

Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Intertextual Strategies in "Midnight's Children" and "The Tin Drum"

PATRICIA MERIVALE

SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *Midnight's Children* (1981) is characterized throughout by a "translation," as flamboyant as it is skillful, of themes, topoi, events, characters, images, and above all rhetorical and metaphorical strategies from "western" fictions — of which Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959) are the two most significant — into the "Indian" terms of Rushdie's own narrative. "Magic Realism" is a shorthand term for many of these strategies: *Midnight's Children* owes its "magic," one could say, to García Márquez and its "realism" to Günter Grass, even though such a formulation smacks of that somewhat primitive version of intertextuality employed by Grass's hero, Oskar, when he "shuffle[s] the loose leaves of *Rasputin* and [Goethe's] *Elective Affinities* like playing cards, so creating a new book" (*Drum* 86).¹

Midnight's Children asks to be categorized as Magic Realism, if only because of its obvious and often-noted indebtedness to García Márquez, the *fons et origo* of Magic Realism for the present generation. In its multiplied fantasies, its introductions of the supernatural into the everyday, its hauntings and its "traffic of the dead" (Márquez 378), its characters fatally crushed by their obsessions, and above all in its apocalyptic vision of the extinction of a family from the earth, standing synecdochally, at its conclusion, for a more general apocalypse, it is indeed a most "Márquezan" book, and its magic is largely a "Márquezan" magic. But insofar as its "mimetic quotient" can be seen for the most part as an imitation of history,² its "realism," in the sense of its literary strategies for imitating history, owes more to *The Tin Drum*. In books where

ambiguous paternity forms a large part of the search for origins (and in a metafiction where "origins" must also be metatextual ones), the putative father of Rushdie's hero-narrator, Saleem Sinai, must be (by a somewhat subtler *genealogical* model of intertextuality) Grass's dwarf, Oskar, even though, metaphorically speaking, Saleem thinks of himself as "fathered by history" (*Children* 118).

Both Grass's and Rushdie's heroes are, in the phrase used in *Midnight's Children*, "handcuffed to history" (420), obliged to bear witness to their times, with "no getting away from the date" (9) for either of them. Year by year, event by event, the "times" build up their selves as well as their stories; "myself, in my historical role" (86) links self and story through comic zeugmas of synchronicity, like Oskar's observation that "Kurt's whooping cough, simultaneously with the Afrika Korps, came to an end" (306), and hyperbolic assertions of responsibility, like Saleem's comment that "Nehru's death . . . too, was all my fault" (279).

Saleem and Oskar share grotesque physical deformities: by the end of the book they are both impotent and suffering the excruciating pains of physical dissolution; Saleem has become, in his own eyes, "a big-headed, top-heavy dwarf" (*Children* 447). They share, further, an alienated perspective on their world, and the picaresque life-journey appropriate to a trickster/artist-hero with a thousand and one faces and several names; but, above all, they share the artistic compulsion to seek their own identity through, in Stephen Kellman's phrase, a "self-begetting" novel, one which will, synecdochally, also account for the history of their time and place. Saleem's face is "the whole map of *India*" (231) and his thirty years of life are a microcosm of India's thirty-year course from Independence through Emergency (1947-78). Like Oskar, "the real lead [who] had been cast in the role of an extra" (*Drum* 276), Saleem, this "perennial victim [of history], persists in seeing himself as [its] protagonist" (*Children* 237).

At the very beginning of his story, Rushdie pays conspicuous though oblique tribute to Grass in his account of the German connections of Saleem's supposed grandfather, Aadam Aziz. He spent five years in Germany; his nose yields three drops of blood (*Children* 10) in seeming echo of the three Parsifalian drops on the

