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Making a Mockery of Mimicry: Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

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> You will never make colonialism blush for shame. (Fanon 223)
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> They say the baby blushed at birth. (Rushdie, *Shame* 89)
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> Between shame and shamelessness lies the axis upon which we turn; meteorological conditions at both these poles are of the most extreme, ferocious type. Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence. (Rushdie, *Shame* 118)

Rushdie's basic thesis in *Shame* is that shame, shamelessness, and violence are inextricably bound. His metaphor suggests Earth's turning on its axis, where one may find shame at one pole and shamelessness at the other, while the magical-real place where the conjoined twins meet is the spatial geography of violence personified. Rushdie fictionalizes numerous violent historical circumstances—such as the murder of a daughter by her Pakistani émigré father in London, and the political and personal strife of Pakistani leaders and their families—and places them into a fairytale narrative structure. He utilizes an arsenal of storytelling techniques to make violence palatable so that his readers may be more willing to critique the East's and the West's cultures of shame. Rushdie's narrative style can be viewed as a tongue-in-cheek use and abuse of numerous literary narrative conventions and theoretical perspectives that include exaggerated reflections of colonial mimicry, unreliable narrators, fairytale motifs, and intertextuality.

Published between the significant successes of *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's *Shame* comparatively seems to be less valued and under-analyzed. Yet, this novel has much to offer a contemporary audience. Through a postcolonial interpretation of Rushdie's kaleidoscopic narrative of shame, we may better understand how Rushdie encourages his Western audience to view with a more critical eye both the absurdities of life in Pakistan as well as the absurdities of our Western views of Pakistan. Sartre writes, in the "Preface" to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, "in the colonies the truth stood naked, but the citizens of the mother country preferred it with clothes on" (7). Sartre's note is perhaps the shortest analytical way of pointing out the West's view of its own colonialism. In *Shame*, Rushdie's overt indictment of the East cannot be extrapolated from Pakistan's colonial heritage and postcolonial present. It must be an indictment of the West as well. Thus, what Sartre explicitly states in one sentence, Rushdie

implies over the course of a novel. In what follows, I examine the concepts of shame, mimicry, magical realism, and the rationale for Rushdie's utilization of the fairytale genre. I also examine the intrusive and unreliable narrator's insistence on his own culpability in the telling of the story, which reminds the reader that it is quite significant who tells the story of history, as evidenced especially by the women's stories. Finally, I argue that the novel represents a palimpsest of Pakistani history, as it contains an array of intertextual references relevant to the region. My conclusion is based on these variations on a theme: that shame and violence, which constitute the heart of Rushdie's indictment of the East in the novel, should not be separated from his indictment of the West.

On Shame

One way to understand shame is through the lens of Rushdie's narrator's postcolonial condition. In *The Satanic Verses*, the narrator asks, "How does newness come into the world? How is it born?" (8). From a postcolonial perspective, "newness" may suggest the interculturation and uneven cultural development that takes place between colonizers and colonized the instant colonialism begins, while "newness" also may suggest how formerly-colonized peoples create new identities or new nations for themselves after colonialism ends. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes, "Nationhood implies violence—the violence of a military state, be it feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, or some other variety" (112). When paired with Rushdie's question, Lefebvre's assertion should help us understand that violence is an entrenched element of newness. Newness is especially pertinent to this novel because a key historical point of reference is the postcolonial reality of Pakistan. The nation was created during the partition of the Indian Subcontinent at the moment of India's independence from Great Britain in 1947. Some citizens of India moved to Pakistan after the partition to begin new lives. They were regarded as muhajirs—outsiders and immigrants—which Rushdie notes is his personal family history (*Shame* 84). If the question in *The Satanic Verses* was how to enunciate this newness, then we may look to *Shame* as one prescient answer, written before the question. Throughout *Shame*, Rushdie illustrates the contradictory intercultural norms of postcolonial Pakistani life, primarily through examples of shame and violence.

Because of its intrinsic significance to *Shame*, we should better understand more nuances of this complex emotion. Shame is related to numerous emotions, such as anger: "anger is, of course, one of the most important defenses against shame. Indeed, the particular power of shame to combine with other affects—anguish, contempt, rage, fear—is one of the things that make it such a crucial element in the emotional life of human beings" (Adamson and Clark 13). Because of the range of emotions and actions connected to shame, this sensation can be both provocative and debilitating. Shame is "instrumental as a protective mechanism regulating human beings" (Adamson and Clark 14-15). Thus,

the absence of this regulating mechanism for social conduct may very well open the door to violence, which is one of Rushdie's central claims. Shame involves generalized self-loathing, while guilt involves disappointment in oneself about a particular action (Tangney 25). These defining characteristics of shame and guilt are solely on the personal level and do not account for greater socio-cultural connections. Yet even at this level, we may still view that the core of Sufiya Zinobia's violence, the epic simile throughout the novel, is shame itself, or the absence thereof. Most characters are described by their absence of feelings of shame or guilt. Neither Raza, nor Iskander, nor Omar seem to have this emotional ability, until it's too late to make amends. Meanwhile, Sufiya is engulfed by it, which turns her inside out, from Beauty into Beast.

Shame is a cultural norm as well as a cultural construct, and the consequences of shame are unlikely to be the same when distinguishing shame in the West from shame in the East. Rushdie's narrator defines a complex use of shame with regard to cultural and language differences:

> *Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry "shame" is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shén ré mém* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance . . . What is the opposite of shame? What is left when sharam has been subtracted? That's obvious: shamelessness. (33)

Later in the text, Rushdie implies more correctly that there exists a polarity of "honour and shame" (117), as well as in interviews during his book tour to promote *Shame* in 1983: "the opposite of shame is shamelessness, but it is also honor" (Kaufman).

