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Haroun and the Sea of Stories as an illustration of Salman Rushdie's "influence" theory

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to elaborate on Salman Rushdie's theory of intertextuality embedded in the concept of "influence" explained by the author in one of his essays from the collection *Step Across This Line*. Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is used here to illustrate the practical application of Rushdie's theory. The novel does not only serve as a field for creative allusions to a body of literary texts, both from the Eastern and Western cultural circles, but it is also a metatext on the tradition and new ways of storytelling.

Keywords

intertextuality, influence, Rushdie, metatextuality, metafiction

Harun i morze opowieści jako przykład wykorzystania teorii "wpływu" Salmana Rushdiego

Abstrakt

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest omówienie teorii intertekstualności Salmana Rushdiego zawartej w idei „wpływu" wyjaśnionej przez autora

w jednym z jego esejów pochodzących z kolekcji *Step Across This Line*. Powieść *Harun i morze opowieści* zostaje tu użyta jako przykład praktycznego zastosowania teorii Rushdiego. Powieść ta nie służy jedynie jako pole kreatywnych aluzji do istniejących tekstów literackich zarówno ze wschodniego, jak i zachodniego kręgu kulturowego. Jest to również metatekst na temat tradycji snucia opowieści, ale także nowych na nie sposobów.

Słowa kluczowe

intertekstualność, wpływ, Rushdie, metatekstualność, metafikcja

1. Introduction

A number of articles have been published on both Rushdie's indebtedness to the theory of intertextuality and its application in his novels. No other novel, though, is so packed with referential meaning as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It is as early as 1994 that Jean-Pierre Durix suggested in his article titled "'The Gardener of Stories': Salman Rushdie 's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*" that the text exhibits both the meta- and intertextual qualities, yet, his article only mentions a few examples in which these two levels of textuality are seen in the novel.

This article is aimed at showcasing *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* as a practical example of Rushdie's theory of intertextuality. The work first introduces Rushdie's ideas stated in his essay "Influence". Then, it proceeds to provide an overview of how this theory is embodied in the novel; first, through metatextual elements, such as the use of metaphors evoking water imagery, aligning with Rushdie's idea of literature as a fluid body. The second part of the analysis is devoted to the illustration of the references to other literary works present in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Rushdie creates an imaginary world full of references to the Eastern and Western culture in which the protagonist must save the Ocean of the Stream of Stories and for this reason the second part of the analysis is divided into references to the

Eastern literature as the basis for Rushdie's tale and the Western influences as complementary inspirations.

2. Rushdie's theory: Influence

The field of intertextual studies dates back to the establishments of such literary critics as Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette. Each of these figures proposed their own definitions of the specific relationships that the newly produced texts of culture enter with the existing body of literature (Allen 2003).

In his collection of essays, *Step Across This Line* (2003), Salman Rushdie provides his own contribution to the study of intertextuality, introducing a notion of what he calls "influence". His idea is similar to Barthes's vision of "a text as a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (quoted in Teverson 2007: 56). But there are important differences between their views as Barthes gives no credence to the author's agency over this blending of sources. Rushdie, on the other hand, insists on a "dynamic image of the author as agent; as a kind of magician or wielder of primal matter who is able to create new out of old" (ibid.). Rushdie's explanation of what he means by the word "influence" is given:

> "Influence". The word itself suggests something fluid, something 'flowing in'. This feels right, if only because I have always envisaged the world of imagination not so much as a continent as an ocean. Afloat and terrifyingly free upon these boundless seas, the writer attempts, with his bare hands, the magical task of metamorphosis. Like the figure in the fairy-tale who must spin straw into gold, the writer must find the trick of weaving the waters together until they become land: until, all of a sudden, there is solidity where once there was only flow, shape where there was formlessness; there is ground beneath his feet. (And if he fails, of course, he drowns…).
>
> The young writer, perhaps uncertain, perhaps ambitious, probably both at once, casts around for help; and sees, within the

> flow of the ocean, certain sinuous thicknesses, like ropes, the work of earlier weavers, of sorcerers who swam this way before him. Yes, he can use these 'in-flowings', he can grasp them and wind his own work around them. He knows, now, that he will survive. Eagerly, he begins. (Rushdie 2003: 62–63)

What Rushdie claims, thus, is that it is the writer's role to blend various threads, to draw inspiration from the existing body of literature. He also underlines the writer's agency and creative power as important in the process.

