

## An intertextual<sup>1</sup> reading of Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

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Intercultural reading of Rushdie's novel written for children, but not only for them, shows that Rushdie simply lives and creates in the milieu of his time, equally rooted in the Indian heritage and in his modern Western upbringing. Salman Rushdie is deeply involved in everything around him and as a true magician of the written word he amalgamates the culture of his adopted homeland producing a blend of exquisite flavour. One might say that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a dizzy juggling with intercultural, interliterary, intermedial, interlingual and intertemporal intertexts.

Ever since Julia Kristeva, incited by Bahtin's concept of dialogue, introduced in the late sixties the notion of intertextuality<sup>2</sup>, this particular theoretical approach has been greatly discussed and developed. It has yielded a rich harvest when applied to "highly intertextual literature of the 20th century", as noticed by Broich and Pfister<sup>3</sup>. And truly, apart from the issue of the applicability of intertextual analysis in creative and imaginative writing as such, the texture of postmodern writing often almost requires discussion along these lines. This is the case with Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, a fairy-tale like novel the first edition of which was published in 1990.

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<sup>1</sup> *Intertextual* is used in this title in a very loose way. It does not only cover all textual relations of one text with another text, but also the relationship one text establishes through its textual procedure with other media.

<sup>2</sup> The phenomenon was noticed many centuries earlier. An example from earlier times appears as motto to the the book *Intertextualität* (ed. U. Broich, M. Pfister).

<sup>3</sup> *Intertextualität*, Tübingen, 1985, p. ix.

Growing up with postmodern literature Salman Rushdie developed his own style of widely recognized and, by literary critics, highly appreciated quality. Amongst the thick volumes of his kathās<sup>4</sup> there is a thin one its intertextual nature disclosing in its very title. On the surface it seems to address children as a reading public, but it also appeals to adults, particularly those who need to reassure their faith in fundamental human beliefs; that good triumphs over evil, in the freedom of speech, in justice, in the possibility that happiness can be attained...<sup>5</sup> This kathā of Rushdie's is entitled *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (further HSS). It is partly in line with Antoine de Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*. They share that special charm of an innocent child-like-attitude while providing deeper insights or disclosing universal truths. But while *The Little Prince* does not transgress the charming simplicity of the narrative and topical texture, HSS is rich with countless layers of meanings of all kinds. These, as a part of HSS's charm are fully recognizable only when this small, gem-like kathā, in Rushdie's necklace of huge pearl-like kathās, is read intertextually.

The first critics<sup>6</sup> of HSS noticed and pointed out its directness and vigour, as well as its links with Arabic literary lore. *Haroun* from the title of the kathā points towards the *Thousand and One Nights*; even more obviously after we open the first pages and find out that the name of Haroun's father is *Rashid Khalifa*.<sup>7</sup> None other than the most celebrated of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs Hārūn al-Rashīd then comes to mind, the magnificent Caliph whose splendour and "fame has been spread throughout East and West by the *Arabian Nights*"<sup>8</sup>.

But let us put aside for the moment the meaning and the function of this intertext and observe the second word of the title, namely the *Sea of Stories*. Those well acquainted with Sanskrit literature associate it immediately with the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, the famous Sanskrit collection of stories. Its title, interpreted as the *Ocean of the*

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<sup>4</sup> *Kathā* is a Sanskrit literary term discussed later; in its loose sense it denotes a story in whichever literary form. Here it is used in that neutral meaning.

<sup>5</sup> This was Rushdie's first creative writing published after Homeini cast a *fatwa* on him (14 February 1989). In a way it was also his answer to that *fatwa*; Rushdie wrote and dedicated the book to his son Zafar, but he was also reassuring himself through it, as well as his readers, that the *fatwa* might only obstruct his creative writing for a short while. The thick volumes of books which appeared later amply proved this.

<sup>6</sup> E. g. Edward Said, *Ocean of Stories, Independent on Sunday*, 23. 9. 1990; Anupa Lal, *Salman Rushdie and the Sea of Stories, Times of India*, 17. 12. 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Pondering, most probably along the lines of the Arabic non-vocalic script, E. Said thinks that Rashid is a disguise for Rushdie. This might be the case, but nevertheless we cannot dismiss Rashid's link with the famous Abbāsīd Caliph. If both interpretations are correct, we have an instance of double allusion which could be treated as an intertextual *ślesha* figure. We mean that we have here a poetic figure from classical Sanskrit literature used in a modern way.

<sup>8</sup> E.J. Brill's *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, p. 272.

*Streams of Story*<sup>9</sup>, later in the HSS text becomes one of the crucial intertexts for the picturesque presentation of the origin and meaning of a story as such. This intertextual play with the Arabic and Sanskrit leading storytelling achievements introduced in the very title of the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* discloses its intertextuality as intercultural, and its theme as **The Story**.<sup>10</sup>

## 1. HSS in the context of postmodern literature and the Indian storytelling tradition

What makes Rushdie's story about the story so appealing to the modern reader is the charm and ease with which it is told. It is a book for children, but it is not a book for children only. It is a story about the story, but it is not only a story about the story, it is also a story about family life, politics, human nature, sadness, happiness...<sup>11</sup>

HSS is a fairy-tale too, but it is not a fairy-tale only. Playing with the storytelling techniques, Rushdie opens the story in the fairy-tale style - *There was once, in the country of Alifbay, a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name.*- (15)<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, the narrative is structured in a mixed postmodernistic way. Approaching the end we encounter an all-knowing narrator who communicates directly with the reader in the Calvino's style: - *Now I must tell you quickly about everything that happened while Haroun was away in the Old Zone...* (179) And as this proceeds rapidly, we reach the very end of the kathā, which is again presented in a sort of fairy-tale style; it is a point-blank happy ending, where the formula *and they lived happily ever after* is transposed into *Outside, in the living room, his mother had begun to sing.* (211) The direct statement of happiness from *and they lived happily ever after* is transposed into the suggestion of happiness, which gives the kathā the individuality of authorship and allows a deeper aesthetic experience of the literary text. After Rushdie's version of the closing phrase *and they lived happily ever after*, as in many fairy-tales, come the words: *The End*. Hence the beginning and the ending of HSS, being told in the form of a fairy-tale, make the fairy-tale structure a sort of frame for HSS's narrative.

