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SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MIGRANCY AS A LITERARY FORM OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN'S PROFANATION

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This paper addresses Salman Rushdie's idea of migrancy as a literary version of Giorgio Agamben's notion of profanation. Contrary to Agamben, who refers to profanation based on the sacred man (*homo sacer*), Rushdie's work shows that profanation or impurity is at hand through migrancy. It displays, surveys, and discusses migrancy as an ambivalent reality which does not only embody the potential of uplifting human condition, but also reinforces and nourishes ostracisms. This paper argues for continuous cultural negotiation and renewal required by migratory rationality to uplift life quality in human condition. Theoretically, an intersectional approach that looks at "relationships among seemingly different phenomena" is convoked to examine the intellectual affiliations between Rushdie and Agamben. Rushdie being a writer and Agamben a philosopher, the paper implicitly pleas for the necessary reinforcement of connections between all subjects, like literature and philosophy, in the field of humanities in academia. The study itself consists of three sections. The first section deals with the significance of migrancy in Rushdie's work. The second section deals with Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*. It addresses the relationship existing between migrancy and impurity in the novel. It also displays consequences of common perceptions about impurity in today's cultural or ideological constellations. The last section deals with the scholarly affiliation of Rushdie's impurity with Agamben's profanation. It ends with discussion of impurity/profanation's prospects in the 'community to come.'

Keywords: Agamben, impurity, migrancy, profanation, Rushdie.

МИГРАНТСТВОТО КАЈ САЛМАН РУЖДИ КАКО КНИЖЕВНА ФОРМА НА КОНЦЕПТОТ ПРОФАНАЦИЈА НА ЏОРЏО АГАМБЕН

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Оваа статија ја истражува идејата на Салман Ружди за мигрантството (migrancy), како книжевна верзија на поимот профанација на Џорџо Агамбен. За разлика од Агамбен, кој ја заснова профанацијата врз фигурата на *homo sacer*, делото на Ружди покажува дека профанацијата или нечистотијата се појавуваат преку мигрантството. Трудот го прикажува, го разгледува и дискутира за мигрантството како амбивалентна реалност, којашто не само што го отелотворува потенцијалот за подобрување на човековата состојба (*conditio humana*), туку истовремено ги зајакнува и ги храни формите на исклучување. Во статијата се тврди дека континуираното културно преговарање и обновување, кое што го бара миграциската рационалност, е неопходно за унапредување на квалитетот на животот на човекот. Од теориски аспект, во статијата се применува пристапот на интерсекционалност, кој ги проучува „односите меѓу наизглед различните феномени“, со цел да се испитаат интелектуалните врски меѓу Ружди и Агамбен. Земајќи го Ружди, како книжевен автор и Агамбен, како филозоф, статијата имплицитно го поттикнува неопходното зајакнување на поврзаноста меѓу сите области – како што се книжевноста и филозофијата – во рамките на хуманистичките науки. Самата статија се состои од три дела. Првиот ја разгледува важноста на мигрантството во делото на Ружди. Вториот дел се фокусира на романот *Сатански стихови*, при што се анализира односот меѓу мигрантството и нечистотијата во романот, како и последиците од вообичаените сфаќања за нечистотијата во современите културни и идеолошки констелации. Последниот дел се занимава со научната поврзаност меѓу нечистотијата кај Ружди и профанацијата кај Агамбен. Статијата завршува со промислување на потенцијалот на тие поими, во заедницата што допрва треба да дојде.

Клучни зборови: Агамбен, нечистотија, мигрантство, профанација, Ружди.

1 Introduction

Relating Salman Rushdie to Giorgio Agamben seems to lead to more dissimilarities than similarities. The reasons for this seem to be many. While for instance Salman Rushdie is known as a worldwide established fiction writer who went into hiding under the protection of the Scotland Yard with the release of *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 and the fatwa placed on him by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, Giorgio Agamben is acclaimed as a significant Italian philosopher influenced by Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg, Hannah Arendt, Emile Benveniste, Carl Schmitt, Guy Debord, and Michel Foucault among others. Also, as Catherine Mills points out, Giorgio Agamben's philosophy is an elaborate and multifaceted reclusive engagement with problems of Western philosophy as varied as metaphysics, *ethos* of humanity, violence, liberty, political, aesthetic or linguistic theory (Mills 2008).