Rushdie's theory has been criticised, though. There are certain arguments against the use of the term "influence" itself. Harish Trivedi (2007: 131) considers the term to evoke the "hegemonic colonial" context and prefers the word "intertextuality", associated with postcolonialism, more suited to the analysis of Salman Rushdie's writing. Anneli Mikhelev (2004: 43) provides another argument in favour of using the term "intertextuality" instead, claiming the term "influence" to be concerned with a relation that is "one-directional". One could still argue, though, that Rushdie by no means refers to the interaction as only affecting the new piece of writing. In his short novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the author underlines that it is important not only to understand the complexity of meaning achieved by the references to the literary canon, but also to re-evaluate the source books. Rushdie's aim is thus more dialogical than the critics may perceive it.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories becomes an ultimate embodiment of Rushdie's theory of influence, or, as the critics prefer to call it, intertextuality. The novel elaborates on the question of the artist's agency by means of metatextual references and the introduction of certain metaphors, but it is also an ultimate portrayal of the abovementioned dialogue that is multicultural and multidimensional.

3. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* as a metatext

The self-reflexive quality of Rushdie's work serves a purpose of calling the attention to the text itself, but also to the tradition of literature and storytelling in particular. According to Linda Hutcheon (1989: 24), "[t]he multiple and complex echoing points to the different possible functions of intertextuality in historiographic metafiction, for it can both thematically and formally reinforce the text's message". The metaphors used by Rushdie point also to the particular situation of India and the issue of censorship.

In his article, Aron R. Aji (1995: 104) quotes Dean Flower's comment on *Haroun*: "What the story really is about is the story". Madalena Gonzalez (2005: 57) also notices the omnipresence of the metatextual quality in *Haroun*: "[…] we are invited to explore the text beyond the text, not merely metafiction, but fiction about metafiction, as well as referentiality renewed, as language performs its magic, multiplying the possibilities of interpretation". As both these theorists underline, the metatextual quality of the novel adds to its commentary on storytelling and storywriting.

3.1. Central metaphors

Rushdie presents his views on the storytelling activity by means of two metaphors: the one of water and the one of juggling. The water imagery present in *Haroun* serves both as a basic device in constructing the setting and the narrative and as an element linking the two lands of Kahani. But it is also a way for Rushdie to show his understanding of the storytelling tradition. Since the narratives are stored in a fluent form, they travel across the country and intermingle with each other. The ocean of stories is a place where the past, the present, and the future can coexist (Aji 1995: 123). As Catherine Cundy (1994: 339) asserts,

> [t]he very fluidity of Rushdie's image, playing in part on the use of sea-journeys as a narrative connecting-device in the original stories, reinforces the interconnectedness of old and new stories apparent in all of Rushdie's writing, with the two literally flowing in and out of one another.

The water imagery is a means for Rushdie (1991: 72) to express his view on stories and storytelling and thus becomes an element of the book's metatextual structuring:

> because the stories were held here in fluid form, they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories; so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead but alive.

Rushdie's aim is thus to draw the readers' attention to the fact that stories evolve and undergo changes. Consequently, reusing the old stories is a way to keep them alive.

Another quality of the stories highlighted by this metaphor is its cultural variety, symbolized by the multitude of colours in the streams: "[…] a sparking and seemingly infinite expanse of water… It shone with colours everywhere, colours in a brilliant riot, colours such as Haroun could never have imagined" (Rushdie 1991: 68).

When the ocean becomes polluted, the stories are endangered. Yet, as Rushdie underlines, the degradation of the ocean is also due to the neglect on the part of the citizens of Kahani to preserve the old tales (Rushdie 1991: 156, Aji 1995: 107). The author attempts to suggest that it is not only censorship but also humans that let the stories sink into oblivion, as the stories are to be 'drunk' (Rushdie 1991: 71) and it is only thanks to "absorbing" the stories by the reader that they can live eternally. In *Haroun*, Rushdie (1991: 85-86) underlines the importance of the old stories, the ones that are the basis of a particular culture, which serve as inspiration for new texts: "New stories are born from old – it is the new combination that makes them new".

Following the creative and entertaining qualities of storytelling is the use the juggling metaphor: "Haroun often thought of his father as a Juggler, because his stories were really lots of different tales juggled together, and Rashid kept them going in a sort of dizzy whirl, and never made a mistake" (Rushdie 1991: 16). This comparison draws the attention to the act of storytelling as mixing stories, but also underlines the amazing accuracy with which it should be done. The storyteller is here presented as a gifted person, who knows their craft.

The figure of storyteller is a parallel to that of writer as Rashid is Rushdie's counterpart, which is even suggested in the name. But similarly to Rushdie, Rashid is denied his storytelling activity and he is devastated by the fact that people dismiss his passion simply because it is not rational. The only difference between them is that Rashid's stories are told and Rushdie writes his stories down. But the orality of the stories as opposed to the written form has also another important function, as it involves the act of listening. The creation of the story takes place in front of the audience and it includes the use of their imagination (Gonzalez 2005: 62).

All the metaphors discussed are in line with Rushdie's argumentation for the role of an author and draw attention to the creative process of storywriting or storytelling. Yet, they also underline the indebtedness of a writer to the literary canon.

