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## Transcultural Identity and Translingual Practices in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

**Abstrakt (Tożsamość transkulturowa i praktyki translingwalne w *Szatańskich wersetach* Salmana Rushdiego).** Mój artykuł proponuje lekturę Szatańskich Werseów Salmana Rushdiego (1988) jako serię praktyk kulturowych negocjujących między postkolonialnymi kulturami, historiami migracji, miejskimi pejzażami i translingwalnymi repertuarami. Dąży on do językowej interpretacji spostrzeżeń postkolonialistów takich jak Bill Ashcroft i in. (2002) i Homi Bhabha (2010), którzy twierdzą, że pisarze postkolonialni zdekonstruowali „dyskursy” imperialne poprzez przejęcie i hybrydyzację jednojęzyczności powieści angielskiej. Poprzez analizę jakościową – opartą na ramach teoretycznych i metodologii trzeciej fali socjolingwistyki – esej ten bada relacje między tożsamością a używaniem języka na podstawie językowych wypowiedzi i interakcji bohaterów, skupiając się na roli odmian językowych, zjawiskach kontaktowych i przełączaniu kodów w budowaniu postkolonialnej tożsamości. Szczególną uwagę zwraca się także na sposób, w jaki kreatywność translingwalna przyczynia się do powstawania hybrydowych, imigranckich lub diasporycznych formacji tożsamościowych. Czerpiąc z Kandiah (1998) i Pennycook (2003), interpretuje wypowiedzi performatywne jako „semiotyczne rekonstrukcje”, które rekontekstualizują i aktualizują zasoby językowe, kulturowe i semiotyczne postaci. Wysuwając na pierwszy plan koncepcję *rekonstrukcji semiotycznej*, ma on na celu ujawnienie tzw. metasocjalnego/metakulturowego potencjału wydarzeń performatywnych, jak również rekonstrukcji socjo-semiotycznej i socjo-semantycznej, którą te wydarzenia są w stanie osiągnąć.

**Abstract.** This article proposes a reading of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) as a series of cultural performances negotiating between postcolonial cultures, histories of migration, urban landscapes and translingual repertoires. It seeks to linguistically interpret insights by postcolonialists like Bill Ashcroft et al. (2002) and Homi Bhabha (2010), who have argued that postcolonial writers have deconstructed “discourses” of empire by appropriating and hybridizing the monolingualism of the English novel. Though qualitative analysis – informed by the theoretical frame and methodology of the third wave of sociolinguistics – this essay examines the relationships between identity and language use on the basis of characters' linguistic utterances and interactions, focusing on the role of linguistic varieties, contact phenomena and code-switching in the construction of postcolonial identity. It also pays particular attention to the way in which translingual creativity contributes to the emergence of hybrid, immigrant or diasporic identity formations. Drawing on Kandiah (1998)

and Pennycook (2003), it interprets performative utterances as ‘semiotic reconstructions’, which recontextualize and reaccentuate characters’ linguistic, cultural and semiotic resources. By foregrounding the concept of ‘semiotic reconstruction’, it aims to reveal the so-called metasocial/metacultural potential of performance events as well as the socio-semiotic and socio-semantic reconstruction these events are able to achieve.

**Keywords:** Rushdie, The Satanic Verses (kursywa), transcultural identity, postcolonialism, translingual repertoire, code-switching

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rushdie, Szatańskie wersety, tożsamość transkulturowa, postkolonializm, repertuar translingwalny, przełączanie kodów, code-switching

## 1. Introduction

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist who was born in Bombay in 1947 and, since 2000, has lived in the United States. *The Satanic Verses* is Rushdie’s fourth novel, first published in 1988 and in part inspired by the life of Muhammad. It became a subject of major controversy in 1989, as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran, declared a fatwā, announcing that the author and the book are against Islam, the Prophet and the Qur’an, and calling for the assassination of all those involved in its publication. Indeed, more than 50 people lost their lives as a result of the fatwā. Rushdie remained under police protection until the death threat was over in 2002: “The bounty and fatwa would stay,” President Khatami of Iran declared, “but the Iranian government would ‘dissociate’ itself from [the hard-liners],” and “neither encourage nor permit” anyone to carry out the threat” (Rushdie 2012: 544-545)

*The Satanic Verses* is the final novel of Rushdie’s trilogy: *Midnight’s Children*, his second novel, which won the Booker prize in 1981, is the first installment; *Shame*, published in 1983, is the second. *The Satanic Verses* is a multifaceted novel which can be analyzed from a myriad of perspectives; my focus here is on the relationship between immigrant identities and language. This satirical, magical realist novel alternates between two narratives. The first is a realist one taking place in England (mostly London, the visible but unseen city) and India in the 1980s, and Argentina in the 19th century. The second is a fictional rendition of a historical narrative<sup>1</sup> (comprised of Gibreel’s dream visions) occurring in the Arabian Peninsula (the imaginary cities of Jahilia and Yathrib which correspond to seventh-century Mecca and Medina), Titlipur (an imaginary Indian village) and England in the 7th century and the 1980s (see Aravamudan 1989).

At the beginning of the frame narrative, a radical Islamic group blows up a plane near the English Channel. The two protagonists of Indian Muslim background, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, magically survive the catastrophe. Gibreel is a Bollywood star who specializes in playing Hindu deities. Chamcha is a voiceover actor in England who, thanks to his fantastic capacity to imitate voices, has become a legend in

<sup>1</sup> My analysis does not concern itself with the historical narrative.

the entertainment business. He seeks to escape from under his wealthy father's thumb by turning his back on the motherland and embracing his British identity. During their fall, both principal characters undergo a fantastic metamorphosis: Chamcha physically changes into the devil and Gibreel begins to impersonate the Islamic archangel Gabriel. In London, Gibreel is attempting to escape from his past, the memory of his ex-lover who had committed suicide as a result of his cheating. He wants to start fresh and seeks the love of the English mountaineer Allie Cone, but is unable to redeem himself and excise his hallucinations. After returning to England in the guise of the devil, Chamcha's English wife leaves him. Suspected of being an illegal immigrant, Chamcha is arrested and brutalized by the police, but is welcomed by Black Britain. As the two migrants' fates become increasingly intertwined, Chamcha's story of political awakening is interlaced with Gibreel's schizophrenic visions.