The playfulness and magically unreal real worlds which HSS shares with literature of the end of the 20th century, might make one believe that Rushdie's literary proce-

<sup>9</sup> As Sanskrit compounds allow different readings the title of the Sanskrit storycollection is in Indological literature read as *Ocean of the Rivers of Stories* (F. Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*), *Ozean der Erzählungsströme* (M. Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*), *Ocean whose Rivers are Stories* (A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature* Vol. VI ), *More u koje utječu rijeke priča / Sea into which the rivers of stories flow into* (R. Katičić, *Stara indijska književnost*), *The Sea of the Stream of Stories* (Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*) and in similar other ways.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, another approach to HSS may disclose the essence of its topic in a different way.

dures belong exclusively to the western literary tradition, that is to say that this aspect of his writing remains untouched by the intercultural friction so characteristic of his entire literary and personal being. In fact HSS is more than full of fairytaleness, space and time are also treated in the postmodernistic way, meaning that they are ignored whenever possible<sup>13</sup>; the typical postmodernistic literary procedures such as contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess, short circuit<sup>14</sup> are also discerned. On the other hand the briefest glance at the old Sanskrit kathā reveals that Rushdie's HSS shares some elements with it as well. That comes out clearly when we try to answer the question - Whether HSS is a rather long fairy-tale, adopted to the intended objectives and the current requirements, or is a short (postmodernistic) novel<sup>15</sup>? The answer to this question is: Both of them and then also something else. That *both and also something else*, HSS shares with Sanskrit kathā.

In Sanskrit literary criticism kathā is used in two meanings; in a general sense it denotes a story, fiction or narrative of any type.<sup>16</sup> In its specific sense it denotes a Sanskrit type of novel. Indian literary criticism does not pay any attention to the first general use of the term kathā, and it does not differentiate between the short narrative forms such as tale, fairytale and fable. All these forms are called kathā or ākhyāyikā, sometimes also ākhyāna, ākhyānaka, upākhyāna, kathānaka etc.<sup>17</sup> In many Sanskrit kathās the three short narrative forms are mixed in one and the same text. We find a similar nondifferentiation in HSS also.

In the specific sense kathā was primarily used to denote a “novel” with a “fictive story” as opposed to the ākhyāyikā, the “novel” with a “true story”;<sup>18</sup> in the later development of the two types of Sanskrit novel, the difference between them disappeared.<sup>19</sup> Sanskrit novels in general display fairytaleness; a kathā “*should have a delightful, wondrous story, generally a love-story, often taken from the older sources such as Guṇāḍhya's lost Brhatkathā, which is then treated freely and imaginatively... The action is permeated with a markedly fantastic and miraculous atmosphere which fre-*

<sup>11</sup> In this paper only chosen aspects of HSS are discussed; many others, such as the motivation of characters, structuring of conflicts, together with those discussed in this paper support the approach to the HSS as more than just a book for children.

<sup>12</sup> The pages referred to are from the Granta Books London 1990 edition published in India by Penguin Books India .

<sup>13</sup> M. Solar, *Laka i teška književnost*, Zagreb, 1995, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> David Lodge: *The Modes of Modern Writing*, 1977.

<sup>15</sup> E. Said starts his review, mentioned in the footnote 6, presenting HSS first as a sort of story for children, but later in the text he refers to it as a novel.

<sup>16</sup> A.K. Warder: *Indian Kāvya literature*, Delhi, 1989 (2nd ed.), Vol.I, p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> P. A. Grincer: *Drevneindiyskaya proza*, Moskva, 1963, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> S. Lienhard: *A History of Classical Poetry*, Wiesbaden, 1984, p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> S. Lienhard, op. cit., p. 229.

quently swings over to the supernatural...”<sup>20</sup> The authors of Sanskrit kathās are masters in display of imagination and linguistic skills. Their kathās “could not finish in tragedy. An unhappy ending was unthinkable as the hero, an ideal type ... could never go wrong. Poetry was also to teach the lesson that, thanks to divine providence, the good will always triumph in the end in spite of all the vagaries of fortune.”<sup>21</sup>

Imagination, delightfulness, fantastic and miraculous, linguistic skills, magic of words, happy ending are all present in HSS. They are not present in exactly the same way as they are present in the Sanskrit kathā, but they are present in a very similar way. HSS shares the happy ending with the classical Sanskrit kathā (not with Sanskrit kathā in its general sense) as well as with the fairy-tale as such.

Happy ending is a point at which HSS differs from postmodernistic literary texts which although full of fairytales can not be looked upon as fairy-tales, because they lack optimism.<sup>22</sup> It may be noted, although it is most probably an accidental correspondence, that HSS displays a delightful sense of humour, which Warder feels to be an exposed feature of the 11th century Sanskrit story telling.<sup>23</sup> There is probably also an accidental feature that HSS and the Sanskrit novel have in common, they are both divided into chapters.<sup>24</sup>

The above mentioned common features may partly result from the fairy-tale nature of HSS and Sanskrit kathā. It is hardly probable that some of them are not part of Rushdie's Indian heritage, especially when the intertext of *Kathāsaritsāgara*<sup>25</sup> from the title of HSS, found later in the text many times, is taken into consideration. Rushdie was brought up as a child amidst the Indian storytelling tradition, imbibing its narrative textures along with listening to the stories being told. It is only natural that some of the elements of these narrative textures translate into Rushdie's storytelling when he decides to write a *kahani*<sup>26</sup> for his son Zafar.