4. The novel's hybrid form and content

As the novel unravels, the reader becomes aware that what he or she is presented with is a unique example of the intertextual theory of Rushdie's put into practice. The writer creates a hybrid form comprising both the elements of Eastern and Western storytelling tradition.

4.1. Eastern inspirations

The Eastern influence on Rushdie's work stems mainly from his cultural background. Indian storytelling boasts a long tradition that started as an oral practice to be later written down in the form of epic (see: *Ramayana* and *Mahbharata* in Brockington 2003: 117).

The most basic influence of these traditional texts may be noticed in the duality of purpose in Rushdie's book. On the one hand, it is the story of Haroun with a complex plot, and on the other, it is a lesson on the importance of storytelling, freedom of speech and literature itself.

Among the most visible Eastern inspiration for Rushdie are two collections of stories: *Panchatantra* and *Kathasaritsagara*. The first one is an ancient Indian collection of animal fables (Olivelle 1997: xvi), whose didactic aim (Naithani 2004: 277) is reflected in *Haroun*. Another commonality is the embedding of one story within another (Ryder 1925: 10–11), which creates a kind of "emboxment" (Olivelle 1997: xv). The stories include such motifs as friendship, collaboration, quest and war, (Ryder 1925: 11, Olivelle 1997: xvii, xix) which are reminiscent of *Haroun*'s plot.

Kathasaritsagara encompasses the stories from *Panchatantra* but is supplied by other stories (Penzer 1924: xxxi-xxxii). Most importantly, though, it serves as a source of inspiration for the setting in *Haroun*. The main principle organizing *Kathasaritsagara* is that of water; the title of the book in the English translation by C. H. Tawney is *The Ocean of Story*, and the original title can be translated even more precisely as *Ocean of Streams of Story* (which is the title of the translation from 2009 by Sir James Mallinson). The choice of the title is justified in the Norman Mosley Penzer's *The Ocean of Story*: "He felt his great work united in itself all stories, as the ocean does all rivers" (Penzer 1924: xxxi). Penzer (1924: xxxi) also mentions the independent division into 18 *lambakas,* meaning "surges". This central water metaphor is re-used by Rushdie to a great extent. As

Rama Kundu (2008) suggests, Rushdie not only includes the connotations of ocean and streams, but also "seeks to capture the element of fluidity – as well as intoxicating-exhilarating spell – in the textual heritage operating behind an act of creativity as suggested by the drinking imagery" (310). By following the idea taken from an ancient collection, Rushdie proves his indebtedness to the existing body of literature and introduces an idea for a creative approach to literature of the past.

Another point of reference to the historical (re)sources are the stories told by Sheherezade, which, although coming from the Eastern cultural tradition, most Western readers are familiar with (Jurji 1946: 35). According to Robert Irwin (1994: 64), "there is scarcely a tale in the whole of the [*Arabian*] *Nights* which does not have its precursors, derivatives or analogous versions".

This set of stories influenced Rushdie while writing *Haroun* in a number of ways. First of all, Rushdie decided to borrow from it the structuring principle of frame tale. In *Arabian Nights*, the frame tale is that of Scheherazade and her husband: Scheherazade tells stories to Shahryar, and the tales imbedded in the narrative are the ones that she invents (Naithani 2004: 275). Moreover, one story gives birth to another, as is in the case of "The Adventures of Haroun-al-Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad" and "The Story of the Blind Baba-Abdalla". The ending of the first story is also the beginning of another; in *Haroun*, the frame, or "umbrella-story" (Naithani 2004: 275) is the one of his mother's elopement with Mr. Sengupta and the loss of Rashid's ability to tell stories. All the adventures that arise on Haroun's quest to win this ability back are framed within this main idea. Also, the setting is similar: Scheherazade tells her stories at night and Haroun's adventures start when he is asleep. This context is evoked even more directly: "'even in all the Arabian Nights you will never have a night like this'" (Rushdie 1991: 51).

What the stories have in common is the importance of the storyteller figure. Scheherazade is one of the best-known storytellers in the history of literature. She tells the so-called "ransom

tales" (Warner 2011: 155-159); telling tales is her only way to avoid being executed. Haroun's father, Rashid is a famous storyteller as well. His gift for juggling stories is used, or even abused, by other people. Rashid is employed by politicians to tell stories to the public to increase their popularity. At the moment of the narrative, Rashid is up against the wall: he will either tell a story or be severely punished for not fulfilling the expectations (Rushdie 1991: 26–27). Both texts are very self-reflective, drawing attention to the storytellers themselves and to the act of storytelling. They underline the metareferential qualities and the orality of the stories, a feature that is present when Scheherazade and Rashid *tell* their stories.

The most important of the characters borrowed from *Arabian Nights* is the caliph Haroun al-Raschid, who, in Rushdie's book, is materialized in two characters: that of Haroun and that of his father Rashid Khalifa (Durix 1994: 346).