### 1.1. Linguistic background

South Asia is comprised of the following states: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives. South Asian English has three distinguishable regional varieties: Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan English. According to Kachru (1990: 36), South Asian English should not be taken to imply linguistic homogeneity nor a uniform linguistic competence but should be understood on a continuum from pidgin to standard (or educated) varieties. In light of the article's focus on *The Satanic Verses*, I will be concentrating on Indian English.

In India, colonial language policy has determined the history of English. English arrived with the East India Company in the early 1600s. The 17th and 18th century debate concerning Indian education was concluded by Lord Macaulay's Minute which set out to create "a class who may be interpreters between us and those whom we govern, a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect." According to the spirit of the Minute of 1835, the British Raj (1765–1947) "established English firmly as the medium of instruction and administration" (Kachru 1990: 37). After independence in 1947, the debate concerning English intensified: some called for English to become the official language, seeing its potential as a language of science and technology, and as a "bridge" or "link" language. Others, however, rejected English, as it was the language of the colonizers (Sridhar 2008: 406).

The new constitution made Hindi and English official languages. From the 1960s onwards, the "three-language formula" for language learning was formulated by the Ministry of Education which provided for the study of Hindi, English and a local regional language. However, Chaklader (1990: 96) among others, claims that "neither Hindi nor non-Hindi states followed this directive."

The features of Indian English can be summarized as follows:

- It has a long history of acculturation, tradition and institutionalization as a second language;

- In the linguistic repertoires of Indian speakers, Indian English dominates in some functions and other local language(s) in others;
- Indian English has four important functions: instrumental (education), regulative (in the legal system and administration), interpersonal (lingua franca), innovative (Kachru 1990: 37);
- It is the language of the education, administration, and the legal system; it is also used in politics, religious life, the music and film industry.

One of the most salient linguistic aspects of Indian English is the use of doublets and duplications for the purposes of intensification or affirmation. Numerous examples demonstrate these linguistic phenomena in *The Satanic Verses: slowslow* (Rushdie 1988: 21<sup>2</sup>), *big-big* (68), *calm-calm* (333), *bad-bad* (334). It can be seen that Rushdie exploits the creative possibilities of reduplication: *glum chum*, *moochy pooch* (249), *tarty-farty* (284). Duplication can be paired also with code-switching<sup>3</sup> when the speaker changes from the Hindi to the English expression, e.g., *not a tola*<sup>4</sup>, *not an ounce* (246).

We can detect the morphosyntactic features of Indian languages in Indian English, e.g., influenced by the first language, there is no difference in tag questions: “We sell ourselves, *isn't it?*” (70, italics mine) In Indian English, differentiated forms of tag questions (such as those in British English) appear too direct, assertive and aimed. Contrary to these variant tags, invariant tags perform politeness functions (see Brown–Levinson 1987), suggesting respect and restraint (Bhatt 2010: 528). The use of the negative particle is frequently used as a tag: “God, but it’s spooky, *no?*” (65–66, italics mine).

The adverb *only* appears only after the object, at the end of the tag-sentence: “And as to your Snow White princess, she is of the opinion that a child is a mother’s property *only*, because men may come and men may go but she goes on forever, *isn't it?*” (325, italics mine) This unexpected syntactic construction emphasizes the element or the moment of the situation, which is usually not highlighted because, semantically, it appears to be least important (Bhatt 2010: 529). The same holds true for the adverb *even* in the next example: “Damn good for him the movies don’t smell, or he wouldn’t get one job as a leper *even*” (13, italics mine). It needs noting that in questions the subject and the auxiliary verb are not always exchanged: *I have a gift for accents. . . . Why I shouldn't employ?* (59)

The use of the progressive aspect (-*ing*) is prevalent: *I grow so old, baba, I was thinking you would not recognize* (65). The use of prepositions may differ from their use in British English: in some cases, Indian English speakers may use different prepositions or not use them at all; it can also happen that prepositions are used when ordinarily they would not be used in British English (Balasubramanian 2009). According to Balasubramanian, similar differences characterize the use of articles: Indian English speakers

<sup>2</sup> All quotes henceforth cite the following edition: Rushdie, Salman 1992. *The Satanic Verses*. Dover: Consortium.

<sup>3</sup> Code-switching refers to speakers changing between languages or linguistic varieties (see Gumperz 1982, among many others).

<sup>4</sup> Traditional Indian measurement of weight: c. 11.67 gram.

may use more or less articles than their British counterparts, or their use of definite and indefinite articles may seem inconsistent to English speakers. As the official at the Indian Consulate says, “[I]t is issue of proof. You see, anybody could come and tell that their father is dying, isn’t it? In order to expedite” (511).

## 1.2. Theoretical background

The third wave of sociolinguistics conceptualizes style as a set of linguistic features and uses which play an active role in the construction of social meaning and identity. This approach foregrounds the study of stylization/styling, crossing, and performance, centering ways of actively, creatively and reflexively creating social meanings and identities (see Bartha–Hámori 2010).

According to the social constructivist approach, Judith Butler’s concepts of performance and performativity are the means of identity construction and resistance to social norms (Bakhtin 1981, Bhabha 2010). In performative speech acts, speakers reconstruct the social and ideological meanings usually associated with linguistic forms and varieties. In this study, I connect the concept of performativity with Richard Bauman’s notion of cultural performance.

Butler’s concept of performativity can be connected to Bauman’s concept of (high or cultural) performance. According to Bauman (2001: 168–169), performance is typically a public display of communicative competence, distinguishable from other performances on the basis of generic and formal features. High performances are temporally and spatially bound, planned and programmed events (such as a theatrical production) endowed with heightened intensity (Bauman 1992: 46, Bauman–Briggs 1990). Coupland (2007: 147–148) extends the characteristics identified by Bauman, arguing that high performance produces “communicative focusing” on multiple levels: *form, meaning, situation, performer, relational, achievement and repertoire focusing*. To a greater or lesser extent, focusing in overlapping dimensions characterize high performances.

Also important to consider are the culturally specific ways of indexing and coding cultural performances. Whereas the conventional opening – *Once upon a time* – signals the telling of a fairy tale, the announcement – *Ladies and Gentlemen* – heralds another type of performance. In the absence of such codes, the setting, seating arrangement, rituals, linguistic and stylistic features help identify the performance. In order to introduce or mark performance-frames, it is important to recognize that different communities of practice use different codes (cf. Goffman 1986).