<sup>20</sup> S. Lienhard, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>21</sup> S. Lienhard, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>22</sup> M. Solar, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., vol VI (1992), p. XII-XIII.

<sup>24</sup> *Kathāsaritsāgara* is divided into 18 lambakas (books or larger sections) containing 124 tarangas (chapters or waves); lambakas are marked by name and number and tarangas only by number. HSS is divided into 12 chapters which are marked by number and name. Formal organization of the text of this, or a similar type, is found in many postmodernistic narratives.

<sup>25</sup> An interesting, surely accidental coincidence may be mentioned here; the compiler of *Kathāsaritsāgara*, Somadeva, comes from 11th century Kashmir, the same “dreamland” from which Rushdie's family originates and which appears in HSS twice as an intertext, once underlining the breathtaking beauty of the scenery and the second time pointing to the present day conflict torn area of the Subcontinent (cf. infra).

<sup>26</sup> *Kahānī* is the hindi/urdū term for *kathā* and Rushdie uses it in HSS as it is.

## 2. Intertextual nature of HSS

In the same way that Rushdie takes delight in life, a good life full of humour, he also takes delight in HSS while playing with the intertextual postmodernistic procedures. However for him it is not a means to its own end. He is consciously juggling intertexts taken from the Indian, Arabic and European literary traditions. Consequently, HSS can be regarded as a text with a high degree of intertextual intensity in the meaning of Pfister's *Kommunikativität* category.<sup>27</sup> HSS also displays a high degree of intertextual intensity in Pfister's *Seliktivität* category.<sup>28</sup> According to Pfister, intertexts which constitute a selection of smaller units of a proto-text, intensify the degree of intertextuality. Such is the case with the HSS intertexts which appear when questions like - what is a story, how does it come up, how is it developed, arise.

In this respect, Rushdie goes along poststructuralistic lines, but in a playful and vivid manner. His concept of *story* is not a single echo, but is in complete agreement with Barthes's stance that each text is a "*chambre d'échos*".<sup>29</sup> To express this concept artfully and picturesquely in a fairy-tale like novel written for a child, he calls to his aid intertexts primarily from the Sanskrit and Arabic tradition, as well as from European story lore. With the intertext *Kathāsaritsāgara*, appearing in HSS in two variants, in the title of the novel as *The Sea of Stories*, and later in the text as *The Ocean of the Streams of Story*,<sup>30</sup> Rushdie masterly lays out the foundation for his unpretentiously pretentious revelation of how and where stories originate from.

He says:

... water ... was made up of a **thousand thousand thousand and one** currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry of breathtaking complexity ... these were the **Streams of Story**, that each coloured strand represented and contained a single tale. Different parts of the Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here, the **Ocean of the Streams of Story** was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And 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 and so become yet 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. (72)

This passage tempts one to interpret it in a lighthearted way; but we shall stick to our point - the *Kathāsaritsāgara* as an intertext. In the interpretation of its meaning

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes, Paris, 1975, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Compare footnote 9. The compiler of *Kathāsaritsāgara* also chose this name *intentionally* for his storycollection, though for a slightly different reason.

Rushdie makes a slight but significant shift. In accordance with the poststructuralistic concept that stories are just variations of the one and the same story, Rushdie talks about the *Ocean of the Streams of Story* and not stories. Nevertheless, this intertext underlines the richness and complexity of storytelling. Moreover, it includes another intertext, the Arabic one, which signifies the same thing. It states that streams of story are *a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents*. These *thousand thousand thousand and one different currents* can be understood only as an intertextual playing with the Arabic storycollection *Thousand and One Nights*. This intertext appears in HSS in more places, as when the houseboat allotted to Haroun and Rashid is called *Arabian Nights Plus One* (50) and *the capital of the Land of Gup<sup>31</sup> was built upon an Archipelago of one thousand and one small islands* (87). Here, as in the HSS as a whole, elements of the Eastern literary tradition are easily and meaningfully interwoven into the fabric of creative writing, primarily based on the end of the 20th century Western literature's theoretical and procedural concepts.

As postmodernistic literature plays with tradition and literature, so does Rushdie artfully play with the story concept, with the modern research of story motives, with storytelling procedures, with the reality and truthfulness of story. In a rather unpretentious way story in HSS becomes a symbol of free thinking, symbol of freedom in general. When Haroun meets the demon-like ruler of Chupwalas, the Cultmaster Khattam-Shud who is poisoning the stories, he asks him:

"But why do you hate stories so much?" ... "Stories are fun..."

"The world, however, is not for Fun," Khattam-Shud replied. "The world is for Controlling."

"Which world?" Haroun made himself ask.