snow (*Drum* 459); his German anarchist friends, Oskar — who, incidentally, "died . . . like a comedian" (*Children* 29) — and Ilse unsettle his Muslim and Indian presuppositions, yet at the same time distance him with their "Orientalist" notion "that India — like radium — had been 'discovered' by the Europeans . . . that he [Aziz] was somehow the invention of their ancestors" (*Children* 11). Thus Rushdie, although he valorizes many of Grass's literary strategies throughout, makes clear that he will "transpose" or "translate" them on his own terms. Since he sees "Magic Realism," at least as practiced by García Márquez, [as] a development of Surrealism that expresses a *genuinely* "Third World" consciousness" (Rushdie 1982, 3; emphasis added), it is not surprising that he finds its techniques helpful in making such transpositions. Rushdie might well agree with Stephen Slemon that read "as post-colonial discourse . . . magic realism can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity" (21). As Srivastava has pointed out (66-72), Rushdie poses an ideological, postcolonial opposition to that linear, imperialist history which represses and distorts India's own sense of its history; thus Saleem both suffers and reports on a "disease of history" in need of Nietzschean, Foucauldian, perhaps especially (Mahatma) Gandhian, medicines.

"To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (*Children* 109). It is legitimate to see this — as Srivastava does (65) — as a specifically *Indian* urge to encapsulate the whole of reality. And I have not forgotten that Ganesh, the elephant-headed Indian "patron deity of literature"³ is the patron deity of *Midnight's Children*, that Saleem has one Indian parent (H. Hatter of G. V. Desani's wonderful novel "all about" him, perhaps?), and that *Midnight's Children* as metafiction is, among other things, as Timothy Brennan tells us, a specifically *postcolonial* metafiction, a "novel . . . about Third-World novels" (85; emphasis added). But for my immediate purpose I need to stress that Rushdie, like Grass and García Márquez, is writing an "encyclopedic" fiction; he is deploying strategies adapted largely from these two major western models; this adaptation Brennan describes quite accurately (albeit somewhat pejoratively), as Rushdie's "overt

cosmopolitanism," his "Third-World thematics as seen through the elaborate fictional architecture of European high art" (27).

Each book is shaped encyclopedically, in the first instance, as the Family Chronicle of an extended, claustrophobic, ingrown, quasi-incestuous, matriarchal, and doomed family. But Grass and Rushdie, unlike García Márquez, want us, having swallowed the world and the family, to go on to "understand one life." These two "autobiographical" novels are, of course, Bildungsromans — indeed Künstlerromans — as well as genealogical allegorizings of historical and metatextual particularities. Both autobiographies start, Shandeanly,⁴ well in advance of the hero's birth; Saleem's listener fears, indeed, that he will never reach it: "You better get a move on or you'll die before you get yourself born" (38). Both are much concerned with tracing origins, and particularly with establishing paternity, for the Name of the Father is multiple in each: Oskar, sure at least that he knows who his mother is, has a choice of two fathers; Saleem collects fathers throughout the book and has at least three mothers. They pass their ambiguity of origins on to the next generation: Kurt (he of the whooping cough) is probably the son of Oskar's probable father rather than Oskar's own son; Kurt, the black marketeer, the quintessence of the normal and ordinary in postwar Germany, inevitably and from the beginning rejects Oskar's paternal claim upon him — a taste for drumming, Oskar has to admit, is not inheritable. Aadam Sinai, on the other hand, although certainly *not* Saleem's son, has the elephant ears that go with Saleem's elephant nose to assert a clear affinity of Ganesh-like temperament; it seems likely that Aadam *will* acknowledge Saleem's paternal claim upon him. The sexual aspects of family life are similarly convoluted, although Rushdie's incestuous patterning of confusion between sisters and non-sisters, between sisters and aunts, is explicitly *narrated* in the García Márquez mode.

Oskar and Saleem are both "thirty-year-old heroes," in Theodore Ziolkowski's sense; they retreat, at thirty, to "the fringes" of life (*Drum* 138), an insane asylum and a pickle factory, respectively, to reckon up an individual as well as a collective past, to come to grips with their own share of collective responsibility and guilt for "those who had come to grief on the shoal of [our] exist-

tence" (*Drum* 569). Then, facing the indestructible principles of evil in their lives, Oskar's "Wicked Witch / Black as pitch!" and Saleem's Widow (a "Black Angel" whose historical manifestation was Indira Gandhi), having written these books as testaments, turn towards death. They are "human being[s] to whom history could do no more" (*Children* 447).