Another figure borrowed from the world of *Arabian Nights* is the Water Genie in Kahani. Genies have always been very important figures in Arabic literature (Lebling 2010: 218) and in *Arabian Nights* one may find a few stories featuring them. In *Haroun*, as opposed to the original stories, the genie is presented as a universally positive figure.

Another symbol that serves as a reference to *Arabian Nights* is the boat, on which the journey of Haroun and his father starts (called Arabian Nights Plus One) (Rushdie 1991: 50–51). It evokes the image of Sindbad the Sailor and his seven voyages. Upon seeing this reference, one might already assume that Haroun's journey will abound in wonderful adventures, as in the tales told by Scheherazade.

Scheherazade's tales are referred to also through the titles of the books in the palace: "Bolo and the Forty Thieves", "Bolo the Sailor", or "Bolo and the Wonderful Lamp" (99), which echo directly the following titles: "Alibaba and the Forty Thieves", "Sindbad the Sailor" and "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp". Such direct references are easy to notice because the tales

evoked are the ones that have been very well adapted into the Western culture.

The canon of Eastern stories then serves as a frame for Rushdie's *Haroun*. He draws from the Indian folktales and Scheherazade's tales mostly in terms of literary devices and plot mechanisms, but the references are also visible in the setting of *Haroun*.

4.2. Western references in *Haroun*

Yet, apart from the Eastern canon, Rushdie also draws heavily from his knowledge of the Western body of literature. He especially relies on the texts produced in Europe, including well-known novels and short stories, but also poetry and mythology. Among minor intertextual references, there are also works of writers of other nationalities, for instance *Gulliver's Travels* by Irish writer Jonathan Swift, *The Name of the Rose* by Italian writer Umberto Eco, and a reference to the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. One of the works particularly worth mentioning is Franz Kafka's short story "Metamorphosis", which is evoked by Rushdie in a retelling of a Rapunzel story, where Haroun transforms into a giant spider upon his attempt to rescue the princess (Kundu 2008: 314, Rushdie 1991: 74).

Another easily noticeable reference to the Western literature is the figure of Jason, an ancient Greek mythological figure, the legendary leader of the Argonauts (Rushdie 1991: 148). One of the books that Haroun finds in the palace and which contain Bolo's adventures is entitled "Bolo and the Golden Fleece" (98), pointing directly to the heroic deeds of Jason. It seems that Bolo would like to be viewed as a courageous prince, whereas in fact, it is Haroun whose adventures resemble those of Jason.

The inspirations that Rushdie seeks in the Western literary canon can be seen in the genre and thematic choices. The author plays within various conventions, using elements of the setting, the overall message of the text, but also echoing such devices as symbols and metaphors.

4.2.1. The fairy-tale genre

The genre that Rushdie draws most heavily from is the fairy-tale. Within this genre, Maria Tatar (2004: 6) identifies an important figure from Western literature, whose traces can be found in *Haroun*, i.e. that of Bluebeard (6), a character from Charles Perrault's tale. This figure's counterpart in *Haroun* is the character of the Water-Genie Iff, "the little blue-bearded creature" (Kundu 2008: 309). But his significance in *Haroun* is reversed: Iff is a positive character, whose role is to close the Story Tap following the cancelling of Haroun's father's subscription of stories. Iff, similarly to Bluebeard, has his own "key", or, rather, a monkey wrench which he calls the Disconnector. Iff is in such a hurry disconnecting the tap that he drops the wrench (Rushdie 1991: 54–56). It serves as yet another direct link to the tale of "Bluebeard", and, as in the original tale, it becomes the pivotal point of the action.

The story of Rapunzel, a fairy tale written by the Brothers Grimm, is referred to directly in *Haroun* at a number of instances. In the original tale, the princess is held captive in a tower and has grown long hair which is to help her saviour climb up to the top of the tower (Haase 2008: 436). This tale serves as the basis for Haroun's dream adventure:

> He was, so to speak, looking out through the eyes of the young hero of the story. [...] all he had to do was watch, while the hero dispatched one monster after another and advanced up the chessboard towards the white stone tower at the end. At the top of the tower was (what else but) a single window, out of which there gazed (who else but) a captive princess. What Haroun was experiencing, though he didn't know it, was Princess Rescue Story Number S/1001 /ZHT/420/41 (r)xi; and because the princess in this particular story had recently had a haircut and therefore had no long tresses to let down (unlike the heroine of Princess Rescue Story G/1001/FJM/777/M(w)i, better known as 'Rapunzel'), Haroun as the hero was required to climb up the outside of the

> tower by clinging to the cracks between the stones with his bare hands and feet. (Rushdie 1991: 73)

This excerpt ends with Haroun's waking up from a nightmare: he is transformed into a spider and the princess cuts his arm (Rushdie 1991: 73). Rushdie makes use of the story of Rapunzel and parodies its convention by introducing a grotesque version of the princess (without long hair that would help Haroun climb up the tower).

