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**Sighing into a League of His Own:
Rushdie's Use of Camões's Epic and Cervantes's Romance in *The Moor's Last Sigh***

A Thesis Presented

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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This paper provides an analysis of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* use Luis Vaz de Camões's epic poem *The Lusiads* and Miguel de Cervantes's satiric romance *Don Quixote*. After a brief discussion of epic and romance, I trace Rushdie's use and re-use of various aspects from both of these works. A close reading of *The Lusiads* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* will show that in re-using Camões's epic, Rushdie provides India with a nationalistic work and voice that reclaims India from her imperial past, while also providing a pluralist perspective for the world to learn from. Furthermore, an analysis of *Don Quixote* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* will show that in re-using Cervantes's romance, Rushdie continues to promote the pluralist ideals, while also re-using the romance trope of loss to create a sense of urgency for pluralism and tolerance.

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List of Abbreviations

The Moor's Last Sigh

Sigh

The Lusiads

Lusiads

Don Quixote

Quixote

Epic and Empire

Epic

“Voices of Resistance”

“Voices”

Introduction

Stories connect us to each other... they can reveal our conflicts within ourselves and our vulnerabilities to each other. Stories can describe why certain choices are made and others are passed over, and they can reveal the colors of our emotions. Stories have the capacity to convert a line drawing into flesh, to dislodge the power of the presumption and prejudice.
 - Moustafa Bayoumi, How Does It Feel to Be A Problem?

A sigh; it is air, breath. A sigh is invisible and intangible, but it is not inaudible. A sigh can even tell a story that is universally understood. In Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Moraes, the narrator, tells the story of his family through these exasperated exultations. His story transports the reader back and forth in time, while evoking many historical and ahistorical figures. Through the character of Moraes's grandfather, Camoens da Gama, Rushdie recalls the image of Luis Vaz de Camões, author of the Portuguese epic poem *The Lusiads*, which recreates the history of Vasco da Gama's voyage to India. Meanwhile, Rushdie's inclusion of Benegeli, the place Moraes travels to in search of his mother's paintings, evokes the remembrance of the fictional historian, Cid Hamet Ben Engeli from Miguel de Cervantes's satiric romance *Don Quixote*. Obvious in his allusions, Rushdie wants his reader to note how he uses and re-uses these works within his own narrative. The question then becomes: what does Rushdie achieve in using and re-using Camões and Cervantes? First and foremost, he creates a nationalistic work for India. Subsequently, Rushdie creates a narrative that does not limit itself to just being nationalistic, but that also celebrates a pluralist perspective in hopes that the world can learn from the susurrations of the past for a brighter future.

Rushdie's choice in alluding to *The Lusiads* and *Don Quixote* in his narrative is interesting because both belong to different genres of literature: epic and romance, respectively. In *Empire and Epic*, David Quint sets out the distinction between these two genres when he

writes: “To the victor belongs epic, with its linear teleology; to the losers belongs romance, with its random or circular wandering” (9). Quint’s definition of epic and romance is situated around the winners and losers in imperial history. Epic belongs to the victors because the narrative style indicates power and a clear-cut path toward victory. In *The Lusiads*, Camões retells the heroic tale of Vasco da Gama’s voyage to India in an effort to remember the glorious Portuguese past in which they were victorious over the old world order. Romance, on the other hand, belongs to the victims of imperial history because the lack of a focused narrative correlates to their search for what has been lost. In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes, Ben Engeli, and Don Quixote are all looking for the world as it no longer exists, albeit the world they are in search of is different for each one.

How and why does Rushdie use Camões’s epic and Cervantes’s romance? I believe that Rushdie only uses Camões and Cervantes as a reference point. What he actually does with these authors and their works is re-use them. In a sense, he recycles what Camões and Cervantes accomplish in their respective works, and I argue that Rushdie corrects their stories by correcting certain aspects of their narratives. In using epic, Rushdie provides India with a nationalistic winner’s story by celebrating her resiliency to her imperial past. He also suggests that in promoting the ideals of multiplicity, a better future can be achieved. Rushdie’s use of romance creates a sense of urgency for change, as what has been lost cannot be regained, at least not within his narration. In order to clearly show how Rushdie uses and re-uses these works and what is accomplished, I have broken my argument into three parts.

In Part I: Camões’s Epic, I closely analyze *The Lusiads* and Camões’s focus on Portugal’s victorious journey to India. Naturally, he promotes the Portuguese, but I examine his portrayals of both the Portuguese and the peoples of Africa and India in order to show his promotion of the Portuguese. An exploration of his celebration of the many over the singular, as

well as his celebration of the Christian God over the Roman gods, will continue to show how exclusionary his narrative is. Furthermore, an analysis of his earthly paradise and his supposed dismissal of its creation illustrates how Camões creates a new cosmos in which the Portuguese are the leaders. Concluding my analysis of *The Lusiads*, I discuss how Camões's uses his epic to express his hopes for the future of Portugal.

In Part II: Rushdie's Re-use of Camões's Epic, I present a close reading of *The Moor's Last Sigh* in an effort to analyze how Rushdie corrects Camões's exclusionary narrative by promoting multiple nationalities and religions. A continued analysis of the novel will show how, unlike Camões, he fully celebrates the ideals of multiplicity and plurality through his portrayals of character personalities, Bombay, and artwork. An exploration of the destruction of his earthly paradises and what he accomplishes in their destruction will illustrate how Rushdie corrects Camões's use of the earthly paradise, and how he exudes an air of hopefulness for the future. Subsequently, this analysis will prove how Rushdie creates a nationalistic work that provides India with a voice, while also promoting the ideals of plurality and tolerance to the world.

In the Epilogue: Rushdie's Re-use of Cervantes's Romance, I briefly analyze both texts' use of narrative and narrator. Specifically, I concern my discussion with the distinction between truth and appearance within the narrative, the use of a narrator with a hybrid identity, and the trope of loss, which signifies a narrative of romance. While my analysis will show that Cervantes and Rushdie similarly obscure truth and appearance within their stories, it will also show how Rushdie re-uses Cervantes's hybrid narrator and trope of loss. With the sense of loss that pervades *The Moor's Last Sigh*, I argue that Rushdie's urgency for a future that promotes plurality and tolerance becomes more intensified with this romance trope, than with his destruction of the earthly paradises, which are part of his re-use of Camões's epic.

Although many critics have explored various aspects of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, none have offered an analysis that links Rushdie's novel with Camões's epic and Cervantes's romance. Analyzing *The Moor's Last Sigh* using *The Lusiads* and *Don Quixote* is important because it gives the reader a clearer understanding of Rushdie's goals and message. He does not just write a story, like most contemporary writers. Purposefully, Rushdie chooses Camões and Cervantes to help tell the story that neither they, nor he, have finished. He needs his readers to learn from the sighs of the past so that as the story continues beyond the narrative, a happy ending becomes possible.

Part I: Camões's Epic

If the names Camoens and Camões are not enough to evoke the remembrance of the epic poem *The Lusiads*, Rushdie makes certain that the reader makes the connection in these descriptions about Camoens: "Named after a poet" and "To me, the doublenesses in Grandfather Camoens reveal his beauty; his willingness to permit the coexistence within himself of conflicting impulses is the source of his full, gentle humaneness... his egalitarian ideas and the olympian reality of his social position" (10, 32). Rushdie's word choice in describing Camoens suggests the nationalistic poet himself. In *The Lusiads*, Camões attempts to show Portugal and India in "coexistence," however, he continually promotes Portugal's dominance over the natives. The "doublenesses" to which Rushdie refers in Camoens directly correlates to the trope of doubleness throughout the epic in which the "conflicting impulses" of the nation versus the individual and ancient Roman mythology versus Christianity are explored. In addition, Camões creates an "olympian reality" on earth with his creation of the Isle of Love. Furthermore, he takes on the endeavor of exuding an air of hopefulness for the future "social position" of Portugal. Therefore, while Rushdie appears to create a fictionalized character in Camoens, he constructs an

entire allusion to the history created by Camões in *The Lusíads*.¹ This invocation of the Portuguese poet is meant to incite a remembrance of what Camões does within his epic so that Rushdie can correct it.

