

# **Shame on Them**

## When Culture and Politics Meet in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

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## Summary

Contemporary Indian writer Salman Rushdie has become a famous author, celebrated by his witticism and his courage to touch upon themes considered dangerous, such as politics and religion, more specifically, Islam. Although his most famous novels are *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, his third novel *Shame*, continues to explore many issues raised in *Midnight's Children*, such as the ethnic tension between Indians and Pakistanis, and anticipates others found in *The Satanic Verses*, such as criticism of religion. This thesis attempts to explore such themes and others in this third novel, *Shame*. The novel fictionalizes historical events, adding many cultural elements to its narrative. This work's project uses such cultural elements, such as family and marriage, to analyze the political situation in Pakistan. The main goal to analyze the delicate relationship between politics and culture, going through a variety of other themes such as women, the role of history, colonial and postcolonialism and religion, using concepts from literary theory, such as postcolonialism, magical realism and satire.

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## Introduction

“*I am making this country, (...) making it as a man would build a marriage.*” (Shame, p. 183)

In a short interview for *Time Magazine*, the Indian writer Salman Rushdie was asked to describe India in one word. He answered that the first thing that calls his attention in the country is the crowd and that in order to represent this multitude in a book, one must ‘tell a crowd of stories’, meaning that one must ‘overcrowd’ the narrative with too many characters, too many incidents, where the main story has to ‘push its way through the crowd’.<sup>1</sup> The novel *Shame* is a good example of this ‘crowd’. It tells the story of the development of two families, the Harappas and the Hyders, and also the development of a recently independent country, which stands for Pakistan, but that the narrator says is not really Pakistan. The Harappas are constituted of Iskander Harappa, at some point the president of the country, his wife Rani and their daughter Arjumand Harappa who never married and wanted to dedicate her life to continuing her father’s political project for the nation. On the Hyders side, there are Bilquès and her husband Raza Hyder, who overthrows Iskander in a military coup and become the president. Their daughters are mentally challenged Sufiya Zinobia and her younger sister, Naveed. The former together with Omar Khayyam Shakil are the main characters, concentrating both political and family narratives in their marriage. Last, but not least, there are the other characters, such as Haroun Harappa, the only man Arjumand loved but who declined her love, Talver Ulhaq, Naveed’s husband, and the mysterious three sisters who give birth to Omar. Next to the family drama, there is the social turmoil that unfolds as the family narrative is told.

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<sup>1</sup>10 Questions for Salman Rushdie, (Time Magazine, video, 2010) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0xysoqT2gs>> [accessed 15 September 2011].

When one reads a book such as *Shame*, one has the opportunity to see literature working to its full potential. Firstly, it has a clear historical background. Some of the characters were based on real people in the political scenario in Pakistan during the seventies and earlier, entitling the book to be a historical novel, to a certain extent. Secondly, there is tragedy. It is a plot of betrayal, with the protégé who turns against his mentor, family feuds and a tragic ending. Thirdly, there is love. It is impossible to ignore the love that fades in marriages, such as in the tension between Raza and Bilquès, or the unreciprocated love Arjumand nurtures for Haroun; and how would it be possible for the reader to not love Sufiya Zinobia, a mentally challenged girl, innocent of heart, always seeking love, but never receiving it? And let us not forget the great psychological observations on human behavior, with an efficient use of metaphors and irony, the latter giving more than a touch of humor. The final result is that *Shame*, by combining all the elements above, is a powerful piece of observation and criticism, where the political and cultural threads of society that the novel is set to explore are intertwined, working in a co-dependent relationship.

It is this relationship which will be the object of study in this work. This thesis attempts to unfold the dynamics between culture and politics, especially concerning marriage, and how the issues that pervade the plot, such as religion, migration, the condition of women, colonialism and post-colonialism, identity, are presented in the novel. Post-modernism and post-colonial theories will be the primary guides for this study. There will be other forms of literary theoretical support, for example, the study of magical realism. As an important device in the novel, magical realism will be a recurrent topic throughout the thesis.

The first chapter will deal with a comparison of the structures of marriage and politics, and how they are manifested in the novel. It is important to understand the social view of

marriage in the Pakistani world. Some of the issues related to matrimony, such as religious foundations and its social roles, will be analyzed using the examples given in the novel. It will also explore the relation between the forms in which marriages are conducted and the ones used in political governance in Pakistan.

Although much of the position of women in marriage will be discussed in chapter 1, the second chapter will detail their situations not only in marriage, but in society as a whole. A deeper analysis of the female characters will be performed, for instance, how they relate to each other and to their male counterparts, the change in their behavior and what affects it. Control-resistance mechanisms will also be explored in this chapter. One important point to discuss is some essays by critics about the role of women in *Shame*. Some of them have argued that the novel does not have a feminist tone, in that female characters have not been liberated from the usual stereotypes attributed to them. Rather, they argue that the novel reinforces Western ideas of Oriental women as oppressed subjects.

In order to understand how the dynamic between marriage and politics is portrayed, the final two chapters will analyze some of the literary devices Rushdie uses. The third chapter will have an analysis of the text's satirical nature. While the reader might feel that *Shame* portrays a tragedy, they cannot but laugh. Such a trait is a comic one, differentiated from a 'comedic' trait: the former refers to 'funny', the latter addresses the idea of comedy as a particular genre in literature. This chapter will present theoretical explanations of terms related to satire and how and why the comic traits are employed in *Shame*.

### **Salman Rushdie and His Novel**

Born in India in the year of independence, 1947, Ahmed Salman Rushdie is an author who has never spared social criticism in his literary works, usually from a historical point of

view. As a matter of fact, Rushdie's education was in History, receiving his master degree at Cambridge University in 1968. Since his second novel, *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie has enjoyed a good deal of both positive criticism from literary circles and persecution from political and religious figures. Many people remember him as the man who received a *fatwa* for his fourth book, *The Satanic Verses*, and had to live in hiding under British police protection for approximately ten years, during which he had not stopped writing. In 2007 Rushdie became knighted, an event that was received with much protest from Pakistan.

Rushdie has usually not evaded any of the repressive attitudes against him, often reacting with a good dose of irony. For example, when facing one of his critics of *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie thanked those who opposed the novel for buying the books before burning them. As for the fatwa, he said that he wished he 'had written a more critical book'.<sup>2</sup> Such irony present in Rushdie the-man became one of Rushdie the-author's trademarks.

Being an essayist, Rushdie also enjoys writing about his work. In his book *Imaginary Homelands*, he makes an observation on Pakistani society in the essay entitled 'Censorship'. He mentions a reader's letter written to a Pakistani newspaper, where the letter writer supported the banning of the movie *Gandhi* from Pakistan on the basis that such measures would protect his society. According to the letter, the movie presented an 'unflattering' image of M.A. Jinnah, one of the instigators of Pakistan's independence, and the letter writer opined that if Pakistani people were 'less broad-minded' they would be better citizens of Pakistan'.<sup>3</sup>

This is one of the several examples the author presents in his essay. All of them have in common the concept of censorship as a tool to remove what is considered offensive material from society, but only the letter referred to above presented censorship as a desirable means of

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<sup>2</sup> *The Satanic Verses Affair*, dir. by Janice Sutherland (BBC, 2009)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmrZbZdoxac>> [accessed 30 January 2012].

<sup>3</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays On Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 37.



maintaining feelings of nationhood, and experiencing the order through unity that nationhood can provide. To question such feelings would be unthinkable. It is then possible to infer what behavior such an act of censorship encompasses: a sense of modesty, since one will not have the arrogant attitude of questioning what the elders in society have been teaching; shyness, for a shy person does not dare to call into question the established knowledge.

In his novel *Shame*, published in 1983, Rushdie argues that ‘shame’ is a key element that shapes Pakistani society. The narrator says that he needs to use the word in its original form in Urdu, *sharam*, because not only does it mean ‘shame (...) but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world’.<sup>4</sup> In the novel, shame, or the lack of it, is what propels the characters’ actions.

Operating in different spheres of society, censorship within the political and legal spheres and *sharam* within the cultural sphere, the juxtaposition of these notions demonstrates their similarities, and how they reinforce each other. While *sharam* may seep into the making of laws, thus reinforcing censorship, the latter will be embraced by a society which already lives in a state of constant self-censorship, be it of people’s emotions or their behavior.

Though this arrangement is seemingly a peaceful combination of civil and political values, *Shame* presents a society which is on the verge of collapsing. In *Shame*, in the dimension of private life, the narrator tells a story about a man, Omar Khayyam Shakil, who was raised in a very peculiar manner and forbidden to feel shame, and a woman, who brought the excess of shame to her family, Sufiya Zinobia. What are the consequences of a marriage between the shameless and the shameful? In a more political dimension, there is a leader, Iskander Harappa, who is betrayed by his protégé, Raza Hyder. What does it entail when a shameful country is governed by shameless politics? All relationships are dysfunctional at different levels for there is

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<sup>4</sup> Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 39.

an excess of control of what may be or not felt, said or done. As a result, all the unfelt is violently brought back to a society that can only repress behavior and feelings instead of dealing with them.

Although *Shame* is Rushdie's third novel, enjoying positive response from literary critics, it became more or less relatively similar to a middle-child who would receive less attention. This happened because *Shame* was published after his first acclaimed novel, *Midnight's Children*. After that, the next fictional work to be published would be *The Satanic Verses*, a piece that caused a major upheaval in the author's life. Squeezed between the first great success and the polemic novel that took all the public's attention away from it, *Shame* eventually became somewhat outside the spotlight. As is so common in Rushdie's life, on the one hand *Shame* won the French *Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger* (Best Foreign Book Prize) and was on the list for the *Booker Prize for Fiction*; on the other hand, it received a ban in Pakistan. To understand a book subject to such opposite responses, some theoretical and historical support will be needed. However, before understanding the theoretical choices, it is first necessary to understand the history of Pakistan and how it relates to the plot.

### ***Shame, Its History and Its Story***

Formerly a part of India, Pakistan was born with the independence of India from the British Empire and the Partition of India, which generated two independent states originally known as the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. The latter would suffer again another separation in 1971, when the People's Republic of Bangladesh was created out of the East Wing of Pakistan.

Though Pakistan's territory became independent only in 1947, the tension between a Muslim minority and a Hindu majority had been mounting since the nineteenth century, when a

school called 'Aligarh Scientific Society' was founded in 1863 with the objective to improve education in the Muslim community. This School became the Muslim League in 1906, a strong political party to which Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's governor-general after the Partition, belonged and which was largely responsible for supporting Jinnah's claims that Hindus and Muslims belonged not only to different religions, but different civilizations. Such claims became known as the Two-Nation Theory: 'an ethnic concept of nation, stressing that the Islam of India constituted a separate culture'.<sup>5</sup>

Jinnah's speeches on a nation made of Muslims have been interpreted in different ways. While some scholars argue that 'Muslim' in Jinnah's view was meant as a cultural term only, therefore contributing to the idea that Jinnah wanted a secular state; others opine that Jinnah was clear in his intentions of having a religion-based nation, guided by the Sharia laws. The Islamization process in Pakistan has had its peaks and valleys, but the overall post-independence situation has shown that the state was prone to the latter.

The idea of basing one's country identity primarily on religion poses, from the start, an identity formation problem. Frequently in interviews Salman Rushdie shows his position against this idea through the use of his parents as an example. As his parents do not use the term 'Muslim' to define themselves, religion should not be the only criterion to define a nation. In relation to Pakistan specifically, in one particular interview extract he mentions how the partition with India also caused partition within families, for some members of Muslim families would leave for Pakistan, while others remained in India. Moreover, he points to the cultural loss a community suffers once it decides to be closed to other cultures, thus becoming, as he said,

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<sup>5</sup> *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, ed. by Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Anthem Press, 2004), p. 13.

‘airless’. Finally, Rushdie usually remarks on the different philosophical doctrines within Islam, making it difficult, per definition, to achieve an idea of nationhood through religion.<sup>6</sup>

Following this last thought, Stephen Philip Cohen calls our attention to the fact that Pakistan has not only a variety of well-known Islamic communities, such as Sunni and Shi’ia, but also other Islamic doctrines. According to Cohen, these sects are tolerated, with the exception of the Ahmediyyas, who were even threatened with death if they referred to themselves as Muslims. The Ahmadi movement was founded in 1889 and it differed from the traditional Muslims in the core points of Islam. The main point of disagreement is the idea that Mirza Gulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadi group, was a prophet. This goes against the Koran that says that Muhammad was the last prophet. Another point of disagreement is the figure of Jesus. Unlike what many people may think, Jesus is of high importance for Islam. Being one of the main prophets in Islam, Jesus is considered to be so holy and perfect that he did not die on the cross, but rather was ‘lifted up’ to heaven, by God, and as for those who did not believe in Jesus and his story, ‘on the Day of the Ressurrection he will bear witness against them’ (4:158-159). The Ahmadi followers do not believe in this version of History, claiming that Jesus died like other ordinary men did, and even identifying the tomb where Jesus was buried.

Another problem lies in the more rural areas, where some villagers have religious practices which are mixed with other beliefs, including elements of Hinduism and Buddhism. Such examples demonstrate the difficulty in unifying a country’s identity solely on the idea of religion, especially when its territory had been in contact with a variety of influences, not only Indian, but also Western.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Sir Salman Rushdie on Pakistan* (2003), <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYvYe-84DNI>> [accessed 15 April 2011].

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 15.

Nevertheless, against all odds, Pakistan did not cease to exist. Politically speaking, it has struggled. Between the Independence and the time when *Shame* was published, it saw, in chronological order, a democratic government, a thirteen-year military period, during which Ayub Khan was president for seven years, followed by another democratic period in the hands of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister. After that, his protégé, general Muhammed Zia Ul-Haq overthrew him, initiating the second military government that would last until 1988, eleven years in total. Bhutto had promoted Ul-Haq to Chief Martial Law Administrator and saw the general as his right hand man. Zia, however, with allegiances with the opposition, turned against him, on the charges of Bhutto being a corrupt politician and of not being a good Muslim. As a matter of fact, Islam became Zia's main card in order to conquer the people's sympathy: Bhutto had an extraordinary charisma, to which the masses responded well. Zia's chance to have something similar was to start a thorough Islamization campaign.

When *Shame* was written, Zia was still in command of Pakistan. According to the narrator, the country in the novel is not 'quite' Pakistan, maybe to be simply ironic, or in an ironic attempt to tell the readers to distance themselves from reality and analyze the facts from a different point of view. Historically, the action in the novel happens in the period starting right before the Independence, going through the martial law previous to Bhutto's ascension to power, his demise, Zia's rise, ending in his fictionalized death. Even though the plot does not portray directly the pre-partition period, throughout the novel the condition of Pakistan is presented as a postcolonial country, as will be argued later.

The main characters belong to two families, the Hyder and the Harappa families, which are connected by politics and by blood. In the Hyder family, the male character is Raza Hyder, a soldier who married an orphan, Bilquïs, with whom he had two daughters. The eldest was Sufiya

Zinobia, a loving character who is not very loved in the plot. According to her parents, Sufiya should have been a boy and the fact that she was not conferred on her the title of 'wrong miracle'. She contracts a brain fever and, after receiving a potion prepared by a local Hakim (a doctor who bases his practices on Islamic beliefs), she was cured of the brain fever, but her mental development would never pass the age of seven. Their second daughter, spoiled Naveed, is the great pride in her mother's life. Raza Hyder corresponds to the historical figure of Zia Ul-Haq.

The other family is the Harappas. Iskander Harappa was married to Rani, who was Raza's cousin and who befriended Bilquis soon after her marriage to Raza. They have only one daughter, Arjumand, also known as the 'virgin Ironpants', because she chose never to marry after being rejected by her cousin Haroun Harappa. Arjumand was a great admirer of her father's political performance, planning to follow his steps. Iskander corresponds to the leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Arjumand represents Bhutto's daughter, Benazir Bhutto.

Outside the Hyder-Harappa domain, there is Omar Khayyam Shakil and his three enigmatic mothers. They are three sisters, Chunni, Munnee and Bunny, who live in seclusion in their mansion called 'Nishapur'. When their very strict father died, they had a big party to celebrate his death and their release, during which one of them became pregnant. In order to protect themselves, all three of them become 'pregnant': they all manifest the same pregnancy symptoms and, when one of them enters labor, all of them also present the same pains.

Omar was raised as to feel no shame. This is especially significant in Omar because he received a non-religious upbringing. His mothers did not do the call for prayer, a ritual that happens when a child is born and the father must whisper the words of God in his ear, as a form of baptism. They did not shave Omar's hair, nor did they circumcise him.

In *Shame*, the problem of Pakistan's identity is represented, amongst others, by Omar Khayyam. He has three mothers (who could be the territories of West Punjab, East Bengal and India)<sup>8</sup> and, as suggested, a father who may have been a British colonizer (the British Empire). After his birth, the three sisters who are his mothers live in complete reclusion and deny him the truth of his own origin. He learns about the West in the library of his grandfather and he learns about the East by the cultural elements he is denied, as he listened to his mothers comments. His mothers' attitude of denying such elements expresses their difficulty in coming to terms with their past, thus hindering the development of their future.

In this regard, Omar's mothers are very similar to the early government of Pakistan. Jaffrelot mentions a similar phenomenon when Pakistan closes itself from the world they once were part of. As Pakistan encapsulated itself, inner tensions were brought to the surface for, despite the fact that Pakistan was created in order to defend the interests of a Muslim minority that would probably have suffered under the rule of a Hindu majority in independent India, the creation of Pakistan did not benefit all Muslims. A symptom of such strain that arose even before the independence was the issue of language.

## **Theory**

In order to have a better understanding of the novel, certain theoretical aspects must be discussed. Here, postcolonial and magical realism theories will be discussed, while chapters 2 and 3 will detail feminist criticism and theory of satire.

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<sup>8</sup> In the partition, it was agreed that the western area of Bengal and the eastern portion of Punjab would belong to India, becoming West Bengal and the state of Punjab, respectively.