"Your world, my world, all worlds," came the reply. "They are all there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a storyworld, that I cannot Rule at all. And that is the reason why." (161)

What Khattam-Shud tries to destroy is the Source of Stories which "was a hole or a chasm or crater in the sea-bed, and through that hole ... the glowing flow of pure, unpolluted stories came bubbling up from the very heart of Kahani. There were so many Streams of Story, of so many different colours, all pouring out of the Source at once, that it looked like a huge underwater fountain of shining white light" (167). This **shining white light** which gives hope to everyone opposing repression, is made of different colours of streams. "And it was in the colours that the best parts of the Stories in those Streams were encoded: their vividness, lightness and vivacity." (122)

Vividness, lightness and vivacity back up three other qualities of the story; namely, purity, innocence and ability to rescue. The same can be said of the story's guards - the Guppees. They are blabbermouths and chatter-boxes; they endlessly discuss and exag-

<sup>31</sup> Guppees are the caretakers of the *Ocean of the Streams of Story*.

gerate; when enraged, as when they caught Rashid suspecting him of being a spy, they even propose cruel punishments like ripping out the fingernails, a slow and painful killing, or a million volts in an electric chair (97). But only for a moment they stay mad. When earnestly asked how he would punish a spy, the good Water Genie Iff replies naively: “*Maybe we should scold him. Or make him stand in the corner. Or write I must not spy one thousand and one times. Or is that too severe?*”<sup>32</sup> (98) The good-natured, gullible Guppies swallow without a wink Rashid’s story about how he arrived into the land of Gup through certain dietary procedures.

Guppees are guppy<sup>33</sup> and naive, but when the time comes, their king named **Chattergy** and their general named **Kitab** know how to pull them together and acquire mastery over the situation. The king’s name Chattergy - which sounds like “*chattering, blabbering*”, stirs conflicting notions for those acquainted with the Indian cultural milieu. At one and the same time it mocks and calls for respect. Chattergy (usually spelled Chatterjee<sup>34</sup> is a typical Bengali family name. In India Bengalis are considered a very artistic, highly cultured, and intellectually not unpretentious part of society. Using a Bengali family name is an apt intertextual descriptive reference to the king’s personality, whose soldiers are called Pages. Guppees, the story’s guards, represent freedom of speech, they symbolize the endangered written word. Just like King Chattergy, so is the Guppee General for a very good reason given the name *Kitab - The Book*.

The name *Kitab* could be read as an attractive intertextual game, played with the cultural traditions based on the *Book*.<sup>35</sup> By taking the word *Kitab* as this kind of intertext, Rushdie underscores the wisdom contained in time proven values. General *Kitab*’s department and actions display this wisdom. It is conspicuous from his very first description: “*a weatherbeaten old gent with a rectangular uniform made of finely-tooled gold-inlay leather, of the sort Haroun had sometimes seen on the covers of old and valuable books.*” (89)

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<sup>32</sup> Here again Rushdie plays in his typical way with the intertext *one thousand and one*. Normally it underlines the richness and beauty of the storyworld or the abundance of something which is desirable. In this instance it is just the opposite; the intertext ridicules the old fashioned way of punishing children by making them write a sentence many times over.

<sup>33</sup> Their name is derived from the Hindi word *gap* meaning *gossip*, but also *nonsense* or *fib*.

<sup>34</sup> Writing of *-gy* instead of the usual spelling *-jee* is a typical Rushdie ludic shift. The whole name can be interpreted also as an interlingual joke. Namely, if we read *Chattergy* as an Anglo-Indian hybrid compound (*-gi/jee* = the respected one), it means The Respected Mister Chattering. This is not a farfetched supposition; in his novel *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Rushdie explains the name of one of the characters, *Lambajan Chandiwala*, as an inter-lingual joke meaning *Long John Silverfellow* (*-jan* reads as the English *John* and the rest is Hindi translation of *Long /John/ Silverfellow*). Vintage paperback ed. 1995, p. 126/

<sup>35</sup> The connotation seems primarily directed towards the Arabic cultural tradition, since the Arabic word for book is chosen.



Old values are mixed up with new ones in HSS in the same way in which the story-telling is visualised as a kind of juggling: "You keep a lot of different tales in the air, and juggle them up and down, and if you're good you don't drop any." (109) Rushdie juggles craftily them, their relations to the modern times phenomena and the scientific research of story lore. When a fairy-tale moves in this world and in cosmic space as well, the *Unidentified Flying Objects/UFO* are imminent. In HSS UFO's travelling to Earth is motivated by inter-galactic gastronomy. On planet Kahani "food production is strictly basic." (92) It's inhabitants must travel to Earth "for tasty and wicked luxury items." (92).<sup>36</sup>

In this fairy-tale like story of the end of the 20th century, there is a lot of dialogue between the characters and objects of classical fairy-tale stock and those of modern times; a standard item from the Eastern fairy tale lore is a *magic carpet*. It does not appear directly in HSS, but in a transposed way and condensed in the sentence describing the beauty of the vista of the Valley of K: "a view spread like a *magic carpet*, waiting for someone to come and take a ride." (34) The inviting beauty of the wondrous, hard to imagine scenery is expressed by a classical fairy-tale requisite – *the magic carpet* – being spread out. Later in the text we come across the modern times' requisites such as UFOs.<sup>37</sup>

Pollution, the scourge of modern times, reverberates throughout the Ocean of Story:

*"The waters of the Ocean were growing thicker by the mile, thicker and colder; many of the Streams of Story were full of a dark, slow-moving substance that looked like molasses."* (140)

The situation is so alarming that "top speed" (75) action is called for. The gravity of the danger is realized when the ending of a Princess Rescue Story, which comes to Haroun in a dream, is terrifying.

Princess Rescue Story, well known from the world story heritage, appears in HSS as an intertext underscoring the horrors the present day world is exposed to. At the same time this intertext leaves room for hope; it is only toying with the threat that even stories might go wrong. Namely, when Princess Rescue Story is just about to turn into an awful, unsuccessful rescue story, the reader is told it was all a dream. Rushdie artfully plays with the intertext giving it both a ludic and scientific connotation. The ludic part of it lies in the appearance of the scientific precision by which the fairy-tale intertext is surrounded. Princess Rescue Story is presented, labelled by numbers and letters in a formula-like style, reminiscent of the research work carried out in the field of folk literature by Aarne and Thompson. They have organized the data on the types

<sup>36</sup> When Earthlings visit other galaxies during their scientific shuttle missions, they are served synthetic foods. Jokingly, Rushdie concocts that UFOs visit Planet Earth because they crave for expensive food items, alluding to idiosyncrasies of modern society.

