This paper examines the Salman Rushdie papers deposited in the Robert W Woodruff Library [Manuscript, Archives and Rare Books Library] of Emory University. Although at first glance this is by and large an old fashioned archive (of 215 boxes and 55 oversized papers), it is also a digital archive in the sense that much of the author’s drafts, letters and sundry material are preserved in computers. The archive has managed to preserve the hard disks in their original form by simulating and incorporating these disks into a PC. The paper examines how the Rushdie archive has been catalogued and what a researcher trained in research methods and textual criticism may do with the archive. Its theoretical template comes from Derrida’s short monograph Archive Fever as it reads the Rushdie archive as a repository as well as a ‘consignment’ which exists within certain laws and power structures. To explore an archive’s concealed or repressed items, the paper carefully traces Rushdie’s interest in the Islamic genesis of secrecy with reference to the available holograph notes and related material on the ‘satanic verses’ in the archive.

Keywords

textual criticism; archives; Salman Rushdie; Derrida
Life, he himself said once, (his biografiend, in fact, kills him very-
soon, if yet not, after) is a wake, livit or krikit, and on the bunk of
our breadwinning lies the cropse of our seedfather, a phrase which
the establisher of the world by law might pretinately write across
the chestfront of all manorwombanborn. (James Joyce, Finnegans
Wake)

Shahrazad replied, ‘What is this compared with what I shall tell you
tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!’ (The Arabian
Nights)

‘Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive,’ is the opening
sentence of Derrida’s short monograph titled Archive Fever. If not at the
archive, ‘then where?’ any one trained in the basic tools of research
methods would ask. We pause to have another look at Derrida’s
opening sentence and find that a paratactic second sentence follows it:
‘But rather at the word “archive”.’ So we begin not at the archive – the
depository – but ‘at the word [my emphasis] “archive”’. Arkhē, the
Greek origin of the word, marks both a beginning (where things com-
mence) and the place of a command, the latter a nomological principle,
the principle of the law linked to power. In Derrida’s deconstructive
reading of the word, an archive becomes less straightforward, less stable
(against our normative understanding of it as a repository, a library, a col-
lection and so on) and a lot more problematic because the ‘order of the
commencement and the order of the commandment’ do not necessarily
follow the same logic. The commandment, the interdiction, the law are
sheltered by the Greek root arkhē, a fact often lost to a common reader’s
understanding of the word ‘archive’. The archive, then, is a law, a
command, a directive, a control, a legislative requirement (which comes
from a principal owner such as an archivist or librarian) as well as a
source of knowledge.

Matters become clearer when we go to the Greek word arkheion from
which we derive our word ‘archive’, via late Latin archīum, archīvum. In its
general meaning it originally referred to the residence of ‘superior magis-
trates, the archons, those who commanded’ (p. 2). These are people
with economic as well as juridical power; they have authority, and it is
in their homes that official documents are deposited. They are the first
guardians of these documents; they ensure the security of both the de-
posited items and the place where they have been deposited (the substrate);
they are also accorded the first right to interpret the documents and
hence establish analytical principles for their interpretation. The archive
is thus guarded as if under an interdiction — to interpret one has to abide by the law of the interpreters — and exists under something akin to a permanent ‘house arrest’, where the passage from the private to the public (‘which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret’ (p. 3)), is in a sense institutionalised. Classification of documents takes place in this privileged space (a space of shelter but which also shelters) according to certain (‘patriarchic’) laws ‘without which no archive would ever come into play or appear as such’ (p. 3). Three aspects of the archive, therefore, come together. First, there is the function of the archon, the ‘magistrate’, which requires that the archive should be deposited somewhere. Second, there is the power of the archon who establishes the laws of classification and gathering which should be applied to the archival material. Third, and finally, the latter power is paired with the ‘power of consignation’ whereby ‘all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration’ (p. 3).

There are ‘grave consequences’ (Derrida’s proviso) if the processes and procedures by which an archive gets established, the manner in which it is classified and any matter relating to its consignation were disputed, interrogated or questioned. ‘There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory,’ writes Derrida in a footnote (p. 4), a point made so manifestly obvious in the Julian Assange-WikiLeaks-Snowden exposure of classified (archived) documents. A science of the archive must keep the two sides of the Greek arkhē/arkheion firmly in the foreground which means that we need to address the power by which an archive is authorised and the principles which govern its implementation, its classification and the like. The science also imposes limits upon both the who and the what: who may have access to the archive (the scholar, the archivist, the law of the land) and what may be read (the public, not the private texts; the open and not the secret). These protocols are always in place and one makes a declaration about privacy and secrecy before access is granted. And if, perchance, privacy is breached, immediate action must be undertaken, any notes made are immediately shredded and a declaration signed to the effect that the closed sections of the archive will never be recalled, not even memorialy.

The Emory Rushdie archive

I turn to my ‘proof’ archive — the Salman Rushdie papers to examine the ramifications of my introductory remarks. The Salman Rushdie papers were bought by Emory University for an undisclosed sum in 2006, three years after the University’s purchase of the Ted Hughes papers for a reported $600,000. The British, naturally, were unimpressed but
whether the British Library would have paid Rushdie the £1.2 million it paid in 1997 to buy the very establishment Laurence Olivier’s archive is highly unlikely. V. S. Naipaul had sold his papers to the University of Tulsa in 1994 rather cheaply for $620,000 but then Naipaul did not really claim to belong anywhere and his life had not been all that exciting. A colourful life does matter as in the same year Stanford University paid $980,000 to acquire the ‘Allen Ginsberg Papers (1937–1994)’.

The deal done it took Emory University archivists, librarians, editors and information technology experts over three years to order, classify and catalogue material in the 200 boxes and old computers which lay in a New York warehouse. Rushdie himself had no plans for depositing the boxes and hard disks in any library until Emory raised the issue soon after he, a James Joyce fan, had delivered the Richard Ellmann Lectures in Modern Literature at Emory in 2004. When the archive was officially installed on Thursday 25 February 2010, Rushdie reflected briefly on the relationship between an author and his archive.7 Rushdie declared at the outset that he was never ‘archivally’ minded as he had thrown his working papers and peripheral material indiscriminately into boxes without any thought of returning to them. He noted that when the boxes were opened, he was alarmed to see his material, some of which ‘he couldn’t remember writing’, and he was not too sure how much he could bear to look at his work being ‘exhumed, brought back to life’, although he added proper cataloguing has meant that writing an autobiography would be so much easier now, which is true as Joseph Anton, his autobiography as third-person memoir, appeared in 2012. To Rushdie, though, an archive tells a reader what a writer did ‘on the way to other work . . . a means of getting from here to there’. Rushdie confessed, ‘to me the book at the end’ is the important thing, ‘the process is not very interesting’. In lectures and talks at Emory university (2007–2011) he anecdotally noted the lack of interest in the processes of composition on the part of none other than Shakespeare himself, who left behind no autograph versions of his plays, let alone handwritten notes about their genesis.