The character of Rapunzel is evoked in the figure of princess Batcheat. Batcheat is held captive in a tower as well (179), but this is the only instance when their plights match. At other instances, the manner in which Batcheat is presented as a counterpart to Rapunzel becomes grotesque.

4.2.2. Romantic inspirations: "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

In his article "Rushdie and the Romantics: Intertextual Politics in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*", Daniel Roberts points to Rushdie's use of Romantic-period texts as sources of inspiration. Among the influences, Roberts recognized two poems by Samuel Coleridge: "Kubla Khan" and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

The full title of the poem to be discussed, "Kubla Khan, or a Vision in a Dream", already refers to its setting of a dream vision, a convention also used in *Haroun* on a number of occasions. Roberts sees this convention as a primary element linking these two texts (125). An example of a reference to dreams appears in the epigraph to *Haroun*: "All our dream-worlds may come true" (Rushdie 1991: 11). The same epigraph starts with the words "Zembla, Zenda, Xanadu", and the last place

mentioned happens to be the setting of Kubla Khan ("In Xanadu did Kubla Khan […]").[1]

What is more, other elements of the setting in *Haroun* refer to "Kubla Khan". Kundu (2008) claims that "pleasure-domes' [direct quotation from *Haroun*: "In the Pleasure Garden were fountains and pleasure-domes" (87–88)] is an obvious echo of Coleridge's Kubla Khan" (318). But the setting of "Kubla Khan" also includes a sacred river and a sea; the scenery is described as green and fertile. This has its direct reflection in the description of Kahani: the waterways are crucial elements of the setting, because they enable the stories to flow, the sea is where the stories intersect (Rushdie 1991: 87) and the land of Chup is as lively and vegetative (82) as is that of Xanadu.

Another land, whose description is similar to that of Xanadu, is the Valley of K: "And later in the text, describing the land of K to Haroun, Rashid evokes at once an Orientalized fantasy world of creative inspiration, its landscape of 'pleasure gardens build by the ancient Emperors….with fountains and terraces and pavilions' (25) evoking the corresponding landscape of Coleridge's poem, which too has been connected with Kashmir" (Roberts 2007: 127).

Another poem by Coleridge is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". *Haroun*'s indebtedness to this poem is recognized by Kundu (2008: 321):

> Again, no reader could possibly fail to catch the echo of Coleridge's famous line 'Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink' behind 'Water, water everywhere, nor any trace of land' (68). The ancient mariner, it may be noted, has emerged as an archetype of the storyteller who can hold the listener spellbound by means of his stories. […] Thus the evocation of Coleridge's canonical poem – albeit in the oblique and muted manner – is in tune with the

[1] All the references to "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" come from the Project Gutenberg version of the collection, with no pagination.

> voyage of Haroun, while enriching the orchestra that produces the wonderful harmony of the text.

Yet, there are other elements from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" reflected in *Haroun*: the ship (the dark ship of the Cultmaster – Rushdie 1991: 149), the moving moon (Kahani starts to move after Haroun's wish – Rushdie 1991: 171) What is more, the ship with the mariner onboard steers from the sunny area to the land of ice, which is parallel to the expedition run by the Guppees to the land of the Chupwalas (Rushdie 1991: 121).

4.2.3. Bildungsroman as a canvas

Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia (2009: 247–248) indicates a link between Dickens's *Great Expectations* and *Haroun*: "The intertexts have been pinpointed with scrupulous detail in several articles. They include […] Charles Dickens (from *Great Expectations* the element of frozen time at the exact moment Miss Havisham's heart breaks […])". Indeed, "the clocks at Mrs Havisham's house, all stopped to arrest the traumatizing moment" are echoed by the means of "the stopped clocks, along with Haroun's fixation about eleven minutes" (Kundu 2008: 318).

But apart from this very blunt reference, *Great Expectations* is evoked by other means. The figure of Haroun reminds the readers of Pip, the main character from *Great Expectations* and both texts can be considered as examples of maturation novels. The two stories contain the travelling as the stage of transformation. Pip travels to town to become more experienced and wealthier, but instead he "becomes a youthful spendthrift, and, totally absorbed in selfish pursuits, […] [f]inally, […] through a knowledge of suffering and injustice won by his own disappointments and his acquaintance with Magwitch, he rises above self and achieves in loving devotion to another his regeneration" (Hagan 1954: 55).

The same convention of the *bildungsroman* serves as the basis for *Haroun*, which Gilmour (2009: 156) considers "a novel of

formation and education", as the young Haroun dares to ask the fatal question and learns how wrong he is in his judgment of the importance of storytelling. At the end of his journey, Haroun is wiser and more experienced.

