

CROSSING FRONTIERS: DIASPORA IDENTITY IN *THE SATANIC VERSES*

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a novel about frontier crossing. Transgression, an underlying device, is the key to the issue of diaspora identity. In juxtaposing the re-imagination of the rise of Islam and the representation of the black immigrant community in London, Rushdie traverses the frontiers of fact, fiction, and antagonistic cultures and ideologies with his deferred/different cultural translation of the "authentic" English/Islamic culture. In this dialogic form, the novel represents a palimpsest vision of metropolitan culture.

Locating its setting in London, *The Satanic Verses* centers on the diasporic anxiety about identification and its transgressive attempt. It depicts the diasporic subject's wavering choice between assimilation and remaining intact, its longing for a unitary identity, and its final liberation from that myth. Its palimpsestual cultural representation re-maps the cityscape of the imperial center, making visible the city's inherent "Third Space," its cultural heterogeneity, and its vitality. In transgressing cultural frontiers, Rushdie no doubt productively turns the diasporic neurosis into an impetus for the making of newness.

Key Words: cultural translation, diaspora identity, frontier crossing, the Third Space, transgression