The archive, housed in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL) of Emory University, is divided into eleven collections or series with, where required, subseries within each series. The stemma, in reverse, may be reconstructed as folder---box---subseries--- series---archive, with the folder being a kind of sub-arterial entry point for the selection of documents. Each box has a number of folders (or files) ranging from 26 (for boxes 42 and 44, for instance) to no more than six or seven depending upon the size and bulk of the material contained therein. Box 22, where I tarry for a while later, is part of four boxes (21–24) in subseries 2.1 (‘Fiction, 1973–2006’, boxes 15–45) which deal with the author’s drafts and final near-proof copies of The Satanic
Vers. The number of files and their thematic unity is not a pre-given as the size of each box determines the number of folders in them so that the author’s copy typescript of the novel begins in folder 11 of Box 21 and finishes in folder 3 of Box 22. Such carry-over is not uncommon in other jurisdictions too.

Series 1: Journals, appointment books, and notebooks, 1974–2003
Subseries 2.3: Scripts, 1984–2002
Subseries 2.4: Other writings, 1964–2002
Series 3: Writing by others, 1983–2005
Subseries 3.1: Writings about Rushdie, 1983–2004
Subseries 3.2: Other Writings, 1983–2005
Series 4: Correspondence, 1974–2006
Series 5: Personal papers, 1964–2005
Subseries 5.1: Financial records, 1974–2005
Subseries 5.2: Legal papers, 1976–2004
Subseries 5.3: Other personal papers, 1964–2005
Subseries 5.4: Family papers, 1984–2004
Series 7: Photographs, circa 1947–2006
Subseries 7.2: Other people and places, circa 1980–2000
Subseries 7.3: Slides and negatives, 1972–1996
Subseries 7.4: Family photographs, circa 1947 – circa 2000
Series 8: Printed material, 1980–2008
Subseries 8.1: Printed material by Rushdie, 1980–2005
Subseries 8.2: Printed material about Rushdie, 1975–2008
Subseries 8.3: General printed material, 1982–2005
Series 9: Memorabilia, 1982–1999
Series 11: Computer and related devices

Not all the series are open to researchers as restrictions apply.

Complete restriction:

Series 4: Correspondence, 1974–2006
Subseries 5.1: Financial records, 1974–2005
Subseries 5.4: Family papers, 1984–2004
Subseries 7.4: Family photographs, circa 1947 – circa 2000
Series 1: Journals, appointment books, and notebooks, 1974–2003
Subseries 5.2: Legal papers, 1976–2004
At first sight the catalogue description points towards an old-fashioned archive classified along traditional generic/chronological principles until we come to series 10 and 11. The presence of the latter two introduces a new element in the ‘consignation’ of the archive and a researcher’s own capacity to engage with it. Modern technology has made it possible for material in what Rushdie, looking back at relatively primitive computer technology, has himself referred to as ‘stone-age, iron-age, bronze-age systems’ to be cast in their original forms so that material in series 11 (computer and related devices) may be viewed as Rushdie himself viewed and worked on them. Apple Mac computers have been simulated into a PC so that even as they are located in another system, they function as if they were in their original habitat.

The archive, as it reached Emory, was therefore a hybrid, meaning that Emory’s Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL) received not only one hundred linear feet of his paper material, including diaries, notebooks, library books, first-edition novels, notes scribbled on napkins, but also forty thousand files and eighteen gigabytes of data on a Mac desktop, three Mac laptops, and an external hard drive.\(^8\)

The archiving of digital material marks a shift in the traditional manner in which archivists have catalogued material. Writers are now ‘born-digital’ in the sense that their literary life is preserved not on paper but on computers. In the case of Rushdie, since turning digital on an early Mac (around 1990) much of his archival material – emails and notes but also first drafts of novels – no longer exists on paper. ‘Born-digital archives’ have, quite naturally, transformed not only the manner in which archives are catalogued and preserved but also how they are accessed, shared and exhibited, the way in which one engages with an interactive apparatus, and how a wholly new area of intellectual property and privacy may be addressed. As one of the archivists at Emory, Naomi Nelson, observed, ‘our challenge is how to bring all these records to life’ as institutions now bid not only for first editions but also for PCs and zip drives, the new depository of the copy text and its variants. A tradition built around paper archives, the kind of British-Continental tradition that underpinned Derrida’s own reflections on archives, is now undergoing a massive epistemic shift as an author’s digital archive places different demands on the scholar-critic. Where once variant readings in manuscripts and early editions required training in palaeography, water marks, the concept of a fair copy and the like,
the challenge now is how to decipher e-manuscripts in early model computers, unreadable disks and outmoded programs. With reference to a soiled Rushdie laptop it was noted by an archivist, ‘Rushdie’s archives include a laptop he had spilled soda on that didn’t appear to work anymore; the library’s experts were able to extract the information from it without even turning it on’.

The reference here to Information Technology experts reminds us of the interdependency of the scholar and a skilled computer technologist. Unlike the old scholar-critic whose scholarly repertoire included all the necessary skills (from languages to hand-writing), the new scholar working with the born-digital is dependent on programmers and computer security experts. In the process of extracting data from Rushdie’s hard drives, the Emory computer engineers emulated Rushdie’s ‘working environment, creating a perfect duplicate that researchers could explore while safeguarding the original [because] … the imprint of the writer’s personality … lies within his computer’.

At Emory three aspects of the archive – that the archive should be deposited somewhere, that it should be classified according to established generic and/or historical principles, that there should be a unity, system or synchrony governing an archive – come together as a normative principle of archive ‘consignation’. By and large the Emory archivists do not veer from these parameters except that the environment, the ecosystem or ‘biostructure’ of the archive is now paper as well as digital. As Deepika Bahri, the Curator of the installation of the Archive in February 2010 observed, ‘Rushdie may not have been born digital but he has been reborn digital.’

The archive clearly is very large and space in a very real sense is against us because a full, critical examination of the archive with illustrated material would require a much longer essay. As ‘a parallel text’ an archive remains under authorial jurisdiction because an archive, in a sense, begins as an autobiography; it is not like the Jewish Geniza where nothing ever was destroyed. In this respect an archive is really an intentional object which requires an intentional act. And if the archive is an intentional object it is because our intentional act considers it (or parts of it) to be meaningful.

The genesis of secrecy: a Freudian signature

Archives are held under an interdiction because they hold secrets. These secrets may be many, some inconsequential, a number of significance to a textual critic. Among the latter some must remain under an embargo and are therefore in a sense under ‘erasure’ awaiting a more propitious time for their release. The Rushdie archive is no exception as it too holds secrets which are closed to researchers other than the author.
himself. One secret, surprisingly, which is not under an embargo is the writer’s engagement with a genesis of secrecy in Islam at the heart of the novel that changed the author’s life. The novel, quite obviously, is The Satanic Verses. What does the archive say about this work and its religious intertext? Rushdie himself has written a memoir dealing with the fatwa years. The Memoir was published in September 2012 with the benefit of the complete archive at his disposal, something not available to researchers.  

