

cation and supplementarity, "the temporality of signification dispossesses the historical time of the first person," yielding "the pre-originary impersonality of the first person itself" (66). This has implications for both narratives and speakers, since if we are not (simply) ourselves, our stories are not themselves, or our own either. The second part, entitled "Impersonality," presents in some detail the "functional analogy" between the implicit conception of subjectivity in Beckett's fiction, and the accounts of subjectivity offered by Freud and Bataille, for whom *intersubjectivity* "at once condition[s] and exceed[s] subjectivity as separation" (95). The third section, "Error," takes up the question of space (raised in the Introduction), which in Beckett often becomes as indistinctly "gray" as the time of the narrative. Indeed Trezise points out that "the undoing of the distinction between time and space is at once that of the separation of inside and outside" (125), a separation upon which the idea of the "expressive" subject is based.

Trezise's short book stops far short of exhausting the possibilities that he opens up. Within its 176 pages, he offers illuminating discussions of such aspects of the trilogy as *Molloy's* play with chronology, the aptness of Moran's status as *petit propriétaire*, and the trilogy's many metaphors of interior and exterior space, especially those linked to the narrator's position as one who speaks as if "from within" yet remains at the same time homeless and "outside." It is a shame that readers can enjoy such insights only after reading pages of the most forbidding theory-speak. Trezise's recurring need to restate his points, in a bid for the sort of clarity which does occasionally emerge, leads the reader to dread the words "or" and "in other words." The book also raises the issue of communication between French- and English-speaking Beckett scholars. Although this study addresses itself to a sophisticated, probably multilingual, readership, *Into the Breach* makes few references to relevant French criticism and theory apart from Trezise's primary interests here, Blanchot and Bataille. For instance, the utter absence of Jacques Lacan from such a study begs for some comment. In short, a larger sense of context would enrich the book, and it would be very useful to have a fuller bibliography of work, in *both* English and French, which approaches Beckett from a similar angle. However, Trezise does English-only readers of Beckett a service, by demonstrating so clearly the fundamental relevance to Beckett's work of French theorists and critics, especially Blanchot.

HARRY VANDERVLIST

Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books, 1991. pp. 432. \$24.95.

The title essay of this collection, written in 1982 by a Rushdie still flush from the spectacular success of *Midnight's Children*, addresses the situation of exiled, emigrant, or expatriate writers, who, subject to the disorienting but liberating impossibility "of reclaiming precisely the

thing that was lost," will necessarily create instead of real worlds "fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (10). Departure ensures a version of non-arrival while denying the option of return, and risking the disappearance in transit of what one sets out with. Among the luggage that Rushdie vividly remembers losing along the way, in a moment of school-boy vision ritualized by the defiant consumption of a forbidden ham sandwich, was his Islamic faith.

With one exception, these essays, implicitly or explicitly, testify to the irreversibility of that conversion: "[f]rom that day to this, I have thought of myself as a wholly secular person, and have been drawn towards the great traditions of secular radicalism—in politics, socialism; in the arts, modernism and its offspring—that have been the driving forces behind much of the history of the twentieth century" (377). Thus declares Rushdie in "In God We Trust," an essay revised in 1990. "In Good Faith," also dating from 1990, elaborates: "I am a modern, and modernist, urban man, accepting uncertainty as the only constant, change as the only sure thing. I believe in no god, and have done so since I was a young adolescent. I have spiritual needs, and my work has, I hope, a moral and spiritual dimension, but I am content to try and satisfy those needs without recourse to any idea of a Prime Mover or ultimate arbiter" (404-05). The one exception, the brief "Why I Have Embraced Islam," was written at the end of the same year, and seems to insinuate itself into the collection—or rather to tack itself onto the end—like a shufflingly hesitant priest at a convention of militant freethinkers, peering cautiously round the door, uncertain of his reception. What is it doing there, affirming "the oneness of God and the genuineness of the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad" (430), in company with sixty-nine other essays, about a third dating from as recently as 1989-90, which celebrate multiplicity and affirm textual instability and the corruptive power of received ideas?

As Saleem Sinai might attest, solitude effects strange transformations, and few writers as cosmopolitan and metropolitan as Rushdie have experienced it in such an extreme form. And if young men can see visions of postmodern socialist futures, why should middle-aged ones not dream dreams of lost theological homelands, imaginary or not? The apparent contradiction may be merely rhetorical, accented by a terminal deference and fulsomeness suggestive of a buckle in the swash. Had certain Muslim scholars not recognized that *The Satanic Verses* "is not a deliberate insult . . . I might well have thought again [about its total withdrawal]. . . . I believe that in the weeks and months to come the language of enmity will be replaced by the language of love" (432).

Rushdie's customary stance and diction are made of headier stuff, spiked with enough judgemental opinionativeness to give even ephemeral reviews a kick and to make the more substantial pieces, particularly those with an overt politico-moral design, bracingly obstreperous. It is no surprise that *The Spectator* should have found his indictment of Thatcherspeak "student-level" and the attacks on Richard Atten-

borough's *Gandhi* and David Lean's *A Passage to India* "intemperate," for the palpability of his hits is unerringly registered in the petulance of those whose myths are pricked. In a climate of such national self-deceit or indifference that a statement like "every major institution in this country is permeated by racial prejudice to some degree, and the unwillingness of the white majority to recognize this is the main reason why it can remain the case" (134) is so far from being regarded as a redundant statement of self-evident fact as to be treated to cabinet-level finger-wagging, a voice like Rushdie's—bludgeoning but witty, committed but urbane, Bombay-toned but Cambridge-inflected—is both salutary and resonant.

The seventy essays are grouped into twelve sections: three concerning India and Pakistan, one on film, one on migrants in Britain, one on British or Palestinian politics (the Palestine piece an interview with Edward Said), five comprising reviews of writers from Africa, Britain, Europe, South America, and the United States respectively, and a final batch of five pieces generated by the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*. The least provocative are the groupings of reviews. While the individual items carry the name of an author rather than a text, their scope is usually circumscribed by the nature of the original medium: "V. S. Naipaul" or "Julian Barnes" promises possibilities that a date-stamped notice of *The Enigma of Arrival* or *A History of the World in 10¹/₂ Chapters* may disappoint. Nor do broad geographical sortings conceal the contingencies of the genre. Question: what, other than nationality or domicile, do John Berger, Graham Greene, John le Carré, Bruce Chatwin, and Kazuo Ishiguro have in common? Answer: they were all once reviewed somewhere by Salman Rushdie. Question: why do the essays "On Adventure" and "At the Adelaide Festival" warrant inclusion in the same group? Answer: they would fit even less well into any of the others, such as section ten, where Marquez and Llosa rattle around by themselves, or section eleven, where the Americans—including the big four of Rushdie's impressionable years: Roth, Bellow, Pynchon, and Vonnegut—are tripping over each other.

The odd alliances wrought by editorial exigency and generic intractability provide ironic counterpoint to the burden of one of the most declarative essays, "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist," which has some timely comments to make on disciplinary straitjacketing. But as a writer of discursive prose, Rushdie is finally a more stimulating polemicist than literary critic. He declares his intellectual, political, and moral allegiances with passion, and his analyses of the ailments of both his original and adoptive countries have a vibrancy in their indignant engagement and genuine concern that tends to slacken into mere partisan enthusiasm or debunking cleverness in the reviewing. That having been said, there are few writers whose newspaper ephemera can stand being dressed up in hardback, and Rushdie's are probably worth holding on to more than most.