These two heroes are both freaks with, for much of their lives, a pair of uncanny powers: Saleem's telepathy and sense of smell; Oskar's impossibly expressive drumming and glass-shattering voice. They are both clairaudient from birth: "I lay in my crib and listened, and everything that happened, happened because of me" (*Children* 133; cf. *Drum* 40). Born under strange circumstances, surrounded by omens and prophecies, endowed with ambiguous talents, these child-voyeurs learn too much, for "the grownups lived their lives in [their] presence without fear of being observed" (*Children* 129).

"I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively," says Saleem (238). His and Oskar's passive roles as witnesses and their magical capacities for witnessing provide a pseudo-realistic rationale for their accounts of both private and public history, in which their more active role usually takes the form of strange influences over crowds and individuals. They both play at being messianic: Oskar as leader of the gang of Dusters, for whom his glass-shattering voice makes him a mock-Christ; Saleem as the leader of the Pakistani army tracking team, for whom the guiding power of his remarkable nose makes him a mock-Buddha. They are both at times part of small collectives of similar freaks: Oskar's friendship with his fellow-dwarfs anticipates both Saleem's uneasy fellowship, by way of the telepathic linking between him as human radio receiver and the "gang" of Midnight's Children (the thousand and one children born at the midnight of India's independence), and his later and easier one with his fellow-entertainers, the Magicians of the New Delhi ghetto. Both heroes lose their primary powers under similarly dramatic circumstances: Saleem at first from a misguided sinus operation on his titanically overstuffed nose, the apparent source of his telepathic powers, and then when hit by a "silver spittoon" at his "parents' funeral pyre" (343); Oskar from the blow of a stone at

his putative father's funeral, which blow (echoing his original fall downstairs as Saleem's loss echoes his original nasal episode and his concussion) prompts Oskar, like a tiny Prospero, to bury his drum and start growing again. Note that here, as often, Rushdie *multiplies* episodes from Grass; in this case he is doubling the events which first provide and then take away their special magic powers.

They are witnesses to their places as well as to their times. García Márquez's Macondo is a landscape of the soul, one shifting phantasmagorically over time in size, status, and culture, while Rushdie's Bombay and Grass's Danzig are utterly specific, time-bound, mappable urban topographies, to which we are given city guides, as well as bird's-eye views with both spatial and temporal perspective:

Our Bombay, Padma! . . . grew at breakneck speed, acquiring a cathedral and an equestrian statue of the Mahratta warrior-king Sivaji which (we used to think) came to life at night and galloped awesomely through the city streets — right along Marine Drive! On Chowpatty Sands! (93)

Saleem can never be as inward as this with the places of his exile, in Pakistan — “I won't deny it: I never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay” (*Children* 307) — any more than Oskar can render the specific actuality of Düsseldorf with the same passionate attention which has been squandered on every stone and corner of Danzig. Their visions of their respective cities are small-scale versions of their synoptic visions of Europe, India, and the world:

I have made the Vistula and the Seine flow and set the waves of the Baltic and Atlantic dashing against coasts of pure disembodied string . . . the resulting landscape . . . I call Europe for short.
(*Drum* 408; cf. 373, 378, 384)

The world as discovered [telepathically] from a broken-down clocktower [like Oskar's view of Danzig from the Stockturm (*Drum* 96)]: . . . in Calcutta I slept rough in a section of drain-pipe. By now thoroughly bitten by the travel bug, I zipped down to Cape Comorin and became a fisherwoman . . . standing on red sands washed by three seas. . . . (*Children* 173)

Oskar's vision of the world is also a vision of world war:

[A]t my feet I saw not only Europe but the whole world. Americans and Japanese were doing a torch-dance on the island of Luzon. . . . Mountbatten was feeding Burmese elephants shells of every caliber . . . while rain fell in Ireland, [Koniev and Zhukov] broke through on the Vistula. (373)