I therefore turn to the partially available archive on the subject to examine, fiendishly, the genesis of the decisive text of the fatwa. When did Rushdie’s interest in ‘the genesis of secrecy’ in Islam begin and where lay its genesis? Was there a conscious plan to deconstruct the Qur’an itself? And was he aware of the consequences of such an undertaking? Frank Kermode tells us in a book from which I have borrowed the phrase ‘the genesis of secrecy’ that the patron of interpreters is Hermes, a god who is in the habit of holding the secret of oracles which at the moment of their ‘announcement may seem trivial or irrelevant, the secret sense declaring itself only after long delay, and in circumstances not originally foreseeable’. The intent of an oracle may therefore be delayed for generations because what the god Hermes guards is the principle of the ‘superiority of latent over manifest sense’. When an archive has two guardian divinities – the goddess of art Saraswati or Athena and the god of interpretation Hermes – judgements about it are about sense and the sensible, reflective as well as determinative.

What is there in the archive which Rushdie, like every ‘careful concealer’ (after Derrida) meant to keep secret? Should we like Norbert Hanold the archaeologist in Wilhelm Jensen’s Gradiva bring back to life these traces which may or may not be concealed? The literary biographer (the ‘biografiend’ as Joyce called him) tries to uncover the repressed, concealed texts and nothing delights him/her more than the discovery of a fragment which completes a literary jigsaw puzzle. As already noted, the archive is large and its entry points many. My task is limited as my aim is to explore Rushdie’s interest in a Qur’anic genesis of secrecy and its relationship to The Satanic Verses. Like Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles was he inviting blasphemy? And like Stephen, again, who in his defence retraced God’s gift of a covenant from Abraham to Jesus, did he mean to offer another, synoptic, narrative of a holy book? After all, Stephen’s speech, whose subtext is the failure of the Jews to uphold the austere monotheistic covenant between God and Abraham, reads very much like a synopsis of the Qur’an with the difference that in Islam the covenant gets qualified via Muhammad/Ishmael and not Christ/Isaac. The archive fever that Derrida (after Freud) had spoken about, a fever linked to the ‘desire and the order of the archive’ (p. 81), a fever quintessentially of the death drive which makes us run after the archive ‘even if there’s too much of
it, right where something in it anarchives itself’ (p. 91), compulsively drags us into the darkening heart of the archive.21

The first reference to the satanic verses as a title of a book appears in a journal entry (redacted copy because the journal is not open to readers) of around the mid-1970s in which there is an illustration of the title page of a novel, ‘The Satanic Comedy’, the title itself a little too cleverly invoking Dante. Salman Rushdie’s name is beneath it followed by ‘author of Grimus, Madame Rama, The Antagonist, Holinshed’s Chronicle, Alpha-Zygote, The Slapstick Scenes from a Place in the Crowd, Clarissa, etc.’ (‘The Book of the Peer’, 1969, is not mentioned although it along with ‘Madame Rama’ and ‘The Antagonist’ exist in the archive in ms form.) Much later in the journal entry (again a redacted copy), which we may date November 1987, we read: ‘I’ve been waiting 20 yrs to write about the incident of the satanic verses.’22 If we go back in time, ‘20 yrs’ places Rushdie more or less in his final year at Cambridge University (1967–1968). In that year as a history student Rushdie read a paper on Islam which, apparently, he took with a tutor, Arthur Hibbert, as an independent study contract because there were no other takers of this unit. We read in the notes prepared for a talk:

> When I was an undergraduate at this College [King’s, Cambridge] between 1965 and 1968 . . . while in my final year of reading history at Cambridge . . . I came across the story of the so-called ‘satanic verses’ or temptation of the Prophet Muhammad, and of his rejection of the temptation. That year, I had chosen as one of my special subjects a paper on Muhammad, the Rise of Islam and the Caliphate. So few students chose the option that the lectures were cancelled . . . However, I was anxious to continue, and one of the King’s history dons agreed to supervise me. So as it happened I was, I think, the only student in Cambridge who took the paper. The next year, I’m told, it was not offered again.23

A fuller description of the paper on Islam he read at Cambridge and the impact of historical scholarship on his reading of Islam is given in his memoir, Joseph Anton;24 the title itself after the name he gave himself when the British Secret Service Special Branch asked him to come up with a covert name: Joseph (Conrad) Anton (Chekhov).25 Foreshadowing the metaphor of the darkening clouds that descended on him after Khomeini’s fatwa, the opening image of the Memoir is of blackbirds and these birds, as he recalls two pages on, are ‘like the plague of murderous birds in Alfred Hitchcock’s great film’ (p. 4). In a note in the archive he observed ‘the sheer oddness of the world historical event blaring down . . . moments of Kafkaesque alienation’.26 When Rushdie read about the incident of the
‘satanic verses’ at Cambridge he was taken in by the remarkable nature of the story. It had great potential for a novelist, something he did not know then. He filed it away in one part of his brain without, it seems, reflecting on the degree to which any overt reference to the rejected verses is considered to be blasphemous in Islam. ‘Twenty years later he would find out exactly how good a story it was’ (p. 45) as a novelistic problematic where it would be necessary to blast open the mediated nature of the transmission of this narrative fragment.

I turn to Rushdie’s own admission that it had taken him twenty years ‘to write about the incident of the satanic verses’ to retrace Rushdie’s engagement with the Islamic genesis of secrecy as it is found in the archive. Anarchiving the archive (to use Derrida’s phrase), one is struck by the extent to which the notes about the genesis of the satanic verses explain Rushdie’s on-going interest in cultural Islam. The reference to the twenty years already cited and written probably in November 1987 confirms what we have read in the Memoir: that to Rushdie the ‘historical source’ of the verses was of special significance. First, it raised questions about ‘how newness enters the world: how one deals with weakness, how with strength’ and, second, how difficult it was ‘to tell angels from devils . . . [which] old theology mixed them up anyway’.27 On this second point Rushdie makes the additional remark that the ‘devil is an aspect of God . . . “Good” and “evil” are confused these days’ and it is ‘hard enough to say what is, let alone what is right’.28 Later he would acknowledge his indebtedness to William Blake, and especially to The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.29 A turn to the satanic verses disturbs the sanctity of the Qur’an as absolute revelation as prophets are not supposed to err in their recollection of divine revelation (the doctrine of ‘ismat al-anbiya or ‘divine protection from sin’).