<sup>37</sup> This could be interpreted as an intertemporal relationship also (cf. *Infra*).

and motives of folktales in world literature, indexing them under exact and precise capital letters and numbers. By using this coding method as an intertext<sup>38</sup>, Rushdie manages to clothe the tale lore in a scientific garb, pointing out that story versions are manifold and their motives widespread.

Arne -Thompson give the number 310 to the HSS Princess Rescue Story, calling it *Maiden in the Tower*.<sup>39</sup> In his subsequent research Thompson records the motif *Captivity in Tower* under code R 41.<sup>40</sup> and the motif *Girl's Long Hair as Ladder into Tower* under code F 848.1.<sup>41</sup> Using the same type of coding system Rushdie presents the Maiden in the Tower story as **Princess Rescue Story G/1001/RIM/777/M(w)i**. The version of the story which comes to Haroun in a dream, Rushdie labels as **Princess Rescue Story S/1001/ZHT.420/41(r)xi**. (73) Rushdie tells his reader directly that the **Princess Rescue Story G/1001/RIM/777/M(w)i** is the one they know by the name of *Rapunzel*. The tale is about the rescue of a maiden imprisoned in a tower, visited by a witch and a prince. They climb up to the tower with the help of the maiden's long hair used as a ladder. When the witch discovers the prince and the maiden's affair, she cuts the girl's hair. After falling off the tower the prince turns blind. The maiden cries in sorrow, and her tears restore his sight.

In Rushdie's version of the Princess Rescue Story, the captive princess' hair is already cut preventing Haroun from climbing to the top of the tower with its help. Haroun climbs, killing the monsters on the way, and "*clinging to the tracks between the stones with his bare hands and feet*". (73) Halfway up, his limbs start transforming into hairy spiders' legs with more limbs pushing out from his sides. The terrified princess hacks and chops them off. Haroun finally falls off, only to wake up terrified.

Narrated at the moment when the battle for the ability of storytelling just starts and its outcome still uncertain, Rushdie's Princess Rescue Story, or rather pollution story, ends in terror, indicating the current precarious state of things. Both Princess Rescue Stories' codes include the number **1001**, underscoring that there are countless versions of the story. The *Rapunzel* type of story is the only one having the familiar happy ending and has triple **7** in its code number – generally thought of as a lucky number. So here again there is an intertextually interlaid intertext. The relation of intertext *1001*

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<sup>38</sup> This type of intertext is usually discussed as an intermedial one, on account of it not being taken from a belles-lettres text but from one belonging to scientific literature, in this case to the research literature of folktales. This intermedial intertext should not be interpreted as a metaliterary case, as it does not further the dialogue with the folktale motives theory. Nevertheless, it does contain elements of Genette's metatextuality in the sense that the new variant of a well known story, made up for the needs of HSS narrative, is presented in the same way it would be as if registered in the scientific indexes. This could be taken as a remark on the new variant of the story, which at the same time is commentary on the pretext.

<sup>39</sup> *The Types of the Folktale*, Helsinki, 1961, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, Copenhagen, 1957, vol. V, p. 273.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*

and the triple 7 number represents a kind of a frame for the intertext *Rapunzel*. So structured intertextual relations led to one more. Namely, when Haroun saw how his new limbs started pushing from his sides, *he understood that he was somehow turning into a monster.*(74) Here we encounter a monster, the intertext taken from the Kafka's famous story *Ungeziefer*.<sup>42</sup> This type of arrangement of intertextual framings reminds us of Chinese carved ivory balls that tightly fit one into another.

There is yet another aspect of intertextuality in HSS, which we call intratextuality. It could be described as a musical motif, played lightly in the beginning, and ever so slightly more developed, later on. We often come across keyweighty statements which are repeatedly referred to in the text later. *What's the use of stories that aren't even true?*, is one such example. One of the main topics of the text is the significance of story as a literary product and its relationship to reality. The topic is introduced in the opening pages of the book and the book closes by offering an answer to it.

Engrossed in storytelling and carried away by his success Rashid doesn't notice that his neglected wife Soraya was "*turning cloudy and even a little thunderous and brewing up quite a storm.*"(16) Their neighbour Mr. Sengupta a *sticky-thin and whiny-voiced* and *mingy* (19) clerk uses the opportunity to approach the neglected wife, and tell her how useless her husband's way of life is. The key sentence conveying Sengupta's contempt of Rashid's life engrossed in the world of stories, is "***What's the use of stories that aren't even true?***"(20) This articulation of contempt for storytelling, motivates subsequent action in the narrative. Haroun, abandoned by his mother on account of his father's storytelling – the only work his father knew how to do – loses his temper and yells at Rashid "*What's the use of stories that aren't even true?*"(22). Unconsciously, he repeated Sengupta's words. This is the final blow to Rashid and he is completely shattered: his storytelling powers dry up. The same phrase is repeated in other circumstances. Facing his father's breakdown, Haroun recalls the words he believes caused his father's troubles and decides to do something about it.(27) The intratext becomes the start of a new set of events in the plot, whereby Rashid's storytelling powers are to be restored.