Portrayals of Portugal, Natives, and Christianity

Luis Vaz de Camões's *The Lusíads* retells, and, in part, recreates Portugal's grand and heroic history. It is not a coincidence that it was written at a point in time in which Portugal's glory days were coming to an end. In *From Virgil to Milton*, C.M. Bowra explicates that Camões's goal in writing this epic would have been "to inspire, to elevate, to instruct" (17). Therefore, in order to celebrate and remember Portugal's past, Camões constructs a history with several layers, some of which are fact and others of which are myth. He also layers Portugal's history with several voices. Camões, Vasco da Gama, Fernão Veloso, Monsayeed, and the gods and goddesses all share the responsibility of recounting the glorious past. Combined, these voices tell how Portugal and India were brought together because of the Portuguese lineage of valiant kings and explorers who risked their livelihood and lives to travel to India. Looking at these layers of history and myth will allow the reader to recognize how Camões employs the trope of doubleness within his epic.

In this multifaceted recollection of the historic journey Vasco da Gama makes to India, which initially brought Portugal and India together, Camões attempts to unite the two nations with words. In a prophecy Tethys gives to Vasco da Gama, she states:

These are the coasts where Portuguese
Who come in your wake will levy war,
Conquering cities and kingdoms in their prime
And holding them in partnership with time. (*Lusíads* X.107.4-8)

¹ Because Rushdie corrects certain aspects of Camões's epic, in his description of him Rushdie can be seen as being facetious, especially when he suggests that Camões is "egalitarian."

Writing his epic almost 75 years after Da Gama reached India, Camões foretells, through Tethys, what will happen to the two countries. The word “partnership” connotes a marriage or union in which two sides are equal, or at least in which two sides share power. Even though Tethys suggests their union will occur “with time,” Camões is writing from that future; a part of India, while Camões is writing this epic, is under Portuguese control; there has been no equality in power from Camões’s perspective. Continuing to look closely at this prophecy, however, one notices the word “holding,” which implies a forced union. The Portuguese will “conquer” India, which also sets up a hierarchy of power. Therefore, while this junction of the two nations seems like a positive and mutual agreement, it also suggests that the Portuguese are the greater force, capable of making India succumb to their will.

At times within the epic, Camões appears to characterize Portugal in harsh terms; what he might say negatively about the Portuguese, however, is usually counterbalanced with a pejorative description of the Africans or Indians. Naturally, his portrayals are often ambiguous in his effort to ensure the Portuguese are honored. For instance, Camões, when describing Portuguese actions during their explorations, states:

Bringing ruin on the degenerate
Lands of Africa and Asia. (I.2.2-4)

The use of the word “ruin” implies the Portuguese are destroying the lands. Yet, Camões qualifies their damaging actions by characterizing the lands as “degenerate” which implies a moralistic incapacity on behalf of the peoples of Africa and Asia because they do not follow the same religion. Thus, Camões atones for and justifies the Portuguese actions in the name of Christianity.

Camões continues to justify the actions of the Portuguese when writes:

So from our boats the fusillade began

In murderous volleys. Lead balls dealt
 Death, the screams were inhuman,
 The shocked air boomed and hissed. (I.89.1-4)

Here the Portuguese are depicted as “murderous.” The reader sees the Portuguese actions as brutal and vicious because the “fusillade” originates from “our boats.” Through the personification of the canon balls, however, the blame for the actions of the Portuguese are diminished because the “lead balls” are the dealers of “death.” Camões, nevertheless, also juxtaposes this description against the “inhuman” screams of the Muslims they are attacking. In dehumanizing the Muslims, Camões desensitizes the reader to Portugal’s cruel acts of murder and continues to honor them.

Through the character of Bacchus, Camões presents India’s conquest in an ambiguous light. On one hand, it appears as though the conquest is negative. On the other hand, Bacchus’s portrayal continues to perpetuate the idea of the powerful Portuguese. Bacchus, to some extent, can be seen as being representative of India. He is the only god who disapproves of the Olympic decision to help Vasco da Gama and his men:

He knew it was fated there would come
 From Iberia, over the high seas,
 An invincible people to subjugate
 All his India’s foaming coastline...

He believed himself India’s conquerer...
 Now he feared his eminence sunk
 In a black urn in those waters
 Of the oblivion nothing can withstand
 If the navigators ever reached that land. (I.31.1-4; I.32.1, 5-8)

Bacchus knows there is nothing he can do. Therefore, in representing this Roman deity as powerless, Camões asserts Portugal’s powerfulness. Here, the Portuguese are described as

“invincible,” as they will “subjugate” India’s “foaming coastline,”² which suggests the Portuguese will penetrate and control it. Nevertheless, the reader recognizes Bacchus’s fears for India. His fears, however, are portrayed as stemming from his loss of power, because “he believed himself India’s conquerer” and thus, “he feared his eminence sunk in a black urn.” Although his concerns are selfish, they are still felt by the reader, as is his desperation to stop the Portuguese. Camões, at one point, even characterizes Bacchus as the one who is being wronged:

‘Neptune,’ he said, ‘do not be alarmed
To receive Bacchus in your kingdom,
For even the great and powerful
May be crushed by unjust fortune. (VI.15.1-4)

The word “unjust” impresses upon the reader the fact that what is happening is not fair.

Regardless of Bacchus’s selfish motivations for wanting to stop the Portuguese, the reader still sympathizes with him when he breaks down and weeps openly:

He wished to say more, but could prevent
No longer spurting from both his eyes
Salt, scalding tears of which he was ashamed. (VI.34.5-7)

The pathos that Camões is exuding in Bacchus’s tears leaves the reader feeling sorry for the powerless god, and hence, makes the reader feel sympathy for India. Yet, the fact that the Portuguese are able to overcome all the obstacles that Bacchus, “the great and powerful” deity, attempts to throw in their way makes the Portuguese victory even more heroic.

Camões continues to illustrate Portugal’s superiority over India and the African nations in the episode with Adamastor. Initially, it seems as though Adamastor, who rises from a black cloud, is meant to be the voice of the African natives:

On the next fleet which broaches
These turbulent waters, I shall impose
Such a retribution and exact such debts

² In mythology, sea foam was viewed as a positive source of life, i.e. Aphrodite’s birth from the sea foam, which thus signifies fertility.

The destruction will be far worse than my threats. (V.43.5-8)

Like many poets before him, Camões appears to be evoking the natives through Adamastor's curses because he threatens the Portuguese with "retribution" for having overstepped their bounds. However, as David Quint points out in his article "Voices of Resistance: The Epic Curse and Camões's Adamastor," Camões's poem "works to appropriate that voice, to contain and neutralize the unsettling implications that the inherited *topos* of the curse might have" (118). Camões twists this commonly used motif of classical epics in order to further perpetuate the image of the great Portuguese because having Adamastor appear out of thin air instead of taking an actual human form diminishes any representation of him as the voice of the natives. As Camões continues to manipulate his use of the curse, he further shows that Adamastor's threats are unfounded in the episode of the tempest he creates in Canto VI. Instead of having this force of nature deter the Portuguese, David Quint points out that the tempest helps them, and leads them to India ("Voices" 130). Consequently, Adamastor becomes just another obstacle given to the Portuguese in order to show their heroic abilities.