The most important feature of cultural performance is, according to Bauman (1992: 47–48), reflexivity. Cultural performances have the capacity to make audiences reflect upon the socio-psychological, cultural, and formal norms animating the performed event. Coupland (2007: 149) calls the reflexive maneuvers cultural performances set in motion their metasocial and metacultural potential. Because performances encompass a given community’s most memorable, repeated, and reflexively accessible repertoires (Bauman 2001), the meanings and identities constituted by these performances reveal

the broader system of signification of which they are part and parcel. By embedding linguistic and cultural practices in social relations, performances lay open to scrutiny how identity is constructed and reconstructed.

Kachru's (1985: 20) notion of 'bilingual creativity' contains "those creative linguistic processes which are the result of competence in two or more languages." According to Kachru, bilingual creativity refers first to the designing of a text which uses linguistic resources from two or more languages; second, to "the use of verbal strategies in which subtle linguistic adjustments are made for psychological, sociological, and attitudinal reasons" (1985: 20). The concept of bilingual creativity<sup>5</sup> is the first step in eliminating the dichotomy between native and non-native Englishes, since it looks at language contact phenomena, code-switching and -mixing in terms of the repertoire available to the bilingual speaker, that is, as new, hybridized norms (and not as deviations from standard Englishes).

At the same time, bilingual creativity conceptualizes the bilingual repertoire as "the sum of several, separate languages," preserving the old terminology of code-switching, bilingualism and multilingualism and their corresponding assumptions (Pennycook 2016: 201). The proliferation of new terminology by what Pennycook terms the "trans-super-poly-metro movement" – *superdiversity* (Bloommaert–Rampton 2011), *translingual practice*<sup>6</sup> (Canagarajah 2013), *metrolingualism* (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010) among others – evinces that "mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication" (Bloommaert–Rampton 2011: 2). In accordance with these new terminologies, I will use the term 'translingual creativity' when referring to instances of creative languaging.

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1. Black British identity performances in the 1980s

Rushdie's novel exposes the racial and police violence Black Londoners encountered in the 1980s. The Black British identity which has appeared in the 1970s grouped Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities around the signifier *Black*, without implying that they were "culturally, ethnically, linguistically or even physically the same, but that they [were] seen and treated as 'the same' (i.e. non-white, 'other') by the dominant culture" (Hall 1992: 308).

<sup>5</sup> It is also considered as a starting point for the study of the relationship between bilingual/bicultural identity formations and language use; on the connection between World Englishes and identity, thus far code-switching has received the most attention in sociolinguistic research (see Myers-Scotton 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Translingual practice serves as an umbrella term for many of the newly emerging practices which go beyond the monolingual/multilingual dichotomy, referring to "the strategies of engaging with diverse codes" (Canagarajah 2013: 8).

A meeting is held when the British Caribbean activist (his birth name was Sylvester Roberts; his chosen name Dr. Uhuru Simba) is arrested on trumped-up charges and accused of being a serial killer. While held in custody, his elderly mother, Antoinette Roberts, speaks up about his day in court. Her powerful voice fills the Brickhall Friends Meeting House where participants listen to her in awed silence.

- (1) 'My son filled that dock,' she told the silent room. 'Lord, he filled it *up*. Sylvester – you will pardon me if I use the name I gave him, not meaning to belittle the warrior's name he took for himself, but only out of ingrained habit – Sylvester, he burst upwards from that dock like Leviathan from the waves. I want you to know how he spoke: he spoke loud, and he spoke clear. He spoke looking his adversary in the eye, and could that prosecutor stare him down? Never in a month of Sundays. And I want you to know what he said: "I stand here," my son declared, "because I have chosen to occupy the old and honourable role of the uppity nigger. I am here because I have not been willing to seem reasonable. I am here for my ingratitude." He was a colossus among the dwarfs. "Make no mistake," he said in that court, "we are here to change things. I concede at once that we shall ourselves be changed; African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans, if our mothers and fathers had not crossed the skies in search of dignity and a better life for their children. We have been made again: but I say we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from the bottom to the top, we shall be the hewers of the dead wood and the gardeners of the new."<sup>7</sup> It is our turn now." (414)

In the performance quoted above, the mother of the movement employs the performative dimensions of Black oppositional practice to create a Black group identity based around common experiences and demands. Her quotation of her son's words establishes an intertextual relationship between their vocal performances. The direct quotation places the center of the referential orientation (spatial, temporary and interpersonal) on the activist (Tátrai 2011: 170). Within the frame of the mother's performance, the embedded text gains new meaning: in addition to resisting and critiquing the nation state, it lays claim to a particular Black British identity. The intertwining of the two performances from two different speakers (son and mother), spatial (the court and the meeting) and temporal frames (past and present) creates semantic and dramatic excess which the mother consciously exploits. Alongside the invocation of the radical political content of her son's discourse and the amplification of the force of its delivery, the motherly register and the volume of her voice have a big impact on the audience.

Antoinette Roberts speaks in a BBC accent, that is, received pronunciation, however, there is "gospel in there, too, and hellfire sermonizing" (414). By summoning up her son's words, she incorporates the voices of activists who sacrificed themselves in the fight for decolonization and civil rights (Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Harry and Harriette Moore, Martin Luther King and others) (Gooneratne 1990: 14). The performance functions as a phono-sonically constituted act which attempts to bridge the political and the spiritual realms; Uhuru Simba, first at the court, second at the

<sup>7</sup> *Hewers of the dead wood* – Moses calls upon Jews to renew their covenant with God including the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Joshua 9:21–23).

meeting – through his mother’s vocalizing –, talks back to empire. In line with the sound-system culture<sup>8</sup> imported to Britain by Caribbean migrants, her public performance is one in which she introduces her son’s speech, coming onto the scene as the main mediator “in dialogic rituals of active and celebratory consumption” (Gilroy 2002: 217-218). In the performance, Uhuru Simba’s speech is the equivalent of the record, one his mother “plays”, taking on the role of the DJ or MC who, in the absence of the original speech/speaker, not only vocalizes, but also re-vocalizes and re-accentuates her son’s words. Similarly to the sound-system performances of DJs and MCs, she (like her son) speaks to the ambivalence of Black British identity: thus, the audience (including Chamcha) recognizes the subversive potential of code-switching (Gilroy 2002: 260). The performance thus puts the energies activated through memory, desire and anger to political work.