The thirty years of history to which, and for which, these heroes feel responsible include partitions, shifting of boundaries, transfers of population, “ten million refugees” (*Children* 357), racism, atrocity, and war. German currency reform, leading to the “economic miracle” for the sole benefit of the “bourgeois-smug,” has its analogies in the years of the great land reclamations which gave Bombay its hollow golden age. These two postwar prosperities are sharply satirized for their frauds, fakes, and complacencies. Youth gangs (similarly nicknamed) are proleptic for adult gangs in each book, as the child-hero falls victim to his contemporaries. A certain Mian Abdullah, Oskar-like, shatters glass by his high-pitched humming: a glass eye, and one (key) window (*Children* 48). Small- and large-scale firebugs destroy godowns and mills, synagogues and cities; Oskar’s catalogue of Danzig’s millennium-long history of arson suitably culminates in the Russian invasion (*Drum* 378). The dictatorship of Indira Gandhi, who bulldozes slums and ensures, with vasectomies and castrations, that India’s hope, the *Midnight’s Children*, will have neither progeny nor future, is an historical climax in Rushdie’s fiction that has equivalent status to the persecutions of Jews in Danzig and to other, remoter, horrors of the Third Reich, as Oskar perceives them. “Fascinated by an immediate reality that came to be more fantastic than the vast universe of [their] imagination,” as García Márquez puts it (44), Oskar and Saleem find the historical actualities “fantastic” to the point of horror, and often past the point of endurance. They are indeed human beings “to whom history could do no more.” But they are not deconstructing the historical in favour of the mythical, as García Márquez usually does, finding, because of the falsity of history, that atrocities can only be *truly* remembered in legend: “sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts” (*Children* 47). Rather, for Grass and Rushdie, the historical has a clear ontological status; but it may be perceived, described,

and interpreted in such a way as to show the marvellous and grotesque inherent in the actual.

The events of history and the nature of history coalesce in that region where both are made of words. Choice and change of nationality go with the juggling of boundaries; so do choice and change of language. "The old folks had been turned into Germans. They were Poles no longer and spoke Kashubian only in their dreams" (*Drum* 289). The consequences of the Indian language riots, triggered off, in the story, by Saleem's inadvertently mocking Gujarati jingle, are as inflammatory as are many of Oskar's drumming exploits:

But the boundaries of these states were not formed by rivers, or mountains . . . they were instead, walls of words. Language divided us. . . . I am warming over all this cold history, these old dead struggles between the barren angularity of Marathi . . . and Gujarati's boggy, Kathiawari softness. . . . (*Children* 189)

These riots "ended," as it happened, "with the partition of the state of Bombay" (192), a major historical event clearly (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*) brought about by Saleem's seemingly trifling intervention.

The linguistic causes and consequences of history, which are given such emphasis in these accounts, may serve to remind us that Magic Realism is not only, as it is so often described, out of partial tribute to the painterly origins of the term,⁵ a way of *seeing* — "reality is a question of perspective," says Saleem (165) — but also a way of *saying*: on a larger scale it is a way of telling a story; on a smaller scale, it is a way of showing "reality" more truly with the aid of the various magics of metaphor.

Both Rushdie and Grass (unlike García Márquez) tell a first-person, seemingly episodic story in a sequence of chapters, grouped in each case into three books: of eight, fifteen, and seven chapters respectively in *Midnight's Children*, of sixteen, eighteen, and twelve chapters respectively in *The Tin Drum*. In Rushdie, the chapters, which correspond to pickle jars (of which, as Saleem would say, more later), explicitly add up to Saleem's age as he ends the book: thirty. In Grass, the last of his forty-six chapters is called "Thirty," for the same reason. Each chapter in both books has a title which captures pithily and emblematically a key object

or situation, and many of Rushdie's titles are sufficiently similar to Grass's to remind us of some thematic resemblances. (I give the Rushdie title first in each pair). Titles like "The Perforated Sheet" and "The Wide Skirt," "Accident in a Washing Chest" and "In the Clothes Cupboard," and "Under the Carpet" and "Under the Raft," suggest, among other similarities of plot, the womb-like retreats suited to the voyeurism and escapism of these largely passive heroes; "All-India Radio" and "Special Communiqués" suggest the metaphor of telecommunications as the means by which "news" makes itself known, available for turning into "history." "Mercurochrome" and "Disinfectant" suggest the key role of hospitals in each hero's life, and Oskar subtitles his penultimate chapter "Adoration of a Preserving Jar."