Adamastor, instead of being seen as representative of the natives, can also be seen as an inferior image of the Portuguese. When da Gama questions who Adamastor is, he relates that he was "one of those rugged Titans" (*Lusiads* V.51.1). In short, Adamastor's history is that when the gods were fighting the Titans, he abandoned the war in order to chase his love, Tethys. When he finally caught her, he realized that he was "hugging a hillside" (V.56.3). Adamastor had been tricked and deceived. In the meantime, the gods beat the Titans, and Adamastor was punished:

And I, tormented by my tears
 Slowly began to feel what heavy state
 Was planned for my audacity by Fate. (V.58.6-8)

Adamastor's boldness in attempting to gain Tethys was punished by the gods. Although their

quests are different, Adamastor's "audacity" links him to the Portuguese because they both exhibit boldness with out any regard for the consequences. Da Gama and his men push the boundaries of exploration and cross several limits in their search for India. The Portuguese redefine the boundaries of possibility without any regard for their own welfare or for the welfare of those they conquer. While Adamastor is punished for his boldness, however, the Portuguese are rewarded on the Isle of Love because "Fate" wills it so. In *Epic and Empire* David Quint suggests: "the relationship between these two most famous episodes of the epic is one of inversion: The Portuguese get the girls, and consummate fame and power, while the enemy monster is consumed with frustration. The diametrical contrast suggests how completely the epic, by its end, has overcome the resistance... that Adamastor represents" (119-120). The Portuguese might share the same disregard for limits as Adamastor did when he went after Tethys, but the Portuguese are the ones able to become triumphant over all the obstacles and limits, while Adamastor remains stuck in his cape, punished and yearning for Tethys.

While Adamastor fails as the voice of opposition against the Portuguese and can be seen as an inferior replica of them, the Old Man of Restelo successfully represents an opposing voice to the Portuguese expedition, but he does not do so on behalf of the natives; instead, he does so on behalf of the hardships it will put Portugal through. Before da Gama sets sail, the old man exclaims:

O pride of power! O futile lust
 For that vanity known as fame!
 That hollow conceit which puffs itself up
 And which popular cant calls honour! (*Lusiads* IV.95.1-4)

The Old Man of Restelo equates the Portuguese claim for "honour" to be a disguise for their "lust" for "power" and "fame." He continues shouting less than comforting remarks about the voyage and the state in which the voyage will leave Portugal:

To what new catastrophes do you plan
 To drag this kingdom and these people?
 What perils, what deaths have you in store?
 Under what magniloquent title...
 But deprives us for ever of the divine
 State of simple tranquility,
 That golden age of innocence, before
 This age of iron experience and war...
 You ignore the enemy at the gate
 In search for another so far away,
 Unpeopling the ancient kingdom,
 Leaving it vulnerable and bereft! (IV.97.1-4; IV.98.5-8; IV.101.1-4)

The Old Man of Restelo has the foresight to see that the voyage will lead to “catastrophes” for everyone involved both on the home front and abroad. The Old Man continues to criticize the reason for the voyage, indicating the “magniloquent title” that will be the reward. He even suggests that Portugal will lose its “tranquility” and “innocence” by breaking boundaries and limits that the voyage will undoubtedly surpass, equating the Portuguese expedition to the Fall of Man. Shankar Raman, in *Framing India*, observes that “although he does not explicitly mention spices, the Old Man of Restelo accedes to each of the primary motives that were used to justify the voyages of discovery: territorial expansion for arable land, the extension of the spiritual realm of the Church, the acquisition of wealth and bullion, and the achievement of honor or fame” (79). The Old Man disputes every aspect of the voyage because of the effect it will have on Portugal. His concern is not for the peoples of Africa or India, but for the Portuguese. It is the only voice of resistance against the expedition, and yet, his voice quickly fades as da Gama and his men continue to sail out into the ocean.

As the layered retelling of the history continues, the inconsistencies in the representations of both ancient Roman mythology and Christianity become more apparent. Camões creates a story line consisting mainly of Jupiter, Venus, and Bacchus, alongside the story of Christian expansion. According to Camões’s tale, the gods and goddesses on Mt. Olympus decide that the

Portuguese should be successful in reaching India. Despite Bacchus's attempts to stop them, Jupiter and Venus do everything in their power to assist the Portuguese. Nevertheless, Vasco da Gama and his men never praise these gods, only their Christian God:

There, the mighty kingdom of the Congo
Has been brought by us to faith in Christ. (*Lusiads* V.13.1-2)

The Portuguese do not even acknowledge the help these Roman gods are giving them. They believe it is the work of their Christian God. C. M. Bowra asserts that, "Camões's real explanation is... that his divinities are symbols for different activities of one supreme God, subordinate powers to whom various special functions are allotted" (118). In other words, all the Roman gods that Camões includes are working under the Christian God who decides the divided tasks of each of the minor gods. Camões sets up this hierarchy of power himself:

They left the managing of the seven
Spheres deputed them by the Supreme
Power who governs by thought alone,
The skies, the earth, and the raging seas. (*Lusiads* I.21.1-4)

According to Camões, the "Supreme Power," or Christian God, has control over everything, not Jupiter. Camões's inclusion of these Roman deities problematizes several events in the poem. Why if these ancient gods were working under God, would Bacchus play such a large role in trying to deter the Portuguese? Why would Venus be so crucial to the survival of the Portuguese on the seas? In *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*, A. Bartlett Giamatti explains: "Camões is completely unconcerned by these bizarre effects and inconsistencies... because he is relying upon our awareness, and acceptance of a literary convention" (213). In other words, Camões is continuing an epic tradition. He has no reason to unite the two religions and therefore, his representations of Bacchus, Venus, and Jupiter become merely aesthetic. These gods, however, serve a purpose, and a more plausible explanation as to their inclusion comes from

Shankar Raman. Raman suggests that while Camões's uses of Roman gods is a continuation of literary tradition of all the epics that came before his, Camões does ultimately give up the Roman deities in order to create a new "world order" (35). In Camões's new cosmos, the Portuguese rule the seas, replacing Odysseus and other classical heroes, and the Christian God is the most powerful, replacing the old world mythologies. This replacement guarantees that Portugal and their Christian God are honored and revered.

Creating an Earthly Paradise

Camões's use of Roman mythology on the Isle of Love helps to further perpetuate the idea that the Portuguese are world leaders. With this island, Camões creates an earthly paradise, by sensually and sexually uniting the Portuguese with Venus's Nereids. Tethys tells da Gama:

You will make your kingdom rich and mighty...
You will bring fame to your beloved king. (*Lusiads* IX.94.5; IX.95.1)

The Portuguese have completed their mission by reaching India, and as compensation for their troubles, they are able to bask on this heavenly island. A. Bartlett Giamatti reasons that Camões "has made pleasure the reward of duty and has found a way to incorporate the frankly pagan garden into a Christian morality" (221). Although Camões has reconciled his consummation of Christianity and mythology by alleging that pleasure is their reward for their service to the crown, he provides the reader with another reason to disregard the union of Christianity and mythology:

Here dwell in glory only the genuine
Gods, because I, Saturn and Janus,
Jupiter and Juno, are mere fables
Dreamed by mankind in his blindness.
We serve only to fashion delightful
Verses, and if human usage offers
Us more, it is your imagination
Awards us each in heaven a constellation. (*Lusiads* X.82.1-8)

Camões sets up a hierarchy of “genuine Gods” who “dwell in glory” against himself and the minor pagan gods, who are subsequently described as being false and illegitimate. According to Camões, all his inclusions of mythology were “fables dreamed by mankind” and were part of an attempt to “fashion delightful verses,” suggesting that they are meant to entertain the reader. Camões treats these gods as if they are a figment of the readers’ imagination. As Giamatti aptly points out, “still, the island-garden of Venus stands, by itself, as a brilliant achievement, a typical, and yet unique, Renaissance earthly paradise” (224-25). Even though Camões dismisses his creation with this disclaimer, he does not actually destroy it, nor would he actually want to destroy it. What happens on the island actually enhances the powerfulness of the Portuguese; they are able to take over the old world order of Roman mythology by intimately engaging with the Nereids. While Giamatti suggests that, “in the union of Tethys and da Gama, we have symbolized Portugal’s final mastery of the sea,” he fails to recognize that their union actually accomplishes a lot more (220). Ultimately, the pair’s union consummates Portugal’s domination of the old world order, placing Portugal as the new world leader.