4.2.4. Children's fiction: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*

Even the creative purpose of the book hints at *Haroun*'s connection to *Alice,* as Lewis Carroll wrote the novels to entertain his daughter (Irwin M. 1993: 12). Rushdie invented Haroun's adventures as bath-time stories for his son, to whom he dedicates the book: the acrostic lines of the epigraph create the name Zafar, which is the name of Rushdie's son (Krishnan 1995: 67, Durix 1994: 349). The dedication from Carroll to the real figure, on whom the character of Alice was based, takes a similar form (Durix 1994: 349).

The two works are connected by the use of the dream motif. Thomas Kullmann (1996) asserts this similarity and exemplifies it: "When Alice awakes at the end of the book, she finds out that her adventures in wonderland have taken place in a dream. Like Alice, Haroun finds out that he has been asleep while engaged in his adventures".

Alice in Wonderland is echoed in *Haroun* also by the focus it puts on the act of storytelling. At the Mad Tea Party, both Alice and the Dormouse are supposed to tell a story, supposedly to kill the time (Carroll 2001: 95). At the beginning of Alice's adventures, the mouse also tells a "tale", which she imagines to look like a tail (a witty play on words, visualized in the book on pages 55–56).

It is also worth noticing that *Alice in Wonderland* is a self-reflective text. There is information given directly by the narrator: "[a]nd as you might like to the thing [Caucus race] yourself, some winter day, I will tell you how the Dodo managed it" (54). Alice is even at one point conscious of being a part of a textual

world: "When I used to read fairy-tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!" (61). The same self-reflective quality can be applied to *Haroun*. As Ambreen Hai (2009: 304–305) asserts, "[t]his meta-story about stories written, like *Alice in Wonderland*, for adults as well as children, makes its central theme the generation, perpetuation, and efficacy of stories".

According to Gonzalez (2005: 68),

> Rushdie invited us to reassess our view of language and the work we make it do. Thus his punning, anagrammatizing and recourse to nonsense force us to see double. Indeed, there are part of a dismantling of the working of language or a defamiliarization of the banal, reminiscent of Lewis Carroll and to project the reader beyond the literal, through recourse to that very literality, into the outland of an estranged textuality which is a blurred mirror-image of wonderland.

Rushdie, just like his predecessor Carroll, plays with the language and the multiple meanings of words. He directly echoes well-known elements of dialogues in Alice. The significance of names is underlined by Rashid in his warning to Haroun: "All names mean something" (Rushdie 1991: 40). This quotation echoes Alice's conversation with Humpty Dumpty: "'*Must* a name mean something?' Alice asked doubtfully. 'Of course it must,' Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh" (Carroll 2001: 219). There is yet another example of this inspirations as one of the first questions that is posed by Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* is "What is the use of a book without pictures?" (37). This question is echoed in *Haroun* by the question that starts the whole action: "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" (Rushdie 1991: 22). Both of these questions are meta-reflective, focusing on the texts themselves.

In both books, the world of textuality intermingles with reality, in various possible combinations: in *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice imagines the world on the other side of the mirror and suddenly becomes able to enter it (Carroll 2001: 160).

Haroun is surprised when the reality around him starts to resemble the setting of the stories told by his father (Rushdie 1991: 48).

Moreover, some elements of the setting in *Haroun* were undoubtedly inspired by the *Alice* books. The Army of Cards in the court of the Red Queen (Carroll 2001: 100) finds it counterpart in the Army of Pages in the court of the Guppees (Rushdie 1991: 98–99). Both courts are surrounded with beautiful gardens (Rushdie, Carroll 99). The giant chessboard of *Haroun* is reminiscent of the chessboard from *Through the Looking-Glass* (Kundu 2008: 320).

One element propelling the action also evokes *Alice*. Haroun drinks from a bottle full of magical story-water (Rushdie 1991: 72). The effect is that Haroun is moved inside a fairytale and becomes its hero. A similar bottle is used when Alice is supposed to change her size: it either makes her grow or shrink (Carroll 2001: 60–61). The "expansion/compression device" is also used in *Haroun*, and Kundu (2008: 323) sees is as harking back to *Alice*.

Alice's Wonderland is full of amazing figures and animals. Among the most imaginative are the Cheshire Cat, who is able to disappear (Carroll 2001: 88), the Mad Hatter, whose language is full of absurd (91)) or the Dormouse, whose funny character is the result of its constant sleepiness (90). Kahani seems to resemble Wonderland; in fact, it is a Wonderland on its own. So many inexplicable things happen in Kahani: Butt the driver is considered mad (he drives at an amazing speed) (Rushdie 1991: 36), Haroun flies a Hoopoe, mechanical bird who uses telepathy (66) , and shadows are able to free themselves from their owners (124).

One figure from *Haroun* is definitely inspired by *Through the Looking-Glass*: the Walrus (Kundu 2008: 320). In *Haroun*, the Walrus does not resemble a walrus; it is only his moustache that makes the other characters call him that (Rushdie 1991: 90). In *Through the Looking-Glass*, the Walrus is a character from the poem repeated to Alice by Tweedledee, who competes

with the Carpenter in the number of oysters eaten. Also, the Eggheads from *Haroun* bear resemblance to Humpty Dumpty, whose appearance makes Alice utter a commentary: "'And how exactly like an egg he is!'" (Carroll 2001: 218).