In the unpublished novels in manuscript Rushdie’s interest in the ‘Islamic genesis of secrecy’ is again evident. In his first attempt at a novel – ‘The Book of the Peer’, written soon after his brief but disastrous stay in Karachi (1969–1970) after Cambridge – Rushdie came upon what he said was a ‘good idea, an idea that even looks a little prescient today’.30 One of the four epigraphs of this novel is the opening lines of the 96th sura of the Qur’an: ‘Recite, in the name of the Lord/thy Creator/who created Man from clots of blood.’31 Although these epigraphs are from the collator/translator (a mode of authorial distancing employed by Rushdie), it is clear that Rushdie’s first completed novel pays homage to one of the signature verses of the Qur’an. To us a number of things about the novel suggest his near-obsessive interest in a sanctified text’s genesis of secrecy (an issue that shadows all texts from the Vedas to the Qur’an) and how it should be handled. Dreams, for one, are ‘often used in an attempt to clarify the dreamer’s thought’.32 The Manichean view in The Satanic
Verses itself is not new as the Qur’anic world keeps this binary between God and Satan. As offered in ‘The Book of the Peer’, that view is less subtly presented since ‘god’ is described as the ‘obstacular’ (p. 20), the real obstacle to a fuller understanding of desire and the sensual nature of the world. Although this is not presented as a critique or a commentary on the Qur’an or any other religious text, ‘The Book of the Peer’ has the aura of a Gospel in as much as it is presented as a teaching. In Section Two, Part II we get a more direct statement on Muhammad, who remains unnamed. Here the ‘inset’ author shows a book about the Prophet to the poet Shujauddin (a Marxist who leaves for the Soviet Union and who, radically transformed, surfaces as Bilal in The Satanic Verses).

I recall the first time I read a book about the Prophet – not Peer, the one they follow now – other than the Book [the Qur’an] itself. I can remember no book that I fought so hard against: every sentence held a blasphemy, every fact was a diminution. Sociology and religion do not mix easily. . . .

The book said: the Prophet lifted many of his main doctrines direct from the Jews and Nestorian Christians whom he met on camel-trips. I said: He had his revelation straight from God. And so on, through the question of the Satanic Verses, the connection between the decimation in battle of the Faithful men, and the injunction to take four wives (wives took their husband’s religion and it was a means to prevent the numbers of the Faithful diminishing even more), the view of the faith as an attempt, a political and social attempt, to inculcate the nomadic virtues into an urban community; the Prophet had been an orphan himself, and greatly approved of the nomadic respect for the rights and privileges of orphans and widows. Shuja explained patiently how the Prophet was a historical figure, in which he was unlike all other prophets, and how it was only right to consider him as living within that known historical context. After all, he always said how human he was.

‘But if this book says he didn’t receive his Book from the angel of God’ I blurted ‘it’s calling him a fraud!’

Shuja [Shujauddin the poet] told me a lot of medical facts about how hypertension, asceticism, anchoritism and isolated places can create illusions, hallucinations. He had to repeat it several times in different words before I stopped shaking head and listened. But I did listen, and it shook my faith. Although that was not destroyed fully until later, when we unearthed the wickedness of the priests.
After that my first impetuous plan was for Shuja and I to go crying the news of the Prophet’s lack of revelation; but after Shuja’s trouble, I realized that we would probably be stoned to death (pp. 66–7).

Here is Rushdie, barely 23, living for a year in a fanatically religious Pakistan (to which his parents had migrated in 1964), already interested in an Islamic genesis of secrecy and showing a preference, it seems, for a polytheistic monism of the ‘post-religious west’ (p. 148). Upon his return to London he continues to write fiction. Of the other novels available in manuscript ‘The Antagonist’ is of interest as a precursor to Midnight’s Children (two of the key characters there are Saleem Sinai and his opposite number swapped at birth), while ‘Madame Rama’ ‘transposed the story of Mrs Indira Gandhi into the Bombay film industry and imagined . . . that beneath her sari she grew a talking penis which actually ran the studio’. Written in 1975–1976 (in two versions) but mercifully unpublished (Rushdie notes it ‘saved [his] bacon’ ) this novel with no overt religious interest, nevertheless, carries the following passage:

When the prophet Muhammad first visited the mountain and saw the Archangel Jabreel, he thought he’d lost his mind. Forty-year-old merchants from Mecca don’t see archangels every day. He came down and told his wife, explaining his fears. It was she who talked him out of his torment and persuaded him he was indeed the Last True Prophet. Imagine what would have happened if she’d been a touch more cynical! Muhammad would have declared himself mad and the world would have been spared the savagery and beauty of Islam. Great Moments In The History Of Man: ‘No, dear, you aren’t nuts, you’re a genius!’ ‘Yes, darling, if you say so. Oh well, back to the mountain; it won’t be coming to me, you know!’ Saladin, the mosques of Isfahan, algebra and Alhambra and the partition of India, springing from the loyalty of an ageing wife. It makes you think. Or weep.

Rushdie recognises early on the dangers inherent in turning to the genesis of secrecy against the advice of the patron of interpreters, Hermes. Such declarations were forbidding and their consequences unpredictable, perhaps even prophetic, as is evident from references to the inversion of the Faustian pact mentioned a number of times in the archive. ‘A book’, we find typed on a quarto sheet,

is the product of a pact with the Devil that inverts the Faustian contract. Faust sacrificed eternity for the joys to be gained in life. The writer agrees to a ruined life, and gains, if he is fortunate, perhaps
not eternity, but, at least, posterity. In either case, it is the devil who wins.\textsuperscript{38}

Clearly there is considerable unease, even disquiet at his textual discoveries, as in the Memoir too Rushdie recalls this note:

Throughout the writing of the book \textit{The Satanic Verses} he had kept a note to himself pinned to the wall above his desk. ‘To write a book is to make a Faustian contract in reverse,’ it said. ‘To gain immortality, or at least posterity, you lose, or at least ruin, your actual daily life.’ (p. 91)