Salman Rushdie writes from the intersection of Islam and Western culture, reflecting his dual heritage. Born in Mumbai in 1947, he was raised in a Muslim family with a successful businessman father and a teacher mother. After living briefly in Pakistan, he moved to the UK in 1961, where he was educated at Rugby School and later at Cambridge University. He became a British citizen in 1964 and studied history, earning an MA in 1968. Rushdie worked as an advertising copywriter in London during the 1970s before settling in New York, where he later became an American citizen (Rushdie 2019).

Despite the apparent differences between Agamben and Rushdie, this paper seeks to show how Salman Rushdie's idea of migrancy as a *factory of impurity* is close to Agamben's concept of profanation. My paper is justified by a controversy which Agamben aired in the wake of the September 11th, 2001, attacks. In fact, he did refuse to submit to the *biopolitical tattooing* requested by the United States Immigration Department for entry to the USA. As a matter of consequence, Agamben had to cancel the course he was scheduled to teach at New York University because of his refusal to "have his fingerprints and photograph filed by [US] immigration authorities" (Agamben 2008: 201). Agamben's resistance against the US biopolitical tattooing was undeniably informed by his contention of the profane, the bare life as he puts it (Agamben 1998), which the idea of sovereignty aims at curbing. Agamben certainly did perceive the biopolitical tattooing as a legal disposition that aimed at validating the violation of his profane status. That is probably the reason why he had to "oppose it" (Agamben 2008: 202).

In this regard, Agamben's ethics aligns closely with Rushdie's vision of migrancy as a *factory of impurity* – what Agamben would have referred to as the restoration of human profane essence, as will be demonstrated in the current paper. It goes without saying that traditionally, profanation and impurity are associated with negative connotations which my paper aims to defuse by endowing them rather with positive connotations. Methodologically, the paper borrows from intersectionality theory which addresses the interconnected nature of social categorization such as gender, race, age, citizenship status, class, and other factors that shape individual's experiences and opportunities. My paper looks, as Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge would say, at "relationships among seemingly different phenomena" (Collins and Bilge 2016: 195). In this context, Salman Rushdie's concept of migrancy and Giorgio Agamben's concept of profanation are exanimated as interconnected phenomena. In some way, my paper urges readers away from insincere "diversity" and "cultural competence" claims (Collins and Bilge 2016: 174) which, in the case of Rushdie and Agamben for instance, part literature from philosophy. It suggests that taking intersectionality seriously means engaging in critical, collaborative, coalition-building work "with people […] [issues that] are really different" (Collins and Bilge 2016: 169).

2 Significance of migrancy in the work of Salman Rushdie

According to Iain Chambers migrancy means to live in another country. It "[…] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a home coming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility" (Chambers 2008: 5). Chambers depicts migrancy as a reality that constantly challenges the psychological comfort of migrants, forcing them never to feel certain or appeased as their condition keeps them in sort of constant maelstrom. Migrancy directs the migrant's psychology into permanent battle for survival, which keeps active the flames of their necessity to permanently try to make sense of their lives. Metaphorically, migrancy can be seen as a genuine medium that captures and encompasses the very essence of human existence. For, it elucidates and even teaches us, practical methodologies sometimes lacking in our ventures towards our individual, collective, moral, cultural, political or economic improvement. Paul Carter certainly senses this metaphorical prospect of migrancy so that, to him,

> It becomes more than ever urgent to develop a framework of thinking that makes the migrant central, not ancillary, to historical processes. We need to disarm the genealogical rhetoric of blood, properly and frontiers and to substitute for it a lateral account of social relation, one that stresses the contingency of all definitions of self and the other, and the necessity always to tread lightly (Carter 1992: 7–8).

Critics of Rushdie's literary work[1] agree that migrancy is a common topic in his oeuvre. Rushdie addresses migration in an original way which enables him to suggest, as Ivana Kardum Goleš puts it, a cultural archetypal model of the 20th and 21st century. Goleš sees the insight of Rushdie's vision about migrancy in the writer's own existence, which his work basically replicates, because Rushdie himself "has experienced a lifetime of migrancy across three continents and his 'archive of displacement' [is] represented in his essays and novels whose characters are uprooted migrants in search for identity in a new postcolonial reality" (Kardum Goleš 2017: 77). In "Salman Rushdie: The Ambivalence of Migrancy", Shailja Sharma points out what she refers to "one of the problems that attends any investigation of migrancy in Rushdie's work" which, according to her is "the almost limitless applicability of the concept", so far as Rushdie's individual itinerary "from India to Pakistan to England, and now to New York" grants him the ability to refer to migrancy in a both complex and elusive way (Sharma 2001: 596).