The point of view in both of the books is that of a child. According to Alvin C. Kibel (1974: 606), "[u]niquely, Dodgson discovered an intellectual legitimacy in the childish viewpoint, making it available to both childish and adult intelligence". Rushdie's book also shows the two worlds through the eyes of a child. Jean-Pierre Durix (1994: 343) elaborates on this feature as parallel to *Alice*: "Here the mood and framework of reference are more definitely those of a story for children, though, as in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, a number of allusions are made to realities or texts which a child could not possibly understand". In both cases, the child's viewpoint is aimed at reaching the young audience as well as inviting adult readers to a deeper analysis and interpretation of the possible meanings of the texts.

4.2.5. *Haroun* and *Charlie*

The construction of the title of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* points directly to the children's book by a British author Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

However, *Charlie* is evoked further in *Haroun* at a number of other instances. First of all, one of Charlie's grandfathers tells his grandson stories about the mysterious Mr. Wonka and his chocolate factory (Dahl 2016: 12). This type of storyteller figure is then reflected in Rashid, the famous Shah of Blah, whose stories also filled with magic and mystery. Rashid is even called a magician by his son (Rushdie 1991: 16), so in *Charlie* is Mr. Wonka: "'*Clever!*' cried the old man. 'He's more than that! He's a *magician* with chocolate! He can make *anything* – anything he wants!" (Dahl 2016: 15).

The plot in Dahl's book is as follows: having found the golden ticket, Charlie goes to a magical place of the chocolate

factory and embarks on various adventures (Dahl 2016: 88-89). A similar plotline is to be found in *Haroun*: only the magical "golden ticket" takes here the form of a monkey wrench that allows Haroun for an eventful journey to the world of Kahani. In both cases, the journeys bring happy endings to the families of the boys: Haroun's family is brought back together (Rushdie 1991: 210) and Charlie's parents and grandparents are given a new home and they are no longer starving (Dahl 2016: 256–262).

In both texts, the factory is presented as a prominent aspect of the landscape. Even though the products of the factories differ, the descriptions of the factories themselves are similar.

Charlie's grandfather Joe at one point of the story comments on the lift in the chocolate factory: "But… but… but… it's made of glass!' […] 'It'll break into a million pieces!" (Dahl 2016: 246). The way he speaks is echoed by Butt the Hoopoe, whose distinctive feature is the repetitive use of the "but but but" phrase, such as in "But but but it is because of Speed" (Rushdie 1991: 67).

A direct reference to *Charlie*, identified by Kullmann (1996), is made in *Haroun* through the character of Miss Oneeta. At the end of the story, she says: "'I have said good-riddance to Mr Sengupta. And I also have a job, in the chocolate factory, and as many chocolates as I require are free of charge" (Rushdie 1991: 209).

4.2.6. *The Neverending Story*: A fantasy retold

The Neverending Story is a fantasy novel written by a German author Michael Ende. Rushdie echoes Ende's *The Neverending Story* in a number of ways. Janet Mason Ellerby (1998) argues that *The Neverending Story* is a text advocating the necessity of storytelling to gain meaning in life (217), which is reminiscent of Rushdie's idea behind Haroun.

The texts are structurally linked by the use of the dream convention, as both main characters enter the magical worlds

in their sleep (Ende 1997: 27, Rushdie 1991: 73–74). However, Kullmann (1996) sees another parallel between Haroun and the main character of *The Neverending Story*: their knightly qualities and the need for an adventure: "Like Bastian/Atréju [sic!] in *The Neverending Story*, Haroun engages in a sort of chivalrous quest to recover lost areas of the imagination". Indeed, Haroun is transported to the imaginary land of Kahani, the second moon (Rushdie 1991: 65–69), and with his newly-met friends sets on a journey to save the world from the overruling silence at the same time aiming to cure his father of his disease, the loss of the ability to tell stories (59).

Since both texts are focused on storytelling as a meaningful activity, they also feature storytellers. In *The Neverending Story*, the readers encounter various storytellers, starting with Bastian himself, who "think[s] up stories" (Ende 1997: 9). There are also Amarganthians, the traditional storytellers of Fantastica (267) or the Old Man of Wandering Mountains, who keeps writing down the never-ending story (180). In *Haroun*, Rashid is the storyteller. When his figure is introduced at the beginning of the novel, in the description appears a direct hint at the title of *The Neverending Story*: "[…] the storyteller Rashid Khalifa, whose cheerfulness was famous throughout that unhappy metropolis, and whose *never-ending* stream of tall, short and winding tales had earned him not one but two nicknames" (Rushdie 1991: 15, my emphasis).

