalal Al-cAzm, Feroza Jussawalla, and Fethi Benslama, have made insightful studies of his work.

As for Djebar's *Loin de Médine*, Calle-Gruber observes that she proceeds with a

> reconstitution—non pas événementielle mais poétique— [...]
> Ce afin de réactiver les voies délaissées, les chances occultées,
> le jaillissement de l'Islam en ses traits contradictoires: pas
> une doxa sans para-doxa; pas une exclusive mais une énergie
> rassembleuse de diversités. Pas une sacralisation de la Parole
> mais son irruption de météore. (166)

This brings us back to the metaphor likening questioning faith to a meteor describing an arc in the darkness. While *Loin de Médine* reveals a number of contradictory practices and interpretations available within Islam, it is notably suffused with an Islamic sensibility. The Mohammed presented therein is indeed an exemplar, both in the domestic sphere and as a statesman. Although somewhat beholden to the myth of a Golden Age of Islam, it is nonetheless very critical of the application of purportedly Islamic principles in many instances. While Djebar's claim to *itjihad*, as George Lang has explained, is likely to be challenged from a theological point of view, it is one that *Loin de Médine* fully espouses,

and to my mind the metatextual reflections constitute the particular strength of this novel is.

While less obviously theoretical in its ambitions, *L'Homme de Livre* is not as naïve and hagiographical as it first appears. Even more than the other two novels, it offers insight into the personality of the Prophet Mohammed. In addition to that, it narrates in a forward-looking manner suggestive of Mohammed's own historical consciousness. In this way, it too is inscribed in an opening of Islam to the future. Perhaps that how its invocation of the sura 81 "the Intercession," should be read. Not so much as a revolution accomplished, but rather as a process set in motion that continues to be elaborated.

My introduction had raised the prospect of these three novels representing heralds of Islamic modernity. In retrospect, that is a misapprehension both of the influence of literary fiction in an increasingly intermedial and especially audiovisual world, and of whether the coreligionists of authors situated on the margins of the world community of Islam are heeding writing in English and French. *The Satanic Verses*, *Loin de Médine* and *L'Homme du Livre* are nonetheless engaged in investigations of the Islamic past based on the pivotal figure Mohammed, which help to articulate, or reflect on, his contemporary legacy in a more inclusive light. For those who care to heed them, they constitute, I would suggest, if not the midwives of Islamic modernity, its pillars.

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