Part of Rushdie's "shame" as an author is revealed here in his lack of being able to adequately translate meaning because he writes in the language of the colonizer—English. Rushdie is not the first author to note the troubles associated with writing in English. In the 1938 Prologue to his novel *Kanthapura*, Indian novelist Raja Rao had similar concerns to Rushdie's: "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own . . . [English] is the language of our intellectual makeup—like Sankrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional makeup" (vii). In an interview, Rao notes, "historically, this is how I'm placed . . . There is an honesty in choosing English, an honesty in terms of history" (Jussawalla 144). Aruna Srivastava's comments also help to illuminate Rushdie's (and Rao's) concerns with writing in English: "Indian writers in English . . . are continuing to displace their own tradition . . . not only working in, but also valorizing, the language of their (former) colonizers" (73). Srivastava's argument resembles Spivak's notion of a "postcolonial informant" (360), which is something akin to a "mimic man" because of the "implicit collaboration of the postcolonial in the service of *neo*colonialism" (*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* 361). Rushdie seems to validate Srivastava's claim when he notes, "I, too, am a

translated man. I have been *borne across*." Yet he complicates this notion, as he continues: "It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion—and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam—that something can also be gained" (23). The Fitzgerald-Khayyam reference is an example of the West's appropriation of the East through the English translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Rushdie seems hopeful that *he* has gained something as well, perhaps linguistically and culturally.

Rushdie, as an always-already "translated man," does the work of translating for the Western reader by writing in English, while the British establishment further validates the distinct British-ness about him, and his work, by adorning him with a Booker prize, and the "Booker of Bookers," for *Midnight's Children*. In light of these awards and Srivastava's comments, one may come to the conclusion that Rushdie has fulfilled, even if in the *post*colonial era, Thomas Babington Macaulay's program for the Indian people set forth in his "Minute on Indian Education" in 1835: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect . . . and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population" (249). Macaulay's program was to create Indian "mimic men" to alleviate the difficulties of British rule. But Rushdie should not be confused with this type of person. If the purpose of an interpreter is to create comprehension in another language for his audience, then what kind of interpreter is Rushdie?

Rushdie's interpretations complicate notions of a "mimic man" or "postcolonial informant" to the point of inscrutability. The authorial aside noting "something lost and something gained" may also pass to a Western audience and create a similar unsteady ambivalence for us. Most of us would be at a loss to grasp the elided "encyclopaedias of nuance" when Rushdie refers to "shame" in English throughout the novel. If an English-speaking Western audience accepts the narrator's assertions about the problems of translation, then we also must accept that our responses will be limited to condemning the atrocities in the text as we now "know" them from a distance (thanks to Rushdie), and through our various ethnocentric perspectives. It is "our" language, yet we cannot wholly know these nuances of meaning even as they are translated for us, or because they are not fully translated for us.

Rushdie does aid his Western audience's understanding of *sharam* through plot details that enhance his definition of shame. For instance, the protagonist Omar Kayyam Shakil is charged by his mothers not to feel the "forbidden emotion of shame" (33) before his first foray into the world beyond their home. Yet, at twelve years old, he must be taught the idea of shame because it was completely absent from his upbringing. According to Omar's three mothers, shame makes "your heart start shivering," it makes women "want to cry and die," and men to "go wild" (34). For the further comprehension of the audience, the plot includes "a necklace of

shoes" as a garland of shame, which is used in the context of the plot as something akin to a ritual stoning of a scapegoat (which is meant to dispel a community's shame/sins). Later, shame is a collective identity signifier for the women of Pakistan: "the shame of any one of us sits on us all and bends our backs" (83). Conversely, when a firebomb kills Bilquis Hyder's father and destroys his cinema and their home, a muslin "duppata of modesty" spares her further shame as the only piece of cloth left on her (59-61). It appears that shame itself determines the place each character has in society. Rushdie writes, "wherever I turn, there is something of which to be ashamed. But shame is like everything else; live with it long enough and it becomes part of the furniture" (21).

Shame causes Sufiya Zinobia to go red in the face at birth on behalf and because of her father, her culture, her nation. This is one of Rushdie's unsubtle nuances: a literal translation of the symbolic. While Sufiya is born red-faced, other characters only slowly find their way to comprehending shame later in life. Omar is often characterized like the West: domineering, a bad influence, shameless, and without any sense of guilt about his wrongdoings. For instance, as a young man, Omar takes advantage of women by using Mesmer's techniques, which he learns by reading the international collection of texts in his grandfather's extensive library (27-28). Why does Omar have no sense of guilt or shame? We may look to his mothers, the Shakil sisters, who begin and complete the paradigm of shame with their party and pregnancy at the beginning of the novel, and with their act of committing murder in their own home at the end of the novel. Their motive for homicide is revenge for the murder of their second son, Babar, by Raza Hyder. However, the final shameful act of the novel is Sufiya Zinobia's murder of her husband, Omar, in his mothers' house. Sufiya's shame engulfs everyone she meets in "her" story. She was born "the wrong miracle" and seemed to go downhill from there (69). She is shame personified; she is also Pakistan personified. The nation, as well, is described as "a miracle that went wrong" (86). So how do humor and mimicry and magic connect with the paradigm of shame? Their crossroads, as Rushdie has stated, is violence. By the end of the novel, there is not much humor left to go around. But there is still plenty of shame.

Rushdie (as narrator) states that his inspiration for *Shame* stems from his reading about the murder of "Anna Muhammad" by her Pakistani father in London's East End, after learning about her supposed affair with a (likely non-Muslim) white boy (117-119). Ironically, the murder of Anna was an act intended to *release the father's shame*. The notion of shame as a "regulating mechanism" (Adamson 14-15) takes on new significance in this cultural context. This act is called an "honor killing," and these types of events are horrifically real and abundant in numerous countries. One estimate suggests that, internationally, more than five thousand women are murdered for similar reasons by family members each year (Stillwell). The intrusive narrator in *Shame* explains the notion of honor killing, "because by making love to a white boy she has brought

such dishonour upon her family that only her blood can wash away the stain . . . We who have grown up on a diet of honour and shame can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy" (117). The overt allusion to Nietzsche's concept about "the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy" is often neglected by critics who focus more narrowly on gendered analyses of shame and violence, when it also should be understood as a complex part of a more holistic problem of modern insecurities.