This intratext also opens up the question of what is the meaning of a story in human life. One of the explanations is typically post-modernistic – "*the real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real.*"(50) The reality of the storyworld is not to be dismissed lightly; it can even have pragmatic justification. Politicians know this and they make use of it: "*Nobody ever believed anything a politico said, even though they pretended as hard as they could that they were telling the truth. (In fact, this was how everyone knew they were lying.) But everyone had complete faith in Rashid, because he always admitted that everything he told them was completely untrue and made out of his own head. So the politicos needed Rashid to help them win the people's*

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<sup>42</sup> That this *monster* is an intertext taken from Kafka's *Ungeziefer* supports a further intertext which directly refers to Kafka himself.

votes.”(20) However, this is only one of the possible answers. Another explanation may lie in the human need for happiness as an essential element for leading a normal life. When there is not sufficient happiness to be found in a daily life full of pollution, then that attained by reading a story is of immense importance and help. By the end of the book an adventurous battle against the devastation of *the Ocean of the Streams of Story* is fought and won by the Guppees – the caretakers of the Ocean, with the help of Haroun and his father. After the battle the latter two return to their city, where they find people joyfully playing in the rain. Haroun is very suspicious of what he sees because nothing had really changed. Factories still manufactured sadness, and people were still poor. He worries that the happiness surrounding him is just a figment of imagination aroused by his story-book characters. He is depressed until he meets a policeman who tells him that the people were happy because they managed to recall their city's name. And that name is **Kahani**, – meaning **Story**.(209)<sup>43</sup>

Rushdie brings thus to conclusion his dialogue with the intratextual intertext *What's the use of stories that aren't even true?* The everlasting question what's the consequence of literature, receives a typical Rushdie reply, delicately tottering on the edge of banality, if it is retold. His answer is as simple as a child's reaction. It is – *happiness*.

Rushdie's playing with the story correspondes to storytelling being looked upon as a type of juggling. In HSS this boisterous playfulness is underscored with an intertext of the above mentioned intratextual type. At the very beginning of the text we read: *“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.”*(16) And when the dizzy whirl of the HSS *kathā* is in full swing, the juggling – which yet again reminds Haroun of storytelling – is visualised in the passage when the Guppe *“Blabbermouth took three soft balls made of golden silk from one of her pockets, tossed them in the air so that they caught the sunlight, and began to juggle. She juggled behind her back, over and under her leg, with her eyes closed, and lying down, until Haroun was speechless with admiration; and every so often she'd throw all balls high into the air, reach into her pockets, and produce more of the soft golden spheres, until she was juggling nine balls, then ten, then eleven. And every time Haroun thought, “She can't possibly keep them all up”, she'd add even more balls to her whirling galaxy of soft silken suns.”*(108-109)

The milky way of intertexts in HSS is as fascinating as *the galaxy of soft silken suns*. What may be even more impressive than Blabbermouth's juggling of sunlit silken balls is Rushdie's juggling with the Shiva dance as an intermedial intercultural

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<sup>43</sup> The intercultural intertextual play with the word *Kahani* was introduced in HSS earlier. The name of the planet of the Ocean of the Streams of Story is also *Kahani*, but Rushdie chooses not to explain the meaning of the word in that first instance. He does so at the end, at the same time revealing the real reason why people are happy. The function of the intertext *Kahani* does not require special elaboration as the position of Oriental story-telling is well known.

intertext.<sup>44</sup> No less fascinating then this is his juggling with politics, dictatorship, obedient citizens and so forth.

Politics is an unavoidable aspect in Rushdie's literary activity<sup>45</sup>. In this fairy-tale-like *kathā* his attitude towards political events and towards the functioning of the political world is often conveyed, supported by the intertexts from well known stories. Crowned heads, the unquestioned dignitaries in so many countries, have their representatives in HSS in the figures of Princess Batcheat and Prince Bolo from the Land of Gup. Rushdie satirises the way the mighty consider themselves deserving of all credit, and how they make themselves believe that they are the heroes of all important events, by making Princess Batcheat order the most famous stories of all times to be rewritten in such a way that her beloved Prince Bolo becomes their main protagonist (106). In the Land of Gup we meet Pages carrying the stories entitled *Bolo and the Golden Fleece*, *Bolo and the Wonderful Lamp*, *Bolo and the Forty Thieves*, *Bolo the Sailor*, *Bolo and Juliet*, *Bolo in Wonderland* etc.

Rushdie shows the vanity and might of those in power to be timeless and universal as he plays with the most famous of famous stories of the East as well as those of the West, with stories of ancient and those of modern times, with those for grown ups, and those for children. Princess Batcheat's utter banality and catastrophic singing, witnessed on more than one occasion, as well as Prince Bolo's pretentious and foolish behaviour in serious situations, highlighted by the above cited intertexts, betray the shabbiness, flimsy knowledge and frivolousness of formal rulers. People fond of traditional institutions forgive them all their follies and foibles. This can be so, since those in real charge, never allow crowned heads to do anything very important. That, "*they are not really let do anything very important round there*" appears in HSS as an intratextual intertext (104, 193) underscoring such a state of affairs.

The general characteristic of the intertexts in HSS corresponds to the general narrative nature. Intertexts in HSS very often comprise a small shift which gives them that little something of Rushdie's ludic style, as in the case of – *Arabian Nights Plus One* –. (50) In other cases they are intentionally adjusted to the requirements of the context they are used in, also not without a touch of humour, as example – *for Batcheat and the Ocean* – (91), – *water, water everywhere; not any trace of land* – (68). This ludicity, fun and humour, all in the intercultural context, are the dominant traits of the intertexts discussed. They are also interwoven into other interrelations, such as intermediality, interlinguality, intertemporality. Each time in a playful way, HSS truly vibrates due to the juggling of different types of intercultural interrelations.

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<sup>44</sup> Intertexts which are not from belles-lettres but from another branch of art are also intermedial intertexts (cf. *Infra*).

<sup>45</sup> Taking into consideration his narrative opus as a whole he could be interpreted as being a politically engaged writer.