A turn to the genesis of \textit{The Satanic Verses} shows the extent to which the apocryphal (‘satanic’) verses haunted Rushdie’s imagination and the act of excavation in itself read as a Faustian pact with the Devil. A Faustian spectral presence invades the marginalia as he toys with the possible title of his new work-in-progress. The earliest working title of the novel is given as ‘The Parting of the Arabian Sea’ and dated 29 December 1983.\textsuperscript{39} This remains the working title (with earlier titles given as ‘The Parting’ and ‘The Parting of the Seas’) for some time (quite possibly for the period 1983–1984) as there is a sheet in Box 212, folder 8 in which Rushdie draws the cover of the proposed book and gives it this title underneath his name. The notes on the novel with this title begin to emphasise theological issues: \textit{The Parting} must include the Mahound/Satanic Verses material. It must be a complete engagement with the ideas of God, revelation, transcendence.\textsuperscript{40} With an eye to the left-liberal Jewish intellectual tradition, Rushdie notes, ‘But I also need to show that Muslims can be both “light” about religion rather than “heavy”, and not evil. So I need all sorts of Muslim in the book’ (Rushdie’s emphases in both quotations).\textsuperscript{41} Other issues begin to invade the theological concerns, issues such as migration, diaspora, travel: ‘Why do people move across the planet?’ asks Rushdie, and ‘How am I to write such a book?’ He answers, ‘But I must write it. The book of change, of motion . . . i am an unpossessed possession, i want to be owned.’\textsuperscript{42} ‘The secret lies in having to take the risk,’ he notes on a separate half-sheet.\textsuperscript{43} The language of the marginalia has the quality of a panic-ridden magnificent obsession which spills over into agitated prose. What can one make of a writer, ‘an unpossessed possession’, who must write the ‘book of change’? There is something of St Stephen’s apostolic self-assurance here; the will to correct a grand narrative, to inflect it in such a manner that its textual stability will be forever in doubt. Rushdie becomes a great writer only after he had written \textit{The Satanic Verses}, his theological-cosmopolitan text after the ‘national’ ones (Midnight’s Children and Shame). In the available archive he can only anticipate
greatness, although he senses that the achievement would come at a great
cost to him.

Almost exactly a year after the first dated reference to ‘The Parting of
the Arabian Sea’ on a sheet dated ‘16/12/84’ one senses a greater self-assur-
ance, the writer reading himself as a non-messianic messiah. The emphasis
shifts quite radically as Rushdie notes:

Maybe the novel should be called The Satanic Verses: because it is,
after all, about forms of temptation: sexuality, solitude, solipsism,
transcendence: and, in its 2 central strands, Muhammad’s is a tempt-
ation away from God towards secularity, … whereas the girl pro-
phet’s is a temptation towards God. Yes. Maybe. Think about it
(Rushdie’s emphases).

By 21 December, that is a week later, he draws a cover of the book
with ‘Satanic Verses’ (without the definite article) as the title. Underneath
he writes, ‘Yes: this must be the title of the new book.’ So by the end of
1984 the focus begins to move away from ‘parting of the sea’ to the satanic
verses. The full import of the shift begins to dawn on him as ‘God’ enters
his jottings. ‘Yes: I’m playing God, I suppose. But on the whole it’s more
dangerous when God plays man … and I am not playing God for money,
but for my life.’ The Manichean principle gets re-stated on another page
with the difference that God and the Devil are seen to be one:

So the point is: the satanic verses came from God, too. God is the
devil. That is if the Divine Being is ourselves written in macrocosm,
It must be simultaneously good & evil. The two in One, as they are
in all of us. Why shd. God be different?

In The Satanic Verses we read ‘Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord
hath not done it?’ echoing Amos 3: 6 where the assumption is that God was
initially depicted as the source of both good and evil.

Beyond the over-riding narrative structure of a dreamer who can
dream anything and enter into the lives of others, beyond a binary Mani-
chean order of thinking, the archive takes us to Rushdie’s catholic and
canonical inter-textual lineage. Seeing himself as a secular commentator
who expands on a holy book, the genesis of secrecy is read through critique
and deconstruction which is more post-Enlightenment European than
post-Saidian orientalist. Originally there were two epigraphs to The
Satanic Verses: from Daniel Defoe’s The History of the Devil and a French
avantgarde filmmaker. Daniel Defoe’s (1660 – 1731) starting
point is Milton’s dramatic suggestion, as Defoe interprets it, that the
Devil’s failed rebellion leads to his permanent confinement. Against this
Defoe makes the case that the devil is forever present in our world, lives alongside us, and at every opportunity tempts us into dismantling God’s divine project. This reading, is affirmed in Ephesians II:2, I Peter V:8 and Job I: 7. In Job Satan tells God that he is forever wandering the earth, ‘walking up and down in it’. Islam by and large accepts Defoe’s reading of the pervasive presence of Satan in our lives, which is why submission to Allah is a categorical imperative. Rushdie’s interest in Defoe’s reading of the Devil is obvious as, in terms of this argument, no one, not even a prophet, is immune from temptation by the Devil. Defoe also provides Rushdie with a repertoire of images which he strategically deploys in his novel.

Rushdie’s passion for the undecidable, the in-between, the item beneath the outer show, the unheimlich, therefore has its grounding in a larger comparative literature from which it follows that Defoe, Dante and Blake are just as important as the Islamic commentators on religion. Blake’s cryptic line ‘without Contraries is no progression’ is in a way Rushdie’s différence (a word missing from the archive) and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is powerfully present in Chapter 5 (‘A City Visible but Unseen’) of the published novel. Robert Southey, to whom Byron dedicated his Don Juan, referred to Byron as belonging to a ‘Satanic School’ and somewhere else Robert Southey is reputed to have said to a friend that Byron’s Don Juan should have been called The Satanic Verses, so the term did not necessarily relate only to Muhammad’s rebuttal of these verses.

The Prophet’s momentary fling with the ‘satanic verses’ is recast as a normative Manichean problematic that seems to shadow any number of great works. This is evident in a ‘signature’ that recurs in eight typed pages with cancellations and marginalia in autograph. The signature is of the name ‘Iago’, capitalised and circled six times. Othello, the Moor of Venice, looms large in the archive where ‘Iago’ surfaces as a signifier of hate, jealousy and resentment, dominant character traits for almost everyone in The Satanic Verses itself. Twice in these typed pages, Rushdie in fact quotes Coleridge’s well know reading of Iago’s hate as ‘motiveless malignity’. And Othello’s words to Iago (‘If that thou be’st a devil, I cannot kill thee’) are invoked to establish the dramatic tenor of Muhammad’s own relationship with Gibreel Farishta as Angel Gabriel who, if we extend Othello’s words, is himself the devil. Hate, though, can only be destructive and the novel, it emerges in the archive, must not relapse into an intense meditation on jealousy although as we read later the ‘Othello/Iago/Desedmona triangle’ acts as the intertextual mechanism for the highly ‘schizophrenic’ Allie-Gibreel relationship, a relationship ‘subject to’ violent swings of mood. And so what the archive affirms, against the Islamic response to the novel, is love and not hate and the
novel, says, Rushdie, ‘has a sort of happy ending’, life must go on and there is optimism, the kind of optimism, in a religious sense, one associates with the ending of Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov.