Saleem and Oskar are writing, telling, or reading out their stories within a frame narrative, to a clearly delineated listener, a "narratee," who is a stand-in for the implied reader and a perpetual reminder of the present tense of narrating time. Bruno, Oskar's warder in the insane asylum, and Padma, Saleem's fellow-pickler in the pickle-factory, eventually his fiancée, but chiefly his "necessary ear" (149), are both permitted to interrupt and even to contribute short sections of their own; both provide — as Padma does through her "paradoxical earthiness of spirit" (150) — some Panzaic "realism," some reader-responsiveness from within the text, to keep the narrator's tale on track and his Quixotic feet on the ground.⁶

Critics have praised Grass for his "sensitivity to the magic qualities of things" and for his "realistic precision [in the] pursuit of fantasy as part of reality";⁷ they are already rightly praising Rushdie for the same qualities. But further keys to mimesis in Grass and Rushdie may be found in their (largely epic) figures of speech.

The two authors share an encyclopedic taste, like García Márquez, for "swallowing the world" through inclusiveness and exactness of description, especially in the form of lists — the tables of contents are the first "lists" in each book to establish a sense of "the supremacy of the inanimate." Sometimes such lists provide cryptic anticipations of the story to come, as in the prophetic verses uttered just before Saleem's birth: "Washing will hide him — voices will guide him / . . . Spittoon will brain him — Doctors will drain

him" (87). Often they serve as a recapitulation of the plot thus far, as in Oskar's Hamletic rumination in the graveyard:

My grandmother's four skirts . . . the maze of scars on Herbert Truczinski's back, the blood-absorbing mail baskets at the Polish Post Office, America — but what is America compared to Street-car Number 9 that went to Brösen? (444)

His final peroration to the shadow of the Black Witch has a similar function:

The Witch, black as pitch, . . . had always been there, [in] all words . . . and all stones . . . and all the shattered glass. . . and all the groceries, all the flour and sugar in blue pound and half-pound bags . . . cemeteries I stood in, flags I knelt on, coconut fiber I lay on . . . (571)

Such Rabelaisian catalogues are largely made up of talismanic objects, like Saleem's spittoon or Oskar's drum, constantly recurring leitmotifs, in both their descriptive roles and their symbolic references, synecdochally mimicking all-inclusiveness by a canny selection of apparently random items. The telepathic catalogue of Saleem's vision from the Bombay clocktower (*Children* 173) becomes an olfactory catalogue of his experience of Karachi:

Formlessly . . . the fragrances poured into me: the pustular body odours of young men in loose pajamas holding hands in Sadar evenings . . . the aroma of contraband cigarettes and 'black-money' . . . Mosques poured over me the itr of devotion. . . . (317)

Then his "overpowering desire for form assert[s] itself": synesthetically, Saleem classifies the scents by colour, then shapes them into a "general theory of smell" and then into a "science of nasal ethics" (318), a key set of Rushdie's rhetorical strategies for making the moral and emotional concrete. Saleem's marvellous nose can identify "the nauseating odor of defeat" (317) and "the old aroma of failure" (202), or detect that "unfairness smelt like onions" (370). "Smells assail [Oskar]" throughout as well (568); again Rushdie *multiplies* a Grassian trope.

All three authors are linked through such figures of speech as the hyperboles of amnesia, or of Rushdie's charming variation on a theme by García Márquez: "for forty days, we were besieged by the dust" (*Children* 271), characteristically testifying to an aes-

thetic of abundance, the feature which most clearly distinguishes their work from the sparer imaginings of Kafka and Borges, their immediate predecessors in the interweaving of the tangible and the marvellous. One of Rushdie's minor characters encapsulates this aesthetic destiny: "a painter whose paintings had grown larger and larger as he tried to get the whole of life into his art . . . wanted to be a miniaturist and . . . got elephantiasis instead!" (*Children* 48).

Perhaps the most concentratedly "magical" of such metaphors are those of abstractions reified: the infectious weeping in Oskar's Onion Cellar, the objective correlative of the collective pseudo-remorse (following the collective amnesia) of the Germans, is like the "pigmentation disorder" (*Children* 179) which occurs among those prosperous Indians who turn white upon inheriting Colonial prerogatives from the departing British, each ailment serving as a compact moral allegory for a collective historical phase.