At the trial, her son identifies himself as an “uppity nigger.” During Jim Crow, the *uppity* label designated African Americans who “didn’t know their place” and for whom such a label might have delivered a death sentence. The appropriation<sup>9</sup> of this term from diasporic memory may seem to accept a racialized identity at first sight, but in this speech situation, its reclamation turns its original meaning on its head and destabilizes the process of racial categorization. This act of rhetorical destabilization cannot, however, halt the onslaught of racial and police violence outside the court: while in custody awaiting his trial, officers break the “uppity” activist’s neck. There is no trial, as the only witnesses to his death are the prisoner officers who testify that a nightmare had caused Simba to fall off his bunk bed. Even though his state-sanctioned murder leaves no “official” traces – except for his piercing screams and the loud snap of his neck breaking –, a riot breaks out after his death (449). The echo of his screams, the noise made by his body and the words conjured up by his mother contest the white supremacist silence imposed on this brutal murder.

That Antoinette’s speech relates to gospel music has been noted above but not explored. This is the way in which gospel music “had always addressed itself to the oppressor, through a complex of dense codes and rich biblical symbolism” (Gilroy 2002: 229). The allusion to the familiar Biblical saying (*we shall be the hewers of the dead wood*), referring to the renewal of the alliance entered into with God, mobilizes complex and multilayered meanings. On the one hand, it can allude to the parallels between the wanderings, persecution and discrimination of Jewish and Black diasporas. On the other hand, the quoted text not only subverts the Biblical allusion, but also the justification of the South African apartheid regime’s educational law<sup>10</sup> which is based

<sup>8</sup> Sound systems are “large mobile discos,” comprised of amplifiers, loudspeakers, mixers, record players, MC-s and DJ-s (Gilroy 2002: 216). Their key characteristics are: communal experience and cooperation, dance and improvisation, oral and performance tradition (ibid.).

<sup>9</sup> Appropriation refers to practices by which the colonized seize the tools of colonial culture to express their own cultural experience and resist its hegemonic control (Ashcroft et al. 2002: 38).

<sup>10</sup> The South African apartheid regime led to the segregation and the apartheid of the educational system. The government made it clear that the goal of the Bantu Education Act (1953) was to turn students of color into “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”

on this quote from the Bible (Gooneratne 1990: 14). In contrast to serving the colonial apartheid state, Simba gives new meaning to the hewers of wood: by discarding the dead wood and planting new trees, Black Britons shall become the agents of the revolution. In this way, the Biblical symbolism embedded in their speech can activate both political and theological semantics, which can be interpreted as a call toward unifying the Black British community and reconstituting postcolonial England as a transcultural community. This act of radical semiotic reconstruction rhymes with Jumpy Joshi's postcolonial poetics: *Reclaim the metaphor... Turn it; make it a thing we can use* (186). Joshi appropriates the metaphor of Eunuch Powell's infamous racist speech "Rivers of Blood," and similarly to Uhuru Simba, wants to legitimize the Black British minority's desire that they "be recognized before the law as legitimate inhabitants of the national community, that they be invested with the juridical protections attaching to English civic identity, that their bodies be granted the rights of inviolability which are the privileges of the English body when in the custody of the English state" (Baucom 1999: 213).

## 2.2. The Bengali Muslim diaspora's multimodal and multisensorial performances

In what follows, I analyze the Bengali English language use of first-generation immigrants. The translingual/transcultural creativity, reliance upon traditional cultural, religious values are signs of a hybridized, changing Bangladeshi identity and of resisting English values.

Hind Sufyan is an immigrant who resists change and is attached to her Bengali roots and identity. Hind feels herself to be a victim of migration, alienated from England, the culture and language of the host country. She misses her language, her home town, her social status, the "customs around which she had built her life" (249): Bengali and Hindi movies and Indian movie magazines are more "real" to her than the "demon city" she inhabits (250). On the surface, she preserves her linguistic, cultural and religious practices, but surviving migration requires learning and adaptation. She opens up a restaurant in Brickhall<sup>11</sup> where, she is offering multiple cuisines of the Indian subcontinent in the name of "gastronomic pluralism" (246). As a result of the success of Shaandaar Café<sup>12</sup>, the Muslim family becomes affluent – more affluent than they ever were or could have been in Bangladesh. The seemingly meek Bangladeshi wife turns into a savvy entrepreneur and the family's breadwinner. The narrator notes that her language use reflects this identity-change: *This Hind, now so firmly entrenched in exclamatory mode, had once been – strangebuttrue! – the most blushing of brides, the soul of gentleness, the very incarnation of tolerant good humour* (245).

<sup>11</sup> "The actually-existing London neighborhoods of Southall in west London and Brick Lane to the east, where Asian immigrants lived, merged with Brixton, south of the river, to form the imaginary central London borough of Brickhall" (Rushdie 2012: 69).

<sup>12</sup> Shaandaar Café, Rushdie (2012: 69) notes, is "a thinly disguised Urdu-ing of the real Brilliant Café in Southall."

When the devil shows up at their Café, her loud, melodramatic, witty verbal utterances reach a dramaturgical zenith. The narration makes it clear that nonverbal elements, such as body language, play as important role as verbal ones in her theatricalized performance. Although confused about what to do at first, she decides to take the men to account for the arrival of Satan. She coordinates her posture, gestures and body movement, as she makes a prophetic pronouncement masquerading as an apocalyptic question. She strikes a dramatic note of bombastic volume, made up of almost exclusively monosyllabic words (and stressed syllables), her words are struggling to come to the surface, eventually erupting in the form of a “howl” and “wail.”