Promoting the Nation over the Individual

Although Camões rejects the polytheistic religion of Roman mythology in favor of the Christian God, his layered retelling of history celebrates the many over the singular. The many that are celebrated, however, are those from Portugal. He opens his epic with “Arms are my theme, and those matchless heroes” (*Lusiads* I.1.1). The plural “heroes” introduces to the reader the idea that the story about to be told will honor all the heroes of Portugal, not a singular hero as in the previous classical epics of Homer or Virgil. Therefore, this epic does not have a hero. Vasco da Gama, although honored, is only part of the entire tapestry of Portuguese historical heroes. Thomas Greene makes this connection in *Descent from Heaven*: “it must be confessed

that Da Gama... the nominal hero, emerges as faceless... relatively unimportant. The real hero is Portugal itself, and in particular, the collective leaders who made it great” (226). Since Da Gama’s role is not that of the hero, his purpose is to be the orator of the history of all the nation’s heroes and their accomplishments. Da Gama tells the Sultan of Malindi, and subsequently the readers, about the noble deeds and traits of all the Portuguese greats from Henrique, who fathered the first King of Portugal, Alfonso I, to all the succeeding kings who exploited the Moors.

Camões’s Hopeful Future for Portugal

Camões spends a great deal of time describing Portugal’s past heroes in order to provide a voice of hope for the future of Portugal. Shankar Raman appropriately notes: “the Portuguese cannot return home, Camões’s epic implies, because the Portugal they left is not the Portugal to which they can go back” (88). The Portugal they need to return to is Camões’s Portugal, a Portugal in decline from the prosperous times retold in the epic. Therefore, Camões wants his readers to remember Portugal’s prosperous past, the past in which they were the victors of the world, so that they can have a similar future. In opening his epic, he addresses the then current king, King Sebastião, with the following:

But while your long reign passes slowly,
 Matching your people’s dearest wish,
 Look kindly on my boldness so
 This epic may become your own. (*Lusiads* I.18.1-4)

Here, Camões speaks directly to the king who can help Portugal return to its splendor. The greatness of Portugal that is retold within the epic, can be the greatness of the future, if the king takes heed. It is through the retelling of Portugal’s winning past, in the epic form, that Camões expresses the hope that Portugal can be returned to its glory.

Part II: Rushdie's Re-use of Camões's Epic

In creating a character symbolic of Camões, Rushdie provides himself with the ability to continue Camões's epic tale. Camoens is Moraes's grandfather, and therefore, because Moraes is a descendent of Camoens, he can tell the family's story. In Moraes's case, he picks up where Camões leaves off because there is no need to retell how the Portuguese got to India. Instead, he focuses on both colonial and post-colonial India; times when India was considered the victim and victor, respectively. David Quint establishes that the "narrative itself thus becomes ideologically charged, the formal cause of consequence of that Western male rationality and historical identity that epic ascribes to the imperial victors. Epic draws an equation between power and narrative. It tells of a power able to end the indeterminacy of war and to emerge victorious... Power, moreover, is defined by its capacity to maintain itself across time, and therefore requires narrative in order to represent itself" (*Epic* 45). Based on Quint's assertions, for Moraes to pick up Camões's tale, points to a shift in imperial power. Moraes, now controls the narrative, not the Portuguese. India, at the time that Rushdie wrote his novel, had achieved independence from her colonizers. Thus, Rushdie can be seen as creating a nationalistic work for India by reclaiming her narrative story from the Western powers. How Rushdie creates India's story requires a close look at the features in Camões's poem that he chooses to re-use in his novel.

Like Camões, Salman Rushdie creates his story through a retelling of history. Rushdie's history, however, is not about Portugal's heroic past; instead he illustrates and recreates the shared histories of India, Portugal, Spain, and Britain. Similar to Camões, Rushdie layers his retelling with both fact and myth, as well as with multiple voices. Moraes provides one voice while Aurora's paintings serve as another. Through the retelling of history, Rushdie not only brings the aforementioned nations together, but he also brings Catholics, Jews, Hindus, and

Muslims together. Subsequently, Rushdie wholeheartedly promotes the idea of the multiple over the singular not only through his composition of nations and religions, but also in exposing these ideals in the portrayals of character personalities, Bombay, and art. These areas of multiplicities contrast to Camões's sole promotion of the many Portuguese greats. Furthermore, unlike Camões who creates an earthly paradise with the Isle of Love, Rushdie completely destroys any image of an earthly paradise within his novel. Nevertheless, he still exudes an air of hopefulness for the future on the sighs of the past.

Portrayals of Nationalities and Religions

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the history Moraes shares with the reader is one of his family's past. Moraes tells the reader, "My family tree says all I need to hear" (*Sigh* 54). Subsequently, his family tree illustrates how India, Portugal, Spain, and Britain are interconnected through his family's lineage. His maternal great grandparents are Epifania and Francisco da Gama. The surname Da Gama is meant to evoke Vasco da Gama in the reader's mind. Hence, Portugal is brought into his ancestry, as it was Vasco da Gama who first came to India, as Camões relates in *The Lusads*. Despite her family being from Mangalore, Epifania represents imperial Britain, while Francisco represents India. Even their sons, Aires and Camoens, are split into these representations of these countries: "Epifania and he [Aires] were for England, God, philistinism, the old ways, a quiet life... It was in that younger boy, Camoens, that Francisco found his ally, inculcating him in the virtues of nationalism, reason, art, innovation, and above all, in those days, of protests" (18-19). Together, this family embodies the conflicting ideals present during the end of Britain's imperialist reign in India. Neither side is depicted as superior, which contrasts to Camões's constant reaffirmation of Portugal's superiority over India.

As Moraes's story continues, he introduces his father, Abraham Zogoiby, whose heritage

is traced back to Andalusia, Spain: “The Sultan Boabdil after his fall was known by one sobriquet, and she who took his crown and jewels in a dark irony took the nickname also... *El-zogoybi*” (83). The story related implies that Abraham’s mother had an affair with the Sultan Boabdil of Granada, and therefore took his surname. Nevertheless, Moraes rejects this connection: “But as for this Moor-stuff, this Granada-yada, this incredibly *loose* connection— a surname that sounds like a nickname... it falls down even before you blow on it” (85). The tone of this dismissal expresses Moraes’s disbelief. He pokes fun at his family’s story. Although Moraes dismisses this familial connection, it is important to realize that this connection is still asserted later in the novel. For instance, Aurora’s painting entitled *The Moor’s Last Sigh* reflects the deterioration of her relationship with her son: “She turned— facing up, in that stark depiction of the moment of Boabdil’s expulsion from Granada, to her own treatment of her only son” (218). Despite Moraes’s previous ambivalent attitude toward the verisimilitude of his family lineage, Aurora’s painting makes a connection between “her only son” and Boabdil. She paints this piece, as a part of her “Moor paintings” series, after she kicks him out of Elephanta, which she aligns with “Boabdil’s expulsion” from Spain. She makes the two interchangeable in their stories as she even aligns Moraes with Boabdil in the title of her painting, which is also the title of the novel. Therefore, the reader can make the connection and understand that in this recreated history, Boabdil of Granada and the Zogoibys are related, thus intertwining his Spanish heritage into Moraes’s ancestry.

In uniting India, Portugal, Spain, and Britain through his familial ties, Moraes also brings together Catholics, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims in his multifaceted history. Camões only celebrates one religion: Christianity, the religion of Portugal. Rushdie, however, purposefully creates a religiously hybrid family representative of the religious make-up of India by making

Aurora Catholic and Abraham Jewish. In an interview, “The Last Sigh of Diversity,” Salman Rushdie speaks about this uncommon union: “The Indian Jewish community in South India is tiny, especially in Cochin. There are different types of Christianity, including the Church of South India... I took these two very small communities, and created an even smaller community by intermarriage (something that, in actuality, the South Indian Jewish community doesn’t allow)” (211). Rushdie, therefore, problematizes the Da Gama-Zogoiby relationship, and the result is the character of Moraes, who continually struggles to figure out where he fits in between the two religions: “I, however, was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew. I was both, and nothing: a jewholic-anonymous, a cathjew nut... Yessir: a real Bombay mix” (*Sigh* 104). Bombay, as will be discussed later, is comprised of many different nationalities and religions, just like Moraes. Besides being Catholic and Jewish, Moraes is also Muslim because of his grandmother’s affair with Boabdil as previously explored. In *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity*, Stephen Morton explains: “By invoking the history of the Jewish diaspora to India, Rushdie also draws a parallel between the experience of other minority groups in India, such as Muslims, and the experience of the Jews in twentieth-century Europe” (95). Moraes’s heritage celebrates all minorities. This becomes important because India is home to people of a variety of religious backgrounds, which are often in conflict, and although Moraes occasionally pokes fun at his family’s mixed religious identity, he embodies what it means to be Indian.³

Although Moraes, himself, is not Hindu, he still incorporates the religion into his story through his relationship with Uma, his love. As a Hindu sculptor, Uma created a “gigantic stone-carving of Nandi, the great bull of Hindu mythology... [Geeta] Kapur had compared the work to that of the anonymous masters of the eighth-century Parthenon-sized monolithic wonder” (*Sigh*

³ See *Step Across This Line* and *Imaginary Homelands* for Rushdie’s discussions on what it means to be Indian.