Rushdie himself seems to be aware of this "limitless applicability" of migrancy in his literary production as emphasized by Sharma. He, who refers to migrancy in his essay entitled *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* as one of the richest metaphors of the present days. Rushdie is so driven by migrancy that he tends to idealize it, as his intention not to avoid it in his literary works clearly shows. He even conceives of it as an unescapable reality in human lives. Rushdie suggests that migrancy "offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age" (Rushdie 1991: 278). He explains that the word "metaphor," originating from the Greek for "bearing across," actually describes a kind of migration – specifically, the migration of ideas into images. In this sense, migrants themselves, "borne across humans," are metaphorical beings at their core. As Rushdie argues, migration as metaphor is something we can find all around us.

Rufus Cook stresses how migrancy is insightfully discussed in Rushdie's novels. Cook whose study focuses specifically on *Shame* (1983) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988) ascertains that Rushdie's discussion of migrants displays them as prophetic human beings in contemporary experience where

[1] In this regard, cf. for instance the whole volume 47, No. 4 of *Twentieth Century Literature* published by Duke University Press in 2001.

colonialism has consolidated cultural blends and hybridizations. In this context, migrants are more prepared or more trained to appreciate and acknowledge that, what is considered today as "meaning" is nothing but a starting point because meaning spares no one from continuous struggle for more meaning, as the existence itself remains in constant mutation. Rufus Cook thus argues that:

> Because he has been forced "to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human", Rushdie argues, the immigrant or expatriate is in a better position than the rest of us to appreciate the pluralistic, contradictory nature of contemporary experience: to accept the fact that "reality is an artefact", for example, or that "meaning is shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper article, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved" […]. Indeed, in Rushdie's view, the immigrant has become "the central or defining figure of the twentieth century […], dramatizing "in an intensified form" the sense of alienation, of cultural discontinuity, to which, as "immigrants from the past", we are all increasingly prone […] (Cook 1994: 23).

It is clear from this preliminary section that migrancy is a significant topic in the work of Salman Rushdie. The same applies not only to Rushdie but also to Cook, who in his work focuses on cultural potentials for reducing conflicts and confrontations in human existence, which the figure of migrant both outlines and incorporates. In relating Rushdie's migrancy with the concept of profanation by Agamben, this study is indebted to Rufus Cook's insight about the figure of the migrant in Rushdie's work. In fact, the study seeks to advocate for the relevance of the migrant as someone that is more prepared than others to take less conflictual and inhumane paths than those being taken by nations in today's human experience. Before showing how Rushdie's migrancy meets or renders the idea of profanation by Giorgio Agamben and vice versa, a short clarification of the concept of impurity as applied to Rushdie's migrancy is necessary.

3 The Satanic Verses and Rushdie's advocacy for impurity

The Satanic Verses opens with the mysterious and unexpected survival of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha from the aircraft Al-420 accidentally bombed by Sikh terrorists. The misfortunate aircraft together with its occupants falls into the Atlantic Ocean. Farishta is a successful film actor and Chamcha, a voice actor. The opening of *The Satanic Verses*' plot seems to recast the mystery that brought Rushdie into an irreversible migrant destiny, which the ocean stream that saves Farishta and Chamcha symbolizes.

As they descend before falling into the water stream, Farishta and Chamcha experience transformations. Farishta is transformed into the angel Gabriel while Chamcha is transmuted into the devil. At a rhetoric level, all the transformations which the narrative allows the main characters to undergo operate as aesthetic devices that signal the necessary transformations which border crossing requires from the migrant. Rushdie makes those transformations visual and hyperbolic or incredible so that critics classify his writing style as a combination of historical fiction and magical realism (Collazo 2021).