But in *The Neverending Story* there is another storyteller: the narrator. He or she is constantly a witness of the stories, reminding of their presence by the recurring phrase "[b]ut that's another story and shall be told another time" (Ende 1997: 31, 445). This accounts for *The Neverending Story* being a metareflective text. There are numerous references to the textuality of the story: "What are you, creatures of Fantastica? Dreams, poetic inventions, characters in a The Neverending story" (151), "How could this book exist inside itself?" (192), or "'Didn't you know that Fantastica is the land of stories? A story can be new and yet tell about olden times. The past comes into existence

with the story'" (235). Bastian's act of retelling his adventures in Fantastica (443) adds significance to the metatextual quality.

Another feature shared by Fantastica and Kahani is the importance of names. The life of the Childlike Empress depends on her being given a new name (Ende 1997: 118). Atreyu explains the deep meaning of his name: "That's why they called me Atreyu, which in our language means 'Son of All'" (46). In *Haroun*, "[a]ll names mean something" (Rushdie 1991: 40) and Rushdie himself provides the explanations for the names he gives to the characters. These names serve as yet a number of other references to texts, popular culture and other languages (217–218). As Kullmann (1996) reflects, "The city where the Khalifas live is 'so ruinously sad that it has forgotten its name' (15)". Paralleling the Infantine Empress in Ende's book, this lack of a name is due to a collective lack of imagination. But in *The Neverending Story*, there is yet another instance when a name is lost. In order for Bastian to fulfil his last wish, he has to forget his own name, the last thing that reminds him of who he is (Ende 1997: 412).

The power of wish is the principle governing the existence of Fantastica; the place is created by the power of wish. Having been transported to Fantastica, Bastian has to make wishes for it to be born again (Ende 1997: 204). Haroun's wish for Kahani to start moving also propels the world of Kahani to live again; he reinstates the principle of constant change and restores its harmony (Rushdie 1991: 171). Both of the heroes create day and night: Bastian literally, through creating Perilin, the Night Forest and Goab, the Desert of Colors (Ende 1997: 206, 219).

But these imaginary worlds are also parallel to the textual worlds (Durix 1994: 344) and in the two texts both worlds must be healed (Ellerby 1998: 217). The denouements of the books are similar happy endings: Bastian's family is restored (Ende 1997: 440) and so is Haroun's (Ellerby 1998: 218). Both Fantastica and Kahani are saved and storytelling regains its importance.

Among minor echoes of *The Neverending Story* in *Haroun* are the elements of the setting. The Ivory Tower of Fantastica finds it counterpart (Kundu 2008: 319) in the tower in which locked sits the princess that Haroun is supposed to save (Rushdie 1991: 73). The way to the Ivory Tower leads through a courtyard with waterfalls and fountains and a labyrinth garden (Ende 1997: 168). When Haroun arrives in Kahani, at the front of the palace he finds the Pleasure Garden, surrounded by water, with fountains and trees (Rushdie 1991: 87–88). Also the library plays an important role in both texts. Through the power of his will, Bastian invents a library of Amarganth, in which his stories are stored (Ende 1997: 270). In *Haroun*, the library of stories takes on the form of the ocean, as one reads in the novel that "the Ocean of the Streams of Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe" (Rushdie 1991: 72).

There is even one symbolic reference to *The Neverending Story*: number eleven. "Fantastica is saved at the eleventh hour" (Kundu 2008: 319), whereas in *Haroun* the clocks stop at eleventh hour and the hero himself is able only to last eleven minutes focusing on one activity (Rushdie 1991: 23).

5. Conclusions

Rushdie's theory of literature as a body of texts influencing each other in a variety of ways is definitely presented throughout the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Not only does the author draw the readers' attention to the act of storytelling as important in blending the old tales with the new ones, but he also creates a literary artwork that itself becomes a canvas that intermingles Eastern and Western traditions, creating a hybrid form suitable for the readers of both cultural backgrounds. Rushdie uses works of literature known to the readers living on both hemispheres, thus allowing for his work to be appreciated regardless of the readers' cultural background.

The author draws inspiration from a variety of sources. He acknowledges his indebtedness to the authors producing

literature before him in a number of ways: through certain genre conventions, especially following the tradition of fairytales and the form of a maturation novel. He also provides very textual allusions by rephrasing famous quotations from children's novels. He plays with the language in an imaginative way, showing that a literary text can have multiple purposes.

Rushdie's attention to detail and knowledge of world literature enabled him to create an entertaining literary text in which a careful reader can trace resemblances and reflections, both of itself as a tale and of a variety of texts produced before.

His novel, even though aimed as a piece of children's literature, proves to be a work of metafiction underlining the importance of preserving old stories, but also strong resistance against any form of censorship. In order for the world to move forward no one can be denied a chance to read, tell a story or speak in general – and this remains the main message of the novel.

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