- (2) At this point [Muhammad Sufyan’s] kindly tones were quite drowned by the intervention of a second voice, raised high in operatic terror; moments after which his small form, was being jostled and shoved by the mountainous, fleshy figure of a woman, who seemed unable to decide whether to push him out of her way or keep him before her as a protective shield. Crouching behind Sufyan, this new being extended a trembling arm at whose end was a quivering, pudgy, scarlet-nailed index finger. ‘That over there,’ [Hind] howled. ‘What thing is come upon us?’ ‘It is a friend of Joshi’s,’ Sufyan said mildly, and continued, turning to Chamcha. ‘Please forgive, – the unexpectedness et cet, isn’t it? – Anyhow, may I present my Mrs; – my Begum Sahiba, – Hind.’ ‘What friend? How friend?’ the croucher cried. ‘Ya Allah, eyes aren’t next to your nose?’ . . . ‘Radical,’ said Mishal, approvingly. And her sister nodded assent: ‘Crucial. Fucking A.’ Her mother did not, however, reproach her for her language; Hind’s mind was elsewhere, and she wailed louder than ever: ‘Look at this husband of mine. What sort of haji is this? Here is Shaitan himself walking in through our door, and I am made to offer him hot chicken yakhni, cooked by my own right hand. . . . If he’s not the devil on earth . . . from where that plague-breath comes that he’s breathing? From, maybe, the Perfumed Garden?’<sup>13</sup> (244–245)

Hind’s performative language use is not monocultural/monolingual, but hybrid. In spite of her rejection of English culture, she plays the role of the Indian wife more and more ambivalently. As a result of her new surroundings and social position, she no longer accepts the gender norms of her orthodox faith and culture of origin entirely. Her operatic laments and invectives question the authenticity of the victimhood she claims. Her melodramatic act of identity causes the type of formal distortion and exaggeration which characterizes postcolonial mimicry.<sup>14</sup> Her mimicry makes it visible that her enactment of the traditional gender roles is not a reproduction, but an act of reconstruction. To use Bhabha’s (2010: 121) formulation, it is *almost the same, but not quite*.

<sup>13</sup> *Begum Sahiba* a woman of high rank; *haji* religious Muslim who has been to Mecca and Medina; *Shaitan* Satan, an Arabic loan word; *hot chicken yakhni* chicken soup; *Perfumed Garden* one of the traditional Muslim names for heaven, in Persian *Gulistan*.

<sup>14</sup> By producing an excess or slippage (*almost the same, but not quite*), the mimicry of colonial discourse emerges as an elusive and ambivalent strategy of appropriation (see Bhabha 2010).

Husband and wife use Bengali English morphosyntactic and lexical elements for different purposes. In the fantastic situation of having to offer hospitality to the devil, the husband reframes traditional family and collective values (hospitality, politeness). His use of invariant tag questions performs politeness functions (Brown–Levinson 1987), suggesting his respect of Chamcha (Bhatt 2010: 528).

Hind uses translingual creativity, the stylistic, linguistic and semiotic resources of oral tales to convince the others that the laws of hospitality should not apply to Satan. The dramatization of traditional values serves as a means of contesting her husband's argument. Her allusions to Islam serve to underline the point that Satan's reception cannot be reconciled with traditional family and Islamic values, social and gender codes. The embedding of pseudo-Arabic-Persian words into the Bengali English lexemes reinforces the notion that Islam is the foundation of family values; certain religious practices cannot be altered or adapted to Britain. Positioning her husband as the opposite of *haji* calls attention to shared religious values as well as criticizing him for not fitting orthodox gender roles. Furthermore, re-embedding these Islamic references into Bengali English enriches the former with the power of cultural, national, social tradition. The opposition between *yakhni* and *Shaitan* reveals that these two frames do not meet. As well, through the use of Bengali English and religio-cultural allusions, Hind emphasizes her orthodox womanhood. Her language use combines traditional as well as modern traits of a Bengali Muslim gender identity.

With her multisensory performance, Hind mobilizes the feelings, the memories and the imaginations of the family and the South Asian diaspora. Word play calls attention to the fact that in Islam the devil's breath is associated with the plague and heaven with perfume. Her ironic mention of *yakhni* soup activates the senses of taste, smell, temperature, sight and touch in the context of familial hospitality and domestic rituals. Smell thus activates a new terrain of semiosis, "one that associates meaning with objects, people, affect and places in a different way" (Pennycook 2018: 70).

Hind's hybrid, contradictory, changing identity is evidenced by her eventual submission to Jumpy Joshi's critique of state-sanctioned racial violence. The collective needs and political agenda of the immigrant population overwrites her national, religious, cultural allegiances. In stark contrast to her loud wails, her comment, *Now I know the world is mad, when the devil becomes my house guest*, is barely audible (253). She eyes her daughters' budding friendship with Chamcha with suspicion, at the same time, she houses and feeds him, sending him, for example, mouthwash for his breath. She has learned to live together with the absurd world surrounding her.

### 2.3. The South Asian diaspora's cultural identities and performances

In the next dialogue, I analyze the first- and second-generation English characters' language use, identity formation and cultural stance toward England and the Indian subcontinent. In addition to British English performances, I pay attention to the performance of identities through translingual practices.

Mishal and Anahita are second-generation English Bangladeshis, their parents own Shaandaar Café. Due to his embodiment as the devil, when Chamcha is rejected by English society, only the South Asian diaspora is willing to help him. When the teenagers bring him a *masala dosa* instead of cornflakes, he has an outburst:

- (3) ‘Now I’m supposed to eat this filthy foreign food?’ [that Mishal and Anahita should respond to his bitterness] with expressions of sympathy, made matters even worse. ‘Sawful muck,’ Mishal agreed with him. ‘No bangers in here, worse luck.’ Conscious of having insulted their hospitality, he tried to explain that he thought of himself, nowadays, as, well, British. . . . ‘What about us?’ Anahita wanted to know. ‘What do you think we are?’ – And Mishal confided: ‘Bangladesh in’t nothing to me. Just some place Dad and Mum keep banging on about.’ – And Anahita, conclusively: ‘Bungleditch.’ – With a satisfied nod. – ‘What I call it, anyhow.’  
But they weren’t British, he wanted to tell them: not *really*, not in any way he could recognize.<sup>15</sup> (258–259)

In spite of his devilish metamorphosis and consequent exclusion from white society, Chamcha holds onto his ‘Englishness’ and remains aloof from his Indian roots. He keeps using his monolingual, homogenous standard British English. Both his insistence on using British English and his xenophobic, racist description of Indian pancakes are supposed to mark his English identity – and his refusal to identify as South Asian. In spite of his obvious familiarity with *masala dosa*, when referring to it, he circumscribes it rather than calling it by its name. His refusal is made even more ironic by the fact that it is a well-known lexical item in the global culinary vocabulary. In spite of his bilingual competence, his language use can be characterized by “double monolingualism,” a characteristic of the colonial Indian elite whose members did not mix English and, for example, Urdu (Heller 2002).