But Rushdie also does so to endorse his coherence to his own idea of literature which he displays in his collection of essays *Step Across this Line* (2003). In fact, literature aims at drawing attention to the close bond between the line and its transgression. To Rushdie's reader, literature is a sort of journey that assures discovery by challenging the reader's ordinary perception of the world. Rushdie's reader is thus invited to perform transgression. George Lamming provides a useful analogy for Rushdie's reader in his account of a Trinidadian civil servant who comes to Britain "to

take some kind of course in the ways of bureaucracy" (Lamming 2003: 13). In his ordinary perception of the world, he had never imagined the existence of English workers, so he is astonished to see "white hands and faces on the tug" and exclaims, "They do that kind of work, too?". This moment disrupts his previous worldview, allowing him to develop a less biased understanding and, in this sense, to become an *impure being*.

In relation to what the main characters in *The Satanic Verses* become as they descend, the line could be considered the good (angel Gabriel) and its transgression, the devil. Disconnecting this contradictory condition by letting them be acted by two different characters is one of the merits of the novel insofar as it allows for reflection on the strengths and flaws of both the good and the bad, assuring thus, reader's being prevented from an essentialist interpretation, - or, more simply , assuring its skilled reader's transformation into an impure being.

Farishta and Chamcha wake up on a beach in England. They stayed with an elderly English woman named Rosa Diamond. Chamcha begins to grow horns, while Farishta emits a strange radiance. They are reported to the police by someone who considered them as undocumented immigrants. The police arrests Chamcha. As he increasingly begins to resemble a goat, the police beat him and sends him to a hospital that treats other patients who are turning into animals. He helps the other patients break out and goes to London. There, he finds out that his wife was having an affair with a friend named Jumpy Joshi. Farishta remains with Rosa Diamond until her death, after which he travels to London. Chamcha and Farishta meet again at a party there. Chamcha is furious with Farishta, who takes medication after being diagnosed with mental health issues. Under the effects of medication, Farishta tells Chamcha the secrets about Alleluia, and Chamcha uses this information to harass Alleluia until she breaks up with Farishta.

Farishta's trumpet, which he named Azreel, suddenly spouts flames on the café in which Chamcha brings his hosts. Farishta follows Chamcha into the burning building and, after initially thinking of kill him, decides to rescue Chamcha. Some months after Farishta saved him from the burning café, Chamcha returns to India. In London, Farishta runs out of money after his attempts to return to the movie industry. He becomes desperate and kills Alleluia along with a movie producer before fleeing to India. There, he tracks and finds Chamcha. He tells Chamcha what he did. Then, the police arrives to arrest Farishta. He takes the gun from the magic lamp Chamcha inherited from his father and kills himself with it.

One constancy from the plot of *The Satanic Verses* is the recurrent interplay between magic and the ordinary. The narrative shows itself as a *mise en abyme* of literature, in the sense that literature allows invented characters (magic) to engage with ordinary issues such as unpredictability, love, murder, reconciliation, or brutality. It is therefore not surprising when Rushdie confesses to the *New York Times* that *The Satanic Verses* speaks for itself (Rushdie 1989: 39). Rushdie thus, profanes the supposed elitism of literature by opening it to sacred issues and returning them to the free use of men as Giorgio Agamben would have said.

Rushdie's idea of impurity consists of a living condition that is permanently negotiated and renegotiated by ordinary people and to their interest. From a post-imperialist and post-modern angle, impurity pertains to a cultural condition where identities or belongings are ontologically mixed with each other. Impurity derives from the loss of one's single culture (identity) due to migrancy or imperialism, which activates its replacement by their varieties. One is impure in this regard for instance, when they belong to more than one culture, identity, gender, country, or when one speaks more than one language. Edward Said refers to this sense of impurity in *Culture and Imperialism* when he argues that: "No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting points, which followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale" (Said 1993: 336).

Said and many other postcolonial theoreticians like Édouard Glissant (2009) or Homi K. Bhabha dedicated their works to this sense of impurity, sometimes also referred to as cultural hybridity

(Bhabha 1994: 38). Contrary to Glissant, Said or Bhabha who all explore the concept from the perspective of power relationships, Rushdie's contribution to the field is to address impurity as artefact of transgression, which migrancy essentially is[2]. This original perspective which Rushdie has on migrancy gives him the ability to address societal issues in a way that complies with the actual condition of human beings, who are nothing but, passing beings. If put into practice, Rushdie's idea of impurity would enable individuals, groups, religions or nations to efficiently resist dilution into essentialisms, polarities or binary divisions. It is a sense of impurity well captured by the astonishment of the Trinidadian civil servant who acquires new understanding of things by discovering British worker for the first time in his life as seen above with George Lamming (Lamming 2003: 13). Impurity derives its ability to resist from the fact that it leads its agent to constant re-interrogation or re-definition of territories and identities. Despite the fact that impurity is traditionally negatively connoted, in the literary work by Rushdie impurity rather grants its agent the caution which permanently keeps the agent aware that "de-finition" has to do with "the question of limits" as Vanessa Guignery following Robert Eaglestone (Guignery 2009: 306) argues.

It would not look hyperbolic to hypothesize that one universal aim of education is to maintain people in that condition of impurity which assures them perpetual openness, change, movement, or willingness to improve. Consequences of such psychological dispositions and its tangible materialization in the society are obvious enough in terms of innovation, quality of life and sustainable peace. Quality of life and sustainable peace go hand in hand in society through this condition of impurity, as it activates tolerance and sincere humility in its agents. Impurity in this relation defuses or resists inducements of its agents to fixed identities – as they for instance romanticize territory, origin, religion, self, or gender – that generally inform "formalized organization of the society and the nation based on divisions, grids and binary oppositions in terms of class, caste, gender, territory or religion" as Vanessa Guignery would say (Guignery 2009: 306). By no longer viewing the self as an exceptional being but, as an ordinary one whose ordinary nature is revealed by its contact to others, impurity coherently relate along with true educational goals, contents or curricula so far as they require permanent alteration because the society also undergoes permanent change.

Migrancy also involves geography as the definition by International Organisation for Migration (ION)[3] suggests. From a geographical perspective, migrancy produces impurity insofar as it materializes the interconnectedness between communities in such a way that one freely claims to belong to more than one community. Rushdie himself is an interesting illustration of such condition. Migrancy accelerates the sense of belonging to a common world for which any human being irrespective of gender, race, class, or religion is accountable. It challenges and diffuses authoritarianism, fundamentalism, nationalism, regression or isolation of all sorts by letting the rediscovery of the ordinary (Ndebele 2006) come true. Ordinary people who emerge from this rediscovery process are freed from the inducements of sovereignty or its spectacle in a given context. As Du Bois would say, they are people with "intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world and of the relation of men to it" (Du Bois 1903: 33–34). Although migration should be seen as a metaphorical source of cultural impurity, it is often treated as a violation of state sovereignty and used as a pretext for human rights abuses. Rushdie's concept of impurity, as created through migration, is typically overlooked and impurity is quickly dismissed as incredible or morally wrong, perceived as an offense to established norms due to the ethical challenges it raises.

In "Human Insecurity: Understanding International Migration from a Human Security Perspective", Francesca Vietti and Todd Scribner highlight how Western states, preoccupied with the concept of sovereignty, respond to irregular migration with intense border enforcement. They

[2] If migration is not interchangeable with transgression, it at least triggers transgression and vice versa.
[3] https://www.iom.int/fundamentals-migration

argue that irregular migration is seen as a direct challenge to state sovereignty, questioning a nation's control over its territorial domain. This anxiety drives massive investments in border security, including immigration officers, fences, and large-scale migrant interdiction (Vietti and Scribner 2013). Vietti and Scribner's argument finds support in numerous instances, such as the Spanish government's construction of border fences in Ceuta and Melilla to block migration from Sub-Saharan Africa. However, as Jaume Castan Pinos notes, these fences often backfire. In October 2005, nearly a thousand migrants breached the fence in a coordinated effort, resulting in the deaths of fourteen people and hundreds of injuries. Despite the reinforced fences, which were raised from 3.5 to 6 meters and equipped with concertina wire, similar incidents, dubbed "collective storms" or "avalanches" by the press, continued from 2012 to 2019 (Castan Pinos 2022). This tragic cycle highlights the futility and brutality of such measures, demonstrating that heavy investment in border security often exacerbates the very issue it seeks to control. In suggesting a "human security perspective" to tackle illegal migration, Vietti and Scribner come close to Rushdie's idea of impurity, for they believe, like Rushdie, that "people are the real wealth of a nation, and the goal of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives" (Vietti and Scribner 2013: 21). Vietti and Scribner's approach is rooted in human rights, as reflected in the concept of human security, which aims to protect fundamental freedoms and safeguard people from severe and widespread threats. It emphasizes the need for systems that support survival, livelihood, and dignity across political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural domains (Commission on Human Security 2003). In light of the challenges discussed regarding migration and impurity, the next section explores the stakes of impurity as the alter ego of profanation for the human community.