Oskar's "carnival make-believe" (*Drum* 452), the telepathic connections among the Midnight's Children, the games that the Delhi Magicians play with illusion, all suggest in context that "Reality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real" (*Children* 200), but rather, in terms of Magic Realism, more real:

[T]he magicians were people whose hold on reality was absolute; they gripped it so powerfully that they could bend it every which way in the service of their arts, but they never forgot what it was.
(*Children* 399)

Saleem seems to contrast an Indian Magic Realism, like that exemplified by these magicians, with a Pakistani fantasy, devaluing the latter:

[In my Indian childhood] I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in [my Pakistani adolescence] I was adrift, disorientated, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities, and lies. (326)

Such an attitude has political consequences:

Karachiites had only the slipperiest of grasps on reality, and were therefore willing to turn to their leaders for advice on what was real and what was not. [They were] beset by illusionary sand-dunes and the ghosts of ancient kings. . . . (308)

What seems to be Saleem's description of his own style likewise suggests a commitment to Magic Realism:

Matter of fact descriptions of the outré and bizarre, and their reverse, namely heightened, stylized versions of the everyday — these techniques . . . are also attitudes of mind. . . . (218)

"Heightened, stylized" descriptions can be found, for example, in insertions of refrain-structured prose poems (very similar in form to some of Oskar's incantatory flights) into Saleem's first-person narration, already crammed with matter of fact descriptions of the outré and bizarre.

The Magicians who are, like Saleem but in their different medium, bending reality without ever forgetting what it is, are Magic Realists and thus evidently artists. But so, in a more humble way, is Saleem's foster-mother, Mary Pereira: "nobody makes achar-chutney like our Mary . . . because she puts her feelings inside [it]." She does so with the feelings of others also: very early in his life "she stirred [Saleem's] guilt into green chutney" too (458). She resembles in this respect Oskar's supposed father, Matzerath, whose epitaph is that "he, an impassioned cook, had a knack for metamorphosing feelings into soup" (*Drum* 36). These several parent figures supply our artist-heroes with a method for metaphor based on the emotional significance of material things, on food as art, the homeliest yet the most pervasive of the innumerable metaphors in these books for the operations of the creative imagination.⁸

The primary self-reflexive image for the creative imagination in *Midnight's Children* seems to be Saleem's telepathic powers, but it is quickly replaced by the more widely diffused (although non-eponymous) olfactory image, which, in turn, modulates into the gastronomic images of his jars of chutney, which constitute, lined up, the chapters of the book itself. Similarly, Oskar, who can create an art work simply by coughing and sneezing (349), is chiefly known for his drumming; it is mirrored in Herbert Truczinski's historical back-scars (a tip of the hat to Kafka's "In the Penal Colony"?), which are, in turn, reproduced in Bruno's string constructions, a *mise en abyme*, like the "ever so fragile house of cards" (*Drum* 232), literally exchangeable with Oskar's own storytell-

ing: "every time I tell him some fairy tale, he shows his gratitude by bringing out his latest knot construction" (9).

Speaking more abstractly than usual, Oskar says, "inevitably the thread of events wound itself into loops and knots which became known as the fabric of History" (373); evidently Bruno can, with his string art, like that later artist, Eddie Amsel, in Grass's *Hundejahre*, who turned History into scarecrows, reify the metaphoric "fabric of history" into the concrete loops and knots of "a figure, which in accordance with Mr. Matzerath's [Oskar's] story . . . I [Bruno] shall call 'Refugee from the East'" (408). And there follows a recapitulation of Oskar's adventures in the familiar catalogue form — all turned into string, that is, History. It climaxes in Bruno's attempt to delineate, in the form of "a single [string] figure which, moreover, should present a *striking resemblance to himself* [Oskar]" (emphasis added), that Goethe-Rasputin dialectic — "how many miles of string I have tied into knots, trying to create a valid synthesis of the two extremes" (412), Bruno complains — which has shaped Oskar's artistic life. He has thus made a *mise en abyme*, in string, of Oskar's "new book," *The Tin Drum*, itself the synthesis of Oskar's two sacred texts. And Rushdie has multiplied, like so much else in the patterns adapted from Grass, his allegories of intertextual origins.