242). Being that Uma's sculpture of Nandi is compared to a "monolithic wonder," it is stigmatized as belonging to the restrictive, fundamental ideals because it represents singularity. It only represents one idea, and that idea, being made of stone, is concrete and inflexible. Even though Rushdie gives Hinduism a place in his story, he looks negatively upon Uma and the fundamentalist ideals of her religion, which ultimately opposes and dismisses any other religion without tolerance, an aspect of life Rushdie strives to promote through his inclusion of the minority groups found within India.

Hinduism is also brought into Moraes's narrative through Aurora's yearly participation in the traditional Hindi Ganpati dance. Moraes describes the growing popularity of Aurora's participation in this dance: "As if to prove her belief in the polymorphous power of the perverse, dancing Aurora became, over the years, a star attraction of the event she despised" (124). In taking part in this dance, Aurora brings her Catholic faith together with that of the Hindu. Her dancing represents the quintessential embodiment of the pluralistic ideals which celebrate the "polymorphous," or those with many forms, and the "perverse." Ironically, in making Aurora the "star attraction" of the event that she "despises," the event becomes more diverse, and ultimately the Hindu fundamentalist ideals of singularity that she, herself, rejects are reduced.

What Rushdie accomplishes with nationality and religion varies radically from Camões. While Camões celebrates the Portuguese, Rushdie reveres the Indian-Portuguese-Spanish-British hybrid mix that is found in India. Camões promotes Christianity and only Christianity, and in the process, dismisses Roman mythology. Rushdie, on the other hand, tries to unite Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism into one unified story, despite their disjointed historical past and their disconnected present in the narration. Anything that hinders the pluralist ideal, like Uma and her fundamentalism, is ill-regarded and inferior. Recognizing that *The Moor's Last Sigh*,

unlike *The Lusiads*, fully perpetuates the idea of the many over the singular is important to understanding how Rushdie corrects Camões's technique.

Promoting the Ideas of Multiplicity

In *Translating Orients: Between Ideology and Utopia*, Timothy Weiss recognizes that in Moraes's story, "the cross-cultural, multicultural nature... is being imaginatively highlighted" (147). Rushdie completely occupies himself with the promotion of multiple nationalities and religions, as previously explored, but it goes beyond the imaginative that Weiss suggests. The multiplicity that Rushdie explores in his novel is a real part of India. Through his portrayals of character personalities, Bombay, and artwork, he continues to capture the idea of the multiple that pervades India.

In Rushdie's layered history, the portrayal of character personalities helps to promote the ideals of plurality. Moraes, as previously illustrated, has multiple ethnic and religious identities. More importantly, Moraes shows two sides to his personality in the novel; one is good, the other evil. Early in the recounting of his past, the reader can see him as a good character. He is speeding through his own life, and states: "I had no desire for exceptionalism—I wanted to be Clark Kent, not any kind of Superman... But no matter how hard I wished my essential bat-nature could not be denied" (*Sigh* 164). Moraes's "essential bat-nature" turns out to be his propensity for violence using his deformed club hand. The fact that Moraes refers to this predisposition as "essential" points to the idea that it is an inherent quality to have good and evil sides to one's personality. Moraes notices his evil side, "I punched... with my bare hand I clubbed my victims viciously, metronomically— like carpets, like mules" (307). Moraes becomes a killer. Describing his actions as "metronomic" implies that the actions are mechanical and without a second thought. This description relates back to his realization of his secret nature

of his essential evil. It is an innate quality to be evil, and therefore, his evil actions come out as a reflex. In the end, Moraes decides to use his ability to kill for good. He has to rid India of all that is destroying her: those who abide by fundamentalist ideas.

This balance of good and evil can also be seen in the characters of Aurora and Abraham. An early account of Aurora's childhood states that she did nothing to help her grandmother, Epifania, when she was dying: "This was cold-blooded murder, then. Calculations were being made" (64). Aurora, who can be seen later in the narration to truly love Moraes, is a "cold-blooded" murderer. Her inaction shows her evil tendencies, and yet those tendencies are balanced by her affection for her son. Abraham, on one hand, shows his softer side when he cries after leaving his mother for Aurora. His evil personality, however, is shown in his business dealings when it is related that "within months of his arrival in Bombay he had begun to trade in human flesh" (182). Abraham's secret life consists of trafficking young women and drugs.

Rushdie exposes these diabolical sides to each of these characters in an attempt continue his promotion of multiplicity. As Moraes openly admits, "The best, and worst, were in us, and fought in us" (376). The plural "we" not only encapsulates the characters within the novel, but extends to the readers as well. Rushdie does not attempt to mask these evil sides to his characters, nor does he qualify their wickedness as Camões does in his descriptions of the Portuguese. Instead, Rushdie clearly displays the good and the bad for the reader to see and accept these tendencies as natural pluralistic qualities that are a part of being human.

While Moraes, Aurora, and Abraham have the natural and balanced propensity for good and evil, Uma is duplicitous and misrepresents the pluralist ideals. Moraes describes: "For in the matter of Uma Sarasvati it had been the pluralist Uma, with her multiple selves, her highly inventive commitment to the infinite malleability of the real, her modernistically provisional

sense of truth, who had turned out to be the bad egg” (272). Uma’s “multiple selves” and her “malleability” makes her false to the ideals of plurality because she pretends to be someone she is not in order to adapt to whatever situation she is in. Uma can be seen as entirely evil without any propensity for real goodness because she is not “real” and her “sense of truth” corrupts the true meaning of multiple. It is one thing to be many things and accept them as part of self as Moraes, Aurora, and Abraham do; however, Uma falsifies her existence. In her final words to Moraes: “‘Don’t say mad’ she shrieked. ‘If you want to live, live. But it will prove you never loved me. It proves you have been the lair, the charlatan, the quick-change artist, the manipulator, the conspirator, the fake. Not me: you” (281). As Moraes eventually realizes, Uma was the “liar”; she was going to kill him if the pills had not gotten mixed up. She is the “manipulator” and the “quick-change artist” that she tries to make Moraes out to be. Rushdie makes a distinction between Uma’s false representation of the pluralist ideals and the natural pluralist qualities in having her die by her own trickery.

Aside from his reverence for plurality within personalities, Rushdie’s narrative also promotes the idea of the multiple through his depictions of Bombay. In describing the city in *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie states: “The nature of Bombay, a metropolis in which the multiplicity of commingled faiths and cultures curiously creates a remarkable secular ambience” (16). Rushdie notes the hybrid atmosphere in Bombay. Moraes similarly describes the city, furthering Rushdie’s own comments by suggesting Bombay is the cultural epicenter of India: “Bombay was central, had been from the moment of its creation: the bastard child of a Portuguese-English wedding, and yet the most Indian of Indian cities. In Bombay all Indias met and merged. In Bombay, too, all-India met what-was-not-India, what came across the black water to flow into our veins... Bombay was central; all rivers flowed into its human sea. It was

an ocean of stories; we were all its narrators, and everyone talked at once” (*Sigh* 350). The metaphor of Bombay as a sea and an ocean points to the fluidity of the city’s composition. Bombay is a melting pot of cultures, ideas, religions, and people because it is “the bastard child of a Portuguese-English wedding.” Imperialism, specifically the marriage of Catherine of Portugal and Charles II of England in which Bombay was the dowry, has had a huge impact on Bombay. Yet despite its imperial past, it is also the “most Indian” city because of its composite culture. The centrality of the city not only affords itself to multiplicity but the word “central” connotes that it is significant. Bombay’s importance lies in its openness to “all-India” and “what-was-not-India,” which helps create the city’s plurality. The city’s vitality comes from the people. The use of the word “veins” points to Bombay as a life-source, like blood. Therefore, the city and its people thrive on its multiplicity.