## *Postcolonial Theory*

Language has been a core concern in post-colonial studies. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, ‘colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial centre (...) remains the most potent instrument of cultural control’.<sup>9</sup> Following this thought, Pakistan’s early government imposed Urdu as the official language, as opposed to English or Hindi, languages that represented the British colonizers and the Hindus respectively. Urdu would represent Islam and unify its believers within the same nation; this nation becoming an attempt at decolonizing the country. Not only was this idea supported by the Punjabi Urdu-speaking elite, but it also found support among the masses, as Ahmar Mahboob reminds us. According to him, ‘religious parties are typically more popular among the less-educated groups of people, who do not have access to English education and consider it to be a hurdle in their access to economic and social mobility’.<sup>10</sup>

However, Urdu would find two major obstacles in its way to establish itself as the main language. The first would be the history. By the time Pakistan was born, English had become the official language, having acquired a more or less accepted and stable role in society. It was associated with prestige, a sign of good education and means of climbing the social ladder, as the language in use at universities and in the armed forces was English.<sup>11</sup> The other great barrier was posed by ethnical fronts. Although English represented the *kafir*<sup>12</sup> colonizers, Urdu could not be the most representative language of an Islamic nation, for this new nation was composed by different ethnicities, each with their own language. In short, the scenario had the colonizer’s

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<sup>9</sup>*The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p.283.

<sup>10</sup>Ahmar Mahboob, ‘English As An Islamic Language: A Case Study of Pakistani English’, *World Englishes*, 28 (2009), 175-189 (p. 179).

<sup>11</sup>Tariq Rahman, ‘The Urdu-English Controversy in Pakistan’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 31 (1997), 177-207 (pp.182-185) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/312861>> [accessed 1 November 2011].

<sup>12</sup>Term used by Muslims to refer to non-Muslims.



language as an important language historically rooted into different areas of society. It also had Urdu as the language of a certain Muslim dominant group and a myriad of other languages linked to other Muslim groups. These differences caused several ‘language riots’ to happen and in this situation, ironically, English became the lesser of all evils, acquiring a new status: it became a neutral language.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to mention that this English that remained in Pakistan, as well as in other former British colonies, did not remain intact. It underwent a ‘nativization’ process. As the name suggests, it gained traits from the new place where the language is being spoken. Parts of this process are the abrogation and appropriation phases. Ashcroft mentions that abrogation is the first step in order to displace the colonizer’s language from its center of power and dominance, to a place where it will serve the colonized needs. Abrogation constitutes refusing ‘the categories of imperial culture’,<sup>14</sup> such as the sense of what is correct, the traditional, the aesthetic element and so forth. Following this step is the appropriation, where the language is acquiring new meanings, new usages, differing, thus, from the original colonial language.

In *Shame* the linguistic issue is discussed, as already mentioned, in the explanation of what ‘shame’ and ‘sharam’ mean, which epitomizes the problem of translation. The idea is that translation has a larger responsibility in communication that transcends the linguistic aspect, but which also includes the social aspects of a community’s life. Rushdie writes in the novel that ‘to unlock a society, look at its untranslatable words’ (p. 104). This means that language reflects its society’s needs and ways of living through words which are unique and do not find equivalents in a foreign language because this foreign language represents a foreign culture, with different

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<sup>13</sup> The same happened in India, for India had similar cultural problems as Pakistan (Braj B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English*).

<sup>14</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2010) p. 37.

needs and ways of life. However, this does not mean that Urdu is the only language that can express Pakistani society, because not only has it several different local languages, but it also has English, a language that stayed in the land long enough to become meaningful and therefore difficult to reject.

This discussion of which pre-colonization language should receive the label ‘official’ in Pakistan is a metonymy for a greater problem: what is the identity of colonized countries? Is it possible to restore a status after colonization when there was no such thing to restore, since the nation did not exist? The question is how to come to terms with this past in the present of Pakistan and, since the comparison was made, of Omar in *Shame*.

The identity issue has been a chief concept in postcolonial theory. Zygmunt Bauman points out that one thinks of identity when the sense of belonging is not clear. He suggests that in the postmodern world (and by inclusion the postcolonial and postindependence world of Pakistan), ‘the “problem of identity” is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open (...) the catchword of postmodernity is recycling’.<sup>15</sup> The idea is that the set of characteristics in which one group recognizes itself is changeable and perceived as natural. Cultures are not immune to the contact with other cultures and the mutations resulting from such meetings.

In his book, *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha develops this idea further when he says that cultures do not dwell in the self-other binary. The ‘action’ starts when they meet and a ‘third space’ is created, which is the space where the exchange of cultural elements will happen. This interaction will happen constantly and the people who participate in it are not aware of this

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<sup>15</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, ‘From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity’, in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 18-37 (p. 18).

continuous reinvention of those elements. At some point it will not be possible to return to the initial point from which the original cultures started.

It is important to note that by ‘exchange’ is meant specially the mutation of cultural elements into something new. The Pakistani English case discussed above is a good example, since it is not simply assimilated, but changed in this process, creating a hybrid. Thus, it is in this space where the process of hybridization (two or more cultures influencing one another) will happen, producing something new. The hybrid is of ultimate importance particularly in the formation of identity in postcolonial scenarios because it challenges the authority of the colonizer’s hegemonic position. The hybrid’s negotiation process is ‘neither assimilation nor collaboration’, but it relies on agencies that,

deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole.<sup>16</sup>

Basing the country’s nationhood uniquely on Islam is, in conclusion, the rejection of the hybrid identity, a repression of cultural manifestations and a form of censorship. Such rejection is a shame because although the elements are still there, they are neither allowed to work together nor is it possible for them to work on their own. In Rushdie’s words, Pakistan is a ‘fantastic bird of a place, two Wings a thousand miles apart, sundered by the land-mass of its greatest foe, joined by nothing but God’ (p. 178).

As explained before, the creation of such nationalism in Pakistan was made through the imposition of laws, often without considering the people who were making the new country. The political scenario is fictionalized in *Shame* in the figures of Harappa and Hyder, characters who stand for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul-Haq. Bhutto became President of Pakistan in 1971,

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<sup>16</sup>Homi Bhabha, ‘Culture’s In-Between’, in Hall and du Gay, pp. 53-61 (p. 66).

immediately after Bangladesh became independent, and remained in power until 1977, partly as President and partly as Prime Minister and Administrator of Martial Law. According to Jaffrelot,<sup>17</sup> Bhutto ‘combined modern values with feudal attitudes’. Among these modern values were his ideas of agrarian reform, where land was redistributed, the promulgation of a temporary constitution and the current amended constitution of 1973. On the other hand, among his feudal attitudes was the fact that the agrarian reform benefitted the poor very little, for the land given to them was of poor quality, the planned dilution of the country’s economic wealth which was concentrated in twenty-two families was not implemented, he gave himself the title of President and later after the introduction of the second constitution he became Prime Minister, passing the presidency on to a minor politician.

Bhutto was seen as the savior of Pakistan after it had lost Bangladesh and he had made many promises to accelerate the development in the country. However, many of his measures proved to backfire, specially the nationalization. At first, when he nationalized the former private industries and created antimonopoly measures, he received much support. This support started to progressively diminish once he nationalized small businesses responsible for the production of cotton, rice and flour, and ‘this alienated a number of small entrepreneurs and merchants who had supported him since the 1970 elections’.<sup>18</sup> His popularity diminished radically and after he sought support from the head of the army, Zia ul-Haq, he was arrested in 1977 as Zia’s measure to ‘protect’ the country.

Similar to the relationship between Zia and Bhutto and their counterparts Harappa and Hyder, is the relationship between Omar and Sufiya. The girl was the embodiment of shame. Her first ‘sin’ was to be born a girl, when she should have been a boy. The second was to contract

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<sup>17</sup>Jaffrelot, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup>Jaffrelot, p. 77.

brain fever and, as a sequel, her mental development was retarded and her mother, unifying both tragedies, said: 'He [Raza Hyder] wanted a hero for a son; I gave him an idiot female instead. (...) she is my shame' (p. 101). By marrying Sufiya, Omar was supposed to save and redeem her, particularly by trying to remove her shame. However, similarly to the 'marriage' between Bhutto and Pakistan, the marriage between Omar and Sufiya happened to ultimately reinforce the relationship of power of Omar over Sufiya. According to Inderpal Grewal, the 'novel thus reinscribes the patriarchal role of women as passive and ineffectual or as mediators of male power' and even though Sufiya finds freedom from this lifetime of shame and patriarchal control through violence by becoming a violent beast, Grewal sees this as a bleak form of escape from the feminist point of view.<sup>19</sup> Sufiya becomes someone who kills boys after having sexual intercourse with them and when her crimes became known to her husband, he was the one who chained her and drugged her to try to keep her from committing more crimes, a measure that does not work, for in the end Sufiya murders him.

The interpretation of Sufiya as the representation of the Pakistani people will be discussed later, as there are several indications throughout the novel that support this view. Perhaps the most explicit of them is found at a point towards the end of the narrative, where it is said that maybe 'she had never been more than a rumour, a chimaera, the collective fantasy of a stifled people, a dream born of their rage (...)' (p. 263). The implication is that, like Sufiya, the most probable way in which Pakistani people will find freedom will be through violence, because 'the Beast of shame cannot be held for long' (p. 286).

Such considerations about the marriage between Omar and Sufiya are, in fact, a part of the larger picture of the treatment women receive and how close this treatment is to how politics

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<sup>19</sup> Inderpal Grewal, 'Marginality, Women and *Shame*', in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. by M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 123-144 (p.129).

is approached in Pakistan. Watching the relationships in the novel, one will discover that the laws that govern the country are similar to the ones that govern relationships. The roles the people and women play in their respective situations are similar, they are both oppressed and they both seem to conform to their positions, even if it does not mean that they are happy.

### *Magical Realism*

Sufiya's transformation is a fantastic element in the narrative and, following its thread, it is appropriate to discuss magical realism as a tool used to uncover reality. In an interview, Rushdie mentions that the use of magical realism in Gabriel García Márquez is designed to tell the truth about a certain situation, though very often it is a misunderstood term by the public:

The trouble with the phrase 'Magical Realism' is that when people use it, they tend to hear the 'magic' and not hear the 'realism', whereas in fact, one of the things of going to the world of García Márquez [visiting Latin America] is that you discover he is telling the truth (...) these books which people call "fantasies" are actually mild understatements of the truth.<sup>20</sup>

This means that, at first glance, fantastic elements are just a hyperbole for out scaled situations of what happens in real life: an angry person or a mob, yes, but the anger would never turn them into a beast; a woman with many children, yes, but not 27, and so forth. However, they are not hyperboles because they transcend the border of reality, of what is possible: an exaggeration would portray Naveed with 10 children, because it is a rare phenomenon, but it is possible. Therefore, these elements are almost a euphemism of what they are trying to communicate. Like satire uses humor to lighten the weight of problems, magical realism uses fantasy to disguise a reality which otherwise would be too crude.

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<sup>20</sup> A Conversasion with Salman Rushdie, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XZwrqlHMB8&feature=related>> [accessed 23 April 2011].

This position seems to echo Stephen Slemon when he says that the ‘imaginative reconstruction has echoes of postcolonial thoughts which seek to recuperate voices’.<sup>21</sup> The idea Slemon develops is that magical realism is a product of marginalized groups who want to resist the authoritarian ideas introduced by the center, the ‘center’ meaning the group that is in power. Moreover, magical realism seems to be particularly appropriate to explain the reality of a post-colonial environment ‘because at least two separate realities [those of the colonizers and the colonized], both of which are relevant and neither of which is completely accurate, work simultaneously’.<sup>22</sup> This demonstrates that magical realism has a hybrid nature, very similar to what was argued in the identity issue earlier.

Magical realism seems to be particularly delicate to define, because even literary dictionaries offer definitions which are often too vague. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* defines it as a ‘genre of contemporary fiction in which a limited number of fantastic elements appear within a preponderantly realistic narrative’; the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* describes such a form as ‘a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the “reliable” tone of objective realistic report’. Such definitions appear to only replace the words ‘magical’ and ‘realism’ with synonymous words and expressions.

However, critics agree with the idea that the narrator must include the fantastic elements without showing surprise that these elements are there. As a matter of fact, it is in this casual manner that magical realism finds strength as a social criticism tool. Issues from people’s daily life are presented as something out of the ordinary, causing a sense of strangeness in the reader.

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Slemon ‘Magic Realism and Postcolonial Discourse’, in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. by Wendy Faris and Lois Parkinson Zamora (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 407-427 (p.415).

<sup>22</sup> Adrienne T. Chilsom, ‘Magic Realism and Self-Conscious Writing in *Waterland* and *Shame*’, <<http://postcolonialweb.org/pakistan/literature/rushdie/magicreal1.html>> [accessed 18 March 2012].

Naveed's pregnancies is a good example. In an Islamic culture, several pregnancies are usually a reason to rejoice because they mean fertility and the blessing of God. The narrator extrapolates the number, first giving birth to twins, then to triplets, quadruplets and so forth. Neither the narrator nor the characters show surprise, as Raza only thinks Talvar is 'overdoing' his duty as a husband. The reader may recognize in this extrapolation and in the characters' lack of surprise the problems many pregnancies bring, which in the real life are overlooked. This seems to be the case of *Sharam*, because as the narrator says, after living too long with it, it becomes furniture.

When Rushdie made use of magical realism in his 1983 novel and before that, this device had already been enjoying much popularity in Hispanic Latin American literature for at least thirty years. As a matter of fact, it is impossible not to speak about magical realism in relation to that part of the world. Firstly, even though the term originated in Germany in the beginning of the twentieth century, it was in Spanish America that the term became strong. Secondly, Salman Rushdie is a confessed admirer of Gabriel García Márquez' works, specially *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Finally, it is impossible not to see the similarities between *Shame* and Gabriel's, lovingly known as Gabo, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, a novel Rushdie is clearly familiar with.<sup>23</sup>

Gabriel's novel was published in 1975, many years before *Shame*. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* narrates the story of a dictator in an imaginary country called Mar Caribe (Caribbean Sea) who came to power through a military coup. With the use of irony and the grotesque,<sup>24</sup> the novel ridicules the dictator, who embodies several Latin American dictators, and his tyranny. Any resemblance to *Shame* is not purely coincidental. As said before, Rushdie is a connoisseur of the Latin American literary tradition and admits its influence on his work.

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<sup>23</sup> 'Gabriel García Márquez' in *Imaginary Homelands*, pp. 299-307.

<sup>24</sup> André Jansen, 'La Progresión del Humor de García Márquez em Sus Tres Novelas Mayores', *Actas del XI Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (1992) [accessed 30 April 2012].

<sup>25</sup> Anne Hegerfeldt, 'Contentious Contributions: Magic realism goes British', *Janus Head* 5 (2002), 62-86 < [www.janushead.org/5-2/hegerfeldt.pdf](http://www.janushead.org/5-2/hegerfeldt.pdf) > [accessed 17 May 2012], p. 63.



While magical realism has been a term heavily associated with Hispanic Latin America, and is very much used in that critical tradition, the appreciation for the fantastic migrated. With Salman Rushdie and other writers, magical realism has gone British, as Anne Hegerfeldt argues. She defends the idea that magical realism is an ‘inherently postcolonial mode’<sup>25</sup> because it always entails an ideological political agenda that seeks to displace the center of power. In order to analyze her argument, it is necessary to understand a little more of the characteristics of this story-telling mode.

In his article entitled ‘Five Theses About Magical Realism’ (free translation), Abdón Ubidia analyzes Latin American literature and lists five aspects of magical realism.<sup>26</sup> Despite the fact that he defends magical realism as an exclusive Latin American mode exactly because of such aspects, it is possible to apply all of them to the magical realism found in Postcolonial British literature. First and foremost, he establishes that oral tradition and beliefs in Latin America provide the basis of magical realism. He argues that it pretends to be an oral discourse. This may not be true for all magic realistic British novels, but it certainly is to *Shame*. The India subcontinent shares with Latin America the tradition of telling oral stories in families and of using popular beliefs and legends in stories. *Shame* brings the figure of Bariamma, the ultimate story teller: she is the person who tells the family tales, altering them, exaggerating or diminishing certain events, until they reach a final version which will be the one to enter history. Another example is the tales about Sufiya after she becomes a panther. The narrator refers to ‘illiterate voyagers’ (p. 253) who could not have read the story, and even calling her a ‘white panther’ was a little suspicious, since ‘nobody ever reported an actual sighting’ (p. 252). The

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<sup>26</sup> Abdón Ubidia, ‘Cinco Tesis Acerca del “Realismo Mágico”’, in *Hispanamérica*, 25, no. 78, pp. 101-107.

explanation for the beast to be described as a panther is that the actions mingled with the collective perception of violence and what causes it, a typical dynamic of oral transmissions.

The second aspect mentioned by Ubidia was discussed before – the idea that ‘magical realism is born where social realism ends’.<sup>27</sup> This means that social realism will provide the basis for a plot, for example, but magical realism will garnish it. The third aspect is that magical realism rejects the European notion that Latin America is ‘a big jungle that resists to be conquered’.<sup>28</sup> He gives the name of ‘creolism’ to the set of ideas that Latin American natives are barbarians, which would represent the Evil, whereas the civilization is the Good. ‘Creolism’ may be Said’s ‘Orientalism’ when applied to Latin America. The rejection of such ideas is part of the essence of Postcolonialism. In *Shame*, though the rulers are educated in accordance with Western civilized ideals, they are far from being good rulers.

Another aspect is that magical realism is part of a group of similar but distinct modes of story-telling. Ubidia stresses that magical realism is not fantastic literature, even though it has fantastic elements. The main difference is that in magical realism, the fantastic elements are part of that realistic world, they are expected to happen, even if the reader is temporarily deceived by the realistic tone of the narrative. In fantastic literature, the reader does not know for sure if the elements are real and the fantastic elements come as a surprise. The surprise aspect was already commented on above. Moreover, this is reinforced by Jeffrey Wechsler in his analysis of magical realism in art, saying that ‘magic realism does not invent a new order of things; it simply reorders reality to make it seem alien’,<sup>29</sup> an idea which can be transferred to literature.

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<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Wechsler ‘Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite’. *Art Journal*, 45, 4 (1985), pp. 293-298 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/776800>> [accessed 30 April 2012], p. 102.

<sup>28</sup> Wechsler, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> Wechsler, p. 293.

The transformation of Sufiya seems to fit this case. It is the most bizarre example of magical realism in the novel. However, when the reader reaches this point, other fantastical elements have already been presented: for instance Talvar's clairvoyance (he would only seek his wife when he knew she was in her fertile period) and Naveed's babies. Moreover, the reader receives signs along the narrative that something in Sufiya will change radically.

Ubidia's analysis, though very pedagogical, appears to be too limiting sometimes. It grounds magical realism within Latin American borders and dwells on the dichotomies such as oral versus written. Hegerfeldt, however, has a more open perspective. Not only is magical realism a postcolonial mode, it also contains characteristics which are not exclusive to the colonized countries. While acknowledging the oral tradition as part of the magical realistic writing, for example, she questions the notion that an untraditional manner of telling a story can only come from colonized countries. She says that 'texts from British fiction emphasize the extent to which alternative, frequently marginalized modes of thought are not restricted to (post)colonial cultures, but exist also in Western settings'.<sup>30</sup> She argues that certain patterns of subverting the central discourse are anthropological, meaning that they are recurrent in different societies, whether they are closely related or not.