### 3. Intermediality

The intermedial relationships are vehemently manifested in HSS, particularly those which this narrative establishes with other forms of art, with music, dance, film, and with theory of literature.

HSS vibrates with sounds and pictures. Vibration of sound is found often in poetic language and represents a well known poetical feature. In HSS it takes an especially enchanting form, both in verse as well as in prose:

*Z embla, Zenda, Xanadu:  
A ll our dream-worlds may come true.  
F airy lands are fearsome too.  
A s I wander far from view  
R ead, and bring me home to you.*

This HSS opening verse, reverberating with sounds, discloses in a nutshell almost all the main characteristics of the text, starting from its theme, right to the way in which it will be unfolded. The playfulness, the storyworlds, the dedication to his son Zafar, the resonant intertext *Xanadu*, all of them are represented within.<sup>46</sup>

But the mere reverberation of sounds in these lines cannot be treated as an intermedial relation. This relation is defined by correlation between systems, not between single phenomena belonging to two types of art forms.<sup>47</sup> Such is the case in HSS with the intratextual intertext:

*“a skinny, scrawny, snivelling, drivelling, mingy, stingy, measly, weaselly, clerkish sort of fellow” (190).*

These four rhyming pairs of words describe the Cultmaster Khattam-Shud just before his final defeat. It is the climactic moment of victory over the dry, fearsome and dangerous bureaucratic mentality. Characters representing that sort of mentality are either despotic like Cultmaster Khattam-Shud, or are simply an unimaginative, spineless crowd. Their looks are deftly described by the pair *skinny* – *scrawny* and their inner qualities by *snivelling* – *drivelling*, *mingy* – *stingy*, *measly* – *weaselly*. The description comes at the end of the book when we meet the ultimate personification of these character traits. When that kind of a person or persons appear earlier in the text, they are described as *sticky-thin*, *whiny-voiced*, *mingy* type,<sup>48</sup> or as *scrawny*, *snivelling*, *weaselly-looking types*<sup>49</sup> or alternately *weaselly*, *scrawny*, *snivelling clerical types*.<sup>50</sup> The same character traits progress and develop in a sort of crescendo - *skinny*,

<sup>46</sup> A thorough analysis of this verse, given as a motto to the book, would require a separate article, which could successfully proceed along the lines of Genette's *paratextuality* category.

<sup>47</sup> Pavao Pavličić: *Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost – Tipološki ogled*, Zagreb, 1988, p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> Mr. Sengupta, neighbour and clerk with whom Soraya, Haroun's mother and Rashid's wife, elopes (p 19).

<sup>49</sup> Chupwalas when Haroun meets them for the first time (p. 148).

<sup>50</sup> Again the Chupavalas (p. 152).

scrawny, measly, weaselly snivelling<sup>51</sup> and then again – snivelling, drivelling, mingy, stingy, measly, weaselly<sup>52</sup> ending in “skinny, scrawny, snivelling, drivelling, mingy, stingy, measly, weaselly”. Themes and motives reverberate as if recurring in a symphony heading towards a dramatic climax, with a slighty humorous shift.

HSS vibrates as much with images as it does with sounds. Once again vibrating images are a universal feature of literature. We often read about memorable scenes described in such and such a book. HSS is specific in that a considerable part of its picturqueness springs from its intermedial relation with movies, particularly the animated and action films. The motion picture style of structuring of scenes, persons and events is being transposed, or we might even say, translated, into the medium of words. It is a quality Rushdie shares with a number of his contemporary writers. The fairytaleness of postmodernistic writing, structured at the end of the 20th century into a fairy-tale-like sort of story, which is what we find the HSS to be, is represented, occasionally, through the imagery showing his familiarities with Movieland.<sup>53</sup> We usually come across the fact that literature and film relations are viewed from the point of a literary text being transformed into a screenplay and then retold in film medium. Less often are reverse cases investigated, wherein the elements of a film appear in literary texts. We come across them several times in HSS. Often present is the cinematic fluidity of motion, as well as film-like editing of action. This facilitates the fairy-tale-like events to proceed, and also to maintain the modern fairy-tale-like form of the story's characters and events.

The speed with which the driver of the mail coach makes his way through the mountain passes in order to reach the magnificent vista of the Valley of K in the daylight, is presented as if on a screen: “*The Mail Coach rushed up into the Mountains of M, swinging around terrifying curves with a great squealing of tyres. The luggage (which was all tied down on the roof rack) began to shift about in a worrying way.*”(36) Apart from the speed and the shifting of the luggage being clearly visualized, the reader can even hear the squealing of tyres.

The multidimensional bearing of the text – as if one can see and hear the scene – quite often appears as if it were an animated cartoon: concisely, clearly and quickly – helps the reader enjoy HSS in a childlike manner: “*The poisoned waters lapped at Butt*

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<sup>51</sup> The Cultmaster Khattam-Shud when Haroun encounters him for the first time (p. 153).

<sup>52</sup> The Cultmaster Khattam-Shud when Haroun identifies him with Mr. Sengupta (p. 155).

<sup>53</sup> Rushdie was born in Bombay, the center of the mighty Indian film industry, which is familiarly referred to as Bollywood. He grew up in the era of prevalence of film media, fully participating in this branch of art. This resulted also in his book of film criticism *The Wizard of Oz*. After having completed this article, I came across Meenakshi Mukherjee's reading of HSS (*Politics and Children's Literature: A Reading of "Haroun and the Sea of Stories"*, ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 29:1, January 1998), where she discusses also intermedial relationship between HSS and Satyajit Ray's children's movie *Goopy Gayen and Bagha Bayen (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha)*.