The final aspect of Moraes’s recreated history that perpetuates the idea of the multiple is the descriptions of the artwork presented in the novel. One painting that asserts the idea of the multiple is Vasco Miranda’s painting of the nursery: “He first painted a series of trompe-l’oeil windows, Mughal-palatial, Andalusian Moorish, Manueline Portuguese, roseate Gothic, windows great and small... Mickey on his steamboat, Donald fighting the hands of Time... He also gave us Loony Tunes... also great galleries of more local heroes... djinns on carpets and thieves in giant pitchers... He gave us story- oceans and abracadabras, Panchatantra fables...” (152). On the walls of the nursery, Vasco combines different nations, landscapes, fantasies, pop-culture icons, and local legends. Normally, these images would not appear to go together in one piece, but Miranda does make a cohesive image out of their combination. The nursery, in which these paintings are located, is where Moraes grew up. His acknowledgement that Miranda “gave us story” implies that it gave him not only an imagination, but also an appreciation for the fact

that all these conflicting images could coexist in one medium.

Aurora also creates a work of art that promotes the pluralist ideals, “Mooristan.” Through her paintings, Aurora creates a unity of the multiple:

The Alhambra quickly became a not-quite-Alhambra; elements of India’s own red forts, the Mughal palace- fortresses in Delhi and Agra, blended Mughal splendours with the Spanish building’s Moorish grace. The hill became a not-Malabar looking down upon a not-quite- Chowpatty, and the creatures of Aurora’s imagination began to populate it- monsters, elephant-deities, ghosts. The water’s edge...She filled the sea with fish, drowned ships... and on the land, a cavalcade of local riffraff, pickpockets, pimps, fat whores hitching their saris... and other figures of history or fantasy or current affairs...” (226)

In this painting, Aurora combines all different nations, religions, people, landscapes, and animals from “the Mughal palace” to “Alahambra” to “ghosts” to “fish” to “fat whores.” No singular image is being portrayed. The images that she combines in her paintings, fuse together and “words collide, flow in and out of one another, and washofy away” (226). She creates a world in which boundaries are blurred. In the essay “Postcolonial Lack and Aesthetic Promise in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*,” Alexandra W. Schultheis suggests: “Aurora’s aesthetic aims are communal rather than comprehensive” (585). In other words, Aurora’s “Mooristan” is not supposed to be about any one particular image, it is meant to tie them together. Specifically, she ties Spain and India together. In the interview, “The Moor’s Last Sigh,” by Charlie Rose, Rushdie clarifies the connection between Spain and India: “there were Christians, Jews, and Muslims living side by side for hundreds of years, and their cultures affected each other... this composite culture of Andalusia is something which certainly in Spain and people who know about it have always found very attractive... Now it seemed to me that the world I come from, India, is also a composite culture... there’s a Hindu majority, but there are many different cultures— Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, et cetera” (202-203). Andalusia’s past, despite its

period of coexistence, which promoted the exchange of cultures, experienced increased conflicts when Catholic fundamentalism took over with the reign of Queen Isabella.⁴ During the 1990's, India experienced a similar period of unrest because of Hindu fundamentalism. Aurora's painting not only disputes those fundamental ideas, but her union of these two nations represents her hopes for the future in which all people and religions can coexist as they once had in Moorish Spain.

Juxtaposing Aurora's "Mooristan" against Uma's sculptures and another painting by Vasco Miranda helps to illustrate how the artwork that promotes the idea of the multiple is preferred. Uma, as previously mentioned, sculpts. The act of sculpting requires only one medium, clay or stone, and the product of sculpting is concrete, meaning that it cannot express more than one idea at a time, unlike Aurora's "Mooristan." As aforementioned, Uma's sculpture of Nandi only represents the bull and nothing else. There is no space within the medium of clay or stone to represent pluralist ideas.

Vasco Miranda's later paintings are also seen as limiting compared to his older work and Aurora's artwork. Vasco's painting of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is described as being painted with "sweeping brush-strokes... those famous, phoney marks which looked so flamboyant and in which he could work so prolifically and so fast" (*Sigh* 160). Vasco does not attempt to fuse any images together to create this painting. Furthermore, the use of "sweeping brush-strokes" suggests that there is no room to represent the idea of the multiple in his paintings because the strokes take up too much space. In this particular painting, Vasco paints an image of himself on top of an old painting of Aurora in an attempt to eroticize their relationship. His self-illustration

⁴ To make clear, Andalusia, during the Arab reign, was not in complete harmony as some historians and post-colonialist theorists suggest. Rushdie notes that these cultures "affected each other." There was an osmosis of cultures from living side by side, and even though they still fought, they were more tolerant and accepting of each other's differences.

points to his narcissism, which only promotes a singular image, his own, since it entirely covers Aurora. Moraes also refers to his work as “commercial,” which indicates that Vasco does not create real art (159). Aurora’s paintings are never classified as “commercial,” thus distinguishing her art as real and true art. Stigmatizing Vasco’s work as “commercial” and “phoney” illustrates to the reader how the idea of the singular is not preferred, whereas Aurora’s pluralistic “Mooristan” is. Even Vasco’s nursery wall paintings are more desirable than this painting in which the singular is promoted over the multiple.

Destruction of Earthly Paradises

The extent to which Rushdie celebrates the many over the singular more than Camões does is evident throughout *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. While Camões is very exclusive in his celebration of the many over the singular, focusing only on Portugal, Rushdie completely celebrates the ideals of multiplicity. Another stark contrast between Camões’s epic and Rushdie’s novel pertains to the creation of an earthly paradise. Camões successfully creates an earthly paradise with the Isle of Love that is still standing at the end of the epic, despite his refutations. Rushdie, on the other hand, never fully creates an earthly paradise; purposefully, the paradises he begins to build within the novel, fail by the time the story ends.

There are two potential earthly paradises that Rushdie creates: Elephanta and “Little Alhambra.” Elephanta’s location lends itself to a paradise in the clouds, or, as Moraes refers, an “aerial orchard” (370). At Elephanta, Moraes’s childhood was spent in the imaginative realities of the tales that Lambajan Chandiwala would tell him. Unlike the Portuguese’s Isle of Love in which their whole experience is mythologized, Aurora is the only aspect of Elephanta given Olympic qualities: “there twirled the almost-divine figure of our very own Aurora Bombayalis” (123). She is almost goddess-like, but not quite. When Aurora throws him out, Elephanta can

never be a place of comfort for Moraes again. Eventually forced to leave Elephanta for good, Moraes can only watch as it is blown up: “Finally, Abraham’s garden rained down like a benediction” (375). The simile, “like a benediction,” connotes that Elephanta is a blessing in this instance of destruction. He is not concerned about losing this paradise, and with the use of “finally,” Moraes infers that this obliteration represents the only good thing to come out of Elephanta.

Moraes’s next hope for an earthly paradise becomes “Little Alhambra.” He hopes to find his own version of his mother’s “Mooristan” in Benengeli. Like Cid Hemet Ben Engeli’s narration in *Don Quixote*,⁵ Moraes, like Don Quixote, is looking for a world that no longer exists. Moraes faces the most evil of evils in Spain; Vasco Miranda is ready to kill him: “What had been made in Elephanta was coming to roost in Benengeli— murder, vengefulness” (419). Moraes realizes that he is not going to find his “Mooristan.” Besides not finding his earthly paradise, Moraes does not find his reward of knowing his mother’s love: “She, too, had gone beyond recall, and she never spoke to me, never made confession, never gave me back what I needed, the certainty of her love” (432). Moraes never finds the solace of his mother’s love as he had hoped to in going to Benegeli in the first place.