The two chief avatars of the Artist in these books are those of the Artist-as-Entertainer (their chief role within the *action* of each book) and of the Artist-as-Historian (their chief role in the *narration* of each book). The two roles overlap in an image like Oskar's painting of "the blockade of Berlin on the table-top with champagne" (454). Both heroes are aware of themselves in motley, as court jesters, as fools in the Carnival tradition (see, for example, *Drum* 452). Their most direct influence upon history is in such scenes as the incitements of the Language Riots in Rushdie and the Pied Piping of the Onion Cellar in Grass, where their enacting of their "historical role" (*Children* 86) is chiefly manifested in their role as entertainers; Art is powerful. Such power implies responsibility (in both senses), which further implies the possibility of guilt.

"Entertainers would orchestrate my life" (101), says Saleem. Bebra, the master-entertainer of the troupe of dwarfs with whom

Oskar is briefly affiliated, likewise orchestrates Oskar's. Both heroes make their living largely as entertainers, though again art and history overlap in Oskar's employment as a carver of epitaphs upon gravestones. As narrators they are also entertainers; they are very conscious of the need to hold their audience, which consists, in the first instance, of their reader-surrogates, Bruno and Padma. Saleem, as Nancy Batty has emphasized, is particularly struck (as is García Márquez) by the analogy of his role as storyteller to that of Scheherazade and of his story to the frame narrative of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

The "literal" connections between the heroes and history are deliberately strained; it is a necessary fiction for both narrators to see themselves as "protagonists," yet, paradoxically, also as "victims." But however remote or indirect Saleem's "first attempt at rearranging history" (260) or however strained the "metaphoric" grounds for supposing that (for instance) the 1965 Indo-Pakistani "war happened because I dreamed Kashmir into the fantasies of our rulers" (339), and, conversely, that "the hidden purpose of the . . . war was . . . the elimination of my benighted family from the face of the earth" (338), that they both see themselves acting upon history, while synchronously being its central victims, is a self-delusion appropriate to Magic Realism, empowering the subjective distortions and the grotesque shifts of perspective that touch the Historical with the Marvellous.

"My [glass-shattering] number was conceived along historical lines" (*Drum* 318); their obligations as historians override in the end their obligations as entertainers. The gastronomic metaphors for art become metaphors for history, as Saleem finally puts *his* whole "number" together. "Pickle-fumes . . . stimulate the juices of memory" (166), and it is an almost Proustian taste of chutney that brings Saleem back to his Bombay heritage, very much as Oskar, in the asylum, must re-collect his life, through the process of re-drumming its events, in order to compose his story. The making of art or story is thus a perfect image of the operations of Magic Realism: "It happened that way because that's how it happened" (461) is Saleem's final — historian's — justification for whatever most strains credulity in his account. But what is true is also "what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe" (*Chil-*

dren 270-71), and thus, if you are skilled at incorporating "memories, dreams, ideas" into your chutney, and possess "above all a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled," you may, like Saleem, create magic through the mimetic, in a "chutnification of history; the grand [pseudo-Proustian] hope of the pickling of time!" (459-60).

In this essay, I have only touched on the variety of Rushdie's intertextual strategies and the astonishing density of allusions to and echoes of *The Tin Drum* in *Midnight's Children*. And I have just hinted at Rushdie's bricolage of other texts, both Western and Indian. To what purpose or effect is his voraciously appropriative pastiche (I adapt Jean Franco's terms here) of Günter Grass, amounting to, in Bader's pithy, non-judgemental formulation, "an Indian *Tin Drum*"? Given that, as Franco puts it, there "is no innocent relationship between discourses" (105), what are we to make of Rushdie's totalizing intertextuality? A satire or critique of Grass is not in evidence. Is Rushdie inverting the processes of "colonial" domination, or is he displaying the "overt cosmopolitanism" of which Brennan, more judgementally, speaks? His mimicry seems, rather, to be a celebration, with Grass's help, of "people who had been translated, who had . . . entered the condition of metaphor," of "writing . . . at the frontier between . . . cultures" (Grass 1987, 63, 59). Perhaps Grass, by now well-travelled in the East, will soon repay Rushdie's intertextual compliment with a German *Midnight's Children*.

NOTES

¹ A version of this paper was read at an MLA section on "The Mimetic Quotient of Magic Realism," 1983. Rushdie has acknowledged his deep interest in Grass in "Salman Rushdie on Günter Grass," an introduction to Grass's own essay, "*The Tin Drum* in Retrospect," I use the Manheim translation of Grass because Rushdie, knowing no German, used it: "In the summer of 1967 . . . when I was twenty years old, I bought from a bookshop in Cambridge a paperback copy of Ralph Manheim's English translation of *The Tin Drum* . . . there are books which give [writers] permission to become the sort of writers they have it in themselves to be . . ." (180). (Rushdie's introduction also appears in Grass's *On Writing and Politics: 1967-1983*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt, 1985.) The Grass-Rushdie connection has been briefly noted by several reviewers, by Lasdun (72), Wilson (23), and more extensively by Bader, who provides many additional points of similarity. Only Brennan has grappled with any subtlety with this relationship — though briefly and from an explicitly "post-colonial" perspective (27, 39, 66, 81). Brennan also points to the

- "direct influence" of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which seems, clearly, to be another book that gave Rushdie "permission to become [his own] sort of writer." Allusions to both its rhetorical strategies — "Many years later, when . . ." (11) — and to details and incidents from it — "the magicians . . . having forgotten everything to which they could compare anything that happened . . ." (444) — occur throughout *Midnight's Children*.
- 2 "If history is composed of fictions, then fiction can be composed of history," says Nancy Batty pithily (64). González Echevarría develops, with much subtlety and detail, similar propositions on the relationship of myth, history, and literature in Latin America as a whole and in *Cien años* in particular.
 - 3 See C. Kanaganayakam on Ganesh and on Rushdie's many comic inversions and variations of Indian mythic intertexts, as well as on Rushdie's position among Indo-Anglian authors generally; G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) seems a particularly promising analogue, as well as an influence Rushdie acknowledges (see also Couto). Again Brennan gives the strongest and fullest account of Rushdie's crucial (yet "critical") relationship to the "Indo-Anglian" tradition.
 - 4 Wilson (23 ff.) establishes numerous parallels between *Midnight's Children* and *Tristram Shandy*, one of Rushdie's most commented-upon intertexts. Rushdie (Grass 1987, 59) "found, in novels like *Tristram Shandy* . . . a very similar spirit" to that of his own work. Miles (51), however, emphasizes *Grass's* debt to Sterne; intertextuality is multi-foliate.
 - 5 See Menton (1983) on the history of the term, making a strong yet rather static case for its visual and painterly connotations, one which does not materially assist the critic attempting to use the term to categorize narrative and action. His earlier paper on Borges and Magic Realism (1982), however, adapts the painterly context to a more narrative one. See also Slemmon's bibliography (21-24).
 - 6 Wilson (25) makes the case for Padma's strengths and limitations as a reader-surrogate; he employs the useful formula that Rushdie is to Saleem as the reader is to Padma. Batty privileges Padma even further in her narratological analysis of Rushdie's Scheherazadean strategies, which, in her view, make *Midnight's Children* an act of sedition against (Indira Gandhi's) Indian state, with Gandhi herself as the ultimate "implied reader" of the book. This distinctly appealing interpretation is indeed corroborated to a degree by Gandhi's considerable annoyance with both the book and its author. She was, however, notably less vengeful than the Islamic Republic has been in respect to Rushdie's recent, and more explicit, (alleged) blasphemy against the Muslim faith.
 - 7 Thomas (80) is translating from Günter Blöcker's review of *Hundejahre* 1963; Miles (49) quotes Grass himself (Interview, 29), who is specifying the influence on his work of Melville's *Moby Dick*.
 - 8 See Batty on Rushdiean metaphors for narrative: "narrative is a perforated sheet, concealing the whole while revealing a part" (61); it can also be, among other things, an episodic cinema, a symphony, and a labyrinth.

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