4 Rushdie's impurity or the alter ego of Agamben's profanation

Intersectionality "being [… not only] a political and an intellectual project [but, also] an ongoing struggle to overcome naturalized categories that seem to hold fixed social positions [whereby] naturalization and essentialism, not particular privileged or powerful groups, are treated as the enemies of agency and transformation" (Ferree 2018: 127), the question at stake in this section is how does Rushdie's impurity politically and intellectually relate to the Agambian profanation?

Agamben refers to profanation as a political operation that aims at neutralizing the exercise of power in social interactions. In the actual context where power has intricated its modes of operations, it became very difficult to avoid assimilating profanation to secularization. Thus, the pertinence of quoting Agamben when he clarifies the difference between both terms as follows:

> We must distinguish between secularization and profanation. Secularization is a form of repression. It leaves intact the forces it deals with by simply moving them from one place to another. Thus, the political secularization of theological concepts (the transcendence of God as a paradigm of sovereign power) does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact. Profanation, however, neutralizes what it profanes. Once profaned, that which was unavailable and separate loses its aura and is returned to use. Both are political operations: the first guarantees the exercise of power by carrying it back to a sacred model; the second deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized (Agamben 2007: 77).

Agamben mentions play as a good example of profanation's operation. He points out the example of children playing with "whatever old thing falls into their hands, [and who] make toys out of things that also belong to the spheres of economics, war, law, and other activities that we are used to

thinking of as serious. All of sudden, a car, a firearm, or a legal contract becomes a toy" (Agamben 2007: 76). Playing thus transforms "activities [or objects] that we are used to thinking of as serious" into toys, resisting any single imposed meaning. In this sense, play subverts the singularity of imposed significations, much as impurity resists the fixation of identity and destabilizes the authority of its agents. Both play and impurity subtly reveal objects or activities as being produced by romance for territory, origin, religion, self, or gender which, in the suitable terminology by Guignery, generally informs "formalized organization of the society and the nation based on divisions, grids and binary oppositions in terms of class, caste, gender, territory or religion" (Guignery 2009: 306). Phenomenological prospects of profanation through play and impurity by the means of migrancy in this regard can be compared to those of stranger by Edmond Jabès in self-perception. The stranger enables you to be yourself, Jabès writes, precisely by turning you into a stranger (Jabès 1989: 9)[4].

How Agamben's profanation relates to Rushdie's impurity as produced by migrancy is evident at this stage of the study. An appropriate hint toward linking Rushdie and Agamben was perhaps already provided by Jeffrey Somers, who in his biography of Rushdie enables us to witness how Rushdie, by turning for instance Chamcha to a humanoid that grows horns profanes all "supposedly 'sacred' topics" (Somers 2020). One of those supposedly sacred topics in this relation being the attempt to detach human beings from their animal lineage. From this perspective, Rushdie metaphorically highlights the necessity to bring back to humankind its amputated or skillfully silenced portion. He sets against cultural consensus through which this skillful silencing of the animal portion of humankind is achieved. He pleads for the restoration of its entire, and ordinary nature to humans. Consequently, it is not a hyperbole to contend that Rushdie's work is marked by his willingness "to profane" those "consecrated" topics like religion, morals, or sovereignty by "returning them to the free use of men" (Agamben 2007: 73). Not considering premises in Rushdie's approach keeps hidden how consecration (*sacrare*) outcasts its object (purity) from common utilization and fossilizes it as sacred, that is, cut off from their free use by men. Rushdie's approach to migrancy enables the visualization of the idea of purity as a manipulative essence because it is "no longer allotted to the gods of the dead [but is] now neither sacred, nor holy, nor religious, freed from all names of this sort" (Agamben 2007: 73). The idea of impurity as envisioned by Rushdie challenges and resists such manipulative disposition which the idea of purity protects or validates.