Hegerfeldt calls our attention to the fact that magical realism has a great share of realism in it, echoing what Rushdie said, that people tend to forget the word 'realism' when they hear 'magical realism'.<sup>31</sup> She emphasizes that realism is crucial to the magical realistic writing. The more realistic elements in a piece, the larger the effect of the real will be when contrasted with the fantastic elements. There are many ways an author can use in order to print this strong realism mark.

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<sup>30</sup> Hegerfeldt, p. 64

<sup>31</sup> Introductory quotation.

A very common way is the ‘doubling of the extratextual world’.<sup>32</sup> This means to make use of features that address the idea of realism. For example, the journalistic way of writing, which will make the text seem more of a documentary text; historical references; or the excessive use of details. *Shame* makes use of at least one of these, which is the historical references, since the novel is based on a historical period of Pakistan. However, Rushdie adds strategies which Hegerfeldt does not list. Rushdie makes intrusion in the text, interfering with the fictional voice of the narrator. While the criticism generally accepts that it is Rushdie himself who intervenes the narrative by making comments or giving real life examples, he is still a created voice in the fictional world of *Shame*. The examples of real life (his sister living in Karachi, Pakistani friends who visited him in England) and his explanations on how he created his characters are features that add to the ‘realism’ share of the novel.

Another strategy is the ‘literalization’. It is not enough to say that a people can become a monster if they are oppressed, in the sense that they can become aggressive. The author needs to actually transform the people into a real monster through the figure of Sufiya. The ghosts in *Shame* are also a form of literalization. Hegerfeldt points out that ghosts are the ‘offspring of a guilty conscience’. In *Shame*, it is not clear that Iskander and Dawood are real ghosts that haunt Raza. On the one hand, the reader does not doubt because of the magical parts of the world in which the story takes place; on the other hand, the reader may think that Raza is hallucinating because he had treated Iskander so badly.

Hegerfeldt also mentions that magical realism has a ‘tendency to adopt a marginalized, peripheral or “ex-centric” point of view’. It means that the narrator will speak from a peripheral place and this serves the objectives of Postcolonialism. This is the case of *Shame*, where the

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<sup>32</sup>Hegerfeldt, p. 66

narrator emphasizes his condition of being a peripheral voice, from the margins, especially because the writer is neither in the center of the colonized, nor in the center of the colonizers.

However, one plausible reason for the use of magical realism in *Shame* may have to do with the proximity of that with religion. It is necessary to see religion as a world where magical events take place and they are accepted as real. Religion has a very interesting place in people's daily life. It is a form of magical realism in real life: there is the real world, but people who have faith will believe in fantastic events if they take place. As a book that criticizes extreme Islamic views, seeing them as absurd, it is interesting to see Rushdie's choice to use magical realism.

Another reason why magical realism was chosen and incorporated into this novel, is the fact that magical realism has been seen as a fragmented mode of seeing the world, because it does not portray reality fully, leaving the reader to put together the pieces of reality which are offered through the magical realist techniques. The narrator of *Shame* admits that he learnt about Pakistan in slices first, and then put together these slices in order to make a whole.

One important aspect of magical realism, according to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, is that the form and the tone in which a story is told are important. In order to be considered a magic-realistic story, 'the magical events (...) are narrated in great realistic detail but without the narrator registering surprise or commenting on their strangeness'.<sup>33</sup> This applies to the fairy tale genre. Its techniques have very often been compared to the ones used in *Shame*. The beginning of the novel is very emblematic:

In the remote border town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumb-bell, there once lived three lovely, and loving sisters. (...) And one day their father died. (p.11)

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<sup>33</sup> *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Laure-Marie Ryan (London: Routledge, 2010), < <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/> > [accessed 9 April 2012].

This beginning resembles the beginning of a fairy-tale: it takes place on a ‘remote border’, similar to a ‘kingdom far away’, the three sisters, a significant number which is very recurrent in fairy-tales, and a tragedy that happens, the death of their father, which will be the beginning of their problems. However, this is not a story about the sisters, as one might think judging by this beginning, but rather the product of these sisters. In addition to that, as the narrator says, the novel is a ‘modern fairy-tale’ and now and then the narrator gives us hints of reality. For example, when he says the story happened in the fourteenth century, he immediately remarks that the calendar is Hegiran, ‘naturally: don’t imagine that stories of this type always take place long long ago’ (p. 13), which makes the story approach our own reality.

This fairy-tale tone is also reduced with the use of irony and mockery throughout the novel. The intrusive narrator makes constant comments on the characters and their actions, mocking them. At some point of the narrative, he makes a joke saying that Bangladesh did not make part of the acronym in ‘Pakistan’ – ‘P for Punjabis, A for Afghans, K for the Kashmiris, S for Sind and the “tan” for Baluchistan’ – and therefore they ‘took the hint and seceded from the secessionists. Imagine what such a double secession does to people!’ (p. 87). He also names the imaginary country in the novel Peccavistan, deriving from the word ‘peccavi’, meaning ‘I have sinned’. This subverts and mocks the original intention of the name Pakistan, which means ‘Land of the Pure’.

## **Satire**

This example is an indicator of the satirical nature of the text. A satire ‘is a verbal aggression in which some aspect of historical reality is exposed to ridicule’,<sup>34</sup> usually with a comic angle. According to this point of view, a satirical text will attack something or someone;

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<sup>34</sup> Fletcher, *Contemporary Political Satire* (New York: University Press of America, 1987), p.ix.

and since postcolonial texts tend to attack the colonizer, satire and postcolonialism have something key in common. However, the satirical nature of *Shame* is not reserved to criticizing the West, but it is vastly used to criticize the social values of a cultural heritage which does not come from the colonizer, such as *sharam*.

‘Satire’ is an ample term, as John Clement Ball<sup>35</sup> calls our attention to: there is ‘satire’ as a tone in the narrative and ‘satire’ as a form of narrative. As a result, many texts may have satirical content without being a satire, even if they are based on an historical event and fictionalized in a novel. This is the case of the apologues, as Fletcher suggests. He argues that both have roots in historical happenings, but, according to his point of view, while the satire is concerned only with the ridiculing of an historical event, an apologue may or may not have this satirical tone, it may or may not expose the historical figures to ridicule, transcending the entertainment aspect of the satire, assuming a more critical tone of the object.<sup>36</sup> Thus, echoing Ball’s idea, satire becomes a strategy in the apologue genre and Fletcher sees *Shame* as an apologue, not as a satire. However, his definition of apologue seems very close, if not the same, to the definitions of satire. This thesis will consider *Shame* a satire. Many other terms are attached to ‘satire’ and ‘apologue’, but they will be discussed further in chapter 3.

### *Postcolonial and Postmodernism*

Hitherto, some literary elements connected to the postcolonial theory have become evident, such as satire, fairy-tale, intrusive narrator, history-based novel. According to Linda Hutcheon, these features are also part of the postmodern novels. In her opinion, ‘postmodern

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<sup>35</sup>John Clement Ball, *Satire & The Post-Colonial Novel: V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>36</sup>M. D. Fletcher, ‘Rushdie’s *Shame* as Apologue’, in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. by M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 95-106 (p.95).

writing is metafictional and also parodic intertextuality of or ironically distanced comment on previous texts (literary or historical)'.<sup>37</sup> In addition to being also a parody, this point of view goes further, indicating that such parodic texts have critical potential, as opposed to the postmodernism critics that argue that such texts are not engaged enough in history in order to generate a critical view.

Although postcolonial and postmodern novels share some elements, it is important to note that the 'post' in 'postcolonialism' is not the same 'post' in 'postmodernism'. While postcolonialism refers to a country's situation from the first contact between colonizer and colonized, postmodernism refers to a set of concepts that challenge those of modernism, starting around the 1950s. One of the main aspects of postmodernism is the displacement of the center, the deconstruction of the mainstream discourse. This is also a main concern expressed in postcolonial narratives, but in a more particular manner, since in this case the 'center' is considered to be the colonizer and his discourse. While deconstruction in postcolonial terms means to shift the focus from the colonizer to the colonized, postmodern art is not necessarily concerned with challenging the Empire, but since the Empire represents the center, postmodern may work together with postcolonial theories. Therefore, it seems appropriate to use both theoretical positions for a broader understanding of the novel, without limiting the novel to its postcolonial aspect.

In this sense, *Shame* can be considered as both a postcolonial and postmodern novel. Thematically, it deals with the aftermath of colonization, such as identity and nationhood, but it also deals with Pakistan's inner historical conflicts that had started to develop prior to colonization, such as the Muslim-Hindu clash.

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<sup>37</sup> M.D. Fletcher, 'Introduction: The Politics of Salman Rushdie's Fiction', in *Reading Rushdie*, ed. by M. D. Fletcher, pp. 1-22 (p.6).



However similarly, there are positions in which these theories collide. Some postcolonialism critics see postmodernism as less serious and also a form of eurocentrism, an expression of Western culture. Another difference between postcolonialism and postmodernism is that postcolonialism has the aim of recuperating a part of History which was lost to the colonized in the hands of the colonizer, telling the untold. Nevertheless, this seems more like one of the potentials of postmodernism than a difference, for in this sense postcolonialism seems to be a postmodernism being guided in a certain direction. Such positions will be considered throughout the development of the analysis of the novel.

Postcolonial studies was not the only field that coincided with studies in postmodernism. Feminist theories also arose from the need to speak back to the center of power in society. The ‘center’, in this case, is the male domination. For a woman, to live in a male dominated society means to be a colonized object. Countries that went through the process of colonization and had a society based on patriarchy became known in feminist theory as suffering ‘double colonization’, because the manner in which women are dominated by men is often similar to how colonized countries are dominated by the colonizer. Feminist theories are concerned not only with investigating how this colonization takes place, but also how women respond to that and how they may escape the male sovereignty, whenever this is possible.

### *Feminist Criticism*

The narrator in *Shame* says that the novel has two plots, one ‘male’, which takes place within the public and political spheres; and one ‘female’, which happens in the private sphere, in the families. However, he acknowledges that the female plot is the “‘male” plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and “‘female” side’ (p. 173). This implies that the

political plot is also a female plot, as advocated by Inderpal Grewal.<sup>38</sup> To expand this idea, it is possible to say that the women suffer a type of control similar to what the Pakistani people suffers under a dictatorship.

In *Shame* all women are affected by the patriarchal world in which they live. As a consequence, their actions are a direct response, a mechanism they develop in order to cope with the oppression. Even the unmarried Arjumand Harappa had her actions influenced by the male world. While for Sufiya and most of the other female characters in the novel much of the influence comes from the figure of the husband, for Arjumand the influence comes from her father and her perception of the male-dominant environment, which leads to her rejection of matrimony and her femininity, in general. She decided to reject her feminine side and become more like her father because she saw in this attitude a way to gain respect and, perhaps, a little more freedom than what women usually have.

As the main focus of this work will be on the relationship between politics and culture, more specifically concerning marriage, the investigation of women's roles in the novel is crucial for the development of the analysis. Moreover, as argued earlier, women also stand, in this novel, for the people of Pakistan when faced with their male rulers. Marriage is a fertile ground for the comparison and allegory of power on the different levels that the novel presents, such as the historical, political and social levels.

However, such a rich novel will still leave points uncovered by this thesis. Nevertheless, this is an attempt to investigate how Rushdie subverts not only history and story-telling traditions through the eyes of postmodernism and postcolonialism. In addition, although *Shame* is largely based on Pakistan, the discussion of repression and its consequences transcend borders because, as the narrator affirms, 'Shame, dear reader, is not the exclusive property of the East' (p. 29).

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<sup>38</sup>Grewal, p.124.

The transformation of shame or *sharam* into a negative manifestation of rebellion in the figure of Sufiya Zinobia, who reaches a point where she refuses to be the receptacle for other people's unfelt shame, releases this self-love and shame in a most tragic manner. The figure of Omar Khayyam Shakil, a boy who, like Pakistan, was denied the right to have a past, thus making it more difficult to develop a consistent present, suggests that repression is not meant to be ignored, for the price to pay later might not be affordable by the population.

## Chapter 1

### **Shame: The Cultural, Political and Religious Parts of It**

*Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes (...) breeds repressions of other kinds as well. (Shame, p.173)*

Salman Rushdie was no stranger to censorship when he wrote his third novel, *Shame*. He had suffered a lawsuit from Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who did not like how she was depicted in his novel *Midnight's Children*. Later, it was *Shame's* turn to be banned in Pakistan because General Mohammed Zia Ul-Haq, the President, felt the book denigrated his image. His fourth 'prize' was the fatwa Ayatollah Khomeini issued for the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, his fourth novel, a book which was banned not only in the Muslim world, but also in countries which are not traditionally associated with this religion, such as South Africa (1988) and Venezuela (1989). Repression is a key concept in Rushdie's works and in his personal life.

Although *Shame* is a fierce criticism of the manner in which Pakistan is politically conducted, it does not spare reproach against civilian life. The concept of 'shame' is at the root of, if not all, then most evils in Pakistan, and it is a concept that is born in civilian society and accommodates itself in political life, as the quotation above suggests. This chapter will discuss shame's role in political and civil life and how it takes form in the novel.

#### **The Social and Marital Life of Shame**

Pakistan was built under the Islamic premise of *ummah*, which is the name given to the community of Muslims, where they are supposed to treat each other as brothers and sisters. In such a context, shame has a collective effect, and this is applicable to families in particular. This

means that to maintain the family pure without shame, ‘honor (izzat) is ascribed to the whole group on the basis of how its individual members behave’.<sup>39</sup> If one member of the family makes a mistake, shame will befall the entire family. In this setting shame has a heavier toll for women than men, but this will be discussed in the next chapter. Such ideas are expressed along the narrative in *Shame*, but more directly in the voice of one of the women who live in Bariamma’s house, reproaching Bilquīs for not having had a child: ““The disgrace of your barrenness, Madam, is not yours alone. Don’t you know that shame is collective? The shame of any of us sits on us all and bends our backs”” (p. 84).

The novel involves shame and shamelessness, and how they affect the society and the individual. In the beginning of the narrative, the clash between these two ideas is visible in the figure of the three Shakil sisters, the mothers of the novel’s (anti)hero, Omar Khayyam. The narrator says that they were raised with the help of ‘an iron morality that was mostly Muslim’ (p. 13), and that they had lived all their lives imprisoned in their mansion. This attitude was meant to secure the sisters’ honor, maintaining the family free of shame. Like this, none could have the opportunity to make a dishonorable mistake, since the sisters had no contact with situations that could potentially lead them to shame. Or could they still be led to shame?

The reader learns from the narrator that the cloister did not do much to keep the sisters ‘pure’. They would imagine how men looked naked, there were rumors that they explored their sexuality through their bodies and that they wished their father would die sooner than later. When Mr. Shakil died, all these repressed feelings were released, embodied in an indulgent gala party: invitations with gold lettering, alcohol, music ‘for the first time in two decades’, much food (p.15). Such excesses represent the opposite of modesty that *sharam* encompasses. In the

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<sup>39</sup>Thomas E. Fricke, Sabiha H. Syed and Peter C. Smith, ‘Rural Punjab Organisation and Marriage Timing Strategies in Pakistan’, in *Demography*, 23 (1986), pp. 480-508 (p. 492), <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2061347>> [accessed 16 February 2012].

middle sister Munnee's words, the party 'would have seemed like a completely shameless going-on' to their father and would have been 'the proof of his failure to impose his will on us' (p. 15). This demonstrates that the excess of shame is fought with the excess of shamelessness, a point that is made throughout the novel, and the result is positively negative. The party is a repercussion of the repressed shame in the private family life. It may be interpreted as an omen of the violent outburst of all this shame deposited in Sufiya throughout the novel, this being that of public social life.

If Mr. Shakil's intentions were to protect his daughters' honor, there was yet another possibility somewhat more civil than the confinement he imposed on them. According to Fricke, Syed and Smith, early marriage is a common Punjabi practice in order to protect the honor of the family. In their study just mentioned, they argue that girls may be married off quickly in relation to their menarche because this seems to appease the 'chastity anxiety', which is the suspicion from the groom and his family that a woman is not a virgin. However, there is more to matrimonial ties than what is dreamt of in our philosophy.

Donald N. Wilber states that 'Islamic marriage is a civil contract rather than a religious sacrament'.<sup>40</sup> This point of view refers to the idea that the marriage contract, *nikah nama*, has terms stipulated by both families which transcend the religious domain. In addition, for those involved in the agreement, financial features occupy a large portion of the *nikah nama*. For example, after marrying, it is the husband's responsibility to pay for the household's expenses, and this is included in the contract.

Special attention must be paid to the matter of dowry. On the one hand, the *haq mehr* is the dowry the groom or his family gives the bride as a gift and it is a traditional practice. This is the traditional Islamic concept of dowry. On the other hand, more modern approaches in Pakistan

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<sup>40</sup> Donald N. Wilber, *Pakistan: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1964), p. 133.

treat the dowry as a financial amount given by the bride's family to the groom's. This difference is believed to be a consequence of the long contact of Muslim communities with other religious groups, mainly Hindu ones.

Other financial obligations are the wedding festivity's expenses, which will be paid by each family, and ornaments for the bride's trousseau. Since the Koran does not stipulate specific amounts, all the economic conditions are negotiated prior to the wedding.

Such worries are presented in *Shame*. When Bilquïs met Raza Hyder, she had been orphaned and did not have any thing, not even clothes on her body. Raza gives her clothes, make-up items, shoes and other garments. When he remarks that he, as her future husband, needs to dress her up, she replies 'But what husband could I, without hope of a dowry, ever find?' (p. 66), reflecting the more modern approach. Another moment where this is reflected is when Bilquïs is talking to her daughter, Naveed, about her possible fiancé. While Bilquïs is worried that the reputation of Haroun Harappa, the prospect husband, is bad and that he mistreats his father, Naveed, also referred to as Good News, says that 'he's famous, he's rich, he's a husband', saying that she will 'fix' what is needed to be fixed (p.155). This passage demonstrates clearly that the most important thing in the marriage is the financial aspect of the groom, since he will be responsible for most of the wedding and household expenses.

