

***Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and Rushdie's Partial/Plural Identity**

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The real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories, (50)

In September 1991, Salman Rushdie, under a death sentence by Iran (originally proclaimed by Ayatollah Ali Khomeini and confirmed since) for allegedly blaspheming Islam in *The Satanic Verses*, emerged from hiding to accept a literary award in London. Flanked by police guards, Rushdie made a brief surprise visit at Dorchester Hotel to be honoured by the Writers' Guild of Great Britain for *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Whether the award was made entirely on literary grounds may be doubted, and this is debatable, but literary reasons there must have been. Nevertheless, both questions are relevant to an examination of Rushdie's novel and also suggest the difficulty of being 'objective' in his case in so far as such an ideal is possible.

The temporal relationship between *Haroun* and *The Satanic Verses* is important. It throws light on Rushdie's character as well as his preoccupations and values in *Haroun*. Rushdie conceived *Haroun* and began writing it while working on *Satanic Verses*. W. J. Weatherby notes: "He had originally planned the story for his young son, Zafar, and he used to read an early version to the boy in serialized form at the boy's bedtime. 'It was part of the deal so I could finish *Satanic Verses*,' Rushdie once said. 'He asked why all my books were for grown-ups and I didn't have an answer'" (194). But it was after May 1989 that the final drafts of *Haroun* were written and the book completed (Weatherby 194) – that is, after *Satanic Verses* (1988) and after the *fatwa* (February 1989).

In several ways, *Haroun* is close to the heart of Rushdie as man and writer. He had said: