Inwardness becomes irrelevant: the artwork's chief interest resides in how it is put together and how it is staged.

Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics leaves a reader wanting more. The final chapter cries out for a companion study of John Cage's Europeras 1–5 (1987–1991). After the sections on Wagner, Mallarmé, and Pater but before the chapter on Pound, there is a golden missed opportunity for a study of T. S. Eliot. There is also the question of how Bucknell would extend or alter his arguments when grappling with such later but relevant figures as John Ashbery, Steve McCaffery, and Jackson Mac Low. How, too, would he tackle such troublesome postmodern works as Samuel Beckett's and Morton Feldman's monodrama Neither (1976), or Yoko Ono's hybrid poem-scores in Grapefruit (1964)? Works of academic criticism rarely make a reader impatient for a sequel; there are few higher praises available to a reviewer.

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Roger Y. Clark. *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie's Other Worlds*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. Pp. 248. \$60 cloth.

Roger Clark's *Stranger Gods* approaches Rushdie's novels from an entirely fresh angle; instead of postcoloniality, hybridity, migrancy, postmodernism or magic realism, the standard topoi of Rushdie criticism, he considers the religious cosmologies and myth structures that underwrite the narratives. Rushdie is so commonly identified with the secular that critics tend to forget how much the magic of his magic realism has to do with prophecy and Apocalypse, and with such figures as Satan and Shiva. Clark locates Rushdie among the Sufi poets Farid ud-Din Attar, Jalal ud-Din Rumi and Omar Khayyam rather than in the more usual company of Grass, Garcia Màrquez and Sterne. In other words, Clark reads Rushdie as Frye reads Blake. Such an approach produces powerful readings, especially of *Grimus* and *The Satanic Verses*. Clark's text has the disadvantage, however, of making Rushdie seem more like Blake than he actually is.

Clark goes farther than any other critic in claiming aesthetic merit for Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus*, and in the process gives what is likely to be the definitive interpretation. In particular, he explains how Rushdie

can be genuinely interested in Sufi mysticism and yet always alert to the dangers of making political use of religion. Clark grants that Rushdie is uncompromisingly secularist—he wants no part of religion in politics—but feels "All of this does not necessarily mean that Rushdie is against Islam or Islamic values, or that he cannot see any way to accommodate Islamic values under the rubric of a secular society" (104); the "mockery" of religion "is aimed at the abuse of religion rather than at religion per se" (83). Clark's Rushdie often promotes the mystic over the material, though never the orthodox over the heterodox.

Clark is, however, too ready to read allusions to religious cosmologies as endorsements of the sacred. Because the novel's final scene of lovemaking and destruction occurs on top of a mountain which is at once Shiva's Kailasa and Attar's Qaf, Clark reads it as pointing to a hopeful postcataclysmic fate compatible with Hinduism and Sufi mysticism, a fate that is not, however, actually shown. In the novel a God-Object, Grimus's Rose, must be destroyed. Clark interprets this to mean not that God must be destroyed, but that any notion of an anthropomorphic God must be destroyed because it will be abused, leaving open the notion of an unattainable or mystical God. I am not fully convinced by the distinction.

Because he considers only the meaning that accrues from religious allusion and ignores all other aspects of the narrative, Clark's readings are often idiosyncratic and occasionally misreadings. For instance, in finding in Midnight's Children a mythic pattern that involves a loss of Eden and a desire for mystic union, Clark privileges relatively minor items in most readers' experience of that work. Aadam Aziz's father is visited by thirty species of birds, an echo of the thirty birds in Attar's poem and therefore a symbol of transcendent unity. Clark assumes Aadam Aziz the son falls from that primal unity because he refuses to bow before God. But Rushdie's sympathies are with Aziz, whose fall, if fall it is, he clearly admires. Clark also sees Saleem's challenge to "the unchanging twoness of things, the duality of up against down, good against evil" as proof that he has succumbed to the devil's reasoning: "Saleem changes the rules of snakes and ladders to a point where he can no longer distinguish between good and evil" (74). Again this will be felt to be a misreading by most readers. Clark believes Padma is "Rushdie's finest ... example of Hindu belief" (77) and that her presence provokes "otherwise skeptical readers into considering the possibility of such things as omens, dreaming other people's dreams, invisibility, sorcery, or mystical telepathy, which is the premise of the Midnight Children's Conference" (78). Count me among the skeptical. I feel Rushdie's interest is in the imaginative resources offered by cosmology