The choice of the bride and groom is also important. Although the matrimony between women and men from the same family is a common practice in all social classes in Pakistan, scholars suggest that the reason for this will vary from group to group. One shared reason is the idea that the honor of the family is almost automatically protected. By marrying a daughter to one's nephew, the father knows the family background of the groom, thus perpetuating the family tradition of *izzat*. Economic reasons are also relevant, though they are more common

among the poorer circles of society. The main concern among these groups is that the family's property should not be lost to someone else's family, a goal which is usually achieved by consanguineous marriages. In richer groups, the reason is political.

However, while consanguineous marriages happen in all classes, the reasons for that will vary from lower to upper classes. Marriage is seen by elite families as a manner to keep power. In this case, consanguineous relationships will happen often because the power is concentrated in the hands of few families. Their primary worry is to keep and expand power, therefore, consanguineous marriages are more frequent among poorer classes.

It is the richer slice of Pakistani society that *Shame* portrays. The Harappa and the Hyder families have the political power. The marriages originate from a political interest. Rani, for example, Raza's cousin, is married to Iskander Harappa, a millionaire. The planned marriage between Naveed and Haroun Harappa is seen by her father Raza as a perfect strategy, since he did not know whether or not he should fully support Iskander Harappa. Raza saw in the marriage the unique opportunity to please President A., as Little Mir, Haroun's father, had received the President's blessing; but also would please Iskander, Haroun's father, who hated Little Mir as much as Haroun did, 'placing the boy firmly in Isky's pocket' (p. 154) and this fondness that Isky nurtured for Haroun would be extended to Raza. The marriage would bring Raza to a privileged position, regardless of how the winds of politics would stir the situation. All these thoughts emerge in Raza's mind without any hint of shame. His only thoughts are about the gain he can enjoy from the match; he does not consider, for example, the bad reputation Haroun has, nor does he show any concern for his daughter's happiness. As a matter of fact, he 'was delighted to get rid of Good News, because she had developed (...) something of the full-mouthed insouciance' (p. 154).



The lack of shame continues after the match is made. When Naveed actually met Haroun, she decided that she would not marry him, rejecting him on the eve of the wedding. Raza, not wanting to accept the shame of having announced his daughter's wedding and not having one, prefers to have a wedding with 'any husband' (p. 166). Naveed, in turn, proudly and shamelessly said that she wanted to marry Captain Talvar Ulhaq. All the lack of shame that pervaded Naveed's wedding, from the arrangement to the ceremony, was embodied in Sufiya, as she attacked Talvar, almost killing him.

Naveed sees her marriage as something that will give her freedom from the patriarchal oppression she had been suffering in her home. In her words, 'Marriage is power. (...) It is freedom. You stop being someone's daughter and become someone's mother instead (...). Then who can tell you what to do?' (p.155). What Naveed fails to see is that she will also become someone's wife, such as her mother did. Since in Pakistan it is not common to keep the maiden name, the wife is often known as 'Begum', followed by the husband's surname. The loss of one's name is a loss of identity. Unlike what Naveed had predicted, she was still subject to someone else's power, only this time it was her husband's. In the novel, the narrator constantly reminds the reader of this loss not just by calling Naveed 'Begum Naveed Talvar' or 'Begum Talvar Ul-Haq', but he enhances this sense by adding 'the former Good News Hyder'.

The constant reminding of changed names is a strategy used by Rushdie with other female characters as well. For example, when Farah Zoroaster returns home, the narrator says 'Mrs. Farah Rodrigues (née Zoroaster)'; and he refers to Sufiya's 'transformation from Miss Hyder into Mrs. Shakil', as she is transformed after marriage from Sufiya to a beast. This serves some purposes. Firstly, it demonstrates the idea that a woman does not belong to her father after marriage, but she becomes an item of property of her husband. Secondly, in the example of

Sufiya the use of the word 'transformation', points to the idea that the act of marrying transforms people. In *Shame*, all of the women are transformed into something negative after marrying: Naveed becomes a baby-making machine, detached from the rest of the world, Rani and Bilquis become reminiscences of what they once were.

While many societies may be misogynist at different levels, it is important to remember that the society being analyzed takes this one step further, bringing into the legal system practices which used to be cultural conventions. For example, after Zia Ul-Haq rose to power, the women's rights movement suffered a severe limitation in Pakistani history. Practices endorsed by the Koran became part of the juridical system, such as the idea that a man's testimony is worth two women's testimonies, demonstrating that a woman is worth less than a man; or that women could only work outside their house after fulfilling their domestic obligations. By acquiring juridical status, such cultural views on women as child bearers and housewives became more powerful, making it difficult for women to escape this cycle of oppression.

Good News learned that the hard way. She married with hopes of acquiring power, of becoming socially equal to men. As argued before, the shift of power from father to husband is demonstrated when Raza, concerned about the fourteen children his daughter and son-in-law had conceived so far, asks them to prevent more pregnancies, to which Talvar refuses. Although the narrator informs us that Raza said this to the couple, it is Talvar who answers the question, silencing his wife. Naveed, in turn, obeys her husband and does not confront him. The shift of power is thus consolidated and Naveed learns what a marriage entails for a woman:

He came to her once a year and ordered her to get ready, because it was time to plant the seed, until she felt like a vegetable patch whose natural fertile soil was being worn out by an over-zealous gardener, and understood that there was no hope for women in the world (...)(p.207).

It is a very clever choice of words. 'Ordered' addresses the idea that the wife is more of a servant; 'to plant the seed' denies any type of sexual pleasure that she could have, becoming a mere repository; and finally her total objectification in the figure of an inanimate 'vegetable patch', something that can be used and cannot show any act of resistance. This last moment of Naveed's transformation into Begum Talvar seems to echo the Koran: 'Women are your fields: go, then, whence you please' (4:223). It also conveys the message of a vegetative state in which Naveed starts living: no longer does she worry about making herself beautiful, nor does she look after her children or even care to remember their names. As the narrator says, 'she stood revealed as the plain, unremarkable matron she had always really been' (p. 207). Not managing to escape the cycle of oppression her life had been, her only solution is in suicide. However, not even then is she capable of confronting her oppressor. In the note she leaves attached to her pregnant belly, she only mentions 'her terror of the arithmetical progression of babies marching out of her womb' (p. 228).

Another interesting aspect of this moment in the novel is that Talvar is not just reaffirming his power over his wife, but he is also reminding Raza that as a father his power over Naveed has been reduced, if not completely nullified. The first demonstration that Talvar is the dominant male now was in the rejection itself of Raza's advice. The second is that Talvar goes further, when he feels comfortable enough to reproach his father-in-law: "'Sir, I never thought to hear such a thing. You are a devout man (...)" So Hyder felt ashamed and shut his mouth' (p. 207). The behavior of Raza and Talvar at this point is completely different from that they presented before the marriage. When Raza consented to Naveed's marriage to Talvar, Raza ordered Talvar to 'take this no-good female off my hands' and declared that he would give 'not one paisa of dowry', adding 'keep out of my sight for ever after' (p. 167). Such an example is

another indicator of how marriages affect the whole family structure. Power is redistributed, reconfigured, and that may be difficult for the previous alpha-male in the family to accept.

It is important to remember that although a great part of the repression in a marriage, for women, comes from the husband, marriage is an event planned by families, and all family members contribute in one way or another to the oppression that happens in a marriage. It is possible to cite, for example, the figure of Bariamma, the matriarch of the Hyder family. Old and blind, she sleeps in a room with all the women from the family, including the married ones. The narrator tells us that ‘the mere fact of being married did not absolve a woman of the shame and dishonor that results from the knowledge that she sleeps regularly with a man’ (p. 74).

This arrangement proves, obviously, to be inefficient. The idea, after all, is that women should have children. Ironically, Bariamma snores ‘energetically’ when the men come into the room. In reality, ‘her snores are sirens, sounding the all-clear and giving necessary courage to the men’ (p. 72). The reader can interpret that the snores are fake, as if to tell the men ‘I am sleeping heavily now, go ahead and do your duty’.

Not only inefficient, the arrangement also leads to a shameless situation, like all the other repressive actions in the novel. In Rani’s words, ‘this arrangement which is supposed to be made for decency etcetera is just the excuse for the biggest orgy on earth’ (p. 73). Her theory is that since the room is dark and there are so many women, the men cannot tell among them who are their wives and who are their nieces or sisters, for example.

Rani’s argument is related to a more ancient practice. It is relevant to say that although marriage in an Islamic society may have a higher repression degree for women, men are also repressed, only to a lesser extent. The pre-Islamic society where Muhammad, the prophet, lived was considered disorganized and sinful, according to the Koran. Practices such as incest and

prostitution were then admonished by the Islamic Holy Book. The role of marriage in that context was of crucial importance, for the laws of marriage are strict and limit whom one can marry, how many wives or husbands (four wives, but only one husband), when they can marry and how to marry. Bariamma's house, we learn from Raza, still conserves the old village ways. With Rani speaking of a possible 'orgy', Rushdie makes a point that old habits die hard, that the laws of shame the Koran wants to impose will produce more shameless acts than honorable ones.

At any rate, marriage is encouraged to all single people: 'Take in marriage those among you who are single and those of your male and female slaves who are honest' (24:32), demonstrating the purpose of marriage as that of curbing harmful behavior. Marriage comes as a censoring tool for both men and women, but in the dynamics of matrimony only one will emerge as the powerful party.

This analysis of marriage indicates some important aspects. Firstly, a marriage is a result of social and family interests. The power relations which are found in the marriage are born outside it. There are social protocols, and the reasons why a marriage takes place involve the people outside the marriage more than the ones who will marry. Secondly, there is a relationship between two people where one has the power and the other will try to resist it. The third aspect is that when the person who is subject to power is resisting, she, for it is the woman in this case, is resisting her family and, ultimately, society. It is, therefore, a cycle: questions of shame and honor are born in society and will cause two people to marry; then these same questions are transferred to a more private sphere, the couple's sphere; finally, when the subject of power tries to resist such notions, she is ultimately resisting and questioning society, closing the cycle.

One may or may not have the means to resist such relations. *Shame* depicts a very grim future for those who try to resist hierarchy in marriage. The novel also shows that, when

transferring these relations to the broader scope of society and its governors, the prediction is not that much better, as will be discussed ahead.

### **Politicians and Their Country: An Arranged Marriage?**

‘We are fooling ourselves if we think that a country which has conservative traditional societies is going to become democratic overnight, or even in 60 years’,<sup>41</sup> wrote Victoria Schofield. She is calling our attention to the fact that one can neither underestimate the power of history, nor the power of culture. As already argued, the people who formed the country of Pakistan after the partition were Muslims, a lot of them from India. They came from different parts of India, different villages, all Muslims, but from different cultural backgrounds. Their lives had been conducted mostly under the Koranic and their own villages’ laws. As for the laws with which the ruling class commanded the country, at the time of the partition the population was only familiar with the British rule. With these experiences, they formed a new country, but those were not very good experiences for the formation of a democracy. My thesis does not argue, though, that certain societies could never have democracy. Rather, it tries to demonstrate how a combination of historical and cultural elements may hinder the development of democracy.

The majority of the people of Pakistan most likely did not know what democracy is, maybe they had a faint idea that it was related to elections. The ruling elite, on the other hand, were better educated: they had received a good education and often had traveled abroad, giving them the opportunity to have an academic education and to experience a different form of

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<sup>41</sup> Victoria Schofield, ‘Can Democracy Work in Pakistan?’, in *Asian Affairs*, 40 (2009), pp. 243-251 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068370902871581>> [ 1 May 2012].

government. Bhutto, for example studied in the United States and United Kingdom; Zia Ul-Haq, following a career in the army, went to college.

The education matter is of extreme importance when analyzing relations of power. According to Michèl Foucault, power leads to freedom and, in order to have power, one must have knowledge. A people that is not aware of what happens around them, cannot collectively or individually fight it. Therefore it is so important in authoritarian regimes to control what people can know. This is also true about marriages. Naveed did not know exactly what a marriage was and, when she discovered this, she had already been so profoundly damaged that she just did not know how to fight her way out of her situation. It is also when she becomes aware of her position in her marriage that she starts to suffer.

One marriage in particular reflects well on a symbolic level the relationship between the government and the people in Pakistan. It is the marriage between Omar Khayyam and Sufiya Zinobia. Omar is the dominant party in the marriage, as discussed before, but his role transcends that of the husband. The way in which he was conceived symbolizes the manner in which Pakistan was conceived. But as a figure of dominance, he also represents the governors in Pakistan: he studied abroad and, when he returned, he became a doctor. Studying abroad is a clear analogy with, for example, Bhutto.

The profession of being a doctor is worth some analysis. A doctor is chosen by a person or a group of people. He looks after them, seeing to what they need, trying to cure them or alleviate their sufferings. This sounds quite similar to the duties of a politician: in a simple analysis, ideally they represent the people and they must help them by giving them what they need, taking care of them.

Sufiya, on the other hand, is the representation of the people. Similar to most of the people of Pakistan, she is not well educated, in her case because she had been damaged by a brain fever. When her parents were deciding whether or not she was ready for marriage, or even would ever be ready, her father said that she is just a child, but Bilquès answered: 'In a woman's body. (...) A woman does not have to be a brainbox. In many opinions brains are a positive disadvantage to a woman in marriage' (p.161). If the words 'woman' and 'marriage' are replaced by 'people' and 'authoritarian regime', we will have a sentence that will make sense in a very dark manner.

It is also interesting to analyze what Bilquès means by 'woman's body'. As the reader knows, Sufiya would not develop mentally past the age of seven, remaining immature despite the fact that her body indicated maturity. Rushdie indicates that the same can be said of the people in Pakistan and the formation of the nation. They came from small villages and all of a sudden gained the status of 'nation', simply because of the fact that, willingly or not, they came to live together within the same borders. It demonstrates that Pakistan did not have time to mature as a nation, as opposed to many other countries in Europe that were formed much in this way, but that had a couple of centuries before they declared themselves a nation.

Sufiya has a very simple understanding of the world. She blushes at situations that show shame and she glows at situations that exhibit love, even if none is directed at her. She knows what a husband is and that she is a wife, but she does not quite understand what those things entail and, above all, why she needs a husband. She also knows there is something really big called 'the world', as she knows it in the form of a globe or maps in books. However, she does not like such representations because she cannot see herself in it. So, 'she puts a much better world into her head, she can see everyone she wants to there. Omar Shahbanou Bilquès Raza



(...)' (pp. 213-214). This reflects the idea that people in a country are very often more worried about what happens in their own lives, tending to ignore the bigger picture.

Moreover, the manner in which Sufiya's marriage is conducted is quite shameless. Bilquīs is only interested in getting rid of her daughter and, despite the fact that he does not agree with the marriage, Raza gives in to his wife's appeal. Similarly, the people of Pakistan were not asked about how they wanted to be governed or even if they wanted to become the people of Pakistan. As some historians state, many Muslims did not want to leave India and, although some remained in India, many felt compelled to move. Sufiya's and the Pakistani people's only choice is to conform to the new situation which is thrust upon them.

However, it is important to remember that Sufiya is a child in mind and children do not disguise their repressions as well as adults do. Sufiya does question the situation in her own way. For example, when she asks why she needs a husband and does not receive an answer, she does not just put the question aside. She also knows that the ayah Shahbanou fills Sufiya's wife obligations for her because she hears the noises and, on the next day, she finds the vestiges of what happened. Her opinion of that is that it is horrible. However, she does not like the idea that she is not being sought by Omar in this manner because, after all, she is a wife. As she closes her eyes, thinking of that, 'there is a feeling of sinking. It makes her sick. (...) somewhere in its depths, a Beast, stirring' (p. 215).

Sufiya is not having her needs attended to. The people who are responsible for her judge her incapable of distinguishing her own needs, which is often how non-democratic regimes see the population. The passage above shows the opposite, that she might not know exactly what they are and why they are there, but she feels them. To say that the Beast is stirring is to say that something inside her is growing and preparing to leave her body.

Omar and Shahbanou become lovers, and she even becomes pregnant with his baby. The idea of adultery is in itself bad, but it becomes totally shameless by the fact that Shahbanou's task was to protect Sufiya. As a matter of fact, the ayah repeatedly declares her love for Sufiya, even saying that she must have sexual intercourse with Omar so that Omar will not hurt Sufiya. The affair between Omar and Shahbanou is, to a certain extent, similar to what happens between Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder. Initially, it was Harappa who had the power over Pakistan. Hyder came into the picture, slowly gaining more power until, finally, he deposed Harappa. This shift is done shamelessly, none of them seems worried about the people. Nor do Omar and Shahbanou worry about his wife, even though Omar's room is next to Sufiya's. Moreover, the narrator reveals that Sufiya is not happy with this arrangement, especially when she learns that Shabanou has become pregnant. When this happens, Shahbanou is sent away with money to perform an abortion.

Pakistan, as Rushdie sees it, was created on the base of shame, Sufiya being the embodiment of shame. 'If you hold down one thing, you hold down the adjoining. In the end, though, it all blows up in your face' (p.173), warns the narrator in the middle of the narrative. In a Shakespearean way, Rushdie warns the reader, throughout the narrative, that something very bad will happen because of shame. It is almost as if the reader were hearing 'beware the ides of March' every time the narrator gives a hint that something bad is accumulating and the result cannot be good.

The Shakespearean tragedy, *Julius Caesar*, where this line was produced is used in *Shame*. This has two functions. First and foremost, it is used as a real example of the lack of democracy in Pakistan. The intrusive author comments that some Pakistani friends said that the staging of the play had been forbidden. A play that portrays the true story of the head of a

government being brutally murdered by other members could not be well-received by an authoritarian government. Moreover, the head of the government in Rome is someone from the army and, among the murderers, is his protégé. Indeed, it sounds familiar to the situation we are examining in Pakistan. The second is that it serves as an omen for what will happen in the Pakistani political scenario.

Returning to Sufiya's situation, the anger and shame within her were growing more and more until, at some point, she became a beast. As a result, she seeks Omar and finally kills him, finally destroying the figure of oppression in her life. When that happens, she returns to her old body, 'blinking stupidly' (p. 286). The message is clear in the narrator's voice: 'the Beast of shame cannot be held for long within any one frame of flesh and blood, because it grows, it feeds and swells, until the vessel bursts' (p.286).

In *Shame*, it is possible to observe that only acts of escape from oppression happen in the private sphere of society, and they include violence. It is Naveed who commits suicide and Sufiya who commits murder. This probably means that the psychological violence to which they were submitted can only be combatted with physical violence, even if it is at times aimed at themselves.