The controlling power of the western intertextual tradition and its analytical procedures (especially in respect of the principles of textual transmission) precludes Rushdie from engaging with a reference in an early draft of The Satanic Verses in which Rushdie’s wish to ‘regain [his] mother tongue’ is given emphatic cadence. The reference here is to Urdu language whose religious and cultural semantics are heavily dependent upon Arabic and Farsi. Why the archive makes no reference to the translation of the title of the novel into Urdu, Farsi and Arabic remains a mystery for Rushdie would have known that the title ‘the satanic verses’ translated into Arabic (Āyat-al-Shaitāniyya), into Farsi (Āyat-e-Shaitānī) and into Urdu (Shaitānī Āyat) directly connotes that the Qur’an itself is demonic because the word āyat is used to refer to the suras or verses of the Qur’an. Although not stated as such in the archive, in a reprise of an earlier entry in which Rushdie had noted the length of his interest in the episode of the satanic verses, Rushdie now acknowledges that he had forgotten ‘how explosive’ the episode was since in his rendition the Angel-Devil dichotomy is never clear-cut because Gibreel may well have been Shaitan (Satan). He mentions the Book of the Star (Sura 53: Al-Najm) where ‘the attack on the idea of angels with female names’ occurs and the attack is linked to Muhammad’s momentary temptation by Satan to include the three pagan goddesses as intermediaries. These verses, which Rushdie writes in the Roman script and in capitals on a sheet of paper, are, of course, expunged from the Qur’an (if indeed they ever existed in the first instance). And it is through this struggle between Gibreel and Al-Lat (one of the three goddesses) that an important ‘third principle’ is introduced into the narrative. The third principle involves the story of Al-Lat (via Ally) which ‘keeps trying to force its way in from the margins, to become central’, and deconstructs the ‘Gibreel/Shaitan division of Allah’. The third, female, principle is important because, in the end, it is Zeenat Vakil who gives Saladin Chamcha another chance. The Satanic Verses, therefore, has a decidedly feminist inflection since it is women who are silenced or marginalised. ‘Ever since SV’, writes Rushdie in a hand written note in the margins of a typed sheet, ‘I’d had my faith shaken. Then all these rules & convenience of them; e.g. 4 wives after loss of men. So I tested him and he failed.’ As the archival evidence indicates, Rushdie’s return to the episode of the satanic verses carried this other political imperative too since only in the so-called satanic verses do we get divinities who are women and whom the Qur’an rejects on the grounds that they are female. The rejection of this radical possibility (women as divine) by the Prophet is mourned by Rushdie since it suggests
what Islam may have been like if the culture’s earlier gods had been given some mediating presence and indeed, with Indian Sufism as an example familiar to Rushdie, how a more open-minded and culturally accommodating the belief may have become. The loss is presented as a dramatic binary opposition on a redacted sheet: ‘Allah v. Allat [Al-Lat] woman.’

A belief incapable of being metamorphosed (or to use Rushdie’s own neologism ‘metaphorphosed’), a belief marked by ‘one one one . . . [a] terrifying singularity’, 56 leads to melancholia since its singularity destroys the very idea of contraries (after Blake). The imagination is hedged in and finds little room to manoeuvre because with the loss of multiplicity, says Rushdie, comes the death of God. In its insistence on singularity the legacy of Muhammad is to leave behind a God who is dead because he and his message become more powerful than God, a theme that Rushdie knew Voltaire, a Rushdie favourite, had developed in his play, Mahomet the Imposter (1736; J Miller translation 1744). Notes Rushdie, ‘objective information about him [Muhammad] is forbidden . . . there is a saying: you can say what you like about God, but be careful with Muhammad’. 57

The death of God, which is at the heart of The Satanic Verses and linked to the lost narrative when the nomad becomes the migrant, takes the form of a poem also entitled ‘the death of God’.

God died last Friday, and nobody noticed. Peacefully, at home, without fuss, no flowers, please. God died, but there were plenty of girls, the Prophet himself had thirteen, two dead, but plenty left alive, God died, but the Prophet lived on, the angel spoke somebody else’s words, but the Prophet didn’t notice. 58

In a 1988 Journal entry (redacted) we read: ‘The book is finished: certainly my most mature work, possibly my best. And because my memorial to Abba [Father] is in it, I do not need to say more here.’ But he is worried about the extent to which it is really new, and asks himself, ‘Is it a mess?’ to which he replies not only in capital letters (‘NO IT BLOODY WELL IS NOT. IT’S NEW’) but by heavily underlining ‘NOT’ and ‘NEW’. There is then a consciousness about the book’s radical status, its recovery of a genesis of secrecy seen as a singular and rare achievement. Not only is the book original in as much as a good book always is, but new, original and even revolutionary as few books ever are. There is an unease, though, that betrays an uncomfortable self-confidence. In a journal entry he had
noted, ‘Why publish so naked a thing?’ to which he himself had replied, ‘Because truth can only be communicated through risk.’

There is another entry with a heading ‘15 March 88: Liberation day!’ The date is then circled, a time given (7 am) with the following additional note:

This is astonishing. Who knows when I wrote this or why; but today, 15 March 1988, the Ides of March [the date of the assassination of Julius Caesar], is in fact the day on which the UK and US publisher for Verses is to be decided: on which the book will enter the ‘real’ world . . .

The Memoir (p. 90) tells us that the novel was finished at ‘4:10 P.M. on Tuesday, 16 February 1988’ and he wrote in his diary in capitals ‘I REACHED THE END.’ The following day he made minor changes to the manuscript and then on Thursday (18 February 1988) he made photocopies and delivered the book to his agents. The Memoir does not note this but, we read in the archive that, as he finishes the work, he translates a poem by his favourite Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984). The translated poem, in ms, is dated 27 February 1988 and the archivist’s descriptive catalogue reads: ‘Translation by Rushdie of “Tum Apni Karni Kar Guzro” by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, 27 February 1988. Translated as O Why Speak of that Day.’

O why speak of that day
when the heart will break in pieces
and all grief is wiped away?
All that we gained will be lost then,
and the things we could not find will be gained.

This day is like another day,
it’s a day like the first day of love,
for which we were longing and longing
and of which we were afraid and afraid.

And how many times this day has come,
and each time we were uplifted and downcast,
and each time we were filled up and emptied.

O why speak of that day
when the heart will break in pieces
and all grief is wiped away?

Turn away now from fear and from danger;
whatever must happen, will be.
If laughter, then let it be laughter;
if weeping, then let it be tears.
Do what you must, do what you will,
And as for the future, we’ll see.

The poem is signed ‘With my love, Salman 27 Feb. 88’ and on the face of it is written for Marianne Wiggins whom he married on 23 January 1988 and with whom he spent Palm Sunday, March 27 that year, to Easter Sunday, April 3 in a hotel within the walls of the grand Alhambra, Granada. In his Memoir (p. 90), however, he notes that four days after his wedding he wrote in his diary ‘How easy it is to destroy a man!’ He can no longer recall why he wrote this: a prescient note about his doomed marriage to Marianne or about a life which was soon to move ‘against the tide’ precisely because of a writer’s obsession with the genesis of secrecy? If the poem presaged the latter, then one may ask why the title of the poem (‘Tum Apni Karni Kar Guzro’) remains untranslated. Although often translated as ‘Do What You Want,’ it is the connotative meaning of the title, ‘You lead a life with karmic consequences’ which is profoundly disturbing and haunts the writer.