Numerous critics focus on this section of the novel. Rufus Cook and Jenny Sharpe, for instance, offer opposing analyses. Cook suggests that "such behavior is conceivable only to people brought up in traditional patriarchal or authoritarian societies, to people raised 'on a diet of honour and shame'" (23). Cook's remark contains an arguably ethnocentric perspective about the East. On the other hand, Sharpe argues convincingly that "the tacit condoning of a father's murder of his only child has as much to do with institutionalized racism in Britain as it does with customs carried over from Pakistan." With these critiques in mind, it is essential that we rethink what Rushdie is doing here. He orientalizes the Pakistani culture, with which Cook relates. Yet, Rushdie may also be attempting to deconstruct the West's orientalist prejudices of Pakistan as "primitive," which Cook apparently neglects to see.

When discussing his inspiration for the novel, the narrator cannot contain his indictment of the East. He states, "but finally [Anna] eluded me, she became a ghost, and I realized that to write about her, about shame, I would have to go back East, to let the idea breathe its favourite air" (118). The narrator notes that Anna is one of an amalgam of people—including Rushdie's sister—who play a role in the character Sufiya Zinobia, and Sufiya's shame signifies her family's shame, and her nation's shame. On the individual level, Sufiya's shameful acts, namely the sexual acts with and murders of four men on one night, and random brutal murders of others around the country, illustrate her becoming the embodiment of the "axis upon which we turn": shame and violence. "She was, as her mother had said, the incarnation of their shame" (210). Late in the novel, Sufiya's story becomes indistinguishable from the legend of the white panther, which is blamed for various "unexplainable" deaths nationwide.

Many readers may wish for Sufiya's death as a cathartic release from the devastation that she creates. Should they not also feel shame in wishing a character dead? Her death does arrive in the final violent moment of the text—an explosion of nuclear proportions—but the release is not cathartic. Rather, it is a depressingly incomplete postcolonial moment of transition, but from what and to what (from a violent colonial nation to a violent postcolonial nation)? Lefebvre's comment that "nationhood implies violence" (112) is again instructive. Yet, one should avoid arguing a related possibility, that this novel may be viewed as a "political unconscious" narrative of a Third World nation (see Ahmad 95-122). Arguing this type of allegorical claim about the novel oversimplifies

an understanding of diverse peoples and cultures, and complexities of experience. Rushdie, in fact, avoids universalizing Pakistan by stating explicitly in his narrative intrusions that "the country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite" (22). Further, this is Rushdie's own vision of history, and it is his very personal experience as a migrant storyteller. He writes, "I tell myself this will be a novel of leave taking, my last words on the East" (22). On the other hand, perhaps because of its complexities, the novel may ironically lend itself to a narrative-as-Third-World-political-unconscious analysis. For instance, instead of Pakistan, Rushdie prefers to call it "Peccavistan" (87), which means "Sind Land," a translation about the Pakistani region of Sind, which as a pun has the allegorical connotation as "the land of sin." Even with numerous indicators such as this one, it doesn't make a reductive allegorical analysis apt. When Rushdie makes critical perspectives fairly effortless for us in the West, it is usually in jest. The problem for some readers may be that Rushdie's "encyclopedias of nuance" are sometimes embedded in (or peripheral to) the obvious. Rushdie's mimicry is one motif where this potential problem recurs.

On Mimicry, And Magic

Readers may view some of Rushdie's humor as ridiculous, but his playfulness has great significance. He arguably creates ludicrous scenarios as commentary on the seriousness of these very situations, which he often accomplishes through various forms of mimicry. The basic concept of mimicry includes repetition, variation, and inversion, and is connected to parody, irony, satire, burlesque, and mockery. Rushdie problematizes his own historical narrative by making a mockery of mimicry, especially in the context of colonial mimicry. "Colonial mimicry" is a consequence of the desire of the colonized to be like the colonizer, through the power of decades and sometimes centuries of violence and cultural conditioning that enables imperial cultural hegemony. Rushdie's apparent mimicry is not so much mimicry, but a *parody* of colonial mimicry. Bhabha explains the "ambivalence" of "colonial mimicry" as the not-so-benign colonial discourse that describes the natives as "almost but not quite" (91), which fetishizes the colonizers themselves, and reminds us that the locals are still (and always will be) "Other." An example from V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* illustrates the problem intrinsic to colonial mimicry, specific to India: "The Indian army officer is at first meeting a complete English army officer . . . This is mimicry not of England, a real country, but of the fairytale land of Anglo-India, of clubs and sahibs and syces and bearers. It is as if an entire society has fallen for a casual confidence trickster" (61).

Rushdie's narrative incorporates forms of mimicry that more closely resemble both Gayatri Spivak's and Rei Terada's descriptions of mimicry. Mimicry includes "catechresis," which suggests the possibility of "reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value coding" (Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value" 228). Mimicry

is also a "representation of a representation, a repetition of something itself repetitious . . . Mimicry tips the hand of its nonoriginality *and* implies the nonoriginality of that which it mimics" (Terada 1). These specific descriptions of mimicry help explain numerous examples of mimicry in *Shame*. In one instance, Rushdie's narrative coincidentally seems to adapt and reply to Naipaul's problem, when, at the end of *Shame*, Omar's home "Nishapur" is looted by the townspeople of Q. (302); "It was as if a spell had been broken, as if an old and infuriating conjuring trick had finally been explained. Afterwards, they would look around at each other with a disbelief in their eyes that was half proud and half ashamed and ask, did we really do that? But we are ordinary people" (303). The looters scandalously rob the Shakil house perhaps solely because it had been locked away from them for approximately sixty-five years, and then the locks were removed. By then, however, there was nothing left of value in the home, not even Omar's mothers. It's as if the sisters' shameful existence that had been such a source of displeasure for the townsfolk was nothing more than an illusion, not unlike the England of the Indian army officer in Naipaul's novel. Shame itself was an arbitrary cultural construct, which would now be mirrored back on to the townspeople because of their looting.

Rushdie's mimicry is clearly related to parody and satire. Parody, "with its ironic 'transcontextualization' and inversion, is repetition with a difference . . . [where] one text is set against another with the intent of mocking it or making it ludicrous" (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* 32). We may view a significant "transcontextualization" in Rushdie's description of how Pakistan is a palimpsest; "a palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time" (*Shame* 86). The revelation that something is a palimpsest brings up the fact that although something is being obscured, simultaneously something is being revealed. Throughout the novel, Rushdie scuffles with, and embraces, the "apparatus of value coding," (Spivak 228) when Pakistan becomes Indian history "with a difference" (Hutcheon 32). The postcolonial moment of transition is what creates this difference.