One of Sufiya's first acts of subversion has to do exactly with her dissatisfaction in the marriage. Failing to have sexual intercourse with her lawful husband, she seeks four men to fulfill her needs. After that, she murders them violently, decapitating them. This action shows two things. First, the sexual intercourse is adultery, and by doing that with four men she significantly subverts the Koranic law that men can have four wives and women can have only one husband. It is as if Sufiya had found four husbands to consummate her marriage. The second

aspect indicates that she projects her hate for Omar to these other men, claiming justice with her own hands, killing the figure of Omar which is projected onto those men.

This happened because Omar, her doctor and husband, fails to attend to all her needs. Like the ruling class in Pakistan, he denied her something which was a basic need in a marriage, as the governors deny a basic item for a society to flourish: freedom. He tries to keep her from committing other similar crimes and every day, twice a day, he drugs her. By keeping her sedated, he hopes to control her instincts.

Parallel to that, Hyder deposes Harappa. Both in the novel and in its historical counterpart, Hyder/ Zia Ul-Haq made use of religion in order to gain respect and acceptance of the people and especially conservative political forces. As a matter of fact, Hyder's great motto was that Bhutto was not a true Muslim and that he himself would launch a real Islamisation process in the country. In the novel, this is represented by Raza Hyder on national television, 'kneeling on his prayer-mat, holding his ears and reciting Quranic verses; then he rose from his devotions to address the nation' (p. 223). It is difficult to deny the emotional appeal such a scene could have. This could be juxtaposed with Omar drugging Sufiya because it reminds the reader of a famous quotation by Karl Marx: 'Religion is the opiate of masses'.

Opium is a drug known for its depressant, not depressive, effects. This means that it reduces the capacity the brain has to receive and interpret certain signs from the body, such as pain, which explains the reason why morphine, an opium derivative, is such an effective analgesic. Some of the effects opium produces are sleepiness, reduced libido, difficulty in concentration. In short, it has a sedative effect. Marx meant that, like the drug that sedated Sufiya (the narrator does not say it was opium, just a sedative drug) to keep her from acting, religion sedates people: when they are too busy trying to be good, their attention is diverted from what is really wrong in

the country. It is not by chance, then, that under Ul-Haq's command, religious laws became so severe. The issue of religion is complex and therefore needs to be analyzed in more details.

### **Religious Politics**

It was said in the Introduction that *Shame* was like a middle child, squeezed between *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*. As a matter of fact, *Shame* develops many of the issues presented in *Midnight's Children* and anticipates some from the *Satanic Verses*. The issue of religion which is central in the fatwa-awarded novel is anticipated in *Shame*.

In a country where there are no clear borders separating religion from politics, such separation has been discouraged because conservative Muslims would not support this position. In *Shame* and other works, the dangers of such a relationship are emphasized by Rushdie. The abuse of religion to achieve political goals is criticized and ridiculed mainly through two central characters, Raza and the Maulana Dawood.

Maulana Dawood is the divine of Q. Although he does not appear very often in the novel, he is present from the beginning until the end of the narrative. 'Maulana' is one of the words used for a scholar in Islam and 'Dawood' could be a reference to one of the Muslim prophets, also known by the name of 'David' in other religions. The comparison of the novel's Dawood with the historical figure is interesting because the latter had both religious and political functions, as prophet and King, and the Maulana was a divine with political power owing to his influence on Raza.

Maulana Dawood is the embodiment of religious fanaticism. We learn that he rides his scooter around town 'threatening the citizens with damnation' (p. 42). This attitude is ridiculed by Rushdie when, towards the end of the novel, he says that the Maulana fell victim to senility, beginning to 'abuse the townspeople for their irreligious blasphemies, because of course the men

were improperly attired and the women were a disgrace' (pp. 205-206). Rushdie is trying to argue how religion is an irrational notion. In the beginning, when Dawood had not yet gone mad, the narrator refers to his attitudes as a product of faith. In the second case, he is still performing the same moralizing actions, but now they are seen as a product of his senility. It is clear, then, that the message is that religion goes in the opposite direction of lucidity, and therefore should not be part of a government because it needs to be rational.

Dawood, in his insanity, wanders in town asking for directions to the Kaaba. He thinks that fish-shops are holy places in Mecca and finally dies when he sees, in the old part of town, the water purification tanks that had become sludgy, claiming that he had finally found the Kaaba and that 'they are covering it with shit' (p. 206). Raza, however, is so blinded by his own faith that he does not accept that Dawood's nonsensical talk is a product of insanity. Having always been spiritually guided by the Maulana, Raza thinks that Dawood's words prophesized the decay of Q., the 'unholy town' (p. 206). Action needed to be taken, and it would happen with Raza's Islamization campaign.

Raza then used religion as a form to justify his coming to power. Some of his actions were to ban alcohol, reduce TV programs to those of theological content only and arrest people who did not stop to pray at the call of mosques on Mohammed the Prophet's birthday. The manner in which Raza commands the country is so absolutist that he is actually compared to God in a very subtle way. The narrator tells us that, as the Koran obliges the giving of alms, the beggars 'took advantage of the arrival of God in the Presidential office' (p. 247). Rushdie uses the term 'God' both as a metonymy, saying that religion is the order of the day; but it is also a comic metaphor, meaning that Raza is governing like a God.

The beggars celebrated Raza's ascension because under the name of religion, they marched demanding a law that would oblige donations to be made at a minimum of five rupees. This was received with an incarceration of one hundred thousand beggars during Raza's first year. The beggars' request does not seem to be a too unrealistic one because it is presented to a government which intends to be religious; after all, if the government should be religious, why should it be religious in just some aspects? The protests, however, were received not just with a mere conflict between police and demonstrators, but with incarceration, announcing that 'God and socialism were incompatible' (p. 247). Yes to religious attitudes if they are governmental, no if they come from the people. Such contradictory attitudes indicate that there was a political agenda behind the Islamization crusade.

Ruling like a God, Raza led the dead Iskander to quote a title from a chapter in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, a treatise on how a governor should rule, 'Of those who have attained the position of prince by villainy' (p. 247) indicates the autocratic nature of Raza's ruling as a God. *The Prince* defends autocratic regimes and the famous phrase 'the ends justify the means' is taken from this book. In the particular chapter cited by Iskander, Machiavelli says about assassination, and deceiving a friend, that 'such methods may gain empire, but not glory'.<sup>42</sup> While Iskander tried to whisper words of wisdom in Raza's left ear, telling him about 'the need for cruelties to diminish with time, and for benefits to be granted little by little' (p. 248), Raza preferred to listen to his right ear, where 'Dawood's ghost was in its stride; (...) ordering Raza to ban movies (...); it objected to unveiled women walking the streets' (p. 248).

The assimilation of religion by politics that Rushdie claims as insanity, as argued earlier, is defended by Dawood early in the novel, when he is playing the part of Raza's counsellor:

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<sup>42</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Project Gutenberg: 2010) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1232>> [accessed 28 February 2012], p. 34.

“Prayer is the sword of the faith. By the same token, is not the faithful sword wielded for God, a form of holy prayer?” (p. 99). When Dawood uttered these words, he referred to the smuggling of ungodly objects, such as American popular music, contraceptive devices and love-story picture books. He fears that such smuggling may become legal one day, so before this comes out of control, the Army should stop it, even if violence is needed, because violence in the name of God is a ‘form of holy prayer’.

Slowly, Raza drives the country to Islamic fundamentalism. The last sight of something close to a democratic regime was dissolved in the replacement of the legal system by religious courts. The lawyers had protested against the Islamization measures, demonstrating ‘the fundamentally profane nature of their profession by objecting to divers activities of the state’ (p. 248). Raza was blinded by religion, and now Justice was blind too.

Dawood’s and Raza’s persecution was not directed only towards the people. Dawood came specifically to Raza in dreams because he was not accepting Sufiya’s ‘beastliness’. Raza’s spiritual counselor told him that Sufiya had the devil in her and, as much as Raza loved his daughter, he should love God more. He continued, saying that Sufiya’s attacks would only get worse and ‘would certainly terminate Raza’s career’ (p. 232). Again, Dawood plays on both religious and political sides. He uses a religious argument in order to protect a political development.

Although Sufiya is not the people, she is the representation of the people. Her name resembles the verb ‘to suffer’ on an English note, pointing to the idea of how the people and Sufiya suffer in the hands of their oppressors. On a more Pakistani note, it addresses religious matters, bearing a more religion-to-religion persecution. ‘Sufiya’ carries the name ‘sufi’ in it, remembering the ‘Muslim mystical sect (...) forced by persecution to live a semi-clandestine



existence'.<sup>43</sup> The position of Sufism in Pakistan is an interesting one. On the one hand, it has a mystical tone to it, incorporating saint worship, which goes against the Sunni tradition. On the other, the very element the Sunnis repudiate is the element which helped Islam to receive many converts: it had a close relation to the polytheistic Hinduism.<sup>44</sup> However, behind all the gods in Hinduism, there is one god, Brahman, who is above all the others.

By giving Sufiya this specific name, there is another point being made about the people, namely that the government needs the people exactly for the very reason it fears the people: their force. By strengthening the population's religiosity and posing as religious people themselves, the rulers gain support from the religious masses. These masses will keep them in power. If people have force to keep a government in the controlling position, they also have the power to overthrow it. Therefore, they need to use their interpretation of religion also to keep people quiet, like opium did. Religion is interpreted in a manner which is the most convenient for the rulers. In Raza's case, it is convenient to censor the objects that are imported into the country, thus demonstrating his commitment to religion. However, one of Islam's five pillars is the zakah, which is the donation of alms to the poor and needy. In this case, Raza conveniently does not follow religion by not complying with beggars' requests of a law of mandatory alms, because it would be too costly to the government.

In *Shame*, Rushdie argues that fundamentalist Islam is imposed on people from above. People are religious, certainly, but the extremism emanates from autocratic regimes because they find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked (p. 251).

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<sup>43</sup> Timothy Brenhan, 'Shame's Holy Book', in Fletcher, pp. 109-122 (p. 111).

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, p. 20.

This reinforces the idea of this thesis that culture influences politics and is, in turn, influenced by the latter. Many of the people in Pakistan, as discussed before, come from villages with little or no education. Religion is a part of tradition, and that in itself would make it difficult for them to discredit it; a matter which is worsened by its status of being sacred.

In such regimes, there is a delicate balance which must be maintained between the different sides of religion, between much religion and too much religion. Rushdie claims, in one of Rushdie-narrator moments, that Pakistan's Islamic base has always been questionable: Jinnah was not a 'God-bothered' type, nor did fundamentalist parties come to power. He says that such an ideology of nationhood might have worked had it not been too much. In Pakistan's case, it became an 'outsized meal', nourishing at first, but sickening in the end. According to Rushdie, 'one pukes' (p. 251). When one feels ill, vomiting may be a solution, but it is usually an unpleasant one. So are the solutions found by the oppressed in *Shame*: murder, suicide, in short, violence.

In the novel, the reaction to oppression that happens in the private life in the figures of Naveed and Sufiya does not have an equivalent reaction in the public life, meaning a reaction of the Pakistani people towards their oppressors. There are no public demonstrations, marches, no overthrowing of government or other ideas commonly associated with political revolutions. However, the message from the book might be a premonition to what may happen to Pakistan if things do not change and a proper democracy, free of its cultural notions of shame, is not established. For Rushdie, since Pakistan is a society that relies on myths, such as that of shame, honor and religion; one can replace the myth of faith by other 'three such myths, all available from stock at short notice: liberty; equality; fraternity' (p. 251). If democracy does not come, its evil twin, mobocracy, might dominate the scene and that is not a desirable situation.

## Chapter 2

### 'Shame': A Female Noun?

"*Woman*", he sighed (...) "What a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word?"' (*Shame*, p. 62)

Being brought up among women, such as sisters, cousins and aunts, Salman Rushdie claims that it had a great influence on his works. He learned to observe 'the instructions, quarrels, laughter and ambitions of these women, few of whom resemble the stereotype of the demure, self-effacing Indian woman', and thus tried to create female characters 'as rich and powerful', while the male characters are 'rarely as flamboyant as women'.<sup>45</sup>

When analyzing the women in *Shame*, at a first look, one might say he does not accomplish the mission. The mothers of Omar live in reclusion, Bilquis ends the narrative under a burqa, Sufiya is mentally challenged, Farah Zoroaster, Omar's first rape victim, does not talk to anyone after her return home; not to forget Naveed, who commits suicide? Even Arjumand seems to have gained respect only because she rejected her womanhood first. Also, in a first analysis, with the exception of Arjumand, their importance seems to be reserved to the private sphere of family and home.

As a matter of fact, many were the negative pieces of criticism aimed at the portrayal of women in *Shame*, even though the authors seem to agree that women have a crucial role in the plot. Ambreen Hai, for example, calls Rushdie's attempt at feminism an 'unfortunate failure'.<sup>46</sup> Grewal, as presented in the introduction, argues that *Shame* reinforces patriarchal archetypes of the submissive woman. Her criticism is aimed not as much at the presentation of such traditional

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<sup>45</sup> Salman Rushdie 'Women Beware Women' in *The Guardian*, 5 May 2001, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/may/05/salmanrushdie>> [accessed 28 April 2012].

<sup>46</sup> Ambreen Hai, "'Marching In From the Peripheries": Rushdie's Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism', in *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie*, ed by M. Keith Booker (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999), pp. 16-50 (p. 17).

values, but at the fact that Rushdie does not provide a rethinking of this tradition. She claims that he perpetuates it by ignoring a minority of women in Pakistan that opposes the system, in a manner which is not by violence.<sup>47</sup> Aijaz Ahmad<sup>48</sup> agrees with this idea, developing it:

This kind of image, which romanticises violence as self-redemption, has of course no potential for portraying regenerative processes; it is linked up, further, in a most disagreeable manner, with imperialist and misogynistic myths: the image of freedom-fighter as idiot-terrorist; the image of a free-or freedom-seeking-woman as vampire, amazon, man-eating shrew (p. 1468).

In this passage, Ahmad argues that the escapes offered by Rushdie in *Shame* are not the desired escapes by oppressed women, but that they reproduce the misogynistic discourse used to control women. Moreover, according to him, Rushdie fails to see women as survivors and producers of history, depicting them only as its victims. All female characters have a tragic ending, including Arjumand, who sadly needed to become ‘desexualized’ in order to receive some respect; and the Shakil sisters, who lost their individual identities in exchange for collective strength.

It is true that the eventual fate of most of the female characters is dark and, many of the women who started as strong individuals, end up silently. However, it is not true that Rushdie fully ignored the feminist movements which were growing during the Zia regime. He briefly mentions such movements in *Shame*, after commenting on Raza’s religious policies: ‘Two years after the death of Iskander Harappa the women of the country began marching against God’ (p. 249). The narrator finishes the account by narrating Raza’s strict reprisals. Perhaps by not spending much time narrating about these movements, Rushdie is making the point that the other

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<sup>47</sup> Grewal, pp.129-134.

<sup>48</sup> Aijaz Ahmad ‘Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*: Postmodern Migrancy and the Representation of Women’ in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 (1991) , pp. 1461-1471 < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4398093>> [accessed 17 May 2012].

side, the side of oppressed women who do not escape their fate, was far more common to find, it was the rule, as opposed to the feminists, who were the exception.

In addition, it is necessary to understand, though, that the feminist perspective in *Shame* does not come from the presentation of a healthy resistance or of strong militant women who subvert the center, nor does Rushdie romanticize violence, as Ahmad suggests. The violence performed by Sufiya throughout the narrative is always presented as something horrible, as is that of Naveed, which is a violence directed at herself. The idea in both cases is that violence will generate a violent response. Sufiya suffered from a psychological violence and Naveed a physical violence, since her twenty-seven children represent a sort of violence committed on her body and mind by her husband.

The feminist aspect comes, on the one hand, from the fact that these women's fates point to what may happen in case this patriarchal system does not change. However, it comes primarily, through the fact that these women's stories are being told, that they are not being ignored as they had been all along history. As the narrator says: 'women (...) marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies (...) their stories explain, and even subsume, the men's' (p. 173). Here, Rushdie demonstrates that it is not just that these stories are being finally acknowledged in the eyes of history, but also that the female characters have primary importance in the plot, partly because their stories reflect the men's, partly because they offer solutions to conflicts and revisions of the history which had been told. It is valid to analyze some of these female characters' actions.

For instance, it is Sufiya who kills Omar and the three sisters who kill Raza Hyder, restoring some sort of order in the narrative, such as when Hamlet kills Claudius, and the strong

will take over the power. Whether it is a desirable escape or not, it indicates that they had the chance to change something and so they did, not just standing passively before the events.

Rani Harappa has the power of telling the historical facts through her eighteen embroidered shawls that 'said unspeakable things which nobody wanted to hear' (p.191), demonstrating that she retains the knowledge that would help people become aware of and change their situation and that she may be a writer of history. She uses a typically woman-associated activity to subvert the male story. Her shawls proved to be subversive enough when her daughter, Arjumand, refuses to receive them, in a form of censorship where the powerful chooses how the past is to be told. According to Goonetilleke, Arjumand is the only woman who is not only a victim. He claims that 'she is not as subservient to patriarchy as Bilquis is'.<sup>49</sup> He argues that through her shawls, Bilquis functions as a judge to Iskander's actions and that by signing her art with her maiden name she repudiates and dissociates herself from Iskander and his wrongdoings.

Last but not least, despite the fact that she needed to reject her womanhood, Arjumand ends the narrative in a powerful position, suggesting that Pakistan's future is largely in her hands. In addition, her coming to a commanding position also means, as probably was the case for her historical counterpart Benazir Bhutto, was enabled by her social class. Though her means of achieving such a position may be open to discussion, it is difficult to deny that it is a place of control that many women in supposed modern Western countries have come to only in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Even though these examples do not show the 'non-traditional' Pakistani women, they show that women do have some strength which has not been exercised to its full potential. As suggested in chapter one, shame, as a social controlling force in Pakistan, is a heavier burden to

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<sup>49</sup> D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 63.

women. This is effectively demonstrated in *Shame*, as the figures of women grow darker and gloomier, as opposed to the figures of men, who remain more or less the same until their deaths. To different degrees, women in the narrative lose progressively their capacity of speaking, of verbalizing their pain, and of fighting back against the pressure. Under such circumstances, we might reconsider if they are truly weak or have been weakened by the ‘airless’ atmosphere that Rushdie claims shame creates in Pakistan.

Shame is the basic premise of the novel, how it shapes society. The narrator tells us that the novel is ‘about Sufiya Zinobia’ who is the embodiment of shame. Therefore, since shame lurks in the corners of the novel, he corrects himself, saying that ‘it would be more accurate, if also more opaque, to say that Sufiya Zinobia is about this novel’ (p.59). And here is the question: how did shame acquire such a feminine aura?