Somers is thus correct to point out that suggesting impurity as an ideal provides Rushdie's work with "a unique ability to cut through the cultural noise" and "also [to bring] danger and controversy" (Somers 2020). Rushdie embraces this disruption, positioning ordinary people as true heroes—those who act selflessly, like firefighters or healthcare workers, rather than the fantasy figures of superheroes. He critiques the notion of superheroes as a mistake of modern times, arguing that such idealized figures foster authoritarian tendencies. In contrast, he values the everyday heroism that engages in the "returning of consecrated issues to the free use of men" (Agamben, 2007), promoting a culture of honesty, inclusivity, and sustainable peace. As Rushdie states, "I'd rather have an honest fireman than Batman any day of the week" (Rushdie, 2019). This recognition of ordinary people as the true agents of change aligns with his broader vision of impurity as a necessary force for cultural transformation.

Profanation or impurity include numerous prospects towards upheaving today's human condition. One of the prospects on which I wish to conclude this study is the lucid acceptance of our unescapable blend nature.

In *Joseph Anton. A Memoir* Rushdie tells his reader tricks and stratagems he had to invent or adopt to survive a decade of hiding after the Ayatollah Khomeini's "fatwa"[5]. Joseph Anton thereby

[4] The original except in French reads as follows: "L'étranger te permet d'être toi-même, en faisant, de toi, un étranger".

[5] The call of February 14th, 1989, by the Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini on "the proud Muslim people of the world" to kill the author of *The Satanic Verses*, and all people involved in its publication. In the years after the Ayatollah's declaration,

represents Rushdie's *nomen falsum* which he carved based on a combination of his favorite writers' first names: Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov. In this autobiography, Rushdie refers to himself using the third person singular. Rushdie conceives of migration as the perfect laboratory to produce impurity. And impurity in that relation is praised and acknowledged as surest way for better futures. Rushdie has it as follows:

> He (Joseph Anton) was a migrant. He was one of those who had ended up in a place that was not the place where he began. Migration tore up all the traditional roots of the self. The rooted self-flourished in a place it knew well, among people who knew it well, following customs and traditions with which it and its community were familiar, and speaking its own language among others who did the same. Of these four roots, place, community, culture and language, he has lost three. (…) The root of language, at least remained, but he began to appreciate how deeply he felt the loss of the other roots, and how confused he felt about what he had become. In the age of migration, the world's millions of migrated selves faced colossal problems, problems of homeless, hunger, unemployment, disease, persecution, alienation, fear. He was one of the luckier ones, but one problem remained: that of authenticity. The migrated self-became, inevitably, heterogeneous instead of homogeneous, belonging to more than one place, multiple rather than singular, responding to more than one way of being, more than average mixed up (Rushdie 2012: 63 l–64).

Samba Diallo, the protagonist of *L'Aventure ambiguë*, a classic novel by Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1961), struggles with the tension of hybridity. He views himself as a victim, caught between Western rationality and African religious empathy, unable to reconcile these conflicting identities. Unlike Diallo, who sees his hybridity as a crisis – trapped between African and European cultures and unable to find clarity in his identity (Kane 1961: 164) – Rushdie embraces hybridity as a positive force, representing the materiality of ordinary human identity both today and in the future. Rushdie's conception of impurity is linked to forgiveness, as it is unshackled from the rootedness that limits Diallo. Diallo's failure to navigate his identity stems from his cultural roots being bound by a closure: his rejection of European colonial culture, which itself is built on a pretension of superiority. While Rushdie acknowledges the consequences of such cultural closures, he rejects their perpetuation, advocating instead for a more open and dynamic understanding of identity. Impurity or profanation acknowledges the achievements of previous generations, even if these were often driven by pretenses. At the same time, it raises the question of today's generation's responsibility for the ongoing improvement of the human condition. Both concepts thus involve freedom – freedom from the tyranny of the past and freedom from future domination. Theoretically, profanation or impurity can be understood as a form of freedom, both in its negative and positive senses, as outlined by Finn Bowring. Bowring distinguishes between the two: "Negative freedom is freedom from being governed by others, while positive freedom is the 'freedom to' govern—a freedom that must define what it means to be self-governing, giving freedom content and character, and making it a determinate activity, not just the opportunity to act" (Bowring 2015: 157). Impurity would imply negative freedom, which is freedom from being governed by others (filial predecessors whose time is necessary different from now or foreign values), except that today's generation works for a radical rupture from their cultural ties, as informed by fixed homegrown roots by permanently trying to extend their roots to the world. Concretely, this means that today's generation boldly

bookstores were bombed, the book's Japanese translator was killed, its Italian translator survived a stabbing, and its Norwegian publisher survived a shooting. Rushdie himself spent about ten years in hiding, living in a bewildering succession of makeshift safe-houses all over the U.K. and the U.S.