Historians speak of archival fidelity but the latter should not be a matter only of transcription – fidelity, that is, in the literal sense –; it is a matter also of the Freudian signature, the hidden lacuna, which surfaces in the uncensored space of the archive. ‘Now is your brother scared?’ is the question posed to his sister Sameen in another poem and the answer given is, ‘he is; scared that he’s worked in vain’. Both the author and the archon, the collector, the ‘magistrate’, the archivist, are aware of this. It is the need to uncover an artist’s encounter with the genesis of secrecy – as a scholarly compulsion, as an act of will and understanding – at the heart of one of last century’s defining texts, Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses, which takes us to the archive. In ‘anarchiving’ the archive as an intentional object we find that, in literary terms, the location of the genesis of secrecy for Rushdie is also a matter of transforming Muhammad into a purely novelistic problematic in need of repudiation before a culturally materialist conversion can take place. Rushdie makes no reference to René Girard but the reading of the genesis of secrecy in the Rushdie archive I have advanced – Rushdie’s own Freudian signature – shows that to transform the unrepresentable into art (Muhammad as the Islamic Absolute beyond representation) the Prophet had to be repudiated and the Qur’an deconstructed before the novel could come into being. The archive shows that the process was in the making for over twenty years and the deconstruction of the Qur’an (read as a textual problematic by
someone ‘totally without religion’ thorough and uncompromising. ‘I have lived with these ideas for so many years,’ he had jotted on a single sheet, ‘that I am beginning to forget how explosive they are.’ It is the sad fate of such a singular achievement — an achievement which introduces a radical dissensus (after Rancière) in the aesthetic and ethical hierarchy — that debate about this deconstruction has become muted and the achievement transformed either into a satanic, unethical exercise or a Voltairean excess. In anarchiving the archive, in looking for the archive’s concealed offences (‘Why publish so naked a thing?’ Rushdie had noted but then added, ‘Because truth can only be communicated through risk’) this exercise uncovers Salman Rushdie’s on-going critical engagement with the Islamic repressed but at the same time raises difficult questions about belief, ethical responsibility, intentionality and a postcolonial writer’s uncritical investment in post-Enlightenment thought. Hermes who, after all, holds the secret of oracles, reveals, initially, only their trivial, manifest content. The secrets come to light after a long delay, and ‘in circumstances not originally foreseeable’. The archive holds a latent text, the deciphering of which leads to the secret of an author’s long-standing engagement with an ‘Islamic repressed’, with its genesis of secrecy. As this excursus into Rushdie’s own Freudian signature shows, it falls to textual scholarship, itself the laborious art of gathering meaning and stitching evidence, to expose an archive’s latent meaning and a writer’s investment, perhaps even complicity, in the construction of that meaning.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

4 Derrida refers to Berggasse 19, Vienna, Freud’s home converted into a museum.
5 Salman Rushdie Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL), Emory University. Permission of MARBL to quote from the Archive is gratefully acknowledged.
9 Ibid., p. 24.
10 Ibid., p. 25.
11 “‘A World Mapped by Stories”: The Archive on Display’. Emory Magazine (Winter 2010), p. 26. Referring to The Moor’s Last Sigh as ‘the best piece of writing I’ve ever done’, Rushdie notes that the reason for this ‘is the removal of the mechanical art of typing. I’ve been able to revise much more’ (Digital Archive, MARBL).
12 See Amitav Ghosh, In an Antique Land (Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1992) for an account of the Jewish tradition of depositing all documents (however peripheral) in the Geniza or chamber of a synagogue.
16 Ibid., p. 2.
18 Author’s typed copy of the novel is dated 17 February 1988 and catalogued as Box 21, folders 11–12; Box 22 folders 1–3.
19 Chapters six and seven of Acts (the entire book is addressed to one Theophilus) are devoted to Stephen. (I have used The Bible [Authorised Version], ed. John Stirling [London: The British & Foreign Bible Society, 1967] as my reference text.) This part of Acts reads like a novel as we know that Saul, who observes the stoning of Stephen, as Paul, will soon become the ethical voice of Christianity through the letters he will write to the foundational Christian churches and their key players. In the case of Stephen blasphemy is a useful excuse for punishment. This is not to say that blasphemy has no historical power or that it has a purely ideological function; rather it co-exists with religion, belief, God and society which is why laws against blasphemy exist in so many countries. The word comes from the Greek blasphēmia via Latin blasphēmia, meaning slander, blasphemy. The first meaning is given as ‘Profane speaking
of God or sacred things; impious irreverence.' The first Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2nd edition) citation around 1225 is from Middle English (be seouede hweolp is Blasphemie, ‘that seventh hweolp is Blasphemy’). Caxton (1488) defines blasphemy as speaking ‘unhonestly of god’ and Milton (1659) ‘Blasphemy or evil speaking against God maliciously.’ By 1768 (Blackstone) we get a meaning that touches more directly on our subject matter: ‘Blasphemy against the almighty, by denying his being or providence.’ The word also has a more common figurative and general meaning. In figurative use we find Bacon (1605) writing about blasphemy ‘against learning’ for which one is punished. The general meaning – slander, evil speaking, defamation is now obsolete – and the OED has no citation after 1656: ‘To speak evil of any man is blasphemy.’ Except for the 1768 quote most of these are not particularly helpful. How does one define ‘unhonestly’ (Caxton), or ‘maliciously’ (Milton)? Only Blackstone is clear: blasphemy involves denying God’s being and his role as the guardian of his creation. The OED does not help us when it comes to the representation of God. Nor does it give us citations that show the consequences of blasphemy. There is no citation from Leviticus or from Acts. When does one cross the line in representing God in art? To what extent can one rewrite or change religiously iconic and culturally endorsed representations of God? This becomes a matter not of epistemology but of law and of legal interpretation which is governed by the social mores of the time. For an account of the etymological origins of the word blasphemy in Islam see Ian Richard Netton, Text and Trauma: An East-West Primer (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996).

20 The word blasphemy too makes an entry in the ms of ‘Madame Rama’ (revised version 1976) where the word blasphemy occurs in an irreverent context: ‘My father was worshipping his own cock, and I couldn’t help but think that as blasphemy’ (p. 83) (author’s emphasis).

21 In a very real sense this intentional act – on the archive as an intentional object – is different from Derrida’s engagement with Freud via Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s Judaic commentaries on Freud’s repressed Jewishness and via Freud’s own supplements by way of footnotes, revisions and rewritings, all of which were published more or less in his lifetime. Derrida deconstructs Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory (New York: Schocken, 1989) in Archive Fever.