As a patriarchal society, Pakistan does not give much credit to their females. This is a conception which is found in the Holy Koran, because women are below men: ‘Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a status above women’ (2:228). Moreover, the testimony of a woman is not worth as much as that of a man, for if the witnesses to a certain case are women, there needs to be two of them to count as equivalent to a man’s testimony. This is necessary, the Koran says, because one woman might forget something, this passage being promoted to a status of law under ul-Haq’s command. The implication is that women are always too feeble and that men, in turn, are as solid as rocks, and could never have amnesia. Other passages suggest that, although husband and wife should always have a dialogue and make decisions together, it is the husband’s final word that is valid; that women should dress with modesty and cover themselves, otherwise they will cause a turmoil

in men and ‘be molested’ (33:59) and the very controversial sura (4:34) which says a man may beat his wife if she is disobedient.<sup>50</sup>

From the passages cited above, the inferences are: women are below men, so they need a man to ‘help’ them. Since women are not very solid, they are forgetful; it is better, for society’s own sake, that they do not speak. Thirdly, they must be modest in order not to cause an upheaval uncalled for, which will only bring discontentment, and, finally, physical punishment may be necessary in order to keep women under control.

It is not by chance, then, that Rushdie chooses a woman, Sufiya, to represent the people of Pakistan. Again, if we use the same strategy from chapter 1 and replace the word ‘women’ for ‘people’, we will find a very similar ideology used by those who are in power in an authoritarian regime, all the reasons that are presented to justify the lack of democracy and tight control on any sort of potential social subversion, such as those of the arts or the press.

Moreover, we might need to return to the concept of ‘double colonization’. It was said that women are ‘colonized’ by men, because they are subject to their rule. Just like the natives are considered ‘the other’, women are ‘the other’ to their ruling male counterparts. For example, they suffer stereotypization, and the passages in the Koran mentioned in this chapter and in the previous one have shown just that: they are weak-minded, and specific roles are given to them such as the child-bearer, the housewife, the matriarch.

It is interesting, then, that Rushdie chooses a man, Mahmoud ‘the Woman’ to communicate directly the burden of being a woman. While all women in the novel suffer with their prohibitions, the novel’s extract in the beginning of the chapter is a quotation of Bilquès’

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<sup>50</sup> One of the reasons for the controversies is the original Arabic word, ‘darb’, used for ‘beat’. It is understood that ‘darb’ may also have other meanings, such as ‘to give examples’ and ‘to separate’. Some Islamic scholars defend that the interpretation should include the Haddith Qudsi, sacred sayings attributed to prophet Muhammed, in which he would have endorsed the beating of wives (James M. Arlandson, ‘Domestic Violence in Islam – The Quran on Beating Wives’ <<http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/beating.htm>> [accessed 13 June 2012]).



father, Mahmoud. The reader learns that Mahmoud received the epithet ‘the Woman’ originally because he had to act as a woman to Bilquis after his wife died. However, the title ‘came to mean something more dangerous, and when children spoke of Mahmoud the Woman they meant Mahmoud the Weakling, the Shameful, the Fool’ (p. 62). It is as if Mahmoud only had the right to speech because he is a man, just like it is the men in the novel who assign an identity to their wives and daughters.

In Chapter One, it was mentioned how the change of women’s names works as an artifice to erase, totally or partially, their former identities, something which is very relevant in postcolonial countries, as discussed in the introduction. Another strategy discussed in *Shame* is the rewriting of history.

According to Edward Said, the representation of history is important because ‘past and present inform each other (...) how we formulate or represent the past shapes our understandings and views of the present’.<sup>51</sup> The use of the word ‘formulate’ indicates that history is liable to manipulation, in other words, history or at least history-telling can change according to the interests of who is speaking. For Said, there is always a teller of History, and this teller will assume a certain point of view. This will cause History to miss certain aspects, minimize some aspects while maximizing others, giving voice to some groups while silencing others. The matter of who has the right to tell the History is presented along the narrative in *Shame* and shares some points with Said’s point of view of History and the postcolonial reality. In Rushdie’s words:

History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise, and old, saurian truths go to the wall (...) Only the mutations of the strong survive. (...) History loves only those who dominate her: it is a relationship of mutual enslavement. (p.124)

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<sup>51</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 4.

This is the case of what happens to Bilquès after she met Raza. In their encounter, Bilquès was naked and had nothing of her life left. Raza clothed her, gave her a house and a family. She gains a present, but at the cost of losing her past. In addition, her story is told and retold by Bariamma, the Hyder matriarch, several times, until it reaches a final version, a version which seems plausible and acceptable.

Bilquès, like the other women in the novel who married, became the property of her husband, the power being shifted from father to spouse. This shift was misinterpreted by Naveed, who saw in it the possibility of freedom, as discussed above. As in the case of women, the shift of status from colony to an independent nation does not, necessarily, entail something positive.

In the case of Pakistan, one may take the risk and say that it was even worse. There was a brutal partition which formed a poor and unstructured country, followed by two wars with India, a civil war and the independence of Bangladesh, and the never resolved issue of Kashmir between Pakistan and India. Bilquès life's history illustrates it well. First, she was found by Raza after losing everything. She was naked, nothing of her past was left to her. This was the case of Pakistan that, in order to be born, needed to be 'undressed' of all its past as a part of India. Bilquès was recreated through her marriage with Raza. Pakistan was territory that had to reinvent itself. Later, she leaves Bariamma's house under the allegation that she cannot become pregnant because of the manner in which the sexual intercourse happens between the married people in that house, as if it were a second partition for her. In Naveed's case, despite the fact that her father wanted to get rid of her, when she is having too many children, he worries about her, while her husband shows no consideration for her.

Another example of this situation is the case of Omar's mothers. They represent the three territories (East Bengal, West Punjab and India) that gave birth to Pakistan. They had always

lived imprisoned in their house by their father. This might be seen as the territories which were ‘imprisoned’ by the British colonizer, the father. When he dies, they see a possibility of flourishing and they say: ‘Father, we are going to be very rich now, is that not so?’, to which he replies ‘Whores, (...) don’t count on it’ (p.14). It took long before India started to flourish after Independence, and it is the same for Pakistan, since it had more adjustments to make than India had.

When it comes to the administration of power, the management in the colonies is paralleled to that of the household in the private sphere. It is very interesting to discuss the figure of Bariamma. Bariamma, the matriarch, rules over the young women. Although she is not a male, she is the one who decides how the house will be run. As a matter of fact, the Hyder family resembles the colonization in India. The house is populated mainly by women, the men are often not at home. In the power hierarchy there is, of course, Raza, a male, but since he is not at home, Bariamma assumes the position of ruler. If we think of India, and therefore Pakistan before the partition, we will see that the British were outnumbered by Indians. The main ruler of the colony, the British monarch, was nearly all the time in England. Therefore, the British had produced a group of highly educated Indians to be at the top of the Indian society hierarchy, to rule the colony for the British. These Indians were usually from the elite and were educated after the British fashion, almost becoming British, but still remaining inferior colonized people.

But women do fight back against the male dominance. While Rani embroiders back, Bilquìs, consumed by her own silence, started to make veils, something which was interpreted by the other characters as an act of madness. However, Bilquìs’ veils have a similar function to the one Rani’s shawls have. While the shawls subvert the male dominance through the telling of Iskander’s true history, Bilquìs’ veils serve to clothe Raza and Omar when they need to leave

their house. If before it was Bilquès who was clothed and was given a new identity, by using a burqa the situation was worse because they were 'head-to-toe cloaks of invisibility' (p. 262), indicating that the identity was completely erased. She is also aware of her act of subversion. She tells Raza: "Your son became a daughter, (...) so now you must change shape also." The President is passive, allows himself to be led' (p. 262). Bilquès refers to Sufiya who should have been a son and brought shame to the house. Now it was Raza's turn to feel some of that shame by becoming a passive woman.

Like the Indian and Pakistani peoples, the women in *Shame* are not weak, but they had been weakened by the centuries of social forces operating in an oppressive manner on them. And although the conclusion of the novel is mostly gloomy for the people and for women, there are some glimpses of hope.

Rushdie uses, then, the female figure to represent different aspects of the population and its political power. Sufiya Zinobia, in her violent outbursts, represents the force that the people of Pakistan have. In a disorganized way, she manages to annihilate her oppressor, though she does not know much about what to do after he is gone. Arjumand, however, does not overthrow anyone, but she could symbolize a mature version of the people. While Sufiya symbolizes the first steps of the people of Pakistan, suggesting that the country might turn into a mobocracy, Arjumand represents the possibilities of a democracy, which, however, is contaminated by her blind admiration for her father.

It is important to remember that Arjumand had a blind admiration for her father, Iskander. According to the narrator, she refused 'to hear anything bad about her father' (p. 108) and accused her mother of having done something wrong that drove Iskander away from his wife. When Arjumand becomes powerful, her mother sends her the eighteen embroidered

shawls, in an attempt to make her daughter see another side of the history, but Arjumand categorically refuses to receive them. But Arjumand deserves a room of her own in this work, since she has both a metaphorical function in the novel and is a representation of a certain historical Benazir Bhutto, daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

### **From Benazir to Arjumand**

A woman's life is not easy in an Islamic-based society. She has to face not just the difficulties imposed on her by the religion, but also by civil laws which were provided by the Koran. In Pakistan it has not been different, although the history of women's rights has had good and bad moments.

According to Afshan Jafar, the governments before Zia did not allow religion to control completely the matters of the State. Before Independence there was a growing number of women entering the public sphere. They took part in society's life not only as teachers or doctors, professions that can easily be associated with the stereotypical roles of women as caretakers or mothers, but also bankers and government officials. To give women such positions 'helped bolster the economy as well as promote a modern and 'westernized' image of Pakistan to the international community'.<sup>52</sup> Other gains were in the field of marriage. For example, a man had to register the divorce in court, as opposed to the old oral 'register' where a man could simply utter three times the word *talaq*, meaning 'I divorce thee'. Another example concerned polygamy, where a man needed to have the permission of his first wife in order to acquire a second. Jafar acknowledges that all those examples were timid advances, but advances nonetheless.

Under Zia's administration, the situation turned against women again. Jafar argues that since Zia was using Islam as his watchword, he needed to make changes that should be visible,

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<sup>52</sup> Afshan Jafar 'Women, Islam and the State of Pakistan', in *Gender Issues* 22 (2005), pp. 35-56 (p. 38)

therefore turning to women, who were gaining more and more room, a development that was of concern to the more fundamentalist religious wing. He achieved this partly by the implementation of new laws, partly by encouraging the population to reform themselves and watch how their neighbors were behaving. Some of the laws were the law mentioned before where a woman's testimony was equivalent to half a man's and the one which imposed all female government employees to cover themselves with a *chaddar*, a veil that covers almost the entire body. An example of the 'encouragement' concerning women's dress-code: it became possible for civilians to punish a woman who was not covering her head and/or the rest of her body, or for the police to importune men and women who were together in public. In *Shame*, the negativity of this process is expressed in Bilquis' burqas, as they are referred to as the 'cloak of invisibility': they standardize women, making them equal and nullifying their identities.

On a more positive note, though, Iftikhar H. Malik comments that such policies 'turned out to be a blessing in disguise',<sup>53</sup> because it stimulated women to become united, forming groups so as to fight for a complete disempowerment of the political leaders.

It was after this government that Benazir Bhutto was elected, becoming the first woman Prime Minister not only in Pakistan, but in a Muslim-oriented country. Many scholars explain that Benazir's rise to power was only made possible because of her Bhutto lineage. She used her father's political connections, on the one hand, to enter the political scene and be considered a candidate, and her father's post-mortem charisma, on the other, to relate to people. With this combination, to be a woman became an advantage, since she could also relate to the groups of women who wanted a less misogynistic approach from the government.

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<sup>53</sup> Iftikhar H. Malik, 'The State and Civil Society in Pakistan', in *Asian Survey*, 36 (1996), pp. 673-690 (p. 679) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645716>> [accessed 24 April 2012].

However, her manoeuver in the political seas proved to be more difficult than expected. Firstly, she was still a woman. When she was elected, many from the religious elite protested, claiming that a woman could not be the head of Pakistan, echoing the teachings in the Koran that a woman is not the head of the family. She did not marry until the age of 35 and many believed her marriage to be a strategy to please the conservatives; she also started wearing a chaddar on occasion, in an obvious way trying to convey the message that she was a semi-orthodox Muslim woman.<sup>54</sup> Secondly, as Lawrence Ziring points out, most of her political views were based on her father's autocratic regime, where she failed to have a critical eye.<sup>55</sup> Thirdly, historians argue that the military has never fallen completely from power and therefore controlled many of Benazir's actions. In short, Benazir was strong, but her actions were constantly being limited by her surroundings and even by herself. All these reasons combined led Ziring to see Benazir as a bridge between a full dictatorial government and a democratic one.

This is the woman who provides Rushdie with the base for Arjumand Harappa. Arjumand, daughter of Iskander Harappa, is a blind admirer of his reign. She fell in love with her cousin Haroun because she sees in him 'a second great man, almost an equal to her father' (p. 157). It is interesting that it is in her feelings towards Haroun, and not her political stands or close relationship with her father, that the reader understands the extent of Arjumand's blind admiration. The narrator tells us that it was not just the 'remarkable physical resemblance' to Iskander that Haroun bore, but also his 'fondness for whoring, gambling and other forms of debauchery' (p. 157) that led her to believe Haroun was her father's double. Haroun, in turn, is driven far from her because of her reputation of declining many other proposals and the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 684

<sup>55</sup> Lawrence Ziring, 'Benazir Bhutto: A Political Portrait', in *Asian Affairs*, 18 (1991), pp. 178-189 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172306>> [accessed 1 May 2012]

‘uninterruptedly disgusted gaze’ she had in her ‘scornful attitude’ every time she was around him (p. 157).

The reason why Arjumand rejected so many suitors and acquired such a bad reputation was because she understood, from a very early stage in her life, the misogynistic society in which she lived, as the narrator informs us that she ‘regretted her female sex for wholly non-parental reasons’ (p. 107). It means that she understood the problem of roles she was probably assigned by her parents was just a piece of a larger picture, and would be found in any part of the social life she went to. She claimed that the female body ‘brings a person nothing but babies, pinching and shame’ (p. 107) and therefore, she loathed her sex. She tried to disguise her female body by cutting her hair short, not using cosmetics, dressing in her father’s clothes and even ‘developed a stooped and slouching walk’ (p. 156). Her attempts, though, failed. Not only did boys fall in love with her natural womanly beauty, but the girls too in the boarding school for ladies where she went under her own request. Her masculinization, as said before, was her way to gain respect, so that she could fulfill her political ambitions.

It is clear, in the novel, that Rushdie in 1983 feared that Benazir might be the next in line for Prime Minister of Pakistan due to her uncritical views of her father. In the novel, this is represented by Arjumand’s authoritarian attitudes towards her mother. She snaps at her mother when the latter makes a criticism aimed at Iskander, and ultimately silences Rani, by refusing to see Rani’s version of the history that she only accepted if told filtered by her father’s lenses.

Her unconditional love towards her father, her desexualization and her competition with her mother seem to match the point of view of many psychoanalytical readings of Arjumand’s character, using Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex. This theory was developed further by Jung, calling it ‘Electra complex’ when applied to women. Unlike the male complex, it is



manifested in a woman through her appraisal of her father's penis. The father has the object of desire that she thought she lost, her condition is called 'penis envy', because the penis is associated with a position of power and control, thus entering a competition with her mother for the father's love. A girl who is fixated in this stage of her psychosexual development will seek in her sexual partners men who resemble her father. However, it is necessary to remember that Psychoanalysis, specially the classic Freudian and Jungian approaches, also bears its share of misogyny. Such a reading of Arjumand would rather reinforce the social codes of Pakistani society, legitimizing with the blessing of Science that women are by nature one degree under men, instead of criticizing it. It flattens her psyche and ignores all the historical processes faced by that society, as well as the feminist struggle in Pakistan; all issues which have been discussed here.

A preferred reading of Arjumand's transformation is that offered by Samir Dayal. In his view, her change is a displacement of 'her father, impersonating him, and transgressing a border well-marked in most Islamic cultural milieux' (p. 53).<sup>56</sup> Her wish to become one of 'them' is motivated by her desire to not be dominated and therefore she transgresses and inverts roles, like Sufiya did when she espoused her four 'husbands' in one of her sexual outbursts. Dayal adds that Arjumand's transformation enables her to become a threat to the machismo in the dominant elites. Eventually, Arjumand's source Benazir, would have to fight such dominant elites even while being the supposedly most powerful person in Pakistan.

Ultimately, it is important to stress once again that the 'dupatta of shame', as the narrator calls it, falls equally to all women in the novel. Very often the reason is because their gender does not allow them to behave differently, since the upholding of the family izzat depends

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<sup>56</sup> Samir Dayal, 'The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's "Shame"' in *The Journal of the Midwest Language Association*, 1 (1998), pp. 39-62 (p. 53) < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315090> > [accessed 17 May 2012].

largely on their conduct, as discussed in Chapter 1. The Shakil sisters confine themselves in their house in order not to expose their shame to the world. Farah Zoroaster comes back without a baby or husband, and she retires herself to silence, dwelling alone in her shame. Bilquès drifts away into madness because she feels ashamed for failing in her role as a mother (only bearing girls, one mentally retarded), while the once joyful and talkative Rani communicates only through her shawls, trying to disconnect herself from the shame her husband brought to their household. Sufiya is not aware of her condition as the most shameful of them all because she captures all the shame around her, acting violently in order to release this shame. Arjumand stands out in her response to the shame of being a woman because she manages to leave the family, the private sphere of society, and make herself known publicly.

### **And the Servants?**

It is understandable that not much is found in critical essays about *Shame* with regard to servants. Rushdie's concerns with the plot were with the ruling elite of Pakistan, therefore the servants play a small role in the novel. Nevertheless, the small role they play is significant, carrying the social rules for the duality of gender and class.

Servants bear per definition a social stigma of being a lower, dominated class in most cultures and this is not different in *Shame*. The additional feature that the family structure in the novel offers is that the servants are part of the household and thus they are also responsible for bringing shame and keeping the honor of a household.

From this point of view, it is not strange that in the Shakil house all the remaining servants are women and they are all locked in the house forever, together with the sisters. Here, Rushdie seems to reproduce the structures of power: first, the sisters are dominated by the patriarch; then it is their turn to dominate the ones who are below them, the servants. Similarly to

the sisters that could bring shame to Old Mr. Shakil, bad behavior from the servants could have the same effect on the sisters. If women from colonized countries are doubly colonized, maybe it would be interesting to talk of women servants from colonized countries as triply colonized. What is it that gives the Shakil sisters the right to imprison their servants and what is it that makes these servants accept it, if not the hierarchy of power?

Moreover, the servants in the Shakil house are always next to Omar. They nurse him, play with him, spoil him, almost to the extent of what a concubine would do with her master. However, one might argue that in the sisters' case, it is more a matter of social class than gender. This view of the women servants as triply colonized is more evident in the Hyder household, in the figure of Shahbanou, the ayah that looks after Sufiya.

Shahbanou embodies the stereotype of a servant. She is gossipy, always telling Sufiya everything that happens in the family. She also appears to be devoted to Sufiya, and Sufiya likes her enough to include her in Sufiya's picture of the world. However, she also embodies a darker stereotype, that of the female servant that uses her body to conquer privileges from her master. After the wedding of Omar and Sufiya, Shahbanou had a conversation with Omar, where she made it clear that since Sufiya was just a child, she – Shahbanou – would be discontented if Omar ever tried to have sexual intercourse with Raza's eldest daughter. As a matter of fact, Shahbanou threatened to kill Omar if he were to try something Sufiya did not want. After that, she visited Omar in his bedroom – he and Sufiya sleeping in separate chambers – offering herself as a 'sacrifice' to Omar, so that Omar will never hurt Sufiya. He tells her 'how much you must love her', and she answers 'more than you' (p. 211).

Shahbanou claims that she only wants to protect Sufiya, however this is open to discussion. The narrator never comments on Shahbanou's words, leaving the reader to trust

solely the ayah. The reader never learns Shahbanou's true intentions. She could be expecting material privileges or maybe she planned to eventually become Omar's wife. What the reader does learn is that she becomes pregnant with Omar's child. She is dismissed from service 'on the grounds of her immorality' (p. 218) and Omar paid for her abortion and provided her with money so that 'she did not starve afterwards' (p. 219).

Whether Shahbanou was being evil or not is not the question. The problem is what led her to do what she did. It is necessary to understand the escape which each woman, depending on her social class, will have to resist male dominance. Arjumand came from the elite and was well educated. She had the opportunity to become politically important if she put herself above her gender, as her father suggested. Shahbanou, on the other hand, represents the poor women. If these have a hope of marriage, often it is not of a happy one. In her case, she needed to use her gender to receive benefits, and so she did. Things were more difficult for her than they were for Naveed or Arjumand. While Naveed got away with rejecting the arranged marriage she initially wanted, Shahbanou is used and disposed of by Omar as he pleases. In order to produce a child, a man and a woman are needed, but only Shahbanou is punished, while we do not hear of any reprisal directed at Omar.

This is the triple colonization system that Shahbanou suffers, a dynamics of 'almost, but not quite' which is found in all three types of colonization. First and foremost, she is Pakistani. As discussed before, Indians sometimes receive the same education as a British person, turning them into something almost equal to the British, but not quite. While the former might be very well educated, they will never compare to the 'real thing'. Women in a household must always obey their husband or father, in short, the alpha-male. They are supposed to be part of the decision-making in the family, but in the end the man has the final word. Women are almost

equal to men, but not quite. Shahbanou is an Indian and a woman. Finally, servants are almost part of the family. They bear the responsibility of maintaining the izzat of the family they work for, but they do not enjoy the same rights as the people who lawfully belong to the family do. Therefore, servants are almost family, but not quite. For example, although Naveed was scorned by her father, she was still part of the family and got what she wanted. Shahbanou, on the other hand, is expelled from the household as easily as in a magic trick. With the presence of the servants in *Shame*, Rushdie details a system of power that starts in the larger, social structure, descending from the upper layers of society, reaching the very lower ones.

The problem of power addressed in the case of women calls the reader's attention to the fact that there is a problem in the very essence of 'power' in that society. Sufiya, Arjumand and Shahbanou use features traditionally associated with men, with the idea of male. Violence, a feeling of psychological superiority and the use of sexual activities to achieve certain goals are equally bad when used by women as it is by men. There needs to be a change in the idea and exercise of 'power'. If people also respond to the authoritarian regime with violence, there will be nothing but disorder.

### Chapter 3

#### The Shameless Satire

*'I am only telling a sort of modern fairy-tale (...); nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously.'* (*Shame*, p. 70)

The quotation above refers to a moment when the narrator is explaining that the novel is not about Pakistan. He mentions all the things he would have to include if the novel were a realistic one: the corruption in politics, the censorship of both foreign and local press, the exportation of heroin, sexism, low attention to education etc. However, by this point of the narrative, the reader knows the novel is exactly about all these things the narrator claims it is not. To say that the novel is only a 'fairy-tale' gives the idea that the events in the novel are too fantastic to happen in real life, that they should not happen in real life. Therefore, as one reads the quotation, one cannot but smile at the irony, which is just an example of many other ironic elements in the novel.

Nevertheless, the previous chapters of this thesis have presented murder, betrayal, oppression, themes which are often too tragic to be associated with a smile. Indeed, even though *Shame* does not belong to the genre of drama, an Aristotelian analysis would identify the novel as belonging to the category of tragedy. Aristotle lists characteristics in the *Poetics* to classify 'tragedy' and *Shame* has some of the main ones. A tragedy tells the story of heroes and their decline. This fall is caused by the hamartia, which is a mistake the hero makes, it is the hero's tragic flaw. Among other reasons, the hamartia is usually caused by hubris, which is the excess of pride that leads the hero to underestimate his surroundings, not allowing him to see the truth about his situation. The moment when the hero learns about the truth is called anagnorisis.

Moreover, the characters of tragedies come from the higher classes of society; tragedies are of a more philosophical and serious nature, therefore their themes will be politics, history, morality, among others; and the language used should be sophisticated.

*Shame* talks about three heroes, Omar, Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder. The three come from the elite, they all die in the end. Omar fell because he underestimated Sufiya and decided not to kill her, a reason which Raza shares with him. Like Omar, Raza ignores Sufiya's danger to his career as a politician, but in addition to that, he gives power to one of his subordinates, General Raddi. This is a repetition of Iskander's mistake, who underestimated Raza, making him the head of the army because 'with such a compromised leader, Army can't get too strong' (p. 181). He underestimated Raza and that was his tragic flaw.

However, laughing is nearly inevitable when reading *Shame*. The ironies, such as the quotation in the beginning of this chapter, the imagery and the informal language, often containing swear words, go against Aristotle's ideal of tragedy. Although the theme is serious, the laughter is there as well. Rushdie satirizes cruel and sad events in the history of Pakistan, leading the reader to an ambivalent laughter: the comic side of the novel comes from narrative's darkest moments, characterizing the dark humor.

### **The Theory Behind**

Dark humor is often at the core of satire. According to Ruben Quintero, 'the satirist provokes mirth or sadness, a concern for the innocent or the self-destructive fool, or a revulsion for the deceitful knave, and always either laughter or scorn at the anatomized subject'.<sup>57</sup> This capacity for evoking laughter and scorn proves to be efficient in a tragedy because satire clothes the dark truth with jest, thus attracting the reader. This clothing removes the potential heavy tone

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<sup>57</sup> *A Companion to Satire*, ed. by Ruben Quintero (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 3.

of the themes, leaving the weight on the truth alone. In this sense, the story will be dark, because the themes are dark but not completely so because the manner in which it is being told is the opposite of dark. This manner will make the story amusing, but not completely amusing, due to the darkness of the themes. It is a duality that matches the general dual aspect of *Shame*: one may laugh at the Maulana when he walks in town reciting verses of the Koran in Arabic, mixing in other languages, but may feel sorry for his senility as well. Dark humor pervades the entire novel.

Many theoreticians do not approve of the term ‘dark humor’ because the word ‘humor’ implies something which is pleasantly funny, which does not have a heavier philosophical questioning behind it. This type of funny is different from the unsettling funny, which is the case in *Shame*, where one laughs at serious matters. ‘Dark humor’ would be satire in its essence, because satire is fundamentally the ridiculing of serious matters, often political and social ones.

As a matter of fact, satire’s main objective is to criticize social values through ridicule. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines satire as a ‘mode of writing’ as opposed to a genre, a position which is supported by Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe.<sup>58</sup> This means that satire is more a rhetorical manner of using words than a group of features that can frame a work within a fixed form. The rhetorical aspect is emphasized by Mathew Hodgart, as he stresses that aesthetics is necessary for this aggressive denunciation to become art.<sup>59</sup> Without the aesthetic feature, it would be a complaint or a pamphlet.

However, Connery suggests that even though satire has always been present in literature, the theorization of satire did not flourish until the resurgence of historicism. Satire has been frowned upon by society, critics and writers. Since satire ridicules people and has a low view of

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<sup>58</sup>*Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. by Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Mathew Hodgart *Satire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).



human nature, it has had problems with censorship and has been seen by many of the Romantic writers as a lower type of literature; needless to say the Romantics influenced many of their successors, thus perpetuating this bad reputation of satire.

As for the critics, Connery points out that satire does not offer a conclusion or a resolution of the conflict. On the contrary, if satires would offer such a conclusion, it would be a comedy or a tragedy and would, ultimately, defeat the purpose of satire of representing 'evil as a present and continuing danger'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, in *Shame*, for example, although the country's oppressors, Iskander and Raza, die in the end, restoring some sort of order, the end is left open. There is the idea that Pakistan will continue under the military rule, in the figure of General Raddi, or in the hands of Arjumand, who adores her father and is likely to reproduce the same manner in which her father governed Pakistan. As for the oppression in marriage, the husbands die, but this does not mean something necessarily good. What will happen to Rani and Bilquès, who were psychologically damaged and probably will not be able to find their own way? And Sufiya, mentally challenged, will the Beast leave her completely, and who will look after her? These women may eventually solve their problems, but the novel does not give much hope.

Another point of distress to critics is that satire is not a proper 'genre', as discussed previously. According to Connery, satire appropriates features of other forms. This creates 'friction between form and content',<sup>61</sup> making it difficult for a formalist analysis of such texts. One may speak of types of satire, meaning different satirical tones. There is, for example, the lampoon, which is a personal attack from the satirist's side. The pastiche is another type. It is, essentially, a parody of a well-known piece of literature. Finally, there is the menippean satire, a term to which many critics associate *Shame*.

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<sup>60</sup> Connery, p.5.

<sup>61</sup> Connery, p.5.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, menippean satire is ‘a form of intellectually humorous work characterized by miscellaneous contents, displays of curious erudition, and comical discussions on philosophical topics’. The dictionary also mentions that the menippean satire is a form which is less aggressive and more ‘cheerfully intellectual’ than the usual satires. However, it is difficult to measure the level of aggressiveness in a piece of work in order to determine unto which point it is a menippea and beyond this point, simply a satire. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether *Shame* has passed this point of no return or not. While the questions posed by the narrator in *Shame* have a deep philosophical nature (what democracy is, the role of history in constructing democracy, the role of religion etc.), the language used by the narrator is informal, there are interruptions in the narrative from Rushdie-author, as Rushdie manages to incorporate his created personal voice in the narrator’s voice, as in a free indirect style. The narrator may be subtle in his criticisms, but sometimes he is more aggressive. In short, on the one hand *Shame* carries characteristics of a menippean satire, but on the other, it has aspects that subvert that point of view.

Another reason for critics to associate *Shame* with menippea is the use of dark humor and grotesquery. According to John Clement Ball, Bakhtin develops the concept of menippean satire associated with the carnivalesque, where the theory of the grotesque body is found. Ball argues that for Bakhtin, grotesquery is not a pure tool that causes repulsion, but it shows the incompleteness, the flaws, and ultimately generates a hope of a transformation into something positive.<sup>62</sup> This seems to agree more with what happens in *Shame*. Sufiya Zinobia, for example, becomes a Beast in order to expose the shame of the society and, once the Beast kills its main oppressor, it goes back to being the beautiful girl Sufiya used to be.

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<sup>62</sup> John Clement Ball, ‘Acid in the Nation’s Blood Stream: Satire, Violence and the Indian Body Politic in Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh*’, *The International Fiction Review*, 27 (2000) <<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/view/7657/8714>> [accessed 1 May 2012].

Something that also represented an obstacle in the theorization of satire was the fact that many critics, specifically the New Critics, have rejected the role of history in interpretation of texts, and the situational knowledge is crucial in the understanding of satire. This is another position to which theoreticians converge, that satire needs a background shared by the satirist and the reader, something that ‘refers the reader to matter outside the text’.<sup>63</sup> For example, if one knows that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was famous for his oratory, one will laugh at Iskander’s constant swearing, because it is an aspect of Bhutto which is being ridiculed. In this case, the knowledge of Bhutto is the background. However, it might be argued that it is possible to laugh even if the reader does not know who Bhutto was. In this case, the person will laugh because Iskander is a politician, as swearing is not an expected behavior for a public person. In both cases, there is a common background, more specific, in the case of knowing who Bhutto was, less so with regard to the idea that generally politicians should not swear.

Quintero develops this point of view, arguing that it is not just shared background knowledge, but also shared values and knowledge of how things should be. This necessity arises from the fact that satire is a criticism and, as such, it speaks from a certain point of view. Again, Iskander is a good example. When he came to power, he forcedly retired ‘the discredited old guard (...) and put Raza Hyder in control’ (p. 181) because he believed that with Raza as a leader, the Army would be weak. The irony is that if the old guard was discredited, the new leadership should be strong. This inversion goes against the common logic and understanding of the word ‘discredited’. Irony is one of the main techniques employed by satirists because, just like satire, irony ‘is the systematic use of double meaning’.<sup>64</sup> Hodgart cites Frye and says that

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<sup>63</sup>Quintero, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup>Hodgart, p. 130.

satire is ‘militant irony’, meaning that satire leads the reader out of his comfort zone, in order to ‘make him an ally in the battle against the world’s stupidity’.

As satire is occupied largely with political matters, Hodgart makes an interesting point when emphasizing anti-clerical satire. He claims that anti-clerical satire is not the same as anti-religious satire. While the latter ridicules beliefs, gods, practices, ‘anti-clericalism is political insofar as the clergy are in politics’.<sup>65</sup> Hodgart develops his theory following the tradition of Christianity in Europe, but it can be applied to the fact that Pakistan was founded under the premise of religion and, in *Shame*, it is a religious person, Maulana Dawood, who works as a political counselor for Raza. In *Shame* there are both types of criticism, the one towards religious people in politics and the other towards religion itself, as the narrator speaks of extreme Islam as something that generates shame.

By exploring the theory of satire, it is clear that satire has a key role in the construction of the novel. Since *Shame* is also a postcolonial novel, it is interesting to explore a little the relation between satire and postcolonialism.

### **Satire, Postcolonialism and Techniques used in *Shame***

Postcolonialists are concerned about demolishing the Empire, therefore satire is a significant tool in *Shame* because ‘satirists specialize in demolition projects’.<sup>66</sup> John Clement Ball mentions that Postcolonialism shares two of satire’s main aspects, which are oppositionality and referentiality. Postcolonialism opposes the hegemony of the colonizer, and it relies heavily on history and culture in order to promote criticism. Moreover, Charles A. Knight argues that satire also expresses ideas of nationalism. If satire, on the one hand, criticizes the history and

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<sup>65</sup> Hodgart, p. 39.

<sup>66</sup> Connery, p. 1.

culture of a certain society, it is also representative of this society. This happens because satire is selective. It may stimulate 'the loyalty of a variety of citizens' because it spreads the ideology of how a society should be, though not how to achieve this ideal; and at the same time satire's 'essential function to attack makes it an ideal vehicle for defining and distorting other nations'.<sup>67</sup>

As satire spreads nationalistic concepts, it also calls into question these very ideas of what a nation is and the aspects that hold it together. This is a core issue in *Shame*, since the partition is highly criticized. For example, the narrator says that the partition of the land, based on religion, 'handed Al-Lah a few insect-nibbled slices of it, some dusty western acres and jungly eastern swamps that the ungodly were happy to do without' (p. 61). In this passage, Rushdie claims that religion, the reason of the partition, did not bring anything good to the new country, not even land that could be cultivated.

Knight suggests that a strategy to propagate certain ideas of nationalism is the use of stereotypes. The classic nationalistic satire exaggerates the negative aspects of the foreign culture. However, in *Shame*, the criticism is towards Pakistan's own culture, for the fact that it was forcedly born under the premise of religion. One of the stereotypes in the novel is Maulana Dawood: he is the typical grumpy religious old man, who goes around terrorizing the villagers who are not considered law-abiding citizens, judged by the strict law of Sharia. He is such an intrusive and old man, that even after he is dead he 'had gone on ageing' (p. 232) and still comes to Raza in dreams to reprehend Raza's loose policies. He is referred to as a 'beardy serpent' (p. 42) and, later on, the more religious people are called 'mule-wallahs' (p. 47), a clear pun for the word 'mullah', 'wallah' meaning, in Arabic, 'I swear to God' and the use of 'mule'. On a first level, the word 'mule' dehumanizes the Maulana because he is compared to an animal. On a deeper level, this dehumanization also happens because mules have negative connotations: it is a

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<sup>67</sup> Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire*, p. 58.

sterile hybrid, and often is used in the expression 'stubborn as a mule'. This says much about the Maulana's personality: in his religious insistence he is a stubborn man, and also sterile, since around him nothing can grow, like a barren land he is already dead in his narrow-mindedness.

One important point Knight makes is that the satire of *Shame* was written in exile. He argues that an exiled satirist, writing from another country, will focus on political aspects in the novel. Although exile has negative aspects, there is a very positive one which is applicable to Rushdie. It is the idea that an exiled satirist has a 'double vision' of the home country. On the one hand, the satirist in exile has the vision of the national-citizen, he knows the culture he comes from and is writing about. On the other hand, he is distanced enough from there in order to see his home country's flaws and have some sort of clarity in judgment.

The concept of double vision is essential because it reinforces the idea that satire can attack several targets at the same time. This makes the text more efficient, since one sentence or one example can satirize more than just the historical element. It is not only the particular figures of Bhutto or Ul-Haq Rushdie wants to satirize, but the very idea of authoritarian regimes, especially those which pretend to be democratic, such as Bhutto's.

Knight classifies Rushdie as an exile satirist. Even though Pakistan, as we know it today, is not Rushdie's home country, Pakistan was part of Rushdie's India, and he knows Pakistan well. This is clearly exemplified in chapter seven in *Shame*, when Rushdie is explaining how he created Sufiya Zinobia. He mentions an honor murder in London, where a Pakistani father killed his daughter for making love to a white boy. Rushdie says that he was appalled by the story because of the horror it is to kill one's own child, but he also found himself understanding the killer. He says: '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' (p. 115). The 'peoples' Rushdie refers to are the people who live in secular States, such as Westerners.