Rushdie is so commonly identified with the secular that critics tend to forget how much the magic of his magic realism has to do with prophecy and Apocalypse, and with such figures as Satan and Shiva.

rather than in supernatural powers. His religious characters are invariably lower in class, less educated, and more credulous than his protagonists. Clark gives as an example of the relevance of religion a minaret's crying of "the terrible agony of war" (83) but does not mention that the minaret in question features a gramophone and loudspeaker and that a dying soldier must be kept from "the disillusioning sight of this mechanized muezzin, whose call to prayer would always be scratched in the same places." Taking her name as a sign, Clark sees the minor character Durga as "a fierce spirit" that rises in opposition to the Widow's tyranny, but ignores that she is described as a "succubus" who flattens and drains Picture Singh of all life. Her name is not actually a clue to her meaning.

In The Satanic Verses Rushdie's cosmology is inconsistent, even, I would say, confused. Rushdie's devil is somehow both a projection onto racial others by the English and a genuine evil force existing within the human heart. Does Rushdie believe in the devil or is the devil a social construct? And what are we to make of the devil who occasionally makes an appearance as a narrator? Clark is able to explain more of this loose and baggy monster than any other critic has done by distinguishing between two narrators. According to Clark, the devil, while usually silent, occasionally takes over the omniscient narrator in the way the angel Gibreel possesses the prophet Mahound. We can tell that this devil is a "traditionally evil Satan"(129) whom we are supposed to distrust because he insinuates "that there is no such thing as a single, transcendental Meaning and Unity, no Ideal toward which all beings can inspire" (131). The entire novel is, Clark concludes, "naturally blasphemous," an attempt by Satan to justify his verses (157): "Its obscurity increases the level of uncertainty and insinuation in the text—all of which coincides with Satan's traditional mode of operating" (139). In other words, Clark reads the novel just as Rushdie's Muslim attackers do.

Why would Rushdie write such a narrative? According to Clark, so that readers can read the text against the grain. Since, however, no liberal critics have seen the narrative as the work of the devil, they must all be "credulous fools" who "fall into his crooked trap" (128). The Satanic narrator that Clark describes is indifferent to immigrant politics except insofar as he can use them to further his own case against God, and he takes delight in the fires that ravage London during race riots. But it is surely not possible that the postcolonial author means us to understand that race riots are the work of the devil. I cannot match Clark's reading for consistency, yet cannot help but feel that the devilish voice in the novel that taunts,

"Who am I? Who else is there?" is a figure of Rushdie the author, glorying in his rival creation.

Although I disagree with Clark's readings, I want to emphasize the value of his book. Clark reads Rushdie's oeuvre as a widening gyre: where *Grimus* is relatively controlled by the narrative patterns of myth, the next three novels give in more and more to a hectic chaotic violence. Clark also offers a convincing explanation of the weakness of Rushdie's fictional output since the fatwa. Although as full of allusions to mythology as the early novels, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* refuse to engage seriously with the paradoxes and challenges posed by the spiritual. They are crude celebrations of the secular weakened by their own self-satisfaction.

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Rowland Smith, ed. *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000. Pp. 216. \$29.95 paper.

Once upon a time there used to be a field called Commonwealth literature. Then Salman Rushdie wrote an essay called "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist" (1981), and lo and behold, Commonwealth Literature ceased to exist. Or, rather, it got repackaged as Postcolonial Literature(s), Postcolonial Studies, and Postcolonial Theory. I am old enough to remember that at my university the Department calendar used Commonwealth/Postcolonial for a few years while the plastic surgery was in progress, dropping the Commonwealth altogether in 1993.

A book with a title like *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, then, creates a certain dissonance in the mind, recalling bloodied battles of yore that did not really settle anything, but suppressed conflicts and disagreements through an exercise of hegemonic power. Not only does Commonwealth literature not exist any longer, one of its major patrons, the Commonwealth Institute has been privatized because the British government is no longer willing to fund it. The Institute's library, so fondly mentioned by the late Jacqueline Bardolph in her contribution to this book, has been dismantled, its collection carted away to the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, under a great cloud of controversy that it will no longer be a "living library."