

## **International Conference: Playing and Playfulness in Salman Rushdie's fiction**

**Thursday 3 and Friday 4 of April 2025**

**Université Côte d'Azur, Nice**

**Guest Speakers: Ana Cristina Ferreira Mendes (University of Lisbon), Stephen Morton (University of Southampton), Marc Porée (École Normale Supérieure, Paris), Florian Stadler (University of Bristol)**

### **Call for Papers**

Because they affect the linguistic, narrative, structural, cultural and intermedial spheres, the motifs of playing and playfulness should allow us both to pay homage to the astounding richness of Salman Rushdie's fiction and to question its puzzling complexity. Rushdie's art of parodically recycling cultural material from all sorts of historical and geographical origins likens him to postmodernism's intrinsic syncretism and its "aesthetics of hybridity" (Stadler) or its palimpsestuous nature (Porée) just as his mocking deconstruction of all metanarratives appears reminiscent of the postmodernist determination "to subvert all centers of authority" and to "romp in polyphony, in plurality, in maximum freedom, in a joyous relativity where all that is rigid is overturned" (Olsen). However, the systematicity of the recourse to tongue-in-cheek metafiction and "self-parody" (Pesso-Miquel 2007) may also encourage us to wonder whether this form of "exhibitionist acrobatics" could not be a means to "give expression to a boastful metafictional self-awareness as the text obsessively sings its egomaniacal and selfishly seductive song" (Gonzalez). From a postcolonial perspective, Rushdie's hegemonic foregrounding of playfulness similarly seems to lend itself to ambiguous interpretations. If his densely intersemiotic texts ostentatiously display "the legacies of colonial modernity" (Morton) and are therefore "appropriable to a bourgeois, predominantly western intelligentsia" (Ahmad), his desire to constantly mix eastern and western codes, to forge a hybrid, bastardised novelistic art may be construed as a proof of "residual faith in utopian grand narratives, a desire to reconstruct some notion of the New" (Baker). Besides these postmodernist and postcolonial approaches, other fertile fields of investigation may be found in the interaction between playing and poetry so much does the author of *Midnight's Children* strive to generate linguistic, stylistic, syntactic and rhetorical innovation in a manifest will to reenchant the English language. Finally, the humorous dispositions enacted by such a prominent presence of playing and playfulness may also be examined, and Rushdie's humour à la Sterne (Pesso-Miquel 2004) or his Rabelaisian grotesque (Porée and Massery) seem to pave the way for fruitful comparative analyses.

Please find hereafter a (by no means exhaustive) list of possible topics:

- Playing around, humour, funny jokes (who are the addressees?)
- Playing with tradition, magical realism, "the alternative great tradition of the novel"
- Playing with his own sources of inspiration
- Playing with geographical boundaries, remapping the world

- Playing with words, neologisms and linguistic inventiveness: poetry or showmanship?
- Playing with formal boundaries, hybridisation, parody, pastiche
- Playing as an antidote to despair
- Playing by ear, oral tradition, songs, rewriting old stories and myths
- Playing games, pretence, wearing masks, metaleptic ludism
- Playing with fire: Scheherazade, historically traumatic events
- Playing by the rules, Americanisation and “selling out”

Proposals of circa 300 words should be sent to Christian Gutleben ([christian.gutleben@univ-cotedazur.fr](mailto:christian.gutleben@univ-cotedazur.fr)), Simona Oliva ([simona.oliva@univ-cotedazur.fr](mailto:simona.oliva@univ-cotedazur.fr)) and Emmanuelle Peraldo ([emmanuelle.peraldo@univ-cotedazur.fr](mailto:emmanuelle.peraldo@univ-cotedazur.fr)) by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024. Please enclose a short biographical note of a dozen lines.

### Works Cited:

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- Baker, Stepen. *The Fiction of Postmodernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Gonzalez, Madelena. ‘Sacred Orgasm and Profane Paeon: The Obscene Paradox of the Postmodern Baroque in Salman Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*’. *Études britanniques contemporaines* n°23, 2001: 71-90.
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- Olsen, Lance. *Circus of the Mind in Motion: Postmodernism and the Comic Vision*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990.
- Pesso-Miquel. *Salman Rushdie : L’écriture transportée*. Bordeaux : Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2007.
- Pesso-Miquel, Catherine. ‘Clock-ridden Births: Creative Bastardy in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*’. In Susan Onega and Christian Gutleben (eds.). *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary Literature and Film*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004.
- Porée, Marc. *Esthétiques sur Rushdie : « Encore une couche »* In: *L’Art dans l’art* [online]. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2000 (generated 19 mars 2024). Available on the Internet: <<http://books.openedition.org/psn/3941>>. ISBN: 978-2-87854-838-9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.psn.3941>.
- Porée, Marc and Massery, Alexis. *Salman Rushdie*. Paris : Seuil, 1996.
- Stadtler, Florian. *Fiction, Film and Indian Popular Cinema: Salman Rushdie’s Novels and the Cinematic Imagination*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

### Further Reading:

- Gonzalez, Madelena. *Fiction After the Fatwa: Salman Rushdie and the Charm of Catastrophe*, Amsterdam & New York, Rodopi, 2005.
- Guilhamon, Lise. « English “Made as India” in Salman Rushdie’s Fiction: Linguistic Heterogeneity and Poetic Hybridity ». Guignery, Vanessa, Catherine Pessa-Miquel *et al.* (eds.). *Hybridity: Forms and Figures in Literature and the Visual Arts*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. p.202-212.
- Hoydis Julia, « Realism for the post-truth era: politics and storytelling in recent fiction and autobiography by Salman Rushdie ». Jan Alber and Alice Bell (eds.). *Fact and Fiction in Contemporary Narratives*, Routledge, 2012. p.32-51.
- Kortenaar ten, Neil. *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004.
- Mendes, Ana Cristina (dir.). *Salman Rushdie and Visual Culture: Celebrating Impurity, Disrupting Borders*. New York and London: Routledge, 2012.
- *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2013.
- Mishra, Vijay. « Rushdie and Bollywood cinema ». Gurnah, Abdulrazak (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. pp.11-28.
- *Salman Rushdie and the Genesis of Secrecy*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.
- Oliva, Simona. « Transmedial Melodies: Music in Salman Rushdie’s Novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* ». Karpinski, Eva C. and Ewa Kęblińska-Ławniczak (eds.). *Adaptation and beyond: hybrid transtextualities*. New York: Routledge, 2024.
- Stadtler, Florian (dir.). *Salman Rushdie in Context*. Cambridge University Press. 2023.
- Wallart, Kerry-Jane. « Affinities, or the Hybrid Art of Perspective in Salman Rushdie’s *The Enchantress of Florence* ». Guignery, Vanessa, Catherine Pessa-Miquel *et al.* (eds.). *Hybridity: Forms and Figures in Literature and the Visual Arts*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. p.213-222.
- Weickgenannt Thiara, Nicole, « Enabling spaces and the architecture of hybridity in Salman Rushdie’s *The Enchantress of Florence* », *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, [en ligne] <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021989411412701>, publié le 21 septembre 2011.