This double vision is enriching and empowering, for the writer realizes things he might not have if he had remained in his home country. As a matter of fact, this vision triplifies if one considers also that the exile satirist is now living in the ex-colonizer's lair, which was the case for Rushdie, writing from England. In relation to the colonizer, the exile satirist does the reverse journey: he comes closer to the foreign British culture. This also gives power to the satirist to know and understand this culture better, enabling him to criticize this culture. When ironically claiming that the novel is not about Pakistan, Rushdie says that if he were to write a realistic novel, it would defeat his purpose of 'writing universally, not only about Pakistan' (p. 70). Indeed, he also criticizes the West. He mentions a dinner with a British diplomat and his wife, a 'quiet civil lady'. Rushdie says that she asked "'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' (p. 29). Here, Rushdie's victims are the Westerners. He ironically calls the lady 'civil' because, after all, this was the idea the British Empire tried to impose, that Westerners were civil people, as opposed to the barbarian Easterners, the former relying on diplomacy to solve problems and the latter relying on violence. The attitude of the lady demonstrates that Easterners and Westerners are not so far apart, where shameless attitudes of violence to solve problems could and can be found in many countries in both worlds.

Irony is certainly the main technique Rushdie employs in *Shame*. Hodgart argues that, by using the double meaning of irony, the satirist 'assumes a double audience, one that is deceived by the surface meaning of the words, and another that catches the hidden sense and laughs with

the deceiver at the expense of the deceived'.<sup>68</sup> This means that the satirist is mocking first and foremost the subject of his text; secondly, he is mocking the part of the audience audience that does not understand the real meaning of the words.

Since the main objective of satire is to deconstruct the image of its victim, satire has to reduce this victim's 'stature and dignity'.<sup>69</sup> For example, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was known for his oratory. His fictional representation, Iskander, is always using foul language. Raza is supposed to be a great soldier. The most famous story that his grandmother tells is of a great conquest of his; this is because it was the only victory in the history of their armed forces and 'formed the basis of Raza's reputation for invincibility'. It is the story that Raza took a mountain valley for Pakistan 'and you must not believe that propaganda which says that the enemy did not bother to defend the place', a place which is described as 'inaccessible' and 'intrepid' (pp. 78-79) . Even though Bariamma's words are glorifying, the reader understands that if this place is so inaccessible and intrepid, why would anyone want it? Maybe the propaganda was right.

Such a passage belittles Raza, making him appear to be incompetent or just a coward for trying to seize a piece of land nobody will defend; it inverts Raza's position and reputation. This inversion happens especially through the choice of names, as Brennan mentions. His argument is that the main characters in the novel are in reality the opposite of what they claim to be, their true selves shown in their names. 'Iskander', for example, means 'Alexander', reminding us of Alexander the Great, who invaded the Indian area which is now Pakistan. Although Iskander Harappa talks about democracy, he came to power through force, similar to the Macedonian Alexander. 'Raza' is an alternate form of 'raja', suggesting the British rule in India, the 'Raj'. Raza claims to be restoring Pakistan to its rightful religious path, but in fact he reproduces the

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<sup>68</sup> P. 130.

<sup>69</sup> P. 115.



same modus operandi the British used before him. One of the excuses European colonizers had to seize a country was to bring the word of the Christian god to the pagans, avoiding for them an afterlife of torments in hell because of their wrong beliefs, and this was not untrue to the British colonizers' strategies. Like Raza, as discussed in the previous chapter, the British also used religion at their convenience, performing a number of unchristian acts to keep control of the population.

The inversions are also present in other characters. Naveed is also called Good News, but she is probably the result of an extra-marital relationship her mother had. Therefore, she is not good news to her father or to the family. Sufiya is a beautiful woman who has a beast inside; unlike the famous fairy-tale where the beast has a beauty within. Sufiya, however, is not the only character who is transformed to an animal-like creature.

This particular transformation of Sufiya is key to the understanding of her as the representative of the people. It had been said in Ancient Greece by Aristotle that man is a political animal. This famous sentence implies that politics is a phenomenon that depends on different areas of society to exist. Man, meaning the human being, needs to be in a city where there are laws, obligations and rights. This is how man thrives. However, in the case of Sufiya's Pakistan, there was an excess of obligations and few rights, where the people tend to be passive and not politically active. Her transformation into – quite literally – a political animal means that she is exercising the power of people to fight for their rights to live in a society where they will be heard. The beast in Sufiya is a political animal and a worrying image of what human beings are capable of.

Other characters are, if not transformed, compared to animals which do not have a positive or serious connotation. It was mentioned before that Dawood was a 'beardy serpent'.

From a Christian point of view, the serpent symbolism is quite obvious: it has been traditionally associated with evil and trickery. Analyzing the Islamic tradition, the choice of a serpent is not less interesting than the Christian. It is known that Muhammed ordered the killing of snakes, except those living in your home. However, one particular type of snake should not be killed. According to the sacred Haddith, some jinns accepted Islam and turned into snakes. Jinns are spiritual entities that can be good or evil. The most famous jinn is Satan, who was cast in hell because he did not bow to Adam, one of the Islamic prophets. The correct procedure for a Muslim man to act with a snake who is living in his house is to warn the snake for three days, asking it to leave the home peacefully. If the snake returns, he must kill it, because it is Satan.<sup>70</sup> If we analyze the figure of Dawood, he is an old religious man who was living with Raza. Maybe he was a jinn, or maybe Rushdie is just trying to demonstrating the evil side of the Maulana through the use of the word 'serpent'.

He is also compared to a monkey that is always on Raza's shoulder, because he is always around the general to advise him on how to lead the country. On the one hand, it reminds the reader of a pirate who has his faithful monkey-pet always with him. On the other hand, the fact that the Maulana is always advising Raza could mean that 'a monkey could do this job', meaning that if to govern this badly, one only needs a monkey. Another possible interpretation on the religious side, is the fact that in Islamic tradition, the monkeys we have today were descendants of the people from Israel. It is told in the Koran (7:166) that on the Sabbath, the fish used to be brought to the surface of the sea and some people broke their obligation of resting, deciding to fish instead. This made Allah angry, turning them into monkeys as a punishment. In both examples, the serpent and the monkey, Rushdie uses religion to attack a religious figure.

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<sup>70</sup> Silas, 'Muhammad and the Snakes', <<http://answering-islam.org/Silas/snakes.htm>> [accessed 13 June 2012].

In the novel, there are other situations where animals are used in order to attack. While Omar is still living with his mothers, he is compared to an animal zoo that does not have real freedom. Pakistan itself is compared to a chicken that is flapping just one wing, after losing its East wing, an image that is ridiculous but evokes pity at the same time.

Hodgart points out that the animalia motif in a satire is essential not only because it removes the humanity of the characters it wants to mock, but also because it,

is an essential device in the visual counterpart, caricature and cartoon: it reduces man's purposeful actions, the ambitious aims of which he is proud and his lusts of which he is ashamed, all to the level of brute instinct: hog in sloth, fox in stealth.<sup>71</sup>

Reduction, however, does not happen only through the animalia symbolism. The tone used can reveal the narrator's real ideas about a certain issue. A good example is the tone of contempt used by the narrator to talk about the ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims. The narrator tells a story before the official partition, when Hindus would go to certain cinemas that showed only Hinduism-supportive movies, especially of vegetarianism, while Muslims would watch 'non-vegetarian Westerns'. The centuries-old conflict is then reduced to a matter of 'veg and non-veg' (p. 62), demonstrating how futile the clash really is.

Another example where the tone says more than words is found when he narrates the beginnings of the battles over Kashmir. He says 'the two newly-partitioned nations announced the commencement of hostilities on the Kashmiri frontier. You can't beat a northern war in the hot season; officers, footsoldiers, cooks all rejoiced as they headed to the coolness of the hills' and they backslapped each other because of the 'meteorological fortune' (p. 77). Here, the tone is amiable, contrasting drastically with the cruel reality of war.

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<sup>71</sup> Hodgart, p. 119.

The tone in *Shame* is usually used in contrast to what is being told, affecting the form of the narrative. Where the form is concerned, it is important to analyze the fairy-tale genre. A fairy-tale often involves the presence of the fantastic, be it magic or a monster. It also has a moralizing, instructive nature: do not accept food from strangers is what we learn from *Snow White*, do not walk alone in the woods is what *Little Red Riding Hood* tells us. When the story involves a princess, often there is a noble king married to a woman who is the princess' evil step-mother, there are evil step-sisters as well, and a good-hearted brave prince who will rescue the princess from the dangers in which she was put. A happy ending is also indispensable: reunification with the family, a wedding.

The fair maiden in *Shame* is Sufiya. Although she is very beautiful, she is not intelligent and does not even understand very well what a husband is. Her father, is a sort of king, but not a noble one: his reign is absolutist and conquered the crown by betraying and assassinating his friend. The villains in Sufiya's family are her mother and her own sister, Naveed. Her prince is the anti-hero Omar, a man much older than she is, ugly and fat. She did not marry a frog that could turn into a prince, she married a frog that wants to remain a frog. He wants to marry Sufiya, but is so afraid to propose to her father that he only does that after the scandal of Naveed's near-wedding to Haroun, because, compared to that, his proposal will not seem so bad. Moreover, instead of rescuing her from her house, he moves in together with the rest of the Hyder family, adding more conflict to Sufiya's life by having an affair with Shahbanou.

Sufiya does not have anyone to kill the dragon for her, and her dragon is actually her prince. Her ending is not really happy: she kills the dragon, but then what? And since all fairytales have a moral, what is the moral of this one? Do not talk to your family? Better yet, the enemy can come from within, from within the family or from within oneself.

Brennan argues that a fairy-tale is an ‘upper-class deformation of the folk tale’.<sup>72</sup> He means that fairy-tales reinterpret the collective experience of the people in the individual figures of a king, a queen, a princess and so forth. Moreover, fairy-tales address the idea of something that happened a long time ago, in an archaic society.

Therefore, it is logical that Rushdie chose this form to tell the story of oppression in a society which is supposed to be modern. The narrator says that this story did not happen a long time ago, thus denouncing the feudalist ways in which Pakistan was being governed, with the power and richness concentrated in the hands of twenty-two families; and violence and force being used in order to achieve ‘peace’. As a representation of the people’s experience, it suits the idea of this thesis that Sufiya represents the people of Pakistan.

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<sup>72</sup> Brennan, p. 116.

## Conclusion

Historical events have always been a common point of departure for writers. Clear historical background is found in many of Rushdie's fictional works, a fact that does not come as a surprise if we consider Rushdie's academic education as an historian. *Shame* explores the history of Pakistan in the earlier seventies, and the work resulted in a project that analyzed Pakistani society not just through the eyes of history, but specially culture. It has two major plots, one that deals with the political turmoil, concerned with the public life; the other with marriages, concerned with the characters' private lives. The plots develop similarly, becoming intertwined. This was the main ambition of this thesis: to explore the relationship between culture and politics.

In *Shame*, the political oppression the society suffers is constantly being compared to what women or servants suffer when facing their superiors. On a more literal level, there are the figures of Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, the avatars of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul-Haq, respectively. On a metaphorical level, there is Sufiya, representing the people of Pakistan, and her husband and doctor Omar Shakil, who represents Pakistani rulers. Their marriage is crucial to the understanding of the novel as a whole, because they operate both in the private sphere, as individuals who marry, living within certain dynamics; and in the public, since metaphorically they represent something larger, as explained before.

When such parallels arise, it is important to discuss identity. The suggestion in the novel is that identity is something which is not as individual as one may think. Since it is born from the social environment a person lives in, identity becomes collective as well. Sufiya becomes the people, the three Shakil sisters become united in their 'shared' pregnancy, Arjumand follows in her father's footsteps, Mahmoud, Bilquis' father, 'becomes' a woman when he had to perform

the role of mother, and so forth. Individual identity is a never ending process, just as much as cultural or national identities are. Here, it is useful to recall Bhabha's ideas of the third space and hybridity, and that such hybridity is something positive not only because it allows different cultures to live together, but also because something new can arise from them, unlike the Maulana Dawood, who was a sterile 'mule', as discussed in the third chapter.

The ideas of Pakistani nationalism and of a national identity based solely on religion are constantly called into question in *Shame*. As a matter of fact, Rushdie has also expressed his discontentment with the partition in other words, and he managed to include his personal voice in the voice of the narrator. The narrator in *Shame* has a very interesting position, because he tells the story and communicates Rushdie's personal point of view. With the creation of such a narrator, Rushdie defies the so proclaimed death of the author. The author is alive and expresses his ideas with much lucidity. The role of the author might be an interesting topic for further research.

Another ambition of this analysis was to study the female characters and discuss how literary critics have reacted to the alleged feminist tone. The female characters are essential in the novel because while the people is being oppressed by the male governors, these male governors are also husbands who oppress their wives. Rushdie was largely criticized for reproducing the patterns of male domination and female submission. It was understood by the critics that Rushdie treated the women in *Shame* no better than those he was supposed to criticize, mainly the conservative Muslims and the general cultural attitude, which had been affected by the long contact with the British and Indians of different religions.

It is necessary to understand, though, that the criticism is there, only in a subtler way. First and foremost, Rushdie's project is to tell the stories which had not been told, and that

included the stories of how women lived in that society. Those stories were told from an honest point of view. For example, a true reproduction of women being submissive would romanticize women as being happy in the position of wives and mothers. Rushdie, however, does not sugar-coat the reality. While many of these women were hoping for a life as mothers and wives, they sooner than later discovered that they could never be happy in such positions. The consequences are women who become mad, erased under burqas, or commit suicide, like Naveed did.

In a work that deals with identity and colonization, it is important to talk also about the servants. In *Shame*, most of them are women. The servants have been colonized three times. Firstly, by the British colonizers, secondly by the men, because they are women and naturally seen as inferior to men, finally, they are colonized by their masters and mistresses. The servants at the Shakil house are obliged to live in confinement with their mistresses, the Shakil sisters, erasing their individual identities in service to Omar's mothers, while Shahbanou is used and disposed of as it pleases Omar.

The manner in which Rushdie conducts such reflections is also very interesting. He makes use of satire to a large extent. Satire is used to mock especially Raza and Harappa, but also the Maulana and Pakistan as a country. Such figures are supposed to be high in rank: Harappa and Raza are successive Presidents, the Maulana is a religious authority and Pakistan is a nation. All these figures lose their stature through mockery, becoming unimportant, as they are compared to animals, for example, but they are still important enough to be a topic for satire.

Despite the fact that he had claimed before that *Shame* is his darkest novel, he also acknowledges that it is humoristic, making the novel a black comedy. He argues that what happened in Pakistan during the Bhutto and ul-Haq regimes was a Shakespearean-like tragedy with a protégé who becomes the executioner of his master, but where the characters were not



elevated enough for a tragedy, but belonged more to the Classical Greek ideas of, as a form, comedy. In short, Rushdie described it as ‘high tragedy performed by clowns’, which is ‘ridiculous in an unsettling way’.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the Shakespearean influences are working in *Shame*, since the bard was known also for the use of comical and mocking lines in his tragedies, such as *Hamlet*.

Shakespeare is not the only influence found in *Shame*. Rushdie is a reader of Gabriel García Márquez, as he mentions in *Imaginary Homelands* and in lectures and interviews. *Shame* has much of Márquez’ magical realism, through the clairvoyance of Talvar or the transformations in Sufiya. Magical realism gives the novel a mythical tone, undermining the tragic happenings, becoming in itself a metonym for the true extent of the problems portrayed in *Shame*.

*Shame* also bears a resemblance to Márquez’ works in content, especially with his *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. In this novel, the narrator claims that the country is imaginary, similarly to Rushdie as he claims that the country in *Shame* is not Pakistan. The investigation of Rushdie’s influences which do not belong to the English world could be a fertile ground for investigation. On a more theoretical note, a comparison between the magic elements in Latin American literature and those in Indian tales could also become an interesting research topic.

Published in 1983, *Shame* ends pointing to the future of Pakistan being in Arjumand’s/ Benazir’s hands and a dark future for the people in case they are not taken care of and do not become the political animals they are supposed to be. The novel did not follow the development of the post-Zia era. The real ‘virgin Ironpants’, Benazir Bhutto, did become Prime Minister

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<sup>73</sup>Salman Rushdie, ‘Authors@Google: Salman Rushdie’ (19 June, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ah9PyZNB4F8>> [accessed 20 April 2011]

between 1988 and 1990 and then from 1993 to 1995 and was assassinated in 2007, when she was a strong opposition candidate for the elections in 2008. Culturally, Pakistan and India still dwell in rivalry, as the recent case of the mass mobile threatening messages showed.<sup>74</sup> Religiously, the Sharia law is still in use and recently a mentally disabled 11-year old Christian girl was arrested under charges of blasphemy: she was carrying a bag with, among other things, tore pages written in Arabic, partially burned, which supposedly belong to the Koran. The hate was extended to all the Christian community, as some Muslims threatened Christians of burning their houses.<sup>75</sup> As for the women, even though the United Nations reported in 2010 that Pakistani women enjoy better gender equality than India,<sup>76</sup> Pakistan's bad reputation for honor crimes against women is still valid

To see Pakistan in *Shame* is to see the country filtered by Rushdie's sharp lenses. When reading this novel, one must consider that, despite the historical background, it is still a fictional work. Secondly, as Rushdie writes in *Shame*, what we read is only one slice of the story, not the whole. This dissertation was preoccupied with the understanding of culture and politics and how Rushdie communicates such issues through literary devices, so that it is a literary piece of work, not a historical one, because 'realism can break a writer's heart' (p. 70). With such a rich novel, it would be a shame not to explore its characters and discover what lies under their burqas.

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<sup>74</sup> The messages threatened revenge attacks to Indians by Muslims groups, causing panic. The Indian government quickly assumed and spread the gossip that Pakistan was responsible for that. 'India Blame Pakistan for Ethnic Panic' 19 August 2012 < <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/08/201281932227892850.html> > [accessed 19 August 2012].

<sup>75</sup> 'Pakistan leader orders "blasphemy girl" probe' 21 August 2012 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/08/201282085643993256.html> [accessed 21 August 2012].

<sup>76</sup> 'India is worse than Pakistan on gender equality' 5 November 2010 [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-11-05/india/28243298\\_1\\_maternal-mortality-india-ranks-pakistan](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-11-05/india/28243298_1_maternal-mortality-india-ranks-pakistan) [accessed 3 July 2012].

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