*the Hoopoe's sides – and then splashed suddenly higher, as the Web of Night was brought to an abrupt halt. Iff and Haroun, acting by reflex, jerked their feet away from the splashing liquid, and one of the Water Genie's attractively embroidered and twirly-pointed slippers fell (from, to be precise, his left foot) into the Ocean; where, quick as a blink, with a fizz and a hiss and a burble and a gurgle, it was instantly eaten away, ..."*(146).

As the turbulence of the eventful search for Rashid's storytelling ability subsides, Rushdie again employs an animated cartoon technique. This time it is applied to creating a happy and peaceful atmosphere. A policeman "*floating by on an upturned umbrella*" (208) announced that people are happy because they remembered the city's forgotten name. *Kahani* – he said brightly "*as he floated off down the flooded street*" (209). The clusters of *fl* and *ff* consonants in *floated off down the flooded street* generate a gliding sensation which only a cartoon can visualize, where the movements can turn into any desired form.

The work is full of cartoon like figures and characters. The army of the Land of Gup, located on the planet *Kahani*, and consisting of *Pages*, organized into Chapters and Volumes, is as if marching in a sophisticated animated movie. The army called *Library* is lead by General *Kitab*. The army recruited from Guppee citizens, named *Pages*, who are as garrulous as could be, does not act in a cartoon like way. But the name given to it – *Pages* – evokes characters from an intellectual breed of animated movies. The same happens when we read the comment on how they behaved during the battle: "*The Pages of Gup, now that they had talked through everything so fully, fought hard, remained united, supported each other when required to do so, and in general looked like a force with a common purpose.*"(184/5) – as if the scene was borrowed from an intellectually oriented animation.

Only a moment later the same *Pages* and the *Chupwalas* appear like buffoons out of a cartoon, *Chupwalas* are described as having spherical black nosewarmers; the *Guppee Pages* have red ones.(179) The *Pages of Gup* become even more zany wearing weird helmets: "*around the rim of each helmet was a sort of hatband that lit up brightly when the helmet was worn. This made the Pages of Gup look rather like a regiment of angels or saints, because they all had shining haloes around their heads.*"(179) Typically, the *Pages* resemble buffoons and angels at the same time.

Other such examples of this are for instance: "*the gnarled old Floating Gardner, Mali, with his lilac lips and hat of roots*"(138). Another describes Water Genie *Iff* as "*wearing a huge purple turban on his head and baggy silk pajamas gathered at the ankles*"(55), leaving the impression of having "*an outsize onion for a head and outsize aubergines for legs*"(54). And again *Haroun* in his favourite long night shirt "*bright red with purple patches*"(53). Completely cartoonish is the house *Haroun* and his parents live in. Even *Haroun* thought it to look more like a cake than a building for it was "*a small concrete house with pink walls, lime-green windows and bluepainted balconies with squiggly metal railings*"(18).



There is one more type of this intermedial relation, achieved by the finest command of language. In the depiction of speed, for instance, we experience the sensation of wild speed as though watching velocity along with all its dizzy hazards develop in an action movie. In Butt the Hoopoe's effort to explain why Earthlings have not noticed Planet Earth's second satellite, we read: "*But but but it is because of Speed ... Speed, most Necessary of Qualities! In any Emergency – fire, auto, marine – what is required above all things? Of course, Speed: of fire truck, ambulance, rescue ship. –And what we prize in a brainy fellow? –Is it not his Quickness of Thought? –And in any sport, Speed (of foot, hand, eye) is of the Essence! –And what humans cannot do quickly enough, they build machines to do faster. –Speed, super Speed!*" (67) Though speed reverberates in sound, we can almost experience its physical sensation like following a car chase on the wide screen. The effect is produced in motion picture editing style, through masterful use of words and language-broken sentences interlaid with accumulation of words denoting either objects or parts of body which can obtain a dizzy speed. The cinematic type of speed suggested in the quoted passage hurries through not only like the "speed" of contemporary life, but also shows humans in awe of bewildering tempo – *And what humans cannot do quickly enough, they build machines to do faster.* – And here again, Rushdie plays with the language and with us and our times.

The third intermedial relation in HSS, the one relating to the art of dance and the theoretical presentation of it, exhibits a pure intercultural quality. As the war between Chupwalas and Gupwalas is about to start, the Shadow Warrior, Champion Warrior of Chup comes to the Land of Gup. His name is **Mudra** and he speaks the language of **Abhinaya**. *Abhinaya* is a Sanskrit word for acting and *mudrā* is a Sanskrit word for the different finger positions used in dance whereby traditional stories are told, usually those about gods; so *mudrā* and *abhinaya* are intermedial intertexts. That intermediality is clearer in the instance when the Shadow Warrior **Mudra** communicates with the horrified Gupwalas by his facial mien and by his dance.

His outfit is just like that of an impressive Kathākali dancer: "*His face was painted green, with scarlet lips, exaggerated black brows and eyes, and white stripes on his cheeks. His battle-dress of leather guards and thick thigh- and shoulder-pads made him even larger than he truly was. And his athleticism and swordsmanship were beyond anything Haroun had ever seen.*" (124) And when Mudra moved "*His hands were moving furiously in something like a dance of rage or hate. Faster and faster, more emphatic grew his hand movements ...*" (126) "*Quicker and quicker moved his hands; and his facial muscles rippled and twitched in a most excited way; and his legs danced nimbly and fast.*" (133)

Although not directly mentioned, Shiva's dance is alluded to. Its function, sustains intertextually interwoven *abhinaya* and *mudrā* to help develop an explanation of the complexity of the world and its mysteries. Shiva is the god with more than one face. In his *tāṇḍava* dance he destroys the world and in his *lingam* aspect he helps to create it. Shiva's dance of destruction, though awesome, has beauty in it too.