Chamcha is surprised at the teenage girls’ expressions of sympathy, namely, that they also identify as British and distance themselves from their Bengali roots. Even though their second language is Bengali, instead of *Bangladesh*, Anahita uses the neologism, *Bungleditch*, which she creates out of matching two English words: *bungle* and *ditch*. Her lexical creativity draws a line between “us” (English) and “them” (Bengalis/Bangladeshis). The word-formation is creative, because it exposes Hind’s rejection of the new, who latches onto the fictional picture of her country of origin, of which almost nothing has remained for her (and even less for her English-born daughters).

The girls’ language use is not a hybridized English, but a diverse *metrolingualism*<sup>16</sup>: (see Pennycook–Otsuji 2015), in which standard, urban, youth, working-class and Black British repertoires mingle. The conscious and creative use of English,

<sup>15</sup> *Sawful*: it’s awful; *Banger* sausage; *In’t* isn’t; *Bungleditch* (*bungle* + *ditch*) Bangladesh.

<sup>16</sup> *Metrolingualism* encompasses the creative language and identity practices of modern urban subjects with diverse backgrounds, going beyond the traditional concept of multiculturalism and multilingualism; it addresses everyday linguistic practices in relation to the city, showing how the spaces and rhythms of the city operate in relation to language (Pennycook 2016: 205).

their ability to switch between, mix and mash different speech genres expresses their metropolitan identity. Their vocabulary includes classical Anglicisms (e.g., *hold your horses* (291), *two a penny*, *bob's your uncle* (263), *welcome aboard* (245), *bang on* (259), *worse luck* (259), *nicker* (264), *This place makes a packet*, *dunnit?* (263)) and London youth slang (e.g., *crucial*,  *fucking A*, *wicked* (245), *you know* (252), *Dad and Mum* (259), *Kissy kissy?* (263), *Cocky-bugger* (284)). As well, sub- and countercultural resources appear in their linguistic and semiotic repertoires – e.g., *bhangra beat* (284), *Thatcherism* (284), *the National Front* (283), *white bastards* (284), *white racists and black "self-help" or vigilante posses* (283) – which mark out a Black British cultural and a political community.

#### 2.4. The performance of generational differences

In the confrontation below, I look at the way in which generational differences are articulated in the performance of identities. I also analyze the role conscious, performative use of semiotic resources plays in identity-construction.

The linguistic and semiotic insurgence of the second-generation English teenagers, Mishal and Anahita, is first and foremost directed at their mother's despotic parenting. Mishal's spike-hair is rainbow color; she likes to wear no bra and tight-fitting blouses (244, 250). Sporting Bruce Lee pajamas, both teenagers are learning karate and Wing Chun<sup>17</sup> (Chinese kung fu) from Jumpy Joshi (244). The verbal disputes between mother and daughters are frequent. In the next dialogue, Hind rebukes her sixteen-year-old daughter for wearing a revealing low-cut T-shirt.

- (4) 'Shameless from somewhere,' Hind shouted back along the passage, 'cover your nakedness.'  
 'Fuck off,' Mishal muttered under her breath . . . 'What about the michelins sticking out between her sari and her choli, I want to know.'<sup>18</sup> (271)

Hind judges her daughter's fashions in terms of traditional, Bangladeshi-Indian gender norms. Her language use is dominated by Bengali English, the allusion to shamelessness has culturally coded semantic content. Through labeling Mishal – as *shameless from somewhere* – she correlates her daughter's defiance of traditional cultural norms with her imputed rootlessness. She uses the semiotic resources of Bangladeshi identity in an active, performative manner; thus, in the case of Bangladeshi identity, it is true as well that in late modernity, the authentication of identity is not automatic, but hinges upon discursive acts (Coupland 2007: 184). To the contrary, Mishal uses her British style to establish a counter-identity, criticizing what she perceives as her

<sup>17</sup> These are transcultural references since the English girls are obsessed with a Chinese action hero and are learning martial arts from Jumpy Joshi, an English man with Indian roots.

<sup>18</sup> *Michelins* Michelin tires; *sari* traditional dress worn by South Asian women; *choli* a midriff-baring short-sleeved or sleeveless bodice with a low collar worn in South Asia; *shameless* – the loan translation of the Hindi word *besharam*.

mother's melodramatic, excessive, contrived Bengali English repertoire and the social meanings yoked to it. The *fuck off* she hurls at her mother destroys the ritualized politeness norms she is expected to perform in relation to her parents but, by lowering her voice, she ameliorates its force. Her language use doesn't contain variations correlated with Bengali English, only her mention of a sari and a choli insinuates a traditional Bangladeshi identity. The style-switching is noteworthy, because it forecasts the position of the outsider toward these cultural norms. To use Bakhtin's (1986: 89) words, in their utterance, the sari and choli preserve their South Asian tone, which they "assimilate, rework and re-accentuate." As a global semiotic sign, the Michelin tire recontextualizes and makes the semiotics of the South Asian diaspora available for the purposes of reconstruction. In Hind's performance, we can see that the construction of a traditional identity involves the focusing and the appropriation of semiotic signs and repertoires identified with the diaspora (Coupland 2007: 147–148). In Mishal's utterance, however, the creation of a counter-identity requires recourse to new semiotic signs, ones hitherto unidentified with the diaspora. The active, conscious, creative use and appropriation of new sociolinguistic resources results in the rewriting and recontextualization of diasporic identity.

## 2.5. Strategic stereotyping<sup>19</sup>: performing reverse-Orientalism

In the next utterance, the performance of Orientalist discourse becomes a means of identity construction. I examine the role of stereotypes and linguistic disorder in the semiotic and linguistic reconstruction of an identity attributed to the colonized by Orientalism.