opposes being governed by aliens and likewise by accomplishments, strengths or weaknesses of their own filial predecessors. Today's generation should comply with its unescapable condition and address the challenges attached to it as well as those of its time which may always never be the same with those of the previous generations. Today's generation must address its challenges using their own means. Impurity or profanation is also about positive freedom because it matches actual context in which distance no more builds an obstacle. Today's context is one in which, as Edward Said puts it: "no one is purely one thing" because "imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale" (Said 1993: 336).

It is that context as revealed by Said that turns migrancy, impurity, or profanation into a necessity. In fact, migrancy activates heterogeneity or a sense of belonging to more than one place, identity, or culture. Migrancy (impurity or profanation) is so to speak the fuel, which entirely diffuses fixed or reified identities, whose principles the Agambian idea of *homo sacer* captures very well. In fact, and as Agamben argues, it is not human destiny to be pure, reified or fixed as the idea of the sacred man tends to suggest. No human being is pure and should ever pretend to be either pure or called and be considered as such. Quoting Pompeius Festus, Giorgio Agamben highlights the vicious ambivalence at stake in the essence of the *homo sacer* as follows:

> The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide; in the first tribunitian law, in fact, it is noted that "if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide." This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred (Agamben 1998: 71).

The last sentence in the above quotation is very explicit about the unavoidable impure nature of human being. Impurity as aim of profanation thus assures positive change, which takes place from permanent negotiation and within mutual respect among entities. It also takes place from sincere recognition that all human beings, irrespective of their gender, race, social class, religion, belong to a same impure humankind. If all human beings could meet these principles, axiological, ethical, or pacifist prospects on quality life could undeniably have been at hand.

5 Conclusion

This study sought to illustrate to what extend Salman Rushdie's idea of migrancy captures that of profanation by Giorgio Agamben. To meet this goal, the study convened Rushdie's and Agamben's biographies in other to explore how they influence their respective intellectual works. This perspective has enabled the study to highlight Rushdie's concern about migrancy and to outline the affiliation of Rushdie's migrancy to impurity. Rushdie's migrancy deserves to be considered a factory of impurity. Impurity appeared as a relevant complex that structures or nurtures Rushdie's idea of migrancy. Migrancy particularly appeared as an existential necessity insofar as it triggers the renewal of human cultural taste by fueling human with ability to resist becoming simple spectators or guardians of cultural heritages. Impurity keeps alive humanity's sense of responsibility towards history. It reinforces human awareness of their mission on earth by permanently connecting them to the ethics of responsibility.

Impurity also appeared as a commonplace for the Agambian profanation. To profane is to detach the free use of things by men from their concealment into sacred areas as made possible through consecration or through habituation. It is a political act that disrupts the tranquility which the morbid essence of things tries to conceal living agents in. A key contribution of the study is maybe that it

suggests impurity or profanation as today's standard for any cultural production, unless the said culture despises consideration. To despise consideration here means for instance to endorse human rights abuses in the name of sovereignty of the state like the few repressive measures against mass migration exposed in the study have shown. Those battalions are also not different from the attack on Salman Rushdie by the 24-year-old Hadi Matar, during a literary event in Chautauqua, New York on August 12, 2022 (Saghieh 2022).

It should however not be forgotten that making profanation sounds synonymous to impurity reveals a theoretical dilemma. In fact, profanation assumes an act while impurity utters a state, so it becomes challenging to really say which of the two terms has precedency over the other? Also, nothing guarantees that, as its traditionally negative connotation appeals, impurity will never become the next sort of *homo sacer* whose hegemonic consequences profanation deactivates and resists. Despite this theoretical existing aporia, it is important to look at profanation (act) alongside impurity (state) because this very interplay enables cultural transactions and negotiations to endlessly continue.

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