



Research article

**Comprehending the risk throughout a literary-geocritical approach.
Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* as evidence and an opportunity in
investigating risk scenarios**

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Abstract: This paper aimed to demonstrate the correlation, a hidden, intricate, interplay, between the conception of risk and the fluid nature of society during the eras of migratory relocations as portrayed in Salman Rushdie's literary masterpiece, *The Satanic Verses*. The general premise found in this paper was that risk is based on the following logical axiom: Risk is mathematically unpredictable, something that goes beyond the human capability of discernment or probabilistic prevision. This blank space that separates reality from its potentiality is the risk. Thus, in migratory relocation, the risk consists of the unknowability of what could happen the second after having passed a line. It is the border of what is known. Rushdie's work offers profound insights into the ways in which individuals navigate the turbulent waters of a rapidly changing world, where cultural, social, and political paradigms constantly shift. In the first part of this work, we will present the main topics related to risk. Rushdie's work underlines the central role that storytelling and narrative play in navigating the complexities of a fluid society. The characters in Rushdie's novel employ storytelling as a means of understanding and asserting their own identities, thereby confronting the inherent risk of being silenced or marginalized in a world dominated by shifting power dynamics. In conclusion, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* provides a rich tapestry of narratives that not only explore the conception of risk in a fluid society but also challenge readers to contemplate the intricate interplay of identity, culture, and faith in an ever-changing world. This works serve as a testament to the power of literature to engage with contemporary issues, transcending boundaries, and sparking critical conversations. Through his vivid characters and daring narratives, Rushdie invites readers to grapple with the aims and main issues of our time: the quest for self-identity, the inevitability of risk, and the enduring need for storytelling as a means of understanding and shaping our rapidly evolving society.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, geocriticism, risk, fluid society, humanistic geography

1. Introduction

1.1. An interdisciplinary perspective of risk: a concise overview

In introducing the notion of risk, this research suggests that it is a human-linked concept. Without the interrelation, or the interaction, between human plans in environmental modification and physical or ideal adaptation, risk is never an object that can be quantified. Therefore, it is possible to define it as something that is environmentally oriented and dependant on what is really needed by the subject itself. For example, if a society wants, or needs, to build a dam, there exists a possibility that some element in the building process will not happen as it is supposed to. Aristotle called this possibility *potentiality*, and it is counterposed to the *actuality* (the *hic et nunc*, latin for “here and now”). Suppose that, during the construction of a poorly designed dam (for example, as happened in the famous Italian Vajont tragedy in 1963 [1]), a particular part of the construction wears out and the whole building collapses. In this case, there is no universal risk but: (i) there is an object *of the* risk (the dam), and (ii) an object *at* risk (the houses, a city close to the dam, the laborer’s encampment, etc.) [2,3]. Risk itself is considered as the potentiality that something could, or could not, happen in strict correlation to what the subject needs to achieve [3].

The term *risk* is strictly linked with the conception of fate. It is possible to acknowledge it by its etymological derivation from the Renaissance Italian *risco* (close to the Spanish *riesco* and the modern Italian *rischio*) [3] and from the period of the colonial voyages, where it has even assumed the connotation of *hazard* [4]. According to various linguistic reconstructions of the term *risk*, it is supposed to be originated by: (i) the Byzantine Greek *rizikon* (translated as *destiny*, with the sub-meaning of *happenstance*); (ii) the Middle English term *rish*, translated as *rock* or *cliff*; (iii) from the Ancient Swedish *skär*; and last (iv) from the Arabian *rizq*, a sort of tax used to maintain determined war camps. In any of these cases, this term has the meaning of something than can *jeopardize* something else [3]. Thus, it implicates an interrelation between actors involved in the space of history [5]. We should try to imagine risk as the opportunity of a subject/individual *x* to change the current course of facts interacting with the otherness of subjects (for example, other subjects *y*, *z*, etc., or the environment that circumstances the existence of *x*, or even both cases) [5]. It is imaginable that during the interaction between the parts, the subject chooses which direction to take, building the “*better-ending bet*”—based structure of its future. Now, risk is based on gaining the best condition possible, while avoiding its *cliff* or *rocks*. As suggested in Morini’s work *Il rischio*, it is possible to conceptualize, and therefore comprehend, risk through the integrated vision of environment, investment, and hazard. The assimilation of a hazard with the necessity to invest in an environment-oriented action has a simple definition: a *gamble* [3]. Pascal properly describes this kind of bet through the image of the *libertine*. In this case, however, the space has no correlation with the process of *risk* comprehension, because the action proscenium is vertically oriented between God and the libertine itself. Nevertheless, the usage of the term *hazard*, contextualized in the case of Pascal’s libertine, is strictly related to a pre-determined existence where everything has already been written by a superior consciousness that has chosen

every single moment. Thus, the real hazard is challenging this divinity: the only human act of willingness is believing or not [3].

Another example proposed by Morini recalls the time of the colonial voyages, the period that represents the cradle of the current risk perception standards [3]. According to Morini, the author links the establishment of the first life insurance policies with the attempt to prevent, or at least to limit, any danger [3]. Putting wares, people, or ships in danger was something on the agenda at that time. Therefore, some Genoese banks and institutions decided to create these policies to avoid this kind of danger, *hazarding* an esteem on the expedition value [4]. This kind of investment funded by the Old Continent during the expansion of the oversea commerce created a new anthropological figure: the *adventurer* [3]. This individual was used to face risk for his own gain, fighting the dangers of storms and every potential calamity to ensure that he would accomplish his mission and be paid by the ship holder or expeditioner [3]. But this kind of figure is even more than that, it is a new social archetype, someone who is up against *destiny* (the risk in its etymon) and goes *adventura* (derived from the neuter plural of the future participle of the Latin verb *advenire*, literally *to come/to happen*, meaning *what will happen*). As it is possible to infer, at the end, the most significant relation regarding risk has been unveiled: its inner dual is the *space*. So, it is relevant that time plays an important role in these inter-actions, but the most important component in composition of reality is the spatial one among these items.

1.2. Defining the edges of risk

Distinguishing between risk, uncertainty, and contingency is essential across various fields. Risk refers to the likelihood of a future event and its potential consequences, quantifiable based on historical data or statistical models. Uncertainty arises when there is incomplete knowledge about future events, making it difficult to predict their probability or impact. Decisions may rely on assumptions or subjective judgments. Contingency involves preparing for unforeseen events that could significantly impact operations or outcomes [5]. This includes creating reserve plans or alternative actions to address unforeseen situations during project implementation. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for effective decision-making and managing challenges in different contexts [5].

Contingency refers to preparing for unforeseen future events that could significantly impact operations or desired outcomes, implying a class of phenomena that cannot be anything else but necessary [5]. It is important to understand that while risk is measurable and can be managed through mitigation strategies, contingency specifically focuses on the uncertainty associated with unexpected events. In a project management context, for instance, contingency planning involves identifying potential threats and developing alternative or reserve plans to address such threats in case they materialize. Contingency management requires careful assessment of potential risks and adequate preparation to address challenges that may arise during project or activity implementation [5]. Developing a flexible and adaptable mindset is important to effectively handle unforeseen situations while ensuring operational resilience and success. In summary, contingency represents a critical component of strategic planning, enabling organizations to be prepared to respond promptly and effectively to any changes or unexpected occurrences in the operational environment.

The modern probabilistic calculation methods are a field of mathematical interest [6] that consider risk as something totally different from the past and accept the fact that risk itself exists. Risk exist between within the parentheses of *existence* and *non-existence* of a probable fact. However, this

concept is typical of the last five centuries. Indeed, in ancient times, there was no need to calculate the probable risk percentage of a determined action in order to predict how to face any difficulty. There are neither proofs nor any recorded data elaborating the end of the Trojan War between Mycenaean and Troy, nor any evidence that the Roman strategists appraised a percentage regarding the probability of failure or success when Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon [4]. Due to the technological evolution of trades and new navigation methods, the colonial era has signed a formal boundary in considering risk as some-*thing* (and it presumes interaction between items) that can change the current stream of facts, manipulating in its *potentiality* the course of history [4].

Combining all of these premises, how can Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* be embedded in this analysis of risk perception? In addition, in what way can this work develop and analyze, through these preconditions, the migratory relocations among its themes, and in what way can it be related to the concept of risk in human geography?

In Rushdie's narrative, the idea of spatial relocation and the figure of the migrant play a prominent role in developing his themes throughout the novel, and the decision to pinpoint his aesthetical-methodological fulcrum in *wandering* individuals represents his awareness that those characters are the real *central* and defining role of the twentieth century [7]. Although this cultural defining system has a central role in almost all of the Rushdie novels (especially in *Shame*), the theme of *wandering* (a theme very dear to literature) always has a connection to risk, and therefore refers to the *gamble* [4]. All the characters that play in the diegetic space of Rushdie's work must bet about their future existence, as Gibreel Farishta and Chamcha have done in *The Satanic Verses*. These two characters have to go *ad-ventura* (to venture), hoping to find their place in the world, their space in this movement of people that the contemporary era has created. Migrancy, though, is perceived by modernity as a cultural state of mankind due to cultural heritage's melting process in space-dependent investment done by an individual [4].

Hence, is the migrancy an act of individual willingness or is it dependent on external factors that affect characters, people, etc.? Can migrancy, or migratory relocations, be considered as positive events even if they will contain some risks?

Although he is obviously aware of the pain and disorientation involved, Rushdie seems to regard cultural displacement as essentially a positive and liberating experience, one of the best ways in the world "of seeking freedom" [6].

Losing the connection with one's own homeland, with one's own *soil*, sets a dislocation with one's cultural identity, a discontinuity that is dependent from the space (the land, charged with its geographical and demo-ethno-anthropological connotations) and the individual that experiences the migratory relocation. In this case, Rushdie represents aesthetically this kind of loss with the metaphor of the air, the element that *par excellence* has no location and position. Air is everywhere and can move easily from one place to another, as fluid as contemporary society. So, air represents properly the imagine of migration, and not only from an extremely speculative point of view (being as fluid as the Baumann societies). This emphasis on air as an element, associated with a loss of faith in the once solid ground of the earth, echoes the way others have described the change in consciousness that came with modernity and persisted in intensified form into postmodernity [8].

Setting this discontinuity is a risk for the individual that decides to *gamble* in wandering for their own fortune. This individual can lose their bet and destroy their identity, remaining in a blank space where the subject does not belong to the native culture and does not belong to the adopted culture (as partially happened to Chamcha, one of the main characters of *The Satanic Verses*, when he emigrated to Great Britain when he was just a young boy). This risk means the loss of identity and cultural

heritage, that this investment entails *something*, and the subject waits for a return on their investment. Thus, at the heart of *The Satanic Verses* is the enterprise of imagining how migrants change during migration, an enterprise that raises wide-ranging questions about the nature of identity in a mobile, interconnected world [8]. Finally, the interaction between individual and space, between the subjectivity of the emigrate and the objectivity of the space, truly affects each other's substance, creating a cultural surface of common exchanges of notions and cultural instances. These exchanges can be studied with the same methodologies used by natural sciences (or *hard sciences*) even if they are social sciences [9].

Hence, in the next section, risk and its relation to *The Satanic Verses* will be studied (*quantitative analysis*) through the embedding of data produced by a computation linguistics workflow developed and managed by the Orange3 software and the linguistic frame analysis of the term *risk* (cognitive linguistics methods). The following part (*qualitative analysis*) will be developed by studying the premises of the introduction, the interconnection between the novel and risk, environment change, and migratory relocation effects.

2. Methods

2.1. Introduction

An analytic protocol has been developed by the author to properly study the novel corpus in relation to the main semantics sets operating in most risk perception works. Further adaptation will be provided in future studies by the author to normalize and standardize this attempt as a particular approach for the computational text analysis method (henceforth, CTAM) [9,10]. It is divided into two phases: *quantitative analysis* and *qualitative analysis*. The first step is constituted by a filtering process of the novel text (in a pdf/epub format) thanks to a programmable workflow designed with Orange3 (3.36.1), sub-package *Textable*, *Text Mining*, *Statistics*, which provides a *bag of words* separated with a regular expression designed for the English language and organized to show lemmas' statistic weight and co-occurrence in the text. Once we have obtained these data, a word cloud was designed to summarize lemmas via dimension and co-occurrence with a direct dependency to cloud center closeness. The semantic sets are then compared with the risk lemma graph obtained with the FrameNet lemma definer. Afterward, coherence between the data is discussed.

2.2. Analytic development

2.2.1. Qualitative analysis

The quantitative analysis has been conceived, developed, and built thanks to Orange3 (version 3.36.1) data mining software and relative text analysis tools (the *textable* package and the semantic analysis package). The workflow has been programmed by the author with an object-oriented language developed by Orange3 (Figure 1).

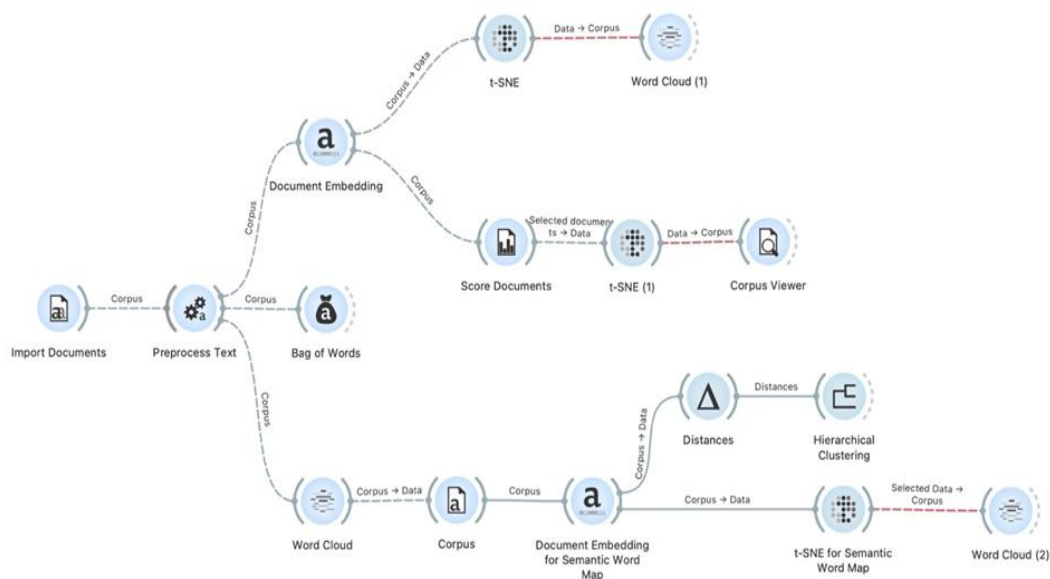


Figure 1. This workflow has been developed to analyze text on Orange3.

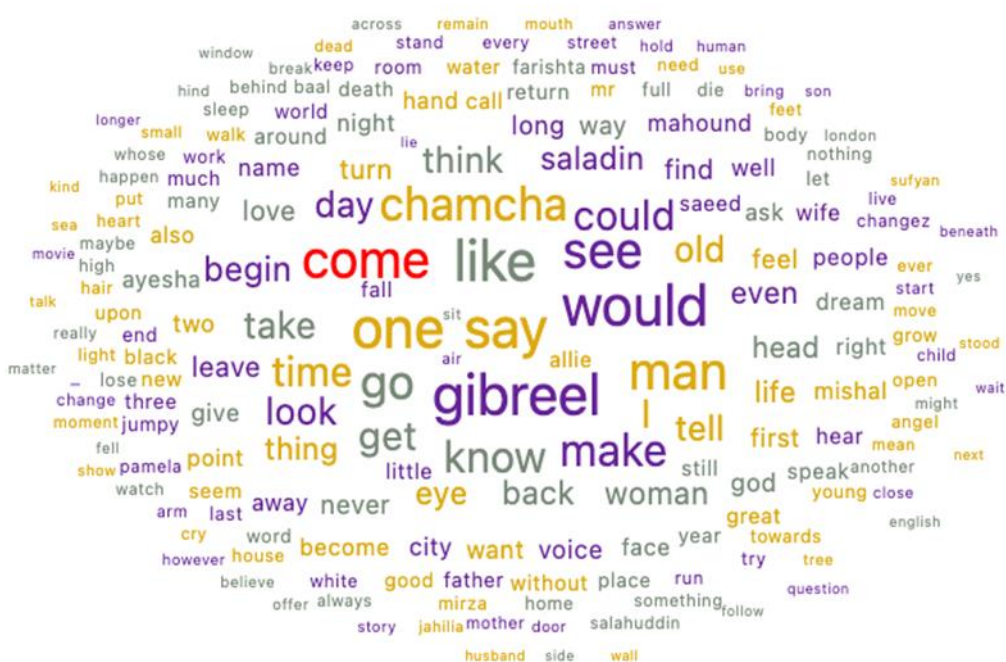


Figure 2. Semantic cloud representing the distribution and the Euclidean distance of verbs and nouns in the novel *The Satanic Verses*.

The second part will interpolate the results obtained from the Orange3 data with the frame scheme provided by the International Computer Science Institute of Berkeley (California) *FrameNet* services, a digital resource that allows the users to comprehend a determined situation (semantic frame) throughout a schematized classification of interactions between lexical unities and semantic roles. The following illustration (Figure 2) is the produced result in analyzing the novel that has been inputted in

the object *import documents* (the tools that allow the users to upload files of any format, i.e., .pdf, .docx, open office, etc.). Thanks to the preprocessing text tool, Orange3 has been able to produce a codified version of the novel (with parameters set to work properly on the text, which are: transformation, tokenization, normalization, and filtering). The settings for the pre-process are: (i) transformation: *lowercase*, which means that it will prepare the text by removing capital letters; (ii) tokenization: $(?< = \backslash s|^)([a-zA-Z]^+)(? = \backslash s|\$)$ in RegEx. With this regular expression, every word has been isolated and considered as a singular item for statistical necessities; (iii) normalization: using the UDPipe lemmatizer for the English language; (iv) filtering: using stopwords and lexicon, which means that it only considers a lemma present in the lexicon of the novel that is isolated to others in terms of blank spaces interposed by words. After this preparation, the novel is ready to face three procedural patterns: the most important for this study is represented by the lower workflow branch. These procedures will allow us to understand how effectively this novel is spatial-deixis-oriented: First, we find the closeness to verbs that semantically pinpoint personal desire and wills (i.e., *to like*, *to love*, etc.). Second, we find the presence of verbs that underline a personal statement or a constation (i.e., *to think*, etc.). Hence, these three verbal systems and their semantic fields are very close to the former triad of the risk semantic frame: personal inclination, aspiration and desires (these two terms can be undressed by their own aesthetic definitions and recalled as hope *in fortune*), and physical movement, a *translation* of matter (Figure 3).

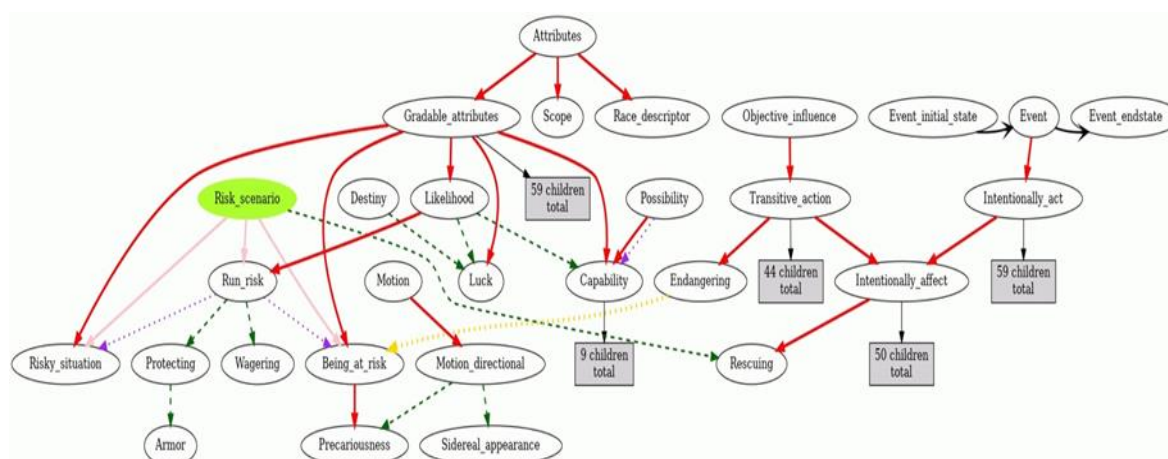


Figure 3. The frame of risk provided by FrameNet.

The dimension of the word and the closeness to the semantic cloud center represent the relevance (statistic distribution and distance) that the lemma has had in the novel. As it can be appreciated, it is possible to find nearby the core: (i) movement verbs (i.e., *come*, *go*, *leave*, *take*, *fall*); (ii) movement indicators (i.e., *away*); (iii) verbs that identify personal statements, ideas, perceptions, knowledge, and emotions (i.e., *would*, *could*, *see*, *like*, *know*, *love*, *feel*, *think*, etc.) (Figure 3). More than being a part of the central movement verbs, it is worthy to note the exact closeness of *come* to the center (in addition to the instances of *say* and *Gibreel*, but this will be studied in the quantitative analysis). The verb *to come* previews a movement *from* somewhere, and it means that the subject (the agent of the action) has something (or even someone) to *leave behind* first and, afterwards, has *to go to a locus* that doesn't belong to the subject itself. Therefore, data confirms what has been premised in the introductory section as to what relationship Rushdie's work has to the main issues related to risk, and to what has been

quoted in the bibliography. *The Satanic Verses* is strictly connected to the inconveniences and possibilities of migrating, and even the deictic perspective plane of the verb *to come* is subject to the shift from the individual-to-land perception to the land-to-individual one. The de-centralization of the subject conveyed by the verb *to come*, and its re-allocation of the destination as a main point of view, lets the reader perceive the subtle thoughts of Rushdie. The author does not condemn migration itself, but he considers every single shade of this process: what the character can gain, what they can lose, etc. These are the main topics of this novel, the centers within which every character must orbit around. Thus, the spatial projection that Gibreel and Chamcha must face is their *investment*, their *gamble*, and the risk that what they are facing is based on spatial and cultural movement, jeopardizing their existential and cultural heritage in changing the environment, passing from what has formed them to a *somewhere* that can reject them. The cultural underground in *The Satanic Verses* passes through the cultural heritage of the English India colony and coexists with the newborn, decolonized, Indian identity: these two poles create a tension amidst the characters in Rushdie's novel, a tension that is always risk-based. Two main opportunities can be noted within this reciprocal tension: (i) facing the risk of *remaining*; (ii) facing the risk of *migrating*. From a decolonized point of view, Westland dream fascinates inevitably, notwithstanding it proposes new re-collocation possibilities, merging the subject self to hosts otherness, even if it can even jeopardize past memories.

Even when migrants pack their past “into bundles and boxes” and try to take it with them, Rushdie points out, “on the journey something seeps out of the treasured mementoes and old photographs, until even their owners fail to recognize them”. What, from one point of view, seems to be an opportunity for change and moral transformation is, from another, a process of cultural dispossession and degradation, for “it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging” [6].

According to the Fillmore frame semantic, the *risk_frame* movement and the perception are two essential profiles (according to the Fillmore-Langacker *frame-profile-dominion* definition of intelligible situations) [11,12] (Figure 3).

This scheme is widely developed, complex, and spreads a numerous set of variables that are interacting in the ambient *risk_scenario*. In navigating risks, a diverse range of actions come into play, involving various agents within the risk environment and extending beyond the predefined scenario. When delving into semantic analysis, it is crucial to understand that the components of this scenario collaborate intricately within the risk environment. This collaboration is not purely theoretical; it involves a cognitive partnership. In essence, it goes beyond mere speculation, transforming into an analysis grounded in the objective of comprehending reality. Therefore, it is relevant to focus on the subframe close to the *box-risk* [10,11].

Hence, those cognitive profiles are the: (i) motor-related set; (ii) likelihood-related set; and (iii) conflict-related set. The cognitive profile's semantic closeness is based on a concrete, reality-linked, experience faced by the subject in his synchronic development based on its spatial interaction. The *Erfahrungen* experienced through the four-dimensional tissue is stocked into memory as *Erlebnissen*, and these stocked experiences are recollected into boxes charged with meaning. Every assertion and every proposition can change depending on the context: reclaiming the meaning in writing processes can be very tricky because it can oscillate through the speaker's communicative necessities.

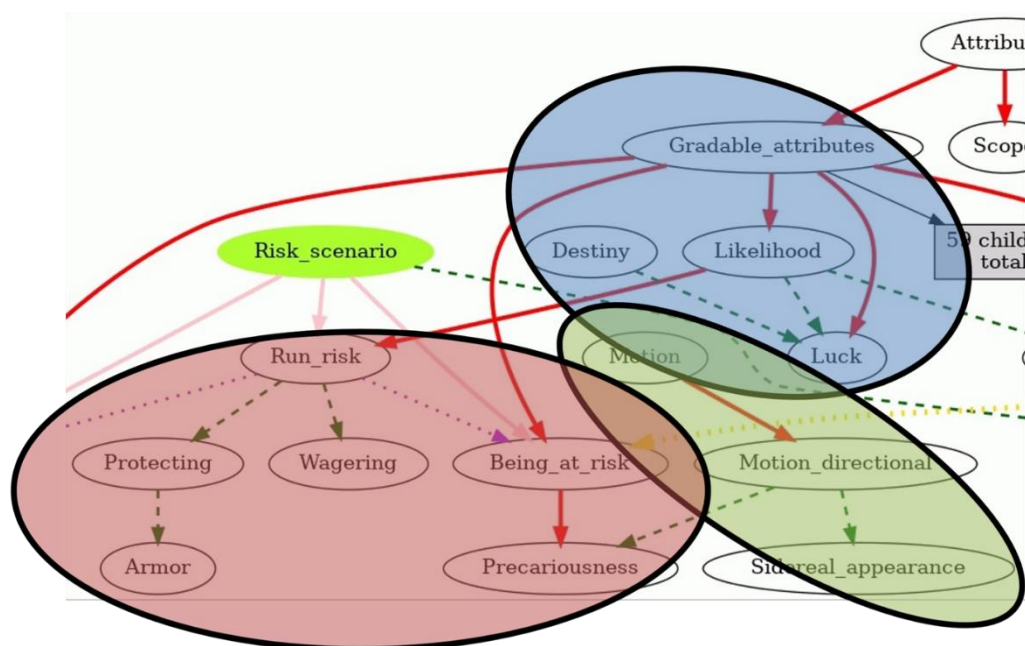


Figure 4. Based on risk_frame from Figure 3, focusing on the risk core is surrounded by three clusters, each serving a distinct purpose: (I) the blue cluster, which encompasses likelihood-related factors; (II) the green cluster, dedicated to motor-related aspects; and (III) the red cluster, focused on conflict-related elements.

From Figure 4, it infers that the semantic risk core is three-sided. The subframes are close to the core, the closest ones are set as cognitive items, boxes charged with meaning that are closer to the category instances. On the other hand, the farther the subframes are from the core, the more their significance is embodied to human experience and comprehension [12,13]. Thus, the accomplishment of risk and the management of conflict-related elements stand as pivotal challenges. This complex landscape can be dissected into various facets, each demanding unique consideration. At the forefront of navigating this terrain is the imperative need for protection from risk, manifested through a web of preventive measures. These safeguards are akin to defense mechanisms, the intricate gears that shield individuals and societies from the unforeseen. Within this realm lies the indeterministic nomology of chaos—a probabilistic dependence that introduces an element of unpredictability into the equation, further complicating risk assessment. In the realm of selfhood and self-perception, a focal point emerges: the delicate balance of precariousness. The intrinsic motivation for self-preservation propels individuals to construct shields against potential harm. This dance with vulnerability becomes a crucial aspect of the psychological and emotional architecture.

Motor implications arise as individuals navigate the dynamic landscape of risk. Directionality, embodied in the perception of endlessness, becomes a critical factor. The ability to perceive a continuum in the face of uncertainty becomes a cognitive compass, guiding actions and decisions.

Amidst the complexity, evaluable aspects come to the forefront. The probabilistic dimension, characterized by a determinist structure, creates a nuanced subframe where destiny unfolds. Here, luck becomes the ethereal force that intertwines with deterministic structures, shaping the course of events. In essence, the intricacies of risk and conflict resolution weave a narrative that encompasses defense mechanisms, the indeterministic nomology of chaos, the delicate dance of self-preservation, the

directional compass of endless perception, and the ethereal dance with luck. Together, these elements form the mosaic of human experience in the face of uncertainty, shaping the course of destiny.

Risk is a part of a broader human experience: our relationship with evil, harm, and suffering. If the risk becomes probability, uncertainty becomes possibility, fear the proximity, panic the action, and terror the experience. To a certain extent, these are variations of a relationship or linkage with harm and evil. I have tried to formulate a model in which different features help to characterize every variation. I do not think that risk should be researched as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of a world of human experience [14].

Thus, Rushdie's work retraces and researches the migration implications through the main issues present in the risk dominion, and this sort of narration is not only a mere aesthetical simulation or an approximation of what could have been felt by those people who moved from *somewhere* to another place. This narration is an *imitation of life*, as it is supposed to be literature in its deepest meaning, and the mimetic aspects are collected in this section from a purely objective, hard sciences-like, method. Finally, in the forthcoming part, the analysis will focus on a formal literary critic approach embedded with a geocritical point of view, in order to wholly comprehend the main issue interacting in the triad *literature-risk-migration*. In *The Satanic Verses*, the author accommodates the category of *Otherness*, and interprets its subframe of *Elsewhereness (Anderwärtig)* as *conditio sine qua non* for a positive interpretation of migratory relocations [15].

2.2.2. Qualitative analysis

According to the mimetic purpose of literature, the cognitive environment that has been immanently set by risk scenarios in relation to the interactions between individuals in the spatial intra-actions let deduce a shade of complexity that Jan Blommaert called *superdiversity*. As a matter of fact, this miscellany of occurrences was created in diegetic development in *The Satanic Verses* and coincides with this definition of *superdiversity*, in pure agreement with cultural diversification issues related to migratory relocations. Summarizing, migratory processes initiate a cultural embedding that stimulate the growth of different forms of epistemologies, diversifying and complexing the international, cultural tissue. Afterward, (i) the deconstruction of mono-perspectival, autoreferential populations; (ii) the subsequent emerging of *post-colonial identities*; (iii) the fluidification of sociological and sociolinguistic landscapes toward migratory *crossing overs*; concurs in creating a complex, *superdiverse*, epistemologically hyper-nested environment.

Thus, narrative serves as a widely accepted form of explaining and perceiving knowledge "in the culture in question". Additionally, narratives exist "as a part of that culture", and they possess a sense of legitimacy in the knowledge relayed through narratives. Two conditions mentioned within Lyotard's definition of narrative should be emphasized: the fact that narratives in themselves are deemed legitimate by a culture and the fact that a narrative serves as a means of conveying knowledge, albeit within appropriate designations. These two conditions assert the significance of narratives in our daily lives as well as the importance of contemplating the formation and characterization of grand narratives [14].

The modern pattern where these interactions are taking place is basically propelled by risk, and its representation is supposed to imitate this entropy of reality into narrative. If the depiction of a solipsistic identity into its diachronic development in diegesis is mere *narrative*, then the depiction of plurality needs another approach: the *mimesis* (the imitational process of reality) has to set entropic complexity of modern societies into narration fibers, henceforth adapted (i) structurally, and (ii)

thematically. Therefore, the diachrony of common narration is endangered as common characters. The obvious concept of *story line* is losing its own appeal in favor to circularity, or even amorphousness. Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, two adult men, find themselves fitted into narration from a birth *in medias res*, one falling from the sky as the Archangel (Gibreel), and the other falling from the heaven of victory (Saladin). Even the lexicon, the syntaxis, and the morphology of the sentences structured by Rushdie reflect this chaos, this complexity that interweaves among themes of social revanchism, wagering on the occidental fortune, or the loss of personal identity. Saladin (in relation to Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub) is a metaphor linked to the Kurdish ruler defeated in the Third Crusade by King Richard I: the Vizier of Fatimid Caliphate that has been stopped by Plantagenet represents a cultural parentheses that lives underneath the character, a sort of rebirth of that historical figure into modern times. According to Vico's recurring cycles in the history of civilization, these emblematic rebirths are not only a literary escamotage, but they are supposed to display the recollection into modernity of ancient issues, of elder antagonisms assembled into one character. Therefore, this battle between Occident and Orient, between Islam identity and Christian invasion, is a fundamental feature connotated in Saladin Chamchawala. Although Saladin is the son of a nationalist leader, Changez Chamchawala, he is a hardened anglophile and he rejects its cultural heritage becoming a dubber in British radiophonic shows and marrying an archetypical woman, Pamela Lovelace. Saladin reached his material goals, originating with that wallet found in his youth and sequestered by Changez, as well as reaching his dream land, leaving his native nation behind. These thematic variations are real *loss and gain* of gambling, the collateral effect of living in a risk-oriented society. According to §2.1, the triad *likelihood-movement-conflict* perfectly fits into Saladin's semantic sphere. Along the narration, the whole set of happenings that belong to this figure are enclosed into the semantic frame of risk. This confirms the presupposition that bases this study upon Rushdie's work in relation to risk. Hence, what concerns the other central character?

On the other hand, Gibreel Farishta represents an emblematic character throughout the novel. His name has a very evocative meaning: the term *farishta*¹ combined with the first name creates a hypertextual linkage to the Quran, a sacred book written by the *kuttabs* who were listening to Muhammad. The character has a strict connection to the Archangel Gabriel, the messenger of God that inspired the prophet to unseal the *last revelation* to all mankind. Rushdie's style is linked to *magic realism*: Salman Rushdie's literary prowess weaves a vibrant tapestry within the intricate methodology of magic realism. His distinctive style, numbered among the literary elite, immerses readers in a world where the fantastical seamlessly intertwines with the mundane. Much like his predecessors in the magical realist tradition, Rushdie masterfully blends the extraordinary with the ordinary, transcending conventional storytelling boundaries. Through his imaginative narratives, reality and fantasy converge, inviting readers to explore the mystical dimensions of existence. Gibreel, a Bollywood star who survives a miraculous fall from a hijacked plane, undergoes a profound transformation, gradually embodying the Archangel Gabriel. This correlation is emblematic of Rushdie's intricate exploration of faith, identity, and the blurred lines between reality and myth. As Gibreel grapples with his celestial connection, the narrative delves into the complexities of belief, questioning the nature of divinity and

¹ Pronounced *fareshta*, from the Hindi word फरिश्ता, means *angel* and it refers to *someone that is gentle or kind to someone else*.

the human condition. The Archangel Gabriel serves as a multifaceted symbol, mirroring the novel's exploration of the interplay between the spiritual and earthly realms [14–16].

Due to the peculiarity of his style, the author can comprehend and imitate the phenomenological complexity of post-nationality interrelationships, the miscellany of sensation, thoughts, fears, and hopes that every migrant has experienced during their voyage to *better-land*. These happenings change not only the individual expertise but evolve into a complete re-evaluation of the identity itself, and the identity as it is placed into a multicultural environment.

The Satanic Verses is a postmodern magical realist novel written from a boundary site, a hybrid identity, by an author born in India and writing in Britain, who is unwilling to accept either possible national identity. *The Satanic Verses* has an international (even intermundial) siting of the narrative, and has been received and interpreted in different, and incommensurable, ways around the globe. It is indicative, therefore, of both the effects of space *on* a novel as well as within it. This sensitivity to spatiality is highlighted in the construction of the hybrid subject position within the text. Hybridity is a spatial condition produced through the attachment to multiple places, a condition increasingly representative of the globalization of contemporary life [14].

Indeed, this hybridization configures a focus shift, a cultural decentralization regarding the secular role of West as an interpretability fulcrum in literature. The role of Western civilization into aesthetic perception is a derivation of colonial policies that has imposed the Occidental standard as a goal to reach for colonized nations. Rushdie's work interprets the retention of the *status quo* in Indian society, peeping at British culture as a *non plus ultra* (i.e., the recovery of a wallet full of pounds while coming back home from school is an allegory of young Chamcha dream to escape from India to become a British gentlemen). If it is considered novel history, it has not a taproot soiled in the sole meanderings of European cultural evolution: the main aesthetical model normalized in literary practices is neither an outcome of a synchronic tract of expressivity, nor a shared practice generated along its embedding of diachronic development.

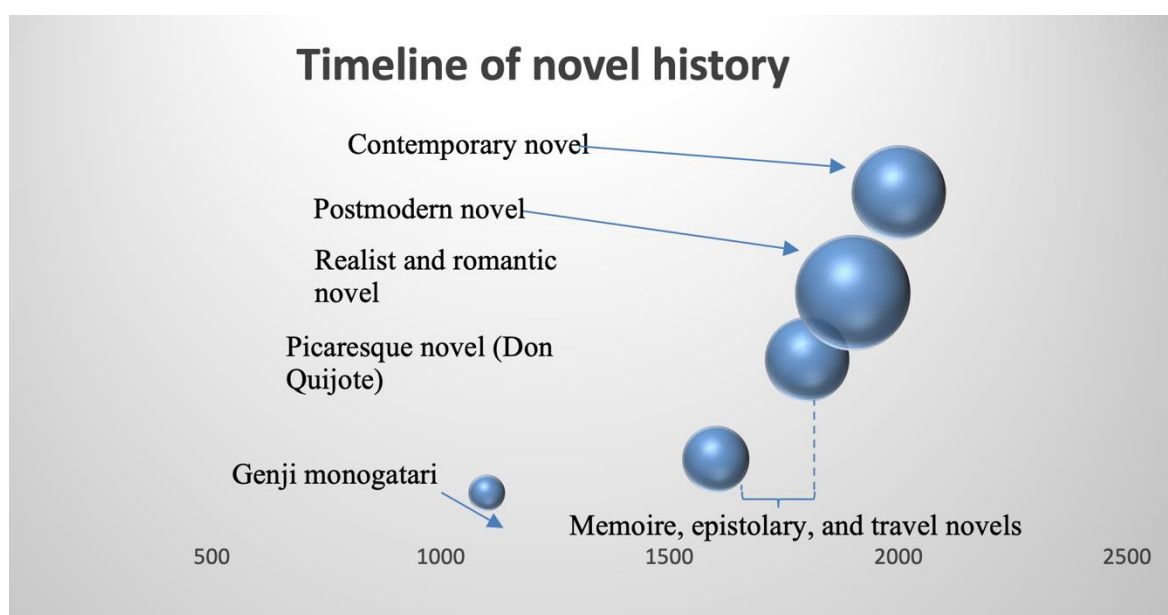


Figure 5. Novel history timeline proposed by the author.

For sure, European literature has affected other cultures to such an extent that sets those tracts to be emulated as an aesthetic archetype. Thus, European novels have represented the *north* for more than five centuries, originally counterposing the masculine-writer novel to the feminine-writer novel (i.e., Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, etc.), then conceptualizing it from the provenance nation (England, France, etc.).

Realizing the system of territorial states in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries involved the formation of a new subjectivity; one locationally defined, based upon identification with national space rather than a selfhood rooted solely in social hierarchy, religious order, or locality. Of the many cultural and social changes involved in this process, not the least was the homogenization of dialects to form nation-state languages. Such institutions produced and reproduced nation-state power, repeating vernacular print images that became naturalized into relatively homogeneous sets of practices [15].

Throughout his syntax, lexicon usage, and morphological adaption that can resemble an accommodation from the Beat generation (according to Figure 5, between postmodern and contemporary novel), especially relating to Burroughs, Rushdie goes beyond the European canon, intertwining his cultural background and readings with a secular, standardized practice. The effect is widely appreciable in the nuances of meaning generated in *The Satanic Verses*, a solid interpretation of phenomenological complexity typical of the contemporary reality. In addition, standards set edges that can maintain a route, an order of procedures that can reproduce knowledge in a comprehensible, therefore committable, way. Losing the solidity of a historically confirmed archetype is as risky as losing one's own cultural path: it sets the subject into a new epistemological condition. Changing the way we comprehend reality, in the case of migratory relocation and people that face this kind of condition, requires a new way to imitate reality in art. Furthermore, the individual constitution as the matter and object of the novel needs to be adapted in this accommodation process. The subject experiences the boundaries of its culture and faces a recollection into the *otherness*, facing a second-grade danger from the migration (or losing their own culture).

Furthermore, the socio-cultural perspective shows how risk is interwoven in processes of identity formation and continuation as well as in the process of group constitution. The importance of power-relation and the role of aesthetics, habituation, and emotion in people's response to risk are emphasized. This perspective foremost focuses on the individual's risk perception and management in cultural contexts (often applied as [media-] discourses). It shows the limits of approaches that assume context-independent rationalities, like rational choice or over-homogeneous risk concepts like governmentality or a risk society, to explain how people manage and understand risk issues [16].

The Satanic Verses does not merely deal with the formation of a new identity throughout the voyages, gambles, and uncertainties, but it explains a wide set of subtexts in strict correlation to reality complexity and to those interactions and factors co-operating in the deconstruction of the colonial rhetoric. The passage to the era of the contemporary novel is epistemology-oriented; the mankind costume starts melting into a general hyper-culture where the ethnological singularity defines a variety co-occurring into this macro-category of knowledge.

The European novel, then, is the product of a particular historical moment. Its adoption in other times and places forces it to hybridize; to mutate its form in order to represent other communities. In the colonial system, and through the incorporation of colonized societies into the circulation of commodity production, the novelistic form was forced into conflict with other literary devices both written and oral, in some ways allegorizing the modern European state form over other forms of rule [16].

Thus, national languages face the risk of being *creolized* with other languages that are vehiculating other meanings, and by doing this even the sentences' semantic might face a change, like a meanings adaptation from colonizer idioms to colonized idioms (culturally); literature has to accommodate these sets of variation in a cultural transfiguration of past sedimented standards. It is a whole transvaluation of values. On the nature of this change, individuals can approach this transcension within spatial and temporal dimensions: diasporic deconstruction of identity has to be understood differently from “indigenous” divestments from nationalist identity [10]. Chamcha and Farishta represent two categories of this transcendence, two alternative responses to postcolonialism.

Thus, a genuine and substantive transcendence of nationalism needs to be differentiated from an elitist transnationalist configuration, a subaltern interrogation of the nationalist regime (an interrogation often premised on the notion of a “return”) requires to be read differently from a putative capitalist de-territorialization of the nation-state [7].

Excluding the temporal dimension from this analysis, thus focusing only on the spatial dimension, Rushdie's novel set the environment where the risks of being are shown and developed from a personal, experienced author point of view. Considering the novel as a blank land where human conduct has modified the soil, building up cities and infrastructures—thus, it is an anthropized space, which reflects and metabolizes the power dynamics typical of Western societies, criticizing the socio-cultural archetypes perpetrated by Occident *our-ness*. Considering the lemma *ecology* in its inner meaning in relation to this work, from the ancient Greek terms οἶκος (transl. *home*) and λόγος (transl. *discourse*), studying the set of rules that organize the narrative space of *The Satanic Verses* and the characters participating and acting toward this space makes Bateson's thought about Systems Theory conceivable. While this is not the place to explore Systems Theory fully, such a passage like Bateson's, re-elaborated by Schimdt, needs to be quoted to properly comprehend how Western rhetoric has denaturalized the space perception in reality and in literature.

The ideas that dominate our civilization at the present time date back, in their most virulent form, to the Industrial Revolution. They can be summarized as: (a). It is us *against* the environment; (b). It is us *against* other people; (c). It is the individual (or the individual company, or the individual nation) that matters; (d). We can have unilateral control over the environment and must strive for that control; (e). We live within an infinitely expanding “frontier”; (f). Economic determinism is common sense; (g). Technology will do it for us [17].

The dyads defined by the first two points are essential to understand how risk containment is just a misery attempt and something that is barely unachievable. First, the definition of a separation between the space of the being and the space which surrounds the being is impossible: individuals are a part of the system which cooperates according to its (lost) role; second, the separation between Self and the Other has been previously considered. The Occidental principle of self-preservation is based on those two assessments, a form of avoidance of hybridization and relative *risk of super-diversification*. But how does literature affect it? *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, and the transformation that comes of a new and unexpected combination of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, and songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure [18], states Schmidt quoting the Rushdian essay “*Imaginary homelands*”, confirming the author's aim of re-evaluating existence as something *ad ventura*, and therefore risk-based.

3. Results and conclusions

As reported in the analysis developed in §2.1 and §2.2, the semantics of risk has three main domains where its meaning can be articulated (*likelihood factors*, *motion factors*, and *conflict factors*) and those domains are the central topics of Rushdie's work [18–20]. The exact correlation between those clusters and *The Satanic Verses* themes development cannot be ignored or minimized as mere *coincidence*. Thus, as a matter of fact, the novel not only imitates reality and represents a product of its time but proposes a new epistemological approach to its inner comprehension [21]. The risk scenarios are a fundamental set of factors and dynamics that influence the interactions within and comprehension of contemporaneity, based on an essential uncertainty acceptance. The environmental exploration which characterizes human life has deep meaning in its cultural perception and material reproduction of it (the *embodiment* into a novel) [22].

During this investigation, a dual approach has been adopted for comprehensive analysis, delineated along two distinct trajectories. First, a quantitative analysis (outlined in §2.1) unfolded, characterized by a methodological framework treating the novel as an object within the hard science dominion. This perspective prompted an exploration leveraging computational linguistics software, specifically Orange3 data mining, to scrutinize the intricate layers of the narrative. The resulting data, meticulously extracted through this computational lens, were systematically synthesized into visual data schemes. These schemes, meticulously aligned by semantic correlations, intricately weave together pivotal themes spanning risk scenarios and the central motifs of the novel.

Concurrently, the second avenue of inquiry delved into a qualitative analysis that intricately wove a discourse around the trinity of cultural heritage, the novel itself, and the nuanced interpretation of risk [23,24]. This qualitative exploration sought to unravel the intricate interplay between cultural contexts, the narrative intricacies of the novel, and the multifaceted understanding of risk scenarios. Within this analytical framework, discourse unfolded, shedding light on the symbiotic relationship between cultural heritage and the interpretation of risk embedded within the fabric of the novel.

Through the data obtained by both analyses, this study not only presented a multi-dimensional approach to the novel but also contributed to a nuanced understanding of the interwoven dynamics between cultural heritage and risk perception in literary works. Comprehending the dynamics between space and the human actions applied onto it, and relative modifications with the whole set of haphazardness that can be considered, is the action core of human geography [23,25]. The three main topics of this discipline that can be noted are: (1) the perceived quality of a place; (2) psychology of power; and (3) culture as imagination [18]. The intersection of these topics with the semantic cores of risk scenarios can be developed and reproduced by the complex and “lazy” (Umberto Eco's definition of the novel, the *lazy machine*) tools of comprehension. Thus, throughout the Rushdian novel, the voice of characters does not represent only a reproduction of an ontological *possibility* [14] fixed into the work, but it is epistemological evidence of space-interactions perception, with its quality and its rules. The *ideal place* of *The Satanic Verses* is an innovative bridge between all of these issues, the *meta-topos* where history, places, stories, and cultures are deeply connected, and its main goal is to reproduce the risk perception of that era.

The endangerment of cultural paths represents the real menace of migratory relocation, a necessary toll to pay for a *superdiverse* society where the communion of many point of view will converge into only one hyper-culture. *The Satanic Verses* re-interprets the novel criteria, adjusting the perception of change, widely spreading its operative boundaries, investing in the pros and cons of the

“gamble of existing”, and finally re-adapting western novelistic tools in order to decentralize the role of Occident as a paradigm.

Use of AI tools declaration

The author declares that he has not used artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the creation of this article.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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