- (5) 'The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means.' – 'The see secret of a dinner party in London is to ow ow outnumber the English. If they're outnumbered they bebehave; otherwise, you're in trouble.' – 'Go to the Ché Ché Chamber of Horrors and you'll see what's rah rah wrong with the English. That's what they rereally like, caw corpses in bubloodbaths, mad barbers, etc. etc. etera. Their pay papers full of kinky sex and death. But they tell the whirl world they're reserved, ist ist istiff upper lip and so on, and we're ist istupid enough to believe.' (343)

According to Said (1979: 43), stereotypes such as primitivism, irrationality, terror, chaos, perversion, sexuality and death have enabled the construction of the Orient (the strange, the East, "them") by and in relation to the West (the familiar, Europe, "us"). Sisodia's performance reverses the Orientalist semiotic repertoire to expose the way in which the English project their undesirable characteristics onto the Orient and to show that it can be also used to characterize English culture. As well, he connects the traits

<sup>19</sup> Following Gayatri Spivak's call for *strategic essentialism* in the 1980s, i.e., a temporary acceptance and use of essentialist identity categories for the purposes of politically motivated collective representation.

purportedly related to Oriental cultures with English society and thus creates a new inventory of English stereotypes, which he substitutes for the national stereotypes. Sisodia calls attention to the contradiction between English autotypes (rationality, stiff upper lip, restraint etc.) and cultural products such as the *Chamber of Horrors*, the obsession with sex and death in tabloids.

Gibreel's English lover, Allie, is bothered by his subversive stereotyping, so she asks him whether all these generalizations are all he sees of England. "No," Sisodia replies while smiling shamelessly, "But it feels googood to let this ist ist istuff out" (343). We can thus conceptualize Sisodia's representation of England as "strategic stereotyping": he concedes that his utterance is a politically motivated performance, deriving from an inner need to compensate the psychic traumas inflicted by colonialism (Fanon 1968, 2006). In her article on *The Satanic Verses*, Gayatri Spivak declares that the novel's subtitle could very well be "Imperialism and Schizophrenia" (drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*): "Not because empire, like capital, is abstract, but because empire messes with identity" (Spivak 1993: 226).

The semiotic dis-invention and reinvention of Orientalist stereotypes functions as an act of identity contestation. Based on Coupland's (2001: 350) insights regarding 'dialect stylistics', we can assert that stereotypes provide a great basis for performative identity and meaning construction because "they do generally constitute known repertoires with known socio-cultural and personal associations." In this performance, the perusal of familiar semiotic repertoires dislocates the semiotic chains and repertoires anchoring ideologically mired identities, and opens up space for the creation of postcolonial, minority and peripheral identities.

The stuttering imbues the semiotic reconstruction with semantic surplus. The syllables highlighted by the stuttering can stand on their own as words, which, in the given context, can be interpreted as: the English *hiss* on their colonial *history*; the utterance can also be read as comparing the English to the *dodo* birds who do not know what their history means. As well, the stuttering – the hesitations, pauses, the repetition of sounds, syllables and words, the disruption of the "naturalness" and fluency of speech – forges a sonic ground for the semiotic reconstruction. In this sense, the colonized subject's so-called speech disorder originates a multimodal and multisensorial discourse.

Speech disorders – like stuttering – are frequent tropes in postcolonial literature (e.g., see works by Sam Selvon, C. N. Adichie, Indra Sinha, J. M. Coetzee) which are used to represent the psycholinguistic effects of colonial traumas. Rather than assuming that Sisodia is using a variety of English because of who he is, we should look at how he performs postcolonial identity linguistically (Pennycook 2003: 528). Stuttering, specifically, begets a performance event during which strategic stereotyping assumes an identity free of colonial domination. In the speech act, the stereotypes used to construct a new, imaginary Englishness not only reconstruct English identity, but also affirm it as plural and diverse, the outcome of complex historical and cultural processes of crossing and mixing.

## 2.6. Postcolonial performativity

Gibreel's performative utterance – *I am going to tropicalize you* and *Let it be* – 'performs' an action; in accordance with J. L. Austin's speech act theory (1962), I will treat it as a performative speech act which changes London's ecology and culture (on the 'insurrectionary' potential of speech events, see also, Butler 1997).

- (6) 'City,' he cried, and his voice rolled over the metropolis like thunder, 'I am going to tropicalize you.' Gibreel enumerated the benefits of the proposed metamorphosis of London into a tropical city: increased moral definition, institution of a national siesta, . . . higher-quality popular music, new birds in the trees (macaws, peacocks, cockatoos), new trees under the birds (coco-palms, tamarind, banyans with hanging beards). Improved street-life, outrageously coloured flowers (magenta, vermilion, neon-green), spider-monkeys in the oaks. A new mass market for domestic air-conditioning units, ceiling fans, anti-mosquito coils and sprays. . . . Spicier food; the use of water as well as paper in English toilets; the joy of running fully dressed through the first rains of the monsoon. Disadvantages: cholera, typhoid, legionnaires' disease, cockroaches, dust, noise, a culture of excess. Standing upon the horizon, spreading his arms to fill the sky, Gibreel cried: 'Let it be.' (354–355)

The catalogue of colonial/orientalist stereotypes symbolizes the unseen, rejected part of English imperial history – "metonyms of the Not-England that England occupied, reluctantly abandoned, and now wishes to forget" (Baucom 1999: 211). The performative stereotyping not only demonstrates that the former colonies are a part of English history, but also that through the Black British diaspora it is present today in England. Gibreel's tropicalization of London does not involve the nativization of foreign elements but is acknowledging its cultural syncretism and visibilizing the "unseen" city.

As seen before, stereotypes can play an important role in the performance of postcolonial identity acts; they form a semiotic system the meanings of which are embedded in sociocultural experiences. Their familiar meanings form the basis of this representation and placement of immigrant identity in the given (imaginary) space. The performance connects London with Indian wildlife and climate, turning the city into the locus of specific sociocultural practices, thus creating a link between space and identity. English weather, Bhabha argues, functions as one of the most salient signs of national/racial difference in colonial discourse. The demonic counterpart of the idyllic English climate is "the heat and dust of India . . . the tropical chaos that was deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilizing mission" (Bhabha 2010: 243). The performance thus reinterprets the relationship between Indian and local Asian minority cultures. Gibreel identifies Indian 'cultural flows' which are no longer tied to locality or community but are rather in motion alongside with other 'global cultural flows', e.g., practices and products, ideas and images, languages and styles (see Appadurai 2001: 5). As a result of his performance, the direction of the transcultural flow is reversed: the flow is going from India to England.

In the performance, the Indian migrant is using standard British English, which highlights the fact that one's identity is not necessarily determined by the language or linguistic variety – Indian or British English – one is speaking (see Pennycook 2003: 528). Kachru's World Englishes model does not exhaust the analysis of the performance, because Gibreel's language use is not determined by the speech community,<sup>20</sup> the national or social group to which he belongs. Using the social constructivist model, we can discern that Gibreel's utterance constructs an identity by projecting semiotic features onto London – out-group stereotypes imputed to the former colonies. Thanks to the dynamic meaning construction accomplished by indexicalization, the performance re-frames and questions the social meanings joined with the English nation. In London's space, Gibreel's performance allows Gibreel to create a Third Space. Following Bhabha (2010), I define Third Space, especially in the postcolonial and late-modern age, as a space for the enunciation of culture – where culture is understood to be a performative, malleable, constructed and reconstructible entity – which enables the revaluation and appropriation of cultural symbols and thereby the production of new cultural forms and formations. That is, a semiotic space in which the elements of two or more differing or opposing cultures compete and blend, while their contact eventually leads to the emergence of a third culture. Since cultural representations are always constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space, they are continually contested and, therefore, necessarily hybridized. This semiotic performance is transcultural: one which moves beyond the boundaries of traditionally imagined nations, cultures and (speech) communities. The transcultural space thus created establishes a relationship with the missing others, Indian roots and diaspora, and the local groups which immigrants interact with daily. The performative reconstruction of the racialized space of the nation state imagines a livable albeit temporary *Umwelt* for immigrants of color.

## Conclusion

My research findings support the conclusions regarding language use, identity, performance and stylization drawn by the framework of the third wave of sociolinguistics. Concerning the identity-constructing function of language, it can be asserted that the use of morphosyntactic and lexical features of South Asian English accentuates or authenticates a South Asian identity, local, indigenous or diasporic values. The use of its morphosyntactic features is used only by lower- and middle-class South Asians residing on the subcontinent, first-generation English South Asians who hold onto their identity. To the contrary, code-switching and translingualism is characteristic of upper-class South Asians both in India and England. Translingual/-cultural creativity is a means of diasporic identity construction and of resistance to colonial/global capitalism. Chamcha's perfectly “standard” British English cannot create an authentic

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<sup>20</sup> A community defined by shared language use and linguistic norms (for an overview of the term and the debates surrounding it, see Rampton 2009).

identity or guarantee assimilation on its own. The language use of second-generation immigrants exhibits trans- and metrolingualism.

In *The Satanic Verses*, the relationship between linguistic variables and social meanings is context-dependent, multidimensional and changing. The languages, linguistic varieties, styles used by characters, code-switching and -mixing have an important role to play in the linguistic construction of postcolonial identities. The acculturated / nativized / minority Englishes, as well as code-switching and contact phenomena, can signify or authenticate local values and identities. The use of standard English and colonial discourse can signify or authenticate an English identity or colonial-global values. In addition to the authentication of one's identity, characters use the above linguistic means to inauthenticate the identity of their speech partners.

The use and appropriation of opposing codes (traditional vs. modern, global vs. local, sacred vs. secular) function as identity-constituting strategies. The differences and oppositions between these codes allow for the construction of hybrid, transcultural meanings and identities on the one hand, and complex identity-constructions in a complicated and sometimes contradictory relationship with each other on the other hand. Code-switching, linguistic mixing and what I term 'translingual creativity' play important roles in the construction of transcultural identities and resistance against colonial-global hegemony.

In this article, I interpreted postcolonial identity construction as a performative event, which leads to semiotic reconstruction. Rather than using linguistic means to represent an a priori Indian, Bangladeshi or English identity, the rewriting and mixing of sociolinguistic resources associated with "Indianness," "Bengaliness" or "Englishness" constitute identities in the given discursive situation. From the perspective of identity construction, it is not relevant which linguistic community the characters are born into, what matters is how actively, creatively and consciously they use the sociolinguistic and semiotic resources available to them (Pennycook 2003: 527). The literary dialogues illuminate Kandiah's (1998: 100) point that these postcolonial Englishes "fundamentally involve a radical act of semiotic reconstruction and reconstitution which of itself confers native userhood on the subjects involved in the act."

Since these performative acts reconstruct and reconstitute multiple linguistic and cultural resources, fictionally constructed identities cannot be easily categorized, as these identities often go beyond the boundaries of a given national or ethnolinguistic community (cf. Hall 1992). Discursively constructed postcolonial identity formations are transitory, dynamic, and context-dependent; their survival, continuity beyond the frame of the performance is not guaranteed, furthermore, they can be dislocated or discontinuous within said frame, exhibiting translingual and -cultural properties. Performative practices allow Black Britons to express their diasporic affiliations as well as their connection to British society, to counter colonial stereotypes and to reconstitute postcolonial England as a plural community. Language use is influenced by the characteristics of black musical cultures, "their orientation toward improvisation, spontaneity and performance" (Gilroy 2002: 290).

The above analysis puts forward that performative linguistic and semiotic reconstruction is characteristic of postcolonial identity construction. Like cultural (Bauman–Briggs 1990) and *high* (Coupland 2007) performance, performative semiotic reconstruction exhibits semiotic focusing and intensity. On the one hand, the linguistic construction of identity involves the performance of semiotic repertoires regularly associated with the group, foregrounding as well as magnifying semiotic indexicality and iconicity. On the other hand, *performative semiotics* complicates the relationship between group identity and well-known sociocultural signs, meanings and forms: it rewrites well-known repertoires and replaces them with new and imaginary semiotic repertoires and identities. In particular, performative semiotic reconstruction is one of the means by which the Black British diaspora redefines what it means to be British and Black, adapting diasporic cultures and languages to “distinctively British experiences and meanings” (Gilroy 2002: 202).

To understand the complex functioning of postcolonial identity and performance, we cannot understand languaging as individual competence or as an internal system. The article demonstrated the idea that language is embedded and distributed across people, places and time; the idea of a spatial repertoire – “that linguistic and other semiotic resources are not contained in someone’s head, nor just choices available within a speech community, but are spatially distributed” (Pennycook 2018: 51) – is necessary because the characters’ linguistic utterances cannot be understood apart from the urban space in which they are embedded and distributed. The study of multisensorial, multimodal and translingual performances has revealed the complexity and dynamism of fictionally constructed interactions. The performative utterances included in the study gather a diverse array of linguistic and semiotic, embodied and sonic, material and mythical, sensorial and affective resources. The goal of the analysis of “touches, sights, smells, movements, material artefacts” and “shared experiences, dynamic interactions and bodily engagements” was to demonstrate the significance of synesthetic, embodied experiences which go beyond the narrow conception of language (Finnegan 2015: 19).

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