A brief scene about "the village of the white dolls" is one caricature of filial Orientalism and mirrored reflections of East/West relations. From the Harappa estate at Mohenjo, Rani Harappa watches from a distance, as

> the white concubines were playing badminton in the twilight. In those days, many of the villagers had gone West to work for a while, and those who returned had brought with them white women for whom the prospect of life in a village as a number-two wife seemed to hold an inexhaustibly erotic appeal. The number-one wives treated these white girls as dolls or pets and those husbands who failed to bring home a guddi, a white doll, were soundly berated by their women. The village of the white dolls had become famous in the region. Villagers came from miles around to watch the girls . . . as they

> leapt for shuttlecocks and displayed their frilly panties. The number-one wives cheered for their number-twos, taking pride in their victories as in the successes of children, and offering them consolation in defeat. (158)

Orientalist tendencies seem to be invoked by both sides: by the white women, who seem happy to become part of a small harem (an exotic adventure for them?), and by the local Pakistanis who exoticize the white women as their dolls and pets. This is the locale of Iskander Harappa's family heritage, where Rani herself is virtually entombed at the Harappa estate at Mohenjo, a life-sized doll house. Mohenjo-daro, to which this location alludes, is translated as "the Mound of the Dead," and lies in the province of Sind in Southern Pakistan; it is one of the oldest known areas of civilization in the world, built around 2600 B.C.E. (Kenoyer). The ancient city of Harappa is just to the north. There appears to be much buried treasure in the palimpsest of Pakistan for Rushdie and his audience to excavate in this humorous archeological/literary dig.

We may view Rushdie's mockery of colonial mimicry in the three Shakil sisters' first three-in-one "independent" production of thought after their father dies. They throw a party in direct imitation of the sahib dances at the British military Cantonment, which they had only seen from a distance in the confinement of their home. The sisters invite mostly the "Angrez sahibs," and a few locals. For their party, "the sisters were visited by a uniformed and ball-gowned crowd of foreigners. The imperialists!"(8). Musicians played "Western-style dance music, minuets, waltzes, fox-trots, polkas, gavottes, music that acquired a fatally demonic quality when forced out of the virtuosi's instruments" (9). Rushdie subverts this narrative of colonial mimicry when he has the sisters orientalize the "Western" entertainment through inherently Anglo and upper-class stereotypes. The Shakil sisters appropriate the powers inscribed in imperialist displays of wealth and civilized behavior. The absence of jazz and rock and roll from this list suggests classist and racist displays of mimicry, parodying Western stereotypes. But the mockery of mimicry does not end there for the sisters. After the party, the narrator informs the reader that the sisters desired to have an "Angrez sahib" baby out of wedlock. Indeed, Omar Khayyam Shakil is a "mongrel" whose father would never know of him or his own fatherhood, and whose grandfather may have disowned his mothers for their actions if he was not already dead. Thus the mimicry of the "sahib dance" is "demonized" when we find out that the sisters set up this occasion for the express purpose of becoming pregnant: "Oh shame, shame, poppy-shame!" (9). The sisters then mimic each other and appear "as one" during the pregnancy—they all appear pregnant, and have morning sickness—ostensibly to avoid the shame that one of them would be forced to endure with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Their mimicry of each other is stunning when Omar is born. "They were all wearing the flushed expression of dilated joy that is the mother's true prerogative; and the baby was passed from breast to breast, and none of the six was dry" (14). While this form of mimicry is less

political than the sisters' "colonial mimicry," it indicates the complexities and potential use of mimicry, in this case to subvert shame.

With the Shakil sisters, Omar, and others, Rushdie writes overt and nuanced parodies. Omar Khayyam's name, for instance, is taken from an actual person. The historical Omar Khayyam was translated and appropriated by Fitzgerald with great success; this event alone should remind even the Orientalists that Persia had a written language, hence a "civilized" culture, at least during Khayyam's lifetime of 1048-1142. With Rushdie's Omar, however, "his name is the name of a famous poet, but no quatrains ever issued or will issue from his pen" (21).[1] We thus have the mimicry of the name referent, but without the poetry or other attributes that would give Shakil his prestige as the "hero" of the story. In this case, something is lost in translation when Omar Khayyam returns to his Persian homeland. (In typical Rushdian irony, Omar's brother Babar is the poet of the family.) Our modern Omar's prestige eventually comes from his status as a respectable doctor, which is significant because it is through his profession that he meets Sufiya Zinobia. However, even as the best doctor around, he cannot cure her ailment. Under his care she matures from Beauty into Beast.

Rushdie mimics the ideology of protagonist-as-hero and then mocks this literary convention. Only one person comes close to being a stereotypical "hero" in the novel, Captain Talvar Ulhaq, although he has a small role. The description of him seems to follow old-fashioned notions of gallant masculinity; Talvar is in fact more parody than hero—a mock-heroic character—conforming "to all the usual heroic requirements, being tall, dashing, mustachioed, with a tiny scar on his neck that looked exactly like a love-bite" (169). Talvar's appearance on the polo grounds as the star of the police team adds to his machismo appeal, and inevitably creates the opportunity for his own "bloodless coup" of a wedding scandal as he steals Good News Hyder away from Haroun Harappa on the day of their wedding: "upright, capering, mythological figure of Talvar Ulhaq on his whirling horse . . . the most successful stud in the city" (171). This is definitely *not* a description of Omar Khayyam Shakil, the apparent hero/protagonist. Even the narrator feels compelled to comment on Omar's lack of heroic qualities (perhaps this is a parody of the *Bildungsroman*). He is "dizzy, peripheral, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?" (18). Yet Talvar makes a mockery of his status as hero when he forces his wife Naveed "Good News" Hyder to have baby after baby until twenty-seven are born, and "everyone had lost count of how-many-boys-how-many-girls" (218). Good News Hyder's anti-fairy tale wedding leads to anti-romantic, magically-real consequences; she has annual pregnancies with increasing multiple births for Talvar, virtually creating a new race of Pakistani citizens from the smithy of her soul. Eventually she hangs herself when

[1] Nishapur, Omar's place of birth, is also the birthplace of the ancient Persian poet, Omar Khayyam.

she is pregnant with octuplets (241). In this context, we may view that the text's "complicity of shame" is "complicated by the ascription of aggressive, violent sexuality to women" (Dayal 45). So, what kind of hero is Talvar, really? The answer: not *our* kind of hero. Talvar, like Raza and Isky, represents the shame of a dysfunctional patriarchal hero system.

Omar is perhaps an anti-protagonist (and anti-hero) in the sense that he is "a peripheral man," who is "not even the hero of his own life" (17, 18). Omar's story is continually interrupted by other characters' stories. Defending his life's actions in a dream sequence at the end of the text, Omar states, "I am a peripheral man . . . Others have been the principle actors in my life-story . . . I watched from the wings not knowing how to act" (301). For the audience, as we come to know all the *others* in the novel, we coincidentally come to know Omar. With this narrative path, Rushdie parodies the Self/Other identity dialectic. By telling a virtually absent anti-hero's story, Rushdie lampoons the narrative convention that suggests that the supposed protagonist actually *is* the protagonist.

Rushdie is like a jester holding up a cultural mirror for us to view the absurdities of our ethnocentrisms. For instance, his use of magical-realism raises questions about cross cultural understanding, such as when he discusses Sufiya Zinobia's connection to the legend of the white panther, and the Beast that she has become (which also returns us to nuances of shame). "This was the danger of Sufiya Zinobia: that she came to pass, not in any wilderness of basilisks and fiends, but in the heart of the respectable world . . . The more powerful the Beast became, the greater grew the efforts to deny its very being" (210). The Beast is, after all, the daughter of the leader of Pakistan. As he is the military dictator of the nation, she bears the nation's shame. The general usage of the term magical-realism to describe Rushdie's literary genre is problematic because its invocation includes mostly Third World literatures and excludes similar Western European literatures which are deemed to be European Modernism (Connell 107). Some definitions of magical-realism "seriously mistake Western modernity for a rationalist epistemology that is radically different from modes of thinking which retain a belief in magic, and in so doing conflate the non-Western with the pre-modern" (107). In one instance, Rushdie seems to be offering a similar commentary. He explicitly mocks the Western superiority complex with a parody of its two-party political system. He invokes the internal strife during election season between the "West Wing" and the "East Wing" of Pakistan; "the real trouble, however, started over in the East Wing, that festering swamp. Populated by whom?—O, savages, breeding endlessly, jungle-bunnies good for nothing but growing jute and rice, knifing each other, cultivating traitors in their paddies" (187). The West's view of the East, as it extends its long arm to the mindset of postcolonial Western Pakistanis, seems relatively unchanged. Rushdie has illustrated both myth and science as overlapping realities: the magically-real myth-creating and myth-believing cultures exist within a rational democracy. The philosophy of the "internal dialectic" is that the Beast exists within us all (257).

On Fairytales, Or Not

This novel reminds us (if we had forgotten) of the gothic horror within many fairytales. Westerners—Americans in particular—have been led astray by the Disney Corporation concerning the gothic horror of so many tales. Disney's variations on the classic fairytales in oversimplified romantic terms for children are rarely revisited by adults since we already "know" these stories. If and when we do return to the original Grimm Brothers' tales, for example, then we may discover what folklorist Wolfgang Meider and others understand: "Scholars have long realized that these tales originally are not children's stories but rather traditional narratives for adults, couching basic human problems and aspirations in symbolic and poetic language" (2). We may gather that Rushdie uses the fairytale form to make his story more palatable to the audience, but there are significant reasons why adults should appreciate fairytales. D. L. Ashliman says that "in traditional fairy tales, morals typically center around the preservation of existing values and the maintenance of social stability" (4). Conversely, Rushdie's employment of the fairytale genre complicates this fantasy, questions the values of the authoritative status quo, and comments satirically on leaders such as Isky and Raza (Bhutto and Zia) who seem to maintain such violence in society. As with so much in Rushdie's narrative, we should interrogate his choice of the fairytale genre.

In one of his many authorial interruptions, Rushdie reminds us, "I am only telling a modern fairy tale" (68). Indeed, on the first page, we find out that "there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters . . . and one day, their father died" (3). The death of a father at the beginning of the story is a common fairytale trope, and the sisters, "Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny," further remind us of the fairy-tale motif of threes. In *Shame* we see this motif in abundance. Early, there are the Shakil sisters' three important refusals as mothers to Omar. In order of succession, Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny explain to Omar that each had a hand in a shameful act of refusing society's norms during his upbringing. They refused to "whisper the name of God in his ear," have his head shaved, or have him circumcised (14). And there are countless "threes" besides the mothers themselves and their refusals. Timothy Brennan notes three male servants, a triple murder, Raza Hyder with three grandmothers and three brothers, three main families, three countries, religions, and capitals (124). Brennan suggests that "the familiar significance of the number 'three' in religious and folkloric texts is not the point; rather, it is the monstrous exaggeration with which it is carried out—another signal that the genre is the message" (124). If we accept Brennan's implicit reference to Marshall McLuhan's familiar axiom that "the medium is the message," then Rushdie's use of the fairytale should be viewed just as suspect as other narrative devices in the novel.

This fairy tale is hardly a fairy tale, even if we often hear "once upon a time." The explicit references to archetypal fairytale motifs add a certain

mythical feature to the text, yet reality encumbers the fairytale suspension of disbelief: "Well, well, I mustn't forget that I am only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faery means" (272). The narrator suggests that he will topple the dictator to satisfy the audience's desire for a happy "fairytale ending" even while he is telling a history of the violent dictatorial quarrel in Pakistan between Muhammad Zia UlHaq (Raza Hyder) and Zulfiker Ali Bhutto (Iskander Harappa). Historically, one dictator is toppled in virtually the exact ways in which the narrator describes it later in the text. "Raza Hyder, Harappa's protege, became his executioner . . . Arjumand Harappa was packed off to Rani at Mohenjo" (236), and "elections were not held. Raza Hyder became President. All this is well know[n]" (244). Aijaz Ahmad criticizes Rushdie's exploitation of these political leaders: "The fictional equivalents of Bhutto and Zia are such perfect, buffoon-like caricatures, and the many narrative lines of the political parable are woven so much around their ineptitude . . . that one is in danger of forgetting that Bhutto and Zia were in reality no buffoons, but highly capable and calculating men whose cruelties were entirely methodical" (141). Yet the audience is not really in danger of forgetting these leaders' atrocities. For many in the West, I suspect the novel opens doors of knowledge and interest about the recent history of Pakistan. Many Western readers—especially those who have come of age to read Rushdie's novel in more recent years, like myself—may know of these leaders *because of Rushdie's novel*. The story really is no fairytale. It is a parody of a fairytale.

Rushdie continually refers us back to these real life situations of shame and violence while marrying this violence to the story of Sufiya Zinobia, who is variously described as Beauty, Beast, and Sleeping Beauty. The narrative slides between contradictory statements, from this novel being "a love story" (126) to it being "a horror story" (228). Of course, one does not necessarily preclude the other. Late in the novel, for instance, the narrator adjusts "there once was a wife" to "there once was a beast" while speaking about Sufiya (257), who therefore becomes both Beauty and Beast. When Omar takes Sufiya up to the attic, drugs her, and chains her, we have an infusion of multiple gothic fairy tales (250). The narrator explains, that "for two years she lay on the carpet, like a girl in a fantasy who can only be awoken by the blue-blooded kiss of a prince; but kisses were not her destiny" (257). The locale of the gothic attic alludes to Charlotte Brontë's prototypical madwoman-in-the-attic character, Bertha, from *Jane Eyre*. This parody of Victorian gothic occurs with a twist. Although Bertha burned down Rochester's mansion, and died doing so, Sufiya will escape and wreak havoc on a whole nation.

The narrator's explanation for why he is so invested in the fairytale genre is that realism is no fun:

> Suppose this were a realistic novel! Just think what else I would have to put in . . . the Sind Club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading 'Women and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point.' . . . The smuggling, the boom in heroin exports, military

> dictators, venal civilians, corrupt civil servants, bought judges, newspapers of whose stories the only thing that can confidently be said is that they are lies. (66-67)

Even here one may view absurd humor in this abbreviated list of atrocities. But if this were a realistic novel, then Rushdie also would have to account for using and abusing Zain Zia (one of Zia UlHaq's daughters) as fodder for the amalgam of Sufiya Zinobia, and the challenges she has had. A recent article reminds us that she has a "slight mental disability and speech and hearing problems" ("In Mumbai"). She, too, is a real person. And the narrator does joke about the "minor speech impediment" (81) of the stillborn son of Raza Hyder, who is reincarnated as Sufiya. Rushdie's final answer for not using realism: "the book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart" (68).[2] He therefore chooses narrative techniques that destabilize any notion of a holistic narrative, while still producing a holistic message about the consequences of shame. Meider connects negative focal points in fairytale adaptations with hopeful futures: "are we not actually concealing behind these negative statements the glimmer of hope for a better world in which anti-fairy tales will once again become fairy tales?" (8). Meider's persistence on a romanticized future does not hold water in this novel. While the common heritage between the West and the East exists in the shared knowledge of the age-old fairytales, which is useful to Rushdie, we also must remember the reasons these associations exist: the heritage of colonialism unites the modern world.

On The Intrusive and Unreliable Narrator

Rushdie's narrative intrusions, while apparent distractions from "the story," also enhance characterizations and plot concerns, yet these occur in such subtle ways as to further complicate the coherence of the novel. The narrator, an arguably not-too-distant version of Rushdie, both accentuates and impedes cultural critique as he discusses how much he dislikes his protagonist and rambles to the degree that he feels compelled to make comments such as "I must get back to my fairy-story, because things have been happening while I've been talking too much" (68). The intrusive and unreliable narrator serves as a bleak reminder that each historical narrative is only one version of events. Further, with Rushdie's narrative style, virtually everything becomes questionable. He destabilizes his narrative frequently by admitting that he has misled us. The narrator states, "the elections which brought Iskander Harappa to power were not (it must be said) as straightforward as I have made them sound" (186). A Western audience, uneducated in the history of Pakistani politics, may not be sure if the narrator is speaking of the story within the text or the historical realities that serve as the violent axis on which the story turns. About Pakistan Rushdie says, "I have never lived there for longer than six

[2] Of course, *Shame* was still banned in Pakistan.

months at a stretch. . . . I think what I'm confessing is that, however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that world in broken mirrors. . . . I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits" (66). The phrase "over there" further problematizes Rushdie as a "postcolonial informant" (Spivak, *Critique* 360), because he reminds us that he is writing from within the spatial geography of the West. He presumably writes from an inconsistent Western view of the East.

Rushdie's audience still must attempt to follow this broken, irreconcilable narrative. For example, after following Omar Khayyam Shakil's exploits as the apparent protagonist through the first three chapters (fifty-four pages), we find out at the beginning of Chapter Four that "this is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia" (55). It is no coincidence that Sufiya is hardly mentioned again in Chapter Four, and that she, "the heroine of our story, the wrong miracle" (88), is only finally born at the end of Chapter Five, when her father Raza Hyder screams at the midwife: "'Genitalia! Can! Be! Obscured!' . . . They say the baby blushed at birth. Then, even then, she was too easily shamed" (88-89). She was supposed to be a boy, a reincarnation of a miscarriage. She is the shame of a peculiarly powerless patriarchal system (which Raza's words illustrate), which represents an incomplete transition to a postcolonial era, and which will create in Sufiya Zinobia a vengeance against a false sense of newness.

The women's stories, even while seemingly peripheral, keep taking over this fairytale, so much that the narrator feels compelled to give them a brief nod, but also as if to say, Who's telling the story here? "They have marched in from the peripheries to demand inclusion of their own tragedies. . . . It seems to me that the women knew exactly what they were up to—that their stories explain, and even subsume the men's" (181). The women's tales are reminders of how the women are sequestered in various ways to be the bearers of men's shame. While the women's stories are "the same story after all," "refractions" of the men's stories (181), perhaps within the patriarchal system of oppression, the women's stories also enhance and explain the men's stories. The women have stories of their own, which "subsume" the men's, and they arguably "seize the apparatus of value coding" from the men's stories (Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality" 228).

Although Sufiya's experience runs the course of the novel, she never gets to tell her side of the story. She is truly a symbolic "refraction." Yet Bariamma's and Rani's stories represent themselves and give some agency to the women. Bariamma is the ancient Hyder matriarch: she is Homeric, a blind bard recounting an epic list, a "catalogue of family horrors" (73). Since the women bear the family's shame, it is no surprise that Bariamma recounts these horrors—as if to relive them. She recounts them to Bilquis upon her arrival in Bariamma's dormitory of forty women. To become a family member it seems "a rite of blood" (74) that one must hear all and bear all historical travesties. Yet there is also something empowering in the act of remembrance. According to the narrator, "the telling of the tales proved the family's ability to survive them. To retain, in

spite of everything, its grip on its honour and its unswerving moral code" (74). Bilquis is then required to recount, relive, and therefore survive again her own horror of her family meltdown when her father died, and when she later met Raza, still naked except for her dupatta of modesty. After this recitation, Bariamma seems to accept her, if temporarily: "at least you managed to keep your dupatta on" (74).

While Bariamma's stories seem reserved for the women to hear, we also may understand the horror stories recounted on Rani's life's work, stories which nobody except for Arjumand will ever see.[3] Reminiscent of Penelope awaiting Odysseus' return, and with narrative strands of Arachne flowing through her, Rani creates intricate shawl after shawl, until she has created an epic list and illustration of shameful details of Pakistani life on eighteen shawls, the collection of which she titles, "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great." The shawls tell all of Isky's shamelessness, which includes, for instance, the slapping shawl, the kicking, the swearing, the atomic bomb, the torture, the allegorical "Death of Democracy" shawl, the shawl of hell, and the death of Little Mir Harappa shawl (200-206). As a passive peripheral actor to these realities, as an absent storyteller, Rani has profound insight into her husband's life. She keeps the shawls locked away in a footlocker, "her body merging into the fabric of Mohenjo" (204). She has the shawls sent to her daughter only after her own death. At least her narrative has been recorded for posterity.

The widow Pinkie Aurangzeb's story is one of male plunder. Isky and Raza, both "duelists," were arguably having an affair with the nation. Likewise, they both had an affair with Pinkie. In one scene Pinkie is covered in a sari that is a creative description of the Pakistani flag. Pinkie also wears a shawl, upon which "miniscule arabesques a thousand and one stories had been portrayed" (105). The women in this story are palimpsests both covering and revealing Indo-Pakistani history and male shame. They wear the shame of their history as much as its shame is written on their souls by the men in their lives. The intrusive and unreliable narrator implicitly reminds us that it always matters who tells the stories of history.

On Intertextuality

Intertextuality in *Shame* is closely connected with the concept of a palimpsest, which Rushdie describes in the novel as a Pakistani condition. *Shame* serves as a good illustration of the idea that "postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present for the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context. . . . It directly confronts the past of literature—and of historiography. It uses and abuses those intertextual echoes, inscribing their powerful allusions and then subverting that power through irony" (Hutcheon, "The Pastime of Past Time" 487).[4] The nation itself is

[3] Rani's character represents the life and myth of Benazir Bhutto's mother.

[4] Although I do not explicitly cite it in the essay, Gerard Genette's *Palimpsests:*

covering up layers of Indian history. Thus we may better understand how, through the creation of Pakistan, "history" itself seemed to have cajoled Rushdie to write the narrative historiography of the region. It seems that he has rifled through history's keepsakes, whether remembered, lost, known or unknown, to narrate the newness of postcolonial Pakistan. In *Shame*, Pakistan is a living, breathing palimpsest, an embodiment of intertextuality.

The intensity of Rushdie's intertextuality may become burdensome at various points to both Western and Eastern audiences. In interview, Rushdie states one possible reason for the legion of references. He claims that his problem is one of "multiple rooting":

> It's not the traditional identity crisis of not knowing where you come from. The problem is that you come from too many places. The problems are of excess rather than of absence. . . . I've often been asked about my identity crisis and as far as I'm aware I've never had one, never had a feeling of unknowing about myself. What I have had is a feeling of overcrowding. It's not that there are pulls in too many different directions so much as too many voices speaking at the same time. (Kaufman)

Rushdie subverts the question commonly posed to migrant intellectuals about their "exilic" identity issues. Exile, by definition, suggests a sense of loss of connections to home, family, and heritage. Although Rushdie comes from "too many places"—India, Pakistan, and England—he takes this potentially negative sense of migrancy and asserts a positive sense of multiple rooting: a rhizomatic and syncretic postcolonial identity. Western readers who are not familiar with an exilic migrant life may indeed feel "overcrowded" by the referential excess in the novel. To those readers, Rushdie is saying, welcome to my world. In addition, the text is filled with Western references that may be unknown to some Eastern audiences.

Intertextuality runs rife in this layered narrative which mimics and transmutates diverse representations of the ancient and the modern in spatial and cultural disjunctures as if they all belong together. The narrative includes multiple assertions that the story takes place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and includes references to cars, airplanes and telephones, specific 1970s Pakistani political figures Mohammed Zia Ul-Haq and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, variants of the fairy tales "Beauty and the Beast" and "Sleeping Beauty," the ancient Persian poet Omar Khayyam, and apparent autobiographical details. The narrative also includes cross-cultural references to the Hegiran calendar (6), Shakespeare's *King Lear* (15), Batman and Dracula (15), shazam (16), the Fitzgerald translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (23), the poetry of Mirza Ghalib, the *Travels* of Ibn Battuta, the *Qissa* of Hatim Tai, Kipling's Mowgli, Farid ud-Din Attar's *Conference of the Birds*, and the Finnish epic *Kalevala* (27), Al-Hambra and the Slave Kings (56), the Lone

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Literature in the Second Degree is a source for my discussion of intertextuality. Hutcheon's discussion points are related to Genette's.

Ranger and Randolph Scott (58), the Red Fort (61), Coca Cola (66), Zoroaster (66), *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines (67), the Valley of Tears (77), Valhalla, Odin, and the World Tree of Norse mythology (86), Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (87), the folklore surrounding Sir Charles Napier's statement "I have Sind" (87), the *Arabian Nights* (105), Nietzsche (117), Kafka's *The Trial* (120), Freud in "The Case of Miss H." (147), Pierre Cardin (157), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (165), a polo match (169), Richard Burton in the film *Alexander the Great* (189), television (192), atomic bombs (203), the film *Dr. Strangelove* (203), Buchner's play *Danton's Death*, the Reign of Terror, and the French Revolution (254-256), *Julius Caesar* and King Solomon (255), Walt Whitman (256), Pandora's Box (257), Nicolo Machiavelli (261), Mecca and the Black Stone (261), the French national motto "liberty, equality, fraternity" (267), Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* (298-300), and, of course, the culturally imbued *sharam* (a.k.a.: shame– throughout the novel). Rushdie's unreliable narrator seems to mock industrialization (166), Enlightenment philosophy (187-188), and Orientalism (187-188).[5] Somehow, part of the humor in *Shame* occurs precisely because these seemingly incommensurable realities, these myriad referents, do coexist. Rushdie's narrative plays with the modern literary convention of intertextuality by over(t)-inclusiveness. His hyperbolic inclusiveness of various historical, literary, and cultural referents in *Shame* creates a parody of postcolonial modernity to the degree that one is rendered helpless to comprehend fully the subtleties and nuances, mesmerized by them, as if Omar himself were taking advantage of us.

Although the meta-narrative asides and sheer amount of intertextuality seem to subvert coherence in the novel, we should still grasp that Rushdie is painstakingly describing how he is engaged with Pakistani culture as a migrant storyteller who is always-already married to his postcolonial condition. This condition has created a seemingly perpetual conflict of the ancient with the modern, sharam with shame, shame with shamelessness, violence with more violence.

Conclusion

Although the novel does have contradictions and problems, which sometimes raise unanswerable questions, one point of sincerity that the audience should grasp throughout the narrative—even if it is by way of tongue-in-cheek parodies—is the leitmotif of the connections between shame, shamelessness, and violence, and their consequences for societies. *Shame* engages the push-pull tension of modern global society, what Arjun Appadurai describes as "the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (32). The polarization invoked by Appadurai may help explain, coincidentally, how a father can

[5] This list *is not comprehensive*. It attempts to illustrate the "excess" and "overcrowding" of which Rushdie speaks.

come to murder his own child. On the one hand, Rushdie asserts that we should understand a fear within the East of "the prospect that their own immediate surroundings could be taken over—'Westoxicated' by the liberal Western-style way of life" ("Yes, This is About Islam"). On the other, we are asked to appreciate this specific father's honest grappling to maintain his cultural heritage while living in a culture filled with indifference to the push-pull tensions of heterogenization and homogenization.

The end of *Shame* may suggest that Omar Shakil, his mothers, and others have no place in the world because they all die or vanish into the ether. Similarly to the migrants Rushdie discusses earlier in the novel, they "floated upward from history, from memory, from Time" (85). This lack of place in society is symbolic of the exilic migrant, a central figure in postcolonial literatures. Bharati Mukherjee Blaise writes about the intellectual migrant experience in a postcolonial center-periphery world, reminiscent of Rushdie's migrant "peripheral heroes": "The Indian writer, Jamaican, the Nigerian, the Canadian and the Australian, each one knows what it is like to be a peripheral man whose howl dissipates unheard. He knows what it is to suffer absolute emotional and intellectual devaluation, to die unfulfilled and still isolated from the world's center" (151). This is also akin to what Brennan describes in assuredly more positive terms as the "cosmopolitan" quality of postcolonial intellectuals (140-142). Yet the ending of *Shame* can hardly be viewed in such a positive light.

Rushdie is telling the story of a great tragedy, a culture of shame—which, if we follow Rushdie's logic, is synonymous with a culture of violence—and the acceptance of this shame and violence by its own populace, and (what is even more significantly implied) the West's contribution to this shame and violence. Indeed, violence is not limited to Pakistanis. In one acute meta-narrative passage, Rushdie directs attention on the sense of shame/shamelessness towards the West. He had just been in a brief argument with a British diplomat concerning the Pakistani President Mohamed Zia ul-Haq, and "as we left the table, his wife, a quiet civil lady who had been making pacifying noises, said to me, 'Tell me, why don't people in Pakistan get rid of Zia in, you know, the usual way?' Shame, dear reader, is not the exclusive property of the East" (22). Rushdie clearly understands Fanon's assertion that "you will never make colonialism blush for shame" (223).

More than sixty years after the partition and twenty-five years after the publication of *Shame*, Pakistani culture still exhibits extensive social strife. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes about the anti-colonial struggle: "sometimes this literature of just-before-the-battle is dominated by humor and allegory; but often too it is symptomatic of a period of distress and difficulty, where death is experienced, and disgust too. We spew ourselves up, but already underneath laughter can be heard" (222). Sadly, this literature of humor and allegory sometimes occurs long after the demise of the colonial state, as illustrated by *Shame*. Throughout the novel, the audience may view variations of mimicry in the guise of

character traits, and narrative and literary stylistic devices to the point of excruciatingly laughable, absurd conditions. In Fanon's terms, Rushdie is "spewing up" his disgust of the political situation in 1970s Pakistan along with his personal challenges as a migrant storyteller. But the end of the novel is not the end of the story, nor the end of this situation. Some fairy tales are too horrifically real to believe; so, as Rushdie does with the Beast that Sufiya Zinobia has become, in the end, some fairy tales must be exploded.

The mockery throughout *Shame* is entertaining, but Rushdie's self-conscious wit is a pretense to discuss quite serious issues within a postcolonial society. Various narrative strands interweave themes of (and about) mimicry, parody, magical-realism, fairytales, intrusive and unreliable narrators, histories, and palimpsests. Shame and violence, which pervade each thematic element and recur throughout the narrative, serve as unsubtle "encyclopedias of nuance" (*Shame* 33). The novel enables a complex understanding of the heritage of colonialism in Pakistan, but requires the reader to excavate cultural norms (such as the West's Orientalist tendencies or the East's dialectic of honor and shame) to better understand the historical subtleties and absurdities of postcolonial modernity.

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