22 The redacted page is not the complete text as entry into the archive on this subject is forbidden, and one can only conjecture what else lay beyond the single sheet of paper. Although much is repressed, the inquisitive mind of the writer begins to question some of the fundamentals of religion but interestingly enough in the redacted sheet no mention is made of the prophet of Islam himself although there is the strong suggestion that Muhammad’s revelation was possibly akin to the utterances of a madman or a mystic.


25 I was expecting James (Joyce) Jorge (Borges) as Box 45, folder 8 carries the memorable entry: ‘‘Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls’ . . . the marvellouest of entries.’

26 Box 45, folder 11.

27 Box 212, folder 12.

28 As to the characters in this novel he isolates Gibreel about whom he is uncertain: ‘the angel or mad’? And the nature of revelation itself is marked by a similar but stronger unease: is revelation close to ‘insanity’? In Indian ‘theologicals’ (that is Indian mythological films) Rushdie suggests that actors such as Rama Rao become a god while other actors such as Amitabh Bachchan acquire godlike characteristics. In an interview with Colin MacCabe (Critical Quarterly 1996; Box 61, folder 44) Rushdie recalls a Muslim actor in the forties who ‘somehow got away with playing Hindu divinities and because he was popular it was not a problem’. He adds there is a bit of that actor (at one stage I thought this actor was Prem Adeeb, well known for his portrayal of God Rama, but, it seems, I was mistaken) in Gibreel as well as Rama Rao and Amitabh Bachchan.

29 Box 22, folder 7.

30 In Box 62 folder 31 we find an essay ‘Scheherazade’ (27 pp., 8192 words) in which he writes about his early apprentice work. This is the third part of his Richard Ellmann Lectures in Modern Literature delivered at Emory in 2004. After graduating from King’s College, Cambridge in the summer of 1968 he shared a house in London (29 Acrfold Road, London SW6) with his sister Sameen and three of his college friends. On an Olivetti Dora typewriter and with a £500 start up seed money from his father, he spent the next few years writing four novels and a television screenplay. Except for one of the novels – Grimus – none of these was ever published or filmed. The others, he writes, ‘still languish in the drawer in which I consigned them, and there, deserving no better, they will stay’ (p. 11). Since he never read English at university ‘in the matter of books’ he was self-taught. And in this matter of books there was the world of the fabulous, the world of Alf Layla wa Laylah (‘The Thousand Nights and One Night’), to be placed against the interior world of Beckett and the linguistic experimentation of Joyce. These were powerful influences, varied, strong, inimitable, and inevitably slavish imitation of them could only produce ‘still-born texts’ (p. 12). He mentions four works – ‘The Book of the Peer’, ‘Madame Rama’, ‘Crosstalk’ and ‘The Antagonist’ – all of which were remarkably derivative, with Pynchon or Kafka or Beckett as their stylistic sources. His interest in Islam, though, is clearly evident in the manuscript of ‘The Book of the Peer’ a work he began writing upon his return from Karachi after a brief, but unhappy stay there (his family had migrated to Karachi in 1964 while he was in England).


33 There are references to incidents and ideas that make their way into the later masterpiece, Midnight’s Children: reference to the birth of a child, ‘a healthy boy. A trifle scrawny, but healthy enough in heart and voice’ whose father, upon hearing the news of the newborn son, ‘dropped the chair upon his right foot, breaking his big toe, and was transformed from visitor to patient on the spot . . . The memory, nevertheless, stuck in my head’ (p. 106); reference to the segregated pool seen from Vazir’s childhood home (p. 107), and his walk home from school without mentioning Cathedral School (p. 108); the cartoon witch in green and black in a dream (p. 100).

34 In the ‘The Antagonist’ one of the characters was ‘Saleem Sinai’, ‘Saleem’ after his Bombay classmate Salim Merchant and ‘Sinai’ after the eleventh-century Muslim polymath Ibn Sina (‘Avicenna’).

35 Box 62, folder 31.
36 Redacted note.

38 Box 22, folder 17.
39 Box 23, folder 1.
40 Box 212, folder 8, redacted 09–116.
41 Box 22, folder 7.
42 Box 44, folder 5.
43 Box 23, folder 1.
44 Box 23, folder 1.
45 Box 212, folder 8. However, it seems that he had already thought about this title during his journey to India in February 1983.
46 Box 212, folder 8.
47 Box 212, folder 8. Rushdie’s emphasis.

50 Box 22, folder 7.
51 Box 22, folder 7, single typed page has the following:

THE PLOT OF OTHELLO . . .
Iago, the diabolic. Releasing the demon inside O.
Othello, Attaullah/Atallah
REMOTE CONTROL CULTURE.
See also Box 45, folder 4: Othello himself, obviously, is not a black man, but a ‘Moor’; an Arab, a Muslim, his name probably a Latinization of the Arabic Attallah or Aitaullah ... of the Islamic moral universe, whose polarities are honour and shame. Desdemona’s death is an honour killing.

52 We get this note written on 27 December 1986: ‘And I must regain my mother-tongue and culture – that goes with it.’ Redacted copy of the Note.
53 Box 22, folder 5, The Satanic Verses Fragments, TS (1 of 2): TILK AL-GHAR-ÂNİQ AL- ‘ULÂ WA INNA SHAFÂ’ ATA-HUNNA LA TURTAJÂ ‘These are exalted females whose intercession is to be desired.’
54 Box 22, folder 7.
55 Box 22, folder 7.
56 Box 22, folder 7.
57 Box 45, folder 11: photocopy of an interview in The Sunday Times, 22 January 1989, before the fatwa.
58 Box 22, folder 7.
59 Redacted copy 09–196.
60 Box 212, folder 8 (09–196) Redacted material from the original Journal. There is a complete restriction on ‘Subseries 5.1 Financial records, 1974–2005’ and so it is difficult to state for sure that Penguin offered £800,000 advance for the publication of The Satanic Verses.
61 One of Salman Rushdie’s aunts was a close friend of the poet. Box 63, folder 1.
62 Box 65, folder 48.
63 Celia Wallhead, University of Granada, personal correspondence 11 December, 2013.
64 Box 45, folder 11 ‘Unidentified Fragments’.
65 Box 63, folder 63.
66 John Berger writes, ‘The two books at this moment represent two notions of the sacred. The Koran is a sacred book in the most traditional and profound sense of the term, a text dictated to the Prophet by the Archangel Gabriel, an emissary of the One and Only God. Rushdie’s book has become a sacred cause to the European world because it represents the artist’s right to freedom of expression. In Europe, as has been pointed out before, art has replaced religion’ (quoted in Paul Weller, A Mirror for Our Times: ‘The Rushdie Affair’ and the Future of Multiculturalism (London: Continuum, 2009, p. 121)).
68 Box 182, folder 24.
69 Box 22, folder 7.
71 ‘I find myself thinking that one day the Muslim world would realize, as post-Enlightenment Europe has realized, that freedom of thought is precisely freedom from religious control,’ we read in a redacted note.