Both of Moraes’s earthly paradises are referred to as “sequestered, serpented, Edenic-infernal private universes” (15). These are not angelic places as they are described as isolated and hellish. As Northrop Frye suggests in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, “the paradisaic is frequently a deceitful illusion that turns out to be demonic, or destructive vision” (98). In Moraes’s story, the places he thinks are paradises become “demonic.” Being “private universes,” these places become “destructive” to the visions of plurality and

⁵ Throughout *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Rushdie constantly refers to Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*. See the Epilogue for further information.

multiplicity, which Moraes has come to embrace. These places are not like the Portuguese Isle of Love, where Vasco da Gama and his crew are able to rest and regain strength. Instead, Elephanta and “Little Alhambra” do not offer rest, consolation, or even a reward for the increasingly sighing Moraes. With the destruction of these supposed paradises comes his demise: all Moraes can do is take his last breath.

As both of Rushdie’s paradises crumble, it becomes evident that Rushdie cannot allow his paradises to survive as Camões does in order to create a new world order. Compared to Camões’s paradise, Rushdie’s are not created by a goddess and do not appear out of thin air. While the locations of Moraes’s paradises are real, they are only built up as paradises in his mind. Reality sets in by the end of the story, and dissolves their image. Moraes states that “the only treasure of value... [is] the past and the future” (*Sigh* 78). In not creating an earthly paradise for Moraes, or for the reader, there is a greater sense of urgency for the necessity of a better future. The reader feels unsettled knowing that there is no place to rest for the long journey ahead, as the Portuguese had in Camões’s epic. Therefore, the reader must look to the past, which, in this case, has been recreated by Moraes in an effort to showcase the good and the bad, so that the future can be a better one.

Rushdie’s Hopeful Future for India

Although Rushdie’s lack of an earthly paradise may leave the reader feeling uncomfortable, he does still exude an air of hopefulness for the future. As Moraes lies down in his final resting place, he states that he is continuing a family tradition of “falling asleep in times of trouble, and hope[s] to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time” (434). Moraes has run out of breath; he is done sighing. Yet, as Nadia Wadia points out, “Is it the end for you? Is it curtains? ... What pagalpan, what nonsense... The city will survive. New towers will rise. Better

days will come” (376-77). Nadia offers hope to everyone and her message is to not give up. She knows the resiliency of the city and its ability to survive.

Here, it appears that Rushdie is reflecting on India as a whole, and her survival of past obstacles. In *Step Across this Line*, Rushdie explicates that India has always survived: “Above all, however, I want to extol the virtues of the most important thing that came into being on that midnight fifty years ago, the thing which has survived all that history could throw at it: that is, the so-called idea of India” (163). Rushdie refers to India’s imperial past and suggests that if she could overcome that, then she can overcome anything. He celebrates India’s strength in becoming victorious over the past. Rushdie also points out that “Fifty years ago, Mr. Nehru, taking office as India’s first prime minister descried Independence as the moment ‘... when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance’” (160). Remembering what Quint suggests about the power of narration in epics, it becomes clear that in using Camões, Rushdie re-establishes the power India had once lost to imperialism. He provides India with a voice that reclaims her from her imperial past and thus, he provides her with a winner’s story.

Rushdie’s reference to India as an idea reveals his nationalistic purpose behind *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. In *Step Across This Line* and *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie questions what India is and who belongs to her. *The Moor’s Last Sigh* strives to answer these questions by illustrating the importance of hybridity to India. He does not pick one nation and religion, as Camões does, because that would not accurately represent India. She is made up of many different nationalities and religions. Her multiplicity makes her strong and therefore, in his novel, Rushdie celebrates the true essence of India: plurality. Anything that threatens that image, like fundamentalism, is represented negatively within the novel in order to ensure that the greatness of India is revered. Therefore, *The Moor’s Last Sigh* can be seen as a nationalistic work for India

because it celebrates the positive cultural hybridity that truly is India.

III. Epilogue: Rushdie's Re-use of Cervantes's Romance

In the interview "The Last Sigh of Diversity," Salman Rushdie offers, "Everything I have done [in *The Moor's Last Sigh*] has tried to be [pluralistic] more than anything else. It's partly because I feel pluralist values to be under threat, and not just in India. It is a strange moment in the history of the world in which people seem to be dividing into smaller and smaller nationalistic groupings and becoming more and more hostile toward diversity... diversity is the inextricable fact of everyday life" (210). According to Rushdie, people are becoming less tolerant of one another, not accepting the fact that everyone is different in some way. Rushdie fears for the loss of the idea of the multiple in the world, not just in India. Fundamentalist ideas and policies, as previously mentioned, cause the problems in society. With the sighs of the past, Rushdie shows us that focusing too much on the singular, too much on the reductive nationalist ideas becomes an issue. While Rushdie does not provide any easy or definitive answers to the growing adversity in the world, by re-using Camões's epic he does present an image of what people can assert in order to stop sighing: plurality and tolerance.

The Moor's Last Sigh begins as a winner's tale; India is no longer under imperial control. Throughout the story, Rushdie promotes India, her strength, and her resiliency to survive the aftermath of da Gama's expedition. Yet, after all the historical aspects of India and Moraes's ancestry are related, the story turns to Moraes's quest of regaining his mother's paintings and in turn, her love. Just as the Arabs had done hundreds of years prior to Moraes in the name of Islamic Imperialism, he travels from the East, India, to the West, Benengeli.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Moraes describes: "I have been living a folly: Vasco Miranda's towered fortress in Benengeli village, which looks down from a brown hill to a plain dreaming,

in glistening mirages, of being a medi-terranean sea. I, too, have been dreaming, and through a narrow slit-window of my habitation I have seen not Spain's but India's South" (54). Benengeli is supposed to evoke the image of Cid Hamet Ben Engeli,⁶ the fictional Moor historian of Don Quixote's tale. In Ben Engeli's tale, he "looks down" from the perspective of a Moor being stuck between the "medi-terranean," recognizing his Arab and Spanish ancestry. Ultimately, the narrative looks from a "brown hill" to a "plain" because his tale is translated by white Christian, and provides "glistening mirages" that obscure the delineation of truth and appearance. Moraes makes the connection between his own story and *Don Quixote* by stating that what Moraes sees is "not Spain but India's South." For Rushdie, Spain represents the possibility to coexist with toleration. Many different nationalities and religious groups reside in South India. He wants them to be able to live in symbiosis as they did in Andalusia and therefore, a "dreaming" with a sense of loss pervades these two works.

As already stated, within *Don Quixote*, Cervantes translates Ben Engeli's narrative. The act of translating an Arabic story asserts the Spanish domination of the Moors, symbolic of the re-conquering of Spain by the Catholic monarch from the Moors. As Diana de Armas Wilson questions in *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World*:

What kind of hybridity, then, do we encounter in a translation from the language of a defeated enemy? Does Cide Hamete— endearing Muslim philosopher... function as a sign of Christian Spain's cultural debt to Islam, a debt which the nation grafted onto itself even while hounding its Moors and Moriscos? ... In both parts of *Don Quixote*, then, we witness the emergence of a hybrid national narrative that pries open the nostalgic past of Spain's Reconquista... to the history of marginality, as well as the narrative subjectivity, of the defeated Moors. (102-103)

Wilson raises many important questions about the narration. The fact that Ben Engeli is a Moor

⁶ In the Oxford World Classics Edition, translated by Charles Jarvis, which is cited here, the name appears Cid Hamet Ben Engeli. Other editions spell the name Cide Hamete Benengeli. There is no other difference.

suggests that he belongs to the group of losers in imperial history. Yet, he is also the enemy to Cervantes, the Spaniard, who translates the Moor's story into his own language, thus purporting the victor's power over the loser. Ben Engeli, nevertheless, is given a voice, albeit subservient to Cervantes's.

It cannot be overlooked though, that the voice of Ben Engeli is written by a Christian and, at times, his voice is lost behind the negative stereotyping of Moors by Cervantes: "But if any objection lies against the truth of this history, it can only be, that the author was an Arab, those of that nation being not a little addicted to lying... In this [story] you will certainly find whatever you can desire in the most agreeable; and if any perfection is wanting to it; it must, without question, be the fault of the infidel its [original] author" (*Quixote* 77). Cervantes claims that just because Ben Engeli belongs to "that nation," which asserts Ben Engeli's Otherness, he is a liar, as though it were some inherent quality found in all Arabs. Claiming that Ben Engeli is an "infidel" suggests that he only accepts his own religion. This implies that Ben Engeli would not include any Christianity within his tale, and if he did, he would speak negatively about the faith. Within Ben Engeli's narrative, however, Christianity can be seen as being promoted. For example, the Captive's tale relates the story of an Arab woman, Lela Zoraida, who escapes her father's house in Algiers and who wants very desperately to be converted to Christianity, taking on the name Maria. The verisimilitude of Cervantes's stereotypical remarks about Ben Engeli thus becomes questionable as Christianity is clearly promoted. This ambiguity of the truth of Cervantes's views of Ben Engeli continue when he states: "Cid Hamet Ben Engeli, the Arabian and Manchegan author relates, in this most grave, lofty, accurate, delightful, and ingenious history..." (181). The fact that Cervantes is now calling Ben Engeli's story "accurate" contradicts his earlier remarks, and even remarks thereafter.

Questions of truth pervade the narration of *The Moor's Last Sigh* just as they do in *Don Quixote*. Moraes opens his story claiming: "My beloved said to me in fondness, 'Oh, you Moor, you strange black man, always so full of theses... Unfortunately, my mother overheard; and darted, quick as a snakebite: "So full, you mean of faeces" (*Sigh* 3). According to his mother, the story to ensue is "faeces," or something not to be believed. Moraes even questions the truth of parts of his own story, including his heritage, as he tells it. Nevertheless, just as Cervantes ends up contradicting himself, so does Moraes. Thus, the distinction between truth and appearance is obscured.

In *The Romance*, Gillian Beer suggests that "We have to depend entirely on the narrator of the romance: he makes the rules of what is possible, what impossible. Our enjoyment depends on our willingness to surrender to his power. We are transported" (8). The veracity of both *Don Quixote* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* seems, then, to play a lesser role as each time it comes into question it is either asserted or reverted. What matters is not whether or not the reader is reading history or fiction, but the entertainment the reader receives in reading the story told by the narrator. In the essay "*Don Quixote: Story or History*," however, Bruce W. Wardropper argues: "What has Cervantes accomplished in making his story pass for history? The easy, or new Aristotelian, answer is that he has achieved verisimilitude. But he has done much more than this: he has obliterated the dividing line between the actual and the potential, the real and the imaginary, the historical and the fictional, the true and the false" (84). Although the narration in *Don Quixote* presents historical facts, they are outshone by the desire to keep the reader entertained, and thus, the actual history presented becomes obscured. Furthermore, the historical moments presented within *Don Quixote* are concealed in metaphors and symbols. Rushdie, on the other hand, while obviously concerned with keeping his reader engaged, continually alludes

to actual historical moments like Indira Gandhi's assassination, the election of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the bombing of the Babri mosque are not as frequently hidden. Keeping these moments in the memory of the reader, instead of fictionalizing the entire story, makes Rushdie's pleas for a better future more understandable because his story seems more like reality.

Going back to the previous assertion made by Cervantes, what is most important to note is that he refers to Ben Engeli as both "Arabian and Manchegan," whereas earlier he only refers to him as an "Arabian historiographer" (*Quixote* 181, 76). This hybrid combination of Arab and Spanish would have been fairly common during Cervantes's time. Unlike Rushdie's composite Catholic-Jewish narrator, Ben Engeli represents a group ordinarily found in Spain especially after the time of Arab reign, even into the Reconquista. It is important, however, to realize that although this interracial composition was common, the Arab identity was often marginalized after the Catholics reclaimed Spain. Rushdie utilizes Cervantes's dual-identity narrator and can be seen as re-using Cervantes's technique by having a Catholic-Jewish-Moorish narrator. Rushdie is not afraid to have a narrator with an identity that is completely a minority within India. While Ben Engeli's mixed lineage promotes multiplicity, it only does so to a certain extent. Moraes's heritage projects plurality more than Ben Engeli's because his familial past encompasses multiple minority groups.

The fact that Ben Engeli's narration takes the form of a romance promotes what Northrop Frye suggests: "It looks, therefore, as though romance were simply replacing the world of ordinary experience by a dream world, in which the narrative movement keeps rising into wish fulfillment or sinking into anxiety and nightmare" (53). What Frye argues goes hand in hand with Quint's assertion that in romances the narrative wanders because they do not have a victory to retell. The narrative expresses the hope to regain power and the world that has been lost.

However, this reconciliation does not occur often. In *Don Quixote*, Don Quixote is looking for the world of chivalric romances that no longer exists. He lives in a dream world where he believes he is a knight-errant and can rid the world of evil. When he does not find this world, he can only die. Yet, this idea of loss also becomes apparent with Ben Engeli. During his narration, it becomes clear that he is looking for a world that does not exist: the special world created in Moorish Spain. The most prominent place in the romance where Ben Engeli's sense of loss is expressed is when Ricote states: "We weep for Spain; for, in short, here were we born, and this is our native country... We knew not our happiness till we lost it; and so great is the desire almost all of us have of returning to Spain... And it is now I know, and find by experience, the truth of that common saying, Sweet is the love of one's country" (*Quixote* 913). Ricote had converted to Christianity when Spain fell to the Catholics, but he was still expelled for being a Moor, like Ben Engeli. All he wants is to return to the country he feels like is his true home but he cannot because Spain no longer tolerates Moors. Being a Moor, his desires can also be ascribed to Ben Engeli's desires of wanting to be able to return to Moorish Spain. Cervantes cannot be excluded in this discussion of loss either. As the translator of Ben Engeli's story, he too exudes a desire for the prosperous times of the past. For Cervantes, he writes his satire at a time in which Spain was in a state of decline, very much like the Portuguese were when Camões wrote his epic.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a sense of loss pervades the second part of the novel. Rushdie's use of romance, and its trope of loss, gives more urgency to the necessity for tolerance, than his failing paradises, which were part of his use of epic. While Rushdie searches for a better future in which the ideals of plurality and coexistence are achieved not only in India but also in the

world,⁷ Moraes is searching for love. Initially, Moraes believes that love cannot heal everything. Love causes a lot of problems. He has lost Uma's love and his mother's love, and has been left devastated. Then, it is as though he comes to a realization that although love sometimes hurts, it is what makes life, life:

But I still wanted to believe what lovers believe: that the thing itself is better than any alternative, be it unrequited, or defeated, or insane. I wanted to cling to the image of love as the blending of spirits, as *mélange*, as the triumph of the impure, mongrel, conjoining the best of us over what there is in us of the solitary, the isolated, the austere, the dogmatic, the pure; of love as democracy, as the victory of the no-man-is-an-island, two's company Many over the clean, mean, apartheidizing Ones... Ignorantly, is how we all fall in love; for it is a kind of fall. Closing our eyes, we leap from that cliff in hope of a soft landing. Nor is it always soft; but still, I told myself, still, without that leap nobody comes to life.
(*Sigh* 291)

According to Moraes, love allows the "blending of spirits" as the lovers completely give themselves to each other. Love dissolves the "solitary" and "pure," and promotes the "Many" over the "apartheidizing Ones." His tone in this passage, with words like "cling," infers his desperation to correct the "solitary" feelings he has in not ever knowing if his mother and Uma ever truly loved him. Unlike Cervantes's satiric romance in which Don Quixote's love for Dulcinea is seen as a poison that further blurs his sense of reality, Moraes and Rushdie see love as a possible remedy to the exclusionary and intolerant world because without love, what is left?

⁷ Rushdie also yearns to return to India, his homeland, like Ricote and Ben Engeli. Being exiled has impacted his life greater than any other obstacle. Therefore, his search for a world that has been lost could also be his India. Nevertheless, the reason he cannot return is the lack of tolerance.

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